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Joe's Year At The Top

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Joe Henderson

Wes Montgomery
A Guitar Legacy

Peter Erskine

Bill Frisell
Blindfolded

Miles Davis
The Legend Grows





Wes Montgomery with his brother Monk

VERYL OAKLAND

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SUSAN RAGAN

Y e a r A t

Joe Henderson's

T h e T o p

By Zan Stewart

In jazz, 1992 will always belong to Joe Henderson.

The jazz veteran, who first raised goosebumps with his telling solo on Horace Silver's "Song For My Father" in 1965, swept the primary categories in *DB's* International Critics and Readers polls, capturing Jazzman of the Year, Album of the Year (for *Lush Life: The Music Of Billy Strayhorn*), and the top Tenor Saxophonist slots. *Lush Life* has gone on to sell more than 100,000 copies—far and away the 56-year-old hornman's best-selling album.

1993 looks to be a bang-up annum as well. In January, Henderson went to Washington, D.C., to play at two of the Presidential Inaugural balls. The day after his latest Verve album, *So Near, So Far (Musings For Miles)*, was released, the voters of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences awarded the resilient jazzman his first Grammy. Henderson won the 1992 Best Instrumental Jazz Solo Grammy for the track "Lush Life," an unaccompanied performance that came in ahead of such stalwart contenders as the late Stan Getz and Wynton Marsalis.

Perhaps it's time for Joe Henderson, a native of Lima, Ohio, who established himself in Detroit before moving to New York in the early '60s, to begin considering the requisite problems that attend the arrival of fame.

But Henderson—whose style incorporates the hard drive of Sonny Rollins, the lyrical invention of Charlie Parker, the ethereal tone of Getz, and the experimentation of Ornette Coleman—doesn't think like that. He's far more concerned with where he's playing next, and whether or not to use a clip-on mic on the bell of his horn rather than if *Time* or *Newsweek* are going to put him on *their* covers.

Still, it's next to impossible for the acclaimed saxophonist—who has made numerous albums under his own name and has appeared as a sideman with everyone from Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea to Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis—not to have some response to all the hubbub that suddenly surrounds him. As far as Henderson's concerned, the notoriety he's receiving is perfectly okay, though, yes, it is a bit tardy in coming. What really irks him is the idea that's being propagated in some quarters that he's in the midst of a comeback; Henderson is adamant that he's been here all along.

"I guess I'm supposed to be so taken aback by all this late adulation, all of this acknowledgement that's coming down the pike now," says the thin, soft-spoken Henderson, sitting at the cluttered dining-room table of his large, three-story home in San Francisco, where he's lived since 1972.

"And I am," he adds, looking down at his hands, in thought. "But I'm busy doing what I've been doing all the time, for over 20 years. I'd like to consider myself a pretty serious person about music. Not

overly serious to the point where the fun is gone from it. This game has been pretty good to me. And this is probably why I'm here.

"I'm aware of all the stuff that's been going down recently, and I appreciate myself for not allowing it to direct me, even unconsciously. I have known people who were really [affected] after seeing their name in print. That's something that didn't have the importance for me. I mean, I was too busy having fun dealing with these interesting chord changes and trying to write some interesting melodies and trying to do some unusual orchestrating for the band that I had to have been concerned with whether the proper number of people had copies of *Song For My Father* or *Page One* or *In 'N Out*. Other people kind of did that for me."

If Henderson's career has not been as well-noticed in his own country, the saxophonist has been likened to a "favorite son" for decades on the continent. In 1992 alone, he played festivals in Spain, Italy, Germany, and Scandinavia.

"In Europe," he says, smoking one of several Winston 100s he lit up during that afternoon conversation, "they hear things like 'the return of Joe Henderson!' It kind of seems ridiculous—I've talked to some people in Germany that I've seen pretty much every year over the last 20, 25 years. And they're like, 'What are those people talking about? I've seen you at least once every eight months, if not once a year, sometimes three times a year, every year.' They don't understand it; I mean, they laugh, like it's a big joke or something.

"I did some interviews in Holland with people who said they were downright angry about it. 'People in the U.S. wait 'til this guy gets to be 50, 55 years old to tell him something that they should have told him 30 years ago.' In some ways, Europeans are maybe a bit more refined about dealing with the human part of it. That is, treating the musicians over there like they deserve some kind of special place in society."

So what's held Joe Henderson's acceptance back in the U.S.? The lack of a good record contract is one possible answer—though Blue Note gave him a good push in the mid-'80s, as did Milestone in the '70s. Another possible answer is the drying up of the U.S. club circuit that thrived in the '60s and '70s—when Henderson was at an early peak. And the saxophonist has not been one, as he's admitted, to focus on the more mundane aspects of fostering a career, such as being readily available for interviews, or making the promotion of an album a priority.

But now that he's signed with Verve, doors long closed are finally opening. And with the winning of the Grammy, Henderson no doubt will find greater appreciation for his wares at home than he has in

the past.

This already has proved to be the case. In February, prior to a weeklong engagement at New York's Fat Tuesday—where he led a quartet with guitarist Mike Stern, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Al Foster—Henderson went to Central Park and heard piano giant Hank Jones at the Tavern on the Green nightspot. That evening, the hornman was treated to the type of welcome that

“In some ways, Europeans are maybe a bit more refined about dealing with the human part of [a musician’s career]. That is, treating the musicians over there like they deserve some kind of special place in society.”



formerly he only received in Europe, and it shook him up a little.

“Hank introduced me to the audience, and the response was incredible,” Henderson remembers with obvious pleasure during another chat, this time on the telephone. “During intermission, about 100 people came over to get autographs, telling me how much they love my music. [This is something I’m going to have to learn how to accept, because I do appreciate it.]”

Henderson undoubtedly will attract still more admirers with *So Near, So Far*, his second theme album for Verve (see “Reviews” Mar. ’93). Here the tenorman, in the company of guitarist John Scofield, plus Holland and Foster, tackles material either written by Miles Davis and/or recorded by him. The tunes range from the original “Milestones,” recorded in 1947 by Davis with Charlie Parker on tenor sax, to “Side Car,” a 1968 Davis vehicle. Also included are such tasteful items as “Miles Ahead,” from the great Columbia album of the same name with Gil Evans’ orchestra, “Joshua,” written by pianist Victor Feldman and recorded on *Seven Steps To Heaven*, and the lyrical title track, from the same album. Trumpeter/archivist Don Sickler transcribed these selections off the original Davis albums.

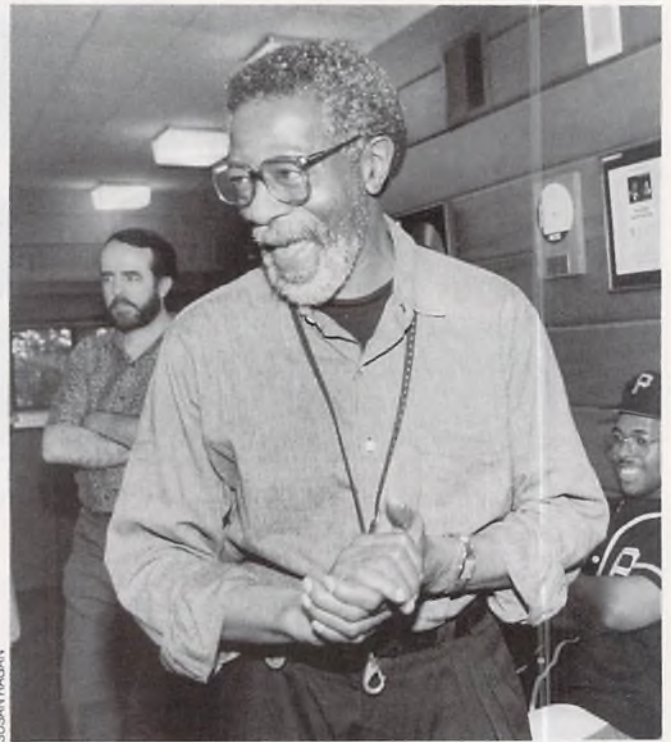
The saxophonist—who gave Verve vice president Richard Seidel credit for the conception of this project, as well as *Lush Life*—was with Davis for a few months in 1967. This meant that all four musicians making the record had known Davis from a sideman’s point of view, and thus had greater insight into his music.

“These people, from having spent time with Miles, knew the Miles impulse, the Miles feeling, though we weren’t trying to recreate that feeling,” says Henderson. “We were there to recognize one of the great forces that had been on the planet and who had been an important force in all of our lives.”

The project, which was recorded in New York last October, was in the preparation stages, off and on, for about six months. That, Henderson says, was the hard part—the selecting of the tunes, the arranging of schedules, and so on. The playing itself was pretty much a snap.

“Once you clear away all the extraneous stuff and get down to the music, that’s the easiest thing,” he says. “That’s what we do; we’re professional musicians. It was a typical jazz record, made in three days.”

Henderson acknowledged that the performances, however, were far from typical. “It was way beyond belief that I was able to bring together these kind of personalities. I felt fortunate to have been part of this myself, with some of the strongest people around representing this music. I just wish Miles could be here to hear it.”



SUSAN FRAGAN

Joe Henderson at Rudy Van Gelder’s studio with arranger Don Sickler (left) and bassist Christian McBride.

Asked about his scant tenure with Davis, Henderson conceded he couldn’t recall precisely how it came about. “I don’t remember talking to Miles, and that still causes some sleepless nights. I guess the fact that I was there is what’s important. I just heard that I was supposed to be part of the band,” which also included, at various times, Wayne Shorter, Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock.

Playing with Davis might have been the highlight of many a career, but for Henderson it was almost a detour in his endeavor to establish himself as a soloist and leader. “It was great on one level, but on another, fate had allowed me to find my own feet; so it was anticlimactic in a way. I had been in New York quite a while at the time, had been in the studios on my own, and countless times with other people, and I was busy trying to explore my own music, which was getting the lion’s share of my attention.”

There’s a rumor that Henderson was fired by Davis because he indirectly asked the trumpeter, through a third party, for a raise. Absolutely untrue, said the saxman. “I left Miles pretty much the way I came in. The gig just seemed to end,” he explains. “And besides, the Miles gig wasn’t about money. Throughout my career, money has factored in in an almost inconsequential way. There’s a higher reason for doing this, not that I don’t know the value of a dollar.”

With the release of *So Near, So Far*, some fans may wonder if the decidedly eccentric Henderson will perform material from the album in club and concert dates.

About a year ago, this writer sat with a press representative from Verve at the Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood, just a few weeks after *Lush Life* had been issued. Not only did Henderson not offer any tunes from the release, he didn’t even mention it. (In fairness, brevity has long marked Henderson’s stage announcements, which often include only the musicians’ names.) Instead, he played such favored numbers as Bronislaw Kaper’s “Invitation,” Sam Rivers’ “Beatrice,” and his own “Recorda Me.”



A few months ago, the saxman treated listeners at the same club to a similar repertoire. What gives? he was asked.

Henderson laughed. "Those tunes, they have no end, they will remain as long as there is music to be played," he says, becoming serious. "Also, if you don't have time to rehearse, well, everybody knows those tunes. When you play Strayhorn, you have to know that stuff."

"I think I've had my own fingerprints on the music right from Day One. Since I was in Detroit, you knew it was Joe Henderson on saxophone."



So, why doesn't he keep a regular band that can get a repertoire down?

He tries to, basing his ensembles around Holland and Foster. "But they aren't always available," he explains, so he ends up using pickup ensembles. One gathers that even if he didn't, he'd be playing "Invitation" and "Recorda Me." The latter was his first composition, written when he was 14, and has been performed basically unchanged since that time, except for a shift of meter from straight 4/4 to a loping bossa nova.

