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The Reluctant



Power Broker

By Fred Shuster

"The thing that's always excited me about jazz

is, you're dealing with real music in the

present tense. Very few people play it like that.

... Very few people improvise in the present

tense. They basically play what they've

learned or what they know."

t's already a warm afternoon in Burbank, California, but under the lights of a glitzy soundstage at the NBC Television Network complex, it's getting hotter.

Chicago bluesman Buddy Guy and the gravel-throated British rocker Paul Rodgers are running through their umpteenth rehearsal of the r&b standard "Some Kind Of Wonderful" while TV cameramen map out angles for the day's taping of *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. Guy and Rodgers, musical guests on the show, are trading verses, and a lively backup band are putting the accents in all the right places.

They've been at it for the better part of three hours, and the musicians are clearly approaching meltdown. Suddenly, laughter washes over the room. The three-piece horn section is cracking up, prompted by a tenor saxophonist who alternately issues sharp, syncopated fills and choreographs goofy Vegas-style show routines to laughs from his partners. Despite a long day of rehearsal and with taping just a few hours away, Branford Marsalis is busy inspiring the troops.

It's typical of Marsalis—who is widely respected for his nononsense modern-jazz chops, gracious personal style, and quick wit—to want to get the job done as painlessly as possible. It's also typical that Marsalis—leader of the stellar new Tonight Show band, Grammy Awardwinning solo artist, and sessionman extraordinaire—would be part of the Guy/Rodgers horn section to begin with.

In previous weeks, Marsalis backed traditional country artist Vince Gill, world-beat rocker Peter Gabriel, and confessional

songwriter Tori Amos, to name a few. Pop singer Neil Diamond enjoyed his televised musical encounter with Marsalis so much that he sent a personalized tour jacket, ostensibly making the former Jazz Messenger a permanent member of the Diamond road band.

Not all musical guests appear center stage, however. Since May of last year, when Marsalis signed a five-year contract with NBC and succeeded Doc Severinsen as conductor of the nation's most visible house band, he has made a practice of inviting friends from all over the jazz map to sit in with the band, thus giving cutting-edge artists like pianist Geri Allen exposure to an audience of five-to-eight million viewers. The visiting musician gets a priceless plug from show host Leno—who flashes their latest album on camera—but viewers at home hear the artist for multiseconds only, when the screen flickers in and out of commercials. But even that small amount of coast-to-coast exposure can spark dramatic results. After short segments with the Tonight Show band, both Allen and saxophonist Everette Harp report increased sales for their current releases.

Marsalis acknowledges, but plays down, the power he clearly wields at a time when publicity for jazz artists often goes begging. "I'm completely indifferent to any thoughts to that effect," he says. "I really don't think about those things."

Despite his humility and uneasiness with being perceived a jazz power broker, Marsalis realizes the good he brings in exposing his fellow musicians. One can't help but wonder what impact the

national TV spotlight might have had on the careers of, say, crooner Jimmy Scott, guitarist Grant Green, or pianist Sonny Clark. The power of television is simply stunning; Allen tells of now being recognized in airports throughout the country. Even without dramatically increased record sales, musicians who've jammed with the Marsalis house band have a high-profile detail to add to their resumes, a detail that reads awfully well in the offices of booking agents.

He explains that the slot was originally conceived as a "forum for the cats we respect as musicians. There have been times for the sake of either the show or record-company politics where we've relaxed our standards and let people sit in because it's good business for the program. But basically, the spot is reserved for people we feel are exceptional. It's an alternative to center stage, which is the best we can do under the circumstances. It gives music that's not mainstream an avenue to be heard."

At various times over the year, the band—Marsalis on tenor and

soprano saxes, Kenny Kirkland on piano, Bob Hurst on bass, Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums, Kevin Eubanks on guitar, Sal Marquez on trumpet, Matt Finders on trombone, and Vicki Randle on percussion—has been augmented by trumpeter Roy Hargrove, guitarist John Scofield. saxophonists Bobby Watson and Harp, trumpeter/flugelhornists Clark Terry and Marcus Belgrave, pianists James Williams. Joey Calderazzo, and Allen, and trombonist Robin Eubanks. among others.

"After my appearance, I got feedback from all over the coun-

try," Allen recalls. "There was quite a bit of response. People were suddenly aware of me in a different kind of way. You can't ignore the influence of having access to millions of people, even for that little amount of time. Branford has this wonderful opportunity to access the mainstream American audience, and this music is getting out there every night. And he's being very gracious by including members of the musical community. That says a whole lot about him as a person."

Lawrence Tanter, program director at KAJZ-FM, a Los Angeles jazz station, says he has logged a number of calls from listeners requesting a track by an artist that has appeared the night before with Marsalis on TV. "It's a symbiotic relationship. They ask about an artist from the TV show and we play them. Or we plug the appearance if we know about it ahead of time. Sometimes a musician will drop by the station and tell us he or she is going to sit in with the Marsalis band. I think it's a very healthy relationship. But we definitely get calls from listeners after an artist has appeared on the show."

Chris Douridas, music director at National Public Radio's flagship station KCRW-FM in Santa Monica, Calif., calls the overall effect: "impressive. Whenever an artist's name is mentioned, especially on a widespread television show like *The Tonight Show*, you're going to further imprint that name on the consciousness of the audience. It gives them further recognition. The fact that some of these artists are getting national exposure is amazing. It's something everyone

SUSAN RAGAN



Not a slick career move—Branford plays the Grammy-winning blues with Albert Collins and Linda Hopkins.

will benefit from."

The octet traverses the musical landscape with ease. Like house bands on other talk shows, the Marsalis crew delivers Motown and Stax chestnuts, classic-rock staples, New Orleans r&b, and '70s funk grooves. But unlike other boob-tube jukeboxes, Marsalis can make a convincing leap from the Meters' "Cissy Strut" to Coltrane's "Impressions" to Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog."

"It's fun, man," Marsalis, 32, says with genuine glee as he relaxes in his office/studio/dressing room while an Ella Fitzgerald disc plays. "First of all, we get to play tunes we'd never play on our own gigs. We have a lot of laughs . . . and we've got more exposure than any house band in television history."

o an observer, it looks like the greatest day job in the modern history of labor. It's also a gig that's apparently hard to let go, judging by the grumbling of members of the previous Tonight Show orchestra who were reportedly ticked-off at the modern direction the new scaled-down band would take. Severinsen and drummer Ed Shaughnessy both refused comment on the new regime.

Marsalis, a native of New Orleans who lived in New York for 10 years before moving to the West Coast, takes it in good-natured stride. "When we first came here, there was nothing but complaining," he says. "Jay [Leno] went to bat for us when I'm sure most of the people at this company had never even heard of me. I wanted to bring some really talented players down and have them on the payroll as NBC employees. Our challenge was to maintain the quality of the music. A lot of people in the industry never anticipated the level of positive response we've received."

Despite his efforts to place worthy jazz musicians in front of a network TV audience. Marsalis has drawn barbs for taking the latenight gig in the first place. In a letter to *The New York Times Magazine* last year, pianist Keith Jarrett implied Marsalis' creative years are past, lumping him with musicians who are "playing musical chairs and competing for public attention." Marsalis says that

while he still respects Jarrett's musicianship and compositional skills, he considers the pianist simply "envious."

If all the attention has affected Marsalis' own music, it certainly isn't evident on his latest release, the often-outside live trio date, *Bloomington* (see p. 45). The disc, which he matter-of-factly calls his "best and most adventurous album to date," is the follow-up to last year's blues-inflected *I Heard You Twice The First Time*, which won the 1992 Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Performance.

Marsalis says he could have followed the listener-friendly *I Heard You Twice* with something equally accessible to capitalize on his newfound household fame (see "Reviews" Nov. '92). "We know what sells albums in the so-called jazz market—happy, major-key sambas with light, pleasant melodies," he says. "But look what I've just released. That's the iconoclast in me, sure. When I started working on the blues album, it wasn't an attempt to gain a broader audience. It was completed, with the exception of the track 'Simi Valley Blues,' before I even took this job. So, it was not like I said, 'Hey, we've got *The Tonight Show*, let's make a commercial album and cash in.' This job had no bearing on what I was recording at the time."

"Simi Valley Blues," which refers to the Los Angeles-area suburb where the first trial of the police officers who beat Rodney King took place, contains the shadow of *Bloomington*. The impromptu avantjazz session was "a challenge to the form," Marsalis admits, "but on *Bloomington* we're not just blowing."

The new album contains six extended tracks that serve as a framework for sophisticated freewheeling improvisations that often bring to mind mid-period Coltrane. It's cerebral, gutsy music that refuses to remain in the background. The interplay between Marsalis, Watts, and Hurst (pianist Kirkland was recording a solo album at the time of the tour) is nearly telepathic, particularly on the ballad "Everything Happens To Me" and the turbo-charged "Citizen Tain," where the saxophonist lays down a withering line of fire. Fans of *Crazy People Music*, released three years ago, will know what to expect.



Stand-up comedy with Branford and Robert Hurst

he 1991 concert at Indiana University that became *Bloomington* was recorded and filmed in conjunction with the D.A. Pennebaker video documentary, *The Music Tells You* (see "Video Reviews" Feb. '93). Marsalis says the period reflects a turning point in the presentation of his music, a point "when I knew we were really onto something. The music was so meaningful to me that I didn't want to play those songs, like a regular straight blues, that we would do for the benefit of the audience each night. We had a lot to say musically, and I didn't want to reel it in. I just wanted to body-slam 'em."

Marsalis expresses the same sentiments as he considers presenting a track from *Bloomington* on TV. "It's a matter of finding a song the average person might find palatable," he says, winding up for the pitch. "Then again, we might just ram it down their throats. Just because people like me on *The Tonight Show* doesn't mean they like jazz."

Marsalis says he approaches a live concert date differently these days. He refers to various ways of playing: "I can play music the way I would play it on a record, the way I would play it for me. Or I can hold back a few things so I don't lose the audience completely and leave them in a cloud of dust."

Have the concert audiences gotten hipper over the past few years? Marsalis pauses and draws out the answer: "No. A lot of people don't get the music, they don't get what it is and what it represents. The thing that's always excited me about jazz is, you're dealing with real music in the present tense. Very few [jazz musicians] play it like that, to be honest with you. Very few people improvise in the present tense. They basically play what they've learned or what they know. And when the music is in the present tense, people have problems with it. They don't get it. Because when we play it and it's working, ideas are just bouncing around all over the place."

Marsalis says even his brother, trombonist/producer Delfeayo

(who produced *Bloomington*), had to take the tape of the Indiana concert home before he warmed to it. "He called me the next day and said, 'I was wrong. This stuff is bad.' Now, Delfeayo loves jazz, listens to jazz all day, makes jazz records, and he didn't get it at first. How the hell is anybody else going to get what we're doing?"

Jazz critics in various cities across the country have blasted the group for "being disrespectful, rude, and continually laughing at inside jokes that we had supposedly played on the audience without letting them know," Marsalis says. But, he argues, "a lot of times musical jokes happen onstage. And sometimes only a handful of musicians in the crowd get it. We've gone out of our way to avoid the very standard bebop thing of quoting an already established tune. We would play licks from a Michael Jackson or Commodores tune and never play them in the right place. I would organically hear these licks in quirky places, so it sounds backwards instead of forwards. And we'd be laughing on stage. I mean, how do you explain a musical joke to an audience? What am I supposed to do, stop the show and say, 'Five minutes ago, we were laughing at this.' They won't get it then, either."

Marsalis says he was especially inspired by a nightclub appearance by the late pianist Walter Davis Jr. that he and Tain caught in New York several years ago. "They were swinging, and ideas were coming, and whenever he would play an idea that we might know the outcome of, he'd stop as if to say, 'We're not going to play that.' He was talking, you know? And [drummer] Ben Riley would be playing as if, 'Oh, you're trying to throw a little curve around me.' They were dialoging. I was just having a great time, and I came away buzzing. I called my dad that night and said, 'I finally see the bebop thing.' You know, when I first moved to New York, I saw a lot of the so-called bebop masters, and all I saw were some guys who learned a bunch of chords and scales and could regurgitate them at will. It was just regular stuff. But Walter Davis, man, that was the real thing that night."

During vacations from *The Tonight Show* (the band has seven non-consecutive weeks off a year) and on weekends, Marsalis and some members of his octet appear individually at local Los Angeles nightspots. A prolific session guest, Branford's name can be found on a long list of albums, including discs by Bruce Hornsby, B.B. King, Fishbone, and the Grateful Dead, plus various movie soundtracks.

Marsalis seems to enjoy living and working in Los Angeles, despite its rather small number of clubs, compared to New York. As for the local perception that he and the crew are attempting to kickstart a dormant scene, Marsalis says that is completely false. "We're a house band," Marsalis says, summing up. "I didn't come here to try and not make it a house band. We play during the commercials." Then he grabs his sax and heads for the bandstand.

EQUIPMENT

Branford Marsalis plays Dave Guardala tenor and alto saxophones and mouthpieces. He also uses the Selmer Mark VI soprano saxophone; tenor and soprano reeds are by Frederick Hemke.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(For additional listings, see DB. Jan. '92.)

as a leader THE PROPER

BLOOMINGTON—Columbia 52461 (C I HEARD YOU TWICE THE FIRST TIME— TO

Columbia 46083

CRAZY PEOPLE MUSIC—Columbia 46072

THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN—Columbia 46990

with others

THINK HE'S THE CENTER OF THE UNI-

VERSE—Columbia 52764 (Fishbone)

HARBOR LIGHTS—RCA 66114 (Bruce Hornsby) GIVE A MONKEY A BRAIN AND HE'LL THE PROPER ANGLE—CTI R2 79476 (Charles Fambrough)

TO KNOW ONE—Blue Note 98165 (Joey Calderazzo) IN THE DOOR—Blue Note 951382 (Joey

IN THE DOOR—Blue Note: 951382 (Joey Calderazzo)

WITHOUT A NET—Arista 8634 (Grateful Dead)

DO THE RIGHT THING—Columbia 45406 (soundtrack) MO BETTER BLUES—Columbia 46792

(soundtrack)
SNEAKERS—Columbia 53146 (soundtrack)

Ramsey Vision

RAMSEY LEWIS

By Amy Abern

amsey Lewis juggles a schedule from Hell. He's the artistic director of the Ravinia Festival's Jazz In June series. He hosts The Ramsey Lewis Show, a weekly three-hour jazz/talk radio show syndicated in 10 cities, and Black Entertainment Television's Bet On Jazz, a half-hour cable program. But first and foremost he is a piano player who's writing, touring, and facing the deadline for his next GRP release.

While he must feel pressured by these commitments, it doesn't come across in conversation. What comes across is his frustration. While his career of more than 30 years has produced 60-plus records and three Grammys, he sees few avenues for young artists, starting their careers, to follow in his footsteps. And the equation that gave entertainers good incomes in bad times, has broken down.

"It's the economy and the government," laments Lewis. "During most recessions, entertainers made more money because people wanted to forget about their problems. Now they're taking a hard look at their entertainment dollars—all their dollars—and finding they can't buy as many CDs as they used to, can't go to as many festivals or concerts as they used to. There's been a drastic cutback as a whole, largely due to the government, and the entire industry feels it.

"Look at the Chicago Jazz Festival. They got a lot of their funding from the city, the city had their funds cut, so the Fest got cut; so there you are again."

At mention of the club scene, Lewis shakes his head. "Once we got into the late '80s, the economy started dropping, people stopped going out. There are still a couple of nightclubs that book major names in New York, and here in Chicago there's Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase—but that's about it. There are sprinklings of clubs around the country, but the nightclub as we knew it 20, 30 years ago—booking big-name artists week after week—no longer exists. Again, it's the

Where do we go from here? Could JTV, a



"The first thing I'll ask is,
'How much fun will it be?'
The second thing I'll ask is,
'What does it pay?' And that's
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questions in reverse."



la MTV, make a difference? "Maybe, if handled the right way. Part of the problem with the industry today is that the people running it are all diehard businessmen. They're only interested in the bottom line, the money.

"It used to be that a creative person was included in designing radio and TV programs. You don't find them included in the decision-making end of programming too much anymore. So you get guys promoting talent based on numbers, not art.

