

HAMIET BLUIETT BLINDFOLD TEST

DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Jan. 1993, \$2.50 U.K. £2.00 Can. \$3.25

Jazz star?
HARRY
Pop star?
CONNICK JR.
Entertainer

Tommy Flanagan
& Mulgrew Miller

David Murray

Robben Ford

Shirley Scott on TV



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Monk? Sinatra? Try Cab
Calloway.

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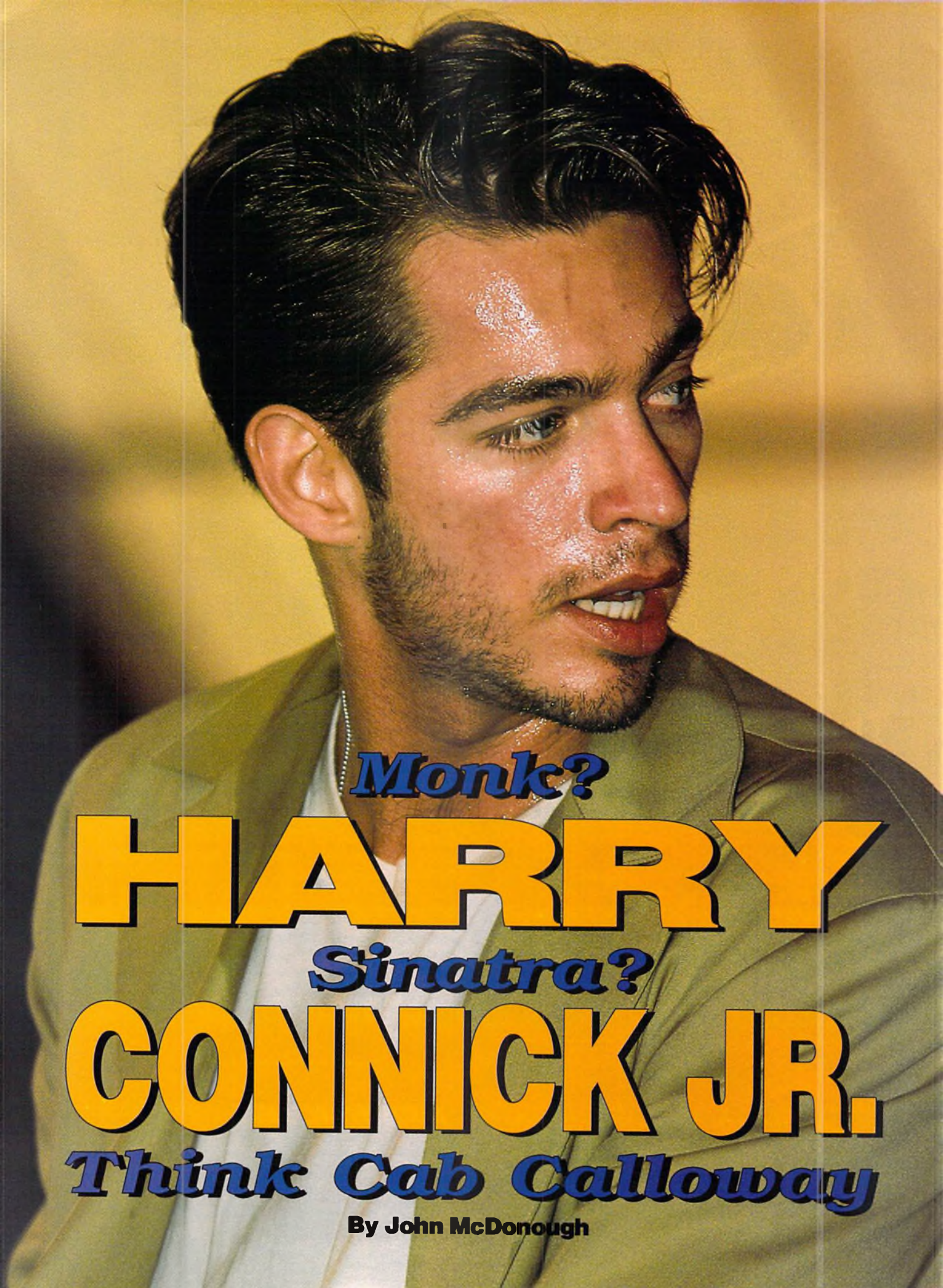
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Tenorman
 David
 Murray



Monk?

HARRY

Sinatra?

CONNICK JR.

Think Cab Calloway

By John McDonough

When Benny Goodman played his big concert at Carnegie Hall in 1938, *The New York Times* faced a dilemma. Who should review it? The paper's classical critic who routinely covered Carnegie Hall? Or its nightclub critic who had never set foot in the place?

The *Times* decided to send its Carnegie Hall man, Olin Downes, who wrote the next day that swing might be pitied since "it doesn't pretend to be music. . . . We venture the prediction that 'swing' will quickly be a thing of the past."

My point here isn't to tweak Mr. Downes from the high pedestal of hindsight. My point is, *The New York Times* sent the wrong critic.

And that brings me to Harry Connick, Jr. Who should review Harry Connick?

"I like to dance. I like to sing. . . . I like to mess around on the drums. . . . I like to put on a show."



In the hands of hard-core jazz critics, Connick has not fared all that well. This magazine is a case in point. Jazz critic Bill Milkowski laid it on the line a year ago when he reviewed *Blue Light, Red Light* ("Reviews" Nov. '91): "To the whitebread masses, he tastes great," he wrote. "To surly jazz critics, he's less filling."

See the problem? The jazz press listens to Connick and hears only the jazz elements of his work. The rest is just static jamming the signal. They insist on holding him to standards that are largely beside the point of what he does. Rather than talking *to* the subject, they talk *past* it, leaving the impression that he is guilty on several counts of grand-theft jazz, or, at least, corrupting the innocent.

Connick sees such critical angst with a mix of indifference and bemusement. "Jazz is part of it," he said recently in a phone interview from his New York apartment, "but I don't like to say I'm a jazz musician. It puts me in a place where I'm not sure I belong. I do other things, too. Yeah, I love Monk, and it comes through in my playing. But I'm not Monk, and I don't pretend to be. I mean, he was a genius."

He wasn't always so confident. Dr. George Butler, Connick's, executive producer at Columbia, recalls getting a call from him in early 1988 when he played Kimball's in San Francisco. "He was rather depressed, and the critics were really very harsh to him," Butler says. "I told him not to worry. There will always be people taking potshots at you, and sometimes critics will use you to carve a niche for themselves in the media. But we have an objective, and let's keep focused on it."

Today, Connick's confidence is running high. He has prospered by diversifying. "I like doing all kinds of other stuff," he says. "I like to dance. I like to sing. I like a big band. I like to mess around on the drums. I like to write songs. I like to act. I like to put on a show."

By putting on his shows, Connick has brightened up a slightly faded category of contemporary music: jazz-pop. Every generation has come up with jazz-*something*, from Paul Whiteman to Glenn Miller to Herbie Hancock's Headhunters. And always the question seems to be the same: What can a jazz critic possibly say about an entertainer when entertainment is fundamentally rejected in the jazz esthetic as the enemy of art? The entertainer's values are beside and beyond the jazz culture. They are beyond formal criticism, in many ways. How do you evaluate charisma? To criticize charisma is to probe the culture that finds it compelling. So, perhaps, we jazz writers have no more business messing with Harry Connick than we would Al Jolson, Judy Garland, or Barbra Streisand.

If he seems a bit bored by analysis and offers no particularly penetrating insights into the increasingly particularized popular culture in which he functions, it's consistent with his ingenuousness, his modesty, and his preference for simplicity. He is like a 1990s incarnation of Capra heroes Longfellow Deeds or Jefferson Smith, propelled precipitously into fame, suddenly surrounded by a retinue of publicists, accountants, lawyers, and business managers, and, for the time being at least, unwilling to let them play shell games with his music or image. "Look," he says, with a slight pique in his voice, "when it's over, it will be over. But I can't turn myself into something else [that I'm not] to keep selling records." Some have dismissed him as a pseudo Sinatra or mock Monk! It doesn't faze him. For he defines himself in terms the jazz world has either



Harry at 11

ignored or sloughed off. And, as with any entertainer, it's *his* definition that counts.

If the jazz world is to deal with Connick with any semblance of sense, then, it has to frame its outlook more broadly. It must abandon its quaint assumption that the blues is the be-all-and-end-all of everything worthwhile in music; and that Tin Pan Alley is some lily-white and worthless anachronism, unworthy of investigation and irrelevant to anything important in contemporary music.

We also have to keep in mind that we're dealing not only with a musician here. We're also dealing with a beacon of high-style fashion and cachet, a personality, a video image—a rare occurrence in jazz. In this article, you will note, there is an accompanying sidebar on his "equipment," which, in *Down Beat* means instrument specifications. To *Vogue* magazine, however, which regards elegance as the highest of life's callings, "equipment" means his shirts, socks, coats, and underwear, all of which were specified in a Connick profile last year in the same detail we afford his piano. So maybe it's time we did with him what we once had to do with Nat Cole and George Benson, and probably should have done with Miles Davis when he became a creature of pop style: Let him go off to his new chosen pastures and wish him luck.

Connick played plenty of small jazz rooms in his New Orleans days. And early on in New York he slipped like the proverbial glove into the woody, intimate warmth of the Algonquin cabaret crowd. Having felt the applause of thousands in concerts since then, though, it's hard for him to think of himself anymore as the cabaret singer he was then. "A good cabaret singer is a student of pop-music history," he says, probably thinking of such encyclopedias of song as Michael Feinstein and Andrea Marcovicci. "I don't really study songs like they do. I just sing them."

He has also avoided letting his big band become a dance band in the "swing clubs" that have popped up here and there. "No, never,"

he says. "I don't want to play for dancers. Dancers are too busy looking at each other. I want people to look at me. I don't mean to play the big shot, but when I perform I like to have the audiences pay attention to what I'm doing. At dances the music is mostly in the background."

A sense of the past, demystified and recycled, permeates Connick's work, although, in his way, he is thoroughly contemporary and original. There is no toadying to nostalgia in his work. He is to Sinatra as Madonna is to Monroe (though, without her daggers of performance-art irony) as Garrison Keillor is to old-time radio. Yet, one still cannot help wondering whether Connick wouldn't have been better off living in the '40s or '50s. In those days, he would almost certainly have had a weekly music-variety show where he



Harry at 25

would have chatted with guests and sung duets with his peers. All the big recording stars—Como, Fisher, Page, Cole, Sinatra, even Crosby—had their own shows then. He would also have had access to national audiences through the fabled *Ed Sullivan Show*. The '50s would have been a natural for Connick because music was still made to fit a single mainstream culture and the media was set up to distribute it. But he was born in 1967. Was it too late?

"Hell no—pardon my French," he says with a down-home drawl. "I was born at just the right time. I don't go for that talk. Look, I'm not out to repaint the '40s. I like it now. Just because I've done some old songs doesn't mean I'm trying to bring back the past. I didn't live then. I grew up with the music of the '70s, and I like it."

"Look at Rob Reiner's movie, *When Harry Met Sally*. I thought it was about a very up-to-date '80s couple. Nothing old-fashioned about it, right? So why did Rob choose the music he did? Because those songs—'It Had To Be You' and everything—fit the emotions the film was portraying. You can't tell a sentimental love story and have loud, hard rock blaring on the soundtrack. When I hear the songs in *Harry*, I don't hear old-fashioned music, man. I hear songs about stuff that doesn't go out of style. I mean, even cats who play heavy metal are going to tell a girlfriend sooner or later, 'I love you.'"

The shortage of new songs with easy melodies and literate lyrics that carry such messages is another reason Connick may seem at odds with his time and generation. In the '40s, they were everywhere because pop music rested on two independent but symbiotic foundations: professional songwriters, who depended on singers to perform their work; and the singers, who depended on writers to come up with tunes they could do. It was a rare person—a Johnny Mercer, say—who took on both roles. And even at that, Mercer is remembered principally as a writer, not a singer. Today, however, Connick must rely on the old catalogs or be his own songwriter. One would think it would be a burden. "I don't consider it a burden," he

insists though. "I love writing songs and tunes. I'm not Ellington or Gershwin, but I think it's a challenge." He is surely one of the few writers outside of country music who still thinks in terms of the 32-bar, AABA tune form.

Connick offers various other reasons why he's glad he wasn't born sooner than he was. But the most revealing is this: "Hey, if I'd been born 30 or 40 years earlier, look who I would have had to compete with. I wouldn't have gotten off the ground." Connick's observation, while a bit severe, does not seem falsely modest.

He also knows it makes marketing sense. "I'm the only guy out there doing this kind of thing today. I have it pretty much to myself. You see what I mean? There isn't anybody *my* age doing this kind of music."

No one has been more mindful of this than Columbia, which released Connick's two most recent projects last month (as well as a debut album by Connick's fine guitarist and protégé, Russell Malone). Well, not exactly recent. The first, *Eleven*, is a prepubescent Connick privately recorded by his father in 1978. (Imagine if we could hear Armstrong or Sinatra at age 11!) The pianist plays nine traditional standards in a straight, Bourbon Street-style dixie ensemble. His quirkiness is evident, but not the more confident keyboard command that came later. The second, *25*, was recorded and wrapped a day before the present interview early last October and is a simple but fairly risky session of mostly a capella solo piano and vocals on 13 standards ranging from a raggy "Muskrat Ramble" to a quietly elegant "Stardust." His instrumentals are percussive, clever, and often more like Garner than Monk ("After You've Gone").

Connick says his albums are not conceived in strategy sessions or marketing meetings with men in double-breasted suits. "I go to the studio and make the record," he says. "That's about it. The company really leaves me alone on that stuff. They don't tell me what to do. I work with my own producer, Tracey Freeman, and we pick the tunes and plan the recording. He's a good critic. If something isn't happening, he'll let me know. When I do a big-band thing, of course, that gets more complicated. But there aren't a lot of marketing guys sitting around a big table saying, 'Do this . . . do that.' That just doesn't happen."

Connick and Columbia have been good for each other. If there've been no corporate pressures on him to "expand his audience," it's because they're unnecessary. The desire to reach an audience is instinctive. The company has supported him mightily in the many directions he's gone, and it's paid off. The reasons make sense when you look at how some of the pieces have fit together. As everybody knows by now, Connick is part of the label's New Orleans-Marsalis dynasty, which, in turn, was set in motion by Columbia's Dr. Jazz, George Butler.

But there have been others, too. Although most of the record industry's executives today are tuned mainly to rock, there is still a corner of the business that concentrates on "pop." And when you look at Columbia in recent years, you find a major label that has scored huge successes at the pop level—Mariah Carey, Michael Bolton, etc. At Columbia, Connick started off with two powerful advocates above Butler on the organizational chart. First, the president of Columbia, Don Ienner, who had come over from Arista and may have seen in Connick a parallel to the success of Kenny G. And second, Tommy Mottola, who became head of U.S. Columbia in April 1988.

"There wasn't very much excitement when the first trio album came out in December 1987 [*Harry Connick, Jr.*]," Butler recalls. "And the critics weren't too kind, either. But we had begun to see larger objectives with Harry."

Butler's objectives became clear in 1988 when Connick's second album, *XX*, with Dr. John and Carmen McRae, came out and introduced his singing. Things now began to move. He got the star treatment at the company's 1988 Boca Raton convention, the annual

ritual in which management identifies to the rest of the company the artists it's betting on for stardom. A corporate consensus from the top down quickly formed around Connick.

"He was not treated as a categorized artist," Butler recalls. "We didn't see him as, say, a jazz artist with a limited marketplace. We focused very broadly. We didn't go to just certain radio formats and publications with his story. We treated him like a pop artist and pulled out all the stops."

Connick's old-fashioned matinee profile and his sense of how to use jazz concepts in a pop way suggested wide possibilities. Without bringing anything new to jazz, his combination of chops and charm might even be negotiable in Hollywood. One man who saw that early on was Bobby Colomby, former drummer with Blood Sweat & Tears in the late '60s and, by 1988, an A&R man at Columbia with good connections in the movie business. Connick excited him in a big way, and he pushed that excitement to every Hollywood contact he had. One of them was director Rob Reiner. Colomby's efforts led directly to Connick's breakthrough in *When Harry Met Sally*, according to Butler. By coincidence, Columbia Records and Columbia Pictures, which released the film, are siblings in the Sony entertainment empire. But there was nothing coincidental about the Hollywood strategy Colomby pressed on Connick's behalf. ("Colomby Day," on Connick's trio album, *Lofty's Roach Souffle*, pays tribute to this valuable advocate.)

