

KENNY G — PEER PRESSURES

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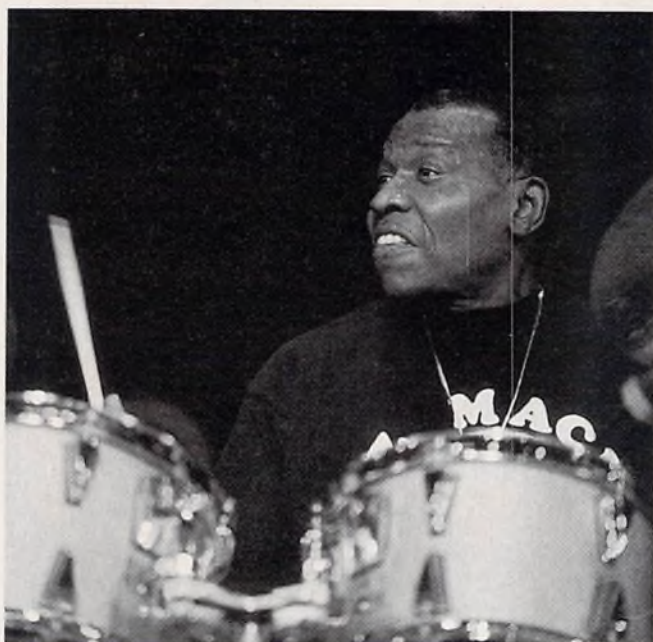
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ELVIN J O N E S Jazz Machine

Drummers Forum:
Erskine, Cyrille, 'Smitty' Smith,
Watts & Kenny Washington
On First Inspirations

**Great Jazz Names —
Next Generation**





KEN FRANCKLING

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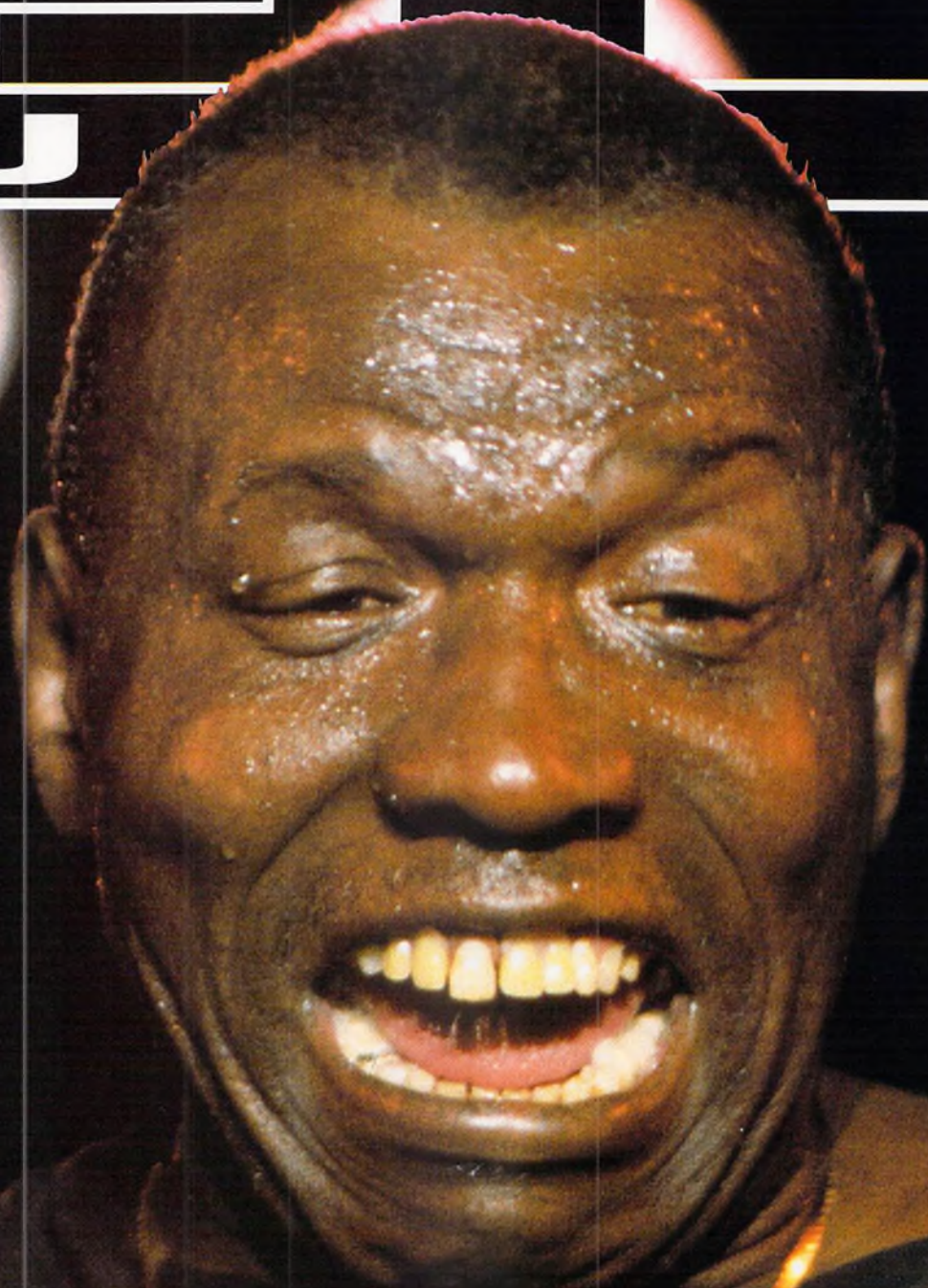
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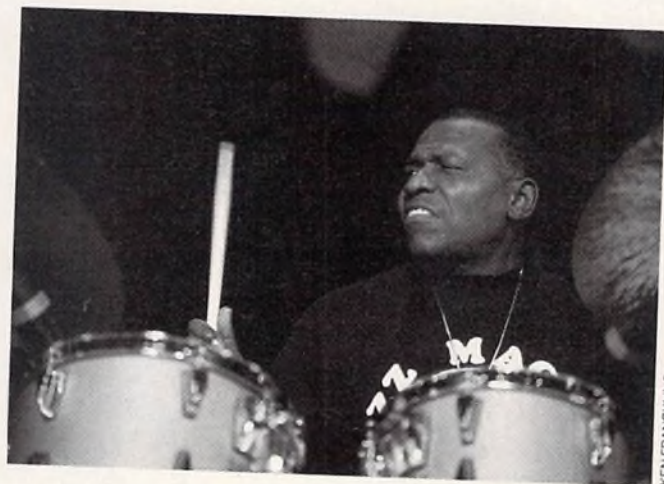
NEWS

Jazz Machine

By Ken Franckling



PHOTOS: MITCHELL SEIDEL



KEN FRANCKLING

Every modern drummer ought to give some not-so-silent thanks—a press roll, perhaps—for the late-summer day in 1932 when the Ringling Bros. circus train stopped in Pontiac, Michigan. For that day, Elvin Jones says, pointed to his future.

As a five-year-old, he watched all day as the circus people unloaded the train two blocks from his home and set up their big tents. Then they paraded through town to hype their show. “I broke away from my mother, who usually had an iron grip on my hand. I followed the drummer all the way to the end of the street and back to the circus grounds. That was something. It was my thrill in life,” Jones explains. “And I used to follow the Salvation Army band—‘Ooh, look at that drummer!’—because they were doing something I thought was quite essential.”

Sixty years later, Elvin still thirsts for the essential. There is more to it now than playing the drums and leading the band. This gregarious drummer has taken on another role as a nurturer of young talent. For Jones appreciates how important it was when people gave him recording and performance opportunities as a

journeyman before his 1960-'66 tenure with the great John Coltrane Quartet showcased his musical imagination and rhythmic innovations. “Giving someone a chance is the greatest gift that you can give to another person—and to help him as much as you can,” Jones says. “I feel very deeply about that. It’s very important.”

That’s why Jones made his latest recording a collaboration with several promising young players. *Youngblood* groups Elvin and veteran bassist George Mraz with trumpeter Nicholas Payton and saxophonists Javon Jackson and Joshua Redman. It includes some standards, originals written at his request by the prodigies, and a Jones drum improvisation. “A commitment to this art form is not something you only talk about. It is something that has to be done,” Jones says. “Young musicians have a difficult time being invited to play on someone’s record. This was an opportunity for me to extend a little courtesy to them. I didn’t make a bad decision. I think it is a great record. When I see these young men so involved, so enthusiastic, that stimulates me.”

At 65, he seems busier than at any time since his Coltrane years.

After an eight-year period when he toured and performed little in the United States, Jones has been highly visible since 1990 in a series of concert tours with his band, the Jazz Machine, and with a flurry of fine recordings. They've included his own sessions and work as a co-leader or guest artist with Wynton Marsalis, John Hicks, Kenny Garrett, and, most recently, Javon Jackson.

Home in New York is a modest four-room apartment shared with his Japanese-born wife Keiko. It's in a building where Max Roach also resides and where the late Art Blakey once lived. Elvin's drum room would have a nice view of Central Park if you could get to the window. But the room is stuffed from floor to ceiling with boxes and equipment cases. Somewhere in that swirl of packing sit 15 complete sets of drums.

The living-room walls are crowded with posters, photographs, and gifts from appreciative fans, many of them with drum themes. The huge ebony hands that power his blurring press rolls and thunderbolt accents point to the things of which he's most proud,

including a plaque marking his induction into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame. There are so many mementos that Jones has no room to set up his gear anywhere in the apartment. "If I need to practice, all I need is sticks and a pillow," he explains. He exercises with hand grips and rubber balls to keep his hand and arm muscles in shape and walks a couple of hours a day in the park when he's home. "Playing is an exhilarating experience. It's not that fatiguing," Jones says. "If I had to work in an office all day long, I'd be more drained than in any musical situation."

■ In this 25th year since John Coltrane's death, a black-and-white photo of the saxophonist stands out from everything else on the walls, including the key to Jones' home city. For it was those years with Coltrane that had the most impact on his career. The experience spotlighted his key role in expanding the style of modern drumming by mixing rhythms, subdividing beats, and opening up

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the solo possibilities of the instrument. More important, Jones says, were the things observed about leading a band, the spiritual side of music, and commitment to excellence.

"I've never seen anybody before or since that intense as a musician. This man was absolutely pure music from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. He exuded that constantly," Jones says. "For the most part, we didn't need to talk about our performances. To get ready for a club or a concert, the biggest thing I had to do was get my drums set up and that I had on my tuxedo, then go out and play. We'd just start playing. We never knew how long it was going to take and didn't care. Sometimes I thought it was too short. Those six years of this intensity will never leave me. I'm sure it will never leave [fellow-bandmate/pianist] McCoy Tyner. It affects the way I lead my band. It was one long musical event."

Elvin's most recent Jazz Machine recording, *In Europe*, shows that when a song gets under his skin, it becomes a part of him. His band becomes a musical laboratory for which each tune is an experiment to be analyzed, explored, turned inside out and back again in front of a live audience. The tunes on *In Europe* were trotted all over the world for more than a year before being documented in June 1991 at a jazz festival in Vilshofen, Germany (see "Reviews" July '92).

"You can't get to the quality you want until you have thoroughly explored the possibilities. You can only do that with repetition. That's the nature of musical evolution," Jones says. "You need to know the compositions so the interpretations can be flexible. In that way, you avoid the clichés. The form is there, but you go in as if it is a new composition each time. Your imagination can't be today what it was yesterday."

"Doll Of The Bride," a traditional Japanese folk tune arranged by Keiko Jones, is the disc's *piece de resistance*, stretching more than 32 minutes into a global masterpiece filled with energy, nuance, and



Elvin's stand-up comedy routine gets laughs from Max Roach at San Francisco's Keystone Korner during a 1980 performance.

unbridled solos from everyone in the band. Using mallets on his cymbals, Jones provides a thunderous base for the fiery saxophones. It is clear that Japanese culture has a strong influence on his music. "The music in Japan has that same unbridled honesty you find in the hills of Appalachia. There are no limits to what you can do with it," he says.

Depending on who's available for any given gig, Jones now draws his Jazz Machine lineup—usually a quintet or sextet—from among pianist Willie Pickens, bassists Chip Jackson or Andy McKee, trumpeter Nicholas Payton, and saxophonists Javon Jackson, Sonny For-

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tune, Pat LaBarbera, and Ravi Coltrane.

The arrival last year of 26-year-old Ravi Coltrane as one of Jones' apprentices has drawn considerable attention to the band. Jones was playing a club in California when the young Coltrane showed up each night and listened. Elvin relayed word that when Ravi felt ready, there would be a job for him. "He's an excellent musician, there's no question about that, but he's still trying to find himself," Jones says. "People have very high expectations because of his name. I don't look at it like that. He's a young man trying to play his horn. It is important that he get as much experience as he can. He is extremely talented. I'm very happy to have him with me."

Jones says the players who meet his standards "have to be open to what I'm doing. I can't put a square peg in a round hole. The whole point is to play jazz, not any of its hybrid forms. You need to have a deep, spiritual feeling for the music. I like them to be involved freely in my music. When the band is playing as a unit, anything you can do to make the fabric of that unit more substantial creates a better sound."

Born Sept. 9, 1927, Jones is the youngest member of one of the most famous families in jazz. He started taking the drums seriously early in his teens when he bought sticks, wire brushes, a Paul Yoder method book, and a drum pad. Elvin credits band director Fred N. Weist at Pontiac's Washington Junior High School with giving him his first insight into what the drums were really about, and his oldest brother Hank with opening his eyes and ears to jazz. "I used to listen to Hank practice. He'd put an Art Tatum record on our windup Victrola and tell me to play along on a book. I listened to all the Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Chick Webb solos. Just listening to music at that stage of my life was a lesson."

Elvin recalls buying his first drums at 14, which he bought on

time with \$5 down and payments of \$5 a month by delivering three different daily newspapers. "When the drums were repossessed, it broke my heart," he says. At 16, he dropped out of high school to work in the nearby General Motors plant, then enlisted in the Army. When he came out in 1949, he used his Army savings and a \$35 loan from his sister Melinda to buy new drums and began gigging around Detroit's busy jazz scene. Seven years later he followed brothers Hank and Thad Jones to New York where work with Charles Mingus, Sweets Edison, J.J. Johnson, Donald Byrd, Pepper Adams, Bud Powell, and Tyree Glenn, and recordings with Sonny Rollins and Miles Davis preceded his Coltrane years.

"Playing is an exhilarating experience. If I had to work in an office all day long, I'd be more drained than in any musical situation."



As early as 1962, when Jones recorded *Elvin!*, his first album as a leader (with brothers Hank and Thad, flutist Frank Wess, saxophonist Frank Foster, and bass player Art Davis), he was being recognized for his versatility and his bold use of the drum set. He took the work of bop drummers Max Roach and Kenny Clarke to a point where it made the jazz drummer an improvising equal.

Jones says much of the credit must be shared with many other drummers who came before him, including Roach, Papa Jo Jones, Art Blakey, Buddy Rich, and Don Lamond. "I just didn't do that much, I don't think. But nevertheless, I have my own ideas about how I feel when I'm playing and still maintain the pulse. It's a mental

EQUIPMENT

Elvin uses Japanese-made TAMA drums exclusively. His kit includes a 5 1/2 x 14-inch custom-made brass snare, 9 x 13 and 8 x 12 aerial toms mounted on his 18 x 18-inch bass drum. His floor tom toms are 16 x 16 and 18 x 18. For cymbals, Elvin uses a 14-inch K. Zildjian hi-hat and a 20-inch K. Zildjian ride to his left, and a 20-inch Paiste ride and 20-inch Istanbul sizzle ride to his right, all floor-mounted. His sticks are custom-made by Pro-Mark to his specification through California's Pro Drum shop, with a bead slightly longer than standard and with balanced tensile strength at each end. He uses standard Remo heads.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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| <p>YOUNGBLOOD—enja 7051
 IN EUROPE—enja 79675
 LIVE AT THE Lighthouse VOLS 1,2—
 Blue Note 84447, 84448 (Dave Liebman)
 POLY CURRENTS—Blue Note 84331
 PUTTIN' IT TOGETHER—Blue Note 84282
 (Jimmy Garrison, Joe Farrell)
 HEAVY SOUNDS—MCA/Impulse! 33114
 (Richard Davis)
 ELVIN!—Fantasy/OJC-259</p> | <p>THE COLTRANE SOUND—Atlantic 1419
 with others
 SPECIAL QUARTET—DIW/Columbia
 52955 (David Murray)
 ME AND MR. JONES—Criss Cross 1053
 (Javon Jackson)
 POWER TRIO—RCA/Novus 3115 (John
 Hicks, Cecil McBee)
 THICK IN THE SOUTH SOUL GESTURES
 IN SOUTHERN BLUE VCL 1—Columbia
 47977 (Wynton Marsalis)
 AFRICAN EXCHANGE STUDENT—Atlantic
 82156 (Kenny Garrett)
 MAGICAL TRIO 2—EmArcy 834 368
 (James Williams, Ray Brown)
 MCCOY TYNER PLAYS ELLINGTON—MCA/
 Impulse! 33124
 EAST BROADWAY RUNDOWN—MCA/Imp-
 pulse! 33120 (Sonny Rollins)
 A NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD
 VOLS 1,2—Blue Note 81581, 46518
 (Sonny Rollins)
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process far more than physical," he says. "It takes flexibility to support the other soloists, using the drum set as an instrument as well as a timekeeper. The colors can be added by dynamics of stroke, the subtleties of press rolls. However, one can apply his knowledge and control without losing the rhythmic consistency."