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"I've had people drive 200 miles to hear me play 'Invitation,'" said Henderson, who recorded the tune in 1970 on *In Pursuit Of Blackness* (Milestone). "That tune, it's found a very comfortable place in my brain, and it's a very liked tune. That's just double fun there. There are some tunes that you never really get tired of, if you don't get bogged down with cliches, which can burn you out. Because it's not that the tune is no longer interesting, but how one interprets it. If musicians would retire some of their cliches, maybe a tune would still be as interesting as when they first started to play it."

What else is on Henderson's 1993 agenda, besides a few more renditions of "Invitation," and perhaps even some selections from *So Near, So Far?* The saxophonist, who played in Berlin in March as part of rallies to protest racial discrimination, travels to Europe again this summer. Then in the fall, he will be the guest of honor at San Francisco's Jazz in the City festival, where he'll perform with a big band, string section, trio, and other ensembles. "That's an awesome undertaking," he admits. "I've never imagined myself as being a whole festival." Following the event, Henderson plans to take a big band into the studio to record some of his compositions for an upcoming Verve album.

Happy to see his career on the upswing, Henderson paused a moment, and then philosophized. "I'm really pleased that whatever my career has been about has come largely from being my own self,

not from being associated with other people. I think I've had my own fingerprints on the music right from Day One.

"Since I was in Detroit, you knew it was Joe Henderson on saxophone. I feel very proud about that. I kind of did this. And what got me started on the right track was the information that I gathered from being around two great parents. That's been largely responsible for my success."

DB

EQUIPMENT

Joe Henderson plays an original-series (1954) Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone, serial number 56923, with a Selmer Soloist mouthpiece, size D chamber. He uses La Voz medium-soft reeds.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(For additional listings, see DB, March 1992.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| as a leader | |
| <i>SO NEAR, SO FAR (MUSINGS FOR MILES)</i> —Verve 314 517 674 | <i>CAUSE AND EFFECT</i> —Muse 5447 (Donald Brown) |
| <i>LUSH LIFE</i> —Verve 314 511 779 | <i>FORMAN ON THE JOB</i> —Kamei 7004CD (Bruce Forman) |
| <i>THE STANDARD JOE</i> —Red 123248-2 | <i>POP POP</i> —Geffen 24426 (Rickie Lee Jones) |
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Birth Of The Modern Guitar

WES MONTGOMERY

By Bill Shoemaker

What makes a jazz legend? A revolutionary innovation? An intriguing biography? A lasting enigma or controversy? In the case of the late guitarist Wes Montgomery, who would have turned 70 this year, the answer is all of the above.

During the eight years between his explosive entrance onto the national scene in 1960 and his sudden death of a heart attack on June 15, 1968, Wes Montgomery did for the guitar what Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker did for their respective instruments—that is, he established a standard of creative excellence that remains unchallenged on its own terms, a standard that can only be referred to as it is circumvented.

"You have to look at Wes and what historically was happening in jazz," offered guitarist John Scofield. "He was the guy who took the straightahead music of the late '50s and early '60s and put it on guitar. It wasn't hard-bop; it was soul-bop. That buildup, chorus after chorus, of recurring figures in single notes, octaves, and chords—that's jazz excitement. The tradition of Lionel Hampton, the mainstream black tradition—boisterous, jovial, outgoing, like Cannonball Adderley—he put that on guitar.

"The temperament of Wes' music is amazing, given that this was also the time that Ornette [Coleman] and [John] Coltrane were taking the music somewhere else. But, though he stayed in the mainstream, he came up with a way of playing that was revolutionary, in a soulful, church-element way. It's all in the sound he got with his thumb. He was preaching."

"His compositions added to the body of

VERYL OAKLAND

work produced in the early '60s," guitarist Kevin Eubanks emphasized, shedding light on a neglected aspect of Wes' art. "They're original works that don't neatly compare with those of anybody else. Most of them have different forms than the standard song form, which I think has a lot to do with Wes developing his own sound.

"Wes did the same thing Monk did, or that Wayne Shorter did. When a musician needed something to establish what they did improvisationally, that's how tunes like 'Confirmation' and 'Giant Steps' get written. The compositional format that lays out an improvisational approach goes together. But, since Wes was such an incredible guitar player, his compositions get overlooked. They're not tunes you're going to hear on a jazz cruise."

"He was a great comp, too," added guitarist Peter Bernstein, who currently records with Melvin Rhyne, the organist in Wes' early '60s trio. "He would comp like a

big band, with upper-register, single-note figures that would go on for two choruses. It goes back to the big band, the riffs of the horns against the soloist. His driving sense of time with these figures would just lock a band into a groove."

"It was the mindset of the '40s that Wes created his music with," concluded guitarist Ted Dunbar. "You had to know the music inside-out to be able to play it off the top of your head. That's what Wes did."

The story of Wes Montgomery, as it has been handed down to us, is fascinating. A newlywed 20-year-old who buys a guitar and amp, and learns Charlie Christian's solos, using his thumb, it's said, to keep from disturbing anyone. A working man with a growing family, holding down a day job, playing Indianapolis lounges until closing, and jamming in after-hours joints into the predawn hours. A local musician, with only a couple of tastes of the big

leagues, catapulted to instant fame.

Little can be confirmed of Wes' formative years as a Christian-influenced guitarist, which span his first public performance in '43, playing the solos he had memorized, through his '48-'50 stint in Lionel Hampton's big band, and his return to Indianapolis.

Guitarist Kenny Burrell can't recall the degree of Christian's influence in Wes' work when he saw Wes play a dance with Hampton, but notes Christian's pervasive impact on their generation. "Christian laid the foundation for us, like Charlie Parker did for saxophonists. I think the influence of Christian you hear in Wes later on is more of a natural influence, like the influence of your parents or family, not the superficial type where you copy someone else." The only Christian-derived aspect of Wes' mature style apparent to guitarist Jim Hall was Wes' ability to make each note sound as if it was downstroked.

Except for brief stints on the road with his

A MESS O' WES



Early Wes: playing the Naptown circuit with (l-r) Willis Kirk, Monk Montgomery, and Buddy Montgomery

Wes Montgomery was the greatest guitarist of his day, but not all of his recordings rank among the greatest of his era. Several of the albums included in the 12-CD *The Complete Riverside Recordings* (Riverside 12RCD-4408-2; total approximate time: 13:42:00: ★★★★★) are jazz classics, but they are leavened in this collection by recordings that received ★★½ or ★★★ stars from DB when first issued, and have never proven to be misunderstood masterpieces.

Among the classics: *The Incredible Jazz Guitar Of*, featuring the sleek propulsion of pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Albert

Heath; *Groove Yard*, which details Wes' hand-in-glove work with brother Buddy; *Bags Meets Wes!*, a soulful workout with Milt Jackson; *Full House*, the only club recording of Wes' tenure with Riverside, which finds a fired-up Johnny Griffin on tenor sitting in with Wes and, arguably, his finest rhythm section—pianist Wynnton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb; and, within the jazz-with-strings genre, *Fusion!*

The close-calls include a session led by tenor saxist Harold Land that's too hard-edged to be considered "West Coast" jazz, a Nat Adderley date with an intriguing cornet-cello-guitar front line, and *Movin' Along*, a Wes-led quartet session

featuring one of tenorist James Clay's finer early efforts. Surprisingly, Wes' one date with Cannonball Adderley isn't a sky-opening blues shout, just a solid, hard-bop session.

The other surprise is that Wes' trio sessions with Mel Rhyne, a thoroughly engaging organist, are among the also-rans. Though their inventive, unpretentious arrangements of Wes' originals showcased their drill-team-precise, dovetailing interplay, a number of tunes are bogged down in a loungey mire. But, compared to the Montgomery Brothers' date with pianist George Shearing, a paradigm of polite jazz, Wes' work with Rhyne is the real deal. —B.S.

brothers, pianist/vibist Buddy and bassist Monk, who had gained a national reputation leading the Mastersounds, Wes perfected his style in hometown lounges such as the fabled Missile Room. "Every story you'd hear about Wes Montgomery had something to do with incredibility," Rhyne said of Wes' mid-'50s reputation. Didn't read music, could play almost anything after hearing it once—twice at the most—and played for hours without repeating himself. "All those kinds of stories about Wes were true."

Dunbar believes an unlikely event contributed significantly to the evolution of the Montgomery sound. Dunbar accompanied Wes to a radio shop, where Wes' amp was modified. "I don't know what was done," he pointed out, "but you could just touch the strings and play the instrument without picking with your right hand, making it more sensitive when you did use the right hand. It improved the timing of the sound. Developing your touch improves your timing. You need as much quickness as possible to go on to the next note. This showed the insight he had—he saw the instrument and the amp as the same thing."

The word about Montgomery spread to touring musicians, setting the stage for the pivotal night when alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley dropped by one of Wes' after-hours sessions at the Missile Room. Cannonball flipped; had there been a phone, his cornetist brother Nat has said, he would have called Riverside Records' Orrin Keepnews in the middle of the night. His enthusiasm rubbed off on Keepnews when they later met in New York, prompting Keepnews to seek Wes out. "I had 20/20 eyesight back then," said Keepnews of the first time he saw Wes play, "and I was sitting directly in front of Wes, but his thumb literally blurred."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Wes was like the first runner to break the four-minute mile," Jim Hall mused, describing Wes' impact on the national scene. "All the guys who came after him would possibly be able to play those ferocious octaves, and get that great feeling with the thumb—but you knew he kind of left the old guys behind, which made him that much more exciting."

Keepnews recorded 12 albums led or coled by Wes in a little over four years; they make up the bulk of the new 12-disc set, *The Complete Riverside Recordings* (see adjoining story). He was always struck by Wes' boundless creativity and relentless striving for perfection.

"When he said he didn't like a solo, which was often, it didn't mean, 'I'm going to dig in a little more here,' or, 'I'm going to change that run there,'" Keepnews elaborated. "He literally played a different solo. There's a fairly startling example of that on the only

"Wes was like the first runner to break the four-minute mile. All the guys who came after him would possibly be able to play those ferocious octaves, and get that great feeling with the thumb—but you knew he left the old guys behind." —Jim Hall



strings album I did with him—*Fusion!*—a version of 'Tune Up,' which ends with an improvised coda that was faded out early when it was mastered. In the box set, you can hear four successive complete takes where each improvisation is markedly different."

As much as his technical mastery, Wes' Riverside output is a testament to a great ear, as many of the dates had little or no rehearsal time and included musicians with whom Wes had not previously worked. Keepnews cites Wes' album with vibraharpist Milt Jackson as a prime example of how Montgomery, who not only didn't read music, but also didn't read chord changes, learned new, original compositions as fast as any reader. It was the same at the *Fusion!* session. "All the orchestra people thought it was amazing what Wes did, not having any music in front of him, and how what he played fit in with arrangements he hadn't previously heard," recalled Rhyne.

But, more incredible than the music Wes recorded for Riverside was the fact that not one of the Wes Montgomery Riversides sold more than 10,000 copies upon initial release. Riverside folded in '64, and Wes moved on.

Wes became a prototypical crossover artist. Though his club dates retained the heat of his Indianapolis days, many of his recordings from '64 to '68 epitomized the mid-'60s equivalent of today's "smooth jazz." He took a beating for it, administered by the very jazz press that had put him on a pedestal. At



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the center of this controversy was Creed Taylor, who produced Wes' pop-tune-studded albums for Verve and A&M, and his last mainstream dates, as well.

"Each session was carefully planned with Wes' involvement," Taylor said of his work with Montgomery. "If I had been so presumptuous to try and bend Wes' enormous talent in any direction that would have detracted from that talent, he would have walked away and ended the relationship. It was always give-and-take.

"A jazz player who tries to provide for his family and maintain his art has a double-edged problem. When he becomes popular, he's no longer a jazz artist, he's sold out. Wes

jokingly referred to this, and I would say that was the price of success. That's a problem you didn't have during the big-band decades, when jazz was actually popular music."

"There was a time you couldn't get more commercial than 'My Funny Valentine,'" analogized Eubanks. "Was Miles [Davis] commercial when he did that? The fact was, there was jazz on all of Wes' later albums."