If the jazz press treated him lightly, a lot of other writers who commute back and forth between jazz and the wider worlds of general entertainment were quite willing to go along for the ride.

And, in many ways, by concentrating less on the music per se and more on the total package, they got it right while the jazz press either missed the point or just wasn't interested. For more than 20 years, pop and rock have been more about art, image, and design than music. So forget Monk or Basie or Ellington. Think Cab Calloway.

When 4,000 people of many different ages walk out of the Chicago Theater smiling and whistling his songs, as they did last year, no one should doubt that Harry Connick, Jr. knows exactly what he's doing. And he's doing it well. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Harry Connick still stands by his Steinway, with which he has a promotional agreement. He specifies no particular period, design, or model. His flings on trumpet and drums are strictly catch as catch can. He plays "whatever's handy." Connick has no taste for electronic keyboards and synthesizers. He plots out orchestrations for his big-band arrangements the old-fashioned way—with sheets of stave paper and a pencil, a sharp #4.

DISCOGRAPHY

25—Columbia 53172	HARRY CONNICK, JR.—Columbia 40702
ELEVEN—Columbia 53171	with various others
BLUE LIGHT, RED LIGHT—Columbia 48685	A JAZZY WONDERLAND—Columbia 46805
LOFTY'S ROACH SOUFFLE—Columbia 46223	ACOUSTIC CHRISTMAS—Columbia 46880
WE ARE IN LOVE—Columbia 46146	RUSSELL MALONE—Columbia 52825
WHEN HARRY MET SALLY—Columbia 45319	(Russell Malone)
XX—Columbia 44369	MAKING EVERY MOMENT COUNT—RCA Victor 60409 (Peter Allen)

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20-Finger Stomp

TOMMY FLANAGAN & MULGREW MILLER

By Michael Bourne

Pianoforte. "Softloud," literally. That's what the words stuck together mean in Italian and what the instrument was originally called to encompass the virtually orchestral breadth of this musical contraption of strings, hammers, pedals, and the 88 keys that 10 fingers can work so many wonders with.

Tommy Flanagan and Mulgrew Miller come from different generations of jazz piano—but the instrument is timeless, and so is the music they play.

Tommy Flanagan is a pianist's pianist, a soloist's soloist, an accompanist's accompanist. A consistent winner in *DB's* Critics Poll, his touch is among the most lyrical in jazz. His tastefulness is legend. Tommy grew up in 1940s Detroit among a whole generation of masters-to-be, including other eventual greats at the piano: Hank Jones, Roland Hanna, Barry Harris. He worked from 1968 to '78 with Ella Fitzgerald, and over the years he's recorded with the Who's Who of Jazz, from Coleman Hawkins and J. J. Johnson to Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. He's featured on more than 300 records as an accompanist, but for more than a decade Tommy's usually worked with a trio. His newest album for Timeless, *Beyond The Bluebird*, is a reunion with Kenny Burrell remembering the Detroit nightclub where they heard Charlie Parker and Art Tatum play live.

Mulgrew Miller was born in Greenwood, Mississippi, and grew up with a feeling for gospel and blues that's deep in the Delta. He attended Memphis State University in the '70s and was inspired by the legendary pianist Phineas Newborn, Jr. His first important gig was traveling with Mercer Ellington; he has also matriculated through the "schools" of Art Blakey, Betty Carter, and Tony Williams. He's become, Flanagan-like, an in-demand accompanist, featured on more than 100 records—but more and more he wants to work with his trio. Mulgrew's recorded six albums as a leader for Landmark, the newest being *Time And Again* (see "Reviews" Oct. '92), and just signed with Novus.

Mulgrew and Tommy came together to talk about the *piano*, the *forte*, and then some.

MICHAEL BOURNE: *Unlike every other instrumentalist, you can't carry a piano on*



ENID FARBER

the road.

TOMMY FLANAGAN: Too bad. Horowitz did.

MB: *What piano do you like to play?*

TF: I've been endorsing Steinway, but it doesn't have to be, as long as it's a good piano. I used to think Bosendorfer was a great piano—and it is, until you run into some of the Bosendorfers made in this

country. It's not the same as made in Europe. I like to have a Steinway, but some places just don't have them. I like from seven to nine, B and D.

MULGREW MILLER: D is a nine-foot concert Steinway. B is a seven-foot concert Steinway. I prefer the same piano, B or D. And as far as tonal characteristics of the piano, I do not prefer the brighter, brittle-

sounding pianos. They're torture to play ballads on.

TF: That's like a Yamaha, high tension in the high end.

MB: *What can be done about bad pianos on the road? Mose Allison once said that he doesn't worry about a shitty piano on the road because he practices on a shitty piano at home.*

MM: I have two pianos at home. I bought a Steinway about a year ago and it's a very nice piano, but I've found that playing on it a lot I get spoiled for when I have to play lesser pianos. So, sometimes just to keep myself focused into reality, I play the other piano once or twice a week. The older piano is a workhorse.

MB: *You're both known as acoustic players, but have you played with electronics?*

TF: I played electric piano on my album *Something Borrowed, Something Blue*. It was a mistake. I was fooling around with it between takes, and the guy was getting a level on me, and said, "Ready?" I just did a couple of tunes.

MM: I thought the results were great. Your touch and personality came across. . . . The only time I ever played on the electric piano was with Mercer Ellington. I recorded with Steve Turre and Kevin Eubanks and played one song on synthesizer—and played a solo.

TF: I don't like the electric sound or the feeling of it. The closest I got was a date with J. J. Johnson that called for extra effects. I played an electric Yamaha and some other thing. . . . On the whole, I'd rather not fool with electronics, but just for kicks I've fooled around with the Synclavier. You can sound like a whole orchestra. If you want a choir, you get a choir.

MM: It's a sampling machine. It can be a useful tool if you're orchestrating. You can get pretty close to the sound you'd like to hear. And there's the fun of sitting down at an instrument that can duplicate the individual sounds of an orchestra and hear yourself being that.

MB: *Why do you play the piano? Why this instrument?*

TF: I heard it early in my life in the house, just seeing this thing and seeing my brother play it and hearing these beautiful sounds. I'd crawl up there and try to get something out of it. Pretty soon I was getting something, and with a little study I got a lot more. I started hearing recordings of people who could really play. I could hear classical music on the radio, but then my brother brought home records of Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson, and this was another kind of piano, more exciting. Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, so many voices that came through. I've never been the same since.

MM: My story is similar. My father brought a piano into the house. I was a young kid, and one day I just made my way up to the piano

and started playing hymns by ear.

MB: *What jazz would you listen to?*

MM: Being a kid in the '60s, I tried to emulate Ramsey Lewis. The first straight-ahead jazz piano player I heard was Oscar Peterson on *The Joey Bishop Show*. I grew up in an environment where you couldn't hear jazz live. There were no record stores, no clubs, no musicians. I heard Duke Ellington when I was in ninth grade, but there was no one local with the stature of someone like Oscar Peterson or Tommy Flanagan.

MB: *Detroit in the '40s and '50s was just the opposite. So much jazz was happening there.*

TF: The great musicians used to come through all the time. Tatum lived in Toledo, almost next door to Detroit.

"We tend to think how well a person can play 'Giant Steps' determines what kind of musician they are. . . . I've met saxophone players who think it's like religious studies to play 'Giant Steps,' but they couldn't play the blues!"

—Mulgrew Miller



MB: *You were there when "God" was in the house?*

TF: Fats was given credit for saying "God" was in the house. You felt like that watching this man. Sometimes he'd be playing these funny little pianos, like spinets. If you play it, nothing happens. He sits down and transforms it into another instrument, another sound. . . . Walter Norris used to hear Tatum at this club in Los Angeles, and he went by one afternoon and played the piano and keys were missing! But the next night, the same thing, these gorgeous sounds coming out of it. Tatum was uncanny. . . . If there was one thing I wanted to learn from Tatum it was his secret of how he got out of a piano what he did—a piano that didn't have what all pianos should have, a piano that didn't have all the notes! I heard he'd play the scales, find out all the notes that were missing, and he just wouldn't play them.

MM: When I was a student in Memphis, I used to hear Phineas Newborn on week-ends. He'd be playing a spinet, and he could get the most glorious sound out of it and play

so much music on it. One night someone coaxed me to sit in and it seemed to me half the notes were missing. But he'd play it like a Steinway. . . . Ultimately, it's not the instrument.

MB: *Even though you're a couple of generations apart, when you studied the lineage, they're the same masters.*

MM: And [for us] including Tommy.

MB: *What excited you about Tommy's playing?*

MM: The thing that I really admire about Tommy's playing, and one aspect of playing I'm trying to enhance and develop, is that when you hear Tommy you always hear a deep well of great melody. I admire Tommy's touch, but that's Tommy's touch and I can't emulate that, but I so much want to develop that characteristic of being melodic at all times.

MB: *Do you remember when you first heard Tommy?*

MM: Yeah, on the *Giant Steps* album.

TF: Oh, my God!

MB: *"Giant Steps" is a standard now, but at the time, Trane's music was revolutionary.*

TF: It was a surprise. It was new music. I didn't think *Giant Steps* was Trane's greatest date. I heard him play better dates. There were other songs as challenging as "Giant Steps" that made more sense to me. I liked "Spiral," and "Naima" was a beautiful ballad. I played a take of "Naima," but they used Wynton Kelly's take.

MB: *Were you handed a chart for "Giant Steps" or just changes?*

TF: Changes, yeah. It was the only way to remember the sequence. It's not regular. It's 16 bars repeated, but not in the order that you normally play. You'd have to keep looking at it to see where your place is.

MM: The thing about "Giant Steps" is that it's a heavily formulated tune. We tend to think how well a person can play "Giant Steps" determines what kind of musician they are. I've played it almost 20 years and I can't say I play it well enough to make an exhibition out of it. I've met saxophone players who think it's like religious studies to play "Giant Steps," but they couldn't play the blues!

MB: *If you're jamming the blues, what determines the key?*

TF: Grease. You can get as greasy as you want when you play the blues. Or you can play some sophisticated blues. That's in the key of "S."

MM: The keys are most of the time established by what key the melody is.

TF: It's just grease. It's the after-hours key, "G natural."

MM: You heard it from the master.

MB: *What's different in your playing, in your thinking, when you're an accompanist from when you're the leader or soloist?*

MM: When you play trio, everything is in



MITCHELL SEIDEL

nary variety of artists. Who were some favorites?

MM: Art Blakey. Woody Shaw. Johnny Griffin. Betty Carter. Tony Williams. The Ellington Orchestra was a great experience, three years. . . . I haven't done bad for myself. I've played especially with saxophone players. I've played with just about everybody who was alive since 1980—Sonny Stitt, Dexter Gordon, Junior Cook, Harold Vick, George Coleman, Jackie McLean.

TF: There were a lot of people that I never recorded with but just played with. Ben Webster was so much fun. The few seconds with Bird. I enjoyed playing with Miles a lot. That was a personality that came through. Trane. Dizzy, of course. . . . I never played with Don Byas, but I played with about everybody who was important to me. I even played with Billie Holiday once. She was very important to me. There's nobody like her today. No one's even close to her feeling, her expression. She came into the Vanguard to see Sweets Edison. It was Elvin Jones, Joe Benjamin, myself, and Sweets. There was nobody there but the band, and Sweets called her up and she worked the hell out of us! That was fun.

your hands. You're playing the melody, orchestrating it, being in command in the delivery of the tune. Whereas if you're an accompanist, usually you don't have that responsibility. You're not laboring as heavily. Somebody else is playing the melody, developing the dynamics of the tune.

TF: Everyone has their way of enhancing whatever the situation is. I never wanted to be in any contest with whoever had the lead voice. You try to enhance as much as possible without getting in the way. It calls for a lot of listening and a lot of discipline. I used to listen to the way Ellis Larkins would accompany singers. He had a way of not getting in the way, but you could always feel his presence. He was doing so much for the singer. He was a model for me. . . . You have to hold back some. As much as I loved Art Tatum, he was not a good accompanist. He just couldn't help himself. He just had to keep playing. Some people understood that and just let him go. Ben Webster would just play the melody and get out of his way.

MB: When you're working with a trio, do you ever miss that other voice?

TF: You don't really need that fourth person. For so many years we've been accompanying, doing our work, when someone requests, "Would you do this?" Now I can say, "No, I'd like to do this myself." When you approach your own group, your own arrangements, you feel so free.

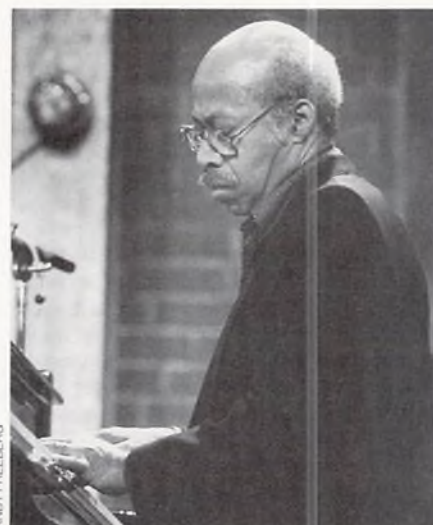
MM: And the goal is not to need horn players! [laughs]

TF: They're so long-winded! [laughs]

MM: Actually, I love playing with horns and singers, and I'm sure Tommy does.

TF: But there's only so many good players who have a voice of their own. It's not like the old days when we used to be saturated with original sounds, people with personalities. You've got too many people now imitating how somebody used to be.

MB: You've both played with an extraordi-



ANDY FREEBERG

MB: What about favorite recordings?

MM: I'm rather proud of the one I did with Cassandra Wilson [Blue Skies] and the one just released with Betty Carter [It's Not About The Melody]. Those are the only records I've done as an accompanist with singers. I'm proud of the records I did with

FLANAGAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BEYOND THE BLUEBIRD—Timeless 350
 JAZZ POET—Timeless 301
 THE MAGNIFICENT TOMMY FLANAGAN—Progressive 7057
 THE LONICA—enja 79615
 GIANT STEPS—enja 79646
 CONFIRMATION—enja 4014
 SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE—Fantasy/OJC 473
 ALONE TOO LONG—Denon 81757-7260-2
 THE BEST OF TOMMY FLANAGAN—Pablo 2405-410
 TOKYO RECITAL—Pablo 2310-724
 THE TOMMY FLANAGAN TRIO—Fantasy/OJC 182

with others

THE MASTER—Muse 5123 (Pepper Adams)
 BOSS TENOR—Fantasy/OJC 297 (Gene Ammons)
 TOGETHER—Denon 81757-7263-2 (Kenny Barron)
 ALL DAY LONG—Fantasy/OJC 456 (Kenny Burrell & Donald Byrd)
 RHYTHM IN MIND—Novus 63125 (Steve Coleman)
 THE CATS—Fantasy/OJC 079 (John Coltrane & Kenny Burrell)
 GIANT STEPS—Atlantic 1311 (John Coltrane)
 COLLECTOR'S ITEMS—Fantasy/OJC 071 (Miles Davis)

UNA MAS—Blue Note 46515 (Kenny Dorham)
 ELLA A NICE—Fantasy/OJC 442 (Ella Fitzgerald)
 MONTREUX '77—Fantasy/OJC 376 (Ella Fitzgerald)
 AT EASE—Fantasy/OJC 181 (Coleman Hawkins)
 NIGHT HAWK—Fantasy/OJC 420 (Coleman Hawkins)
 TODAY AND NOW—Impulse! (Coleman Hawkins—out of print)
 FREDDIE FREELOADER—Denon 81757-i302-2 (Jon Hendricks)
 THE TROMBONE MASTER—Columbia 14443 (J.J. Johnson)
 OUR DELIGHTS—Galaxy 5113 (Hank Jones)
 BLUES FOR DRACULA—Fantasy/OJC 230 (Philly Joe Jones)
 THE INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR—Fantasy/OJC 036 (Wes Montgomery)
 YOU MUST BELIEVE IN SPRING—Antilles 314 512 570 (Frank Morgan)
 SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS—Fantasy/OJC 291 (Sonny Rollins)
 FALLING IN LOVE WITH JAZZ—Milestone '179 (Sonny Rollins)
 HERE'S TO MY LADY—Chesky JD3 (Phil Woods)

MILLER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

TIME AND AGAIN—Landmark 1532
 FROM DAY TO DAY—Landmark 1525
 THE COUNTDOWN—Landmark 1519
 WINGSPAN—Landmark 1515
 WORK!—Landmark 1511
 KEYS TO THE CITY—Landmark 1507
 LANDMARKS—Landmark 1311

with others

WHAT AM I HERE FOR?—Criss Cross 1054 (Harold Ashby)
 LIVE AT KIMBALL'S—Concord Jazz 4307 (Art Blakey)
 ART COLLECTION—Concord Jazz 4495 (Art Blakey)
 IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MELODY—Verve 314 513 870 (Betty Carter)
 BENNY RIDES AGAIN—GRP 9665 (Eddie Daniels & Gary Burton)
 MUSIC IS MY MISTRESS—MusicMasters 5013 (Mercer Ellington)
 DEDICATION—JMT 834 433 (Robin Eubanks & Steve Turre)

INTRODUCING KENNY GARRETT—Criss Cross 1014 (Kenny Garrett)
 DOUBLE TAKE—Blue Note 46294 (Freddie Hubbard & Woody Shaw)
 THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE—Blue Note 48117 (Freddie Hubbard & Woody Shaw)
 REJUVENATE!—Criss Cross 1035 (Ralph Moore)
 COMMUNICATIONS—Criss Cross 1034 (Steve Nelson)
 SAM I AM—Criss Cross 1056 (Sam Newsome)
 THE COMPLETE CBS STUDIO RECORDINGS OF WOODY SHAW—Mosaic MD3-142
 THE LURE OF BEAUTY—Criss Cross 1049 (Gary Smulyan)
 JOHN SWANA AND FRIENDS—Criss Cross 1055 (John Swana)
 NATIVE HEART—Blue Note 93170 (Tony Williams)
 ANGEL STREET—Blue Note 48494 (Tony Williams)
 BLUE SKIES—JMT 834 419 (Cassandra Wilson)

Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw [*Double Take* and *The Eternal Triangle*]. *Live At Kimball's* with Art Blakey. And the one I just did with Harold Ashby [*What Am I Here For?*].