Today, Jones is open to whatever musical possibilities he hears, but swears off anything but the standard drum kit to achieve his own sound. That means no electronics, no cage of drum options surrounding him on stage or in the studio. "There's enough there in the standard kit to keep you busy for a lifetime. The more you expand it, you duplicate what's already there. The stuff these rock drummers bring on stage looks dramatic, but it's all show," Jones says.

He's always been fascinated by the sound of percussion, particularly congas, but says his skin is too tender to use anything but sticks and mallets. He was a percussionist, however, on Miles Davis' *Sketches Of Spain* project, playing castinets and timpani. "If I had started when I was younger, I might have the calluses to withstand that kind of pressure. I've played congas, but I found after an hour or two that my fingers would split and bleed. It takes 10 to 15 years to build up to that." He muses, this summer day over homemade lemonade, what might have happened if he had grown up in New York instead of Michigan. "I would have been around a lot of Latin guys and had an opportunity to assimilate that range of percussion, like Willie Bobo, who had the ability to switch back and forth," Jones says.

Jones spent considerable time in the 1980s in Japan where he and his wife have a second home. They ran a small restaurant and jazz club for a while in Nagasaki, and he still dreams of opening an international cultural institute there for the study of jazz, literature, martial arts, and English language skills. All it will take, he says, is a funding source.

He also hopes within the next three years to produce a version of *Madame Butterfly* that blends jazz soloists and opera singers—"not to distort the great compositions of Puccini, but to give it another point of view," he says. "It might even give some of the symphony orchestra managers some food for thought. All we need is flexible people."

Even in his dreams, Elvin Jones continues to push, pull, and prod the music, looking for new possibilities. "I can't think of any art form more powerful or exacting than the jazz art form. The fundamental principle is the honesty of the artist from his inner self. It is important, and it is an unchanging thing," he says. "You can't change it with painting, you can't change it with literature, you can't change it with music. It is almost a compulsion."

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Peer Pressures

KENNY G

By Pat Cole



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He's sold millions of albums. He's got just as many rabid fans. They'll stand in line for hours to buy his concert tickets. Jazz and pop stations and even grocery store Muzak speakers play his songs. Sounds like a musician who's got it made? Hardly.

After 10 years of making records, Kenny Gorelick still gets questions about his ability that he thought were resolved long ago. "One critic asked me a question that summed up many critics' attitude," Kenny starts out. "He asked me if I'm going to play any challenging music? My answer is that there is nothing more challenging than playing two or three notes that can touch people emotionally."

Kenny G, as the world knows him, could be the most successful-but-picked-on musician on the scene. Millions adore him, but some critics dismiss his music as mere cotton candy for the ears. Record stores stock his CDs in the jazz section, but jazz musicians scoff at any suggestion that his music bears any resemblance to the art form. He considers his music art, but some write it off as commercial fluff. His latest album (untitled at press time), could be his

biggest test yet: To prove that he can produce compelling music as the prince of pop instrumentalists.

By the commercial yardstick, Kenny G certainly is a success. After his debut on Arista Records, *Kenny G*, which achieved gold status, the following five albums sold more than 12 million units worldwide. His fourth album, *Duotones*, released in 1986 and featuring the single "Songbird," is his best-selling disc so far with 4.5 million copies sold—and counting.

Perhaps the best-selling instrumentalist since Herb Alpert, how has a man armed only with a sax sold records like Phil Collins? In the beginning, Kenny could hardly explain the euphoria over *Duotones*. The album's raging commercial success blind-sided him. "It blew me away," Kenny says after a flight from Reno, Nev., to Paso Robles, Calif., hours before performing at a county fair. "I never expected it to happen. As it was happening, it was almost surreal."

Kenny expected the first single released from the album, "What Does It Take To Win Your Love?," to be the hit. But "Songbird" became pop music's most valuable ballad of 1986. He insists he wrote it as a tribute to his

girlfriend (now wife), hoping that it would become a hit. "After I played it on Johnny Carson's show, the public response was tremendous."

Kenny believes ballads such as "Songbird" and "Silhouette" attract fans because of his emphasis on melody. "There are plenty of guys out there who play a great saxophone," Kenny explains. "My sense of melody is one of my strong points; and my sense of dynamics, that there's something emotionally happening. I do play a lot of notes. But when it comes to playing a melody, that's where some musicians come up short because they want to impress their friends."

Yet Kenny rejects formal musical training as the path to mastering melody. "If I went to Berklee, I don't think we'd be talking," he says matter of factly. "Berkee's not for everyone. I don't like to read about things, I want to do it. Instead of going to Berklee, I would play my horn for hours and hours." When he's not on the road, Kenny practices three to five hours a day. "I have different licks that I play in my improvisations, and I play them in all 12 keys as exercises," he says.

Once those fans of "Songbird" paid to see Kenny live, they were in for an unusual bit of showmanship: His parading through the audience, blowing his sax without missing a note. Kenny insists this isn't a gimmick to make himself stand out from the pack.

"Physically walking through the seats, to me that's the best," he explains. "I like the sound better out there than the sound on the stage. Anytime there's a performance, there is a wall separating me and the audience. You can leave it up there or take it down. I like to put myself in the audience's place."

So with that approach, he built a huge following. Many of his fans were jazz- and instrumental-music neophytes, and those burned out on pop and rock schlock looking for mature, accessible, vocal-less music. His style even impressed some fellow-sax players who would never even think of jumping offstage and going through the audience.

"One thing I thought Kenny G had going for him was that he had a great way of communicating with his audience," says Eric Marienthal, the sax player in Chick Corea's Elektric Band, who first saw Kenny during a tour in 1986. "It's important to be proficient with your instrument. Also you want to try to communicate with people. Kenny's a master at that. He was able to get that real connection that a lot of musicians aren't as successful at doing."

Kenny also had the Arista Records promotion machine in his corner. After all, Arista isn't a jazz label. This is the house that hit-maker Clive Davis built. Arista boosted Whitney Houston into pop stardom and currently peddles groups like the hip-hoppers TLC and r&b stalwart Aretha Franklin. Once Kenny signed on, he wasn't shy about joining forces with the promotion staff in nudging radio stations to play his songs. When the label releases a new album, Kenny tours the country, playing golf and schmoozing with radio-programming executives.

"Some people may say that this is brownsing," he says. "It's not. If the radio people know you as a person, the chances of them supporting you is a lot better. I try to think of the whole picture. The radio stations are not my enemy, and the record company is not my enemy. If a record does well, then everybody's happy. Some artists look at the record company as the enemy. I look at it as part of a team."

With this combination of melody, theatrics, and airplay in place, Kenny G became a superstar by 1986, the quintessential crossover saxophone player of the 1980s. Record companies took notice. "Kenny showed that instrumentalists can have acceptance, and I see that as a positive situation," said GRP Records president Larry Rosen, whose roster now includes six saxophone players as

solo artists.

Since the ascent of Kenny G, record labels have been scrambling to sign up sax players who could trigger a similar, or even better, following. Arista has added 22-year-old Dutch saxophonist Candy Dulfer and singer/saxman Curtis Stigers to its roster in the past two years. Dozens more are signed to major and independent labels alike. Gerald Albright. Najee. Richard Elliot. Boney James. Nelson Rangell. Sam Riney. The list goes on and on. Many of them pay homage to Kenny G for their record deals. "If it weren't for the success that Kenny had, I wouldn't

*"... there is nothing more
challenging than playing two
or three notes that can touch
people emotionally."*

—Kenny G



have gotten the shot that I had," said Dave Koz, a tenor saxophonist on Capitol Records, who spends Thursday nights jamming with Arsenio Hall's house band.

Success has changed Kenny's lifestyle. He began as a curly-haired sax player from Seattle whose first professional gig was with Barry White's Love Unlimited Orchestra. He's now a headliner who sells out 20,000-seat arenas. His album sales, gate receipts from his grueling tour schedule, and music-publishing income puts him in the millionaire musician's club. He still lives in Seattle, but he also has a home in Los Angeles which he shares with his wife. A lover of flying, he owns a Glassair III prop plane which he uses for touring. Endorsement offers also came. Casio asked him to promote a synthesized saxophone.

But critics and his peers weren't necessarily tooting his horn. With all the questions his success and rapid rise provoked, one could virtually hold a two-day symposium on Kenny G: Is he jazz? Is he pop? Where does he go from here? Can he go anywhere? Has he peaked? Did he already peak after *Duotones*? Is he a good musician?

What baffled many keen observers was this: Why did people classify him as a jazz musician at all? The answer: Even though he was a popular success, record stores stacked his CDs in the jazz section. So his fans, especially those who never had lis-

tened to Sonny Rollins or John Coltrane, considered him a jazz artist. In addition, some jazz stations played his records.

But the critics knew better. Some of them came down hard on the G-man. Real hard. For instance, renowned jazz critic Leonard Feather, whose bias for the straightahead tradition is well known, says, "I have no interest in talking about Kenny G. There is nothing to say about him, he is beneath criticism. I went to the Hollywood Bowl once to see him, and that was enough for me."

Saxophone players who call traditional jazz home see Kenny as a guest in a strange house. "Kenny G is to jazz as Mr. T is to acting," says Bob Sheppard, whose critically-acclaimed debut, *Tell Tale Signs*, was released on Windham Hill in 1991. "People know Mr. T from television. And Kenny G is sort of analogous. They know him from television and that one tune. I don't want to take anything away from him. He's a capable guy with a horn. But it's a slap in the face when he's compared to jazz players."

To Kenny, there never was any debate. He never considered himself a purely jazz artist. "I'm just doing a contemporary sound that's kind of jazz," he says. "But at the same time, r&b stations are playing my music. Not being able to categorize me has helped me."

Well, let's suppose Kenny G walked into the studio one day and wanted to make a straightahead jazz recording. Could he cut it? "He feels he's a pop player," says Everette Harp, a saxophone player signed to Manhattan Records. "I'm a firm believer that if you don't use it, then you lose it. I feel he's definitely losing it. I hope he doesn't, because I would really like to hear it."

Rosen of GRP disagrees. "In conversations I've had with Kenny, he appreciates the John Coltranes and the other historical greats. He's enough of a musician to play bebop tunes or write tunes and improvise on the chord changes, which is functionally playing a straightahead record. Whether he comes up to the level of a John Coltrane, Branford Marsalis, or Michael Brecker, I don't know. I would doubt it just by the direction he's taking."

Most observers agree that Kenny is a masterful player. Bob Mintzer, the Yellowjackets' sax man, saw him at an AIDS fundraising concert Arista organized two years ago. "He was pretty amazing," Mintzer said. "Kenny definitely can play."

What his peers tend to criticize is his music. Some simply don't like it. "This is not an indictment of Kenny G," says George Howard. "But to me, Branford Marsalis is the best sax player among the young guys. When I listen to him, I get chills, and when I listen to Kenny, I don't get chills." Adds Jay Beckenstein of Spyro Gyra: "I'm not a big fan of his style of music. Obviously, an awful lot of people like it, although it's not the kind

"Kenny G is to jazz as Mr. T is to acting."—Bob Sheppard



"If it weren't for the success that Kenny had, I wouldn't have gotten the shot that I had."—Dave Koz



of music that excites me."

Kenny has heard these criticisms from time to time. He dismisses some critics' comments as missing the point. "They don't like the context of what I'm doing, so they don't listen to the content," he adds. "I'm glad I have a natural sense of melodies. It does come easy to me. If I can play a melody, I'm glad. They could stand some education in that light."

Yet Kenny admits he felt compelled to take his music beyond wah-wah-wah ballads like "Songbird" on his latest album. "I was looking to make sure that the songwriting and melodies grew," he said. "Duotones and Silhouette were recorded within a year of each other. I realized *Silhouette* was a continuation of my *Duotones* sound. It had a similar feeling. Then I released the live record, and I put a period at the end of this kind of sound—saying in a sense, 'That's it, and now we're moving on to something else.'"

His latest effort was extra challenging. For not only did he feel compelled to produce a fresh sound, he also was under pressure to briskly churn out a follow-up to *Kenny G Live*, which has sold about 2.5 million units worldwide. He spent a year in his 48-track home studio in search of new songs. Meanwhile, the top brass at Arista were urging him to stretch out a little and to produce a master-tape by early '92. Kenny didn't start recording the final song until late August of 1992. Did he wait too long to release an album while he drifted out of the public

consciousness?

"Arista wanted a record a year and a half ago, but we sat down and talked about it," he says. "The music just wasn't ready. It's my commitment to put a record out there that is really great and not to release it from a business standpoint," he says. "It's the thing that makes people successful in life or not successful. In the short term you'll be okay, but in the long run, you're going to hurt yourself. That's something that maybe the other guys aren't doing. They put out records once a year, and they all sound alike. I won't mention names. I think it's a waste of shelf space, and I don't mean it in a cold way. They just want to fulfill a contract."

More than in the past, Kenny made a painstaking effort to create melodies that reflect the songs' meanings and moods. "Then I ask, 'Should I end the verse here, or

is it a bunch of notes, or does it continue to represent the theme of the song?' I will do it again and again to make the song that moves emotionally in the right way," he explains. "I didn't take it as seriously in the last couple of records. I'm really crazy about this record."

Even before he finished recording the album, he was satisfied with the result. "The sound of my saxophone is better," he says. "The way I'm playing the melodies are better. I think I could play 'Songbird' better today."

Perhaps his fans will like the record, too. Then again, they may not. Even so, Kenny feels he's given it his best shot. "I take my music and playing very seriously. I think it's a great position to be in. I remember the time when I didn't have a gig. It's a dream. I'm waiting for the dream to end, and I hope it doesn't." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Kenny uses Selmer saxophones: a 59000 series tenor, a 74000 series alto, and an 81000 series soprano. His mouthpieces are a Ria #5 for tenor with a LaVoz #3 reed, an Alto Beechler #5 for alto with a LaVoz #3 reed, and a Dukoff #8 for

soprano with a LaVoz #2½ reed. For live performances he uses an AKG microphone anchored by a Sony wireless system. For recordings, he uses a Neuman TLM 170 mic.

DISCOGRAPHY

Iba—Arista 8646
KENNY G LIVE—Arista 8613
SILHOUETTE—Arista 8457

DUOTONES—Arista 8427
GRAVITY—Arista 8282
G FORCE—Arista 8192
KENNY G—Arista 8299

First Inspirations

By Larry Birnbaum

In today's eclectic, retrospective musical climate, drummers may have the advantage of adaptability, since they usually work in a variety of stylistic contexts. That's certainly the case for Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Peter Erskine, Kenny Washington, and Andrew Cyrille, who individually and collectively span the gamut from bebop to funk, fusion, free-jazz and world music. But however widely experienced, everyone's got to start somewhere, so we put the same question to each of these five percussive polymaths: "Who first inspired you to take up drumming as a career?"

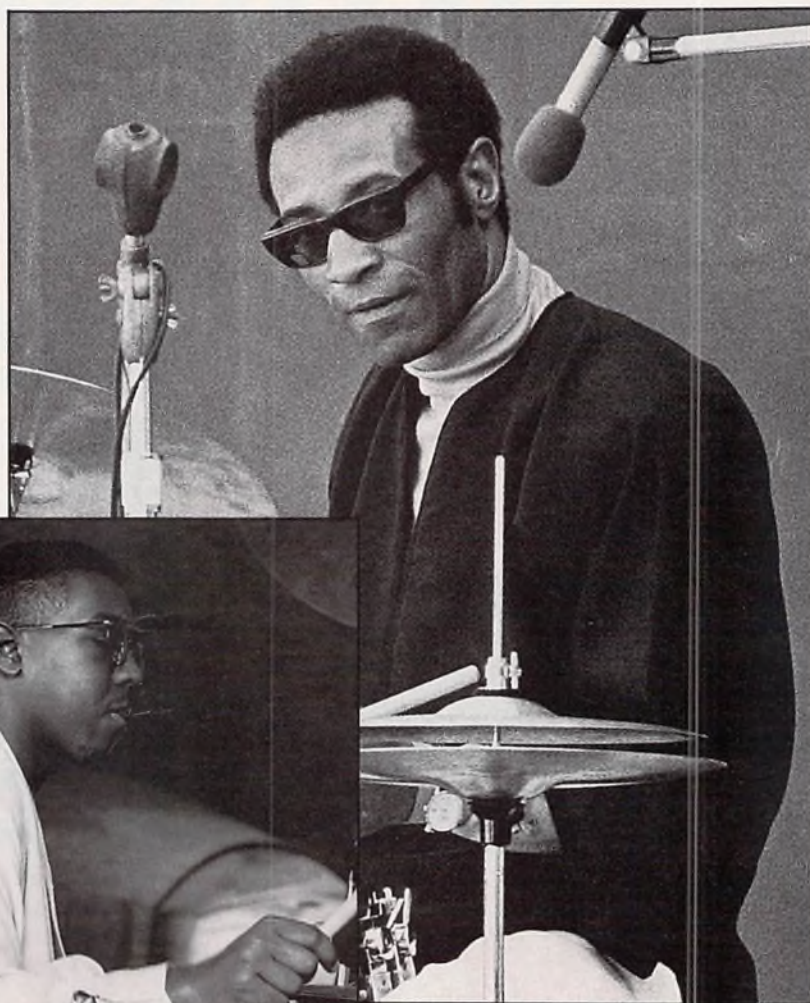
"I guess the person most responsible for me really forging ahead is my father, Marvin Smith Sr.," says Marvin "Smitty" Smith. "He's from Waukegan, Illinois, and he played drums around the Chicago suburban area. He gave me my first lessons when I was three, and then I had three teachers who were all friends of his—Charlie Williams, Donald Taylor, and a great drummer from Chicago named Marshall Thompson, who passed away in December.