"Wes' work patterns didn't parallel his albums," explained Keepnews, who remained in contact with Wes during this period. "There were no outlets for performing the material from the later records for a general audience. When you went to see Wes in your hometown, you didn't get the record,

you heard Wes as he had always been in a club. The people who dug Wes before were turned off by the records, and a lot of the people who liked the records couldn't deal with what Wes did live. If such a success story was happening today, Wes would simply be too expensive to work clubs, and there would be someone promoting concerts with string orchestras."

As time went on, Wes tired of artistic compromise. Taylor had plans to record him again in a mainstream setting. But the desires and plans went unrealized. Taxed by the accelerated pace of stardom, Wes Montgomery died in the midst of the crossover crossfire. DB

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What's Peter Erskine, the drummer who powered three of the '80s most acclaimed electric bands—Weather Report, Steps Ahead, and Bass Desires—doing with a stripped-down acoustic kit centered around Yamaha drums and Zildjian cymbals?

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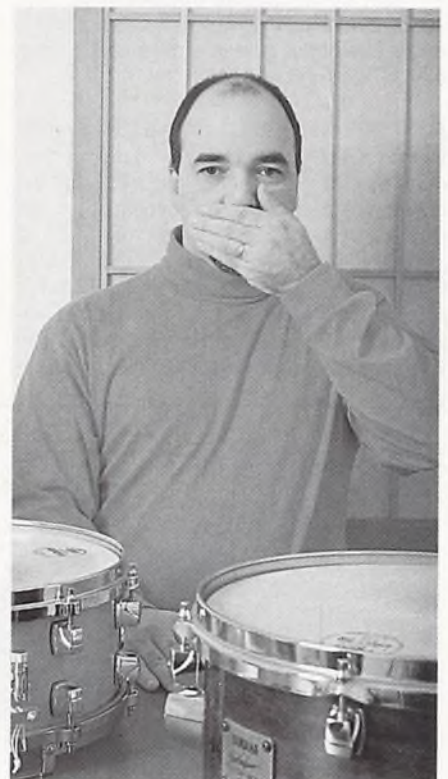
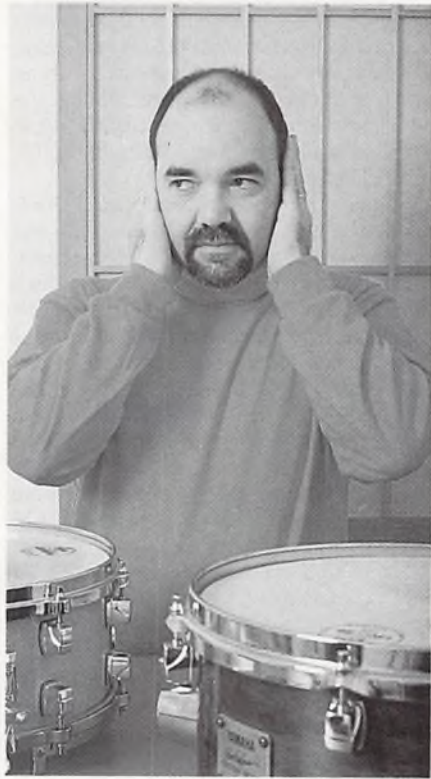
Performing Arts and the American Conservatory Theatre. The Kokuma (Afro-Caribbean) Dance Company of Birmingham, England is planning on taking his dance piece, *The History Of The Drum—Transitions In Rhythm*, to Zimbabwe. He has collaborated with Jude Miller on an electronic composition currently being used in a Japanese theme park. And let us not forget his co-production of John Scofield's *Time On My Hands*, which resulted in the ongoing partnership of Sco and Joe Lovano.

For Erskine, the key to being effective in

Swing Simple

PETER ERSKINE

By Michael Davis



BETH HERZHAFT

will come up sounding like *you*."

From leading his own recording sessions to engaging in delicate duets with Ralph Towner and freeblowing triologues with Miroslav Vitous and Jan Garbarek, from powering the Large Ensemble of Kenny Wheeler to helping Eddie Daniels and Gary Burton recreate the music of Benny Goodman, Erskine is clearly at the top of his game. He certainly isn't hurting for work. His most recent gigs include sessions with Arturo Sandoval, Jimmy Haslip, and Sadao Watanabe, a new album with the John Abercrombie Trio, and three weeks on the road with Chick Corea, in a quartet with Bob Berg and John Patitucci. Wearing his composer's hat, Erskine has completed four musical scores for Shakespeare plays produced by the Pacific Conservatory of the

such diverse contexts is "that endearing and enduring quality: simplicity. Part of that simplicity is the call to get in touch with how music functions when it's played with a lot of space, how music feels when you concentrate on just trying to make it feel good. And then when you've got this inner knowledge, and you play around the beat, the music still carries its same qualities of momentum, velocity, feel, and texture. It hasn't lost the core, so you can play around it; but you've got such a strong reference point internally that you can infer the beat, you can play open time, so it's free, yet it doesn't sound miscellaneous."

Such lessons did not become obvious to him overnight, however. He relates a story about a mixdown session for Weather Report's live *8:30* album, where Joe Zawinul

made the difference between following a horn line and supporting it very clear to him. "As Joe and I were standing there, listening to the playback," Erskine related, "he turned to me and he goes, 'Sounds good.' Then Wayne Shorter played this hemiola-type of figure—that's when you have one time going and you play another rhythmic figure to suggest another one—and I joined him, thinking, 'I've got big ears.' As that part of the tape came up, Joe turned to me and said, 'Too bad you had to do that, though.' In a rehearsal, I did the same thing again, and Wayne said, 'Don't do that.' I was just Mickey Mousing as he was playing, and the function of listening is to support, and to know when to comment and when not to comment."

Watching Tony Williams play with just two cymbals during a 1964 Miles Davis concert

video convinced him to try it on a 1989 European tour with Kenny Wheeler. "The focus and awareness it brought back to my cymbal playing," he recalls, "made it a real neat musical experience; and I would advise any drummer to, periodically, really pare down his setup."

Another inspiration is pianist Paul Bley, with whom Peter is planning a July workshop in France with bassist Dave Holland and saxophonist Dave Liebman. "I saw him play in a nightclub in Washington, D.C.," Erskine remembers. "For the first five or six minutes of this tune, he didn't play a note. He was just concentrating and listening, and then when he finally played, it was amazing. It was one of the greatest, most challenging things I'd ever seen."

Erskine's first cymbal stroke on his new release, *You Never Know*, takes place about a minute and a half into the first track; so it would appear that his appreciation of Bley's sense of space is already having an effect. A more overt influence on the album, which also features pianist John Taylor and bassist Palle Danielsson, is the music of the late pianist Bill Evans, whose example is most clearly mani-

"I had to stop physically forcing the drum thing and learn to breathe better on the kit. I had to play with my shoulders relaxed, and not to beat the sound into the drum, but to draw the sound out. Now I don't worry about the 'wow,' and I enjoy the creative process."



festated in the empathic manner in which the three equal voices inspire one another.

"ECM records are always pretty much of a surprise to make," Erskine notes. "I had never recorded a piano trio up in Rainbow Studios; I'd always recorded with a guitar,

and playing with just piano and bass gives the room a different acoustic quality. Also, I thought we were going to have overdubs, so I arranged for a couple of synthesizers to be sent down to the studio. Boom! This was a trio recording with no overdubs and no percussion. So whatever pre-planning you do, you also prepare just to chuck it out the window as soon as you start rolling the tape. No other producer I've worked with has challenged me like that.

"Manfred [Eicher, founder and head of ECM] likes to get involved creatively, and that's where things really start getting fun. Sometimes we'll be doing some free improvisations, and if something's good, he waves his arms in excitement, sort of conducting the music. He has a very specific, strong sense of taste; as we were mixing the recording on the final day, he turned to the engineer, smiled, and said, 'You know, this sounds like a jazz record.'"

Erskine's previous record, *Sweet Soul*, was also a jazz record, recorded with yet another ex-Evans bassist, Marc Johnson (see "Riffs" March '93), one of Erskine's most frequent collaborators. Joe Lovano's mellifluous presence makes it another pearl in his string of recent recordings (see "Reviews" Nov. '92). A remark about the intuitive relationship between Erskine and Johnson launched a discussion on what makes a good rhythm section work.

"I feel like a brother to Marc," Erskine smiles. "We've played together for almost 10 years. We enjoy great trust, which is one of the most important things for a drummer and bass player to have. If I stray from the plan—I mean, the plan is always to stray—but if I start to do something different rhythmically, I know that Marc is gonna keep the constant happening from the point where I departed from it. With a lot of bass players, as soon as you do something, they go, 'Oh, now's the time that we can break it up, or we can get interactive.' If a bass player doesn't have the kind of patience or maturity that Marc does, the whole thing you're trying to set up, the whole dance of the music, gets deflated right away. You can't build, and then you get scared to try anything, because as soon as you do something, the clown's just gonna go with you.

"I was never the type of drum soloist who could play the things that would make people go, 'Wow!' When I tried to do the 'wow' thing," Erskine reflects, "that's when my playing turned out to be a bit heavy. How could I make that come out right? Well, I had to stop physically forcing the drum thing and learn to breathe better on the kit. I had to play with my shoulders relaxed, and not to beat the sound into the drum, but to draw the sound out. Now I don't worry about the 'wow,' and I just enjoy the creative process."

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EQUIPMENT

Peter Erskine plays a new Yamaha kit, which includes either the 4-inch signature Erskine snare or a 5½ x 14 maple snare with a clarinet finish, a 14 x 18 bass drum, 12- and 13- bass toms, and a 14-inch floor tom—"just the standard 'jazz' sizes; these aren't the deep drums." He plays with Vic Firth sticks, either the new Peter Erskine signature model or the 7A, on white-frosted or clear Evans heads, either the Uno 58 or the Genera. His Zildjian cymbals are the pre-aged, dry light ride 22-inch K., an 18-inch K. ride, and an 18-inch dark crash thin. He uses either New Beat or K. hi-hats and takes Shure microphones with him to gig or record with, "because those mics seem to hear the drums just like I do."

For certain recording projects, he'll add as many as three cymbals, including a 16-inch A. custom crash and an 8-inch K. splash, and play with as many as five tom toms—8-, 10-, 12-, 13-, and 15-inch—and a 20-inch bass drum.

Puck Productions, Erskine's home studio, is centered around his Macintosh SE-30 computer; his note-processing software is Performer, Passport Master Tracks, and Passport's Encore. He has a pair of Yamaha DMP-7 mixing boards mulled together, and a Yamaha TX-816 rack with a patch bay. Percussion sounds are triggered from the Drumkat, ddrum pads, or the Yamaha RY-30 pads, and he takes his Macintosh Powerbook "everywhere." His master keyboard is a Yamaha SY-99; others include a Korg M-1 and an Oberheim OBX-A. Topping his keyboard wish list is a Yamaha baby grand. "I know that there are new electronic keyboards that are amazing, but there's nothing like sitting down at the piano and hearing all those overtones."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(also see **DB** Dec. '86)

as a leader

YOU NEVER KNOW—ECM 517 353
SWEET SOUL—Novus/RCA 63140
AURORA—Denon 81757
MOTION POET—Denon 72582
TRANSITION—Denon 33CY-1484
PETER ERSKINE—Contemporary 14010

with Gary Burton

COOL NIGHTS—GRP 9643
REUNION—GRP 9598
TIMES LIKE THESE—GRP 9569

with Bob Mintzer

DEPARTURE—DMP 493
I REMEMBER JACO—Novus/RCA 63139
ART OF THE BIG BAND—DMP 479
HYMN—Owl R2 79250
SPECTRUM—DMP 461

with various others

OPEN LETTER—ECM 511 980 (Ralph Towner)
STAR—ECM 849 649 (Jan Garbarek/Miroslav Vitous)
BENNY RIDES AGAIN—GRP 9665 (Eddie Daniels/
 Gary Burton)
A LONG STORY—Manhattan 95476 (Eliane Elias)
START HERE—World Pacific 94592 (Vince Mendoza)
WEAVER OF DREAMS—Blue Note 94591 (Don
 Grolnick)
THE WIDOW IN THE WINDOW—ECM 843 198 (Kenny
 Wheeler)
MUSIC FOR LARGE & SMALL ENSEMBLES—ECM 843
 152 (Kenny Wheeler)
SO FAR SO CLOSE—Blue Note 91411 (Eliane Elias)
*JOHN ABERCROMBIE MARC JOHNSON/PETER ER-
 SKINE*—ECM 837 756
JIGSAW—Atlantic 82027 (Mike Stern)
GETTING THERE—ECM 833 494 (John Abercrombie)
TIME IN PLACE—Atlantic 81840 (Mike Stern)
SECOND SIGHT—ECM 833 038 (Marc Johnson's Bass
 Desires)
INVITATION—Warner Bros. 23876 (Jaco Pastorius)
BASS DESIRES—ECM 827 743

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Ahmad Jamal

CHICAGO REVISITED/LIVE AT JOE SEGAL'S JAZZ SHOWCASE—Telarc CD-83327: *ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE; DAHAHOUD; TATER PIE; BELLOWES; BLUE GARDENIA; DANCE TO THE LADY; BE MY LOVE; WHERE ARE YOU; LULLABY OF BIRDLAND.* (59:47)
Personnel: Jamal, piano; John Heard, bass; Yoron Israel, drums.