TF: I did a *Giant Steps* with the trio. I like the one dedicated to Thelonious Monk called *Thelonica*. There's a couple I did with Coleman Hawkins I'm proud of. *Today And Now*. . . . The records with Ella were mostly live, and I didn't care for them much. It was a cheap way to record. I had some wonderful nights playing with Ella but they weren't recorded.

MB: *How much do you practice?*

MM: Not enough. I don't have a routine. I spend so much time on the road. It's not like I imagine it was in Tommy's younger days when all the hotels had pianos. You can't get to a piano half the time on the road. When I'm at home I try to do one or two hours. I practice very basic things, technical things, scales. I call them gymnastics. And sometimes I just play.

TF: There's a Czerny book of exercises for the left hand that I love. It keeps you flexible. But I don't practice much.

MM: He doesn't need to.

TF: Teddy Wilson asked a classical pianist when he practiced, and he said, "Oh, I did that already!"

MB: *Something you haven't done, either of you, is record one of the solo sessions for Concord Jazz at the Maybeck Recital Hall.*

TF: I'm doing one.

MM: They called me, but I respectfully and politely declined to do a solo record. It's just not what I want to do right now.

TF: I don't like to perform solo that often. It's not the best way I can play, but I love doing it. I can sit at home and entertain myself for hours.

MM: I understand that. Playing at home is quite a different process than delivering the kind of performance you'd want on record. It's difficult for me to deliver a satisfying performance of solo piano in a studio. I sometimes suffer from a high degree of self-consciousness.

TF: You've got to work at it to really feel comfortable. You have to do it a lot. I feel comfortable playing with the trio because I've been doing it a lot. It doesn't feel comfortable to sit in front of a lot of people naked, and wondering, "Where's those other two guys?"

MM: Meanwhile, if somebody secretly recorded Tommy or other pianists in their living rooms when they didn't know they were being recorded, you'd probably hear some of the most amazing solo piano you'd ever want to hear.

MB: *If you were alone together with a piano now, what would you play or talk about?*

TF: If there was a piano, he'd play something, and I'd have to say, "What's that? Show

me that!" That goes on with pianists all the time.

MM: There are so many things I'd ask Tommy about, pianistic things, but also about his development, how he shaped his style and his concept, who he listened to and how he worked it out. That has a lot to do with who a person is. . . . I was talking with Tommy at the Vanguard a few years ago, and

he said something really profound. We were talking about how great some guys are, how much stuff they have together. And he said, "You know, it's the guys who spend the most time with the instrument who are furthest along." It was a simple statement but so profound. I always think about that.

MB: *And yet you don't like to practice much.*

TF: Oh, I did that already!

DB

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So Much Music, So Little Time

DAVID MURRAY

By Bill Milkowski

A prolific composer, a frequent collaborator, and relentless road warrior, reedman David Murray is eager to place his distinctive horn in as many contexts as possible. And he has had the luxury, unlike some of his peers, to document many of his ideas on record. Currently, Murray records for Columbia/DIW but also has an association with Bob Thiele's Red Baron label and has had an ongoing relationship with Giovanni Bonandrini, the Black Saint label head who championed Murray's cause throughout the '80s.

The man's output is staggering. Even Murray himself has a hard time keeping up with which ones are coming out on what label and which ones remain on the shelf. Last year saw two excellent releases on DIW in *Special Quartet* (with Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner, and Fred Hopkins—see "Reviews" Dec. '91) and *Shakill's Warrior* (with Don Pullen, Stanley Franks, and Andrew Cyrille). Around the same time, Thiele released *Black And Black* (with Roy Haynes, Kirk Lightsey, Santi DeBriano, and Marcus Belgrave). Yet another Murray offering was his superb big-band release on DIW with Butch Morris conducting and featuring a cast of "overlooked all-stars" from New York (see "Reviews" July '92).

A restlessly creative spirit, Murray is back with another deluge of releases in the coming year; again, no two are alike. On the DIW horizon, in no particular order, are *David Murray Quartet Plus One*, with special guest Branford Marsalis; a kinetic duet with waves-of-energy drummer Milford Graves, appropriately titled *The Real Deal*; a recording of Bobby Bradford's heartfelt tribute to John Carter, the gorgeous *Have You Seen Sideman?* suite featuring the late, great Ed Blackwell on drums; a suite for Picasso with his octet; and another big-band recording with Butch Morris and company which he insists is better than the previous one.



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Other upcoming recordings on unspecified labels include *The Baltic Suite* with an ensemble of German and Scandinavian musicians, another duet recording with pianist Dave Burrell, and a special project showcasing bass-clarinet playing exclusively. Meanwhile, Thiele is releasing *MX*, a musical tribute to Malcom X, under the Murray banner for Red Baron. Plus, there's a new killer World Saxophone Quartet album on its way from Elektra Nonesuch featuring vocalist Fontella "Rescue Me" Bass and pianist Amina Claudine Meyers.

Murray is able to juggle all these projects because he doesn't get bogged down with the non-musical aspects of the business. He just continues to steamroll ahead, working and composing and recording, picking up momentum in his career as he hits age 38.

He was on his way to the airport immediately following this interview. Today, Istanbul for a gig with some Turkish percussionists, tomorrow Hamburg with the Baltic

Ensemble. Have horn will travel. So little time, so much music to make.

"I would like to be able to play with everyone who plays jazz . . . everyone who plays any kind of music," says the tenor titan. "By the time I die, I would like to be able to play with any musician on the planet and know something about what they do as well as they know about what I do. I think that's the process that Duke Ellington went through in his lifetime. He learned a little bit from every culture, and he reflected that in his suites about different cultures."

Murray's own recent interest in suites (*The Baltic Suite*, Bradford's *Have You Seen Sideman?*, and *Picasso Suite*, inspired by and orchestrated from a 1948 solo by Coleman Hawkins that he dedicated to Pablo Picasso) seems to be partially motivated by an awareness of marketing strategy.

"Suites seem to be the thing of the day, I guess," he reasons. "Most record companies want some kind of angle. So rather than

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going at the angle of mixing up musicians who would never, ever play with one another. To me, it's better to go at the angle of having the music performed in a suite. It keeps the music from being trite. In the '80s, I was getting tired and weary of producers wanting to throw me in with people who didn't have anything to do with jazz. The last thing they would want would be a jazz drummer. I couldn't understand it, and a lot of those dates were terrible. I did some of them just to make some money, but my heart wasn't quite into it. It was some type of fusion, I guess you'd call it. Some of it was electric. But it just never gelled to me.

“The only guy who I was really able to gel with who did that kind of stuff was Kip Hanrahan. I worked on his project, *Conjure* [on Pangaea], and we also did a tour with Billy Bang, Little Jimmy Scott, and Ishmael Reed. That was most satisfying. For something that's in that mode, that's probably about the best there is, I would think.”

“I'm not here to be a star show. . . . I just wanna be one of the cats who can play.”



Searching for the source of his mid-'80s discontent, I wondered aloud if he had problems with the electric, harmonic approach of James Blood Ulmer and Jamaaladeen Tacuma in their Music Revelation Ensemble.

“Oh, I love playing with Blood because he has a concept. Playing with him is always exhilarating because Blood is the best at what he does. Jamaaladeen is also the best at what he does. I have no problems there. The electric thing doesn't bother me as long as somebody's got a concept. I'll always be attracted to a cat who's got a concept. Milford Graves is one of those guys that has his own concept. As long as a person has something that he's developed that really depicts what he thinks about all the time . . . when a person has a concept, you can hear the agony, you can hear the blissfulness, you can hear everything. In Milford's playing you can hear Africa, you can hear Brazil, you can hear everything. You can see the whole world in somebody's playing if they have a concept. It's the same with Blood Ulmer, the same with Craig Harris, same with Dave Burrell and Billy Bang. These are people who really have a concept.”


“And I have a concept, but it took me a long time to really develop it. When I came to New York in 1975, I was studying everybody, probably sounding like them. Like any



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Murray with fellow road warrior Fred Hopkins

younger player who wants to sound good, you have to study others, you're not just gonna come upon it all by yourself. Not unless you're Charlie Parker or somebody. They threw away the mold when he died. So you've gotta study people to be good. It's like, you can't be a great writer without acknowledging the great works. You just can't get around James Joyce, you can't get around Ralph Ellison, you can't get around Albert Murray, you can't get around Chaucer. You can't get around these people. You don't just come up with a concept all on your own, because they didn't either.

"But as far as being a saxophone player, I probably developed my own sound when I got to be 27 or 28. And I encourage my students around the world to keep trying to develop their own sound because that's their ticket to success. A sound is like a signature, to quote Cecil Taylor."

Murray laments the fact that certain seasoned musicians who *have* developed their own sound and *do* have a concept have been largely ignored by the recording industry and overlooked by the music media.

"There's so many good musicians out here, so many good jazz musicians in New York, that to focus on just a few, to me, is just obscene. It doesn't make any sense. And even if I thought in that vein, if I may be one of the chosen ones, for me it's no good because I didn't come here to be a scapegoat of any kind. I'm in love with the art of jazz. And there's a lot of players, man, that are being overlooked.

"It's a shame," he continues. "I hate to see great musicians in their latter years being frustrated. These kind of frustrations seem to be dictated by certain powers-that-be in the jazz world. And those are the kinds of things that I would like to see corrected. One of these days . . . if things don't get fixed correctly, I don't know what I'm gonna do. Maybe I need to be a producer or something

. . . try to record these people myself. Because it ain't right that these cats have not gotten their due."

I mention Carter Jefferson, he comes back with Bobby Bradford, Rasul Siddik, Hugh Ragin, Craig Harris . . . "I could make a list, man. Look, there's a lot of people out here who can really play. And not just in that particular genre but in other genres, too. There's a lot of bop players that haven't got their due that are being pushed aside for the younger generation of kids that seem to pose at being bebop players. You got Dizzy Reece, for one. He's a great player who is one of the pioneers. I mean, he played with Bird, man. Why isn't he trumpeted out here? Does he have to be 85 years old like Doc Cheatham to start getting a little play? You know, there's a lot of guys, man, and if I start naming them we'll be here all day. On every instrument there are great, great players being ignored. I just don't understand it.

"Jazz has never been the kind of business when you get old you get pushed aside. Most musicians play until they die. Clifford Jordan is sick now but I always thought he should've had a much bigger push than he got. There's a tenor saxophone player over in Europe named Andy Hamilton. He's like the Lester Young or Ben Webster of England. I've done a recording with him called *Silvershine* [World Circuit]. Man, he's a great player, and he's been overlooked, even by the English. So there's a lot of great players that are out there. All over the world."

Murray also maintains that some of the best new music being composed today goes unrecorded. "There's a lot of people out here doing good writing and arranging these days. Baikida Carroll's music that he dedicated to John Carter is beautiful. And, of course, Bobby Bradford's suite for John is gorgeous. Anthony Davis and James Newton are doing some beautiful things. Craig Harris is coming on like Mozart or some-

body. He's got a wealth of music inside him . . . and on paper, as does Leroy Jenkins. So it's time for the record companies to wake up and start recording all this music that's just sitting around."

When I mention that it's very commendable of him to bring some of these players to the attention of people through performances and recordings with his octet and big band, Murray is quick to point out, "Look, the tides could be turned, and I could be playing in their big band. And if they ask me, I certainly will because I respect these players. I'm not here to be a star show. I'm not here for that. I just wanna be one of the cats who can play."

At the time of this interview, Murray was eagerly anticipating a December guest appearance with the American Jazz Orchestra at Cooper Union in New York. "Gary Giddins called me up for that, and it was really nice that he did because I always wanted to play with that orchestra. It was nice to be able to play with them because I'll probably never get the opportunity to play with this orchestra they have at Lincoln Center, with Wynton Marsalis and all his cousins and all their dogs and cats, family and generations."

Hmm . . . touched a nerve, or what?

When I suggest that a recent engagement at the Village Vanguard is one example of how he's gained mainstream acceptance since the '80s, David snaps, "Oh, I was playing at the Vanguard when it meant something to play at the Vanguard. When Max Gordon was alive I think it meant a lot more to play at the Vanguard, because his tastes were very rigid in a certain way, but in a positive way. First of all, you had to be good to play at the Vanguard. And he didn't go for no nonsense. I just remember him coming up to me and saying, 'Keep playing the ballads. Keep playing the ballads. That fast stuff I don't like. Play some ballads.' And I thought about it. He had a point. It's just like he's part of the old guard, and he's gone now. I dug Max.

"And his wife [Lorraine] . . . she's a little more flexible in terms of the choice of music she brings in. But at the same time, when it was difficult to get into the Vanguard, I was already playing there. Not like today . . . darn near anybody plays at the Vanguard. It doesn't have to fit the mold of the old Max Gordon Vanguard, which in a way is good because time must move on. But at the same time, I feel like I've been there a little longer. I've had more experience playing that gig than a lot of players do. So if somebody now tells me they're playing at the Vanguard, it's not like 12 years ago when they'd tell me they're playing at the Vanguard. It's a little more flexible now. He would bring people in

to play who he respected, nothing more, nothing less.

"I also play at Condon's in town, and I might even go back into Sweet Basil. The Blue Note has already told me that my music is too . . . they associate me with a certain crowd . . . avant-garde musicians or something. I always thought that avant garde was a painting style of a certain period. I never knew that it applied to music."

His wife, Ming Smith Murray, a fine-arts photographer whose work has graced several Black Saint covers, is seated with us in the Columbia conference room. She pulls out a copy of her latest project, *A Ming Breakfast: Grits And Scrambled Moments*. It's a book full of evocative black & white portraits of jazz musicians, including Sun Ra, Betty Carter, Babs Gonzalez, and David Murray, with captions by writer Albert Murray and a foreword by director Gordon Parks. "We're in business together," says David, looking at his wife with obvious pride. "This book will be for sale in stores and everywhere I am. We're gonna be selling them off the bandstand."