"I went to see Max Roach, Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, and Jimmy Cobb when I was young. It was really nice to see Max, because when I was four years old, I got a record with Max on it, and that was the thing that said, 'This is music—it's not just about drums.' Max played melody and harmony and rhythm, and I gravitated toward that right away. But my dad would take me to jam sessions when I was eight years old, and I would sit in, so I was learning from guys who were four, five, or six times my age. That was some invaluable experience."

After attending Berklee College with classmates Branford Marsalis, Donald Harrison, and Jeff Watts, Smitty came to New York in 1981 on a tour with Jon Hendricks and went on to land club and studio gigs with Slide Hampton, Bobby Watson, John Hicks, Dave Holland, Lonnie Smith, Hamiet Bluiett, Henry Threadgill, David Murray,



MITCHELL SEIDEL



ALLAN S. FLOOD

Marvin "Smitty" Smith (at left) with Max Roach, circa 1969

"... when I was four years old, I got a record with Max [Roach] on it, and that was the thing that said, 'This is music—it's not just about drums.'"

—Marvin "Smitty" Smith



Steve Coleman, Michel Camilo, Paquito D'Rivera, Kip Hanrahan, and a host of others. He's also recorded two Concord Jazz albums with his own septet. "I just accumulated a well-rounded kind of thing, a spectrum if you will," he says. "I was always used to playing any kind of music whenever it

happened to crop up. I grew up with Motown and James Brown and Led Zeppelin, so in my early days I played r&b and rock and fusion, and I still have that affinity. To this day I have my own electric jazz group as well as the septet. I just like good music; I don't care about style."

"I didn't get my first set until I was around 15," says Jeff "Tain" Watts, "and the music influencing me at the time was mostly the funk and rock on the radio. But I went to Duquesne University in Pittsburgh to become a classical percussionist, and the drum set wasn't really my focus. Then my brother began to make me aware of the contemporary jazz of the day, which was fusion, so some of the first jazz records I heard were Herbie Hancock's *Thrust*, Billy Cobham's *Crosswinds* and *Spectrum*, and Return to Forever's records. I was still into being a percussionist, but the type of career I saw for myself was like Harvey Mason, who was known for percussion but played the drum-set, too.

Like many musicians today, I came to the music backwards. From listening to Chick Corea, I would find out that he played with Miles Davis, and Miles played with Charlie Parker, and Charlie Parker played with Jay McShann. That's how I found out about Philly Joe Jones, Art



RONALD HEARD

Jeff Watts (left) with Roy Haynes, circa 1980

NOEL NEUBURGER

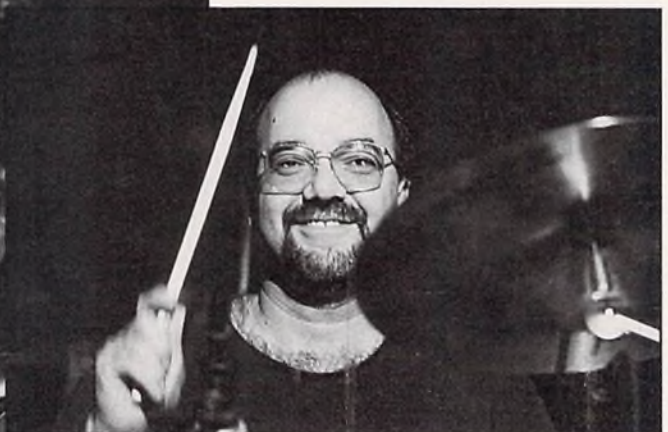
Blakey, Kenny Clarke, and Elvin Jones. I'm pretty much self-taught on drum set. My teachers have been people like Elvin Jones or Roy Haynes, who let me sit behind them and watch how they produce their sound."

After transferring to Berklee for three semesters, Watts joined the first Wynton Marsalis Quintet in New York in 1982. "Branford put that group together," he says,

"and I still don't know why he called me to do it. I had just met Wynton a few times when he was with Art Blakey. But it was a gig; if it had been a gig with Kool & the Gang, it would have been cool. At the time it was just six guys with one or two suits apiece in a van with no shocks staying at the Rodeway Inn and trying to play some original music. I did Wynton for six years, and then I played with

George Benson and with McCoy [Tyner], and then Branford put together his core quartet in the summer of '89, and that's been my main gig ever since."

Watts is also the drummer with Branford's Tonight Show Band on TV, where he plays alongside percussionist Vicki Randle (see **DB** Sept. '92). He's also worked with Jerry Gonzalez's Fort Apache Band and with Don Alias in the Kenny Kirkland trio, and he's thinking of taking conga lessons. "It's influenced how I feel the beat," he says, "and it



HYOU VIELZ

Art Blakey (left), circa 1962, with Peter Erskine

helps me to get more options on what to play. You're trying to communicate a specific color of pitch with an instrument of indefinite pitch, and you want to expose yourself to as many kinds of music as possible. You should

Steve Khan

E The follow-up to Steve's acclaimed Bluemoon debut finds this gifted guitarist further establishing himself as the most versatile player in jazz. Backed by world-class sidemen: bassist Ron Carter, Contrabass guitarist Anthony Jackson, drummers Al Foster and Dennis Chambers and percussionist Manolo Badrena, Steve Khan covers the music of Thelonious Monk, Larry Young, Ornette Coleman, Clare Fischer, and Joe Henderson. *Headline* exhibits all the characteristics of classic jazz: open, interpretive composition, spontaneous ensemble support, with great collaborators in union with the beautiful soloing of a masterful player.

BLUEMOON

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Big Sid Catlett (top), circa 1951, with Kenny Washington

"Big Sid Catlett was one of the first drummers to make people aware that drummers are musicians too."

—Kenny Washington



MITCHELL SEIDEL

be aware of how to supply the rhythm for different things, since your prime function is to spark the group and shape the overall skeleton of what's going on."

"The first drummer I recall hearing when I was four or five was Art Blakey," says Peter Erskine. "My father used to be a bass player, and he had some records around the house, so the first things I heard were bebop drummers and the Stan Kenton big

band. My father took me down to the music store in Atlantic City, and the drummer there, Johnny Civera, agreed to take me on as a student. So even though Art Blakey was the first drummer to grab my imagination, it was really Art and Johnny and my parents. A few years later my dad took me up to the old Showboat Lounge in Philadelphia. It was one of the first times I'd ever been in a real jazz club, and I was amazed at

Notes From Rayburn

what it smelled like. But what really surprised me was when I saw Art Blakey on the street. I imagined him to be this very tall man, because the records had such a big sound. When he played the drums, he was a giant."

At seven Erskine began attending jazz camp at Indiana University, where Kenton's and Cannonball Adderley's bands maintained summer residencies. "I guess it was just providence that I would wind up working with both Kenton and Joe Zawinul later on," he says. He attended the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan and was in his first year at Indiana University when he joined the Kenton band. After three years he returned to school, but then Maynard Ferguson called, and "as fate had it, Jaco Pastorius came to one of Maynard's shows, and on his recommendation, Weather Report hired me to do a tour of Japan in 1978." Three more years and several albums later, Erskine left Weather Report, briefly joined Steps Ahead, and formed a trio with John Abercrombie and Marc Johnson that's still active. He also has a new solo album, *Sweet Soul*, featuring Joe Lovano (see p. 38).

"It wasn't really until after Weather Report that I finally started to get some idea of how to play drums for a small group," says Erskine. "The process over the years has been one of stripping away notes and approaching it more and more like chamber music, where it starts involving the drum set on a more melodic and harmonic level. The drums can function on the same level as saxophone or keyboard or bass, because you don't just have to play a wash of rhythm or velocity."

Max Roach was a big influence on me," says Kenny Washington, "and Big Sid Catlett. But Max picked up where Sid left off. Sid Catlett was one of the first drummers to make people aware that drummers are musicians too. And Max took it to another level of respect. Art Blakey is another one. I used to watch him rehearse, and he knew how to get the most out of ensembles. One time the band wasn't playing soft enough, so he stopped and said, 'I want it so quiet that I can hear a rat pissing on cotton.' You have to say that if there was no Art Blakey, there would be no Philly Joe Jones. And to see Philly Joe for the first time was really something for me. I used to follow him around all the time and ask him questions. Mel Lewis was an influence on me, too, and so was Louis Hayes."

Born in Brooklyn, raised in Staten Island, Washington took lessons from a friend of his father's, Rudy Collins, before studying percussion at New York's High School of Music and Art. "My father's only instrument was the record player," he says, "but he is really

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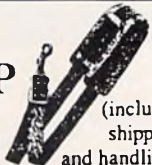
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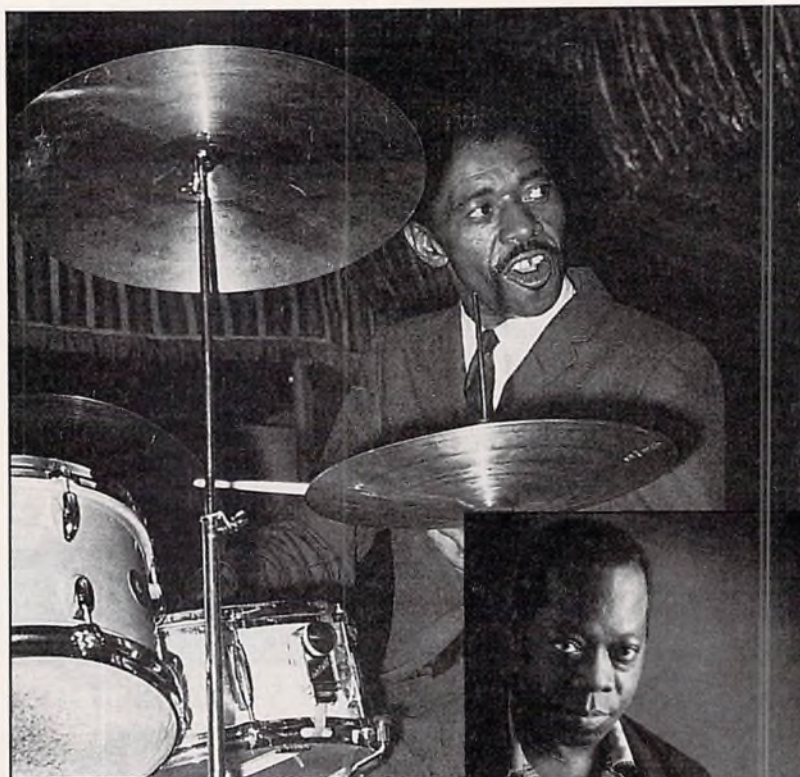
the cat who turned me on to all the music. In my house, there was nothing but jazz and classical music, and while other kids were getting into trouble, I was practicing with Kenny Clarke records." At 18, he joined the Lee Konitz Nonet, then worked with Walter Bishop, Jr., Walter Davis, Jr., Betty Carter, Johnny Griffin, Joe Newman, and many more. His recording credits include Dizzy Gillespie, George Cables, Benny Carter, Lena Horne, Milt Jackson, and Tommy Flanagan. "I was able to learn something from every one of them. At one time I was the only younger guy around who was playing. So I was very lucky, because I had a chance to work with almost everyone—Jay McShann, Earl Warren, Benny Goodman. Benny told me, 'You're too young to play this music like that.' But I had listened to Gene Krupa, Dave Tough, Jo Jones, and Sid Catlett, so I knew that style.

"Nowadays I always try to play form. And when cats don't come in on time, I want to fight, because I feel that if I've listened to the horn players, they should be paying attention to me as well. A lot of times when the drum solo is playing, they're thinking about what they're going to do on the break, and when it comes time to bring the band back, nobody comes in. That's when I want to fight or cuss somebody out, because that's dissing the drummer."

"I used to go and listen to Max Roach practice," says Brooklyn-bred **Andrew Cyrille**. "As little kids, we couldn't go into the place because they served liquor, so they would have us stand downstairs and listen. Then Max married the sister of my best friend in grade school, and as a result I met Max when I was about 12 years old. But my friend had Max as his champion, and I met Philly Joe Jones, so just to have a hero of my own, I attached myself to Joe. But they didn't give me any kind of lessons. I would just be on the scene watching them play."

In grade school Cyrille played march music in Abdulio "Pop" Jansen's drum & bugle corps, where he was taught by Willie Jones, Lenny McBrowne, and Lee Abrams. He worked parties and wedding receptions in high school but entered St. John's University as a chemistry major, playing with Duke Jordan and Cecil Payne at night. Switching to Juilliard, he went to Puerto Rico as an exchange student with Roland Hanna, Bernie Charles, and Olatunji, whose African ensemble he joined back in New York in the early '60s. "I was playing Western drums in the midst of all these African drums," he says, "and as a result I learned a lot about traditional African rhythms as applied to the trap set."

Best known for his 11 years with Cecil Taylor, Cyrille says, "People don't know that for eight or nine years I played almost daily for dancers at the June Taylor School of



Philly Joe Jones (top), circa 1958, with Andrew Cyrille



CHEUNG CHING MING

Dance. In the early years with Cecil, we'd sometimes only have two or three gigs a year, so I had to do something else to make a living." Since leaving Taylor in 1975 he's worked with Milford Graves, Rashied Ali, Jimmy Lyons, John Carter, Muhal Richard Abrams, David Murray, Vladimir Tarasov, Peter Brötzmann, Daniel Ponce, and Ivo Perelman. His current band—Oliver Lake, Hannibal Marvin Peterson or Ted Daniel, Reggie Workman, and Adegoke Steve Colson—is featured on *My Friend Louis* (see p. 40).

"I've been rich with the kind of musical

creativity and diversity that has been presented to me," Cyrille says. "It's not like a job, it's music I enjoy playing. But it's also an educational experience as well as a creative experience. And I'm learning." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Marvin "Smitty" Smith has endorsed Pearl drums for seven years. He uses a 14 x 18-inch bass drum, 8 x 12 and 9 x 13 mounted toms, a 14 x 14 floor tom, and a 6 1/2 x 14 Ludwig snare. He's endorsed Zildjian cymbals for eight years and plays a 22-inch K Zildjian riveted ride cymbal, an 18-inch pre-aged K crash ride, 15- and 16-inch thin crash cymbals, and 14-inch New Beat A Zildjian hi-hats. Smith uses Remo heads.

Jeff Watts has endorsed Sonor since 1987. His *Tonight Show* set includes 10-, 12-, and 13-inch mounted toms, 14- and 16-inch floor toms, a 22-inch bass drum, an 18-inch jazz bass drum with an extension pedal, and a Bronze Signature Series Piccolo snare. His road set consists of a Sonor 18-inch bass, 12-inch rack tom, 14-inch floor tom, various snares, and small hand percussion for trio work. He plays a changing variety of cymbals, with Sabian a particular favorite.

Peter Erskine plays a Yamaha Custom maple kit with an 18-inch bass, 12- and 13-inch rack toms, a 14 x 14 floor tom, a 22-inch K Zildjian pre-aged dry light ride cymbal, an 18-inch K ride, two crash cymbals, and hi-hats. For composition only he uses a Yamaha RY-30 drum machine and a Drum Cat. Erskine plays on Evans drum heads and uses Vic Firth sticks.

Kenny Washington endorses Slingerland, playing an 18-inch bass, 14-inch and 8 x 12 toms, plus K and A Zildjian cymbals and a hi-hat.

Andrew Cyrille has endorsed Ludwig since 1968. He plays a 12 x 16 bass drum, three small toms and a large tom. He also endorses Zildjian cymbals, using three splash cymbals, two crash cymbals, and two ride cymbals—one flat and one depressed. Cyrille has his own Zildjian 7AN sticks and uses Ludwig drum heads.

Jazz Children

The Next Generation

By Michael Bourne



Joshua and Dewey Redman at the Village Vanguard

MITCHELL SEIDEL

“I’m a descendant of this music,” says singer and guitarist John Pizzarelli, son of guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli. And he’s not alone. Nowadays, more and more children of jazz musicians are flourishing as musicians themselves.

Some, like tenor saxist Joshua Redman, son of Dewey Redman, play the same instruments and often work with their fathers. Others, like cornetist Graham Haynes, son of drummer Roy Haynes, may play different instruments and different styles. Still others, like Ravi Coltrane, only know their famous fathers from records and memory. But all were awed and inspired by the previous generation to carry on with the “family” business of creating jazz.

