

58th ANNUAL READERS POLL

# DOWNBEAT

*Jazz, Blues & Beyond*

## JOSHUA REDMAN

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# JOSHUA REDMAN

# So, You Wanna Be a Jazz Star?

BY PAT COLE

What a difference a year has made in the life of Joshua Redman. Twelve months ago, Redman was a largely unknown musician in search of a dream. Today, he's a young man in the limelight. He's been showered with brisk record sales, an enthusiastic following, plenty of calls from major booking agents, too many calls at home from star-struck fans, and more nights in strange hotels than he cares to remember.

Not that Redman's complaining about instant success. He's ecstatic. But a dizzying rise to fame has its drawbacks. Sleep, for one, has been hard to come by. At a concert stop last September in San Diego, the young Redman was so short on sleep, he almost collapsed. "The only way I could stay awake was to keep playing," recalls the soft-spoken tenor player. "Every time I stopped playing, I felt like I was going to pass out."

Redman has managed to conquer the hard part of being a jazz musician: breaking through a sea of saxophonists and winning recognition as a potential torchbearer of his generation. Now, comes the momentous test of building on this quick start. Fans and critics alike wonder: Can he maintain his momentum? Will he grow musically? Can he handle instant fame or the business aspects of his new life and still thrive musically?

Understanding how he came out of the blocks helps answer some of those questions. His ascent in the jazz world has arguably been the Cinderella story of 1993. After listening to his CD or witnessing a live performance, many critics showered him with adjectives and superlatives. Within four months of its release, Redman's self-titled debut sold more than 30,000 copies and rose to No. 3 on *Billboard's* jazz charts.

*Wish*, his second album, released in September, is even better (see "Reviews" Nov. '93). The album, with some tunes recorded live at the Blue Note in New York, let Redman fulfill his dream of playing with some of his idols. It features Pat Metheny on guitar, Billy Higgins on drums, and Charlie Haden on bass. Within a week of its release, it became the most-played jazz album on radio stations nationwide, according to the Gavin Report.

Redman admits that while success has happened quickly, it hasn't been easy. Upon meeting him for the first time, one would hardly know that the Berkeley, Calif., native's life has undergone a sea change. Two days after the San Diego gig, Redman took some time to unwind and catch up on sleep at his aunt's house in Los Angeles' Silver Lake district. Casually dressed, he practiced riffs in a terraced garden overlooking a valley of dated Spanish-style homes, apartments, and bungalows.

When meeting a guest, Redman flashes a wide smile and offers

an array of soft drinks. He begins talking about living like a gypsy on the road, the ritual musicians either love or loathe. Since June 1992, he has spent about half his life in airports, buses, or cars, traveling from gig to gig.

"It's exhilarating," says Redman. "There is a real sense of freedom when you go on the road. You're not tied to a specific location. But then there is also a sense of imprisonment. Sometimes, I feel like all I do is pack and unpack. An hour a day is spent packing. There is so much else I could be doing. It's been a year-and-a-half since I've listened to a CD from beginning to end. I feel like I lose a lot of my life on the road."

But the travel is definitely worth it, he concludes. Redman genuinely likes playing for an audience. "I like being on stage," he says. "Which is funny, because when I was young in school, I didn't like raising my hand in class, and I never got kicks from being in front of a lot of people."

Redman, 24, is by no means the first young sensation the jazz world has seen this century. In fact, his rise certainly fits a pattern. Wynton Marsalis was only 19 when he started making an impact with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, and 22 when he earned two Grammys for his jazz and classical albums. Miles Davis was a mere 21 when he was anointed by *Esquire* as jazz's New Star. And Duke Ellington was in his mid-'20s when he became a noteworthy bandleader.



What separates Redman from prodigies past is his extraordinary mix of academic intellect with musical artistry. After graduating from Berkeley High School as its valedictorian, he entered Harvard University with the intention of becoming a doctor.

Then, after choosing social studies as a major, he sought to become a lawyer. "I never wanted to be a professional musician," Redman says. "I saw how hard it was for my father [tenorman Dewey Redman] to succeed." So Redman graduated *summa cum laude*, applied to Yale Law School, deferred his admission, then won the Thelonious Monk Institute's prestigious Jazz Saxophone Competition. It's not the normal path that serious musicians take to jazz prominence.