"The recording industry also had to change their priorities in order to survive. It used to be record companies carried a new artist for two or three records to give him a chance to make it because they knew sometimes it took a while to catch on. They also had the funds that could allow them to sit back and wait. Now they're looking for the biggest bang for the buck. They're feeling the crunch, too."

n addition to his radio and cable shows, Lewis has another venue from which to keep jazz thriving. As artistic director of Ravinia's *Jazz In June*, held at the music park on Chicago's North Shore, he inherits a twoyear-old concert program established by Gerry Mulligan. Lewis' plans include an educational component and a bigger role for new Chicago artists.

"Gerry's first priority," explains Lewis, "was to get high-quality musicians, and he did just that." This season's lineup includes the return of the Modern Jazz Quartet, Wynton Marsalis, Arturo Sandoval, and Mel Tormé as well as the debuts of Joe Henderson, Betty Carter, and Sonny Rollins. But what is the outlook for the future as the legendary names pass on? Will audiences agree to pay the same ticket price to hear the young lions as they do for the music's veterans?

"Maybe not immediately. There's a transition that has to take place," Lewis answers. "When Ella first started, she was making peanuts. So were Dizzy and Bird; all of us started out with very paltry beginnings. These guys need time to build their reputation. You can't hurry that along."

Will festivals survive in the next five to 10 years while the new "greats" are still in the discovery stages? Lewis laughs. "I'd need a crystal ball to tell you that. But if I knew how to insure the success of festivals, I'd start a company right now to get the ball rolling, get my kids in on the action, and we'd all be millionaires."

Does Lewis see any young Birds, Ellas, or Dizzys on the horizon? "If you mean do I see any hot, new players that have the potential to make it in the long run, yes. But no, there's only one Bird, one Ella, one Louis, just as there's one Beethoven, one Bach. No one replaces these people, but new artists come along and make the same kinds of names for themselves if they have the talent. It isn't fair to make that kind of comparison."

Lewis has set up the last night of Jazz In June with a jam session featuring a couple of young lions with some grand masters. Roy Hargrove and Joshua Redman will be trading fours with Clark Terry, Stanley Turrentine, and Phil Woods, to name a few.

Lewis also hopes to promote jazz on the local scene. New to Jazz In June are six preview concerts that feature Chicagoans Patricia Barber, Brad Goode, Barrett Deems, Johnny Frigo, Orbert Davis, and Vandy Harris. Future plans for the Jazz In June series include holding master classes with some of the featured performers, giving high school and college jazz bands a shot

on the Ravinia stage, as well as starting a Ravinia jazz band. "We'll commission composers mainly from Chicago, but not exclusively, to write new works which will premiere at Ravinia with the jazz band," explains Lewis. "It's gonna take some time, though; I don't expect everything to happen in one year."

All this and recording, too. His next release for GRP features Mike Logan, electric keyboards; Henry Johnson, guitars; Charles Webb, bass, and Steve Cobb on drums, with guest appearances by sax player Art Porter and longtime friend/drummer Maurice White. Lewis comments, "The record is along the same vein as *Ivory Pyramid* [his GRP debut], but I think the music hosts a new level of intensity as far as composition and performance."

Not that he has any time currently to consider anything other than when he might be able to sleep next, but is there anything *left* to do to make Ramsey Lewis happy?

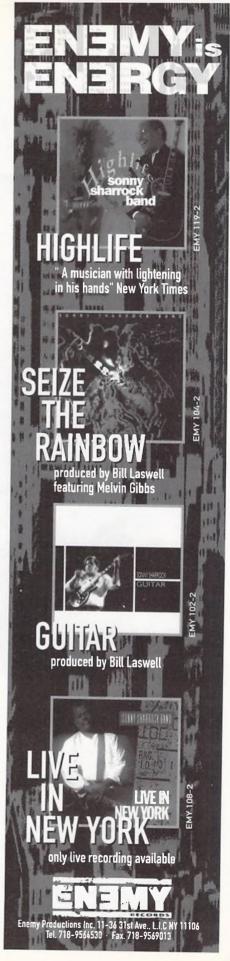
"I will always play the piano. Playing has always been, and always will be, my first love. Other than that, there's nothing I can think of that I feel the need to pursue.

"If an opportunity to do something falls into my lap, the first thing I'll ask is, 'How much fun will it be?' The second thing I'll ask is, 'What does it pay?' And that's cool, because it wasn't too long ago that I asked those questions in reverse."

With the current climate in the entertainment industry, what advice can he offer to aspiring players?

"Get a formal education. Included in that formal education should be general knowledge. There are other things besides music, because life consists of other things. If you get a general education specializing in music, it gives you the opportunity to not only be a performer but also a teacher, a composer—there might be eight or nine different ways to earn money in the music industry if you have the knowledge from a practical education." He laughs and adds, "I seem to be doing all eight or nine myself right now.

"In conjunction with that, performing is important. Get out and play anywhere you can, whether it's the church, fashion shows, bar mitzvahs, sitting in with other groups—wherever you can play in front of people, that's the key, playing in front of an audience."



EQUIPMENT

Ramsey Lewis plays Steinway Concert Grand pianos.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

IVORY PYRAMID—GRP 9688 URBAN RENEWAL—Columbia 44190 A CLASSIC ENCOUNTER—CBS 42661 KEYS TO THE CITY—Columbia 40677

TEQUILA MOCKINGBIRD—Columbia 35018 SUN GODDESS—Columbia 33194 THE IN CROWD—Chess 9185

Of Guts & Guitars

VERNON REID & SONNY SHARROCK

By Bill Milkowski



or some musicians, it's not so much about technique—it's about going beyond the notes to a place of pure passion and gut-level communication. Sonny Sharrock, the father of avant-garde guitar, and Living Colour's Vernon Reid both seek that higher ground every time they hit the

Warren Harding "Sonny" Sharrock was born in Ossining, New York, on August 27, 1940. From 1954 to 1959, he sang in local doo-wop groups before getting his first guitar at age 20. He attended the Berklee College of Music from September of 1961 to February of 1962. After moving to New York City in 1965, he began gigging with African master drummer Olatunji. There followed stints with saxophonists Byard Lancaster and Pharoah Sanders and drummer Sunny

Murray before hooking up with flutist Herbie Mann in 1967, a gig which lasted on and off for five years.

After appearing on Pharoah Sanders' Tauhid (1967). Wayne Shorter's Super Nova (1969), and Miles Davis' landmark Jack Johnson session (1970), Sonny began to garner a lot of critical attention. He shared DB's June 11. 1970 cover with guitarist Eric Clapton and received a ★★★1/2 rating that year for his Black Woman album. There followed a number of ambitious projects as a leader with his wife, vocalist Lynda Sharrock. Sonny kept a low profile through most of the '70s, but was brought back into the experimental spotlight in the early '80s by producer/bassist Bill Laswell, who utilized Sharrock's aggressive "shards of splintered glass" sound for his Material and Last Exit

projects.

Sonny made a successful bid at placing his free guitar in a more commercial context with his 1990 album for Enemy Records, Highlife. The following year he released the extraordinary Ask The Ages, produced by Laswell for his Axiom label and featuring Elvin Jones, Pharoah Sanders, and Charnett Moffett (see "Reviews" Sept. '91). His current band features drummers Abe Speller and Lance Carter, keyboardist Dave Snider, and bassist Charles Baldwin.

Guitarist Vernon Reid came up playing in funk and rock bands around Brooklyn. With bassist Melvin Gibbs he formed a fusion band in the mid-'70s, Point of View, that was inspired by the Mahavishnu Orchestra. He went on to play with New York cult bands like James White & the Blacks and Defunkt before joining Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society in 1979. He remained with that band for five years before forming his own metal-edged rock band, Living Colour, in 1984. The band's 1988 debut album on Epic, Vivid, went platinum and earned a Grammy for Best Hard Rock Performance ("Cult Of Personality"), while the 1990 followup album, Time's Up, was a gold-seller and also won a Grammy. Their latest, Stain, is another mix of furious hard-rock energy, funky rhythms, and socially conscious lyrics (see "Reviews" May '93).

Vernon recently provided the metaloid edge to Jack DeJohnette's latest Blue Note release, *Music For The Fifth World*, and he also appears alongside fellow Black Rock Coalition guitarist Michael Hill on "We People Who Are Darker Than Blue," from *People Get Ready*, Shanachie's star-studded tribute to Curtis Mayfield (see p. 49).

Over a sumptuous dinner of sesamecrusted salmon and calamari at Manhattan's Time Cafe, we talked about guitar gods who walked the earth and that special place that exists beyond the notes.

BILL MILKOWSKI: Over the years, have you two had the opportunity to play together on the same bill before?

SONNY SHARROCK: Two years ago we did a Black Rock Christinas party. I played in an all-star band called Crunch with [bassist] T. M. Stevens. Vernon played with the Defunkt reunion. I also remember we were both at the Moers Festival in Germany once, but we didn't play on the same day. I was there with Last Exit.

VERNON REID: Man, I'll never forget those Last Exit gigs at CBGB's. Wow! Shards... breaking glass... shrapnel! One time I saw you play with Exit, and there were literally like two strings left on your guitar. The bass strings were gone, the treble strings were gone. And the two middle strings, the G and D strings, were begging for mercy.

SS: Yeah. You know? I stopped breaking

strings, man. I think I've changed my picking or something. But I don't break strings like I used to. Still wearing the frets out though. [Note: At a recent gig at Tramps, Sonny had broken two strings before the second song was over.]

BM: Vernon, when was the first time you heard about Sonny's music?

VR: I remember reading an article about Larry Coryell, who had a lot of really complimentary things to say about Sonny. And then I went and got *Birds Of Paradise* with Lynda Sharrock. I thought it was just really interesting, not like anything I had heard before.

BM: Where were you then in your own development as a guitarist?

VR: I was at the point where I was checking out different music. It was around the time when I first heard Ornette's music and Harry Partch's music, so my ears were wide open for Sonny. I just thought the record was so unique because Lynda's singing and Sonny's playing were so intimate and complementary in a weird way.

SS: Yeah, what I was trying to do in a very strange way was to take all of the things that I had come out of the freedom thing with and make a pop record. It didn't work. It actually worked a lot better with *Highlife*.

BM: Vernon, what did you hear in Sonny's playing that had an impact on you?

VR: Absolute conviction, absolute passion. The fact that it wasn't about notes or anything . . . he just took it straight out. He was really communicating on this extramusical level.

SS: I think it always takes that, though. When you hear the real players, that's what it is that you're attracted to. If you're really listening to the music, that's what you have to hear. I remember the first time I heard Vernon was on a tape. I had never heard of him, but one day my manager brought me a tape and said, "Listen to this cat, man." And that's what I was struck by . . . how hard he was playing, how honestly he was playing. That was the thing that got me first about Vernon, and that's always the thing that knocks me out: how terribly hard some people play. I don't get kicked off any other way.

BM: Vernon, I've seen you solo where you're so deep into the music that it seems like a seance.

VR: Well, there's this very special place that you can go to when you're really improvising, when you really give yourself over to the music, really let go of your ego and let go of wanting to look cool, wanting to manipulate the girl in the third row or whatever. And it's hard to let go of all of that because we all carry baggage around with us. But when you get to this place when you're gonna let go of all of that, all your knowledge and everything you've studied and all those things are just in service of the music. It's an amazing

thing. It's hard to describe, but it really is this transcending thing, and you're not making it happen. Something happens when the rhythms coincide, when everybody on the bandstand is there with you and they're fueling this thing. It might be a collective improvisation where you're all kind of feeling it and nobody's getting in each other's way. It's a wild place to go. It's almost like



Vernon: "Let go of your ego."

entering a trance, really. The thing about it is, it's such a beautiful, frightening place to go that you wanna go there all the time. And the real danger is when you try to make it happen. I've always found my worst moments were when I would try to force that to happen. There's a level of just playing proficiently and being in control and being very aware of the choices you're making . . . you're aware of the fact that you're going to play a whole-tone series or a diminished series or how you're moving triads around. and that's a cool level to be at. But then there's a level that's way past that, where all of your intellect and all of that is really removed. And it really isn't about a matter of style, because I've seen people playing Bach and it's been as free as anything I've heard, because they're so off into it they've become part of what those chords are. I've seen people play blues and get to this place.

BM: Like John Lee Hooker.

VR: Really. See, there's a level of music where cats get into this real macho testosterone-type of thing where it's "me and my shit." Who's playing the hip shit? But music is like art: the ability to see something, have a vision, put it on the canvas, the ability to approach an instrument or even a log or whatever and make that into something by organizing tones and making something meaningful of it. To me . . . I don't know, I don't wanna get too spacev with it. but music is a humbling thing when it's played well. Music, when it's played with conviction and soul and heart, is an awesome thing. And it really goes past whether the person is hip or not. Certainly hipsters go there, sometimes. Like Charlie Parker. But it's really past all of that.

SS: I've found of late that the composition has something to do with it. Some songs propel themselves, and that's what I've been trying to do in the last couple of months, is play songs that have this thing in them that you could literally . . . if the song was a solid, physical thing, you could set it there and it would start to move on its own. And these are the kinds of songs that when you do get into them, you can ride it forever and you start to reach things. So for me, getting to that place has a lot to do with the song you're playing.

BM: The song plays you.

SS: Yeah, it takes you there. It's got its own motion. It propels itself. Sometimes I listen to cats and think, "This shit ain't movin' nowhere. It's just sitting there." There are a lot of "young lions" who are playing things that don't move at all. They've got all the chops, but they're not thinking about the music on that level.

VR: Music exists on a level of just pure feeling, but it also exists on a level of mathematics and numbers. So it's almost like, the kind of personality you bring to it is what you get out of it. A tune like "Giant Steps" can be approached incredibly mathematically. It can be looked at as a set of vexatious harmonic and mathematical problems. That's one way of looking at it. And that playing can be on a very high level. But there's another level of really just the movement of the chords and the emotion that it invokes. There's a very romantic thing that goes on with that song because there's so many major 7th chords. So it can be approached on a lyrical level, and that can be taken to a higher level. It's like what you wanna bring to it, the way you see things, the way you hear things. I find like Pat Martino's playing . . . for me, I love his

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playing. His playing is very warm to me, but a lot of his playing is very angular and mathematically precise. But still his playing operates on a level of humanity...not being cold but still being very logical in a way; whereas Grant Green's playing is not like that at all. Different styles, but they both work for me. It's a trip. Like listening to Miles. There's such an intellect at work. Just listen to any of the great Miles Davis records

. . . but it's also someone who's feeling it from his gut and soul. I think a lot of people confuse that feeling with a style. They really latch onto, "Well, it's gotta be hard-bop or it's gotta be this or that." And I think that sound, the human sound, is transcendent.

BM: One person who had amazing technique but also approached the music from a very egoless perspective was Arthur Rhames [the late, legendary, and criminally under-recorded Brooklyn multi-instrumentalist who inspired Vernon and a whole generation of Brooklyn players].

VR: Arthur was really chasing after that transcendence 24-7 [24 hours a day, seven days a week]. He really, really pushed himself past his own limits. Man, he just was simply . . . it's hard to even describe what level he reached. Those of us who saw him in the neighborhood and things we'd hear on gigs will never forget him. A lot of musicians have stories about these amazing guys who sink without a trace. Arthur was one of those guys. He was a great inspiration to

BM: Sonny, tell us about how Blind Willie Johnson inspired you.

SS: It's only that one song he did, "Dark Is The Night, Cold Is The Ground." Before that time I had never really heard a musician reach that point, where the music was so strong that you knew that if he didn't make it, it might kill him inside. You know what I'm saying? I feel like that sometimes, where if you don't get some things out of you they're just gonna explode inside of you. That's what that was like. It was the most vital music I had ever heard, man. I just wanted to be a part of that. I knew I had to have some of that in order to live. That's the question: "Can you live without it? Can you live if you didn't do this?" And if you think you can live without doing it, maybe you should do something else. It should be that strong for you. And when I heard Willie play that song, I knew then that I couldn't live without having some of that.

BM: John Coltrane was obviously another towering influence on you.