★★★★★

This album catches Jamal, one of the great stylists in jazz, in fine focus. The parallel with *But Not For Me*, his most famous live album (recorded in 1958 at Chicago's Pershing Lounge), is obvious.

Jamal remains a pianist who favors catchy phrases, spaciousness, detail to the nth degree, and audience rapport. But the years have added a grander scheme, an orchestral sweep to the performances, and traces of Tatum. At his best, Jamal structures his discreet musical episodes to build toward a climax. I have seen him when these became merely desultory events, but that's rarely the case here.

He will forever get mileage out of Miles Davis' comments in the '50s (e.g. "I live until he makes another record"), and a Milesian sparseness can occasionally be found here. But more and more, it appears that Jamal and Earl Hines, another Pittsburgh native, share common roots: eclecticism, metric independence, and an independent-hands attack. One hears this in the variety that characterizes his performances of "All The Things You Are," "Bellows" (a Jamal original), and "Lullaby Of Birdland."

Others, such as Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," with Heard's bass walking throughout, are more straightforward. And "Blue Gardenia" really reiterates the Jamal style, as does "Tater Pie." As a trio, the group shares space, with Heard and Israel soloing between the pianist's segments. With this album, it seems that Jamal has come home.

—Owen Cordle



Bob Belden

PUCCINI'S TURANDOT—Blue Note (Japan) CDP 7 99829 2: *OPENING; CALAF'S THEME; FIRST VISION; CHILDREN'S SONG; THE PRINCESS SLEEPS; THE EXECUTION; SIGNORA ASCOLTA; NON PIANGERE LIU; IN QUESTA REGGIA; THE THREE ENIGMAS; IN QUESTA REPRIS; NESSUN DORMA; DEL PRIMO PIANTO.* (60:35)

Personnel: Belden, arranger, tenor and soprano saxophones (1,2,7,11,13), with various ensembles, including David Liebman, Joe Lovano, Mike Migliore, Chuck Wilson, Ron Kozak, Glenn Wilson, Tim Ries, reeds; Wallace Roney, Tony Kadlec, Tim Hagans, Jim Powell, Clark Gayton, George Moran, brass; Fareed Haque, John Hart, guitars; Geoff Keezer, Marc Copland, Kevin Hays, Adam Holzman, Joey Calderazzo, keyboards; Jay Anderson, Gary Peacock, Ira Coleman, acoustic bass; Tony Williams, Bobby Previte, Joe Chambers, Ralph Penland, Jeff Hirshfield, drums; Bruce Hall, David Earle Johnson, Jerry Gonzalez, percussion.

★★★★★

Opera lovers revere Giacomo Puccini for beautiful melodies. Bob Belden finds source material in Puccini's melodies from *Turandot*, arranging themes for jazz ensemble, with soloists like Wallace Roney and Joe Lovano planned, but never realized, a treatment of Puccini's *Tosca*. Like Belden, they understood how the melodrama and hyperbolic emotions of opera lend themselves to jazz interpretation. Evans and Davis are patron saints inspiring the ambition of Puccini's *Turandot*.

An opera about stubbornness, *Turandot* isn't Puccini's best-loved work, but it offers unrequited love, violent death, and a (relatively) happy ending. In medieval China, an exiled prince persistently courts a psychotic, man-hating princess. She executes suitors who fail to answer her riddles, discouraging dating.

This is sufficient context, since Belden's *Turandot* is thoroughly enjoyable as a stand-alone. His arrangements play like opera: big, sweeping gestures packed with over-heated emotion and energy. Belden invokes Davis' sound, circa *Bitches Brew* and *In A Silent Way*, propelled by rippling keyboards and multiple drummers. The most successful tracks capture the spirit of the arias, as when Roney's anguished, slow-burning trumpet plays "In Questa Reggia" against a swooning choir of horns. Lovano delivers the showstopper, "Nessun Dorma," capturing the ardent prince's hope in a Trane-ish mode. (In opera, a tenor is always the hero.)

Belden's creation won't be mistaken for opera. At its best, it translates the melodies and emotions of *Turandot* into a different medium, and then the music doesn't sound like Evans or

Davis, or even Puccini—it sounds like Belden. (Sadly, Puccini's *Turandot* is available only as an import through Toshiba-EMI, 2-2-17 Akasaka 2-Chome, Minato-Ku, Tokyo, Japan 107; fax: 011-81-3-3584-0376.) —Jon Andrews



Ginger Baker

UNSEEN RAIN—Day Eight Music 028: *RAIN AND THE RHINOCEROS; WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS; OPEN SECRET; THE GREAT FESTIVAL OF DESTRUCTION; THE TIME OF NO ROOM; THE SIGN; MIRROR OF STEEL; TO EACH HIS DARKNESS.* (42:55)

Personnel: Baker, drums; Jens Johansson, piano; Jonas Hellborg, bass.

★★★★★

Masters of Reality

SUNRISE ON THE SUFFERBUS—Chrysalis 9463-21976: *SHE GOT ME (WHEN SHE GOT HER DRESS ON); J.B. WITCHDANCE; JODY SINGS; ROLLING GREEN; ANTS IN THE KITCHEN; V.H.V.; BICYCLE; 100 YEARS (OF TEARS ON THE WIND); T.U.S.A.; TILT-A-WHIRL; RABBIT ONE; MADONNA; GIMME WATER; THE MOON IN YOUR POCKET.* (42:35)

Personnel: Chris Goss, vocals, guitars, keyboards; Googe, bass, backing vocals; Ginger Baker, drums.

★★★★★

As the story has it, guerrilla producer/situationist Bill Laswell rescued drummer Ginger Baker from a life of musical self-exile and olive farming in Italy, and got him in the studio to record the highly evocative instrumental project *Middle Passage* in 1990. While coming from a different, more collectively improvisatory perspective than its predecessor, *Unseen Rain* is a further step in the evolution of Baker's renewed career as a unique brand of musical tone painter.

On *Unseen Rain*, the context is less layered or production-oriented, and more about the magic that can spring up with empathic improvisers flung into a room together. Is it jazz? Not in any classifiably accredited way. It doesn't swing so much as it percolates and ruminates. The musicians follow the edict of never soloing/always soloing. Starting on the opening "Rain And The Rhinoceros," Baker works up his characteristic rumbling thicket of tom and snare work that becomes a recurring motif throughout the eight tracks. Equal time, equal space is a working credo. Johansson never abuses the hierarchical legacy of the piano as a lead instrument to overpower either Baker's upfront pulse-playing or Hellborg's fertile bass parts. Hellborg's guitar-like chordal patterns on "Mirror Of Steel" reflect the paradoxical

imagery of the song title, before Johansson sprinkles sad, simple broken chords into the mix.

In all, a dark, exotic beauty emerges from the album, not so much a collection of finished pieces as an exploration of a working process and a set of moods. Like much of the music out of the Laswell camp, this music manages a fine balance between atmospheric creep into the subconscious and full-frontal music.

Meanwhile, Baker's rock impulses currently

are being vented in the Masters of Reality, a band with a clear allegiance to such '60s-era role models as—surprise—Cream. Baker's uniquely rumbling pulse allies beautifully with the group's limber power-trio antics. *Sunrise On The Sufferbus* is the first recording to feature Baker as a full-fledged Masters member, and the gutsy retro folk-blues-rock material benefits from his input. Goss is the kingpin here, who craftily grafts post-'70s irony onto the pre-'70s textures.

—Josef Woodard

Sun Rise, Sun Set

by Larry Birnbaum

His earliest reviews were decidedly mixed, but today Sun Ra's genius is beyond critical dispute. While he awaits the final judgment of posterity—still active, though ailing, at 80—various independent labels are issuing and reissuing samples of his huge recorded legacy, providing a more-or-less chronological career perspective. Through all the shifts in style, personnel, and instrumentation, the essence of Ra's sound remains remarkably unchanged. Though he predicted virtually every trend in jazz, from the AACM to ECM, he never achieved the mass popularity he courted with costumes, choreography, and cosmic chorales. Consistently inconsistent, he juxtaposed buffoonery side-by-side with epiphany, hovering magisterially between the sublime and the ridiculous.

Sun Ra Visits The Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways (Evidence ECD 22039-2; 62:18; ★★★★★^{1/2}) combines El Saturn LPs waxed in Chicago in 1956-'58 and 1960. The earliest session is Monkish hard-bop—bluesy and swinging, with Mingus-y low-brass sonorities—but Ra's pioneering electric piano hints at colors yet to come. By 1958 the charts have shattered the bebop barrier, the drummers play Nubian tangos, and Marshall Allen's flute has gone Asiatic. Two years later "Rocket Number Nine Take Off For The Planet Venus" proclaims the Arkestra's dissonant ascent to the heavens, with John Gilmore's tenor sax wrenching Coltrane-esque sheets of sound into urgent cries of freedom.

The versions of "Interplanetary Music," "Eve," and "Space Loneliness" on *We Travel The Space Ways/Bad And Beautiful* (Evidence ECD 22038-2; 55:20; ★★★★★) are more abstract than those on *Interstellar Low Ways*, although they're of similar vintage. Even "New Horizons," from 1956, is as futuristic as the set of offbeat ballads (including a preternaturally postmodern take on "And This Is My Beloved") recorded in 1961 by a six-piece Arkestra newly arrived in New York. Pat Patrick's brawny baritone sax glows in this quasi-mainstream context.

The ensemble is back to full strength on the 1961-'62 session that concludes *Cosmic Tones For Mental Therapy/Art Forms Of Dimensions Tomorrow* (Evidence ECD 22036-2; 66:31; ★★★★★), schizophrenically alternating Edgard Varese-like percussive workouts and ethereal horn arrangements like "The Outer Heavens" with Allen's alto foreshadowing Roscoe Mitchell's. But percussion and horns are brilliantly integrated on the opening 1963 set, where studio echo creates a pseudo-electronic aura. Gilmore's bass clarinet, magnificent on "Adventure-Equation," and Allen's oboe add Eastern flavors, while Ra's Hammond organ grinds lunar funk on "Moon Dance."

The 20-minute title track establishes the sparse, atmospheric mood of *Other Planes Of There* (Evidence ECD 22037-2; 48:02; ★★★★★^{1/2}), from 1964. Danny Davis' caustic alto introduction gives way to long stretches of rattling percussion and ruminating piano, with

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MICHAEL GRECCO

Sun Ra in '78: The Sun also rises

episodic solos by bassist Ronnie Boykins, oboist Allen, and various trombonists before Gilmore winds out in a cacophonous tenor crescendo. Though the textures are often dry, the band establishes the hallmark sound that defines the avant garde for the next two decades.