“I felt like the son of Pharaoh,” says drummer T.S. Monk, whose father, obviously, is the late Thelonious Monk. “People were always saying, ‘Do you know who your father is?’ I knew there was something special about him and his friends, even though I didn’t know their last names for the first 10 years of my life. They were just Bud and Bird and Trane and Miles and Diz and Max and Art and A. T. and Klook. They were the guys running through the house all the time—but everybody talked about these guys like they were gods! I felt like I was growing up on Mount Olympus.”

Heredity? Environment? Some of both, perhaps, but who knows: “I’m always asking myself if I’m a good musician because of my father or because I’m a good musician,” says Monk. “I guess if you grow up with enough

cattle, there’s a strong chance of being a cowboy.”

In the jazz world, there’s plenty of evidence to substantiate that theory. After all, Ellis Marsalis fathered saxophonist Branford, trumpeter Wynton, trombonist Delfeayo, and drummer Jason. Dave Brubeck’s sons are cellist Matthew, pianist Darius, bassist Chris, and drummer Danny. Now, not all the Marsalis, Brubeck, or other children of jazz play professionally. But plenty do. And, they’re not all *sons* either. There’s

“Children are like sponges. They sit there silently and absorb.”—Rene McLean



violinist Maxine Roach, daughter of Max, and trumpeter Stacy Rowles, Jimmy Rowles’ daughter, to mention two.

Since the beginning of time, it’s been only natural for sons (and now, thankfully, daughters) to follow in a father’s footsteps. That’s not to ignore the importance of Dolores Marsalis, Iola Brubeck, Nellie Monk, and all the other mothers of jazz. The point is that work has always been a family tradition as generation after generation of wrights and smiths have handed down the craft. “Whozit

& Sons, Plumbers,” for example.

It’s the same in jazz. Gene Ammons was the son of boogie master Albert Ammons. Mercer Ellington continues Duke’s lineage, and Mercer’s daughter Mercedes Ellington often choreographs to Duke’s classics. Way down yonder where jazz supposedly originated, New Orleans is one enormous family, from the Humphreys and Barbarins to “Marsalis & Sons, Swingers.”

What’s extraordinary is the very number of next-generation musicians, more than enough for a Next Generation Orchestra. Just imagine a trumpet section of Wynton Marsalis, Graham Haynes, Michael (son of bassist Jay) Leonhart, Nicholas (son of bassist Walter) Payton, and Miles (son of Gil and namesake of Miles Davis) Evans—with a rhythm section of Kenny Drew, Jr. at the piano, bassist Charnett (son of drummer Charles) Moffett, drummer Duffy (bassist Chubby) Jackson, and guitarist Joe (saxophonist Al) Cohn.

But was it so inevitable that they all became musicians? (And jazz musicians at that?) Is there the stuff of a doctoral dissertation in psychology or sociology in these children of jazz? Is the music itself a *bloodline*?

“Children are like sponges,” says saxophonist Rene McLean. “They sit there silently and absorb. At the time, they might not be cognizant of what they’re absorbing but it leaves an imprint. At a very young age,

I'd be at rehearsals when all the musicians came by the house. Music was in the environment, like the air. My father was in the Jazz Messengers, and Art Blakey would tell us these fantastic stories. I met everybody, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis."

"Rene gravitated toward music more than my other children," says alto legend Jackie McLean. "Rene's thirst for music made me do everything I could to help him. I gave him a saxophone when he was nine, and after I got him started, he studied with Sonny Rollins, George Coleman, Jaki Byard, Barry Harris."

But what better teacher for Rene than the master at home?

"My lessons with my father were not necessarily formal. He'd show me things and leave me to work them out. He hipped me to what to listen to, how each instrument relates, how to play on the meter and make it swing. He'd always tell me if you can't play it slow, you'll never play it fast, and if you can't sing it, forget it. There has to be a melody, no matter how free or abstract the music may be. . . .

"One thing with my dad, music comes first. He didn't ask me to play in his band until he thought I was ready. I was always taught to have reverence for the bandstand. It's sacred ground you don't tread upon until you understand the rituals that take place up there. . . .

"We love playing together. And as much as he's influenced me, I can see that I've influenced him. We share ideas. We complement each other. It comes from living together, seeing each other in our pajamas! It's a life experience. That's unique about what we do together. We can even make the same mistakes at the same time. That's how in-tune we are."

Rene plays all the saxophones (his father sticks to the alto) and composed most of the repertoire for Jackie's quintet on *Dynasty* (Triloka 181) as well as for *Rites Of Passage* (Triloka 188). But through more than 20 years around the scene and around the world, he's become much more than Jackie's son. "I've been very much influenced by my father musically and otherwise, but at the same time, as you mature you come into your own. An artist reflects his time and space, and I've had a lot of other influences from my research and my travels in Africa, in Japan, in Indonesia, and from all the Latin bands and other traditions I've played [that are] unique to growing up in New York. That's also part of one's growth—and the music is really one."

Rene's new solo release, *In African Eyes* (Triloka 7195), was recorded in Johannesburg with South African musicians. It features original and traditional music. "I've been spending a lot of time in South Africa since 1985. That's where my wife and

children are. I want to expose some of the talent there and this part of my life. It's really a milestone of my career, having lived there and trying to communicate and share with my counterparts there."

Perhaps, this is a breakout from the shadow of so famous a father. "Yeah, it is," says Rene. "But it's a great shadow. I can't imagine any other shadow to be in."

But what if the shadow is colossal? Only a

handful have energized the music as if a messiah—and one was John Coltrane.

"Growing up, I didn't have the sense of the name or the weight of the name," says Ravi Coltrane. "I didn't grow up feeling the pressure that this was something I had to carry on. I grew up in California around very few people who ever listened to jazz. None of my friends ever heard of John Coltrane."

Ravi and his younger brother Oran, also a



RON HOWARD



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"I think of my father as two people. One is the father I never knew, and the other is John Coltrane, the saxophonist, one of the main catalysts of why I'm playing."—Ravi Coltrane



John and Ravi Coltrane



John Pizzarelli and his dad Bucky with the late Zoot Sims

saxophonist, were infants when Trane died in 1967. Ravi was named for the great sitarist, Ravi Shankar, so he's twice blessed—or twice burdened. "An administrator at school saw my name and thought it was a joke. I couldn't be a real person."

Ravi knows about his father as a person from his mother, pianist Alice Coltrane, but knows about his father as a musician the same as the world knows him. "I think of my father most of the time as two people. One is the father I never knew, and the other is John

Coltrane, the saxophonist, one of the main catalysts of why I'm playing. It's funny, but when I'm talking about music with people I usually refer to him as Trane. My exposure to him is just like anyone's, through the music. . . . I didn't listen to the music, no jazz, when I was a kid. That music is hard to grasp, and especially when you're a kid. I was really ignorant about the depth of his music. I started listening to his records in my teens, and from there I was sparked. I started listening to Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker and it just kept building. . . . Picking up the saxophone for me, it didn't have such a significant impact as people might think. It was something I desired. It wasn't like a passing of the torch I have to carry. It was music."

Ravi plays tenor and soprano and often works with [former Trane drummer] Elvin Jones. Ravi feels Trane's drummer is like an uncle. "When he called me to be in his band, I said I didn't feel I was ready and it would be too strange, that the implications of me being in his band would distract from the music. But he assured me it would be purely musical. I'm not interested in pulling off Trane imitations, and I don't need to do that with Elvin. It's not what Elvin is about. It's not what playing is about. If I do my own gigs I don't play Trane tunes. I love that music and it's very important, but it's hard enough dealing with the music without dealing with the expectations. I'm just trying to learn from my father's legacy like everyone."

T.S. Monk is the keeper of his father's legacy. Toot, as he's known to family and friends, heads the Thelonious Monk Institute. But he's also a player—but not of the piano. "Early in the game I realized that if I were playing the piano, because everybody wanted me to play the piano, it was going to be a hassle. But fortunately, Thelonious never pressed me to play the piano. He just let me go with the flow."

Toot was always fascinated by the drums and eventually became Monk's drummer. Toot's style was very much in-sync with Monk's music: edgy, angular, and swinging. But for some, his musical bona fides were not enough. "I used to get it all the time that I was playing with my father because I was Thelonious Monk, Jr.—as if it was automatic, as if I didn't have to practice, as if Thelonious let me on the bandstand because I was his son. He was never that much into nepotism to sacrifice the music."

Toot could sing his father's tunes when just a child but didn't appreciate the depth and difference of his father's tunes until a teenager. "I remember I built this big speaker. I put on the trio playing 'Work,' and the tune went by and I said, 'Is this for real? Can he really *think* like that?' I must've listened to it 50 times that afternoon. That's when I realized what Daddy

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was playing on the piano, that he was thinking in another dimension and beyond everybody. And once that door opened for me I started understanding the magnitude of his compositions."

T.S. Monk didn't stay with jazz, but instead fronted a popular r&b band. It's only now that he's returned with a straightahead sextet and a new release, *Take One* (see "Riffs" Sept. '92), with mainstream classics by Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley, Elmo Hope, and especially Thelonious Monk. That he'll generate interest in the music because of his name, Toot knows, is an advantage but also a hurdle. "There was never a time when being Thelonious Monk, Jr. was a problem. It's only now, being who I am, that I'm dealing with a level of scrutiny that I've never dealt with. But I'm ready for it and I welcome it, because I know if people can accept me I've got a career. Often with the offspring of legends, people are predisposed that you're full of shit and only capitalizing on your name, but the music is serious, and I'm serious about the music."

Toot's first drums were a gift from Max Roach—and Art Blakey gave him some sticks. They also discovered a talent in Max's family. "Art and I were talking and we heard someone downstairs playing the drums," remembers Max Roach. "We sneaked down and it was Maxine! She had the kind of ear that she could go to the piano and pick out anything. When you see your offspring gifted like that, you want to push them."

Maxine Roach remembers her father and all the musicians at the house playing chess more than music, but she enjoyed the music, was encouraged to play, and in school showed an aptitude for strings. Maxine embraced the viola.

"She was such a natural," says Max. "She could play all kinds of music, like Bartok, when the page was just black with notes. She went to Europe and studied with William Primrose, the greatest violist in the world. And then my mom said, 'Listen, you've made all these records with Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown, all of these people. When are you going to do something with your daughter?' When she came back I asked Maxine to form a string quartet to do some experimenting with my regular group. We've been working together almost 12 years now—and they blow us off the bandstand!"

The Uptown String Quartet often works with Max's Double Quartet. They've recorded several albums together, like the recent *To The Max* (see "Reviews" Feb. '92), and several albums of their own, like the recent *Just Wait A Minute* (Bluemoon 79174). Max is especially proud that Maxine and the strings have become so successful

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—Maxine Roach



Maxine and Max Roach

—and so independent. “Maxine always surpasses my wildest expectations. She took a drum solo of mine and extended it in motion for strings, using the string quartet like I use all four of my limbs. She had the four voices dealing with all the feet and hands. This had never been done before. And when Benny Golson and the other writers heard it, they said ‘Max, you’ve got to keep that child writing!’”

But where does the music come from? That’s the unanswerable question about the jazz children. Max believes that a musical environment is essential, but “It’s 99 percent hard work, being willing to give of yourself to accomplish something.” Maxine believes the same and more, especially about her father. “What excites me most about my father is that he doesn’t compromise. That’s a trait that carries over into the rest of his life. And for me that’s a great inspiration. But aside from the hard work, people like my father and Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday—only a very few people create like that. They make me believe there must be a God. I just don’t think genetics is enough.”

“It’s genetics,” counters Dewey Redman. “Joshua plays beyond his years. He’s 23 but plays like he’s 43. He’s already f**ked up a whole lot of tenor players in New York, including me. I’m always amazed by his ability to play. I have no idea where he got it from.”

Joshua Redman, like Ravi Coltrane, grew up in California without his father. Joshua never lived with Dewey, though they’d meet from time to time when Dewey passed through town. It’s only now that they’ve connected and become very close. But musically, like Ravi, Joshua inherited his father’s music through listening.

“I play tenor sax because of my father, because I was so attracted to the way he

played. His records were the first records I listened to; and even when I didn’t know what the music was—because when you’re little, jazz just goes over your head—the sound always captured me. He has the most amazing sound. I used to love this blues called ‘Booty.’ I liked the stuff with Ornette Coleman and Keith Jarrett, but mainly I liked his own records. . . . I never had a private instructor, but I listened to my father’s records, so you could say he taught me, same as John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins taught me. That’s probably how Dad learned to play, listening to the records you love and finding yourself in them.”

Dewey credits Joshua’s mother, Renée Shedroff, with getting Joshua interested in the arts. “She’s the one who played the records for me and encouraged my creativity at a very early age,” says Joshua. Dewey is especially proud that Joshua earned a scholarship to Harvard, majored in urban studies, and graduated *summa cum laude*. “But it doesn’t help you swing,” says Joshua.

They’re realizing as they work together now that the connection between them is very deep. “The blues and soul in my father’s playing, that comes from a culture,” says Joshua. “He grew up in the South, in Texas. I didn’t. I was poor but I grew up in Berkeley, a college town. He had completely different cultural experiences. I never had the experiences at a young age that would give me the depth of blues feeling and soulfulness he’s got, but the more I play with him the more that sound and feeling is coming into my playing and my personality. It’s amazing to me that my style is very different from my father’s; but the more I play with him, the more I hear parts of him in me and me in him and the more my playing gravitates in his direction. It’s almost like I’m discovering a

part of myself that I didn’t know was there.”

They’ve recorded together and already Joshua is active on his own. He toured this summer with a young quartet called Future Now! He’s featured on the stellar jam *New York Stories* (see p. 38). And soon he’ll record up-front. What’s curious, but not unusual in the music business, is that Dewey Redman, a master, hasn’t recorded as a leader for an American label in about an eon, but Dewey’s fresh-faced kid has been signed by Warner Bros. It’s not that Joshua Redman isn’t an extraordinary player and worth all the attention. It’s the ironic twist about Joshua’s generation—that their very youth is what’s selling.

“I think the whole concept of the youth movement is not something new in jazz,” says Joshua. “It’s mainly a marketing scheme. This whole idea of ‘Young Lions’ is bullshit. If you want to talk about young lions, talk about Louie Armstrong, Clifford Brown, Sonny Rollins. I just picked up Sonny Rollins on Prestige, and he’s 19, playing with J.J. Johnson, and he’s just amazing! There’ve been young people playing far younger and far better than us forever!” Still, he’s realistic. “I hope I’ll get to the point where I’ll have some influence about how I’ll be marketed. I would never want myself marketed as ‘Future Now!’—but hey, I want to work.”

Dewey is just as realistic. “I’m always encouraged by good music, and I think the crop of young musicians coming up now is fine. Joshua shows fortitude and integrity. I respect him for that and I’m proud of him. I’ve never received my due, but I’ve received the respect of my peers—and that’s more important to me than anything. Joshua is going to get everything I didn’t get.”

“And hopefully,” says the child of jazz with a smile for his father, “I’ll learn how to play.”

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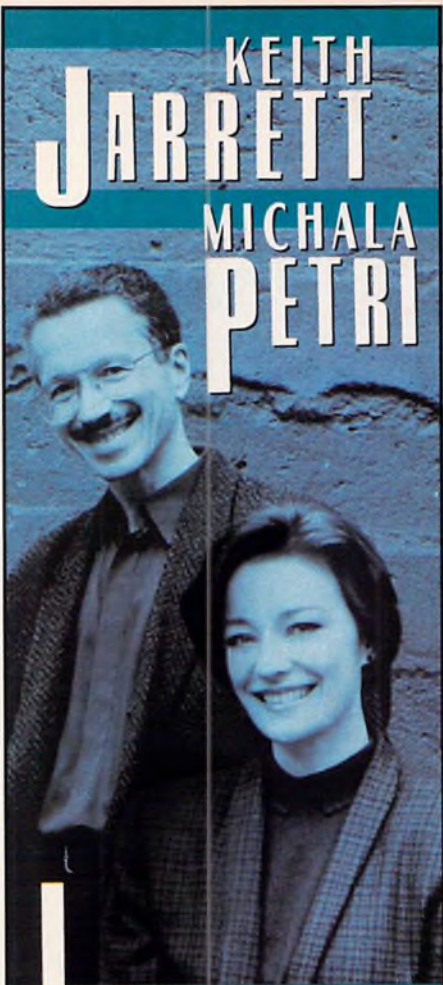


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Key

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



Peter Erskine

SWEET SOUL—Novus 63140-2: *TOUCH HER SOFT LIPS AND PART; PRESS ENTER; SWEET SOUL; TO BE OR NOT TO BE; AMBIVALENCE; ANGELS AND DEVILS; SPEAK LOW; SCOLASTIC; DISTANT BLOSSOM; BUT IS IT ART?; IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY.* (74:43)

Personnel: Erskine, drums; Joe Lovano, soprano, tenor saxes; Kenny Werner, keyboards; Marc Johnson, bass; John Scofield, guitar (3,4,8); Randy Brecker, trumpet (3,4); Bob Mintzer, tenor sax (3).