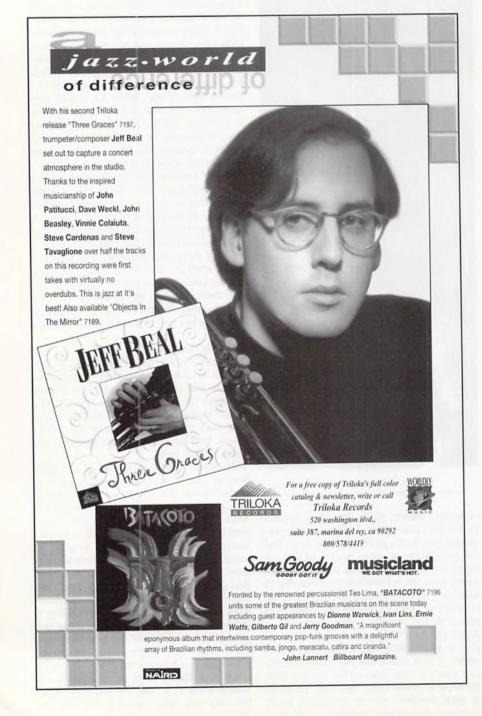
SS: Man, I followed that band around New York whenever they were here. You look at Trane's progression through the years, those cascades, those millions of flawless notes to, in the end, screaming on one note because that's all there was. He had reached it, and that's all there was. It's an amazing journey, man. And the beauty of Coltrane is that you can see most of it on record. Most guvs got these gaps, but with Trane, every six months there was another record through most of his career. So when I heard Blind Willie Johnson do that and then I started hearing that same quality in Trane and in other music I was listening to, I said, "Man, this is the thing I have to be about."

BM: In 1970, you played with Miles on Jack lohnson.

VR: What was that like?

SS: It was . . . you know, they were all such beautiful cats . . . Jack [DeJohnette] and Wayne [Shorter]. It was just being around those cats. They were really sweet cats, man. Miles was sweet to me. Very fatherly and very nice. And funny.

BM: How did you meet him? How did that whole session come about?



SS: I was with Herbie Mann, and we were touring for George Wein on one of the summer tours, Newport on-the-road kind of thing. Miles was on the tour, too, and Wayne was still with the group at the time. One night in St. Louis we pulled up to the stage door, and we get out of the car, and Miles is standing up on the loading dock, and he says, "Sonny." And I didn't know he knew who I was. So I said, "Hey, Miles." And he said, "You played your ass off last night." And that's all he said. Later on after we finished playing, he came over to me and started telling me about Monk and Bird. It was the weirdest shit in the world. Now, here's Miles, man . . . who, you know, is supposed to be this cat who looks at you funny and pushes you away and shit. And he came over to me and started talking about Bird and Monk and the Baroness and the whole shot. It was amazing. I'm standing there with my mouth on the floor, you know? And after that, he called me for the date.

BM: Did you do any touring with him?

SS: No, what happened was, after doing the Jack Johnson session, I went to Japan for about three weeks with Herbie. We were on the bullet train going from one city to another, and they called me to the phone. It was Miles. He said, "Where you at?" I said, "I'm in Japan on a train." He said, "Call me when you get to New York." So I called him when I got back to New York, and he said, "Come on in my band. But you gotta audition." I said, "Miles, come on, let's stop playing. You know what I sound like." And he said, "F**k you!" and hung up [hysterical laughter]. He was incredible, man. That cat was so beautiful. He was a game-player, man ... super game-player. I think Miles ... if he heard what you were doing, then he was very easy on you. Whether he liked it or not wasn't necessary. If he understood what you were trying to do, then he'd be cool.

BM: Nowadays, it's difficult for people to tap into that feeling of greatness in music because they're sort of distracted and corrupted by a lot of things going on: the state of the music business, the influence of conservatories and MTV. The spiritual aspect is not so strong anymore. Music seems to be in a very different space now.

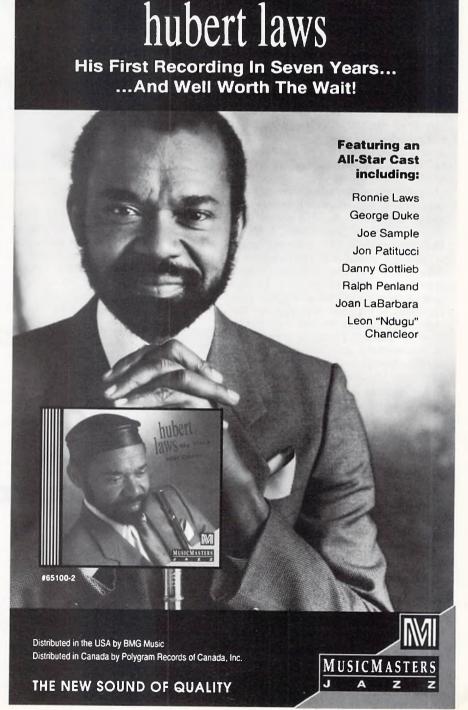
VR: Music has become more of a commodity. At one point, music was really salvation in the black community. And it just turned into this thing, I don't know... at some point it was like, "Well, the revolution is not gonna be televised, so I'm just gonna get mine." And once it was reduced to a product with the numbers, I think that, on one level, it had a devastating effect on the community. It's a very different situation now, to the point where the concept of how music is made has changed. It's turned to deejay culture and mix culture and sampling culture. I'm not gonna say that's right or wrong or good or

bad, but you know, jazz music has moved out of the communities. Jazz is essentially entertainment for the moneyed bourgeoise. Really.

BM: There's a whole new generation coming up that is making music and does not play instruments at all, in the sense of shedding to learn and evolve with it and grow. I guess it's just a different set of tools that have come along. And people are hing creative with

them.

VR: They're using the fabric of the past, and this is where it gets into a really strange thing. We're at the point where certain segments of the music population are recontextualizing the past. And the past is a finite quantity. There's only a certain number of records made in the past, only a certain number of James Brown records, and a lot of people have descended upon these records



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to find whatever funky bits they can to use for their own purposes. And it's created a very odd situation where the music is moving forward but it's caught in this kind of bizarre artistic stasis. Because you're hearing the same Rick James that you heard 10, 15 years ago, and all of a sudden it's a hit again. Well, that just tells you about the enduring power of Rick James' original tracks. Because when people hear this new stuff, they're really buying "Super Freak." So there's this constant reshuffling of the deck, and it gets into a very weird, funny sort of

BM: So in the midst of this artistic stasis, is it likely that a new Charlie Parker will ever come along?

VR: The new Charlie Parker is already here. The new everything is here. The thing about it is access to the means of production. Check it out. The history of music is only the history of music that we know, that was recorded or written down. Literally, that's it. At any given time there are thousands of musicians working and playing. While Charlie Parker was playing . . . he's celebrated, and rightfully so, because he was an amazing musician. But we'll never know about soand-so that never made a record date. Arthur Rhames is a case in point.

BM: Sonny, your Ask The Ages last year has to stand as a landmark in your career.

SS: That was an awesome experience being in the same room with Elvin Jones. There's a tune on there where I had a flashback, man. I'm sitting in the room with him, and he's right here looking at me, and we're playing together. Pharoah [Sanders] is in a glass booth down here, and Charnett [Moffett] is in a glass booth down here, so it's just me and Elvin over here, and I wrote this tune as a Coltrane tune; it's got that deep, slow, droning groove ["Many Mansions"]. And when he went into it, I flashed back and thought I was in Birdland again, listening to the Coltrane Quartet. And I almost lost it, man. Because it was just . . . oh man . . . it's hard to describe the feeling . . . everything just went into slow-motion for me. It was just incredible. That cat, he's just so much music. And he's so much a part of my life, just all those years of listening to him. It was hard to confront my whole musical past, because he really was a big part of it. And to be there with it . . . it was very scary. But you need to be scared like that every now and then just to bring your shit back together.

BM: Are there other people around that are still conveying this deep stuff?

VR: You know, you don't really get to it unless you're willing to expose your guts. I think a lot of times it's actually convenient to be good and clean and have no rough edges. You can present that to people, and they'll actually think that you're giving them something. And the thing is, I don't want to fall



Sonny: . . . "if you don't get some things out of you they're just gonna explode inside of you."

into the trap of equating feeling with not having a level of technique, because there are too many amazing players who are actually doing something deep with their technique. Coltrane had amazing technique. Everybody talks bad about George Benson, but I gotta tell ya . . . when George puts the guitar around his neck and says, "I'm ready to hit," head for the hills.

BM: I've seen him sit in and jam where he just burned it down.

VR: Head for the hills! But he's made certain choices. He wants his music to appear in a context, and that's part of his journey. But as far as the guitar . . . not to be f**ked with!

EQUIPMENT

Sonny plays a Gibson Les Paul Custom through a Marshall 100-watt head with a Marshall 2 x 12 cabinet. He also has a Nady RW3 wireless unit, a Furman PL Plus, an ARTGX 2000 multi-effects processor, and an ARTX15 foot pedal. He plays D'Addario medium-confetti strings.

Vernon plays a Hamer guitar with EMG pickups. His rack looks like the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. For amplification, he uses a Mesa/ Boogie Triple Rectifier, Mesa/Boogie 50/50 power amp, and VHT 2150 power amp in combination with a series of three preamps—a Mesa/Boogie

TriAxis, an ADAM-1, 50/50 power amp, and another VHT 2150 power amp. His pedalboard contains a Crybaby wah-wah, a Digitech Whammy pedal, a Morley custom volume pedal, and an Electro-Harmonix 16-second delay. His rack also includes a Rocktron Intellifex, an Eventide H3000 SE harmonizer, and a Digitech IPS 33B He also plays a Gibson Max guitar synthesizer with Akai S-1000 and E-mu Proteus sampling modules and a Korg Wavestation. Vernon also uses D'Addario strings

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Vernon Reid

(For additional listings, see DB Oct. '90.)

with Living Colour STAIN-Epic 52780

BISCUITS—Epic 47988 TIME'S UP—Epic 46202 VIVID-Epic 44099

with others MUSIC FOR THE FIFTH WORLD-Manhattan 99089

(Jack DeJohnette) THE BIG GUNDOWN—Nonesuch 79139 (John Zorn) SMASH & SCATTERATION—Rykodisc 10006 (Bill Frisell) MAN DANCE-Antiles 846 397 (Ronald Shannon

BARBECUE DOG-Antilles 1015 (Ronald Shannon

RENAISSANCE MAN-Gramavision 8308 (Jamaaladeen Tacuma)

SPIRITS DANCING IN THE FLESH-Columbia 46065 (Carlos Santana)

YO BUM RUSH THE SHOW-Def Jam 40658 (Public Enemy)

Sonny Sharrock

ASK THE AGES—Axiom 848 957
FAITH MOVES—CMP 52 (w/Nicky Skopelitis) HIGHLIFE — Enemy 119 SEIZE THE RAINBOW — Enemy 104 GUITAR-Enemy 102 PARADISE-Atlantic 1522

with others NOISE OF TROUBLE - Enemy 003 (Last Ext)

LAST EXIT - Enemy 001 (Last Exit) A TRIBUTE TO JACK JOHNSON—Columbia 47036 (Miles Davis)

SUPER NOVA—Blue Note 84332 (Wayne Shorter) MEMPHIS UNDERGROUND-Atlantic 1522 (Herbie

Playing Grace

JEFF BEAL

By Linda Kohanov

ow that Miles and Dizzy have laid down their trumpets, a curious hush has fallen over the jazz community. It's more than a moment of respectful silence. It's as if people are holding their breath, waiting to see who, if anyone, will begin to fill these shoes. The implication that there's nothing new under the sun has been haunting jazz—and most other art forms as well—for a good 15 years now. Young instrumentalists either seem to be spicing up worn-out fusion formulae with new production techniques or resurrecting the mainstream past with something approaching religious fervor.

Then there's Jeff Beal, a 29-year-old trumpeter and composer who hangs out in the shadows between these two signposts. This Northern California-born artist has already proven that middle ground does not necessarily produce mediocrity—or instant popularity. He may even develop into the kind of iconoclast who can blast the trumpet into the 21st century with some futuristic new style of jazz. But don't let out that big sigh of relief yet. Beal's perfectly happy to experiment, digest, and incubate in his Southern California home-recording studio, the kind of setting where the heat, not to mention the pressure, can melt your brains. Ultimately, it either drives you crazy or creates its own weird sort of alchemy. Beal is counting on the latter.

"I think it was [author/educator] Joseph Campbell who spent his 20s just traveling around, reading and absorbing," he says on one of those 75-degree Los Angeles spring days when the smog has lifted and anything seems possible. "It wasn't until Campbell was much older that he stood out from the crowd and really blew people's minds with some original ideas on mythology, and it seemed to happen quite naturally."

The problem is that Beal is also dealing with what he calls "this prodigy thing." During his years at the Eastman School of Music, he won an unprecedented collection of Down Beat Student Music Awards for jazz composition and trumpet performance, including the magazine's first distinction given for a concert piece. "I know it helped



me get my record deal with Island," he says of his first two albums as a leader, *Liberation* and *Perpetual Motion*. "But I'm looking forward to turning 30 and getting beyond that image because I didn't want to do whatever people told me in order to fulfill some sort of [young lion] fantasy. I took the time to find out who I really was. Believe me, it would have been very easy for me early in my career to be Mr. Bebop Trumpeter. That would have been a very palatable package for people to accept."

Beal couldn't bear to be limited by any movement, or genre, for that matter. Then again, you can tell that just by listening to his latest effort, Three Graces. Even though the album is more acoustic and ensemble-oriented than his label debut, 1991's Objects In The Mirror, it's still got some heady electronics, unusual compositional structures. and harmonies that have more in common with the 20th-century classical styles of Alban Berg, Bela Bartok, and Igor Stravinsky than your typical bebop standard. But Beal also exhibits a strong respect for the accomplishments of his jazz elders, most obviously in the quirky, uncompromising bop of the opening cut "Jazz Habit." Throughout the album, his lush flugelhorn lines share an affinity with early influences like Kenny Wheeler and Woody Shaw. Two selections dedicated to Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis manage to capture the essence of what Beal admired most about each of these late jazz masters. Yet through it all, Beal remains true to his own voice, an approach to the instrument that includes a penchant for digital delay and other silky production treatments as well as undulating sequencer patterns that anchor his compositions firmly in the late 20th century.

"On a certain level I really respect some of the people who are dedicated to the straightahead-jazz thing because they are giving some much-deserved attention and recognition to an important art form," he concedes. "But at the same time, they're putting a piece of glass over it, and we're all staring at it like it's in a museum rather than experiencing it as living art.

"I feel very strongly that jazz musicians are going to have to come to grips with technology and realize this is part of our culture. Whether or not an individual chooses to use synthesizers, somehow he's got to acknowledge that this stuff's around and not be afraid to be influenced by it. But technology represents a certain corruption that has taken place in the record industry around popular culture.

"The irony of life and music is that even though the pop world is corrupt, there's still a glimmer of relevancy. I'd rather listen to Peter Gabriel, who I think is a great producer and a composer with some real originality, than somebody singing jazz standards from the '40s, because [Gabriel] is saying something relevant to our time. The danger, however, is that you can lose the one thing which the whole purist school has gotten right, that you can't go forward unless you understand the past.

"But the purist school has set itself up with a whole set of rules which you have to obey or you're not welcome there. I made a conscious decision not to get caught up in that, and there was a lot of pain and frustration that came as a result. But one thing I can say is that I've made my own mistakes. The one regret I don't have is that I always followed my inner voice first and really did what I felt like doing at the time. I can sleep well at night.'

t's not like Beal has been snoozing through the last decade, mind you. In addition to leading his own jazz ensembles, he has composed and produced tracks for Dave Weckl, Dave Samuels, Spyro Gyra, and John Patitucci. Beal is currently working on his own jazz-influenced trumpet concerto. Alternate Route, which he will premier with the Berkeley Symphony in early '94, along with another original composition he's beginning to construct, Interchange, a vehicle for the Turtle Island String Quartet. To supplement his income (and finance new acquisitions for his studio), Beal also writes soundtracks. You've probably heard his music on I Witness Video and Unsolved Mysteries, which gain a much-needed boost from his moody scores. He's looking to expand into the realm of feature films, mostly so he can have the excuse, and the budget, to compose for massive orchestras.

Still, when you've felt the youthful elation of backing up Dizzy at the Monterey Jazz Festival as part of an all-star high school jazz band, then gone on to beat a bunch of cocky conservatory-trained jazz hopefuls over the head with not one, not two, but 11 "DB"s before college graduation, well, you probably imagine that people think you're slipping if you don't produce a six-figure record deal with a major label by the age of 23 and see your own mug smiling back at you from the cover of Time magazine by the age of 25. Beal's approach, however, is a little too eccentric for that route. It's not overtly challenging or acoustic enough for hardcore jazz fans, not accessible enough for the adult-alternative crowd, and too strange for them both. Still, the most intriguing feature of his style as a trumpeter and as composer is his inability to be pinned down. There's a relentless ambiguity to his music that's sometimes like watching murky greys melt into different shades of blue.