The Heliocentric Worlds Of Sun Ra, Vol. 1 (ESP 1014-2; 35:10: ★★★★★^{1/2}) made Ra's cult reputation in 1965, and though it's no longer shocking, it still has the power to unsettle. The tightly plotted compositions rumble with ominous percussion, creak with haunted-house horns, and shiver with the spooky timbres of Ra's marimba and celeste. Robert Cummings' deep-throat bass-clarinet solo on "Outer Nothingness" harks back to Stravinsky, but Gilmore's high-energy tenor on "Other Worlds" rages straight into the future.

Boykins' arco bass sets the elegiac tone as Ra's clavoline buzzes like a tuneo electric razor on "The Sun Myth," the first of only three pieces on *The Heliocentric Worlds, Vol. 2* (ESP 1017-2; 37:27: ★★★★★). On these loosely structured jams, the modern classical ingredients blend inconspicuously into the astral gumbo. Allen's skirling piccolo agitates "A House Of Beauty," working up to the extended saxophone squeal-athon of "Cosmic Chaos," where Ra's bongo playing serves almost as comic relief.

The sound is virtually formulaic on the 1966 live recording *Nothing Is* (ESP 1045-2; 40:18: ★★★★★^{1/2}), with practiced space-bop on "Dancing Shadows" and a familiar cruise down the Nile on "Exotic Forest." The musicians chant a populist message—"Sun Ra and his band from outer space will entertain you now"—but Gilmore, Allen, and Boykins deliver meaty solos, and Ra's clavoline points to new directions on "Shadow World."

But by decade's end the group has broken through to yet another dimension. Recorded in 1969, the first half of *My Brother The Wind, Vol. 2* (Evidence ECD 22036-2; 39:53: ★★★★★^{1/2}) features Ra bouncing interstellar lounge organ off polytonal horn riffs, while June Tyson warbles like an earthbound Betty Carter. The second half, from 1970, is something else again, with Ra, on unaccompanied mini-Moog, blasting further out than ever before. Stripped of all conventional references, jazz or otherwise, the music finds a universal groove.

The 1977 album *Solo Piano, Vol. 1* (Improvising Artists 123850-2; 37:29: ★★★★★) signals Ra's return to Earth, or at least its atmosphere. "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" delves into spiritual roots, while "Yesterdays" takes Jerome Kern's dreamy ballad down a striding path, at times nodding in

homage to Ellington and Monk. On originals like "Cosmo Rhythmic" and "Romance Of Two Planets," the post-impressionist harmonies suggest Charles Ives; but the fractured rhythms are Ra's own, and the gentle vamp that propels "To A Friend" makes a distinctly African mark.

In between the rumble and roil of its opening piano solo and the squealing bedlam of its final ensemble frenzy, *Sunrise In Different Dimensions* (hat ART CD 6099; 71:04: ★★★★★)—recorded live in Willisau, Switzerland, in 1980—consists mostly of deconstructed classics, including "Round Midnight," "Take The 'A' Train," "King Porter Stomp," and tunes by Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Coleman Hawkins, Tadd Dameron, and even Noble Sissle. Ra subjects the standards to respectful mockery, tearing them limb from limb and reassembling the parts into an outlandishly swinging musical Frankenstein.

Ra plays it so straight on the first half of 1986's *Hours After* (Black Saint 120 111-2; 43:15: ★★★★★), you'd think his LSD was spiked with lemonade. On this 1986 Italian date, he saunters Monkishly through Gershwin's "But Not For Me," kicks off his shoes and boogies on "Hours After," and does some mellow crooning on "Beautiful Love." With only Gilmore, Patrick, and Allen remaining from the old Chicago crew, even the token freakout, "Dance Of The Extra Terrestrials," is slow to shift into warp drive, but "Love On A Far Away Planet" creates an enticing new hybrid—rain-forest disco.

Much of 1990's *Mayan Temples* (Black Saint 120 121-2; 79:12: ★★★★★^{1/2}) is also in a nostalgic vein, long on ballads and neo-bop, with a few outside stretches just for old time's sake. Ra recapitulates "El Is The Sound Of Joy," from 1957, but the edge is gone, and he sounds more comfortable on standards like "Time After Time," or on his own "Opus In Springtime," which cops the modal changes of "Miles." Gilmore skronks sporadically but sticks mainly to smooth, knowing neo-bop.

Recorded in Austria last spring after Ra suffered a pair of strokes, *Destination Unknown* (enja CD 7071-2; 56:11: ★★★★★) finds him unbowed in spirit and still incisive on piano and synthesizer. The band is exuberant, romping through show tunes and moonwalks alike, though with Gilmore gone. Ra's signature sound is sometimes nearly absent. But on "Calling Planet Earth," Allen's steam-kettle alto leads the group on a parting space probe, and the younger members chant the planetary patter in the cadences of rap, recalling just one more musical movement that Ra anticipated 20 years before its time.

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John Blake

QUEST—Sunnyside 1058D: *QUEST; NEW LIGHT; SMILE; ICE ANGEL; AT HOME; MOMENT'S NOTICE; MS. PEARL; VAL'S BLUES; EASIN' IT.* (47:10)
Personnel: Blake, violin; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Charles Fambrough, bass; Joe Ford, Grover Washington Jr. (6,8), soprano sax; Omar Hill, percussion; Ben Riley, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

The Philadelphia violinist brings an acoustic band in for this session, his first album in four years, and combines a melodic jazz freedom with Latin elements to create a classy modern sound. After a laborious title track, Blake reaches for a nice solo on "New Light," proving my worries over intonation and time to be mostly unfounded. As with any good soloist, it's the emotion in the fiddler's playing that makes it work.

Pianist Calderazzo shows off growth and groove, lying in wait, teasingly tickling the keys before launching into several noteworthy solos, and never clashing with the violinist. Joe Ford plays soprano with a lot of bite and taste—he always knows where he's going, but it's not where you might expect. Grover Washington Jr. also works well with Blake on "Val's Blues"—the soprano and violin are almost identical in tone. Blake gets downright dirty, his leading tones and quick asides ringing slightly off the melody. Bassist Fambrough contributes two nice tunes—the hot bop of "Ice Angel" and the jam vehicle, "Ms. Pearl," which opens up to adventurous playing by Ford and Calderazzo.

—Robin Tolleson



New And Used

SOUVENIR—Knitting Factory Works KFWCD-125: *SLOW BOAT TO MECHANICSVILLE; RED LETTER; COWS; SOUVENIR; LAZY BRUSHES; SAFE AT HOME; TRIFFECTA; PARADOX; HAGIA SOPHIA; KERNEY.* (65:04)

Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Kermit Driscoll, electric, acoustic basses; Mark Feldman,

violin; Andy Laster, alto, baritone saxes; Tom Rainey, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Better recorded than Knitting Factory's live releases, this is the label's best offering yet. Sort of an all-in-one package, *Souvenir* contains compelling writing and playing by a fairly civil, occasionally rowdy bunch of New Yorkers. There's lots of ziggling, zagging, herking, jerking, stopping, and starting on the disc's 10 fidgety, kaleidoscopic tunes, with swift shifts in style, mood, and tempo, plenty of room for solo-stretching and ensemble improvisation.

Take Laster's "Lazy Brushes," which starts deceptively as a ballad, then segues neatly into an angular, strident theme, backing down into a sharp groove for solos—first Douglas (whose playing is excellent and more outfront than it is with Dr. Nerve, his other main band), then the ever-inventive, technically brilliant Feldman, who builds an exciting climax; on the way out, the group samples yet another fresh theme. Feldman's pair of compositions, "Tri-fecta" and the delicate "Kerney," are standouts, but all five members contribute pieces conceived specifically for this group, which indeed has a strong personality and sound of its own.

—John Corbett



Dave Valentin

REDSUN—GRP 9699: *WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS; RED SUN; TWO STEPS AHEAD; WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN (DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF DIZZY GILLESPIE); BEYOND THE RIDGE; LIA'S SONG; LOCO MOTION; LITTLE SNOWFLOWER; PENSATIVE.*

Personnel: Valentin, flute; Bill O'Connell, synthesizer, piano; Arturo Sandoval, flugelhorn (4); Dave Samuels, vibes (3); Bernd Schoenhart, guitar (1); Steve Turre, sea shells, trombone (8); Lincoln Goines, bass; Robbie Ameen (1,5); Richie Morales, drums; Sammy Figueroa, Milton Cardona, percussion.

★ ★ ★

Agreeable to a fault, studded with hidden gems, Valentin's latest album continues along the Latin-jazz axis that the flutist has favored in his solo career. The results are mixed.

Kicking off with a version of that Mizak-ified Beatles tune "With A Little Help From My Friends"—even with its feisty salsa bridge section—suggests commercial concession from the git-go. And much of the album consists of Latin-tickled, bright-toned pleasantries that skim along the surface rather than dive into any degree of personal expression.

But tucked into the album's folds are deeper.

memorable moments. Dedicated to Dizzy Gillespie's memory, "We'll Be Together Again" is coated with a dark, lush romanticism, interwoven with string lines and warmed up by Arturo Sandoval's musky flugelhorn. Goines' "Lia's Song" is a real beauty, a medium-tempo Latin-pop-jazz number of subtle sophistication. Layered flutes harmonize the melody of a sinuous "Little Sunflower," with Steve Turre inserting tasteful trombone fills and soloing with loopy grace. These are a few of the things, in addition to Valentin's ever-clean and energetic playing, that salvage the album from the happy-jazz trenches. —Josef Woodard



Joshua Redman

JOSHUA REDMAN—Warner Bros. 2-45242: *BLUES ON SUNDAY; WISH; TRINKLE TINKLE; ECHOES; I GOT YOU (I FEEL GOOD); BODY & SOUL; TRIBALISM; GROOVE X (BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY); SALT PEANUTS; ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET; SUBLIMATION.*

Personnel: Redman, tenor sax; Kevin Hays, Mike LeDonne (6), piano; Christian McBride, Paul LaDuca (6), bass; Gregory Hutchinson, Kenny Washington (6), Clarence Penn (3), drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Joshua Redman, the Harvard-educated son of saxophonist Dewey Redman, plays almost too well for his own good. His tone is full and ripe, his phrasing richly shaded and nuanced—and he never hits a wrong note. He never takes a risk, either; and there's not a bar of music on his debut solo album that would have raised an eyebrow in 1969, the year of his birth.

In this context, Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle" comes off avant garde, but Redman's worshipful take on the classic Coltrane solo betrays its questing spirit. He bops "Salt Peanuts" with furious dispassion, pours secondhand paths into "Body & Soul," and rewinds James Brown's "I Got You" back into old-time Texas funk. His original tunes are a tad more daring, melding various hard-bop modes into a sleek, impersonal synthesis. But he often falls back on Coltrane licks, as on the closing "Sublimation," where he wails with mock audacity into a bygone future.