And with that, he glances at his watch and announces his desire to head to the airport. Istanbul is waiting . . . and then on to Hamburg, followed by Lincoln, Nebraska for a duet concert with percussionist Kahil El'Zabar, then a week with his quartet in Canada, followed by the American Jazz Orchestra gig in New York.

Constant motion, constant growth.

"Yeah, I'm busy. I like to stay busy . . . stay alive. I'll continue to keep creating. That's the main focus for me. There's a lot of people out there that play the same stuff over and over. But I'm constantly kicking myself, trying to make myself change and do something different, so I won't become bored with my own self. So right now, writing fills that void. The more I write, the more strange the music sounds, and the more strange my playing gets. After a certain point, it gets less strange, then the next thing I know it becomes part of my concept. But you have to go through that period of strangeness and assuredness to get to something that's normal or kosher enough for people's palate."

Connecting with listeners, then, seems to be on Murray's agenda for the '90s. And collaboration just might be the key. "You have to be a little more flexible if you want to survive financially playing jazz." That's something I need to do very much, is survive financially. And I have to have my feet in different camps to do that."

As he rises to leave, he adds, "I can play with anybody . . . hopefully, I can. I'd like to play with the Philharmonic. I'd like to be a soloist with them one day. That's probably impossible, but I would be all ears for that. I'd like to play at Bill Clinton's Inaugural Ball. I try not to put any boundaries on myself.

When you say 'can't,' you usually mean 'won't.' My mother and father always taught me there's nothing you can't do if you have God behind you and if you put your heart into it. Eleanor Roosevelt said, 'The things that you cannot do are the things that you should do.' And, to me, that meant a lot. Because

things that are difficult are things that are gonna be more satisfying once you accomplish them. I feel like that."

Look for Murray to sit in with some philharmonic at some point in the future . . . maybe at the Inaugural Ball for Clinton's second term. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

David Murray plays and endorses Das Blaushaus Black Pearl Series tenor saxes, made for him by a new company based in Luzern, Switzerland. "This is a very special horn . . . really loud and different-sounding. It's basically a Conn sax with Selmer keys

and is dark grey, almost blue in color." He continues to use #4 Rico Royal reeds and a Berg-Larson 120/2 mouthpiece with an eight lay. He also plays a Leblanc bass clarinet with an Otto Link mouthpiece.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

MX—Red Baron (tba)
SPECIAL QUARTET—DIW Columbia 52955
BLACK AND BLACK—Red Baron 48852
BIG BAND—DIW Columbia 48964
SHAKILL'S WARRIOR—DIW Columbia 48963
MING'S SAMBA—Portrait 44432
SPIRITUALS—DIW 841
MING—Black Saint 120045
HOME—Black Saint 120055
HOPE SCOPE—Black Saint 120139
LIVE AT SWEET BASIL, VOLS. 1 & 2—Black Saint 120085/120095

with the World Saxophone Quartet

METAMORPHOSIS—Elektra/Nonesuch 79258

RHYTHM AND BLUES—Elektra/Musician 60864
DANCES AND BALLADS—Elektra/Nonesuch 79164
PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON—Elektra/Nonesuch 79137
REVUE—Black Saint 120056
LIVE AT BAM—Black Saint 120096
W.S.Q.—Black Saint 120046

with various others

MUSIC REVELATION ENSEMBLE—DIW 825 (Music Revelation Ensemble)
ELECTRIC JAZZ—DIW 839 (Music Revelation Ensemble)
IN OUR STYLE—DIW 819 (Jack DeJohnette)
THE HEALERS—Black Saint 120118 (Randy Weston)



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You Bop Your Life

SHIRLEY SCOTT

By Russell Woessner



Bill and Shirley boppin' on the set of *You Bet Your Life*

Think of a musician who fronts a jazz band on a national television program, and the first image that comes to mind is probably that of a young saxophonist from New Orleans. But in recent months, a mature female organist from Philadelphia has been providing a jazz backdrop for a nationally syndicated television program. Shirley Scott leads the house band on *You Bet Your Life*, starring Bill Cosby.

"I wanted someone for the show who was knowledgeable, especially about the music called jazz," explains Cosby. "Not the titty-boom, but the music that I was brought up on from the '40s to the '60s: bop, Broadway tunes, and the blues. Shirley Scott fits the bill perfectly."

Last fall, the show premiered on 126 stations across the country. Taped in Cosby's hometown of Philadelphia and based on the 1950s program of the same name hosted by Groucho Marx, *You Bet Your Life* features the amiable comedian chatting and clowning with contestants as they wager on their answers to questions in designated categories. As on Groucho's show, players win bonus money if they unknowingly utter a predetermined "secret word," but Groucho's duck has been replaced by a black goose wearing a Temple University sweatshirt and smoking a stogey. George Fenniman was Groucho's straight man; now Robbi Chong (cryptically referred to as "Renfield") introduces the contestants.

Choosing Scott to be the music director of the program is only the latest example of what seems to be Cosby's continuing campaign to bring jazz to national television. When he filled in for Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show*, Cosby invited Wynton Mar-

salis, Sonny Rollins, and other jazz musicians to perform. On the comedian's immensely popular sitcom, *The Cosby Show*, Max Roach, Betty Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Williams, and others made guest appearances.

Cosby's selection of Scott is not difficult to understand. He was doubtlessly familiar with her classic recordings with saxophonists Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Stanley Turrentine, her former husband. Performing on the Hammond B-3, Scott embellishes her basic blues & gospel vocabulary with the intricate harmonies of bebop. In her words, "I play straight-ahead bebop. No avant garde, no fusion, no confusion, and always some blues. Bebop can go anywhere the musicians take it."

As the music director for *You Bet Your Life*, Scott is responsible for all of the musical interludes on the program. These include the theme (which Scott co-wrote with Cosby), sonic support for contestants while they search for an answer, and any other impromptu melodies or sounds requested by Cosby. Scott remembers that she and Cosby composed the theme song in a rather unorthodox way. "He had some ideas about a theme," she recalls, "so he sent me a cassette of him singing. He sang the rhythm, and he gave me an idea for the melody that he wanted. I listened to him singing, and we collaborated and came up with a theme."

In addition, the sextet performs for the

studio audience before and after each taping. Then the band gets to stretch out on bop standards, and the music roils and churns. But this is strictly for the in-house audience's benefit, not for the folks watching in their living rooms. According to Scott, Cosby "wants the audience to be relaxed when he comes out. So we try to play something they might know. Nothing loud or overbearing. We want to make them feel at home. It's fun music. But it's not the run-of-the-mill music for a TV show. It's all jazz."

Joining Scott in the hard-bop oriented ensemble are some veteran Philadelphia musicians as well as some up-and-coming talents from the area. Alto saxophonist Tony Williams, bassist Arthur Harper, and drummer Billy James can usually be found on the bandstand, often in Scott's company, at Ortlieb's Jazzhaus, a Philly restaurant that presents live jazz seven nights a week. The emerging voices in the sextet belong to trumpeter Terrell Stafford, who has recorded with Bobby Watson, and saxophonist Tim Warfield, one of the Tough Young Tenors.

Scott is particularly proud to have Stafford and Warfield in the band. "They're excellent musicians," she says. "It makes me feel good that there are young musicians who value the music, have respect for it. They open up my ears to something different. Anything I can do to help them, I will do. I almost feel like they're part of my family."

These warm sentiments are echoed by Warfield when he discusses Scott. "She's like an aunt," he explains. "We call her Auntie Shirley. She's very, very easy to get along with. She relates easily to the younger generation. We talk about everything—life, music, relationships. She's my confidante. I think that helps the music. What's missing now is the communal aspect of the music. Playing with her is like family." Stafford adds that he appreciates Scott's humor as well as her nurturance. "She's a very warm person, very, very caring," he says. "And she's very funny, very hilarious. She's always happy about life."

Both Stafford and Warfield credit Scott for teaching them about the music's history and repertoire. In Terrell's words, "The thing that I love about Shirley is that her patience is incredible. Tim and I are the youngest guys in the band. So there are a lot of standards that we don't know. She doesn't mind us learning on the bandstand." Tim agrees that playing with Scott "is a lot of fun. I consider myself blessed to have the opportunity to play with her. I'm learning a lot because Shirley plays a lot of music that is beyond my era."

Although, by his own admission, he is not

a professional musician, Bill Cosby often sits in with the band between shows. While his playing is essentially another opportunity to exercise his comedic muse, Cosby demonstrates considerable proficiency behind both the drums and the keyboards. He has even borrowed Stafford's trumpet once or twice. One evening, during a rousing rendition of Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'," Cosby cued repeated saxophone moans for comedic effect while he picked out a tasty blues-inflected melody on the piano. In his solo, Cosby scrambled across the keys, sounding something like Don Pullen playing Monk. Then he snapped into an in-the-pocket hard-bop groove, to the studio audience's hearty approval.

Tim Warfield comments that "it's obvious that Bill listens to jazz all the time, even in what he's *not* playing. What I found interesting was his use of space. What he plays is like what a jazz musician would play." Warfield has also noticed Cosby's affection for the music in their conversations. "When I talk to Bill about the music," he says, "it's like talking to my father or an older friend. When Bill talks about jazz, his eyes light up. I couldn't see him having any other music on the show."

Scott says that Cosby "likes to have fun. It's great. Sometimes I'm so engrossed in what he's doing that I almost forget to play."

In addition to her duties on *You Bet Your Life*, Scott is an assistant professor of music at Cheyney University, where she earned a degree with honors. Along with Maxine Gordon (Dexter's widow), Scott runs a jazz music production company. Last year, she received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts to compile definitive piano sheets of Dexter Gordon's compositions and a selection of solos to be made available to students and other musicians. Next month, Candid will release a live recording of Scott at Birdland with Harper and drummer Mickey Roker; Warfield and Stafford make guest appearances. The inexhaustible Scott also finds time to be the music director at the Spencer U.A.M.E. Church in Chester, Pa., work on a jazz oratorio for chorus and orchestra, and play bingo.

Summing up her involvement with *You Bet Your Life*, Scott is sanguine. "I just hope that we will be there in the future," she concludes. "I hope Bill keeps that jazz focus. If I can continue playing this music, I will be very happy." **DB**

La Voz.

Benny Golson
La Voz tenor hard

Everette Harp
La Voz soprano medium hard
La Voz alto medium hard
La Voz tenor medium hard

Jeff Kashiwa
La Voz soprano medium
La Voz alto medium
La Voz tenor medium hard

Ronnie Laws
La Voz alto hard
La Voz tenor hard

Sonny Rollins
La Voz tenor medium soft

David Sanborn
La Voz alto medium

Stanley Turrentine
La Voz tenor medium hard

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Rico Royal alto #2 1/2

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Rico Royal tenor #3 1/2

Sonny Rollins
Rico Royal tenor #2 1/2

Stanley Turrentine
Rico Royal tenor #3 1/2

Frederick L. Hemke

Kenny G
Hemke soprano #2 1/2
Hemke tenor #3
Hemke alto #3

Kenny Garrett
Hemke alto #3, #3 1/2

Jeff Kashiwa
Hemke tenor #2 1/2

Stanley Turrentine
Hemke tenor #3 1/2

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Rico baritone #3 1/2

John Klemmer
Rico tenor #2 1/2 and #3
Rico soprano #2 1/2

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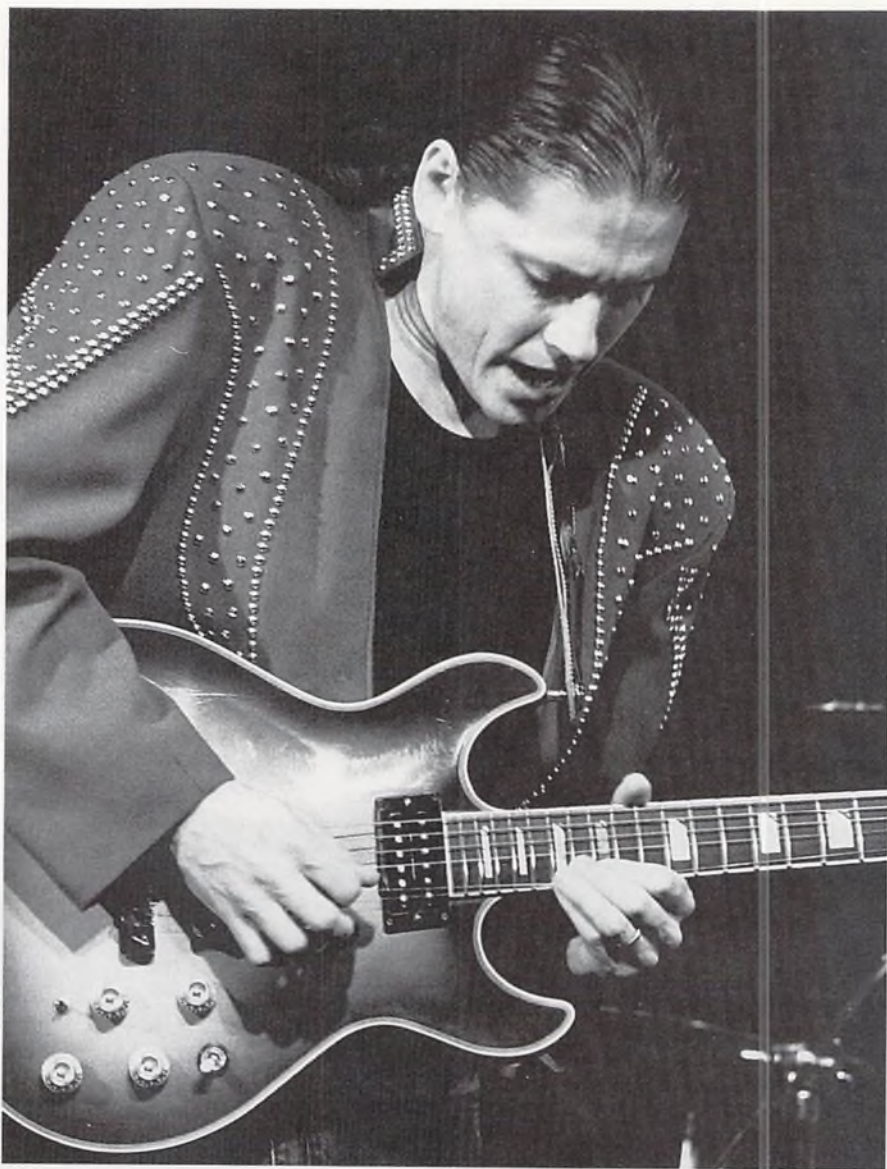
ROBBEN FORD

By Josef Woodard

He's been around the world more than a few times. His resumé boasts employment with Joni Mitchell, George Harrison, Little Feat, and Miles Davis. His eminently tasteful, signature sound is one of those instantly recognizable, personalized pacts between touch, tone, and, especially, phrasing. Paying heed to the head and the heart, he mediates the urgency and sting of a blues player with a jazz player's technical fluency and instinctual taste for adventure. No list of the major guitarists on the scene would be complete without him.

Robben Ford would seem to have it all, except for luck and patience with the record industry. Recently, Ford the solo artist dented the new-releases bin for only the third time in his brilliant, almost 25-year career. *Robben Ford & The Blue Line*, one of two inaugural releases on Chick Corea's new Stretch label (see "Reviews" Dec. '92), comes four years after the release of his first blues-oriented project, the Grammy-nominated *Talk To Your Daughter*. And that album came a decade after his first album, *Inside Story*.

Plainly, the blues is the well from which Ford's current direction springs, but he's reluctant to accept easy stylistic categories when describing his music. "In my group, we play jazz," he insists, sitting in Jerry's Deli in Studio City, California. "It's maybe not as obvious to some, because it's such a heavy blues context, but we always try to keep that harmonic interest going. The use of chord changes and altered tones and passing tones from one chord to another is all there. We don't go as far as in a real straightahead context, or even music like what David Sanborn does, but I think that's just appearances. Obviously, the beat is swinging, and a song like 'Cut Me To The Bone' has II-V-I



ALAN STRAUJER

"... I am a lover of acoustic music. But the acoustic guitar never really appealed to me very much. I like the electric guitar, because I like blues guitarists."

chord changes. It starts off with brushes. It's both a blues shuffle and a jazz thing.

"All the elements are there. Our band is so diverse, so eclectic. Everybody plays a little bit of everything, if not a lot of everything."