Another, perhaps even more effective element of uncertainly stems from Beal's sardonic interplay of opposites. On Three Graces, this is taken to a highly inventive and sophisticated level. Muted-trumpet improvisations seem to be letting you in on some secret joke, but Beal never quite delivers the punchline. Add to this an element that the composer calls "beautiful dissonance" (an idea absorbed from listening to Alban Berg) and the effect culminates in sensuous flugelhorn lines soaring with an

almost religious sense of ecstasy over atonal piano accompaniments while bright cymbal splashes and low drum blasts trade unpredictable accents.

"It's the opposite of what a Hollywood ending to a movie is like where everything has to be tied up neatly," he explains. "Life's not like that. Things don't line up perfectly, and sometimes you don't know how you feel

". . . I've made my own mistakes. The one regret I don't have is that I always followed my inner voice first and really did what I felt like doing at the time. I can sleep well at night."



about what's happening to you. I like to express this through asymmetrical phrases and rhythms. I also like to use this strange sort of jazz approach to minimalism where you have a sequencer repeating a pattern, or even just a simple chord progression in the middle of the texture, that takes on different emotions and meanings because of the way the melody, counter melodies, and improvisations change the context around it.'

The title cut to Three Graces is a particularly expressive example of some of these techniques. The melody follows a tricky combination of three-bar phrases and

hinges on a richly hued tension between luxurious harmonies and unsettling dissonances. "It's not like I sat down and came up with this big intellectual concept," he reveals. "It just happened. Actually there was this spiritual sense to the tune that, to me. expressed the ideas of faith, hope, and love-not just the beauty of these three graces, but also the fact that the manifestation of them in our world is so imperfect."

Beal credits his band members with understanding these concepts and taking them further than he could have anticipated. Though the trumpeter composed most of the music at the computer, as he does with virtually all of his projects these days, he set up the conditions for a free-flowing interplay between himself, bassist John Patitucci. drummers Dave Weckl and Vinnie Colaiuta, tenor saxophonist Steve Tavaglione, pianist John Beasley, and guitarist Steve Cardenas. Together, they create a series of poignant insights into ideas that are already potent with meaning.

"Part of being an artist," he concludes, "is learning to let go and trust the mystery of creating something that's beyond what you could ever have imagined. Jazz has the perfect outlet for that. When you're improvising, just being in the moment, you can sometimes express something that's not merely an extension of your own ego or someone else's concept of what music is all about. You become a channel for something: It's a feeling of limitless possibilities. Every once in a while you have these moments of revelation that give you just enough faith to keep on going. Someday, maybe you'll look back and realize that you've been able to take the art form itself in a completely unexpected direction."

EQUIPMENT

Jeff Beal's home studio is filled with a small arsenal of electronic gadgets, everything from an Akai S-950 sampler and Kurzweil 1000 PX sample player to a series of rack-mounted synthesizers including a Korg M1R-EX, Korg M3R-W, and a Roland D/110, all controlled from his Roland U-20 MIDI keypoard and high-powered Macintosh II CI computer

Even when he writes for acoustic instruments. Beal usually fires up his machines and takes advantage of an ever-expanding collection of software programs. While you might expect this would make his music sound more mechanical, it actually frees him from the drudgery associated with his craft and lets his imagination run wild.

"Anything that robs your energy robs your creativity," says Beal, who insists the technology allows him to incorporate free-flowing ideas more easily into the compositional process. "I improvise

into my computer, go back and tweak or change a few things, then just pour it over into my Finale 2.5 [Mark of the Unicorn's notation program] and print it out. In several pieces on Three Graces, I noticed that what I had written was in a good key for the piano, but it wasn't a good key for the trumpet. So I went back and transposed the whole tune just by hitting a few commands.

When it's time for Beal to record the lead parts, he uses a Bach B. Stradivarius trumpet with a medium-large bore and a Model 37 gold-brass bell because he prefers a warm, dusky sound. His Getzen Eterna four-valve flugelhorn (purchased his senior year in high school with prize money won in a San Francisco Symphony competition) has a slightly larger bore than most. "It sounds almost like a french horn sometimes, very dark and smoky," he says of the instrument that dominates his more introspective tunes

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THREE GRACES-Triloka 197 OBJECTS IN THE MIRROR-Triloka 189 PERPETUAL MOTION -- Antilles/New Directions 91237 LIBERATION - Antilles/New Directions 90625

with others

NATURAL SELECTION—GRP 9656 (Dave Samuels)
FAST FORWARD—GRP 9608 (Spyro Gyra)
HEADS UP—GRP 9673 (Dave Weckl)
HEART OF THE BASS—Stretch 1101 (John Patilucci)

My Time Has Come

HUBERT LAWS

By Josef Woodard

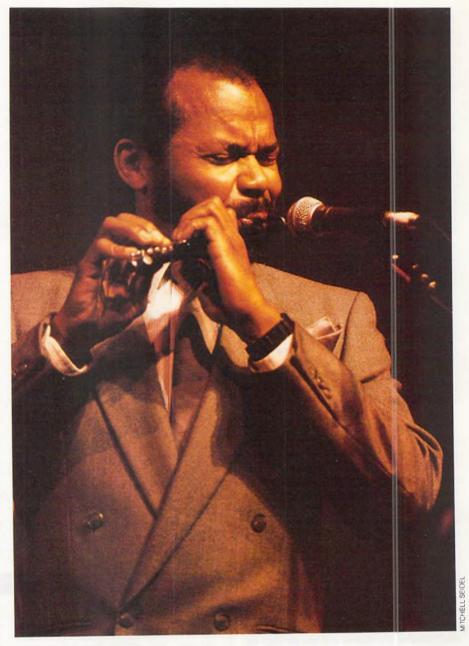
ubert Laws lives in a two-story house in Los Angeles, following the time-honored tradition of house upstairs and shop/studio below. On a bright spring morning, this writer passes through the security gate and heads upstairs, greeting the famed flutist. In a tennis outfit and surrounded by living-room walls lined with his gold and platinum records, and covers of albums by his saxist brother Ronnie Laws, Hubert looks the picture of health.

It's been seven years since Laws' last solo album, *New Earth Sonata*. Now, finally, comes Laws' long-awaited return to action, fittingly entitled *My Time Will Come*. While Laws has done sporadic live playing in the interim with his own group, and assorted studio work, he hasn't added to his discography—some 19 titles strong now—until this year.

When prominent jazz artists drop out of sight—at least from the shelves of your local record store—for any extended period of time, inquiring minds start wondering why. Is it a record-industry smokescreen? Is it a self-imposed sabbatical for creative recharging? Is it personal demons on the warpath (you think of Miles Davis' late-'70s "retirement")?

For Laws, his rationale was of the healthiest, most life-affirming sort: he wanted to step off the treadmill and raise his kids, Sky and Ashley, without the kind of absentee parenting that a musicians' life might typically bring.

How did he come to embark on such an extended hiatus? "I never really viewed it as a hiatus," says the affable Laws. "It just happened circumstantially. After my children were born, I became very dedicated to taking care of them. That just took precedence. As a result, music got shoved into the background—until recently. The kids are older [ages 7 and 8], and much more inde-



pendent now."

My Time Will Come came along as Laws' downstairs studio began pricking his creative conscience. He explains, "Little by little, I began to put parts down. I did the whole production myself, and it took a lot of time, mainly because I had to do it in between my other family obligations. I finally got it finished."

Two years in the making, the finished project is a typically diverse brew that reflects aspects of Laws' musical background. Swinging from innocuous pop-jazz confections to ambitious classical adaptations to the sinuous jazz piece, "Shades Of Light," My Time Will Come tells the story of a versatile flutist who juggled jazz and

classical idioms long before the name Marsalis monopolized the proverbial jazz marquee. This time out, Laws takes on "Malaguena" in a Chick Corea-esque arrangement by Don Sebesky, a supple jazz reading of Chopin's "Valse" featuring bassist Gary Willis, and "Moonlight Sonata," in Latin-ized form. It's all part of the puzzle for Laws, who once earned a Grammy nomination for his version of Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring*.

Such diversity can add up to another kind of puzzle for singleminded music marketeers. I raise the subject of Laws' tendency to produce adventurous albums. "Why is this adventurous?" he asks rhetorically.

"Most of the records I've done have

always been like that. It's like, 'How do we market this?' When *New Earth Sonata* was done for CBS Masterworks, they were saying the same thing, because 'Amazing Grace' and a Telemann suite and the 'New Earth Sonata' included some Latin and jazz elements. They're dumbfounded. It does puzzle the marketing people in record companies."

Covering many musical bases was always a natural inclination for the Houston native,

"What I tried to do at that time was learn to play the guitar, because there was no conflict of embouchure. I tried hard, and I did learn to play it to the point where I had a much better concept of chord progressions and how chords are structured. I even played a few gigs. Eventually, flute just took over."

His workload around New York was wildly varied, from jingles and Broadway shows to

a long stint with the Metropolitan Opera orchestra and subbing work with the New York Philharmonic.

Laws points to these disparate elements when analyzing his own hybrid music sensibilities. "You've got the gospel, the rhythm & blues, the classical music, and with Mongo. All these elements come together. I always somehow include them. My writing is also influenced by those experiences."

"After my children were born,
I became very dedicated to
taking care of them. As a
result, music got shoved into
the background—until
recently."



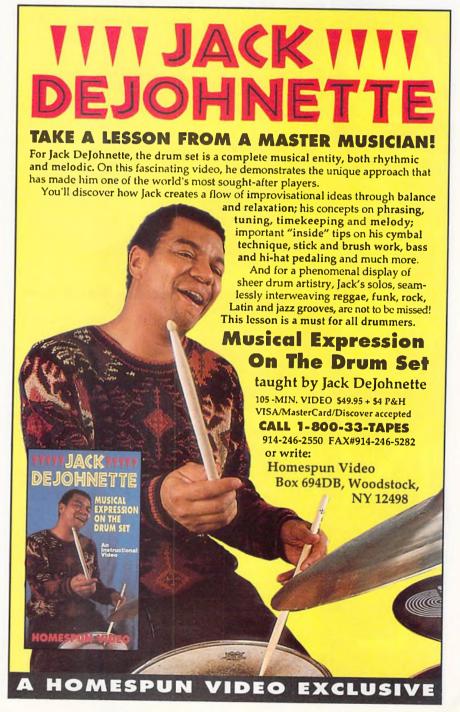
born in 1939, who came to Los Angeles in 1958 with the Crusaders, then went to Julliard, and hit big on the New York Latin and freelance scenes before starting a long fruitful solo career.

"My mother was the pianist for the Baptist church choir," he picks up the saga, "and she tells me that when I was age six, I was getting up and picking out melodies. There was gospel music in the home. Also, across the street from us there was a honky-tonk, so I was able to hear rhythm & blues."

aws played clarinet and sax in high school, but stumbled onto the flute by happenstance, when the band needed a flute soloist to play the featured part in Rossini's William Tell Overture for a graduation ceremony. It was a critical turning point: Laws fell in love with both a new instrument and classical music.

Once at Julliard, Laws found himself torn in terms of instrumental focus. He was playing flute and sax gigs by night—with such Latin artists as Willie Bobo and Mongo Santamaria—while getting a classical education by day.

Did he ever have second thoughts about the flute, a less-central jazz instrument than the sax? "No, I never did. As a matter of fact, I thought about getting away from the saxophone. Some flute players would tell me, 'Well, the embouchure's totally different. It will affect your flute playing.' But I had to play saxophone when I was in school, in order to pay the rent. I was going to 8 a.m. classes and playing in gigs until 2 in the morning, playing saxophone and flute. It was a necessity.



Signed by producer Joel Dorn, Laws started recording solo albums for Atlantic in the late '60s, but was soon scooped up by Creed Taylor, then starting his influential indie label, CTI. The fateful call from Taylor came while Laws was enjoying life on a coveted gig, in the band for the David Frost show, led by pianist/educator Billy Taylor. Thus, it was that Laws took a flight to Memphis to record with Creed Taylor, got

his walking papers from Billy Taylor, and became one of the first artists to tap into what became the highly influential and marketable CTI sound, predating the pop-jazz explosion of the '80s.

"I thought, 'Here's my opportunity to go with a small company, CTI,'" Laws recalls. "It was the best thing that ever happened to my career—not money-wise, but for my career. When it came time for CBS and other

big companies to swoop down on CTI artists, they offered a lot of money. That's how I was able to build my studio downstairs and do a lot of other investments that I made."

Over the course of Laws' long solo career, many once-fledgling musicians have passed through the ranks, including Bob James, Ron Carter, Jack DeJohnette, Lee Ritenour, Patrice Rushen, Ndugu, his brother Ronnie, even Pat Metheny. "There were a lot of players who have gone on. Makes me feel real old," he laughs.

Does Laws sense, at this point, that he's like a crusader (no pun intended), putting stylistic graftings into the broad public sphere that his name attracts?

"I guess I'm rebellious, in a sense. My high school teachers always told me I was an oddball. I protest the way man has taken the earth and placed geographical boundaries here and there, and made things very difficult. Nationalism is one of the deadliest diseases that plagues our society. It's the reason for wars, contentions, all kinds of maladies in our lives.

"So it is with music. They try to compartmentalize music in this or that category. Subconsciously, maybe I'm trying to erase those boundaries. It's not purposely that I do that. I feel comfortable when I go into a classical, jazz, or rhythm & blues setting. That's been my existence. I like various musical idioms, and I try to reflect that when I do a recording.

"I don't feel that I'm doing it as a personal crusade. It's just that I'm reacting and acting according to what my background has been."

In his liner notes to his new album, Laws explains, "At the conclusion of an interview with **Down Beat** magazine about ten years ago, the question was asked: 'What is it that you would like to accomplish that you haven't done before?' The answer was: 'I would love to have a son . . ."

This year's DB reporter can't resist the temptation of repeating the same question at the conclusion of this interview.

Laws bursts out laughing. "That I haven't accomplished? Well, now that I've got these beautiful children, maybe now, get about 50 million people to buy the record!"



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Greg Osby

3-D LIFESTYLES—Blue Note B4 7 98635 4 9: MR. GUTTERMAN; GOD-MAN COMETH: RAISE; 3-D LIFESTYLES; HANDCOPY; STREETJAZZ; HONOH THE EXAMPLE; FLOW TO THE UNDERCULTURE; INTELLIGENT MADNESS; THELONIOUS.

Personnel: Osby, alto, soprano saxophones; Geri Allen (3,5,8), Darrell Grant (2,4,10), piano; Cassandra Wilson (7), Bad Newz, Lamar Supreme, Mustafo, RM, Mal-Blak, voice; with instrumental programming.

Miles' Doo-Bop anticipated and inspired a wave of collaborations between rap producers and jazz "musos" exploring hybrid forms. After listening to Greg Osby's 3-D Lifestyles, Doo-Bop seems detached and antiseptic. Miles was visiting the neighborhood. Osby's moved in. Understand upfront that 3-D Lifestyles is primarily a hip-hop project, with jazz influences and references, incorporating Osby's lithe, twisting saxophone lines as "instrumental rapping" over programmed and sampled backgrounds.

At first, Osby prominently features five convincingly gritty rappers from 100X, establishing street credibility and commercial viability. With "Raise," Osby's agenda becomes evident, as he weaves soprano sax into a shifting sonic tapestry created with producer Ali Shaheed Muhammad (from A Tribe Called Quest). Instrumentals "Streetjazz" and "Intelligent Madness" could be blueprints for a new form, turning Osby loose for energized alto solos that take account of richly detailed, bizarre rhythmic environments. Eric Sadler, a veteran of Public Enemy productions, gives "Streetjazz" the complex, near-chaotic P.E. sound Osby aspires to. In these turbulent surroundings, the alto recalls Ornette Coleman with Prime Time at its wildest

Jazz is widely praised and sampled on 3-D Lifestyles, but guest pianists Geri Allen and

Darrell Grant add mostly color, rarely interacting with Osby. The next challenge Osby faces is to effectively blend electronic programming, rappers, and other live performers. Too often, I wanted these rappers to shut up and get out of Osby's way. 3-D Lifestyles may be trendy and a bit uneven, but it establishes a beachhead for something different. Confirmed haters of hiphop will not be converted, but, if you have an open mind, 3-D Lifestyles can be a lot of fun.

-Jon Andrews



Chico Hamilton

TRIO!—Soul Note 121246: A LITTLE AFTER TWELVE; AROUND THE CORNER; SOUND RISING; 29; LA VIE D'AMOUR (LOVE OF LIFE); C&C; 10TH VISION; SONG FOR HELEN (ELSA'S THEME); SEE SAW. (70:01)

Personnel: Hamilton, drums; Cary Denigris, guitar; Eric Person, alto, soprano, sopranino saxes.