With little training or experience, Redman blows with bred-in-the-bone understanding but none of his father's rebelliousness. In a liner-note essay more painfully emotional than the music itself, he declares, "Jazz is not about hiding forever in the past, paying blind homage to yesterday's idols." Let's hope he takes his own words to heart: if his imagination caught up to his chops, he'd be a monster. —Larry Birnbaum



Donald Brown

CAUSE AND EFFECT—Muse MCD 5447: *THE POWER OF THE DRUMS; I SHOULD CARE; A FREE MAN?; CAUSE AND EFFECT; THEME FOR MANDELA; BLACK NARCISSUS; DADDY'S GIRL CYNTHIA; THE SMILE OF THE SNAKE; MAN IN A STATE OF NATURE (PART 1); MAN IN A STATE OF NATURE (PART 2).* (68:04)

Personnel: Brown, piano; Joe Henderson, tenor sax (except 8); James Spaulding, flute (1,3-5,8-10); Steve Nelson, vibraphone, marimba; Ron Carter, bass; Carl Allen (1,4,5,7), Kenny Washington (2,3,6,8-10), drums; Rudy Bird (1,5), Donald Eaton (5), percussion; Marlon Saunders, narration, vocals (1,3,5,9); Lenora Helm, background vocals (1,5).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Memphis-native Brown, continuing to stretch as a composer, has come up with a series of

provocative pieces that, except for the standard "I Should Care," express various aspects of the black life experience. These selections often have a dynamic rhythmic underpinning—"Theme For Mandela" is old-fashioned, back-beat funk, "The Power Of The Drums" is driven by a foot-tapping groove. To drive home his message further, Brown on four tracks has included texts by Marshall Stephens, Nancy Tobin, and Dorothy Jean Brown that discuss such topics as "How free can a person be who has witnessed, or been held, in slavery?" The words are potent, are read with authority and passion by narrator Saunders, and are deftly bolstered by complementary instrumental statements.

Despite the thematic aspect, the album is musically moving, and abounds with prime moments. Henderson, whose "Black Narcissus" is lyrically revived, is tender and evocative on the gentle ballad "Daddy's Girl Cynthia," and more urgent as he rides the vamp provided by "Drums." Nelson brings "I Should Care" to life, and Spaulding shines with a thrusting yet melodic solo on "The Smile Of The Snake."

Brown remains a more individualistic writer than pianist, and here his strong ties to Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner are readily apparent. He embraces the latter's richness of tone and approach on "Drums," while a Hancock funkiness prevails on "Theme For Mandela."

—Zan Stewart

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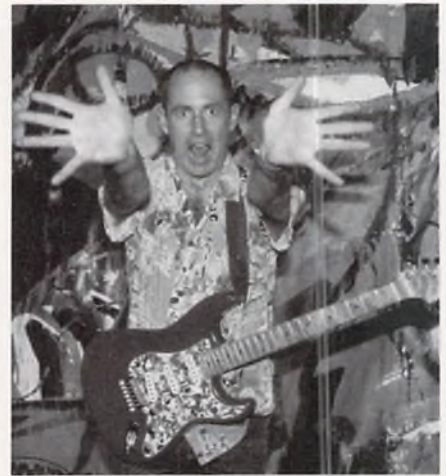
In the ever-continuing and multifarious saga of the jazz guitar, the mainstems of neo-con jazz-playing and contemporary "happy" jazz are nipped at the heels by outsiders. Here, the ones with the most money at the end do not necessarily win.

Wolfgang Muthspiel is an undeniably gifted and versatile player who, still in his mid-20s, has paid the proper dues and worked on the right sideman gigs (e.g., Gary Burton's band). His latest album, *Black And Blue* (Antilles 314 517 534: ★★★★★), finds him wriggling out from behind the shadow of Pat Metheny's influence and finding his own voice. His style takes a fresh turn on the opening tune, "Dance (For Prince)," with a hip-hoppy pulse and knotty voicings. His playing has a tougher, edgy quality, veering closer to a Mike Stern post-fusion mode of playing. He also explores the possibilities of the two-horn quintet format—tenor saxist Chris Creek and trumpeter Tom Harrell—and with a more European sensibility. Muthspiel's "Miles" captures a cool, dark, and princely character.

If **Chuck Loeb** weren't such a conspicuously fine player, it would be easier to dismiss *Mediterranean* (DMP 494; 64:25: ★★) as so much shameless commercialism. But its watered-down, early-period Methenyisms and generally middle-brow approach offer little reward for anyone looking for a musical experience. "Discipline" sounds like it belongs in a tennis-shoe commercial or a downhill-skiing movie. "Let It Be" revives the Beatles gem and wrings the gospel-tinged soul out of it. "FYI," a tribute to Donald Fagen's "IGY," at least introduces some kinetic rhythms. "Autumn" is a pretty number, but it, too, has that feel-good, movie-soundtrack glow to it.

One of the more soulful players currently working the EZ-listening pop-jazz trade, **Steve Laurie** somehow infuses his music with infectious feeling. His latest is the aptly titled *Keepin' The Faith* (Denon 75283; 48:54: ★★★★★), which heads straight down the middle, taking no detours from the proven r&b or Latin-inflected jazz paths he's followed in the past. But whereas other contemporary jazz guitarists sound like their mind is on the cash register, Laurie digs deeper. Handy with Wes Montgomery-ish octaves and single-line runs on his Gibson L5, an avowed fan of simple melodies, technically clean to a fault, Laurie is a true believer who puts his emotional genuineness across persuasively.

The Guitar Artistry Of Billy Rogers (Stash 566; 48:48: ★★★★★½) is a remarkable album, not only because of the striking playing, but also the story behind the scenes. Rogers, who died in 1987 of drug-related causes, was something of a legendary underrated guitarist whose most visible work, with the Crusaders, scarcely flaunted his virtuosic abilities. When tapes of Rogers more pure, scorching jazz playing were discovered in his apartment after his death, guitarist Dave Stryker took it upon himself to go through the countless hours of tapes and glean an album's worth of material,



Henry Kaiser: ragged but wonderful

bolstered by a posthumous rhythm section featuring bassist Jay Anderson, drummer Jeff Hirshfield, and, on "Good Morning Heartache," saxist Plas Johnson. On these tunes, including Wayne Shorter's "ESP" and "Body And Soul," Rogers plays with a do-or-die intensity, brandishing both technical ferocity and a kind of pained sense of musicality. It's a must-own item.

With his easy facility, melodic instinct, and the soothing timbre of a nylon-string guitar, **Earl Klugh** has a knack for plugging into a listening mass not necessarily grounded in jazz. For his latest effort, *The Earl Klugh Trio, Volume II, Sounds And Visions* (Warner Bros. 4-45158: ★★★★★), Klugh jumps into the populist realm of movie music, with all the orchestral plushness that the London Royal Philharmonic can provide. His choices lean toward themes, such as "Goldfinger" and "Barefoot In The Park," offbeat fare for jazz improvisation that triggers little waves of recognition. When he does handle what has become a jazz standard, namely, "Secret Love," the lightly swinging energy of the trio—with drummer Gene Dunlap and bassist Ralphie Armstrong—and the orchestral sprinkles give it a new twist.

Ron Jackson follows a *Guitar Muse* (Muse 5456; 41:14: ★★★★★½) from another era, but finds himself smack dab in the middle of a neo-mainstream movement. The 27-year-old Jackson nods toward the straightahead tradition laid down by Wes Montgomery and early George Benson, but you can also hear a bit of Gabor Szabo in his gypsy-like working of notes. Jackson is not afraid of oddly placed long notes or solos that use space as part of the expressive canvas. Joined here by young fresh fellows—pianist Benny Green, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Cecil Brooks III—Jackson navigates through a set of neatly penned originals and a few covers, including a languid "But Beautiful" and Montgomery's "S.O.S." to close.

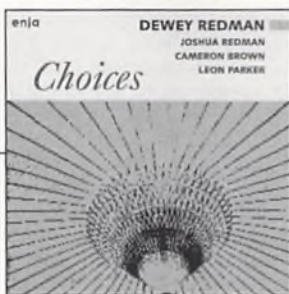
Ciro Hurtado is a fine Peruvian-born nylon-string guitarist whose moodscapes on *Tales From Home* (ROM 26014; 48:40: ★★★★★) tap into the Latin musical palette, with mixed results. Some of Hurtado's compositions, mostly based on simplistic themes in minor modes, don't go anywhere, but leave a residue of mildly

exotic pleasantry. His solo pieces "Amanda" and "Waltz #1" have a Villa Lobos-like charm. "Molly's Chicha" and "Free Range Chicken" have a rootsy zeal. Elsewhere, the album slips into new-age-ish mergings of native Peruvian instruments with an electric rhythm section that add up to one thing: yuppie dinner music.

They came to rock, but brainily What guitarists **Brett Garsed** and **T.J. Helmerich** cook up on *Quid Pro Quo* (Legato 1006-B; 63:10; ★★★) is a mostly instrumental stew falling somewhere between rock and fusion. "Subway" kicks off with Return to Forever-esque bombasticity and dives into bruising backbeat vamping. But they also turn country-rockish on "Cherokee" and make good funk on "A Musical Oasis Awaits Us." Bassist extraordinaire Gary Willis holds down the low-to-low-mid end with his customary flair.

More inspired mayhem from the hinterlands, **Tim Brady** is a Montreal-based guitarist/composer who refuses to accept the existing parameters of genre and timbre that most people associate with the electric guitar. You can hear the impressive range of Brady's explorations on his latest recording, *Imaginary Guitars* (Justin Time 8840; 77:56; ★★★★★). Brady's work recalls the experimental strides of Robert Fripp and Fred Frith, while staking out its own territory as well. "Dead Of Winter" is an icy and foreboding abstraction, while "Time Lapse Exposure," with a relatively clean guitar sound, crosses the border between contemporary classical procedures and jazz harmony. "Roche Noire (Chronique Irlandaise)" features pyrotechnical linear flourishes amidst a backdrop of expressionistic noise, field recordings, and little deposits of musical tendernesses.

Free-guitar guru **Henry Kaiser** is nothing if not prolific and peripatetic. After last year's releases of music from and with Madagascar musicians (co-produced with David Lindley for Shanachie), and Kaiser's own 20-year retrospective package, *Lemon Fish Tweezer* (Cuneiform), Kaiser comes out with *The Five Heavenly Truths* (FOT HK1; 76:41; ★★★★★), another ragged but wonderful compilation of tracks, improvisations, and collaborations. Hysterical, jocular, and even occasionally blues-lined, Kaiser is one of the finest living exponents of electronically altered, sometimes MIDI-fied guitar used toward the goal of non-partisan, non-idiomatic free improvisation. He gurgles and skitters behind Vernon Edgar's free-associative, babbling poesy on "Logic Of Fire" and "Dark Comprehensions," and joins a rankling quintet for "Project X." The title track is a rambling, 25-minute summation of what makes Kaiser tick, with martial-arts practitioners in the background at the London performance where the piece was recorded. For the full visual effect, you had to be there. But, musically, Kaiser makes his own there *there*. (FOT Records; Box 505 Bloomingdale, IL 60108) **DB**



Dewey Redman

CHOICES—enja CD 7073-2: *Le Clit*; *Everything Happens To Me*; *O'Besso*; *Imagination*; *For Me*. (55:29)

Personnel: Redman, alto, tenor saxophones, musette; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone (1,4,5); Cameron Brown, bass; Leon Parker, drums.

★★★★

Armchair shrinks should have a field day with *Choices*, the first recording pairing Dewey

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Redman with his son, Joshua. On the two tracks where they perform together, Dewey surprisingly forgoes the tenor for the alto, which more plainly conveys his stylistic connection with his mentor, Ornette Coleman. Dewey only picks up the tenor for his ballad feature, "Everything Happens To Me"; he sits out on the other ballad, "Imagination," letting Joshua have an open field. So, the head-to-head match-up between the Coleman phlange's most-celebrated tenor and his prodigal son is artfully dodged.

One of Dewey's better albums, *Choices* is a

program with an engaging symmetry. Driving, Ornettish blowing vehicles open and close the program, while the keystone-like "O'Besso," a 14-minute exposition of astringent musette musings buoyed by African rhythms, is bracketed by the ballads, which receive warm, breathy readings from their respective interpreters. "Le Clit" and "For Mo," Dewey's do-not-go-gentle-into-the-good-night dedication to his longtime drummer the late Eddie Moore, provide insight into Joshua's responsiveness as an improviser. On the former, Joshua playfully picks up on the swirling motives Dewey

uses to conclude his solo, and stretches them like taffy. The latter contains the session's one bracing duel, where the saxophonists ricochet slashing lines off each other.

If anything, the absence of twin tenors makes Dewey and Joshua Redman's next joint recording an even more anticipated event.