★★★★

**Mintzer/
Abercrombie/
Johnson/
Erskine**

HYMN—Owl R2 79250: *DUO; HYMN; RE-RE; MODERN DAY TUBA; CHILDREN'S SONG; LITTLE MOTIF; WEIRD BLUES; IMPROVISATION; THE DARK SIDE.* (52:54)

Personnel: Bob Mintzer, tenor sax, bass clarinet; John Abercrombie, guitar; Marc Johnson, bass; Peter Erskine, drums.

★★★★

Bob Mintzer

I REMEMBER JACO—Novus 63138-2: *THE VISIONARY; THREE VIEWS OF A SECRET; THE GREAT CHASE; WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN; RELENTLESS; A MOMENT OF PEACE; A METHOD TO THE MADNESS; TRUTH.* (51:21)

Personnel: Mintzer, tenor sax, bass clarinet, EWI; Joey Calderazzo, keyboards; Michael Formanek, bass (5,7,8); Jeff Andrews, electric bass (1-4,6,7); Peter Erskine, drums; Frankie Malabe, percussion (1,3).

★★

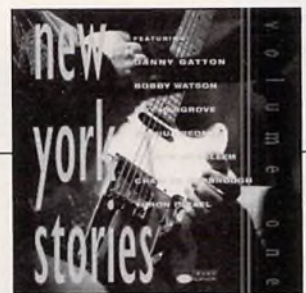
Of all the hired hands that passed through Weather Report, Peter Erskine is proving to be the most durable mainstream jazz leader. These three dates all reflect his range, re-

sourcefulness, and, most admirably, restraint as a drummer, but *Sweet Soul* is a defining statement. Though he will remain "the logical choice" for such Report-linked projects as *I Remember Jaco*, and the first-call for such percolating electric guitar-hinged sessions as *Hymn*, it's sets like *Sweet Soul* that Erskine will probably be best known for in the long run.

For a program that covers many stylistic bases, *Sweet Soul* is an effortlessly flowing program. There's an inviting, low-keyed beat Erskine has on much of the material, whether it's wistful lyricism of Sir William Walton's "Touch Her," which recalls Erskine's work with Kenny Wheeler, fluent takes on standards like Brubeck's "Sweet Way" and Weill's "Speak Low," or Erskine's title piece, an r&b flavored theme first waxed by Bass Desires, and made earthier here with the addition of organ and Capetowntinged horns. Even when the music shifts to the more open-ended, Miles/Shorter-circa-'66 spaces of Kenny Werner's "Press Enter" and Erskine's "To Be," Erskine nudges with nuance as often as he muscled the music along.

Mintzer's compositions have more of an edge on *Hymn* than on his Pastorius tribute—chalk it up to a close rapport with Erskine, John Abercrombie, and Marc Johnson. There's little on *I Remember Jaco* that pegs Pastorius' winsome brashness and audacious virtuosity. Actually, it's *Hymn's* brightly lyrical yet feverishly propelled "Modern Day Tuba," which melds Mintzer's pungent bass clarinet with Abercrombie's smeared synth tone, that's closest to that mark. And *Hymn's* "Little Motif," a fine vehicle for Mintzer's gliding lines and subtle timbral inflections, tugs on more heartstrings than anything from *I Remember Jaco* with the exception of "Three Views," the set's only Pastorius composition, and an excellent example of how Pastorius drew contrasting moods from his material. It's as if Mintzer just tried too hard. Chalk it up to friendship.

—Bill Shoemaker



**New York
Stories**

NEW YORK STORIES—Blue Note CDP 7 98959 2: *DOLLY'S DITTY; WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL; ICE MAIDENS; OUT A DAY; MIKE THE CAT; THE MOVE; A CLEAR THOUGHT; 5/4; ONE FOR LENNY.* (53:36)

Personnel: Danny Gatton, guitar; Bobby Watson, alto sax; Roy Hargrove, trumpet; Joshua Redman, tenor sax; Franck Amsallem, piano; Charles Fambrough, bass; Yaron Israel, drums.

★★★★

The tales spun by three seasoned players

(Gatton, Watson, Fambrough) and four younger hands (Hargrove, Redman, Amsallem, Israel) during a near-impromptu New York studio meeting illuminate the joy of playing for the sheer kick of it. Using their unsentimental appreciation of historical Blue Note blowing sessions as an impetus, they undertake flights of imagination on a rewarding program of originals with roots in rich blues soil.

Gatton, a guitarist who naturally gravitates toward rockabilly, c&w, and '60s soul, has long had an affair of the heart with modern mainstream jazz; his speedy runs unfold with the bright logic of his idol, Lennie Breau (start with Gatton's open-hearted homage, "One For Lenny"), and his octave passages evoke the bluesy luxuriance of Wes Montgomery. Tenorist Redman, for his part, lives up to his rave notices, offering absolute, fresh prose. Similarly, there's little forced, mechanical, or exhibitionistic about the notes coming from Hargrove's trumpet; his bold, meticulous phrases swing heavenward on a celestial updraft on his lovely "A Clear Thought," for one, and capture all the earthiness of back-alley dallying on Gatton's blues "Mike The Cat." Watson, another uncommon talent, takes chances when building his intricate solos, mixing bebop and down-home blues conceits in his highly personal approach to rhythm. Always surprising, he strengthens the wistful lyricism of bassist Fambrough's "Ice Maidens" with a cool tonality reminiscent of Lee Konitz. Fambrough's dexterity, drummer Israel's assurance and brawn, and

up-and-coming French pianist Amsallem's keen ear for harmony also contribute considerably to the appeal of this potent Dan Doyle-produced date. —Frank-John Hadley



Kenny Garrett

BLACK HOPE—Warner Bros. 4-45017: *TACIT DANCE*; *SPANISH-GO-ROUND*; *COMPUTER "G"*; *VAN GOGH'S LEFT EAR*; *BLACK HOPE*; *JACKIE & THE BEAN STALK*; *RUN RUN SHAW*; *2 STEP*; *BONE BOP*; *BOOKS & TOYS*; *BYE BYE BLACKBIRD*; *LAST SAX*.
Personnel: Garrett, alto, soprano saxes; Joe Henderson, tenor sax (1,3,11); Kenny Kirkland, piano; Charnett Moffett, bass; Don Alias, percussion; Brian Blade, Ricky Wellman (9), drums; Donald Brown, synthesizer (5,8).

★ ★ ★ ★

Garrett is just about the ideal combination of

bebop traditionalist and fusion modernist. After seeing him leave it all on the stage with Kenny Kirkland's band, and hearing his ample helpings of jazz-charged funk with Mike Clark and Paul Jackson, not to mention his work on many of Miles' last projects (where he *really* got to blow), I'm not shocked by his versatility and fire anymore.

Here he's achieved continuity from track to track by sticking with the same rhythm section, and he gets fine support. Kirkland, Moffett, and new drumming face Brian Blade show their muscle and musicality on "Tacit Dance," navigating old trails and forging fresh ones. Kirkland plays off Garrett's alto magically on "Spanish-Go-Round," while Alias and Blade pick the beat up and take it somewhere new on "Van Gogh's Left Ear."

"Black Hope" and "Bone Bop" are more than mere funk tunes, showing off Garrett's pop side but at the same time offering so much more musical meat than that *other* Kenny G. You can hear the wheels turning while he plays. The saxman can burn up the joint on a bop jam like "Jackie & The Bean Stalk," sell an engaging, child-like melody (Courtney Pine-ish) such as "Books & Toys," or go way up for some trills and thrills. "Computer 'G'" leaves wide-open spaces for guest tenorman Henderson, who contrasts Garrett expertly. As they wind up "trading fours," the alto-man takes it up high for some screaming that ought to settle the issue, but Henderson answers right back, climbing the ladder to hit the same note, only with a

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slightly more vulnerable and lovely tone. Gotcha. I'm sure Garrett loved the moment, too.
—Robin Tolleson



Andrew Cyrille

MY FRIEND LOUIS—DIW Columbia 52957: *SOUL BROTHER; SOUTH OF THE BORDER; SERENADE; THE PROPHET; SHELL; KISS ON THE BRIDGE; TAP DANCER; WHERE'S NINE; MY FRIEND LOUIS.* (62:54)

Personnel: Cyrille, drums; Hannibal, trumpet; Oliver Lake, alto sax; Adegoke Steve Colson, piano; Reginald Workman, bass.

★★★★½

**Plimley/Ellis/
Cyrille**

WHEN SILENCE PULLS—Music & Arts 692: *GOOD NEWS BLUES; CONDENSATION ON POISED ARROW; SEPARATE CYCLES; WHEN SILENCE PULLS; INHERITANCE; BABALOOBOP; WHEN THE SHUFFLE PARTY BEGINS; MOON OVER SAND; INVOLUTION IN ROUNDS; F.U.N.* (76:42)

Personnel: Paul Plimley, piano; Lisle Ellis, bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums.

★★★★½

One of the most versatile, adaptable drummers to come out of the avant garde, Andrew Cyrille is equally comfortable swinging in the pocket or singing into his snare head for effect. He's one of the few drummers around who can play the kit, the wall, and the floor with equal aplomb. Cyrille is the rhythmic colorist on *When Silence Pulls*, painting tones with mallets on toms, sticks on shells, elbows on skins, whatever strikes him in the moment. He makes dramatic use of space on the open-ended title cut and shows a playful side on a Cage-ian sound game called "F.U.N." On "Moon Over Sand" he demonstrates a kind of walking-on-eggshells delicacy, then turns around on a Herbie Nichols-influenced "When The Shuffle Party Begins," and swings with the jauntiness of a Kenny Clarke, bridging the gap between bebop and the avant garde.

"Involution In Rounds" is a dangling conversation between bass, drums, and piano that begins sparse and turns volatile before resolving in serenity. And on Cyrille's lone composition, "Babalooobop," he keeps a constant quarter-note pulse on the bass drum, reminiscent of a swing-era drum style. Canadians Plimley and Ellis strike the kind of impulsive rapport with Cyrille here that the drummer enjoyed with Cecil Taylor and Alan Silva in the '60s. They know each other's moves and react accordingly. It's a musical relationship based on sensitivity and trust.

Andrew favors a hip ensemble sound with plenty of room for stretching on his quintet date, *My Friend Louis*. Hannibal's bold trumpet statements punctuating "Soul Brother" and Lake's provocative alto work on Eric Dolphy's "The Prophet" are both underscored by Cyrille's melodic approach to the kit, where he directly accents the other players. Andrew offers sensitive support on Hannibal's tender ballad, "Kiss On The Bridge," then flaunts some slick brushwork on Lake's engaging "Tap Dancer," exuding personality on the snare by emulating the fancy footwork of a Jimmy Slyde or Bunny Briggs.

Cyrille's lone composition here is the somewhat dark "Shell," full of abrupt, stop-time gestures and long dissonant solos. Andrew keeps a multi-directional pulse flowing behind the proceedings before erupting into a dynamic solo himself. He swings forcefully on Workman's urgent "Where's Nine" and pays tribute to South African drummer Louis Moholo on the modal title cut, a 14-minute suite that allows for the most daring solo stretches by the band members and culminates in a reflective drum monolog by the leader. —Bill Milkowski



John Patitucci

HEART OF THE BASS—Stretch STD-1101: *CONCERTO FOR JAZZ BASS & ORCHESTRA; HEART OF THE BASS; FOUR HANDS; MULLAGH; BACH PRELUDE IN G MAJOR; MINIATURES FOR SOLO BASS, PIANO & STRING QUARTET.* (57:04)

Personnel: Patitucci, Yamaha six-string electric bass, acoustic bass; Chick Corea, piano (6), synthesizer (3); John Beasley, piano (1); Alex Acuña, percussion (1); Paula Hochhalter, cello (6); David Campbell, viola (6); Clayton Haslop, Ralph Morrison, violin (6); chamber orchestra (1).

★★★★

It would have been safer and easier for John Patitucci to make another fusion record. Instead, his fourth album is a real departure—a high-wire balancing act which entices its listeners into (or near) the world of classical music. *Heart Of The Bass* reflects Patitucci's love of classics, bookended by extended compositions by Chick Corea and Jeff Beal, and including a Bach prelude for cello, along with bravura solo features for the bassist. Without funk rhythms or backbeats, Patitucci surrounds himself with string quartets (both real and emulated by Corea) and chamber orchestra.

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The first and last movements of Beal's "Concerto" remind me of Steve Reich, particularly in the way Beal uses a piano pulse with repeating figures for the strings. A somber acoustic section evokes Charlie Haden's work with Keith Jarrett and orchestral washes on *Arbour Zena*. Throughout, Beal holds the listener's interest while furnishing his soloist with melodic vamps, serving as launch pads for improvisation. When Patitucci reaches for the upper register of his instrument, you hear cellos or guitars. He's so quick and fluid that he makes it all sound easy.

—Jon Andrews



Branford Marsalis

I HEARD YOU TWICE THE FIRST TIME—Columbia CT 46083: *BROTHER TRYING TO CATCH A CAR (ON THE EAST SIDE) BLUES; B.B.'S BLUES; RIB TIP JOHNSON; MABEL; SIDNEY IN DA HAUS; BERTA, BERTA; STRETTO FROM THE GHETTO; DANCE OF THE HEI GUI; THE ROAD YOU CHOOSE; SIMI VALLEY BLUES.*

Personnel: Marsalis, tenor, alto, soprano saxes, vocals; Wynton Marsalis (5), Earl Gardner (9), trumpet; David Sagher (5), Delfeayo Marsalis (9), trombone; Wessel Anderson, alto sax (5); B.B. King (2), John Lee Hooker (4), guitar, vocals; Russell Malone (3), Joe Louis Walker, T-Blade (9), guitar; Kenny Kirkland, piano (2,4,7-9); Robert Hurst (1,2,4,5,7-10), Reginald Veal (3), bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts (1,2,4,5,7,8,10), Herlin Riley (3), Bernard Purdie (9), drums; Thomas Hollis, Roscoe Carroll, Carl Gordon, Charles Dutton (6), Linda Hopkins (9), vocals; Patrick Smith, Dave Kennedy, Daryl Cornutt, voices (1).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

In the collected works of Branford Marsalis, this blues album will probably be seen as a side-track rather than the main road. This, his tours and records with Sting, and his leadership of the Tonight Show Band show an eclectic jazzman at work. Critics used to ask, "Will the real Branford please stand up?" Now he is identifiable as Branford, even when he pays tribute to other saxophonists, as he does frequently on this album.

His adaptation of Sidney Bechet on "Rib Tip Johnson" is as solid as anything he has recorded on soprano. His bent notes, Malone's sterling acoustic guitar (a mosaic of Southern and Southwestern blues styles), Riley's timely economy and colors, and Veal's stalwart bass comprise a perfect balance of emotion and control. Another soprano piece, "Sidney In Da Haus," boasts Bechet-like arpeggios. But the quasi-arranged dixieland ensemble is too cool, especially when compared to groups featuring Bechet-influenced players such as

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Bob Wilber (Soprano Summit and Bechet Legacy) and Rick Fay, who records for Arbors Records in Florida. But with "Dance Of The Hei Gui" we get whiplashing Trane-like soprano, which is the kind of heated technical display we normally associate with Branford

The saxophonist mixes well with the guests on the three vocal cuts. (A fourth vocal, the chain-gang song "Berta, Berta," is unaccompanied.) "B.B.'s Blues" illustrates the continuity between King and Charlie Parker (with Branford on alto). On "Mable" Marsalis adapts to Hooker's asymmetrical phrases and showers of electricity. On "The Road You Choose" he preaches with Hopkins. While these performances do not result in new heights (or depths) of the blues, they are stirring, sincere, and nonexploitative. —Owen Cordle



Richie Beirach

SELF PORTRAITS—CMP CD 51: *GRANDFATHER'S HAMMER; SONG OF EXPERIENCE; A QUIET, NORMAL LIFE; SONG OF INNOCENCE; DARKNESS INTO AIR; FALLING OFF MY BIKE; CALCUTTA; APRENTICE/MASTER.* (47:27)
Personnel: Beirach, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

AT MAYBECK—Concord Jazz CCD-4518: *ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE; ON GREEN DOLPHIN STREET; SOME OTHER TIME; YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS; SPRING IS HERE; ALL BLUES; MEDLEY—OVER THE RAINBOW, SMALL WORLD, IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT; REMEMBER; ELM.* (59:17)
Personnel: Beirach, piano.

★ ★ ★

Beirach is a versatile, agile pianist with a pronounced tendency towards the tenderest of sentiments. Whether playing standards, as on *At Maybeck*, or free improvising, as on *Self Portraits*, he's a melodist given to flourishes, frequent showers of notes, and a good share of brooding rubato. Though his musical world is sometimes run rather technocratically, he's got sturdy ideas and an individual, all-around sound

The best parts of the standards disc are the least sleepy. Beirach recasts the main line of "On Green Dolphin Street" with nicely clunky tone-clusters; a restless "'Round Midnight" features a rapid-fire run of tempi and temperaments right up to its neat, incongruous endpoint. "Spring Is Here" starts with acid washes and proceeds to contrast delicate and harsh elements. When playing the changes, Beirach sometimes smooths out sharp corners and rough spots with a bluesy cliché—something I find quite annoying. Conversely, his boogified

version of Miles' "All Blues" tries to be lowdown and dirty, but comes up squeaky clean, teasing out the generic connotations of its title. On the quieter pieces, things are generally less interesting; the medley, for instance, is a full snooze.