The Blue Line's drummer, Tom Brechtlein, has played with Chick Corea and Wayne Shorter, among a host of other jazz and fusion bands. Roscoe Beck, among other bassist and production roles, has long played with guitarist Eric Johnson.

Born in 1951, Ford soaked up a wealth of music via records and his father's troubadorial traits all while growing up in the northern Californian town of Ukiah.

With his brothers, he played in the Charles Ford Band (named after their father), which landed a job backing Charlie Musselwhite, which led to a gig for Robben with Jimmy Witherspoon in the early '70s. There, he met future Yellowjackets member Russell Ferrante, with whom he had a jazz project on the side. "We were playing blues with 'Spoon, but this music was really more inspired by Coltrane and Wayne Shorter.

"I was playing tenor saxophone myself, at least half the time. The electric guitar, for me, has been kind of a frustrating instrument, because I am a lover of acoustic music. But on the other hand, the acoustic guitar never really appealed to me very much. I like the electric guitar, because I like blues guitarists. Beyond that, I like jazz artists—Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Yusef Lateef, Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman. These are the guys I really dig."

In Ford's phrasing, you can hear the natural ebb and flow, a sense of almost breath-controlled cadences. "It's a direct result of loving and listening to horn players," he asserts. "It is something that you don't hear in a lot of other guitar players. It's true. Miles Davis once said that, in his own playing, there was less breathing than he had had—this was in a certain period. He said, 'It must be all these guitar players I've been having in my bands.' It was having an effect on him, so that he was playing longer lines and breathing less."

It was his precocious guitar work that attracted Tom Scott, who invited Ford to replace Larry Carlton to play with Joni Mitchell alongside the L.A. Express. During that period, Ford earned a reputation as a studio player, almost by osmosis. "I was being associated with first-class studio musicians, and that's where the reputation developed. Because of Tom Scott, John Guerin, and Max Bennett—those people—I started getting calls.

"But I was not a reader, and I didn't enjoy practicing reading. I tried, but it was not an enjoyable experience for me. It wasn't where my energy was. My desire was always to have my own band and make my own music. But you've got to make a living. It's a tough industry, especially when you're trying to make records. That messes everything up," Ford grins his famous toothy, dimpled grin.

Ford will be always remembered for his sweet & dirty guitar solo on Mitchell's "In France They Kiss On Main Street." But from his Mitchell days, Ford also remembers three blues tracks cut for *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* that were never released. "Jaco Pastorius was playing bass; he always had something interesting to say, no matter what. John Guerin was wonderful. It was sad that they never made it to the record."

Through the mid-'70s, Ford continued to work the session mill, but he was also trying to nurture his own music. Finally, he debuted as a leader with the much-heralded *Inside Story*, held up by many an aficionado as a fusion classic. That same band—Ford, keyboardist Ferrante, bassist Jimmy Haslip, and drummer Ricky Lawson—went on to become the Yellowjackets, which carried on long after Ford left

the band in the early '80s.

At the time, Ford wanted to go in more of a vocal r&b direction for his second Elektra album, but the label was having internal problems and imposed a frustrating roadblock. "It's a weird thing, what happens to me," Ford shakes his head. "I experienced the same thing with Warner Bros. later on. They keep me around because I guess they're thinking, 'Well, something might happen here, because this guy is good,' but they don't let me work. They just don't drop me from the label for a couple of years, and then they do."

"[My phrasing is] a direct result of loving and listening to horn players."



Not one to mince words or wallow in hype, Ford doesn't seem to be just paying lip service when he talks about life on Stretch Records. Chick Corea and his very active partner Ron Moss hold the reins of the label, a subsidiary of GRP. "The whole idea behind this label is music," Ford says simply. "They want to make a living and be a successful label, but not at the expense of music or their artists."

Blue Line is a varied affair, entailing various blues strains and three instrumentals. "Generally, I'm inspired by other records I listen to. The song 'Step On It' was kind of inspired by the Vaughan Brothers' *Family Style* record. It was drawing on that kind of inspiration. With 'Cut Me To The

Bone,' I was looking for something like the old song 'Fever'—a minor-swing thing. 'I'm Your Man' is somewhat of a rewrite of 'Help The Poor' from *Talk To Your Daughter*."

One of Ford's career highlights was his shot at playing in Miles Davis' band in '86. Ford recalls initially being a bundle of nerves and insecurity with Davis. "I was thinking of John Scofield and Mike Stern, feeling like I had to go out there and play like that. I put that away very quickly, because it was important to me to feel good. I said, 'The hell with it, go out there and be yourself and stop worrying about it.' So I did. I started playing with my fingers—playing the blues. And Miles was grinning from ear to ear. He loved it."

But the musical agenda at the time was less than inspiring for the guitarist. "When I first joined, it was loose and extended, but he started going more and more toward the *Tutu* record, and he wanted to play it just like the record. I've always had a hard time with that. I just don't enjoy playing the same shit every night. I couldn't hang with it."

As non-linear as Ford's musical life has been, he's maintained a potent sense of purpose and "something to say" even when the larger picture has been hazy. But when he emerges, as on his latest vehicle, Ford exudes a natural drive and the sheer joy of playing. And, despite the rocky terrain, Ford's had a longevity that should be the envy of many musicians. The toothy dark horse rides again.

"I've always been able to make a living as a musician," Ford explains. "I've always had a career. But there's a personal sense of all the pieces falling into place in your world. It feels like, to me, you make your own world. It's a learning experience for me." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Ford's main axe is a Robben Ford model in Fender's Signature series, a solid-body guitar with two sound cavities, two humbucking pickups equipped with coil-splitters, and an ebony fretboard. "I seem to gravitate towards a little brighter sound"

For amplifiers, Ford swears by the Dumble Overdrive Special and also uses Dumble speaker cabinets. At times, he adds a Fender twin to the loop. "It just opens the sound up and makes it a little bigger. I'm coming through six speakers instead of four, and it spreads the sound out"

The "mighty clean sound" is Ford's ideal, but he also makes judicious use of effects. For chorus

and delay, his TC Electronics 2290 Reverb comes from a VCM 70 and a Real Tube reverb. An ADA MIDI pedal serves as an effects navigator. He also has a volume pedal and a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal at the ready.

But, as Ford says, "far more important than the effects are the guitar and the amp. There's almost always a little chorus and a little reverb going on, and, more often than not, a little delay. But I try to minimize it and keep it natural. I want the guitar sound to be the main thing. The effects are really just enhancements, and mainly because we're just a trio."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

ROBBEN FORD & THE BLUE LINE—Stretch 1102
TALK TO YOUR DAUGHTER—Warner Bros. 25647
INSIDE STORY—Elektra 159

with the Yellowjackets

THE YELLOWJACKETS—Warner Bros. 3573
MIRAGE A TROIS—Warner Bros. 23813

with the Charles Ford Band

THE CHARLES FORD BAND—Arhoolie 4005

as a sideman

THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNs—Elektra 1051 (Joni Mitchell)
IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES—Warner Bros. 23703 (Michael McDonald)
NO LOOKIN' BACK—Warner Bros. 25291 (Michael McDonald)
DOWN ON THE FARM—Warner Bros. 3345 (Little Feat)
POP POP—Geffen 24426 (Rickie Lee Jones)

Key

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



J.J. Johnson

VIVIAN—Concord Jazz CCD-4523: *ALONE TOGETHER; FRANKIE AND JOHNNIE; I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU; I LOVE YOU; WHAT'S NEW; HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN; BUT NOT FOR ME; THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU; AZURE-TE; YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS.* (56:36)

Personnel: Johnson, trombone; Ted Dunbar, guitar; Rob Schneiderman, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Akira Tana, drums.

★★★★★

Whole notes are the lingering kiss of jazz. Johnson, whose considerable reputation rests on the eighth- and 16th-notes of bebop, has now given us an album of whole notes, relatively speaking. A ballad album, *Vivian*, named for the trombonist's late wife, is one of the great ones of the genre.

It has become a cliché to explain that such and such a trombonist has been influenced by J.J. But this shortchanges the master, because here is a side that we may have inadvertently passed over to get to the hair-trigger-like 16ths. His tone is perfect: dark, inherently blue, round. He eschews almost all vibrato, letting the note stand alone in tribute to tone. But the note never becomes a dead beat in the line: there is always rhythmic motion, even at the slowest tempo. Here, too, J.J. turns the simplest descending scalar phrase and embellishment into exquisite improvisation. Restraint is the order of the day.

There's respectful support from the troops. Check Reid's sensitive lines on "Alone Together" and "What's New." Likewise, Schneiderman and Dunbar are harmonic and melodic distillers par excellence. The pianist's introduction to "I Love You" stands as one of the finest supporting acts in recent jazz, and Dunbar's solos on "How Deep Is The Ocean" and "But Not For Me" echo J.J.'s thoughtfulness.

In the meantime, sing the praises of J.J.: his bluesy authority on "Frankie And Johnnie," his

assured swing on "But Not For Me," his lyrical feeling on "I Thought About You" ... the whole album. —Owen Cordle



Maceo Parker

LIFE ON PLANET GROOVE—Verve 317 517 197: *SHAKE EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT; PASS THE PEAS; I GOT YOU (I FEEL GOOD); GOT TO GET U; ADDICTIVE LOVE; CHILDREN'S WORLD; GEORGIA ON MY MIND; SOUL POWER '92.* (73:30)

Personnel: Parker, alto sax, vocals; Fred Wesley, trombone, vocals; Alford "Pee Wee" Ellis, tenor sax, flute, vocals; Rodney Jones, guitar; Kenwood Dennard, drums; Larry Goldings, Hammond organ; Kym Mazelle, vocals (3,4); Candy Dulfer, alto sax (5,8); Vincent Henry, bass guitar (4,5,8).

★★★★ 1/2

Kenwood Dennard

JUST ADVANCE—Big World Music BW2006: *JUST DO IT; JUST DESSERTS; JUST PHRASES; JUST BLUES; JUST DRUMS/JUST GET STARTED JUSTICE; TEEN TOWN; A FULL HEART TODAY; JUST DUO; JUST ADVANCE; PURPLE RAIN.* (56:33)

Personnel: Dennard, drums, Jews Harp (5); Marcus Miller, bass; Hiram Bullock, guitar; Delmar Brown, Charles Blenzig, synthesizer.

★★★★

The expression "ain't nuthin' but a party" certainly applies to this live recording featuring Maceo and the J.B. Horns. Full of long, take-your-time solos and robust chants from the audience, *Life On Planet Groove* is exactly what the genial host Maceo calls it: "Two percent jazz, 98 percent funky stuff"

"Shake Everything You Got" is an earthy vamp that goes on for 16 minutes. Maceo, Fred, and Pee Wee's synchro-funk seems to respond especially well to this rhythm section. The tight interlock provided by Dennard's crisp, syncopated backbeat, Jones' slick rhythm guitar, and Goldings' funky bass pedal work on the B-3 is just what the Horns ordered for this throwdown. Maceo's solo on "Shake" is the epitome of less-is-more. He may not be harmonically adventurous but he sure knows how to squeeze the juice out of a single note.

"Children's World," a melancholy, minor-key ballad in the tradition of James Brown's "It's A Man's Man's World," is Maceo's chance to tell a story on his horn. And on "Georgia" he delivers unspectacular but soulful vocals on top of Goldings' churchy organ. On "Pass The Peas," Wesley shows why he's the funkiest trombone player on the planet. Candy Dulfer makes a guest appearance on "Addictive Love," blowing harmony lines alongside Maceo on this Bebe and Cece Winans ballad. She blows

more Sanborn-inspired alto on "Soul Power '92," an update of that ultra-funky J.B. jam from 1971 that also informed Fela Kuti's churning Afro-funk. The extra half-star is for the fabulous Kym Mazelle, vocalist with Soul II Soul. She nails J.B.'s "I Got You (I Feel Good)" and wails with toe-curling intensity on "Got To Get U" and "Soul Power '92."

Some of those same funky J.B. grooves carry over to *Just Advance*. Kenwood's debut as a leader, "Just Do It" and "Just Blues" in particular scream out for Maceo's soulful alto. The rest of this album is the sound of five friends jamming and showing their influences (Brown, Sly Stone, P-Funk, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles with a bit of Mandrill, Mahavishnu, and post-*Bitches Brew* Miles thrown in).

Bassist extraordinaire Marcus Miller anchors this session with a heavy thumb and nimble fingers. He slaps his way through Jaco's "Teen Town" and flashes some Jaco-influenced fretless work on the studio improvisation, "Just Duo," which also serves as a good vehicle for Kenwood's uncanny display of independence on the kit. Woody, Marcus, and Hiram recreate a Band of Gypsies vibe on "Just Phrases," while the grandiose heavy-metal anthem, "A Full Heart Today," sounds like an overture from a Rush concert. Continuing in this hard-hitting vein, they close on Prince's "Purple Rain." The power and fury of rock with plenty of room for extended soloing along the way. Once upon a time, they called it fusion. —Bill Milkowski



Hal Russell

HAL'S BELLS—ECM 513 781-2: *BUDDHI; MIL-LARD MOTTKER; PORTRAIT OF BENNY; STRANGEST KISS; SUSANNA; CAROLINA MOON; KENNY G; I NEED YOU NOW; FOR FREE; MOON OF MANAKOORA.* (53:46)

Personnel: Russell, tenor, soprano saxes, trumpet, drums, vibraphone, bass marimba, mallet, percussion, voice.

★★★★

The late Hal Russell didn't leave an extensive recorded legacy behind. *Hal's Bells* captures his penultimate sessions, removing him from the familiar environment of his NRG groups for a multi-tracked solo effort. The NRG Ensemble's multifarious frenzy combined with Russell's versatility to obscure his musical identity. *Hal's Bells* sharpens the focus.

Russell is an impressive one-man band. The timing and fit between horns and percussion is so tight that you suspend disbelief to hear the spontaneity of a unit. Russell's tunes are vehicles for improvisation, demonstrating an understanding of how much tension the tightrope

between structure and freedom requires. Driven, emotional solos and aggressive drumming define Russell as an acolyte of the passion and dynamism personified by Albert Ayler and Sunny Murray. Two tenor features, "Carolina Moon" and "Millard Mottker," strongly invoke the wail of early Ayler. "Kenny G," for tenor and vibes, offers melody without compromise, and mercifully, doesn't invoke anybody.

Several tracks showcase Russell's skill with mallet instruments, as "Buddhi" employs an array of gongs and bells to create a percussion collage worthy of Famoudou Don Moye, and "I Need You Now" shows a contemplative (okay, ECM-ish), but abstract approach to the vibes. *Hal's Bells* is a revealing snapshot of an unrepentant free player after three decades of dedication to an unprofitable, unfashionable muse.

—Jon Andrews



Chick Corea

THREE QUARTETS—Stretch 1103: *QUARTET No. 1; QUARTET No. 3; QUARTET No. 2; FOLK SONG; HAIRY CANARY; SLIPPERY WHEN WET; CONFIRMATION* (61:04)

Personnel: Corea, piano; Michael Brecker, tenor sax; Eddie Gomez, bass; Steve Gadd, drums.

★★★★

TOUCHSTONE—Stretch 1104: *TOUCHSTONE; THE YELLOW NIMBUS; DUENDE; COMPADRES; ESTANCIA; DANCE OF CHANCE* (46:12)

Personnel: Corea, keyboards, percussion; Paco De Lucia (1,2), Al DiMeola (4), guitar; Gayle Moran, voices (1); Alex Acuna (1,5,6), Don Alias (2,5,6), Laudir De Oliveira (1,5), Lenny White (4), percussion, drums; Stanley Clarke (4), Carlos Benavent (1,6), Bob Magnusson (3), bass; Lee Konitz, alto sax (3); Carol Shive, violin (3); Greg Gottlieb, cello (3); Al Vizzutti, trumpet (6); Steve Kujala, tenor sax, flute (6).

★★★ 1/2

Two reissues on Chick Corea's new label offer very different looks at this influential pianist/composer. *Three Quartets*, which dates from 1981, burns with post-Coltrane intensity. (And what a bonus it is to hear Michael Brecker in that context.) *Touchstone*, also originally recorded for Warner Bros., but a year later, takes Corea's troops into an ethereal world of synthesized sounds and Latin rhythms.