In addition, one would think that he spent hours and hours in a room playing riffs while hearing his conscience shout, "Practice, practice, practice!" Hardly. Listen to this:

"It's a bit of a losing battle right now," Redman says with some regret. "The time for personal musical reflection is deficient. I don't practice. I mean, luckily, I never really did. Before, I didn't like practicing, and I had the time to do it. Now I have a desire to practice, and I don't have the time."

"The dominant things in my life are the peripheral things: doing interviews, keeping contact with the record company. That does dominate right now. And it won't continue to dominate. Because I'm definitely at a point where I have to set aside that time for personal musical reflection. If I don't, I'm going to end up being frustrated. That's what I'm grappling with right now."

To Warner Bros., Redman, though young, represents a future stalwart. "I think Joshua felt he had a chance to be nearly one of a kind here," says Ricky Schultz, Warner Bros.' vice president of jazz and progressive music. "He's happening because he's extraordinary. He's the real thing. [This is the most excited I have been about an artist in the last 15 years. The last artist I had been that excited about was Pat Metheny.]"

So it's clear that Redman has all the promise to be a great musician. But how will he grow and thrive? During the interview, he revealed three key paths to flourishing as a musician.

Step One: Play music from the soul.

Many critics think he has accomplished this. Redman, however, thinks he has a way to go. "People say I sound mature, and I think that's the greatest compliment you can get," he says. "But I consider myself a beginner. Also, I try to be honest in what I do. Maybe there's a directness and an honesty that I have. When I hear some musicians, sometimes I feel like they're not playing from the soul. Any kind of intellectual agenda distracts from what the music is about."

Well, he may be a beginner, but believe what some critics and observers say—Redman has discovered his voice in raw form. His doesn't focus on speed, technique, or copying Stanley Turrentine or Dexter Gordon licks. Instead, he says, he hones in on communicating emotions. During the recording of *Wish*, Charlie Haden was amazed at his phrasings. "He plays very original solos," he said. "He's discovered his soul a lot more quickly than most musicians do. His solos are very mature and consistent with a lot of continuity. He doesn't rely on licks like a lot of people do. He makes his own licks, and I'm sure he's going to be a very influential musician in jazz as soon as he gets more experience."

**H**ow should Joshua get that experience?

Step Two: play with musicians who challenge you, young or old.

Part of the strategy behind *Wish* was for Redman to play with an elite group of jazz musicians. "It was a music lesson," Redman says about the day-and-a-half recording session. "It was a chance to learn from three of my idols. I was scared shitless going into the studio. I had all these insecurities and doubts. But once we played the first beat, all that mattered was the music."

What did Redman learn from Pat Metheny, for instance? "He's an incredibly great storyteller," Redman says. "When he improvises, it doesn't sound like a bunch of licks. There's always a journey. It can be a far-out journey at times, but there's always a sense of structure. He always has something to say. Seeing that process firsthand was like seeing a master sculptor in the actual stage of sculpting instead of just seeing the finished product. And he really has a sense of how to communicate to an audience without compromising."

While some observers think that young jazz musicians shouldn't focus on playing with their peers, Redman sees the benefits. His own bandmembers are unusually accomplished for their age. Redman's regular bass player, 21-year-old Christian McBride, is arguably one of the best young musicians on the scene today. Drummer Brian Blade, who is also in his 20s, wins kudos for his passionate, sensitive attack. Good musicians are good musicians.

"I think it's essential to work alongside the masters," Redman says. "I insisted to Warner Bros. that I be able to play as a sideman. And I've done a bunch. Just this year, I've recorded with Melvin

Rhyne [the late Wes Montgomery's organ player], Joe Lovano, Mulgrew Miller, Paul Motian, and I'm going to record with Milt Jackson at the beginning of next year. That's going to be an ongoing part of my career. It's very, very important for me to continue to play with master musicians.

"But I think there's something to be said about playing with musicians from your own generation. Great musicians come in different sizes and shapes. Playing with Christian McBride: to me, he's one of the great bass players out there. And he happens to be 21. It's just a freak, right? Not to denigrate the masters that I've played with, but I've learned as much playing with him as I have with anyone else. He's an incredible musician regardless of his age. So, if you find great musicians to play with, it really doesn't matter what their age is.

Something very positive happens when you bring together musicians of the same generation. There is a fire, an intensity, an unbridled passion. There's that youthful exuberance that I get from playing with my peers that I don't get in the same way from playing with older musicians."