For his set of solo-piano solipsisms, however, Beirach takes the introspective turn a less tiresome route. Though still gushy in places, *Self Portraits* is an entirely rewarding listen; like fellow-Quester Dave Liebman, Beirach's skills as a free player outstrip his interpretive standards. On "A Quiet, Normal Life," the disc's

quirky hot-point, he dubs slicing lines onto percussive, sheet-like prepared piano. (There are also multiple tracks on the Sisyphean "Calcutta.") Moving in and out of its gizzard, Beirach yanks a hefty reflection from his piano on "Darkness Into Air." A study in trial-and-error, "Falling Off My Bike" is a virtuosic romp, with appropriately abrupt stops and starts and a cheeky, piano-student cadence. Gorgeously recorded and imaginatively worked out, I hope Beirach records more in the mode of *Self Portraits*. —John Corbett

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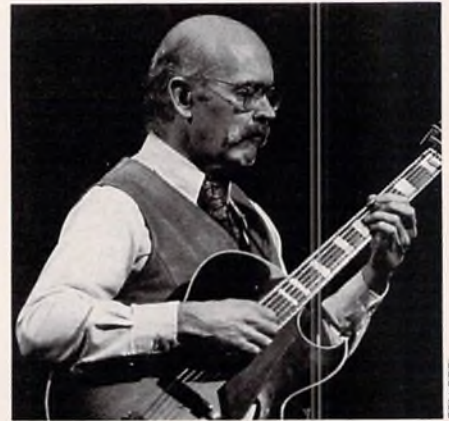
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Hall Of Mirrors

by John Litweiler

Has anyone ever pointed out that Jim Hall is an uncommonly clever songwriter? His title song on *Subsequently* (MusicMasters 01612-65078-2; 55:39: ★★★★★) is delightfully irrational, consisting of spaced, irregularly shaped, goofy phrases, each on a different chord, none with any

relation to any other, and his own solo draws out the theme's humor into witty lines and rumbling chords. "Mr. Blues" is another cunning Hall tune, and in fact, there's a consistent upbeat sparkle throughout the disc. Credit many of the virtues here to a swinging rhythm section, especially to pianist/organist Larry Goldings; throughout most of the disc Hall's playing is at his best, in light, simple melodies that, with his softly amplified sound, suggest a muted, pastoral version of Charlie Christian. A laid-back



TOM COPEL

Jim Hall: flickering in and out

Hall is especially swinging on "More Than You Know," which also includes Rasmus Lee getting Rollinsish on tenor sax; on two other tracks, harmonica-man Toots Thielemans gets tangled in his own decorative phrases. The relaxed small-group setting, the simple, sophisticated moods here surely are the best kind of inspiration to Hall.

There are similar good vibrations on the George Shearing & Jim Hall duet disc, *First Edition* (Concord Jazz CCD-4177; 37:30: ★★½). On the long-lined, minor-key "Careful," we have another ingenious Hall theme. The guitarist may be the more swinging of the pair, but it's the ever-active Shearing who's more engaging. He moves from style to style on successive songs: Erroll Garner chords on "Careful"; a Bach fugue, faintly samba-ized, on his dedication to Antonio Carlos Jobim; jaunty Fats Waller lines on his dedication to Tommy Flanagan, "To Tommy Flanagan."

Hall seems to need to be goaded by Goldings and Shearing into playing flowing, melodic music—he is far too low-key on two other collaborations. The centerpiece of Jim Hall & the David Matthews Orchestra's *Concierto De Aranjuez* (Evidence ECD 22004-2; 37:22: ★★½) is the familiar second movement of the Rodrigo composition, about which Hall, despite an interlude of flamenco strums and blues fragments, has no revelations to add. Kosaku Yamada's "Red Dragon Fly" is an especially appealing, folkish theme, but David Matthews' scores are mainly poppish variations of Gil Evans' ideas, and even Ronnie Cuber's swaggering baritone sax on "Ara Cruz" hardly disturbs the disc's placid surface.

Heaven knows why Hall is credited as leader of *Youkali* (CTI R2 79480; 54:52: ★★★★★). Fusion-style electric bass and percussion underline most of the tracks and provide continuity to what is otherwise a hodge-podge, with coy piano, more Gil Evansish brass sonorities (courtesy of arranger Jim Pugh), Grover Washington intoxicated by the sound of his perfume-drenched soprano sax, and a severely broken, unmelodic Hall flickering in and out throughout. The chief merit to *Youkali* is three spliced-in Chet Baker trumpet solos, including truly inspired, sweet creations on "Django" and "Sky-lark"—it's the sort of music to which Jim Hall, at his best, seems to aspire, yet only sometimes achieves.

DB

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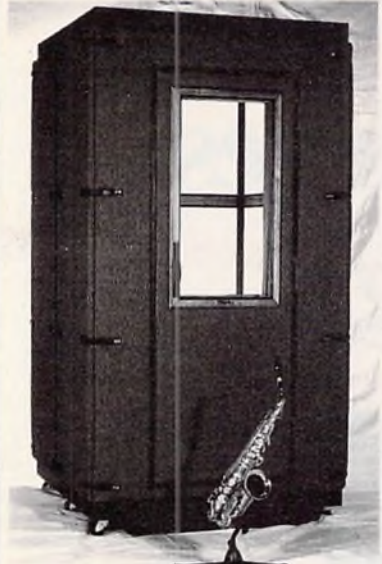
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CD REVIEWS



McCoy Tyner Big Band

THE TURNING POINT—Verve 314 513 573-2: *PASSION DANCE; LET IT GO; HIGH PRIEST; ANGEL EYES; FLY WITH THE WIND; UPDATE; IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD.* (55:07)

Personnel: Tyner, piano; Kamau Adilifu, Earl Gardiner, Virgil Jones, trumpets; Steve Turre, Frank Lacy, trombones; John Clark, french horn, hornette; Howard Johnson, tuba; Doug Harris, soprano sax, flute; Joe Ford, alto sax; John Stubblefield, Junior Cook, tenor saxes; Avery Sharpe, bass; Aaron Scott, drums; Jerry Gonzalez, percussion.

★★★★

McCoy Tyner

TRIDENT—Milestone OJCCD-720-2: *CELESTIAL CHANT; ONCE I LOVED; ELVIN (SIR) JONES; LAND OF THE LONELY; IMPRESSIONS; RUBY, MY DEAR.* (40:52)
Personnel: Tyner, piano, harpsichord (cuts 1,4), celeste (2,4); Ron Carter, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★★★★★

McCoy Tyner is the beau ideal of a jazz pianist whose playing in his post-Trane career (since late 1965) has most always been an extraordinary union of probity and dynamic creativity. The reissue of *Trident* is a heady reminder of his past accomplishment, whereas the second album by his big band serves as a benchmark of his undiminished importance to recorded jazz in the present decade.

The 15-piece ensemble, heavier on brass than reeds, is a modal juggernaut that possesses the uncommon ability to inspire us in both musical and emotional terms. Tyner's revival of "Passion Dance," immortalized by his ace quartet in the Blue Note late '60s, is intelligent excitement typified: Avery Sharpe's fleet bass serves as the mooring for sinewy solos and onslaughts of reactive sectional work. The heat drops a number of degrees on trombonist Steve Turre's Latino "Let It Go" but at no loss in intensity, and the intellectual passion for precision shown by the players—from heavenward flutist Doug Harris to gully-low tuba expert Howard Johnson—is unmistakable. Five more numbers, including Tyner alone sizing up Ellington's "Sentimental Mood," also show exemplary musicianship linked to upfront sincerity.

The writing for orchestra is stellar, audacious, and productive in its formation of textures and colors. Arrangers Tyner, Turre, Johnson, Dennis Mackrel, and the estimable Slide Hampton understand how to capture the exultant or thoughtful tone of the songs; they've fit together solo instruments and sections with apparent ease. Bob Belden is the able director of the

band.

Trident reunited Tyner in 1975 with his Trane-mate Elvin Jones for a classic set of Tyner, Trane, Jobim, and Monk. Spurred on by ex-Miles bassist Ron Carter's implacable pulse and their own stimuli, the two strip back layer upon layer of emotion in their piping-hot playing. The torrent of blistering notes have astonishing rhythmic clarity and a marvelous logic of form and organization. Silvery-sounding harpsichord and clear-as-a-bell celeste on a couple songs, by the way, are molten putty in Tyner's knowing hands.

—Frank-John Hadley



NRBQ

HONEST DOLLAR—Rykodisc RCD 10240: *RIDIN' IN MY CAR; BATMAN THEME; THAT I GET BACK HOME; AIN'T IT GOOD; AMY'S THEME; TENNESSEE; DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS; GREEN LIGHTS; WACKY TOBACKY; NEW TUNE; LUCILLE; 1-2-3; I LOVE AIR CONDITIONING; NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF YOU; THE DUMMY SONG; THE DUMMY SONG; IT'S A SIN TO TELL A LIE.* (49:26)

Personnel: Terry Adams, keyboards, vocals, drums (12), cornet (13); Joey Spampinato, bass, vocals; Al Anderson, guitar, vocals; Tom Ardolino, drums, vocals (12,15,16); John Sebastian, harmonica (5); Donn Adams, trombone (11-13,17), vocals (15,16); Jim "Bob" Hoke, baritone sax (11), tenor sax (17); Klem Klimex (12), Gary Windo, tenor sax (13); Keith Spring, tenor sax (13), vocals (15,16); Roswell Rudd, trombone (13).

★★★★ 1/2

Not counting a double-album compilation on Rhino and CD reissues on both Rhino and Rounder, the last three out of four NRBQ releases have been live, which—as any 'Q fan knows—is the best way to experience the idiosyncratic magic of the veteran omni-pop quartet. 'Q's debut on Rykodisc is a collection of 17 tracks from gigs recorded at several venues—from Cotati, California to Northampton, Massachusetts—over a period stretching from 1981 to 1991. 'Q helmsman Terry Adams culled through hours of the band's tape archives to put together this thoroughly entertaining set of songs that twist and turn through riveting rock, saccharine pop, raunchy rockabilly, blazing r&b, zany vaudeville, quirky novelty, and free-improv pieces.

Unpredictability, spontaneity, and off-kilter humor are the key concepts at work in any NRBQ show, and Adams has successfully captured that here. Prime examples: Big Al Anderson's 'Q classic rocker, "Ridin' In My Car," immediately followed by a crazed take on the TV "Batman Theme," a spaced-out romp through "Wacky Tobacky," Big Al's bizarrely impromptu "I Love Air Conditioning" followed

by his pop-perfect gem, "Never Take The Place Of You," and the double-run through "The Dummy Song" ditty.

Anderson's lead-guitar work is superb, especially in his frantic flails on the rockers and the stingo in his rockabilly solos on Carl Perkins' "Tennessee." Likewise, Adams' prowess on keyboards is showcased, ranging from his Jerry Lee Lewis-like lightning runs through Little Richard's "Lucille" to his playful wrong-note, free-jazz tinkering on several tunes. On the down side, the sound quality varies widely from track to track, the bass-drum pedal is irritatingly mixed too high on some tunes, and at times the deliberately raw and unrefined quality of the musicianship borders on sloppy. But those are small gripes for an album that's packed with pop innocence, unrestrained vivacity, and just plain fun.

—Dan Ouellette



Anthony Davis

X, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MALCOLM X—Gramavision R2 79470: *X, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MALCOLM X, ACTS I-III*. (70:38/68:27)

Personnel: Eugene Perry, baritone; Thomas J. Young, tenor; Priscilla Baskerville, soprano; Hilda Harris, mezzo-soprano; Herbert Perry, bass-baritone; Marty Ehrlich, J.D. Parran, John Purcell, woodwinds; Herb Robertson, trumpet; Arthur Baron, trombone; Abdul Wadud, cello; Mark Dresser, Mark Helias, bass; Pheeroan akLaff, Gerry Hemingway, Warren Smith, percussion; Marilyn Crispell, Clyde Criner, piano; Davis, celesta; Orchestra Of St. Luke's; William Henry Curry, conductor.

★★★★★

The 1980s left two important legacies in American music: an articulation of multiculturalism, and what Anthony Davis presaged as "the ascendancy of the composer" in traditionally performer-oriented forms, as evidenced by such epic works as George Russell's *The African Game*, John Carter's *Roots And Folklore* suite cycle, and Davis' own *X, The Life And Times Of Malcolm X*. Davis' harrowingly majestic first opera is as revolutionary as its subject, as it rewrites the rules of what opera can and should be.

Davis' most striking overhaul of conventional opera is the inclusion of his working ensemble, Episteme, as an integral performance element. At key points, fully formed solos by Marty Ehrlich, John Purcell, and others give the score a palpable, spontaneous heat opera rarely offers. The thunder and lightning provided by Pheeroan akLaff and Warren Smith's traps in ensemble passages provide intensely dramatic touches.

But, despite Episteme's principal role, and the score's rich allusions to Ellington, Coltrane, and other jazz greats, *X* is not a "jazz opera." Jazz has always been just part of Davis' compositional vocabulary. Yet, Davis can seamlessly insert swinging riff-like choruses and Thomas Young's sublime scat singing into a work that is assertively unjazzy without downgrading such sequences to genre or period pieces.

X is Davis' most comprehensive expression of what is essentially a melting-pot compositional sensibility. His music is underpinned by a coalition of seemingly disparate influences, including Monk, Gamelon, and Minimalism (the latter being expressed in a decisively reactionary mode). It's a rich musical fabric, one that makes the plain-spoken poetry of Thulani Davis' libretto reverberate.

X is a masterpiece.

—Bill Shoemaker

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The Blues Got Soul

by David Whiteis

Cruising through the latest crop of blues, soul, and r&b discs we find reissues, releases of previously unreleased material that bring bygone eras back to life, and—most optimistically—sparkling new creations by bold young souls carrying on the tradition in new and exciting ways.

Among the latter: Guitarist **Sue Foley's** *Young Girl Blues* (Antone's 0019; 38:25; ★★★½) initially sounds as if it's going to be an exercise in relentless crunching overdrive, but it gets better in a hurry. Although Foley's voice tends to be thin, she excels on countryish romps (Memphis Minnie's "[Me & My] Chauffeur Blues," Foley's own "Walkin' Home") and instrumentals: her workout on Earl Hooker's "Off The Hook" is a masterpiece of taste and maturity far beyond her years. On the self-penned "Gone Blind," Foley plays with almost terrifying ferocity, bending strings as if she's tearing pieces out of her own heart.

Aussie **Dave Hole** is every bit the fire-fingered guitar monster he's being promoted as—he also shows more melodic and harmonic imagination than many of his ilk (although his lyrics are mostly standard booze-and-boogie macho raunch). On *Short Fuse Blues* (Alligator 4807; 61:25; ★★★½), you sometimes wish he'd tone things down and let the music breathe, but his passion is unassailable and he mostly avoids the young fretman's trap of pouring too many notes into every phrase. He should never, however, have attempted to take on either Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark Was The Night (Cold Was The Ground)" or Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze"—you can't improve on perfection.

I've got a secret—guitarist **Gary Moore** doesn't slay me. His *After Hours* (Pointblank/Charisma 91825-2; 48:25; ★★) is primarily a pastiche of standard blues-rock licks overlaid by Moore's none-too-powerful voice, burdened by embarrassingly puerile lyrics ("Only Fool In Town") and string sections in unwelcome places. Moore seems unusually enamored of lovelorn pop ballads ("Nothing's The Same"), and his callow romanticism should lend itself to that genre—but even here his voice lacks the authority to elevate the material above the bathetic, and the violins are godawful.

Complementing this fresh new output from fresh young faces are some important reissues of vintage blues and r&b recordings that put all this youthful audacity into perspective, showing us where it all came from and thus, better illuminating where it might go in the future. The late **Big Joe Williams' Classic Delta Blues** (Milestone 545-2; 36:01; ★★★★★) is a re-release of Williams' Milestone LP of the same title from the late 60's, featuring Williams on six-string guitar instead of his famous homemade nine-string. That means that things are a bit more in tune and controlled here—there's a brooding, dark majesty to this material, different from the raspy, flailing intensity Joe's known for. His reworking of Delta standards (Robert Johnson's "Hellhound On My Trail," Charlie Patton's "Pony Blues") stand as classics in their own right, and he peppers everything with ref-



Big Joe Williams: a riveting sense of immediacy

erences to local people, events, and places—maintaining the riveting sense of immediacy that was his trademark.