* * * *

MAN FROM TWO WORLDS—Impulse! GRD-127: Man From Two Worlds; Blues Medley: Little Sister's Dance. Shade Tree, Island Blue; Forest Flower: Sunries, Sunset; Child's Play; Blues For O.T.; Mallet Dance; Love Song To A Baby; Passin' Thru; Transfusion; Lady Gabor; Lonesome Child. (67:31)

Personnel: Hamilton, drums; Charles Lloyd, tenor sax, flute; Gabor Szabo, guitar; Albert Stinson, bass; George Bohanon, trombone (8-11).

Nearly three decades separate these two Hamilton releases, and they frame the story of a restlessly creative soul, now in his 70s, whose current work is as daring as ever. Hamilton's present bass-less trio—with a sax/guitar/drums lineup like Paul Motian's group—takes detours around existing orthodoxies of jazz, rock, and free blowing.

Hearing these albums together, you have to consider the nature of Hamilton's leadership, and his uncanny ability for talent scouting. Hamilton's 1964 *Man From Two Worlds* (which, in this CD package, also includes four tracks from his *Passin' Thru*) is really a Charles Lloyd album—featuring the then-rising Lloyd as both the group's primary composer and solong voice. We hear Lloyd's intuitive poetics, invoking folk sonorities alongside nascent free-jazz urgings on such tunes as "Forest Flower." Meanwhile, Szabo's jangly post-gypsy guitar playing, with its hypnotically rattling open strings, and Hamilton's own expressive side trips make the band an exotic jazz hybrid

All is more equitable and collaborative on *Trio!*, which features Hamilton, Person, and Denigris in both compositional and improvisational capacities. Rather than try to fill in the

blanks where a bass might have gone, the trio permutates itself in multiple variations. They paint with space. The album is nothing if not varied in its textures and rhythmic feels. Hamilton lays down a loose-shuffle/funk pulse on "C&C" and a rumbling tom groove on Person's "10th Vision." Hamilton's own "See Saw" shifts from quirky Monk-ish business to brushwork, at once pensive and urgent. Handling the sonic middle ground, Denigris has a solid grasp of the idioms between jazz and rock. He uses a swelling, chorus-y tone for chordal pads, and unleashes some register-leaping single-line gymnastics reminiscent of Allan Holdsworth or Bill Connors. -losef Woodard



John Mayall

WAKE UP CALL—Silvertone 01241-41518-2: MAIL ORDER MYSTICS; MAYDELL; I COULD CRY; WAKE UP CALL; LOADED DICE; UNDERCOVER AGENT FOR THE BLUES; LIGHT THE FUSE; ANYTHING I CAN SAY; NATURE'S DISAPPEARING; I'M A SUCKER FOR LOVE; NOT AT HOME; AIN'T THAT LOVIN' YOU BABY. (53:15)

Personnel: Mayall, vocal, harmonica, keyboards, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, synthesized flute; Coco Montoya, lead guitar (1,2,5,6,9,10,12), rhythm guitar (7,8,11); Rick Cortes, bass; Joe Yuele, drums; David Grissom, rhythm, lead guitars (1-8,10,12); Tom Canning, Hammond organ (1-3,5,7,10), Wurlitzer electric piano (4); Dave McNair (1), Mike Bruno (5-7,11), percussion; Buddy Guy, vocal, lead guitar (3); Mick Taylor (4,11), Albert King (7,10), lead guitar; Mavis Staples (4), Maggie Mayall (12), vocals; Joe Sublett, saxophones (4,7,9,10,12); Darrell Leonard, trumpet (4,7,9,10,12).

With the release of this superb new album, John Mayall can lay claim to recording sweaty, hard-working, blue-collar blues for 30 years now. While he went through a stretch of unfertile times on the blues circuit during the previous two decades, Mayall has hit the '90s with a dynamic and passionate stride similar to that which propelled him into the forefront of the seminal '60s British blues scene. Wake Up Call contains some highly charged boogies, swinging blues-rock shuffles, a couple of lyrical, midtempo soul gems, and the show-stopping slowblues crawl through Junior Wells' "I Could Cry" (where guitarist Buddy Guy dips deeply into the blue zone, and Mayall and Guy trade off gritty vocals). Then there's Mavis Staples, who unleashes spirited vocals on the title track, and ex-Bluesbreakers guitarist Mick Taylor. Then there's the blistering guitar work of Albert Collins on the incendiary boogie, "Light The Fuse," and his eight-to-the-bar duels with gui-

CD REVIEWS

tarist Coco Montoya on "I'm A Sucker For Love."

The current Bluesbreakers lineup is anchored by Montoya and drummer Joe Yuele, both of whom have backed Mayall since the mid-'80s. Many of the tunes have the looseness and spontaneity of an after-hours jam session. But the strongest undercurrent at work is Mayall's soulful style, whether he's blowing a mouthful of ecstatic harmonica riffs on the humorous "Mail Order Mystics," or providing laid-back electric-piano flavorings on the loping jaunt through Jimmy Reed's "Ain't That Lovin' You Baby." The only letdown is Mayall's eco-prosyletizing on his funky remake of "Nature's Disappearing," where social commentary overrides emotion. —Dan Ouellette

pressing its capacity to surprise.

Bireli Lagrene is new to me, but his repertoire is familiar and offers a friendly medium of introduction. His sound has somewhat more of a twang to it but is sweetened with an understanding of the material and seasoned with a bravado technique, rhythmic variety, and much rapid-fire sleight of hand. In this he is matched by the quick, clear bass lines of Neils Pedersen. The two dance beautifully together and create a fluid density on "Softly As In," "Donna Lagrene can lay out serenely on ballads like

Lee," and some of the other fast pieces. "Body And Soul" as well. —John McDonough



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Howard Alden

A GOOD LIKENESS-Concord Jazz 4544. NOBODY ELSE BUT ME; THE PEACOCKS; SOMETHING To LIVE FOR; SINGLE PETAL OF A ROSE; LOTUS BLOSSOM, THE EEL'S NEPHEW, TURN OUT THE STARS; NO MORE; JUST AS THOUGH YOU WERE HERE; CREPUSCULE WITH NELLIE; ECHO OF SPRING. (53:21)

Personnel: Alden, guitar; Michael Moore, bass; Alan Dawson, drums.

Bireli Lagrene

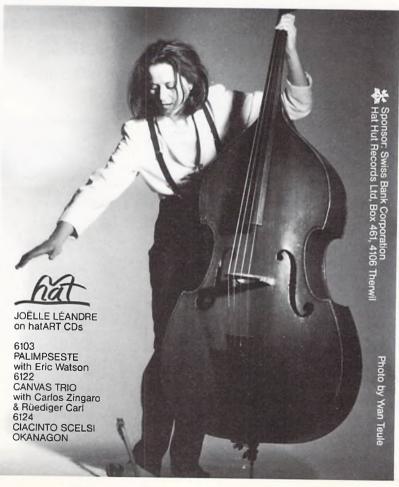
STANDARDS-Blue Note 80251-2: C'EST SI BON; SOFTLY, AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE; DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES; STELLA BY STARLIGHT; SMILE; AUTUMN LEAVES; TEACH ME TONIGHT; DONNA LEE; BODY AND SOUL; ORNITHOLOGY; HOW INSENSITIVE; NUAGES. (69:16)

Personnel: Lagrene, guitar; Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, bass; Andre Ceccarelli, drums.



We now know that jazz and classical music have many things in common. And that among them is the importance of repertoire. This explains why I find that many of the players I admire most these days are masters of repertoire. Howard Alden is a case in point, and A Good Likeness is the pudding that is the proof.

Alden is one of the finest guitarists playing today, and this trio outing will disappoint no one. His sound and touch are what you'd expect of a consistent master. And in Michael Moore and Alan Dawson, he could find no more empathic comrades. But when all such things have come to be givens in a player's work, repertoire becomes one of the more interesting frontiers of creativity. Alden, a consummate song detective, brings us an unexpected mix of seldom-heard Kern, Ellington, Strayhorn, Bud Freeman, and Bill Evans. The group imposes a lovely unity over all this potpourri without sup-



YOU MET MISS JONES?; SKATING IN CENTRAL PARK; SECRET LOVE: IF YOU NEVIER; AUTUMN LEAVES; MY FOOLISH HEART; SOLAR; CHELSEA BRIDGE; AND THEN AGAIN. (55:38)

Personnel: Herring, alto saxophone; Renee Rosnes, piano: Ira Coleman, bass; Billy Drummond drums.

* * * **Eric Person**

ARRIVAL-Soul Note 121237: ARRIVAL; TIGER IN THE MAZE: WHEN MORNING COMES; GREAT EXPEC-TATIONS; WHERE'S THE PLACE?; BEAUTY BEYOND TIME; IMPLICATIONS; EVERY TIME I SMILE; PERSONI-FIED. (49:18)

Personnel: Person, alto, soprano saxes; Michael Cain, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Ronnie Burrage, drums; Cary Denigris, guitar (4,8).



Two young alto saxists, two different trajectories: Herring heading straight down the middle, essaying polished versions of standards; Person swerving toward the left, finding a fresh path between mainstream jazz and chancier, more personalized terrain.

Person's "arrival" is announced on the opening, title cut, with its terse theme fanning out into an open solo section with his increasingly feverish improvisation. Pianist Cain is a sympathetic foil for Person, supplying subtle harmonic beds for the music. The promising young guitarist Cary Denigris, with whom Person plays in Chico Hamilton's group, makes two welcome guest shots, displaying the softer side of his palette on "Great Expectations" and on Hamilton's "Every Time I Smile."

In addition to his bold playing. Person has some fine compositional ideas, related to M-BASE and hard-bop esthetics, but from different angles. Person's "Implications" has a stylized. Wayne Shorter-like structure, and a funk bridge. "When Morning Comes" is a ballad sans sentimentality. The scampering closer, "Personified," features Person on an unhinged soprano sax solo.

After larger groupings on previous solo alburns, this time out. Vincent Herring enjoys the free reign of a quartet setting, and he has a commanding enough presence to take advantage of the spotlight. A technically ripe neatnik, Herring negotiates cleanly articulated beboppish phrases and occasionally busts out with more roughhewn stuff from the soul. A very able quartet takes arrangemental liberties with the title cut, placing the melody atop a modal pedal-point vamp, before settling into the swing of the matter. Usually, though, straight is the word. John Lewis' sweet waltz tune, "Skating In Central Park," exemplifies the essential attitude here, the band skating along with a genteel, restrained muscularity.

-Josef Woodard

Background, **Foreground**

by Robin Tolleson

here's no substitute for emotion, and as evidenced by these varied releases featuring mostly young guitarists, it can come in all musical forms-electric, acoustic, eighth-note, swing, whatever.

When a session ace like Abraham Laboriel calls an album Dear Friends (Mesa/Bluemoon R2 79188; 52:13: ★★★1/2) you can bet that half of L.A. County appears on it. The bass king injects the funk and Latin grooves on his solo debut with plenty of life. The band doesn't really take things "out," but the interaction among the friends is very good. Al Jarreau shines on the twisting, grooving "Samba 7," and Larry Carlton and Jim Keltner get in some fun sparring at the end of "My Love Is You." Laboriel even brings the old master, drummer Steve Gadd, in for a couple tracks. The bass playing, as you'd expect, helps in every wayrhythmically and melodically, and the foundation is immovable.

Henry Johnson's New Beginnings (Heads Up 3019; 51:34: ★★★1/2) is the work of a very able and mature guitarist. When he toys with a funk tune you can hear the smile he's wearing. On "Andrea" he finds time to get the groove just right before leading explorations into more challenging terrain. He covers tunes by Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, Freddle Hubbard, and Billy Strayhorn with soul; but hearing him and his Chicago working band jam on an original like "Flying Fish," with spry-sounding quest-star Hubbard, is really the ticket. It's called New Beginnings, but it's a reaffirmation of blues roots with a tight, actively listening band including Bob Long on keyboards, bassist Frank Russell, and drummer Robert Gates.

Mark Whitfield (Warner Bros. 9 45210; 62:02: ★★★1/2) takes this young electric guitarist and his hollow-body ax into the pop realm a bit with the opening bounce of "Strollin" and the Stevie Wonder cover "That Girl." "Sweet, Sweet Love," written by electric bassist Chris Walker, is actually a very good pop tune. But it doesn't hold a candle to the excitement generated by Whitfield and his acoustic group (Marc Cary, piano; Roland Guerin, bass; Troy Davis, drums) on "Salvation Of MRT." There's also plenty of room for Whitfield to get serious on Miles Davis' "Freddie Freeloader" and elsewhere. The chops are in place right now. Whitfield plays more like he feels less need to please all parties that may be

The Rhythm Of Wings (Chesky JD92; 60:55: **1/2) shows off Bruce Dunlap's graceful acoustic-quitar work, with help from upright bassist Scott Colley and drummer Jamey Haddad. The group plays with spontaneity and wit, and takes flight to the heavens several times on songs like "Crowtalk," "Avian Ways," and "Low Gravity Depravity." This is new age with guts, with an emphasis on people making music. It's got a wonderful human feel. And yet, I'd have preferred a more generous mix for the drums and bass in general. Dunlap just seems to be in another musical room at times, not connecting quite as well as he could.

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Mark Whitfield: into the pop realm

German guitarist Ralf Illenberger displays an even more focused, progressive acoustic sound with his band on Soleil (Narada 63021; 50:42: ★★★★). Illenberger's open tunings create brilliant chiming effects, and the leader shows off tasteful aggression in both his chorded soloing and on single-note phrases. His bandmates play with the right amount of respect, resolve, and restraint. "Dark Glow" begins in a Fripp-ish cycle, and gradually unfolds into an open-air groove by bassist Peter Keiser and drummer Walter Keiser that's more Pink Floyd. Vocalist Susan Osborn makes a nice contribution, singing as strong as Grace Slick one moment, angelically whispering the next. This, too, is new age with heart.

Irreverance is the name of the game as usual with the **Lounge Lizards** and leader/saxman John Lurie on *Live In Berlin 1991 Vol. 1* (Intuition 2055; 47:54: ★★★¹/₂). In this new edition of the Lizards, guitarist Michele Navazio replaces the free-spirited Marc Ribot. There isn't as much space for soloing, but Navazio picks his spots and adds some nice flourishes over the horn chants. Navazio works well with new Lizard drummer G. Calvin Weston in building the interlocking phrases and the monster grooves, like on "Mr. Stinky's Blues." It's not the most intense Lizards, but still a kick in the pants.

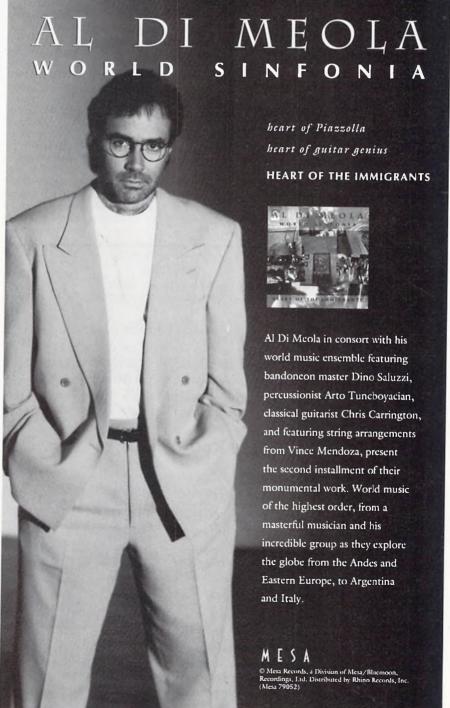
Zachary Breaux's groovin' (NYC 6003; 43:57: ★★★) is an honest, open, no-apologies blend of blues, jazz, and funk. As sideman with the likes of Donald Byrd, Jack McDuff, and Stanley Turrentine, Breaux has not only learned musicality and swing a la Kenny Burrell, but the importance of the groove, hence the funky version of Coltrane's "Impressions," the frisky "Picadillo," and the laid-back, in-the-pocket cover of "Where Is The Love." Breaux tries out a hip-hop groove with guest vibist Roy Ayers on "Red, Black And Green," and his beautiful composition, "Lagos," is masterfully understated Excellent sounds on this live recording from Ronnie Scott's in London.