On *Three Quartets*, drummer Steve Gadd slips into every nook and cranny with clever little asides. He pushes the beat but never forces it. Bassist Eddie Gomez plays just as aggressively—and responsively. Spotlit on Part 1 of the "Quartet No. 2," which is dedicated to Ellington, Corea is a colorist, sweeping up and down the keyboard. But

there's nothing lightweight about his playing here or elsewhere on the recording; he chooses his lines and harmonies carefully.

For the reissue, four tunes from the vaults were added. Like the quartets, they are written by Corea, with one exception. The exception is "Confirmation," where Brecker will surprise some listeners with his masterful, Bird-inspired playing. On Part 2 of the "Quartet No. 2," where modal patterns summon Coltrane's ghost, Brecker also makes you sit up and take notice.

Nothing quite as arresting happens on

Touchstone. It helps to be in a reflective mood when listening to this collection, which moves along as deliberately as a folk epic. Chick, Al Di Meola, Stanley Clarke, and Lenny White rock out on "Compadres," but the appeal is mostly nostalgic. It's nice to hear an old Return to Forever album, too, but how often? Between the dated quality of the sound (Corea's instruments include a Fender Rhodes and various electronic keyboards) and the thin musical ideas, *Touchstone* offers little to savor.

—Elaine Guregian

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Sam Newsome

SAM I AM—Criss Cross 1056: *INTIMACY OF THE BLUES; IN THE VEIN OF TRANE; INDIANA; I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU; PENT-UP HOUSE; BROOKLYN NIGHTS; UPPER MANHATTAN MEDICAL GROUP.* (60:24 minutes)

Personnel: Newsome, tenor sax; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Mulgrew Miller, piano; James Genus, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

★ ★ ★

Javon Jackson

ME AND MR. JONES—Criss Cross 1053: *ME AND MR. JONES; THE MASQUERADE IS OVER; THEME FOR A PENNY; OPUS ONE-POINT-FIVE; A CERTAIN ATTITUDE; A FREE MAN?; BUZZ-AT.* (57:18)

Personnel: Jackson, tenor sax; James Williams, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★

Variations on a theme: Call it the bell-shaped curve of jazz. The middle swells with players such as Jackson and Newsome. There are few extremes these days. The statistical mean is a young musician with smart chops and, if he is a tenor saxophonist, shades of Trane. Newk, Joe Henderson. Hank Mobley, and the like in his style.

So much for the mathematics of the scene. Hello *Me And Mr. Jones*, which, though it is not good grammar, is good jazz. Jackson, who worked with Art Blakey's last group of Jazz Messengers, proves that he can work with another revered drummer: Elvin Jones. The title cut offers a typically thumping Jones intro, Williams' McCoy Tyner-ish piano to set the mood, and a rolling tenor lead that owes as much to Joe Henderson and Billy Harper as to Trane. The pianist's bluesy minor-key, "A Certain Attitude," set to a springy Jones beat, gives us some of the best blowing on the date, everyone loose and natural. Donald Brown's "A Free Man?" sounds diffuse and unfocused by comparison. But this is an anomaly in what is above all a solid mainstream date for the '90s.

If Jackson leans strongest toward Henderson—and he does—Newsome favors early Sonny Rollins, but with a touch of Mobley's relaxation on Billy Strayhorn's "Intimacy Of The Blues" and a bit of Clifford Jordan's exotic tone on "In The Vein Of Trane," a Newsome original. "I Thought About You" shows his thoughtful way with a familiar ballad—fine nuances, no double-time—while the eclectic Miller underscores with choice chords. In Nelson we hear a forthright vibist whose roots include Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutcherson. Tenor and vibes blend most enticingly on Newsome's Shorter-ish "Brooklyn Nights." In summary, a firm three-star date from an up-and-coming tenor man

whose current employer is trumpeter Terence Blanchard.

—Owen Cordle



**Lincoln Center
Jazz Orchestra**

PORTRAITS BY ELLINGTON—Columbia 53145: *PORTRAIT OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG; THANKS FOR THE BEAUTIFUL LAND ON THE DELTA; PORTRAIT OF BERT WILLIAMS; BOJANGLES; SELF PORTRAIT OF THE BEAN; SECOND LINE; TOTAL JAZZ: (FINAL MOVEMENT OF "PORTRAIT OF ELLA FITZGERALD"); LIBERIAN SUITE—I, I LIKE THE SUNRISE, II, DANCE NO. 1, III, DANCE NO. 2, IV, DANCE NO. 3, V, DANCE NO. 4, VI, DANCE NO. 5.* (58:08)

Personnel: David Berger, conductor; Wynton Marsalis, Umar Sharif, Lew Soloff, trumpet; Marcus Belgrave, trumpet, flugelhorn; Wycliffe Gordon (except cut 8), Britt Woodman, trombone; Chuck Connors (8), bass trombone; Norris Turney, Frank Wess, alto sax; Michael White, clarinet (6); Bill Easley, clarinet, tenor sax; Todd Williams, tenor sax; Joe Temperley, baritone sax; Sir Roland Hanna, piano; Steve Nelson, vibes (8); Paul Meyers, guitar (3,4,8); Andy Stein (8), violin; Reginald Veal, bass; Kenny Washington, drums, tympani; Milt Grayson, vocal (8).

★ ★

To hear a live band that gets as close to the sound of Duke Ellington's orchestra as possible outside his lifetime, see the LCJO. On a good night, no ghost band or other repertory ork comes close. Its able cast, a few Ducal vets among them, recreates the distinctive solo styles that define Ellington's sound as much as his voicings do.

But on record (which is what the rating applies to), these concert performances come off as a misguided stunt. Why listen to *Portraits* instead of a real Ellington record? Since the LCJO's recreation of the Ellington effect depends on impersonating Duke's key players, the usual argument for jazz repertory bands—showing the music can live on in fresh interpretations—doesn't apply. Besides, if you look to history to discover jazz's real values, as Lincoln Center's Wynton Marsalis urges, you'll notice great jazz musicians of the past didn't mess with projects like this. They were making their own music, even when playing older compositions.

Defenders of this disc say anything that turns people on to Duke's music is praise-worthy. But as LCJO concedes via flattering (if imperfect) imitation, the sound of Duke's music is the sound of Duke's band. Lincoln Center would better serve the cause of popularizing Ellington and "classical jazz" by pointing record buyers toward the real thing, not a counterfeit.

—Kevin Whitehead

Blues On Fire

by Dan Ouellette

The surprise of the blues reissues two years ago was the Robert Johnson double-cassette/CD box that contained every existing master and alternate take of the seminal slide guitarist's career. The music was gritty and raw, and the collection earned commercial and critical success. The perfect follow-up collection is the superb double-CD box *King Of The Slide Guitar—The Fire/Fury/Enjoy Recordings* (Capricorn 9 42006-2; 74:21/73:49: ★★★★★) by **Elmore James**, one of Johnson's protégés and an incredible slide guitarist and gutbucket blues singer in his own right.

James, who, last year, was inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, was a hero to Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones and the late guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan as well as to such bands as early Fleetwood Mac and the Allman Brothers Band. The blues legend recorded these fiery and stormy sessions from 1959 up to the time of his death (in 1963) in New York, Chicago, and New Orleans for three of r&b producer Bobby Robinson's labels. While James' razor-sharp and aching plaintive blues vocals would suffice to recommend this package, it's his slash & burn slide-guitar



Elmore James: slash & burn blues guitar

stylings that really give his music its emotional depth and dynamic drive

Included here are two takes of James' big-

gest hit, "Dust My Broom" (originally recorded in 1951 on the Jackson, Mississippi-based Trumpet record label), a Johnson tune interpreted with a ferocious rocking beat on the first CD and given a dazzling piano treatment by Walking Willie on the second. On both of these versions, James delivers his trademark lick, a flurry of slide-guitar sparks also appropriated from Johnson's repertoire and given new energy in James' hands. Other notable songs that have been covered by blues artists and rockers over the years include "The Sky Is Crying," "I Believe," "One Way Out," "Look On Yonder Wall," and "Shake Your Moneymaker." Then there are the lesser-known, but equally cooking and soulful gems like "Up Jumped Elmore," "Talk To My Baby," "Every Day I Have The Blues," and "I Can't Stop Loving You," as well as impressive instrumental jams such as the blazing "Bobby's Rock" and the jaunty "Pickin' The Blues."

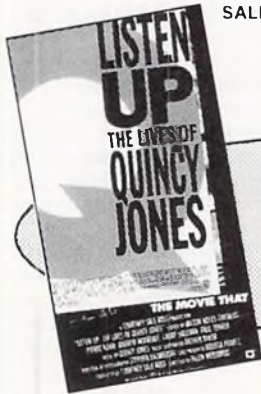
While some of the tunes here are derivative of "Dust My Broom," with minor variations built around James' signature slide riff, what really shines through is the emotional edge of James' singing and playing, facilitated by the spontaneous and often unrehearsed way in which these sessions were recorded. Special bonus: a humorous in-studio conversation James has on life in Mississippi that leads into a romping run through Clifton Chenier's "Blacksnake Blues." **DB**

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-- Stephen Holden, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Cuban Cooking

by Larry Birnbaum

Cuba nowadays may lack food, fuel, and soap, but music has never been in short supply. In seeming anticipation of the Castro regime's demise, a resurgent awareness of Cuban sounds has revitalized the careers of aging expatriates, stimulated classic reissues, and leaked a trickle of recent recordings from the island itself.

Cuban émigré **Mario Bauza** worked with Chick Webb and Cab Calloway before joining his brother-in-law Machito's mambo orchestra for a 35-year stint as music director. His pioneering 1940 Latin-jazz composition "Tanga," newly arranged as a five-part suite by Chico O'Farrill, forms the centerpiece of *Tanga* (Messidor 15819-2; 47:37: ★★★★★). At 81, Bauza leads a fiery big band whose rippling brass roars over explosive percussion, with vocal veteran Rudy Calzado adding an Afro-Cuban accent to "Ganga" and saxist Paquito D'Rivera guesting suavely on "Chucho."

In 1967, several members of Armando Romeu's Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna split to form Irakere, revolutionary Cuba's best-known musical export until Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Now Irakere's leader, **Jesus "Chucho" Valdéz**, the son of mambo star Bebo Valdéz, has cut a solo-piano album, *Lucumi* (Messidor 15976-2; 47:22: ★★★½), that's as eclectic as his band but much less spicy. Without Rubalcaba's dynamic touch or imagination, his smoothly improvised Cuban-jazz fusion drifts impressionistically. Pleasant but bland.

Until his death in 1963, **Beny Moré** was Cuba's most popular singer, belting mambos or crooning boleros with earthy sophistication,



Mario Bauza: stronger than ever

Y Hoy Como Ayer (RCA 3203-2-RL; 42:46: ★★★★★½), from BMG's digitally remastered Tropical Series, collects his mid-'50s hits with his own Orquesta Gigante, after he'd left Perez Prado's band in Mexico and returned to Havana. Avoiding Prado's crude gimmickry, the lush horn charts are more pop than bop, but Moré's soulful tenor soaks every phrase in piquant salsa.

Founded in 1939 and still active today, **Orquesta Aragon** is Cuba's most renowned *charanga*, or flute-and-fiddle band. *That Cuban Cha-Cha-Cha* (RCA 2446-2-RL; 37:35: ★★★★★), also on the Tropical Series, dates from their mid-'50s heyday, when they spearheaded the cha-cha craze. Derived, like the mambo, from the stately *danzon*, the cha-cha likewise came to be smothered in bombastic

brass, but Aragon's elegant arrangements are models of rhythmic delicacy. This isn't their best material, but flutist Richard Egües is never less than sublime.

Modern Cuban pop is rooted in the *son*, a blend of Spanish and African folk musics that emerged at the turn of the century. Non-agenarian **Isaac Oviedo** can still play the guitar-like *tres* and sing rural *sones* with authority, and on his self-titled album (Rounder CD 5055; 65:50: ★★★★★½), the third in Rounder's Routes of Rhythm series, down-home originals like "Ta José" reflect both origins and attitude. "I done heard the mambo," he sings, "but I'm a Congo, and I'll stick to my *son montuno*."

The history of the *son montuno*, a son with a vamping coda, is compiled on *Cuban Counterpoint* (Rounder CD 1078; 64:34: ★★★★★), which traces the music from the Sexteto Habanero, whose '20s recordings spread the Cuban sound worldwide, to Beny Moré, who translated folk rhythms into big-band swing. In between are seminal hits by the Septeto Nacional, Arsenio Rodríguez, Cachao, Celia Cruz, Miguelito Cuni, and Felix Chapotín, plus field recordings and later recreations. Not just academic, it smokes like a fine cigar.

A more up-to-date collection is *Diablo! Infierno New Directions In Cuban Music* (Luaka Bop 9 45107-2; 54:10: ★★★★★), the third in the label's Cuba Classics series. It includes '70s trendsetters Irakere and Los Van Van but spotlights later experiments, from the reggae of Los Blues to the heavy metal of Zeus. More to the point are the Afro-Cuban electronics of Síntesis and the vocalese rumba rhythms of Grupo Vocal Sampling. But the real surprise is N.G. La Banda's triumphant take on New York's imitation Cuban music, complete with the politically incorrect rallying cry, "Salsa!" **DB**

Rhythm, And The Blues

by Kevin Whitehead

Earl Hines' greatness had less to do with so-called "trumpet style" treble lines than with his left-hand revolution, liberating the bass register from ragtime and stride's regular accents. On his late-period solo records—one of the great bodies of work in jazz—he spans continents and centuries: African drum-choir cross-rhythms, early-jazz two-beat phrasing, and avant-garde clusters jostle like no big deal. He'd been doing this stuff for decades, but these sides distill his wisdom.

A full disc of prime Hines kicks off *The Complete Master Jazz Piano Series* (Mosaic MD4-140; 67:56/66:04/73:14/74:33: ★★★★★). On "I Got Rhythm" or "Panama," his free basses take in stride fragments, jabbing single notes, and craggy phrases that start and end in the trees. The master is OUT.

(Note this box—with 10 mostly veteran pianists represented, usually by four tracks each—doesn't contain all the solo piano recorded for the indie Master Jazz label between 1969 and '74 [Hines' essential Ellington songbooks are on New World 361/362], just the stuff released



Earl Hines: the master is OUT

on multi-pianist anthologies—something Mosaic's vague about in ads and the booklet.)

The series almost seems to've been created to demonstrate Earl's influence. (Hines booster Stanley Dance advised the label about artists.) Southpaw **Cliff Jackson's** varied and off-kilter left-hand syncopes on "I Got Rhythm" are very

Earl-y. ("Rhythm" is a test piece for four pianists here—pre-boppers, they play the tune, not just the changes.) **Claude Hopkins'** version is less radical, but the octave-unisons hopping around the bass are out of Hines' bag, too. **Teddy Wilson's** fluid style is like Earl sans the gonzo streak: even with his smooth four-beat flow, he sounds far more old-fashioned. Little-known **Keith Dunham** plays a rollicky "Carolina Shout," but really comes alive on Hines' "Rosetta," popping in and out of manic stride like Earl. On "Love," **Ram Ramirez** (heard on a dozen selections) catches Hines' kaleidoscopic puckishness even without his power chops.

In other veins, **Sir Charles Thompson's** two performances brim with barre-hoove energy and invention; **Sonny White's** style is understated parlor blues, even on "Memories Of You." **Jay McShann** (eight tunes) combines light on-the-beat chords, boogie basses, and Waller-esque sparkle. Most introspective is **Cliff Smalls**, on a slow, seven-minute "Blues In The Afternoon"; most cautious, neglected **Gloria Hearn**, who has a pearly touch, and deliberates over each note or chord before striking it. They're all good. But there's only one Earl. (Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902) **DB**

Scavenger Hunt

by Jon Andrews

Terms like "contemporary classical" don't adequately describe a growing number of composers who borrow forms or instrumentation from classics, only to rummage through a wide range of genres and cultural references for inspiration.

A rebel with an accordion, **Guy Klucevsek** re-invents the polka and commissions new writing for squeezebox. Are you supposed to take this seriously? Yes and no. *Manhattan Cascade* (CRI/Emergency 626; 70:54; ★★★★★) offers infamous "polkas from the fringe," Klucevsek originals with Brazilian and Scottish influences, and "serious" pieces. John Zorn and Christian Marclay encourage Klucevsek to plunder cartoon and film scores,



Christopher Bowers-Broadbent

searching for and destroying accordion clichés. Aside from Marclay's turntable jam and Lois Vierk's multi-tracked, minimalist "Cascade," all compositions are solos for

Klucevsek's "free bass" accordion. Klucevsek combines poker-faced wit and imagination with command of his instrument, forcing you to re-think the accordion's limitations.