—Bill Shoemaker



Dave Samuels

DEL SOL—GRP 9696: *CONQUISTADOR; JAMBOREE; SAND CASTLES; SEA BREEZE; DANCE CLASS; DEL SOL; ONE STEP AHEAD; EL PEREGRINO/THE PILGRIM; THE LONG WAY HOME; COASTAL COMFORT.*
Personnel: Samuels, vibes, marimba, percussion, synthesizers; Jorge Strunz, guitar (1,8); Dave Valentin, flute (2,4,7); Danilo Perez (2,4,7), Javier Carizzo (3,9), piano; Andy Narell, steel drums (5,6); Eliseo Berrero (1,8), Lincoln Goines (2-4,7,9), bass; Walfredo Reyes (1,8), Richie Morales (2-4,7,9), drums; Long John Oliva (1,8), Sammy Figueroa (2-7,9), percussion.

★ ★ ★

Best known for his long tenure with Spyro Gyra, Samuels has pursued an eclectic career, working with everyone from Anthony Davis to Pink Floyd. On his second GRP solo album he turns south of the border, collaborating with musicians like Costa Rican guitarist Jorge Strunz (of Strunz & Farah), Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez, and Newyorican flutist Dave Valentin. The result is predictably mild, with pastel colors, breezy tempos, and just enough spice to keep the salsa from tasting bland.

The most impressive tracks, "Dance Class" and "Del Sol," feature steel drummer Andy Narell, whose soft-mallet textures blend with Samuels' own to create hypnotic wave effects. Perez puts some Latin-jazz backbone into "Jamboree" and "Sea Breeze," but elsewhere, twinges of minor-key angst and the rhythmic vitality of Sammy Figueroa's congas barely rein in Samuels' bent for wistful sentiment and new-age banality. Strunz and Valentin only reinforce the leader's insipid predilections, and when Samuels plays unaccompanied on "Coastal Comfort," he sounds like Chick Corea on lithium.

—Larry Birnbaum

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Collective Migrations

by Jon Andrews

Vernon Reid helped start New York's Black Rock Coalition because the rock music industry didn't offer many opportunities to black musicians after Jimi Hendrix. Reid's **Living Colour** is the Coalition's most visible success, so much so that the group has a dilemma: how to maintain its creative edge without alienating mainstream fans. *Stain* (Epic 52780;44:59: ★★★★★^{1/2}) pushes the envelope of commercial viability, expanding a hard-rock sensibility to encompass elements of speedmetal, r&b, and noise. If *Stain* is a little less adventuresome than 1990's *Time's Up*, it compensates with



MARK LEJALDHA

Living Colour: (l-r) Will Calhoun, Doug Wimbish, Reid, and Corey Glover

aggression.

Starting with the rage of "Go Away," Living Colour attacks with pounding rhythms and catchy hooks. This is a consistently provocative band with something to say. Lyrical topics include guilt, hate, police brutality, bisexuality, and the world's angriest mailman. The band's canny enough to know where and when to use a sample, a Beatle harmony, an Aerosmith riff. Reid's turbulent but compact guitar solos invoke Hendrix spiritually, though not literally. The instrumental "Wtfff" flirts with Bomb Squad production and hints at the band's experimental side. It's impossible to reconcile Living Colour's potential for exploration with its massive audience. A Vernon Reid solo project is needed.

Brooklyn's **M-BASE Collective** evolved from support group and booking service to think-tank. Co-founder/alto saxophonist Steve Coleman and like-minded associates wondered why jazz fusion couldn't incorporate "free" horn solos and unconventional, funk-based rhythms. The M-BASE sound is distinctive, if increasingly reliant on formula. Horns dart through complex vamps while chilly synthesizers mix with edgy piano and guitar chords.

This is how M-BASers hear the future: *Anatomy Of A Groove* (DIW Columbia 53431;54:58: ★★★★★) reunites Coleman and Greg Osby on saxophones with M-BASE house drummer "Smitty" Smith and vocalist Cassandra Wilson, and features tunes by seven members of the collective, highlighted by the South African lilt of Wilson's "One Bright Morning." All employ familiar M-BASE constructs. The performances are strong, particularly Smith's drumming and Wilson's vocals, but this gathering sounds contrived.

The principals join **Steve Coleman and Five Elements** for *Drop Kick* (Novus 63144-2; 61:50: ★★★★★) Coleman's work represents the M-BASE dialectic in its most concentrated form, valuing speed and agility over feeling. With *Drop Kick*, Five Elements functions like a finely tuned engine: quick, precise, and relentless. The rhythms are tight, urgent, and possibly constricting. You hear discipline and control, along with a unique harmonic sense, but it's difficult to make any emotional connection with the music. *Drop Kick* has the narrowing

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focus of a man painting himself into a corner.

Strata Institute's *Transmigration* (DIW Columbia 53432; 68:51; ★★★★★½) suggests fresh applications of Coleman and Osby's theories. *Transmigration* is among the most persuasive and enjoyable projects from the M-BASE think-tank. Sounding as much like Chicago as Brooklyn, the session focuses on veteran tenor Von Freeman. Freeman has long influenced Coleman, and Von's contributions to last year's terrific, neglected *Rhythm in Mind* encouraged Coleman to slow down and swing

a bit. The two generations find common ground with funk grooves subordinated to blues and straightahead sounds. Coleman claims Charlie Parker as an idol, and that affinity has never been so clear. Freeman's presence inspires expressive, well-developed solos from Coleman and Osby, and there's plenty of interplay among the horns. Freeman lingers over Henry Mancini's "Mr. Lucky" and Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now," and everyone stretches out on Coleman's slow blues, "Speake." **DB**

Furious Fire

by Dan Ouellette

Listening to the two-CD compilation *The Fire/Fury Records Story* (Capricorn 42009; 69:19/71:04; ★★★★★) is like digging in your backyard and finding gold nuggets. This collection unearths a surprisingly rich vein of the blues-based music that helped spawn rock & roll and soul. The mother ode is r&b, and these resplendent 51 specimens of roots music come from the Fire/Fury Records label founded in New York in 1959 by producer Bobby Robinson.

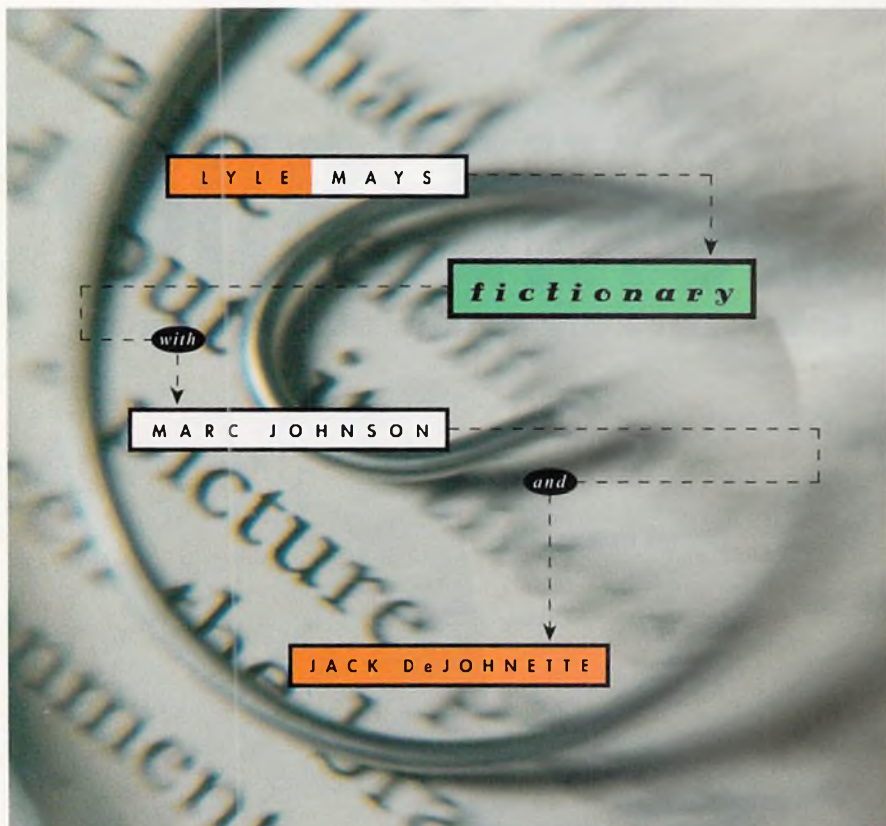


Tarheel Slim & Little Ann

As one of the first black-owned independent record companies of the late '50s and early '60s, Fire (and its subsidiary Fury) developed a sizable and decidedly eclectic roster of raw blues, r&b, soul, and gospel talents for more than a decade. Fire/Fury was home to such well-known singers as Wilbert Harrison, Buster Brown, Lee Dorsey, and Gladys Knight, and to such gritty blues guitarists as Lightnin' Hopkins and Elmore James. But the label was also the roost for a number of amazing, but relatively unknown, artists like Tarheel Slim & Little Ann, Mighty Joe Young, and an obscure South Carolina soul singer named Joe Haywood, whose previously unreleased "Strong Feeling" provides an exhilarating close to this collection.

Of course, the compilers have included such obvious classics as Harrison's million-selling shuffle "Kansas City," Don Gardner & Dee Dee Ford's gospel-tinged "I Need Your Lovin'," James' "Shake Your Moneymaker" and "Dust My Broom," Brown's blues hits "Fannie Mae" and "Sugar Babe," and Dorsey's buoyant tripleheader of fun soul-pop numbers "Ya Ya," "Do Re Mi," and "Eenie Meenie Miny Mo."

But what makes this package excellent are the tunes that rarely if ever get any kind of rotation on the oldies radio stations. There are great discoveries to be had here, including a number of robust instrumentals by sax man King Curtis (of the Coasters' "Yakety Yak" fame), a couple of pieces of Dr. Horse (including a great Ken Nordine-ish cool-jazz tune, "Jack, That Cat Was Clean"), Titus Turner's spine-tingling "All Around The World," and gritty acoustic blues by Hopkins (his sparkling guitar clinic on "Mojo Hand") and Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (a major influence on Elvis Presley). Plus, as the compilers did with the superb Elmore James two-CD box, Capricorn provides an informative accompanying booklet with interviews, studio info, and stories. **DB**



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Max Roach

PERCUSSION BITTER SWEET—Impulse! GRD-122: *GARVEY'S GHOST; MAMA; TENDER WARRIORS; PRAISE FOR A MARTYR; MENDACITY; MAN FROM SOUTH AFRICA.* (40:57)

Personnel: Roach, drums; Booker Little, trumpet; Julian Priester, trombone; Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Clifford Jordan, tenor saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano; Art Davis, bass; Abbey Lincoln, vocals (1,5); Carlos "Patato" Valdez, Carlos "Totico" Eugenio, percussion (1,3,6).

★★★★★

The Civil Rights Movement of the early '60s galvanized Max Roach's music. It inspired the historic *Freedom Now Suite* and adventurous projects like *It's Time*, his still-bracing first recording with a chorus. Chronologically, '61's more modestly scaled *Percussion Bitter Sweet* is the middle man, but it's just as out-front in its political passions.

Compositionally, Roach was surveying a new plateau. Works such as "Tender Warriors," which benefited from the contrasting moods of Eric Dolphy's flute and bass clarinet, are built upon voicings and cross-rhythms that tugged at his graceful melodies and sleek themes to produce strong, dramatic tensions.

Percussion Bitter Sweet is also an excellent soloist's forum, where topnotch work from Clifford Jordan, Julian Priester, and Mal Waldron is the base line. "Garvey's Ghost," fueled by simmering percussion, contains one of the most fiery statements Booker Little ever recorded. Setting up one of Roach's blistering solos, Dolphy's grenade-like alto on "Mendacity" rips the poignant ballad into razor-edged fragments, an improvisation that foreshadowed the breakthroughs of the AACM and BAG altoists.