Sometimes not even a funky, rocking guitarist like Hiram Bullock can rev things up. Drummer **Idris Muhammad** has played his share of good sessions for Prestige and CTI, and on hits by Fats Domino, Jerry Butler, and Roberta Flack. Unfortunately. *My Turn* (Lipstick 8902: *\(\frac{1}{2}\)) is *not* among his good sessions. The

veteran trapster sounds okay on the kit, but his inspiration is hidden here among the rehashed funk-jazz licks and bad vocal tunes, wasted along with the talents of Randy Brecker, Bullock, Bob James, and others.

There's so much feeling in the steaming bigband rock of guitarist **Kimo Williams**, it's almost possible to overlook how ambitious a project his is. Williams has taken his experiences as a Vietnam veteran and put them to music on *War Stories* (Beck 2165; 51:15: *****/2). Williams' arranging can be subtle.

bombastic, colorful, sparse, blaring. He honors mentor Jimi Hendrix on "The Wind Cries Mary," but his real strength is in the unique presentation of the 24-person Paumalu Symphony, which reads like a Gil Evans band, with Mike Stern, Victor Bailey, Kenwood Dennard, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Tim Landers. Guitarist Ernie Denov rips every chance he gets, and Carol Williams (Kimo's wife) plays some lovely and haunting tenor. This is powerful stuff. (Beck Records: 2503 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.)





Richie Beirach

SUNDAY SONGS—Blue Note CDP 7 80511 2 1: FULL CIRCLE; INAMORATA; PRELUDE; DES PAS SUR LA NEIGE; WISTERIA; ANSE DES FLAMANDS; PRELUDE; FROM FOREIGN LANDS AND PEOPLE; PEACE PIECE; SUNDAY SONG; MUSICA CALLADA NO. 1; ETUDE. (63:03)

Personnel: Beirach, piano.

**** Fred Hersch

RED SQUARE BLUE-JAZZ IMPRESSIONS OF RUSSIAN COMPOSERS—EMI/Angel CDC 7 54743 2 9: The OLD CASTLE; ANDANTE; ARIA; PRELUDE; CANZONA; ETUDE; PRELUDE; THE YOUNG PRINCE AND THE YOUNG PRINCESS; PRELUDE; ARABIAN DANCE; ADAGIO. (62:08)

Personnel: Hersch, piano; James Newton, flute (2,3,8,11); Toots Thielemans, harmonica (1,5); Phil Woods, alto saxophone (7), clarinet (10); Erik

Friedlander, cello (1-3,5,9-11); Steve LaSpina, bass; Jeff Hirshfield, drums.

* * * 1/2

Classical repertoire can intimidate jazz musicians, despite its potential as source material for improvisation. I get a little wary of anything titled "Jazz Impressions of . . ," and this goes double for jazz/classical crossovers. Pianist Fred Hersch earns high marks for taking on pre-Revolution Russian composers (Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, et al.) and getting just about everything right.

With Russians, you might expect something heavy and mournful, perhaps with sleigh bells. Instead, Hersch's spirited arrangements successfully capture the melodies and shifting moods in a jazz context, reflecting a consistent approach to the material. Soloists, including Phil Woods, Toots Thielemans, and James Newton, offer voices of hope, tempered with skepticism and offset by Hersch's "blue" chordal accompaniment. Hersch's playing is right on target-brave and passionate, with ostinatos suggesting struggle against all odds. Three complex Scriabin pieces are highlights, allowing Hersch to stretch out, with Woods taking a fine alto solo on "Prelude No. 1." The rhythm section swings where appropriate, thanks in large part to drummer Jeff Hirshfield. Newton (who is criminally under-recorded) and cellist Erik Friedlander are integral to the ensemble's sound, and only Thielemans harmonica sounds out of place.

Richie Beirach goes it alone, preferring to improvise from the lighter touch of French composers. Sunday Songs scrambles two solo dates initially released in Japan, juxtaposing Chopin and Debussy against Beirach originals and Bill Evans' "Peace Piece." Considering the Impressionist cover art and the title Sunday Songs, you might momentarily flinch, thinking "Yuppie jazz brunch." Not so. Beirach's performances are pretty, but have depth. Minor chords and traces of dissonance haunt "Sunday Song" and Chopin's "Prelude No. 4." "Musica Callada No. 1" is moody and emotionally charged, but hardly pastoral. Beirach seems more comfortable with the contemporary pieces, which are expressive and personal. Pairing "Peace Piece" and "Sunday Song" acknowledges a debt to Evans (one shared with Hersch, among many others). Though a sensitive, introspective interpreter, Beirach can drift into reverie or unnecessarily embroider a phrase. Sunday Songs has clarity and focus reminiscent of Beirach's best solo work (e.g., -- Ion Andrews his mid-'70s Hubris album).



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MY TURN (LIP 8902-2 CD only)

UPCOMING RELEASES

Drummer Carola Grey with Ron McClure, Craig Handy et al.- "Noisy Mama" (JL1132-2)

Marc Copland & Dieter Ilg "Two Way Street" (JL1133-2)

Tonz Lakatos with Al Foster et al. - "Recycling" (JL 1134-2)



Keith Jarrett Trio

BYE BYE BLACKBIRD—ECM 513 074-2: BYE BYE BLACKBIRD; YOU WON'T FORGET ME; BUTCH AND BUTCH; SUMMER NIGHT; FOR MILES; STRAIGHT NO CHASER; I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU; BLACKBIRD, BYE BYE. (67:57)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★ ★ 1/2

Keith Jarrett & Jack DeJohnette

RUTA AND DAITYA—ECM 513 776-2: OVERTURE, COMMUNION; RUTA AND DAITYA; ALL WE GOT; SOUNDS OF PERU, SUBMERGENCE, AWAKEN-ING; ALGERIA; YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW; PASTEL MORNING. (41:24)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano, electric piano, organ, flute; DeJohnette, drums, percussion.

* * * 1/2

Recorded two weeks after Miles Davis' death on September 28, 1991, Bye Bye Blackbird is the Standards Trio's gift to the memory of the famed trumpeter. It's hard not to think of Joe Henderson's tribute, So Near, So Far (see "Reviews" March '93), when listening to this album. Both discs approximate the spirit of Miles, but ultimately miss the mark. On the

Classic en Telarc

other hand, the music on the reissued *Ruta And Daitya* comes closer, perhaps because it was recorded so soon after they both had left Davis' band, in 1973.

Maybe it's unfair to compare, let alone try to evaluate, something so personal as a tribute to another artist. And yet, music is music, and on that basis the sounds must be judged. The trick is keeping the context for the music in context.

The repertoire for *Bye Bye* veers off from the Henderson set only when it includes tunes Davis may have played but never recorded (tunes that "reminded them, tangibly or intangibly, of Miles"), or originals, i.e., the trio's "For Miles" and "Blackbird, Bye Bye." "You Won't Forget Me" comes to us via Shirley Horn (a favorite of Miles who sang this standard regularly) and an Oliver Nelson blues, "Butch And Butch" (from who knows where). Everything else is something Davis played and recorded himself.

As for the renditions, well, the 10-year-old Standards Trio has always been one of my favorites when it comes to ... playing standards. In this case, the Miles connection/ context trips up the transition from dated material to eloquent, contemporary update Like Henderson, the trio's reference point is the late '50s-through-'60s acoustic Miles, music they all grew up on (and, except for Peacock didn't play with Miles). With the exception of the plodding, 18½-minute modal chant, "For Miles," it's pretty safe territory. The ballads "You Won't Forget Me." "Summer Night," and "I Thought About You" are played with delicacy and immediacy, and are beautiful choices; but there's little to suggest those extra dimensions to Davis' music, like silence and that certain yearning. ("You Won't Forget Me" comes closest.) Likewise, uptempo numbers such as Monk's "Straight No Chaser" (with Jarrett starting off his solo quoting Davis from his Newport Jazz Festival recording) and the Wynton Kelly/ Paul Chambers/Jimmy Cobb-like "Blackbird, Bye Bye" swing effortlessly—but so what? It sounds like business as usual. For these guys, that means a lot. If you can forget about Miles.

As for Ruta And Daitya, the Jarrett purists will be shocked if they haven't heard it before, what with Keith's funky wah-wahs and apparent ease at zig-zagging between keyboards and flute. Next to the chamber-group sounds of the Standards Trio, this music sounds primitive. It's definitely experimental, showing sides to both musicians we don't really see anymore. Ruta And Daitya (Moslem names for Keith and Jack?) comes across as a humble exchange between longtime bandmates/friends. De-Johnette's propulsive hand-drumming alongside Jarrett's peppy, breathy flute on the title track suggest new-age tribal music. "You Know, You Know" shows a level of communication between artists that's infectious. R&D is fun, open-ended with just enough rough edges to keep things unpredictable. It doesn't all work, and some of it sounds dated. But ... so what? There's a playfulness here that suggests the spirit of jazz, if not the form. Something the Prince of Darkness might appreciate.

A final note: The cover art to Ruta And Daitya was completely changed—from an attractive, "un-ECMish," slightly surreal nature scene to a contempo, letters-only cover. —John Ephland

Jeanie Bryson

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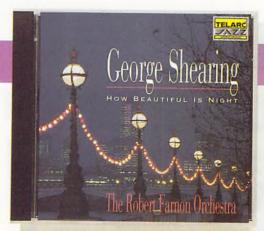
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Blues Hoodoo

by Frank-John Hadley

ave voice and rhythm, will cast a blues spell. These gutbucketers, except for two slippery characters, double as barroom conjurists you can count on.

Johnny Copeland's first album in three years, Flyin' High (Verve/Gitanes Jazz 517 512-2; 41:23: ★★★★), is conclusive proof that entertainment and artistry need not be mutually exclusive. A premier Texas blues player, Johnny Clyde comports himself with typical authority and intensity when singing in an aching, sandpapery voice and building solos on his Gibson guitar. The distinctive nine originals he brings suggest they were formed by bittersweet experience. And the ex-prizefighter keeps fine company: Dr. John, zydeco merrymaker Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural, r&b saxophone scholars Fathead Newman and Hank Crawford, among others.

Dallas-based guitarist Smokin' Joe Kubek launches phrases on Chain Smokin' Texas Style (Bullseye Blues 9524; 47:13: ****) that exhibit the patient care and crisp feeling of conviction he brings to his note selection Kubek's second domestic album, mind you, is more than a showcase for his slyly satisfied approach: second guitarist Bnois King is a good singer, forthright and carnal, and the

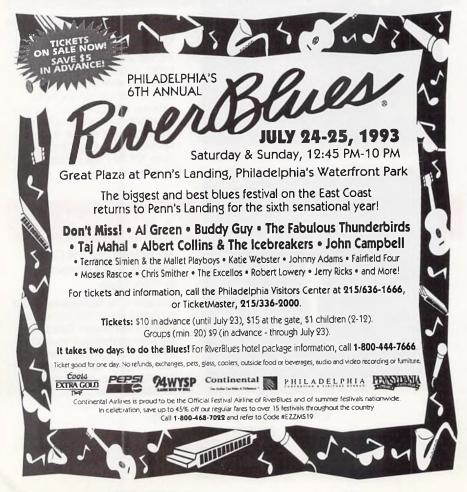


Little Charlie and the Nightcats' (I-r) Rick Estrin and Charlie Baty: an unalloyed delight.

crackeriack rhythm section carries a leavening sense of Southwestern-style swing. Kubek and his confederates combine to drive a graceful strain of excitement into strong in-house tunes and renovated items from Willie Dixon and T-Bone Walker. Austin's Omar (Kent Dykes), leader of the blues-rock trio the Howlers, has been maniacally baying at the moon à la Howlin' Wolf soused on bad sour mash for a number of years. On Live At Paradiso (Bullseve Blues 9529; 61:49: $\star\star\star$), he sings and plays quitar with typical flair, joining his gung-ho bassist and drummer in a frontal assault on the wayward youth gathered in a 1991 Amsterdam concert hall. The roaring thunder of repertoire staples and newer numbers is moderately pleasurable, although the ears numb after five or six songs straight.

An up-and-comer living in south Louisiana, Tab Benoit has energy to burn, blazing away in the spirit of Albert Collins and Stevie Ray Vaughan on his Nice And Warm (Justice 1201-2; 58:45: ★★★). Even in the throes of passion, the 25-year-old guitarist steers a steady course, evincing concern for changes in textures and dynamics, letting his lines enunciate his tough-mindedness. On the down side, Benoit's singing is dubious, not revealing the regret or jubilation of his gultar, and the material (originals plus saddle-sore classics) isn't consistently involving. Dry Branch, Georgia's Robert Ward, a dependable studio guitarist in the '60s and early '70s, follows the unexpected success of the 1991 Fear No Evil with Rhythm Of The People (Black Top 1088; 50:00: ★★). The otherworldly vibrato he coaxes from a Magnatone amplifier and his quirky runs may again magnetize you, but this time heed his barely functional singing and the unintentional silliness that resides in many of his lyrics. Take away the stellar Black Top sessionmen and the set (the wild gospel shake "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" is excepted) threatens to sink straight to the bottom of the Ocmulgee River.

A session musician of considerable renown, Lucky Peterson utilizes guitar, electric piano, organ, and his vocal chords with equal aplomb on his fifth and most assured solo effort. I'm Ready (Verve/Gitanes Jazz; 62:58: ***). The title track and "You Shook Me" are stirring payback to Chicago blues gargantua Willie Dixon, producer of five-year-old Lucky's first record in 1968, while his version of Howlin' Wolf's "Who's Been Talking" is informed with an



exquisite sense of grace. These covers and several originals unfold in surprising, intelligent terms that twine funk and soul into the blues fabric. Peterson's supporting players, from tenor great Illinois Jacquet to first-rate bassist Wilbur Bascomb, possess a certain spirit that underscores his freshness of vision.

Little Charlie and the Nightcats never stint on personality, and their fifth outing called Night Vision (Alligator 4812; 51:37: ***) is an unalloyed delight. Always ready with a dash of humor, Rick Estrin writes little modern vignettes that pit his perplexed self against crafty woman; his singing style is light and easy, his superb harp work puts a fresh twist on Little Walter. A sophisticated, inventive player with undeniable musical integrity, guitarist Charlie Baty suggests by turns Arnett Cobb's melodic saxophone, Tiny Grimes' swinging

four-strings, and this and that rockabilly, surf. jazz, or blues guitarist. The Nightcats, never static with expert drummer Dobi Strange channeling various rhythms, seem totally at ease with producer/guitarist Joe Louis Walker throughout this 13-song set. Maurice John Vaughn, active on the Chicago blues scene since the late '70s, uses his incisive music to illustrate the pleasure and loneliness of urban life. On In The Shadow Of The City (Alligator 4813; 56:11: ★★★¹/₂), he plays single-note leads and chords that express jocularity or apprehension, pushed along by bassist Freddie Dixon and three different sets of pianists and drummers (and sometimes a trombone and his saxophone). Vaughn's voice, neither large nor supple, carries an air of confident nonchalance as his crisply appealing songs (only "Eager Beaver" sputters) preserve the

tradition in a modern context with galvanizing strains of r&b. "Suicide Is Not The Way" strikes a most serious chord.

Lastly. Paul Rodgers has treaded the popular blues-rock waters the past 25 years, enjoying adulation as the singer with Free. Bad Company, and the Firm. Muddy Water Blues (Victory 383 480 013-2; 65:58: ★1/2) comes as his heavy-handed homage to Mr. McKinley Morganfield, whose Chess records inspired him while growing up in north England. While Rodgers evinces honest emotion amid his overblown yowling, hot-guitar godlings like Queen's Brian May and Slash completely trivialize updates of Muddy Waters classics with their empty masturbatory flashiness. Only Buddy Guy, Jeff Beck, and Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, of 11 lead string-benders, have that mesmerizing blues feeling. DB

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CD REVIEWS



Rova

FROM THE BUREAU OF BOTH—Black Saint 120135-2: Swang; Pinnacle; Swapmeet! Swapmeet!; Cage—For John Cage; The Floater; What's The Frequency, Kenneth?; Streak. (54:34)

Personnel: Bruce Ackley, soprano saxophone; Steve Adams, sopranino, alto saxophones; Larry Ochs, tenor saxophone; Jon Raskin, baritone saxophone.