Omnivorous **David Lang** writes for chamber ensemble, but claims the punk-rock band Clash as an important influence. *Are You Experienced?* (CRI/Emergency 625; 59:53; ★★★) deploys a range of styles with varying results. The title track borrows a Hendrix riff, improbably arranged for electric tuba, and centers on Lang's eccentric, sometimes annoying narrative about getting hit on the head. Less showy and more interesting, "Orpheus Over And Under" is a pulsating, cyclical duet for pianists Nurit Tilles and Edmund Niemann. Lang's provocative music takes risks and generates surprises, if not lasting impact.

When he's not playing the piano, **Michael Harrison** tunes the piano. Harrison shares with his mentor, minimalist elder statesman LaMonte Young, a fascination with alternative tuning. Harrison's *From Ancient Worlds* (New Albion NA 042; 62:58; ★★★★★) showcases his "harmonic piano," tuned in "just intonation" to mathematically precise intervals (24 notes to the octave). The tuning system and modified strings transform the piano's sound, creating a strangely beautiful "Eastern" timbre, with sustained overtones. The harmonic piano is so seductive that it's easy to overlook the compositions, but, around the third listen, the tuning becomes familiar and Harrison's flowing melodies emerge.

At the pipe organ, **Christopher Bowers-Broadbent** interprets music rarely heard in church. *Trivium* (ECM 849 655-2; 58:28; ★★★½) juxtaposes compositions by Estonian mystic Arvo Pärt and Philip Glass. Pärt's ethereal music belongs in a cathedral. With traces of dissonance and cyclical themes, Pärt's spiritual themes link traditional sacred



Eleni Karaindrou: somber, evocative

music with the 20th century. Bowers-Broadbent approaches these other-worldly scores with the right mixture of spiritual awe and respect for Pärt's intricate structures. He seems less comfortable with Glass. "Satyagraha," transcribed from Glass' second opera, is grand and powerful, if a bit mechanical, missing the color and emotional pull of the original.

Pianist **Eleni Karaindrou** writes for movie theaters, not cathedrals. Her *Music For Films* (ECM 847 609-2; 44:33; ★★★½) arranges excerpts from atmospheric scores to several films by Greek directors, achieving the flow and organization of an extended suite. Jan Garbarek's yearning saxophone is at home in these moody adagios. Lyrical solos for sax, french horn, and accordion drift above pulsing string orchestra and keyboard textures. References to jazz, classical, and Greek folk influences recur through somber, evocative miniatures. Forget context—it's unnecessary. These films are not coming soon to a theater near you. **DB**

A Hard-Drivin' Guy

by David Whiteis

Bluesman **Buddy Guy** burst upon the Chicago recording scene in 1958 with a handful of classic sides for Artistic, a subsidiary of Eli Toscano's influential but ill-fated Cobra label. After Cobra's demise, Guy went to Chess and proceeded to create a remarkable body of work between 1960 and '67. These sides largely defined the hard-driving, arpeggio-laced, and intense post-'50s Chicago blues guitar style and set the stage for the legions of young guitar monsters—both European and domestic—who followed in the '60s and '70s.

The Complete Chess Studio Recordings (Chess 9337; 67:59,71:17; ★★★★★) is just that—a compilation of Guy's Chess output, presented in chronological order. It's all here: Guy's larynx-shredding screams and tormented, rapid-fire leads, those thrash-bang primal Chicago blues arrangements that ga-



Buddy Guy: mid-'60s grit

rage bands have been trying to emulate ever since, and an underlying feel of professionalism: no matter how raw things got, you always felt that these records were calculated to sell.

Virtually every cut's a keeper; personal favorites include "First Time I Met The Blues," which Guy sings like a man writhing in hell; Willie Dixon's anthems to superstition and romantic distrust—"When My Left Eye Jumps," "I Got A Strange Feeling"—laced with a portentous sense of lurking danger; and "Stone Crazy," featuring one of Guy's classic guitar statements: single notes hammered out with machine-like precision and deep passion in symmetrical, box-like phrases. Guy's fiery emotiveness is on display throughout. But unlike his later work, these sides seldom find him flirting with dissonant chaos.

The Very Best Of Buddy Guy (Rhino 70280; 74:27; ★★★) is basically a Guy sampler from the Artistic days through '70s-era sessions with such pop stars as Dr. John, Eric Clapton, and Bill Wyman, to a few offerings from 1982—nothing more current, unfortunately. There are some breathtaking moments—the primal power of the Artistic sides, "Sit And Cry (The Blues)" and "This Is The End"; the intense intimacy among Guy, harpist Junior Wells, and pianist Junior Mance on the acoustic "Five

Long Years"; the convivial atmosphere of an unnamed South Side club where a searing live version of "First Time I Met The Blues" was recorded in 1970; the increasingly closer-to-the-edge hysteria of Guy's guitar work over time.

Unfortunately Rhino has chosen to program these sides out of chronological (or any other discernable) order. Thus, it's virtually impossible to trace Guy's stylistic evolution; it also



D. SHINGLEY

'70s-era Guy: closer to the edge

renders Bill Dahl's excellent liner notes difficult to follow. It's also being alleged that several of these tracks may have found their way to light of day without proper contractual agreements. Such sloppiness on the part of a self-styled aficionado's label like Rhino is unpalatable: 4 stars for the music, 1/2-star demerit for the slipshod programming, another 1/2-star demerit for the appearance of impropriety.

The Vanguard set, *My Time After Awhile* (Vanguard 141/42; 62:12; ★★★★★1/2), is representative of the balance of Guy's major mid-'60s U.S. output. Vanguard got Guy to tone down his excesses without sacrificing his intensity: the result is a smoldering set that fuses muted elegance with soul-piercing aggressiveness. Guy's duets with Junior Wells—"Stormy Monday Blues," "Five Long Years," "Checking On My Baby," "So Sad This Morning"—are masterpieces of synergy and soul communication. Wells' vocals and Guy's guitar playing both sound more sincere and less mannered than either has consistently sounded for years.

The real masterpiece is Mercy Dee Walton's "One Room Country Shack." Guy sings it in a trembling whisper, desolate and forsaken, as pianist Otis Spann noodles around the lower registers sounding like the muted thunder of a breaking heart and Guy inserts high-note guitar cries over the top.

Aside from an unfortunate version of "It Hurts Me Too," which finds Wells straining to find an appropriate emotional niche over the errant ramblings of a bass player who can't comprehend the changes, everything here is at least workmanlike, and most is far more. It's a riveting portrait of a major bluesman in full bloom, before he succumbed to the decadent excesses that have plagued his later work and, ironically, have brought him greater public acclaim.

DB

Out Of The Tradition

by Jon Andrews

It's important to understand where tradition stops and exploration begins. **Zakir Hussain** knows both sides of the equation, enjoying acclaim in the realms of Indian classics and "world music" fusion. *Tabla Duet* (Moment! MRCD 1001; 67:39; ★★★★★), with **Ustad Alla Rakha**, matches pre-eminent players of different generations, who happen to be father and son. Imagine a tabla jam session (or clinic), with solos and duets in many different improvisational modes. The performance is dazzlingly quick, gaining intensity over its length. Nirvana for percussionists, but demanding for casual listeners.

Zakir Hussain And The Rhythm Experience (Moment! MRCD 1007; 44:49; ★★★1/2) introduces a seven-piece percussion ensemble, a sibling to Hussain and Mickey Hart's Diga Rhythm Band and cousin to Hart's Planet Drum. The Rhythm Experience explores percussion styles associated with India, and also Africa, Cuba, and Southeast Asia. "Balinese Fantasy" and "Nines Over Easy" are built on complex interrelationships and layers of tablas, mallet instruments, hand drums, and obscure



Zakir Hussain: dazzlingly quick

percussive devices. (Naal and dholak sound more like condiments.) The core group is augmented by Rakha and Hart, and enhanced by wonderful production.

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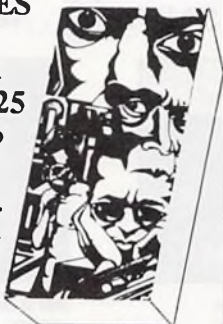
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CD REVIEWS

With the Hieroglyphics Ensemble, **Jai Uttal** plays instruments which are very old (harmonium, dotar) and very new (MIDI guitar). His solo projects pursue an equally ambitious multikulti direction. *Monkey* (Triloka 7194-2, 62:22; ★★★★★) playfully embraces jazz, pop, and world music, with emphasis on Indian themes. Uttal's Pagan Love Orchestra includes Peter Apfelbaum (on drums!) leading a contingent of Hieroglyphs, and flutist Steve Gorn. It's remarkable how smoothly the Orchestra handles transitions between surging rock rhythms, spiritual meditations, and pop songs (with vocals suggesting an Indian-inflected Steve Winwood). Tuneful and energetic, *Monkey* updates John McLaughlin's efforts toward a curry-flavored fusion.

Stephan Micus creates his own world of sound. He's a walking sampler, traveling the globe collecting exotic instruments and absorbing traditional musics. *To The Evening Child* (ECM 513 780-2, 47:04; ★★★★★) exemplifies his approach—Micus sings (in no recognizable language) and plays Egyptian and Balinese flutes, recorder, and the violin-like Indian dilruba. He favors unusual percussion, and *Evening Child* uses steel drums to form slow, hypnotic tone patterns enveloping spare solo themes. Much of the music is ascetic, even by Micus' standards—when strings, flute, and voice harmonize, the sound is luxurious.

The music of East Africa hasn't received the recognition given the strong traditions of the West. **Samite of Uganda's** *Pearl Of Africa Reborn* (Shanachie 65008, 45:55; ★★★) bids to increase awareness of Ugandan culture. Samite skillfully alternates flute, kalimba, and marimba. He's a folk singer whose soft, breathy



Stephan Micus: a walking sampler

vocals tell tales of bicycles, birds, moms, and food from East Africa. (Who else has two songs about dried fish?) The tunes are simple. Samite adds tonal color with guitar and percussion (notably, Mar Gueye of Senegal and the World Saxophone Quartet).

West Africa's instruments and rhythms fuel **Tony Vacca and Tim Moran's** *Dance Beneath The Diamond Sky* (Columbia CK 47391, 52:11; ★★★½). Vacca creates deep grooves with balafon, mbira (thumb-piano), and African percussion. Moran's saxophones and flutes add structure and a jazz sensibility. In its jazz mode (e.g., "Keeper Of The Flame"), the duo evokes the straightahead side of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. **DB**



Various Artists

MELTDOWN: THE BIRTH OF FUSION—
Rykodisc RCD 20236: CHAMELEON (Herbie Hancock); MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER (Weather Report); THE NOONWARD RACE (Mahavishnu Orchestra); FLORA'S SONG (Aíto Moreira); SNAKE OIL (Tony Williams Lifetime); TAKE ME BACK (Keith Jarrett); YOURS IS THE LIGHT (Santana); MILES RUNS THE VOODOO DOWN (Miles Davis). (72:16)

★ ★ ★ ½

A paean to the '70s, this compilation is full of Mu-Tron bass lines, excessive soloing, and funny little squiggly synth sounds that seem oh so quaint now. But there are a few essential tracks here.

"The Noonward Race," from Mahavishnu's *Inner Mounting Flame*, represents the best of

what that initial burst of fusion was all about. John McLaughlin's ferocious guitar attack threatens to rip the back of your head off while Billy Cobham's slamming back beat keeps the adrenaline rushing. A classic example of rock power married to extended, adventurous improvisations: Hendrix meets Coltrane. Far too severe for today's "smooth jazz" radioplay. Along these same subversive lines are Weather Report's "Mysterious Traveller," from their self-titled 1974 album, and "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down," from the 1969 landmark session. *Bitches Brew* (even though Jack Johnson is the definitive fusion album of all time).

Unfortunately, this compilation is somewhat hindered by the fact that it draws only from the

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Columbia family. Hence, no Larry Coryell & The Eleventh House and no vintage Lifetime or Return To Forever from their rawer, earlier years with Polydor. The Lifetime cut here, "Snake Oil," is from an unspectacular 1975 album, *Believe It*, and is instantly dated by Tony's disco hi-hat work.

Airto's "Flora's Song," from 1972's *Free*, is lovely, but I'm not sure what it's doing here. Fusion ain't supposed to be pretty. And Santana's "Yours Is The Light," from 1973's *Wellcome*, sounds tame compared to the ferocious live *Lotus*, an album he recorded that same year. Jarrett's "Take Me Back," from 1972's *Expectations*, sounds more like a fusion of gospel and avant garde than any kind of marriage between rock and jazz. And when was the last time you really checked out Herbie's "Chameleon" from 1973's *Headhunters*? Roughly half of those 15:43 are interesting. Nearly 20 years later, that infernal 12-note synth bass refrain sounds like Chinese water torture. The piece really doesn't begin to open up until Herbie jumps on electric piano and begins to deal. The rest is a sonic fishing lure intended to reel in rock crowds. And I guess it worked.

—Bill Milkowski



David S. Ware

FLIGHT OF I—DIW Columbia 52956: *AQUARIAN SOUND*; *THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU*; *SAD EYES*; *FLIGHT OF I*; *YESTERDAYS*; *INFI-RHYTHMS #1*. (61:42)

Personnel: Ware, tenor sax; Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass; Marc Edwards, drums.

★★★★ 1/2

GREAT BLISS, VOL. 1—Silkheart 127: *FORWARD MOTION*; *ANGULAR*; *BLISS THEME*; *CADENZA*; *SOUND BOUND*; *MIND TIME*; *SAXELLOSCAPE ONE*; *THIRDS*. (73:29)

Personnel: Ware, flute, tenor sax, saxello, stritch; Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass; Marc Edwards, drums.

★★★★

Ware is a profound powerhouse of a reed player, having worked with Cecil Taylor and

Andrew Cyrille among others in free jazz during the '60s. His work brings back memories of an era when Coltrane, Sanders, and Ayler ran free—in the truest sense. With his two new releases, Ware and company come blowing onto the scene with a kind of intensity, unchained improvisational fervor, and general sharpness of purpose that hits like a sneak attack.

Great Bliss, Vol. 1 is Ware's statement of purpose, a bold, sometimes chaotic, always gripping excursion. The young pianist Shipp is especially inspiring in his grasp of the free tradition. The tunes are long, the structure expendable, dictated by the spirit of the moment. But lyricism is not lost: "Bliss Theme" has a different sort of gospel luster. "Saxelloscope" is a pensive solo for that obscure member of the sax family.

Unlike the more expressly personal intensity of *Great Bliss, Vol. 1*, *flight of i*—recorded a year later—combines fiercely original pieces with two standards. The blend is beguiling. Ware finds a wholly new way to say "There Will Never Be Another You," checking in with the chord changes and the melodic chassis only peripherally. Ware plays the head to "Yesterdays" with a fluttering, beehive-like quality. But these standard treatments are not sly blows against orthodoxy: in their own reinventive way, they are ultimately reverent toward the source. Ware's quavering, Ayler-esque vibrato, split tones, and general-action painting approach to the tune, against the rhythm section's rumbling backdrop, are evident on the title cut, as the band lays out a looping, sententious chordal statement. Ware enters the fray with a long-winded, scabrous tone, a wail from the depths. The effect is at once anthemic and cathartic.

—Josef Woodard



Jackie McLean

RHYTHM OF THE EARTH—Antilles/Birdology 513 916-2: *RHYTHM OF THE EARTH*; *FOR HOFSA*; *SIRIUS SYSTEM*; *THE EXPLORERS*; *OH CHILDREN RISE*; *OSYRIS RETURNS*; *THE COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION*; *DARK CASTLE*. (59:09)

Personnel: McLean, alto sax; Roy Hargrove, trumpet; Steve Davis, trombone; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Alan Jay Palmer, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

★★★★ 1/2

Chairman of the African American music department at the Univ. of Hartford, and world-class alto burner, Jackie McLean has assembled three talented students from his university program along with one longtime band member in bassist Nat Reeves and two ringers in

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CD REVIEWS

vibist Steve Nelson and trumpeter Roy Hargrove. These youngbloods challenge their mentor as they burn their own blue streaks.