—Bill Shoemaker



Peter Erskine

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ABOVE: PURE & SIMPLE; HEART GAME; EVERYTHING I LOVE. (58:41)

Personnel: Erskine, drums; Palle Danielsson, bass; John Taylor, piano.

★★★★½

If Weather Report was Erskine's gang, this ECM debut represents his yin. A highly interactive session along the lines of the great Bill Evans trios, his playing here is more zen than macho, more Paul Motian than Buddy Rich. On con-

templative fare like John Taylor's spacious "New Old Age" and Vince Mendoza's "Heart Game," he explores tones, textures, and dynamics with a painterly touch. His brushwork on Mendoza's melancholy "Amber Waves" and his own delicate "On The Lake" is sensuous and alluring, two terms you'd never associate with the Buddy school. Rather than keeping strict time, Peter plays a more melodic function here, commenting on the music while Danielsson holds the center. —Bill Milkowski



Jerry Granelli

A SONG I THOUGHT I HEARD BUDDY SING—ITMP 970066: WANDERLUST; SMOKY ROW; THE OYSTER DANCE; BILLIE'S BOUNCE; COMING THROUGH SLAUGHTER; IN THAT NUMBER; PRELUDE TO SILENCE; I PUT A SPELL ON YOU; BLUES CONNOTATION; BLUES CONNOTATION (REPRISE). (58:21)

Personnel: Granelli, drums; Kenny Garrett, alto sax; Julian Priester, trombone; Bill Frisell, guitar, banjo; Robben Ford, guitar; Anthony Cox, bass; J. Granelli, electric bass (2,5,6,9).

★★★★½

This blues-based offering has the unlikely twosome of Robben Ford and Bill Frisell exchanging wicked bent-string statements. Ford sticks largely to the tradition while Frisell frequently takes the pedal-steel/Buddy Guy-on-acid approach. Kenny Garrett pays heartfelt homage to Johnny Hodges on "Wanderlust," and Ford's keening arrangement of Screaming Jay Hawkins' "I Put A Spell On You" is a high point. Throw in nods to Bird ("Billie's Bounce") and Ornette ("Blues Connotation") along with Granelli's highly impressionistic originals, and you've got one provocative package. —B.M.

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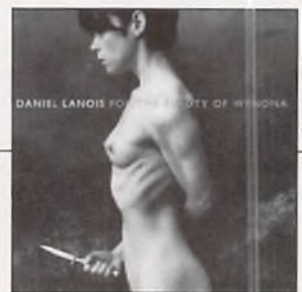
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Daniel Lanois

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Personnel: Lanois, guitar, vocals; Daryl Johnson, bass, percussion, vocals, drums; Malcolm Burn, various keyboards, guitar; Bill Dillon, guitar, guitorgan, mandolin; Ronald Jones, drums, Flintstone's Kit; Sean Devitt, processed tape loop (12); Emanuel del Casal, bass (2); Nicholas Payton, trumpet.

★★★★

This album is a sonic marvel. First of all, there's

a new rawness and depth to Daniel Lanois' vocals, which sounded somewhat weedy on 1989's *Acadie*. Must've been taking voice lessons from U2's Bono. Or maybe it's the banks of sound-processing equipment he so cleverly utilizes at his Kingsway Studio in New Orleans. Whatever, the voice is so present and riveting, the heavily treated guitars burst through the mix with the urgency of a sniper attack, the rhythms are huge and mesmerizing, and the hooks are ever-present. There's a sad beauty to "The Messenger," "Rocky World," and the mellow "Death Of A Train," while "Brother L.A." and "Lotta Love To Give" rock with a vengeance. Canadian Lanois also pays a fitting tribute to his adopted home on a grooving version of the Wild Tchoupitoulas' "Indian Red."
—B.M.



Marlon Jordan

THE UNDAUNTED—Columbia CK 52409: *VIL-LAGE BLUES; CONFRONTATION; LAURIE'S MOOD; IN OR OUT; THE UNDAUNTED; THAT'S GONE; NEW ORLEANS STREET BEAT. (59:39)*

Personnel: Jordan, trumpet; Tim Warfield Jr., tenor sax; Tarus Mateen, bass; Troy Davis, drums; Eric Reed, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

Now that Wynton can't decide if he wants to be Duke Ellington or Raymond Scott (see *Citi Movement*), his New Orleans protégé Marlon Jordan is left to carry on the '60s Miles Quintet legacy for Columbia. He does so here with an arresting verve and relaxed confidence that's been lacking (check his laid-back growling and half-valve statements on the bluesy "Laurie's Mood" and his muted-trumpet burn on "In And Out"). Warfield provides a powerful Trane-Wayne connection, and the rhythm section feels good swinging hard or laying down a lazy Second Line groove.
—B.M.

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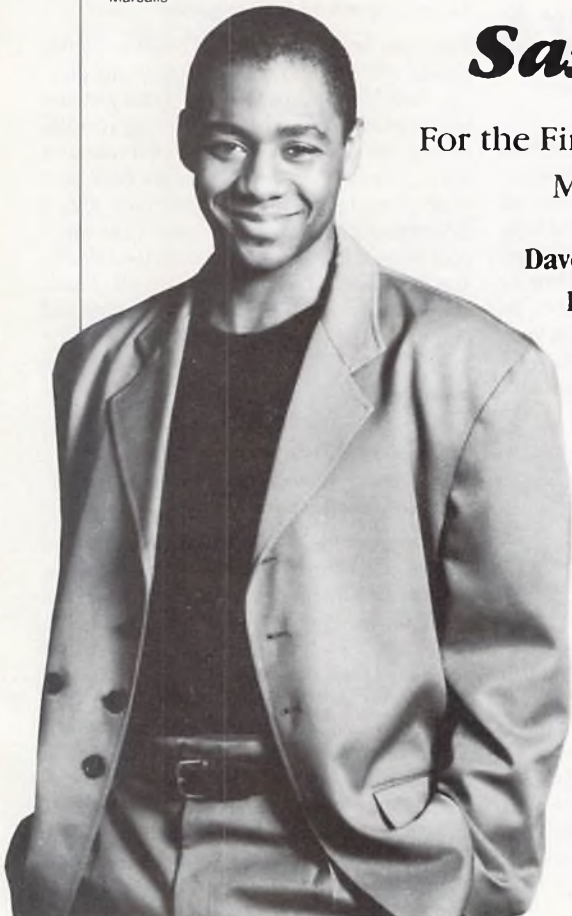
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1 Kenny Burrell & John Coltrane

"Freight Trane" (from *KENNY BURRELL & JOHN COLTRANE, Fantasy/OJC*) Burrell, guitar; Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

This is John Coltrane and Kenny Burrell together. I've never owned this record, but it's one that I listened to while I was going to Berklee in 1971. The school had a great library where I spent most of my time either copying tunes out of fake books or just listening to albums. Burrell has this thing with his articulation that I've never heard anyone else do. He creates this beautiful sound with the way his pick hits the strings. To hear Coltrane playing with a guitar player is pretty exciting. 5 stars.

2 Sonny Sharrock

"Promises Kept" (from *ASK THE AGES, Axiom*) Sharrock, electric guitar; Pharoah Sanders, tenor saxophone; Elvin Jones, drums; Charnett Moffett, acoustic bass.

I hadn't heard this before, but I'm pretty sure it's Sonny Sharrock. I'm not as familiar with him as I should be. I was introduced to him in 1968 or 1969, around the time when I was first getting into Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell. I went to a Herbie Mann jazz-rock concert, and I saw Sonny Sharrock brutalizing his guitar with a slide. I was just starting to step into the quote-unquote 'jazz world,' and hearing him break all the rules was liberating. At the time I was just trying to play the right notes, but what he did stuck with me. I felt it was a brave thing to do then, and it's inspiring to see that he's still got the same conviction. Another 5 stars. Anything with Elvin Jones I have to give top rating.

3 Jim Hall

"Scrapple From The Apple" (from *GUITAR PLAYER MAGAZINE PRESENTS LEGENDS OF GUITAR—JAZZ, Vol. 2, Rhino*) Hall, guitar; Don Thompson, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.

That was Jim Hall doing Charlie Parker's "Scrapple From The Apple." It's an inspiring piece to hear done on a guitar. 5 stars. Jim's done so much to advance the instrument in the way that he takes ideas, phrasings, and articulation from other musicians and applies them to the guitar. I took lessons from him, and he'd tell me to listen to a Sonny Rollins solo. Or he'd play a Bill Evans piece and have me check out the harmonic elements. That was a key for me in terms of opening up the possibilities on guitar by listening to different instruments, whether it's a banjo, a harmonica, or even the entire

BILL FRISELL

by Dan Ouellette

A top vote-getter in *DB's* Critics and Readers polls, Bill Frisell's albums have consistently garnered 4- and 5-star reviews, and he has added haunting and scintillating licks to session work with a diverse cast of musicians ranging from John Zorn to Marianne Faithfull. Recent projects include his stint in Hal Willner's studio band for *Weird Nightmare: A Meditation On Mingus* (see *DB* Oct. '92) and his latest Elektra Nonesuch release, *Have A Little Faith*, an album of covers by songwriters Aaron Copland, John Hiatt, Muddy Waters, Sonny Rollins, John Philip Sousa, Stephen Foster, Bob Dylan, and Madonna (see "Reviews" Apr. '93).

For this, his second Blindfold Test, we spent a rainy afternoon at his producer Lee Townsend's house in Berkeley.



Cleveland Symphony.

4 Pat Metheny & Ornette Coleman

"Song X Duo" (from *SONG X, Geffen*) Metheny, guitar; Coleman, alto saxophone.

That was Ornette and Pat Metheny. Another 5 stars. This is so good it's ridiculous. Ornette has this casual way of throwing off phrases. The music is so much a part of him. It's as if he's walking down the street whistling. Pat has always acknowledged Ornette as a big influence, so I think it's cool he worked on this project. This album was such a left turn for him. Businesswise it was risky. But I think he sounds great in this context. I especially like the way he triggers a sax sample with his guitar.

5 David Torn

"Voodoo Chile" (from *DOOR X, Windham Hill*) Torn, guitar, vocal, percussion, tablas; Antony Widoff, keyboards, percussion; Mick Karn, bass, percussion; Bill Bruford, drums.

That's David Torn. It's amazing that he can take a Hendrix tune and not just rehash it, but somehow make it his own. Hendrix was a big influence on me, but I don't know if I'd ever dare covering one of his songs. David's one of these real cutting-edge guys who experiments with sound. I get lost in all the MIDI stuff, but David knows how to use the technical advances in guitar playing to his advantage. It really shows in this song. I like the way he sings it, too. 5 stars.

6 Henry Kaiser

"Get Moose And Squirrel" (from *LEMON FISH TWEezer, Cuneiform*) Kaiser, guitar.

That one made me laugh. That was Henry Kaiser. He has so much energy in his playing. He's Mr. Positive Energy. I can just see him playing that, with his feet flying over the pedals. He's either using a harmonizer or a delay that repeats what he plays back at a later time but at a different pitch and a different speed. Another 5 stars. That was a cool piece. I like the way he uses the effects. You don't hear a box turning on or off. That's my goal: to make the effects as invisible and organic to the piece as possible.

7 Bob Mould

"No Water In Hell" (from *GUITAR SPEAK III, IRS*) Mould, Fender Stratocaster, American Standard guitars, Fender jazz bass.

Well, you got me there. I don't have any idea who this is. I'd hate to break my pattern, but I'll give this 3 stars even though I don't feel I'm really qualified to give it a star rating. I'm not really attracted to this, yet I feel I should be. John Zorn's into this kind of music, and he's played me some on occasion. On the surface, I just hear a wall of noise with a drummer playing a polka beat. It has a dense, thick sound, and there are some interesting rhythmic changes going on. But it sounds like a bunch of guys rolling on a floor in their own vomit. I guess I'm getting a little too old for this. Even though I should give this music more of a chance, I don't go out of my way much to check it out. **DB**