From The Bureau Of Both is the type of compelling, invigorating statement that is now expected from Rova, the tirelessly imaginative Bay Area saxophone quartet. Such expectations of them now exist because their longevity and productivity have elevated them, to use the strata of a law firm as metaphor, from associate

status to that of full-partnership rights among the pillars of the U.S. new music community. On the merits of this program, Rova can handle the stature

As always, Rova mines the overlapping edges of composition and improvisation, and the methods driving the resulting bristling music are often difficult to discern. Except for the weighty, yet pliantly delivered introduction by composer Jon Raskin, "Pinnacle" is completely scored, but sections of the piece have an elasticity commonly mistaken for group improvisation. Larry Ochs' aptly titled "The Floater" is structured so each rendering is markedly different; here, Ochs' ponderous, unaccompanied solo and the seamless unisons of Bruce Ackley and Steve Adams are prominent features.

From The Bureau Of Both also includes plenty of Rova's rhythmically arresting, jazz-informed works featuring easily identified hot improvisations. Adams is particularly effective ricocheting off the sharply angled riffs of "Swang," while Ackley soars as "Streak" reaches the boiling point. Rova's abilities with such material carry over to their more farreaching compositions, giving them the requisite spine.

Regardless of the immediate compositional proposition at hand, Rova's music has an urgency of which jazz can never have too much.

—Bill Shoemaker



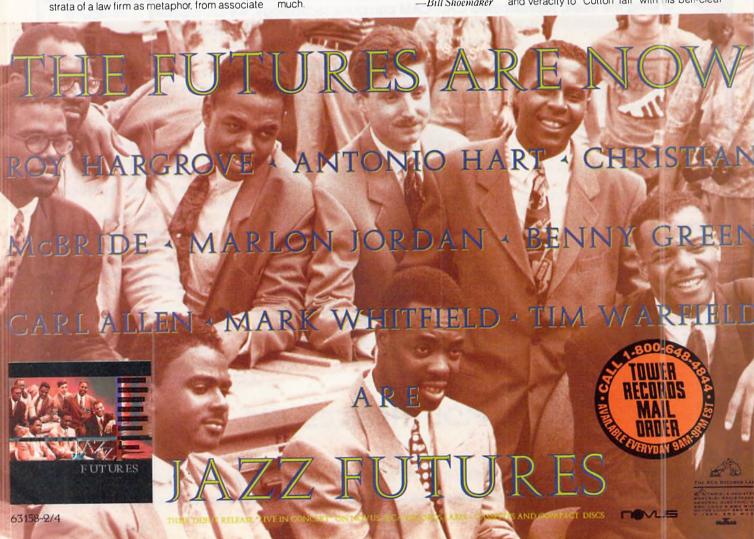
Dave Grusin

HOMAGE TO DUKE—GRP 9715: COTTON TAIL; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; SATIN DOLL; MOOD INDIGO; JUST SQUEEZE ME; CARAVAN; EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO; C-JAM BLUES; SOPHISTI-CATED LADY; TAKE THE "A" TRAIN. (49:48)

Personnel: Grusin, piano, arranger: Clark Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals (2,5); Pete Christlieb, Tom Scott, tenor sax; Eddie Daniels, clarinet (4); George Bohanon, trombone; Briari Bromberg, John Patitucci, bass; Harvey Mason, drums; wind ensemble (4,10).



Homage To Duke is a pleasantly lukewarm small-band date of Ducal classics. Clark Terry, veteran of Duke's ensembles, provides the spark that ratifies and affirms. He adds color and veracity to "Cotton Tail" with his bell-clear



flugelhorn, good-humored mumbles on "Things Ain't What They Used To Be." and brave plungering through a slowed-down, not-so-dirty "East St. Louis Toodle-oo." The contexts are squeaky-clean L.A., e.g., the careful riffing on "C-Jam Blues" and tippy-toe ensemble on the plush "A' Train" finale.

Grusin's own playing—solos, fills, trios on "Satin Doll" and "Caravan"—is predictably free of Dukish percussion and exclamation, but evidently executed with pleasure. George Bohanon gets in some good licks, as does Tom Scott. Of interest is "Mood Indigo" as a reharmonized, classicized conceit for Eddie Daniels' purling clarinetics.

Ellington's influence was wide, and not every interpretation need be in the strict Ellington tradition. These Duke tunes have had a glorious history, and Grusin works hard—with some success—to prove their future can hold more than just business as usual. —Fred Bouchard

PaulPlimley& LisleEms,Kal elcoscopes.

Paul Plimley & Lisle Ellis

KALEIDOSCOPES (ORNETTE COLEMAN SONGBOOK)—hat ART CD 6117: Long Time No See; Poise: Beauty Is A Rare Thing; Kaleidoscope #1; Peace: Folk Tales; Dancing In Your Head; Moon Inhabitants; Kaleidoscope #2; Street Woman; Chronology. (58:18)
Personnel: Plimley, piano; Ellis, bass.

Paul Bley must now concede his claim as the sole worthwhile practitioner of Ornette on piano, because another Canadian named Plimley has joined him. The trick, adapting Coleman's charts for piano, an instrument with fixed tones, is to somehow account for the lubricious way the altoist has with a tune; it's a question of lending a piano line the suppleness and arching, bendable quality of harmolody, while simultaneously figuring appropriate changes to lay down underneath melodies that are, in themselves, designed to unhinge traditional harmony.

Plimley accomplishes this with ease, utilizing perfect liquidity and weightlessness of phrase. Ellis—the pianist's partner since the mid-'70s—is equally relaxed and at home with the material, and his gut strings and love of percussive plucking and slapping give the bass a woody palpability. Together, the duo conjures the jubilance of Ornette in a personal, highly refined improvising language. "Peace" is vividly placid, with hushed moments of anticipation; "Folk Tales" and "Moon Inhabitants" are rollicksome bouncers; "Dancing In Your Head"

whittles the once-electric groove down to a smooth acoustic toothpick. —John Corbett



Branford Marsalis

BLOOMINGTON—Columbia 52461: Xavier's Lair; Everything Happens To Me; The Beautyful Ones; Citizen Tain; Friday The 13th; Roused About.

Personnel: Marsalis, tenor, soprano saxes; Robert Hurst, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.



Here, we have Marsalis doing a concert for the anointed in Bloomington, Indiana, one of the hipper university towns in these United States.

Marsalis plays at length; he plays without stopping; he barely takes the horn out of his mouth for a solid hour.

There's 15 minutes of fast blues (tenor); 10 of a well-known ballad (tenor); midway through an eastern cadenza, he switches to soprano (the crowd claps for relief) and spins out "Beautyful Ones" for another 20, Hurst and Tain with him in a deep way, every which way. "Citizen Tain" barrels along in a drum/tenor encounter (another 15 minutes), with Hurst keeping tempo. Marsalis single-times, doubletimes, squeals, keeps in and around tempo, but it's him practically all the way, and with much more Rollins than Coltrane in evidence. Kenny Kirkland—usual pianist in this Gang of Fourand his verticality are missed. Encores are succinct: the Monk four-bar riff to "Friday The 13th" gets amusingly defused in a long fade; a shorter Lacyesque tune by Hurst ends it.

While Wynton and Delfeayo are brilliantly, meticulously overcrafting Modern Great Black Statements for Small Orchestra, brother B is stretching and stretching out and jes' ba-low-in' his ho-ans. Though the music is full-fruit jam—prolix, cheerful, well-paced, and (above all) loose—producer/brother D.'s liner notes resound as if these guys just invented sensitive, extended collaborative improvisation. Gee, maybe—for whole new (TV) audiences—they have.

—Fred Bouchard

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Gil Goldstein & Romero Lubambo

INFINITE LOVE—Big World 2008: MY FOOLISH HEART; LUISA; THE PHOENICIANS; WHITE AND BLACK; VALENTINE'S DAY: CORRENTEZA; SEGURA ELE; INFINITE LOVE; JECA'S BAIAO; AMAZON RIVER. (55:22)

Personnel: Goldstein, piano, accordion; Lubambo, guitar; Armando Marcal, percussion; Maucha Adnet, voice; Toninho Horta, guitar, voice.

**** Dori Caymmi

KICKING CANS—Owest/Warner Bros. 9 45184-2: Migration; Forever Lover And Friend; It's Raining (At Buriti Farm); From The Sea; Brasil (Aguerela Do Brasil); Kicking Cans; Spring; Northeast; Hurricane Country; My Countryside. (45:55)

Personnel: Caymmi, acoustic guitar, vocals; Don Grusin, Greg Karukas, kayboards; Billy Childs (2). Herbie Hancock (5), Dave Grusin (7,9), piano; Ricardo Silvera, guitar (6,8); Branford Marsalis, soprano sax (1); Yutata Yokokura, koto (3); Teco Cardoso, double bamboo flute (4); Susi Katayama, accordion (9); Abraham Laboriel (1,4,6-8), Jerry Watts (2,3,5,10), John Patitucci (9).

bass; Claudio Slon, Michael Shapiro (2,4,7,10), drums; Paulinho da Costa, percussion.



Since moving to Los Angeles, veteran Brazilian guitarist/singer Caymmi has been met with a warm embrace from the local music pool. Here, he features many Southern California-based players, including Branford Marsalis, whose soprano sax solo eclipses the smooth rolling contours of the opening cut, "Migration." Caymmi pens a good tune and knows how to keep harmonic interest up, as with the antic title cut-featuring Ricardo Silvera's limber guitaring. But the most haunting track is "Brasil," here slowed down to a sultry, pulsing lope. Caymmi's low murmuring vocal bespeaks a wistfulness for the homeland, while Herbie Hancock's piano solo dances fitfully along the jazz-Latin axis. A kind of theme song, it fades into the Rio sunset on a seductive vamp that could go on forever.

Keyboardist Goldstein, a longtime Brazil nut, teams up with guitarist Lubambo for a beautiful Brazil-meets-jazz song set that kicks off with a fresh variation on the theme of "My Foolish Heart." In contrast to the more produced approach on Caymmi's album, here, a lot of music comes out of a compact ensemble, featuring Adnet's supple voice doubling melodies, and a flexible but spare instrumentation. Goldstein's tunes, "The Phoenicians" and "Valentine's Day," are deceptively friendly inventions that go in unexpected directions. Highly mobile modulations keep the driving "Correnteza" in perpetual motion.

Also of note: Goldstein is one of those keyboardists helping to make the world safe for the accordion, that unjustly maligned instrument. He squeezes eloquence and longing out of his squeezebox.

—Josef Woodard



Arild Andersen

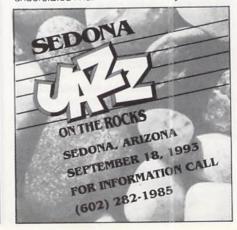
IF YOU LOOK FAR ENOUGH—ECM 314 513 902-2: IF YOU LOOK; SVEV; FOR ALL WE KNOW; BACKE; THE VOICE; THE WOMAN; THE PLACE; THE DRINK; MAIN MAN; A SONG I USED TO PLAY; FAR ENOUGH; JONAH. (59:00)

Personnel: Andersen, bass; Ralph Towner, guitars (2-4,9,10); Nana Vasconcelos, percussion, voice (1,2,4-11); Audun Kleive, snare drum (1,11).



"One of those ECM guys." Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen will probably remain pigeonholed by his long association with the label of fjords and wintry landscapes. He's a versatile, highly melodic player who works best in intimate settings, as with his group Masqualero. If You Look Far Enough leatures Andersen's "singing" bass prominently, providing variety through duets and trios with Ralph Towner and Nana Vasconcelos, and through the use of delay processing and other effects that extend the timbre of the bass and create otherworldly, "orchestral" textures.

Like Sagn (an overlooked breakthrough from 1990). If You Look Far Enough pairs the bassist with Vasconcelos' distinctive percussion style. and reworks Norwegian folk themes. Andersen's interest in traditional folk songs apparently inspired a new emphasis on lyricism in his work, as this album includes a catchy funk riff ("Main Man") and a Paul Simon cover ("Jonah"). Towner's agile, intricate guitar lines and filigrees complement Andersen's articulate leads well, and their duet (the standard "For All We Know") is a highlight. Vasconcelos has already proven (with Andersen and Jan Garbarek) that Brazilian percussion accompanies Norwegian jazz very nicely, if improbably Andersen's never flashy, but he's always interesting, making If You Look Far Enough an impressive, -- Jon Anderws understated find.



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Definitive Swing

by John McDonough

enny Goodman: On The Air (Columbia/Legacy 48936; 70:42/75:53: *****) is the greatest Benny Goodman album ever assembled. Nothing else even comes close, not even the fabled Carnegie Hall concert. (Well, perhaps the MGM Treasure Chest set, still awaiting CD reissue at PolyGram.) Anyone with any affinity for the overall language and rhythmic shape of swing—yet, who has never found any special favor in Goodman—will, I expect, be blown away by this Goodman.

I would submit also that it is the greatest single document of the swing era ever assembled. Before you take pen in hand, I'm not suggesting that Goodman is the greatest among his peers of the era. Such matters may be argued but never decreed. What seems clear, however, is that no other figure of the period ever had his essence so richly concentrated into one spectacularly definitive package.

Originally issued in 1952 as the 1937-38 Jazz Concert No. 2, it brought together the absolute cream of an enormous crop of live performances recorded in the '30s by a Harvard physicist named Bill Savory (and who lives today in the Washington, D.C., area, married to Goodman's first vocalist, Helen Ward). Listen to "Roll 'Em," "St. Louis Blues," "Runnin' Wild"—take your pick—and you will almost certainly feel what it was about this music that captured American culture nearly 60 years ago. This is great jazz, without compromise.

There is a power in the music on *this* album that you will not find on the commercial records. Harry James would never surpass the excitement he generates here as a sideman. Nor would Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, Gene Krupa, or even Goodman himself.

The original 1952 material has been augmented with an additional 13 titles and an alternate "Goodbye," mostly good even though their sound characteristics disturb the acoustic homogeneity of the original tracks. More important, though, Columbia exposes itself needlessly to violation of truth-in-packaging laws when it claims disingenuously that the new material is "previously unissued." Unissued by Columbia, perhaps. But nearly all the "new" pieces have been widely available for years on the Sunbeam Madhattan Room albums.

Swing Swing Swing (MusicMasters 65095-2: ★★★¹/₂) moves us forward to a Goodman in semi-retirement and brings together the first five Goodman Yale archive CDs, all previously issued individually. It covers a period from 1955 to his last session in 1986, and is a musical arc from oddball ("Marchin' And Swingin'") to very good.

Volume 1 (50:05) is a little of this and that with no special focus. It does suggest the diversity of Goodman's performing moods at different times, from the rigid tension of "Sweet Georgia Brown" to a liquid "Soft Lights," with some all-too-lazy playing in between. He was less consistent than the Goodman of 1938, yet more surprising. Volume 2 (61:26) concentrates on material recorded at Basin Street in 1955, from which a three-LP set was assembled by Book



Benny Goodman: without compromise

of the Month Club in 1968. This contains unissued titles, and although the BOTM set generally got the pick of the litter, this remains some of the best Goodman from the period. With Teddy Wilson, Ruby Braff, and Paul Quinichette.

The Brussels Fair in 1958 produced one of the shakiest Goodman albums of the LP era, and there isn't much to change that view on *Volume 3* (64:50), which draws from the same group of concerts but focuses mostly on vocalists Jimmy Rushing and Ethel Ennis. Goodman's playing is adequate at best. Also with Zoot Sims, Taft Jordan, and Roland Hanna. The various ad-hoc bands on *Volume 4* (52:10) showcase Goodman in unexpected ways, ranging from some vintage but less-familiar Eddie Sauter and Mel Powell things to a few contemporary charts (as of 1958-'62) that are interesting but ultimately mismatched to the Goodman sensibility.

Volume 5 is a double-CD set (61:09/59:14), though why is anybody's guess. Goodman is absent on half the cuts. Not that Flip Phillips, Red Norvo, and Bill Harris aren't worth hearing, but the label says this is a Goodman set. When he does play, it's fairly standard fare but nice. "Breakfast Feud" is long, messy, self-indulgent, and often startling.

Finally, a word on the book designed by Kristin Stephen. First, any art director who overprints session data on photography is patently incompetent. Second, there are no personnel listings. Third, titles and dates are 36 pages apart. I could go on.... DB







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CD REVIEWS



J.B. Horns

FUNKY GOOD TIME/LIVE—Gramavision R2 79485: Sweet & Tangy; Blues A La L.S.; House Party; Children's World; In My Neighborhood; Funky Good Time; Step On Your Watch Pt. 2; Soul Power; Let Him Out. (57:18)

Personnel: Pee Wee Ellis, tenor sax; Fred Wesley, trombone; Maceo Parker, alto sax; Allan Jaffe, quitar; Mark Helias, bass; Jim Payne, drums.