The legendary soul sound of Stax Records may seem as archaic to some young ears as Williams' Delta primitivism, but there's an emotional honesty and sense of uplift to it that transcends generation and genre. *A Little Something Extra* (Stax 8566-2; 53:20; ★★★★★) showcases previously unreleased cuts by smooth-voiced **William Bell**, one of the class acts of r&b. Bell's work was unfailingly elegant, with a powerful emotional commitment beneath the gentle surface—hardly deep soul, but moving and timeless just the same. His version of Carole King's "Will You Still Love Me



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Tomorrow" brings a previously unrealized depth to the song, and he's also surprisingly adept at the occasional hot-blooded cooker ("Sacrifice") or propulsive blues ("You Got Me Where You Want Me")

Carla Thomas *Hidden Gems* (Stax 8568-2; 56:43: ★★★½) suffers from a thrown-together feel—there's little thought for continuity or chronological accuracy in this collection of previously unreleased songs and alternate takes. But on tunes like "Loneliness" and "Sweet Sensation," Thomas' combination of adolescent angst and womanly soulfulness is still effective; although there's a cloying teenage preciousness to some of the material ("I Wonder About Love," "Little Boy") that hasn't aged well.

Daddy **Rufus Thomas** is likewise anthologized on the riotous and wonderful *Can't Get Away From This Dog* (Stax 8569-2; 52:15: ★★★½). Sexy, outrageous, funky, and man-ish as hell, Rufus struts and shouts his way into your heart, your sunnyside, and your soul with effortless panache and outrageous wit. His pantheon of "Dog" songs ("Walkin' The Dog," "Can't Get Away From This Dog," "Can Your Monkey Do The Dog") represent one of the most antic catalogs in r&b history, and the bizarre "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" (complete with a nostalgic reference to working hard for "Ol' Master") is delivered in a hilarious deadpan whose irony apparently escaped



PETER AMFT

Rufus Thomas: riotous and wonderful

even liner-note writer Rob Bowman.

Now it's sacrilege time: **Otis Redding** has always seemed overrated to me with his clumsy phrasing, frenetic rave-up endings, and overly nuanced vocals. *Remember Me* (Stax 8752-2; 59:35: ★★★½) shows Redding's winning ways with a ballad, but it also demonstrates how easily he could slide into bathos ("There Goes My Baby") and overkill (the hyper-speed alternate take of "Respect").

"I've Got Dreams To Remember," though, is a sparse, aching gem of almost transcendent sadness and longing. If Otis had made only this one song, his legacy would be intact—that extra half-star is there for this cut alone.

Two of the r&b tenor sax honkers who gave beboppers nightmares in the '50s—**Joe Houston** and **Chuck Higgins**—have been anthologized on Specialty. It's hard to critique this stuff—either your feet and spirit will be galvanized, or you'll think it's anti-musical cacophony. This was the raw, unbound voice of youth breaking the chains of fashion and custom, doing in the black musical community what Elvis would soon do in the white. It may be significant that this is some of the first black pop music to make an impression on '50s-era white teenage audiences.

Houston's *Cornbread And Cabbage Greens* (Specialty 2171-2; 68:09: ★★★) is the more musical of the two, and his tireless (sometimes tiresome) wailing can still send shivers down your spine. Houston even managed a couple of coherent, almost swinging solos ("I Cover The Waterfront," "Lester Leaps In"). On "Jay's Boogie," however, the band is gratefully out-of-tune, and one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry at Houston's attempts to construct a solo over the changes to Pee Wee Crayton's "Blues After Hours." Higgins' *Pachuko Hop* (Specialty 2175-2; 48:42: ★★★), meanwhile, is the r&b equivalent of a modern-day garage band demo—Higgins rarely even manages a good, full-bodied wail; he honks away with relentless primitivism, sometimes staying on a single note throughout virtually an entire solo ("Broke"), other times hitting on a melodic or harmonic conceit almost by accident ("Special Tea").

Regal Records In New Orleans, by **Paul Gayten** and **Annie Laurie**, with Dave Bartholomew & Ray Brown (Specialty 2169-2; 73:34: ★★★) is as smooth as the honkers are raw. Gayten's straightahead, crooning style complements Laurie's somewhat more soulful purr quite nicely. But despite the tight arrangements and classy musicianship, most of this sounds tame and repetitious today. The material ("Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!") often seems too simplistic for the musicianship on hand, and many of the ballads ("You Ought To Know") are too dire for repeated consumption. Most of this music is neither sophisticated enough to retain the interest of jazz lovers nor raw enough to qualify as blues or r&b. Still, it provides a vital look at an important historical moment in the creation of the bridge between big-band jazz and the coming onslaught of r&b anarchy.

Finally, **Percy Mayfield** probably achieved the fusion of swinging elegance and bluesy immediacy as well as any artist who ever lived; to boot, he was one of the most poetic lyricists in the history of the music. *Percy Mayfield Live* (Winner 445; 52:15: ★★★★★) recorded in California in the early '80s, showcases the West Coast legend in the twilight of his career. His voice cracks occasionally and his enunciation isn't the most coherent, but he creates a riveting sense of intimacy, and his lyrics are sublime. There's a vulnerable sense of fatalism to his best work ("The River's Invitation," "My Jug And I") that imbues even his most desperate images with hope, and on the occasional uptempo jumper ("The Flirt"), he fuses his soulful tenderness with a ribald wit. **DB**



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Basic Basie

by John McDonough

It's hard to imagine a more important reissue than **Count Basie: The Complete Decca Recordings** (Decca 3-611; 61:13/70:55/54/55: ★★★★★) for this year, or any other. Dust off a Grammy and a **Down Beat** plaque for this one. Here is the old testament of the first Basie band (1937-'39) brought together into one indispensable 3-CD set. The first "One O'Clock Jump," the first "Jumpin' At The Woodside," and more. Not only does it sound terrific, it raises the last complete Basie edition (Japan, 1983) by four previously unissued takes.

Completeness can be a two-edged tribute. In acknowledging an artist's importance, it also has a nasty way of disinterring genuinely awful music that can do no reputation any good. No way is that the case here. Of the 63 tracks, only a couple of ballads crooned by lead alto Earl Warren are real groaners. Otherwise, never has completeness been so completely satisfying. There are 34 Basie instrumentals and 27 vocals by Helen Humes and Jimmy Rushing, who turns even Carmen Lombardo's "Boo Hoo" into a delightful swinger. Catch Basie's tongue-in-cheek dinner piano, incidentally, in the first eight bars before getting down to business.

Here, of course, is Buck Clayton, Harry Edison, and above all, Lester Young, all in prime, early form and as fresh and invigorating today as they were 55 years ago. Unlike other pre-modern classic works, which may have a certain esthetic mustiness to contemporary ears, these sides sound new. They travel effortlessly across time on the wings of an astounding rhythm section in which Jo Jones' stainless-steel signature is written in literally every bar. Decca was not a label known for quality, but somehow it managed to capture the burnished sizzle of Jones' high-hat cymbal work with a bracing sparkle no one else matched. (He's practically mute on Billie Holiday Brunswicks and Vocalions.) And the feathered pulse of guitarist Freddie Green with bassist Walter Page has a remarkable sonic dimension. The transfers are brighter than the Japanese equivalent set. Word that the old Deccas were speeded up for this set is not confirmed by sample matching against several original 78s.

The Best Of The Roulette Years (Roulette CDP 7 97969; 74:57: ★★★★★) is a generous cross section of another well-remembered Basie period, 1958-'61. Though poorly annotated with no dates or personnel, you'll get the original versions of "Cute," "Flight Of The FooBirds," "Whirly Birds," and other "atomic" Basie perennials, plus eight perfunctory recreations of early charts recorded for a Roulette boxed set recorded in June 1960. Two superb Benny Carter charts, "Easy Money" and especially "Turnabout," bring things to a final boil with Carter himself sitting in, and supposedly Cozy Cole replacing Sonny Payne on drums. A showy "Old [sic] Man River" featuring Gus Johnson (not Sonny Payne) is empty and anticlimactic.

From a decade later comes *Count Basie: Ain't Misbehavin'* (LaserLight 15 778; 37:47:

★★½), a relatively lightweight offering of Chico O'Farrell arrangements originally made for Groove Merchant in October 1969. The band achieves some real drive on "Idaho." But more often, the brass is heavy and unswinging, and the charts have a self-consciousness to them that tells you this date is flying mostly on formula.

The last decade of Basie's recording career became the richest since his first, thanks to his many Pablo sessions, where the mix-and-match strategy in various small groupings seemed to lead Basie back to essentials. Fantasy has brought three of them to CD. *Night Rider* (Pablo OJCCD 688-2; 40:00: ★★½) is the third of Basie's four dates with Oscar Peterson, and not among the best. The tempos are a bit too languorous and long in the tooth for even these two masters to sustain over 40 minutes. Although one might have wished for a little more ensemble glue in the Basie all-star dates, *Basie Jam #3* (Pablo OJCCD 687-2; 37:00: ★★★★★) is still a masters class in jazz sum-

mitry: Benny Carter, Clark Terry, Al Grey, Lockjaw Davis, Joe Pass, Louie Bellson, et al. The spirit is friendly and non-confrontational, even when Terry and Grey engage on "Moten Swing." And Basie's elfin swing knits it all nicely

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Count Basie: sounding terrific

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Keith Jarrett

VIENNA CONCERT—ECM 513 4237-2: *PARTS I & II*. (68:11)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano.

★ ★ ★

SILENCE—Impulse! GRD-117: *BYBLUE; RAINBOW; TRIESTE; FANTASM; MUSHI MUSHI; SILENCE; BOP-BE; GOTTA GET SOME SLEEP; BLACKBERRY WINTER; POCKET FULL OF CHERRY; BYBLUE (SOLO PIANO VERSION)*. (66:27)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano, soprano sax (10); Dewey Redman, tenor sax; Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums.

★ ★ ★

discography overflows with piercing poetry and slushy platitudes. He can be a transfigured selfless vessel—as on his stunning reading of Dimitri Shostakovich's *24 Preludes And Fugues, op. 87* (ECM New Series 437 189-2)—or he can be totally self-absorbed, as on portions of *Vienna Concert*. But, even his excesses command serious attention. The bottom line is that you never know when Jarrett will take wing.

It's surprising that anything came of Jarrett's "American" quartet's last Impulse! session, which produced the *Byblue* and *Bop-Be* LPs that *Silence* repackages. By late '77, disbanding was all but a done deal with Jarrett advocating his role as principal composer to his cohorts; subsequently, this date lacks the urgency of *Fort Yawuh* or *Death And The Flower*. But, Jarrett's soaring solos on both his aptly-titled "Bop-Be" and Dewey Redman's scorching, "Mushi Mushi," and even his gritty soprano solo on Charlie Haden's buoyant portrait of Don Cherry are instances where Jarrett abruptly raises his level of performance in mid-statement.

Such moments take on greater dimensions in Jarrett's solo concerts. Twenty-five minutes into "Part I" of *Vienna Concert*, the sequence of rustic ruminations—imagine Bruce Hornsby possessed by Aaron Copland—and pensive

together, peeking out from behind corners occasionally for some of the most resourceful piano solos you'll ever hear.

Freddie Hubbard and J.J. Johnson join Basie on *Kansas City 7* (Pablo OJCCD 690-2; 54:00: ★★★★★), another jam-session date. After a weak start, the set jells with "Exactly Like You." Basie strokes Lockjaw like a cat, Hubbard plays with bold but easy crackle, and Hanna, who is often the most Jo Jonesish of drummers, plays with astonishing beauty behind Basie on "One Hour" and "Always Be In Love With You." The CD contains a nine-minute bonus blues, "Count Me In," with excellent Hubbard. **DB**

Pianist/composer Keith Jarrett is one of the most perplexing musicians on the planet. His

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expositions of prolonged harmonic resolution erupts into an ostinati-driven fury. Even though this bristling passage ultimately gives way to some of Jarrett's more frequently employed tactics—ebullient themes riding a tidal wave of tremolo and droney invocations of non-Western sensibilities—the remainder of the concert retains some of its edge. That edge is the core of Jarrett's art.

—Bill Shoemaker



Ivo Perelman

CHILDREN OF IBEJI—enja ENJ-7005 2: *MINA DO SANTE; O MORRO; CHANT FOR LOGUM; OH! QUE NOITE TAO BONITA; CHANT FOR OSHUM; CHANT FOR OSHALA; LITTLE ROCKS OF ARUANDA; TOM'S DINER; CHANT FOR IBEJI; CANTAR.* (71:46)

Personnel: Perelman, tenor sax; Flora Purim, vocals (1,7); Don Pullen (2,5), Paul Bleý (3), piano; Fred Hopkins, bass; Brandon Ross, guitar (10); Andrew Cyrille, drums; Manolo Badrena (2,5), Guilherme Franco (1,5-8), Frank Colon (1,5,7,8), Mor Thiam (5), percussion; Ana Luisa De Moraes Azenha, voice (10).

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Flora Purim

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT—Sound Wave 89009-2: *PERFUME DE CEBOLA; MY SONG FOR YOU; MACÁ; BRANCO E PRETO; MEU MESTRE CORAÇÃO; FINALE; RAINHA DA NOITE; AVIÃO; TARDE; RADIO EXPERIÊNCIA; DOIS IRMÃOS; DONA OLYMPIA.* (55:53 minutes)

Personnel: Purim, vocals; Marcos Silva, keyboards; Gary Meek (2-4,6,9), Mary Feltig (3,8), saxes; Gary Brown (1,3,7,8,10), Bob Harrison (2,4,6,9), Jerry Watts (5), bass; Jeff Buenz (1,3,7-10), Ricardo Silveira (2,5,6,11), Toninho Horta (12), guitar; Michael Shapiro (2,4-6), Teo Lima (3,8), drums; Airto Moreira, drums (9), percussion; Celso Alberti, drums (1,7), percussion (10); Giovanni Hidalgo, congas (1,6), percussion (10).

★ ★ ★

Brazilian jazz, so breezy-fresh in the hands of Getz-Gilberto or the early Return To Forever, has since grown increasingly stale. Flora Purim, who sang with both Getz and RTF, is a case in point, having steadily retreated from her pioneering flights of fancy to the faceless mainstream style of her latest release. But now a new contender, tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman, has re-energized the genre with a slamming dose of free-jazz, spurring Purim herself to creative heights on his star-studded second album.

Arranged by keyboardist Marcos Silva, Purim's *Queen Of The Night* includes catchy material by Djavan, Milton Nascimento, and Toninho Horta, but the mixed Brazilian and American ensemble, featuring saxophonist

Gary Meek, is relentlessly tepid, never veering from the middle of the road. Purim's thin, dry vocals—in Portuguese, English, or wordless scat—pointedly avoid the risky leaps, dives, and arabesques that camouflaged her nasal tone in her '70s heyday.

On *Children Of Ibeji*, by contrast, the 31-year-old Perelman plunges headlong into the ululating maelstrom of the '60s avant garde. Although he disclaims the direct influence of Albert Ayler, his approach, save for the Bra-

zilian rhythms and a lush, Gato Barbieri-like romantic streak, is Ayler-esque to the point of *déjà vu*. The album is dedicated to Brazil's homeless slum urchins (in the Afro-Brazilian *candomblé* religion, the *Ibeji* are the twin gods of children), giving Perelman an ethnic excuse to mimic Ayler's fractured nursery rhymes. After a few bars of a folk theme, drum chant, or Suzanne Vega's childlike "Tom's Diner," he heads straight for the cosmos, skronking up a storm. Sidemen Cyrille, Hopkins, and Pullen

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are brilliantly empathetic on "Chant For Oshum"; Paul Bley generates his own gentle mind warp on "Chant For Logum"; and Purim pirouettes and yodels in vintage form on "Little Rocks Of Aruanda." It's all slightly over the top, but after two decades of musical stultification, Perelman's buzz-saw brashness is like a breath of spring. —Larry Birnbaum

Alexander, piano; Alex Schultz, guitar; Bill Stuve, bass; Jimi Bott, drums.

★★★★

Since his entry onto the West Coast blues scene in the early '60s, Rod Piazza has blown his chromatic harp with several blues greats—including Pee Wee Crayton, Jimmy Rogers, Big Mama Thornton, and his mentor, George "Harmonica" Smith. On their sophomore Black Top release, P & MFs—cashing in on their years of honing blues licks in clubs—dispatch a brawny set of spirited blues stained by tears, whiskey, and sweat, and driven by muscular guitar riffs, deep-grooved bass and drum rhythms, dazzling piano runs, and thick, propulsive harmonica lines. Rugged-voiced Piazza & Co. play it tight on these 12 tracks (10 of which are impressive originals), giving this studio collection the immediacy of a live performance recorded in a smoky, dimly-lit barroom with a packed dance floor.

Piazza's party takes off with the hot jam on the plaintive title cut, shifts into the next gear with Alexander's rollicking piano celebration on her "So Glad To Have The Blues," and then speeds into the zesty instrumental appropriately titled "The Bounce" before finally braking for a gripping dose of economic reality, "Blues In '92." Later the band romps through a fun "Rockin' Robin"-like take on Joe Hill Louis' "Hydramatic Woman," takes flight into the album's stoutest and rowdiest boogie, "Tangled With A Woman" (another fine Alexander composition), and swings into Piazza's mid-tempo

blues, "No Pretty Presents," which deserves Christmas airplay as a companion to Charles Brown's "Merry Christmas, Baby." And, speaking of the airwaves, the nightcap of the album is a blissfully slow, show-stopping salute to late-night blues radio, with a great closing fade.