The eight original compositions have a decided modernist edge while maintaining that white-hot hard-bop core that McLean has been so noted for since the '50s. Jackie contributes the angular, funky, 15-minute title track along with the lush "For Hofsa" (a heartfelt love song dedicated to his wife), and the aggressive group workout, "The Collective Expression." The other principal composer of this energized session is pianist Alan Jay Palmer. He favors the kind of aggressive, up-tempo burn on "Sirius System" and "Osyris Returns" that Jackie built his name on. His hauntingly beautiful ballad, "Oh Children Rise," features a collective band vocal that matches the melancholy mood. And his "Dark Castle" shows a gift for oblique harmonies.

Aside from McLean, the two solo standouts are the two Steves, vibist Nelson and trombonist Davis. Their choice of notes is often provocative, their sense of phrasing always elegant and swinging (catch Davis' sly "Night In Tunisia" quote in the middle of his superb "Osyris Returns" solo). Hargrove turns in some bold, fiery work on Davis' "The Explorers" and on "Sirius System." Drummer Eric McPherson provides forward thrust throughout by slightly anticipating the beat with his rapid hi-hat action. And Reeves is the rock, just laying it right down.

—Bill Milkowski



Paul Desmond

LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE—Telarc 83319: *Just Squeeze Me; Tangerine; Meditation; Nuages; Like Someone In Love; Things Ain't What They Used To Be.* (61:10)

Personnel: Desmond, alto sax; Ed Bickert, guitar; Don Thompson, bass; Jerry Fuller, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Long lurking in the shadow of his celebrated employer Dave Brubeck, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond was one of those jazz underdogs deserving wider recognition. In this live session from Toronto, circa 1975, Desmond nicely demonstrates his tone and gently witty phraseology—sounding like an emotive kin to Stan Getz. The tunes, hoary standards all, run about 10 minutes each and allow generous room for free expression from a quartet that takes it easy, seriously.

—J.W.

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Clayton Brothers

THE MUSIC—Capri 74037: *Touch And Go; Because Of You; On The Trail; Misty; Only The Lonely; Happenstance; Skylark; I Concentrate On You; Everything Will Come In Time.* (63:20)
Personnel: John Clayton, bass; Jeff Clayton, alto flute, alto and tenor saxes; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Bill Cunliffe, piano.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

While the L. A.-based Claytons, and drummer Jeff Hamilton, have made jazz news through their admirable big-band project, this project takes the intimacy of a quartet as its mandate. Jeff is a strong, clean alto saxist. John lays out some luminous arco work on "Only The Lonely" and then underpaints some impressive arpeggiated lines under his brother's reading of "Skylark," before it slips into a suave bossa. Apart from a few arrangermental curves thrown in, it's a definitely straightahead session, but the message of musicality rings out loudly, clearly.

—Josef Woodard



Liz Story

MY FOOLISH HEART—Windham Hill 1934: *My Foolish Heart; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; How Inensitive; My One And Only Love; My Romance; My Ship; I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good; You Are Too Beautiful; In A Sentimental Mood; Sumeday My Prince Will Come; Never Never Land; Never Will I Know; All The Things You Are; Turn Out The Stars.* (50:53)

Personnel: Story, piano; Joel DiBartolo, bass.

★ ★

It's hard to know how exactly to listen to or appreciate Story's affectionate standards outing. Her song selection is unassailably potent, but the tunes themselves seem to do most of the work. Her reharmonizations can be interesting, but too often, she merely essays blandly literal or stiff readings of these tunes—which can inspire improvisers to expressive heights. At best, Story's album serves as a good primer for those who want to hear how these great songs actually go, without the interference of jazz liberties taken.

—J.W.



Steve Khan

HEADLINE—Bluemoon 79179: *TYRONE; THE BLESSING; AUTUMN IN ROME; TURNAROUND; ONTEM A NOITE; WATER BABIES; ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL; HACKENSACK; CARIBBEAN FIRE DANCE.* (58:57)

Personnel: Khan, guitar; Ron Carter (1-3,5,6,8), Anthony Jackson (4,7,9), bass; Al Foster (1-3,5,6,8), Dennis Chambers (4,7,9), drums; Manolo Badrena, percussion (4,7,9).

★★★ 1/2

On this intentionally dualistic project, Khan splits the difference between his wonderfully, elliptically electric Eyewitness group and a straightahead trio with Messrs. Carter and Foster. On tunes by such aptly quirky geniuses as Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk, and Wayne Shorter, Khan displays his special flair for the angular phrase and suspended harmonic animation. Notably, the ever-provocative Jackson opens up "Turnaround" with some of his inimitable bass. —J.W.



David Darling

CELLO—ECM 314 511 982: *DARKWOOD I; NO PLACE NOWHERE; FABLES; DARKWOOD II; LAMENT; TWO OR THREE THINGS; INDIANA INDIAN; TOTEM; PSALM; CHORAL; THE BELL; IN NOVEMBER; DARKWOOD III.* (44:15)

Personnel: Darling, acoustic cello, 8-string electric cello.

★★★★

The deceptively simple title tells all. Darling's cavernous cello makes a lonely and yet stately sound, ideal as an extension of ECM's musical tradition of Nordic eloquence. More specifically, Darling's range of stylistic evocations, from early music to ethereal, swarthy impressionism to folk sonorities, embodies the range of ECM's more recent evolution from jazz into new music. "Choral" seems to be derived from Estonian composer Arvo Part's palette. All is dark and wintry, but somehow transcendent in effect, a safe refuge from more clangorous niches in the current music universe. —J.W.

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Pump Up The Volumes

by Kevin Whitehead

Jazz literature is astonishingly varied, from oral histories to technical tracts, the music's stories told in photographs, information tables, and jangly hip-hop rhythms.

The most ostensibly nerdy book surveyed here is the most significant: volume one of Tom Lord's **The Jazz Discography** (Cadence/North Country, Redwood, NY; 608 pp., paper). A computer whiz adept at getting info onto and off his floppies fast—some CDs included were issued just weeks before publication—Lord is assembling the first all-inclusive jazz discography designed to be regularly updated. Information is well laid out and easy to read, small type notwithstanding: leader and group names, album titles, personnel, recording dates and sites, tunes, matrix and album numbers, formats. Each session gets a new code number; a cross-referencing sidefolk's index will be published at the end of the series—about 20 volumes published over several years—along with periodic update volumes. Surveying the first sturdily paperbound installment (A to Tallulah Bankhead, who sat in with Joe Bushkin in 1950), with its 592 Louis Armstrong sessions, I looked in vain for European free-jazz sides so obscure Lord surely couldn't know them. (He not only lists Derek Bailey's solo LP on Italy's Cramps label, but supplies the recording dates the sleeve doesn't.) Lord's definition of jazz is sensibly broad; there are hundreds of tantalizing dates here practically nobody's heard of. At \$45 a volume, it's expensive. But for jazz junkies who've spent weeks searching for and through haphazard and incomplete specialized discographies, it's money well spent for time well saved over a lifetime.

Three recent roundups of recycled critical essays stand out because each author expands his beat to take in other aspects of our culture, weaving jazz into the broad fabric of American life. The late Martin Williams' **Hidden In Plain Sight** (Oxford, New York; 153 pp., cloth) includes casual pieces on children's lit, Fred Astaire, Segar's cartoons, and paperback writer John D. MacDonald, as well as a perfunctory Ellington piece. Williams takes pop culture on its own terms—he prefers Bullwinkle to TV's talky "golden age"—and makes fine distinctions within genres: loved Yogi Bear, hated the Flintstones. Gary Giddins' **Faces In The Crowd** (Oxford, New York; 278 pp., cloth) is similarly most interesting for its many pieces not on jazz instrumentalists: Jack Benny, Myrna Loy, Kay Starr, Eudora Welty, Robert Altman. . . . Giddins finds the common element in soap operas, sitcoms, and jazz:



Art Hodes (at the piano) and band parade for the Indianapolis Indians ball club, April 1957.

far-flung riffs stem from familiar departure points. His pen keeps getting sharper; he describes Manhattan Transfer in concert, "pouring their usual quotient of vanilla sauce on day-old white bread." Bullseye.

Of the critics now hovering near 40, as prose stylist no one cuts the enviable Greg Tate, who can hiphop from street slang to pulp prose to clinical precision in a phrase. (Bo Diddley dancing: "a lateral hippity-hop augmented by those curvaceous turns that make you think of a sidewinder proficient with a hula hoop.") The topics Tate treats in **Flyboy In The Buttermilk** (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, New York; 285 pp., paper)—like Wynton, George Clinton, De La Soul, African art, George Bush sideman Lee Atwater's love of r&b, the fiction of Nathaniel Mackey, William Gibson, and Don DeLillo—place jazz in the context of black American culture and black culture squarely in the national mainstream. All-American himself (comes from D.C., lives in Harlem), Tate reads our culture with invigorating virtuosity and verbal facility few rappers, orators, or pundits equal. He was astute enough to forecast Wynton's turn toward orchestral projects back in 1984. No one hears Miles' electric music better. Some smart publisher should commission a bio.

West African Pop Roots (Temple, Philadelphia; 349 pp., paper), by John Collins, who runs a studio in Ghana, is okay for its capsule biographies of lots of musicians—not all West African, incidentally—and less for its vague musicology; he's bad at clarifying what distinguishes one regional style from another. Collins' few pages on South African jazz, a topic I know pretty well, contain a troubling number of errors, omissions, and misspelled names, making me wonder what other gaffes I've missed. Even so, he illuminates the circular influences African and American (or European—Collins' roots are English) musics exert on one another, and there are lots of anecdotes,

many firsthand, about working musicians' occasionally harrowing lives. And as he reminds me, even in tradition-conscious Africa, players are expected to find their own styles.

Hot Man (U. of Illinois, Chicago; 160 pp., cloth) is pianist Art Hodes' life in his own words, stitched together (from Art's zesty writings and taped reminiscences) by Chadwick Hansen, who, unlike some co-authors, is over-scrupulous about not putting his words in Hodes' mouth. Hansen will break from the narrative for a bridging sentence or two in his own voice and a different typeface, interrupting the pleasurable flow of Hodes' prose and gloriously long, low life in trad jazz. In 1953, Larry Gara conducted a series of interviews with the pioneering jazz drummer from New Orleans, which became 1959's **The Baby Dodds Story** (LSU Press, Baton Rouge; 105 pp., paper). Justly praised for its concision, plain style, and blunt honesty—particularly about Dodds' ambivalent relationship with his beloved clarinetist brother Johnny, who saw Baby as an unreliable drunk—its reissue now is long overdue. Biggest surprise? Dodds' contempt for wire brushes.

With Christmas a-coming, consider photographer Lee Friedlander's **The Jazz People Of New Orleans** (Pantheon, New York; 120 pp., cloth), a handsome coffee-table that captures NOLA's elder traditional musicians at home, in clubs, marching slowly to the graveyard, and cavorting back home. (Some photos date from the '50s.) Friedlander neither sensationalizes nor sentimentalizes the poverty so many players live in. The black & white reproductions are sharp, his compositions sometimes shrewd. (Pianist Joe James' weathered profile is doubled by that of a slick dude in a beer ad on the wall behind him.) Whitney Balliett's account of an outsider's mid-'60s trip to New Orleans sets the scene, but Friedlander takes you inside. **DB**

1 Duke Ellington Orchestra

"Serious Serenade" (from *CAPITOL JAZZ 50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION, Capitol*) Ellington, composer, piano; Harry Carney, baritone sax (rec. 1955).

Harry Carney with Duke Ellington. Outstanding. Duke had two bands—he had his band and he had Harry Carney. Clarity, great tonal range, all the dynamics, everything you need to create suspense, power—he's the standard bearer for what's going on. Compared to Harry Carney's tone, everything else is superfluous. Everybody else gets all hung up on chords and manipulating the instrument, while Carney just makes the earth shake. I saw him play one note once, held this one note for two, three minutes, and everything else in the joint stopped—the cash register didn't ring, nobody moved, nobody talked. And that note didn't waver—I make mine waver because I want a more aboriginal sound; I want you to hear me breathe. Carney made that note work. That's command of the instrument. You don't have to put anything else on, because that's all there is. 5 stars all the way.

2 Gerry Mulligan

"Israel" (from *RE-BIRTH OF THE COOL, GRP*) Mulligan, baritone sax; John Carisi, composer.

That's a Mulliganish type of band. I didn't care for it. The ensemble writing and the playing of it was very good, but I didn't care for it because they didn't develop it. They just went into some straight-ahead blues with some licks in it, instead of developing the sonorities built up by the writer. That's what we used to do in roadhouse bands when you didn't know the changes. All of the *Birth Of The Cool* flatted-fifth shit was cool. What they did with it, or didn't do with it, was very unsettling. Very disturbing, given the high level of musicianship. They should've done what Bird did—alter the changes—and play those altered changes, and cool bopped it on out. 4 stars for the composition, 2 for the performance; it was a retreat.

3 29th Street Saxophone Quartet

"Your Move" (from *YOUR MOVE, Antilles*) Bobby Watson, Ed Jackson, alto saxes; Jim Hartog, baritone sax; Rich Rothenberg, tenor sax, composer.

That sounded like Bobby Watson, so it's probably the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet. The baritone player didn't have anything distinguishing about him, in terms of an identity. He's listened to me, and he's listened

HAMIET BLUIETT

by Bill Shoemaker



MITCHELL SEIDEL

After placing second behind Gerry Mulligan in *DB's* Critics Poll for years, baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett finally took top honors this past year. While Bluiett is perhaps most widely known as the anchor of the World Saxophone Quartet, he has an impressively diverse discography as a leader. His recordings range from solo-baritone outings to programs featuring eight clarinets, bass, and drums to *The Clarinet Family* (Black Saint) to *Birthright* (reissued by India Navigation).

Several more recordings are in the mill, including *Rear Guard* (a Black Saint

date with Ben Riley, Clint Houston, and Ted Dunbar), *If Trees Could Talk* (with Larry Willis for the audiophile Mapleshade label), *If You Have To Ask* (enja), and *Gumbo/Footprints: Live At Sweet Basil* (with John Hicks, Fred Hopkins, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, and Chief Bey, for Black Fire).

His work with the WSQ continues, with an emphasis on collaborating. Their upcoming Elektra Nonesuch album will feature performances with Fontella Bass, Claudine Amina Myers, and Dave Burrell, among others. This was Bluiett's first Blindfold Test.

to some other people, but he didn't leave a strong impression of who he was. The music was boring. I was tired halfway through it. Everybody's spelling out chords in the absence of a piano, instead of playing music, working out sonorities. It makes the music smaller. There's room to solo, but it's just the product of one person, with everybody else just acquiescing to it. There's no element of group improvisation, which is what I and the musicians I play with do. Taking a solo is different from playing with each other, making music while you go. They don't do that here. Another thumbs down. 2 stars, but I'm probably biased.

4 Anthony Braxton

"Two Not One" (from *EIGHT (+ 3) TRISTANO COMPOSITIONS 1989; hat ART*) Braxton, alto sax; Jon Raskin, baritone sax; Dred Scott, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums; Lennie Tristano, composer.

That was a hell of a chart. At first I thought about Lennie Tristano—the voicings, the harmony, the line of the piano. But, it sounds

like it was done recently. The baritone player reminded me of Pepper Adams, but it was someone who took the Pepper influence outside. He's good. The alto player was definitely outside, though he was in the pocket for the head—the first name that came into my mind was Anthony Braxton. There seemed to be an uneasy alliance between them and the inside rhythm section. Their textures could have been a little more avant garde while adhering to the structure.

The pianist and alto, though, sound like they've played together, and maybe the baritone, too. But, the bass player's in the pocket—it would have been better with a bass player who was off-center like the horn players—and the drummer's inside-out; so it sounds like something that was put together for this date. The alto player said, "You've got it, I'm gone!" And the baritone player said, "I'm on top of this, and I'm going to play the shit out of it!" But, then, when the piano started, they just locked down into the 4/4 groove. It was an ambitious piece of music that took them to—pushed them past—the max. Hell of a head. 4 stars for execution, 2½ for the solos. **DB**