***** * 1/2

Pee Wee Ellis

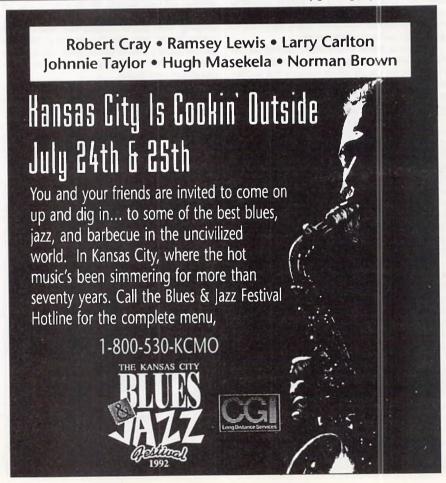
BLUES MISSION—Gramavision R2 79486: Zig Zag; Gotcha!; Cold Sweat/Mother Popcorn; Yellin' Blue; One Mint Julep; Texas Sweat; Ham; Fort Apache; Blues Mission.

Personnel: Ellis, tenor sax; Tyrone Jefferson, trombone; Jack Walrath, trumpet; Jean-Paul Bourelly, guitar; Masbumi "Poo" Kikuchi, organ; Darryl Jones, bass; Clyde Stubblefield, drums.

James Brown's patented sound, once considered too threatening to appeal to white audiences, has gradually achieved nearly universal acceptance, and Brown himself is now revered as the godfather of everything from disco to rap. His bands have recorded on their own since the late '50s under such names as the Swans, the Dapps, the Macks, and the JB's, and with Brown recently sidelined due to incarceration, several of his former sidemen have launched solo careers. Two new albums, one by the J.B. Horns, the other by saxophonist Alfred "Pee Wee" Ellis, offer sharply contrasting takes on Brown's quintessential funk.

Captured live in Japan in 1990, the Horns—Ellis, Fred Wesley, and Maceo Parker—wax nostalgic, faithfully evoking vintage Brown arrangements with help from ringers Jaffe, Helias, and Payne. The performance is loose and amiable, with plenty of party patter, as each horn is showcased in turn on new compositions that sound suspiciously like Brown's old hits. Ellis' shrieking Texas tenor sounds almost avant garde on "Blues A La L.S.," Wesley's gruff trombone blurts stuttering staccato phrases on "House Party," and Parker's dry alto pours mournful passion into "Children's World." The groove is soulful, but the thrill is gone, and the band comes across as an oldies act just going through the motions.

Though Ellis' solo album mines the same mother lode, his glove-tight studio band makes a much more contemporary impression, with Jean-Paul Bourelly grinding psychedelic guitar



riffs over legendary J.B.'s drummer Clyde Stubblefield's primal beat. Ellis wrests an expressive range of timbres from his horn, but his real forte is arranging. His updated combination of two classic hits he wrote for Brown, "Cold Sweat/Mother Popcorn," is hotter than the original(s), and he even manages to make the Clovers' doo-wop chestnut, "One Mint Julep," sound fresh. All that's missing is the King of Soul himself.

—Larry Birnbaum



Various Artists

PEOPLE GET READY: A TRIBUTE TO CURTIS MAYFIELD-Shanachie 9004: Um, Um, Um, Um, Um, UM, UM; HE WILL BREAK YOUR HEART; CHOICE OF COLOURS; PEOPLE GET READY; GOT A RIGHT TO CRY; IT'S ALRIGHT; WE PEOPLE WHO ARE DARKER THAN BLUE; I GOTTA KEEP ON MOVING; YOU MUST BELIEVE ME; I'M SO PROUD; GYPSY WOMAN. (42:32) Personnel: Will Calhoun, drums; Paul Griffin, keyboards; Jonathan Sanborn, bass; Steve Cropper, Jon Tiven (5), Michael Hill (7), Vernon Reid (7), Joe Ferry (10,11), guitar; David Sanborn (4), alto sax; Crispin Cioe, alto, baritone saxes; Arno Hecht, tenor sax; Bob Funk, trombone; Larry Elkin, trumpet; Goldiloxx (3), rap; Don Covay (1), Angela Strehli (1,5), Delbert McClinton (2), Jerry Butler (3), Huey Lewis & The News (6), Bunny Wailer (8), Don Covay (9), Lani Groves (10), Kim Wilson (11), vocals.



Impressions-member, soul and funk pioneer, brilliant producer and writer, sweet singer, fine guitarist, Superfly. Struck down in 1990 by a wind-blown piece of lighting equipment, now paralyzed, facing astronomical med-bills. And a few months ago his house caught fire. There couldn't be a more appropriate tributee than Curtis Mayfield, and Shanachie is giving him half of all the revenue from the project. So for that alone, this is something you should support

As on most comps, it's got highs and lows (big musical low: a cappella H. Lewis & The News), though producers Joe Ferry and Jon Tiven assembled a snappy core band and strong leaders, who in turn picked great tunes (tough to go awry with such a songbook). Fellow soulster Jerry Butler's "Choice Of Colours" might be my pick (interrupted briefly for a rather superfluous rap), though Angela Strehli socks the hell out of "Got A Right To Cry" and her great duet with Don Covay. Outside the genre, Hill and Reid jam lightly metallic on their guitar entry; Bunny Wailer admits the wide influence of Mayfield on the island with a dancehall reggae cut; and Sanborn & Son team up for a Hank Crawford-ish take on the title cut. -lohn Corbett



Steve Turre

SANCTIFIED SHELLS—Antilles 314 514 186-2: EXPLORATION: GUMBO; AFRICAN SHELLS (STBENGTH); MACHO; AFRICAN SHELLS (THE DREAM); BEAUTIFUL INDIA; TOREADOR; AFRICAN SHELLS (HAPPINESS); SANCTIFIED SHELLS; SPIRIT MAN. (57:30)

Personnel: Turre, Robin Eubanks, Reynaldo Jorge, shells, trombone; Douglas Purviance, bass trombone; Clifton Anderson, trombone; Charlie Sepulveda, Dizzy Gillespie (7), trumpet; Andy Gonzalez, bass; Herlin Riley, Ignacio Berroa,

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CD REVIEWS

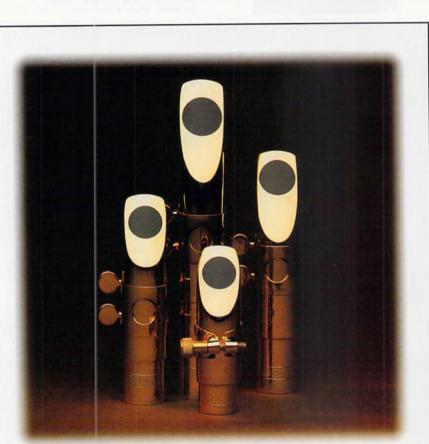
drums; Carmen Turre, castanets; Milton Cardona, Kimali Dinizulu, percussion; Badal Roy, tabla; Claude Thomas, jun-jun.

* * * 1/2

Over the past dozen years, Turre has developed his conch-shell blowing from novelty to full-fledged artistry. Having schooled several fellow trombonists in shell techniques, he fronts a whole conch ensemble here, accompanied by Latin, African, and Indian percussion along

with more traditional brass and rhythm instruments. The lustrous blend of soft-toned shells creates gorgeous sonorities pitched somewhere between Ellington and Sun Ra. while Turre flaunts his own pearly virtuosity on solos that range from bopping blues to undulating raga. In this rarefied atmosphere, trombones, trap drums, and even Dizzy Gillespie's low-key guest appearance on "Toreador" seem almost intrusive. You might say it's a higher state of conchousness.

—Larry Birnbaum



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Terumasa Hino

UNFORGETTABLE—Blue Note CDP 0777 7 81191 2 8: Blue Smiles; You Are So Beautiful; Smile; I've Never Been In Love Before; Body And Soul; Unforgettable; Alfie; My One And Only Love; Bye Bye Blackbird; My Funny Valentine. (58:03)

Personnel: Hino, cornet; Cedar Walton, piano; David Williams, bass; Michael Carvin, drums.



Seemingly at pains to live down his reputation as both fusion-monger and slash-and-burn bebopper, Hino has cut an all-ball ads, cornet-only album with a dream-team rhythm section. You've got to give him credit for tackling one hoary old warhorse after another without flinching; but his dry, vibrato-less lone, sharp, breathy attack, and sputtering phrasing aren't exactly made for romance. Although his choice of notes is immaculately tasteful and his accompanists exquisitely sensitive, his approach is relentlessly conventional and emotionally reserved, allowing Walton's brief but fresh piano solos to steal the show.

—L.B.



Lewis Nash

RHYTHM IS MY BUSINESS--Evidence 22041-2: Let Me Try; 106 Nix; Sing Me A Song Everlasting; My Shining Hour; Sabaku; Omelette; When You Return; Monk's Dream; Danielle's Waltz; Pranayama. (63:24)

Personnel: Nash, drums; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Peter Washington, bass; Steve Kroon, percussion; Ron Carter, piccolo bass (6); Teresa Nash, vocal (7).

Nash, who graduated from Betty Carter's band to become one of today's most in-demand drummers, plays it cool on his horn-less solo debut, adding just enough starch to the gauzy vibes-and-piano textures to keep the pastel-shaded session from going limp. The material—including tunes by Roland Hanna. Don Pullen, Walter Davis Jr., and Nash himself—is



Write for brochure. Dealer inquiries invited. conservative, but the approach is contemporary, commenting on classic hard-bop rather than imitating. Nash's crisp, understated drumming, especially his brush work on "My Shining Hour," is impeccable, but his solo on "Monk's Dream" reveals the virtually undigested influence of Monk drummer Ben Riley.



Cecil Bridgewater

I LOVE YOUR SMILE—Bluemoon/MR R2 79187: MAGIC; I LOVE YOUR SMILE; AS I LIVE AND BREATHE; NEVER TOO YOUNG TO DREAM; SAMBA, PARA US-TEDES DOS; SOPHISTICATED LADY; WALTZ FOR DUKE PEARSON; SCOTT FREE. (57:47)

Personnel: Bridgewater, trumpet, flugelhorn; Antonio Hart, alto sax; Roger Byam, tenor, soprano saxes; Steve Turre, trombone; Earl McIntyre, bass trombone; Mark Taylor, french horn; Roland Hanna, piano; Tyrone Brown, bass; Michael Carvin, Max Roach (3,8), drums; Vanessa Rubin, vocal (4).



In his 20 years with Max Roach, Bridgewater has been a model sideman, more craftsman than creator, distinguished by his rich tone and quirky way with a blue note. He's lined up a topflight crew for this solo outing, which sparkles with ensemble empathy and communal high spirits. Horn men Hart, Byam, and Turre toss off sleek, fluid hard-bop runs as Barron comps with masterly ease, leaving Bridgewater, with his slightly off-kilter attack, the odd man out. But it's Roach, playing on only two tracks, who makes the most distinctive mark. In the end, polish and positive attitude are no substitute for originality.



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Don Cherry & Ed Blackwell

"Mutron" (from EL CORAZON, ECM, 1982).

Oooh, I heard his sticks [laughs]. The cymbals are throwing me off. Max Roach. It's not today's Max Roach? Ed Blackwell? Man, that's killin'. That is really killin'. When you first put it on I didn't know who it was. It sounded like Max Roach, and I was like, "That's Max, but it's not Max." The cymbals kept throwing me off. I really loved that. That is a 5-star rating. I definitely liked the drums. It sounded very intelligent to me, and I like the idea of trumpet and drums—it was very open.

Elvin Jones &Richard Davis

"M.E." (from HEAVY Sounds, MCA/Impulsel, 1968).

Ohhh. That's killin'. I knew it was sounding like Elvin. Definitely a 5-star rating. It's just the broken-up triplets, it's his signature. A lot of people try to sound like him, but there's only one Elvin. And that definitely sounded like Elvin. I've heard people come close, though. That's why it fooled me for a minute. That's not out-of-print yet, is it? I've got to get that, man. I've listened to a lot of Elvin. That was a great tune, great blowin'.

Mike Clark & Paul Jackson

"Four String Drive" (from The Funk Stops Here, enja, 1992).

Is that Mike Clark? Paul Jackson? I heard they did something new, and that had to be them. I never heard Mike Clark solo like that before. I like that. Definitely a 5-star. I was always a fan of Mike Clark's playing. I think he was the first person I ever heard that could sound like Tony Williams and sound like—I can't say Gadd because I heard him before I heard Gadd—and sound like David Garibaldi, so to speak, with the hand/feet combinations. That's one of the things I dug about him, the syncopated thing. He's a bad cat, an underrated player.

Steve Coleman & Five Elements

"Z Train" (from Drop Kick, Novus, 1992) Camille Gainer, drums.

Steve Coleman. I know Marvin "Smitty" Smith plays on his records, but I've heard other drummers play with him, and that didn't sound like Marvin to me. The composition's what gave it away. Steve Coleman's the only cat that's doing that kind of thing—taking something that's really out, and then

DENNIS CHAMBERS

by Robin Tolleson

The drummer had just finished a gig with the reunited Brecker Brothers band, greeted a line of well-wishers backstage, and was now sitting down to his first Blindfold Test. From P-Funk work-horse to Fusion Groovemaster with John Scofield, Gary Thomas, the Stern-Berg Band, and others, Dennis Chambers generally turns whatever music he's playing on its ear. To their credit, the Brecker Brothers selected one of the only drummers capable of stealing the show from them, without even looking like he was trying very hard.

Chambers apologized for loving everything I played him, and wasn't fooled by anything much. He's obviously a dedicated fan of music, as well as a musician. Chambers can be heard on Return Of The Brecker Brothers (GRP) and co-leads a project called Petite Blonde (Lipstick) with Victor Bailey, Mitch Forman, Chuck Loeb, and Bill Evans. Westbound Records has re-



leased some of his best early work on *P-Funk All Stars Live* (Westbound). And Chambers can be seen up close on a couple new instructional videos from DCI, *In The Pocket* and *Serious Moves*.

He was given no information about the recordings beforehand.

making it sound in. Bringing the funk grooves into stuff, you know. I really dig his writing. That's definitely his signature. And the drumming was phenomenal. I don't know who's playing drums, but wow, that's definitely 5 stars there.

5 Tommy Bolin

"Marching Powder" (from Teaser, Nemperor, 1975) Narada Michael Walden, drums; Bolin, quitar; Jan Hammer, keyboards.

That's Billy Cobham. Wait a minute, Michael Walden, Yeah, Michael Walden. Back it up a little bit. I like that. First, I thought it was Billy because of the single-stroke rolls, but then I heard the tone of the drums. And he definitely had his own Michael Walden sound, the way the bass drums and tom toms sounded. Then it was the way he started phrasing. There were only two or three people that could play like that back then. Billy definitely had the single-stroke rolls, and Alphonse Mouzon came out of the Billy Cobham vibe. Narada Michael Walden had a feel of life, the way he phrases. Those were the only three that I could think of, but what gave it away was the sound of the drums. And the way it felt. 5 stars, definitely.

6 Ginger Baker

"Time Be Time" (from Middle Passage, Axiom, 1990)

Great drum sound. Is it Ginger Baker? The

only other person I thought it might have been was Keith Moon, but it's not wild. This had an ethnic feel to it. The drums sounded like him, but it sounded more controlled. Ginger's probably the only rock drummer that I heard back in those days that had a lot of chops, but he played so laid back, and it was about the feel of the tune. He created this vibe. For a rock drummer, he played a lot of tom toms, just played the drums, and basically stayed away from the cymbals, you know, for a rock drummer. Even before he went to Africa, all that Cream stuff with the tom toms. I was a Cream fan; still am. I'm still buying up all the stuff that's coming out on CDs and Lasers. That's definitely a 5. I'm giving everything 5s here, it just sounds great to me.

Miles Davis

"Budo" (from Віятн Оғ Тне Сооь, Саріtol, 1949) Max Roach, drums; Gerry Mulligan, baritone sax.

I think that's Gerry Mulligan. The trumpet has to be either Miles or Wallace Roney. It sounds like Grady Tate. Wait a minute. Is it Miles? Jeez, who is it on drums? It don't sound like Philly Joe Jones to me. I'm stumped. It's Max? It don't sound like Max Roach to me. Just the way he swung the band. Pretty good tune, but I never would have thought it was Max. Just the way he phrases and sets up things, and his time-keeping. I didn't hear a hi-hat in there, which is always strong, tik tik, the time in there. I'd give that 4 stars.