—Dan Ouellette



Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers

ALPHABET BLUES—Black Top CD BT-1076: *ALPHABET BLUES; SO GLAD TO HAVE THE BLUES; THE BOUNCE; BLUES IN '92; SOMEBODY; HYDRAMATIC WOMAN; TANGLED WITH A WOMAN; COME ON HOME; NO PRETTY PRESENTS; CAN'T GET THAT STUFF NO MORE; SKIN DEEP; NIGHT'S END.* (51:06 minutes)

Personnel: Piazza, vocals, harmonica; Honey



Giorgio Gaslini

AYLER'S WINGS—Soul Note 121 270: *HOLY SPIRIT; MOTHERS; TRUTH IS MARCHING IN; OMEGA IS THE ALPHA—BELLS; ANGELS; GHOSTS; WITCHES AND DEVILS; NO NAME.* (50:47)

Personnel: Gaslini, piano

★★★★ 1/2

MULTIPLI—Soul Note 121 220: *MULTIPLI; ORA; INTERNI; CHICAGO BREAKDOWN; PIANO-SEQUENZA; CORTEO; ORNETTE OR NOT; LA RISATA.* (45:20)

Personnel: Gaslini, piano; Roberto Ottaviano, alto sax, soprano sax, soprano sax, bass clari-

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net; Claudio Fasoli, tenor sax, soprano sax; Bruno Tommaso, bass; Giampiero Prina, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Gaslini's 1981 record of Monk tunes was a masterpiece—an oddball item, to be sure, but utterly brilliant. Similarly, *Ayler's Wings* is a weird, insightful take on free tenor giant Albert Ayler's contribution as a composer, a contribution that is generally dismissed in favor of his ferocious playing. What the Italian pianist does with the original charts—minimal as they are—

is completely un-Ayler-esque; no flailing, no glossolalic pounding, no flights of unmediated expression. Instead, Gaslini plays them as sonatas, protracting their stately, hymn-like qualities and insinuating hidden connections with European baroque, classical, and late-romantic music. On "Ghosts," for example, he augments Ayler's best-known melodic line with a soft, translucent, minor-key double, lending it a distinctly Bach-like sound. By overdubbing, he combines themes from "Omega Is The Alpha" and "Bells" with chiming percussion in a

melange that suggests Ives' concordant discord; Gaslini's "Angels" might be Paul Bleys playing a diabolical variation on Beethoven. Unique, revealing, and powerful on its own terms—this disc could appeal to Ayler fans and detractors alike.

In fact, "Piano-Sequenza," from *Multipli*, is more in the spirit of Ayler than anything on *Ayler's Wings*—smoother, with a section that sounds remarkably like Henry Threadgill, but with the trademark Ayler love-cry. The quintet disc is a bold, architecturally sound showcase for Gaslini's own compositions. Like Anthony Braxton and Muhai Abrams, his pieces shift around a lot, playing with colors, varying instrumentation, and sampling patches of swing. "Interni" features bright piano pinches and a torchy tenor line; "Ornette Or Not" is an aptly jubilant, Colemanesque vehicle for Gaslini and Ottaviano. On the disc's only non-original, the band gives Jelly Roll Morton's "Chicago Breakdown" a pipish treatment, as if caught in a calliope, and bassist Tommaso saws a stirring, outré accompaniment. Ottaviano is excellent throughout, burbling bass-clarinets as he freebops along on the title tune and crossing soprano streams with Fasoli on "Ora."

—John Corbett

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BY

JEROME CALLET

17 years ago, Jerry introduced a heavy, ugly mouthpiece which was laughed off the market by a fashion conscious Trumpet World. Forget that it outplayed everything else...it wasn't pretty enough so Jerry reluctantly discontinued it. Comes 1990 and the Trumpet World goes wild over a brass donut called a tone intensifier which (are you ready?) adds weight to the mouthpiece. Wonder of wonders!...Only thing is, the weight is in the wrong place. It belongs on the rim and cup. Also the shank needs to be heavier to prevent resonance.

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29th Street Saxophone Quartet

YOUR MOVE—Antilles 314 512 524-2: *YOUR MOVE; JIMMY KAY; JUST ONE MORE THING; PRIORITY WALTZ; FREQUENT FLYER, PAMELA; FORECAST; MIND JOURNEY; SOLITAIRE; NEED TO KNOW. (52:24)*
Personnel: Ed Jackson, alto sax; Bobby Watson, alto sax; Rich Rothenberg, tenor sax; Jim Hartog, baritone sax.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

It's about the blend, the lush harmonies, and sheer momentum that four horns can whip up together. Clever to a fault, this sort of thing can easily fall into the realm of gimmickry or come off as a cold, intellectual exercise. Though they don't possess the swaggering, syncopated feel (particularly in the bottom end) of their forebearers, the World Saxophone Quartet, the 29th Streeters avoid these pitfalls with the help of Jackson and Watson, their emotionally-charged alto soloists. Check out their wailing on the bluesy "Jimmy Kay." Jackson supplies the nasty edge on "Need To Know" and Watson flies ahead of the pack on "Pamela," an exuberant Four Brothers-informed romp. Rothenberg stretches the group sound with ambitious arrangements for "Just One More Thing" and his Copland-esque "Forecast." —Bill Milkowski



**McPartland/
Wilson/
Larkins/Hines**

CONCERT IN ARGENTINA—Jazz Alliance 10008: *WAVE; TIME AND TIME AGAIN; ELLINGTON MEDLEY; GERSHWIN MEDLEY; ROSETTA; AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'; BODY AND SOUL; FLYING HOME; PERFIDIA; BLUES IN MY HEART; ILL WIND; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; CLOSE TO YOU; THE GIRL FROM IPANEMA; BLUESETTE; TEA FOR TWO.* (66:43)
Personnel: Marian McPartland, Teddy Wilson, Ellis Larkins, Earl Hines, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

This document of a 1974 concert in Buenos Aires showcases four wonderfully personable piano stylists in solo recital. McPartland's portion of the show is highlighted by a reverent, if reserved, medley of Ellingtonia, though she does pick up steam and take a few more

chances on "It Don't Mean A Thing." Wilson puts his graceful stamp on a Gershwin medley, then trots out a delightful stride version of "Body And Soul" before "Flying Home" in swinging fashion. Larkins opens with a slow, luxuriant take on "Perfidia" then can be heard scatting along with "Blues In My Heart" and humming wistfully behind "Ill Wind." Of the four pianists, Earl Hines turns in the most rhythmically compelling, unpredictable performance. He injects a jaunty stride sensibility into corn like Burt Bacharach's "Close To You," and on "Girl From Ipanema" he leaps all over the keyboard with stop-time breaks, brief double-time figures, and flowery right-hand embellishments while varying the dynamics from a whisper to a shout. He brings a Lisztian kind of flamboyance to "Bluesette" and pulls out all the stops on "Tea For Two."
 —B.M.



**Franco
Ambrosetti**

GIN AND PENTATONIC—enja 4096 2: *MISS, YOUR QUELQUE CHOSE; MORE WINGS FOR WHEELERS; YES OR NO; GIN AND PENTATONIC; AUTUMN LEAVES; ODE TO A PRINCESS; ATISIUL.* (71:18)

Personnel: Ambrosetti, flugelhorn, trumpet; Michael Brecker, tenor sax; Daniel Humair, drums; Buster Williams (1,2,4,7), Dave Holland (3,5,6), bass; John Clark (1,2,4,7), Alex Brotsky (3,5,6), french horn; Kenny Kirkland (1,2,4,7), Tommy Flanagan (3,5,6), piano; Lew Soloff, Michael Mossman, trumpet (3,5,6); Steve Coleman, alto saxophone (3,5,6); Howard Johnson, tuba, baritone saxophone (3,5,6).

★ ★ ★ ★

These New York sessions from 1983 and 1985 not only highlight Ambrosetti's gorgeous tone and supple phrasing but also offer another side of Michael Brecker's heroic tenor work. With Buster Williams walking furiously, Brecker exorcises his hard-bop demons on "Miss, Your Quelque Chose." And with Holland pulling the band through a searing version of Wayne Shorter's "Yes Or No," he flows with inspired conviction. Franco paints with burnished tones on the George Gruntz ballad "More Wings For Wheelers," cops a lush Miles-Gil vibe on "Ode To A Princess," featuring a nice Steve Coleman solo, and trades quicksilver statements with



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Flanagan and Humair on "Autumn Leaves." A 15-minute "Atisiul," composed by Franco's sax-playing father Flavio, is a tour de force for Brecker and also features an incredibly facile tuba solo by the amazing Howard Johnson. Special mention must go to Humair, who swings forcefully and plays melodically throughout this fine album. —B.M.



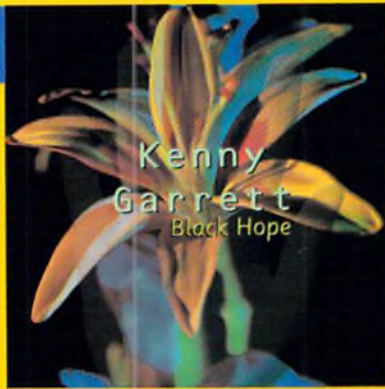
Bill Mays

KALEIDOSCOPE—Jazz Alliance 10013: *SAMBA SUILEBAHAIN; WHEN THE SUN COMES OUT; ADIRONDACK; FOR ALL WE KNOW; BODY AND SOUL; FOUR; KALEIDOSCOPE; BOOMERANG; MY MAN'S GONE NOW.* (63:31)

Personnel: Mays, piano; Harvie Swartz, bass; Jeff Hirshfield, drums; Dick Oatts, soprano sax (1,3), tenor sax (4,8), flute (7); Peter Sprague, guitar.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Mays, the eternal sideman and consummate accompanist, occasionally steps out to make more personal statements as a composer, player, and arranger. His baroque interpretation of "Body And Soul" here is startlingly original, drawing on Chopin's piano etude Opus 10, #6 for inspiration. Hirshfield's alluring brushwork sets the tone on a bluesy treatment of Harold Arlen's "When The Sun Comes Out" and his swing factor is front-and-center on a radical revamping of Miles Davis' "Four." The trio makes dramatic use of space on a haunting rendition of "My Man's Gone Now" and Swartz carries the melody on a reharmonized "For All We Know," with Mays comping gently behind him. Another surprise is Sprague, whose acoustic-guitar chops add some bite to the session, particularly on "Adirondack." —B.M.



Kenny Garrett

Black Hope

Miles Davis called Kenny Garrett the next superstar. He's played with luminaries from Art Blakey and Herbie Hancock to Peter Gabriel and Sting—and held down the sax chair in the last Miles Davis band.

George Duke

Snapshot

The Grammy-winning, gold and platinum-laden keyboardist/producer who cut his ivories with both Frank Zappa and Cannonball Adderley presents his first solo album in three years, recorded with a remarkable cast of Jazz 'n' R 'n' B stars.



Bud Shank

THE DOCTOR IS IN—Candid 79520: *THE DOCTOR IS IN; EMBRACEABLE YOU; IF I SHOULD LOSE YOU; J.P.'S AFTERNOON; I CAN'T GET STARTED; I'M OLD FASHIONED; ONCE I HAD A SECRET LOVE; SONATINA FOR MELISSA; OVER THE RAINBOW; THE DOCTOR IS OUT.* (61:47)

Personnel: Shank, alto sax; Mike Wolfford, piano; Bob Magnusson, bass; Sherman Ferguson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Shank may be associated with the West Coast cool school, but his playing here is freer and far more passionate than his reserved '50s work. One couldn't imagine the old Shank blowing with the raw, blustery tone he displays on "I'm Old Fashioned," burning with such Bird-like abandon on "Once I Had A Secret Love," or taking such liberties with "If I Should Lose You," "Over The Rainbow" and "I Can't Get Started." Somewhere between the studios of Hollywood (his mainstay in the '60s) and the '80s, Bud had a major reawakening. Now he's swinging with more exuberance and making more daring choices along the way. This album proves that he's not getting older, he's getting more ferocious. —B.M.

On Warner Bros. Cassettes and

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1 Paul Motian

"Good Idea" (from *ONE TIME OUT*, Soul Note)
Motian, drums; Bill Frisell, guitar; Joe Lovano,
tenor sax.

Hey man . . . I liked the hell out of that. I thought that was done exceedingly well, and it had a good feeling to it. The drummer is very interesting, very smart . . . good touch, good feeling, had a good pulse. I never heard this before in my life, I don't know who these guys are, but the drumming sounds to me like it could be one of three players—Don Moye, who I like very much, or it kinda sounds a little bit like Arthur Taylor, too, and a little bit of Roy [Haynes]. But it was dynamite. Whoever it was, we have very much in common, because I'm in that kind of a groove myself with my own trio. They got a lot of music out of those three instruments, man. I'd give it 5 stars.

2 Tony Williams

"Creatures Of Conscience" (from *THE STORY OF NEPTUNE*, Blue Note) Williams, drums; Ira Coleman, bass; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Bill Pierce, tenor sax.

Man, the drummer had to be the leader on this. Had to be his band. It's so obvious. It sounds like, I don't know . . . is that Louie Bellson? That kind of drumming sort of reminds me of him. Sounds like an exercise, as far as I'm concerned. The horns, all the figures . . . I don't know . . . they didn't swing at all. I don't know if they were meant to swing. But there was nothing there to ever make you feel like you wanna jump up and down. The guy's got chops. I hate the sound of his cymbals or at least how they were recorded . . . that constant ringing, there was no definition in the beat. Of course, he's soloing all the way through, but you couldn't tell when the solo starts and when it ends. I didn't particularly care for it, but I'd give him 4 stars for effort, anyway.

He's playing his ass off. He's got lots of chops, but he's very repetitive also. Played the same licks over and over again, regardless of what drum he was playing them on. It got very predictable for me. A lot of eighth notes and 16th notes. I didn't hear any flowing syncopation in the sense of turning the rhythms around.

BM: *It's Tony Williams.*

No kidding! I would've never, never guessed that was Tony. Again, an abundance of chops. But I won't take back what I said. I don't know whether it was supposed to swing, but it didn't. The figures that the band played are kind of straight up and down. They're not my favorite kind of figures. I'm just being honest. But man, Tony . . . you got some chops.

CHICO HAMILTON

by Bill Milkowski

One of the great innovators of contemporary jazz drumming, Chico Hamilton's uncompromising artistry has stretched across six decades. And at age 71, he appears to be as prolific as ever, touring and recording with two separate groups—his acoustic Reunion Quintet (a recreation of his adventurous 1955 ensemble) and his electric-fusion band, Euphoria (see "Reviews" Sept. '92).

Hamilton formed his first band with high-school mates Charles Mingus, Illinois Jacquet, and Dexter Gordon. He went on to work with Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, Lester Young, and T-Bone Walker in the early '40s. He backed Lena Horne from 1948 to 1955, then became an integral part of the original Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker pianoless quartet. As a leader, he has introduced such talents as Eric Dolphy, Jim Hall, Charles Lloyd, Gabor Szabo, Larry Coryell, and Arthur Blythe.

Hamilton's latest "discoveries" are saxophonist Eric Person and sensa-



MITCHELL SEIDEL

tional guitarist Cary DeNigris. Their next album together, *Trio!*, is scheduled for an early '93 release on Soul Note. Hamilton's last Blindfold Test took place more than 20 years ago.

3 Andrew Cyrille

"Shell" (from *MY FRIEND LOUIS*, DIW/Columbia)
Cyrille, drums; Reginald Workman, bass; Oliver Lake, alto sax; Hannibal, trumpet; Adegoke Steve Colson, piano.

That's very good, man. Very hip, man. That's some choice playing. All these dudes got chops. The trumpet player reminded me a little bit of Freddie Hubbard. As a matter of fact, some of the things the drummer played in there sound like some of the things maybe I'd be doing. That's not Roy Haynes, is it? He's smooth as silk, man. I never heard this sound before, but I liked it very much. I'd give this 5 stars. I'd like to hear these guys again. This was exceptionally good.

4 Ed Blackwell

"Dakar Dance" (from *TRANSIT*, Black Saint)
Blackwell, drums; Dave Holland, bass; Karl Berger, piano.

Is that a drummer and a percussionist? It sounds a little bit like Vernell Fournier. It's kind of got the feeling of one of Ahmad Jamal's old trios. The overall concept was good. Very well-balanced in regards to the

pulse. And I thought the drummer was very good. The only thing . . . I felt when he went on the cowbell and still had his rhythms going, the cowbell was just slightly delayed so that it almost gave you the feeling that it was two different players. But for what they did, I'd give it 5 stars. A lot of intent went into it. It was well-thought-out and it had a feeling. The emotional aspect was there. I liked it.

5 Pheeroan akLaff

"Alligator And Kangaroo" (from *SONOGRAM*, MU Works) akLaff, drums; Kenny Davis, bass; Carlos Ward, alto sax; John Stubblefield, tenor sax.

I liked that very much . . . sort of reminds me a little bit of Ol' Thunder, little bit of Elvin [Jones]. I liked the drumming very much, and I liked the composition. It's different but interesting and came off very well. And the drums were really recorded well. I'd give that 5 stars. This is where my head is at musically. Who is it?

BM: *Pheeroan akLaff.*

Oh yeah . . . man, he's dynamite. I heard him once down at the Vanguard with Geri Allen. He's fantastic, man! I like him very much, man. I give him 10 stars. DB