Before this year, Redman had never been exposed to international acclaim. So how do you handle fame, money, and set your career on a smooth course?

Step Three: Keep a level head, and surround yourself with trustworthy people.

Redman hardly thinks he's got it made. "The music business is not an artistic meritocracy," he says. "The best musician doesn't get the biggest paycheck. Because I've never planned for this, it's icing on the cake. It's a fantasy, really."

In his favor, money isn't a problem for Redman right now. He is constantly touring and playing gigs with various bands. "I'm paying my rent, I can eat, I'm not in need, I'm not on welfare," he says. "I never had any money, I never had a lot of luxuries. But I'm totally aware that I don't have secure employment. I book a gig, get paid, and it's on a daily basis. There isn't a sense of security."

Redman isn't looking for a movie deal, and, no, he doesn't want Branford Marsalis' job on *The Tonight Show*. He lives in a diverse neighborhood in the Park Slope area of Brooklyn, where he can hear music played on the street. It helps him remain anchored in the jazz scene. "New York is the only place where there is a really vital acoustic-jazz scene," he says. "Every night, if I want to, I can go and see good players. And in Park Slope, I can get away with practicing in my apartment."

So it seems like Redman's got the formula down, if he can just squeeze time in for more practice. While he's still worried about his future, Warner Bros. executives are less concerned. "You hope that a person or a couple of persons like him drop in your lap during your career," says Schultz. "It's pretty exciting to work with rare and genuine talent."

It certainly looks like Redman knows what he's doing—and he's only just begun.

DB

*"He's discovered his soul a lot more quickly than most musicians do."—Charlie Haden*



**EQUIPMENT**

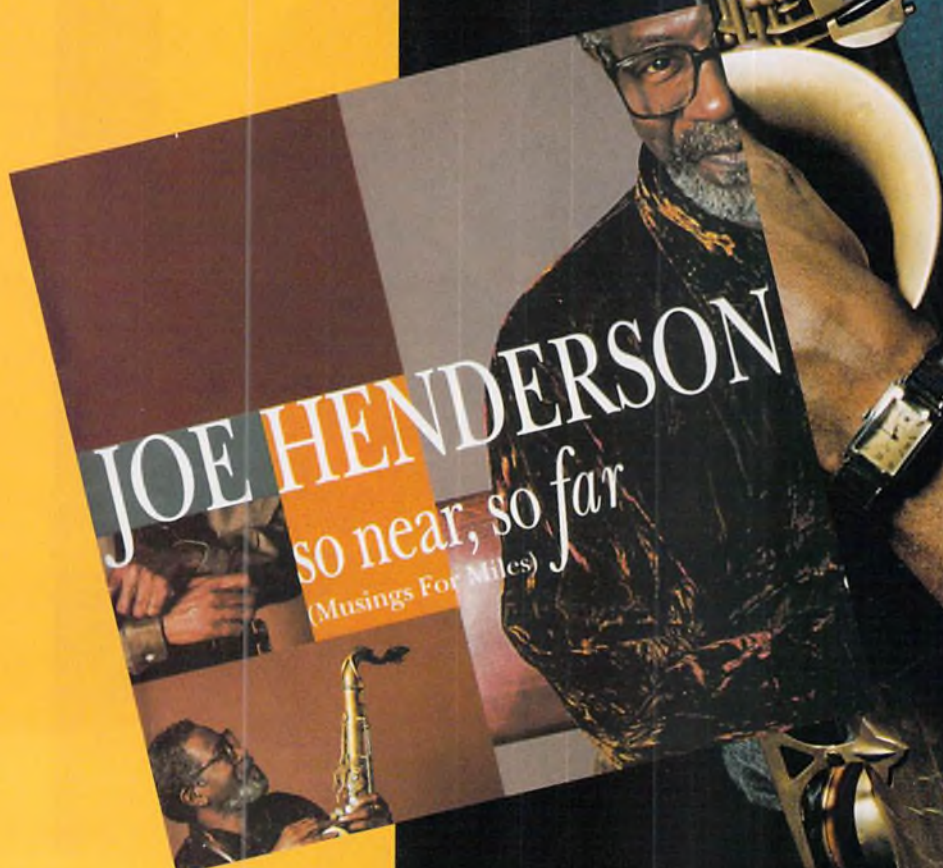
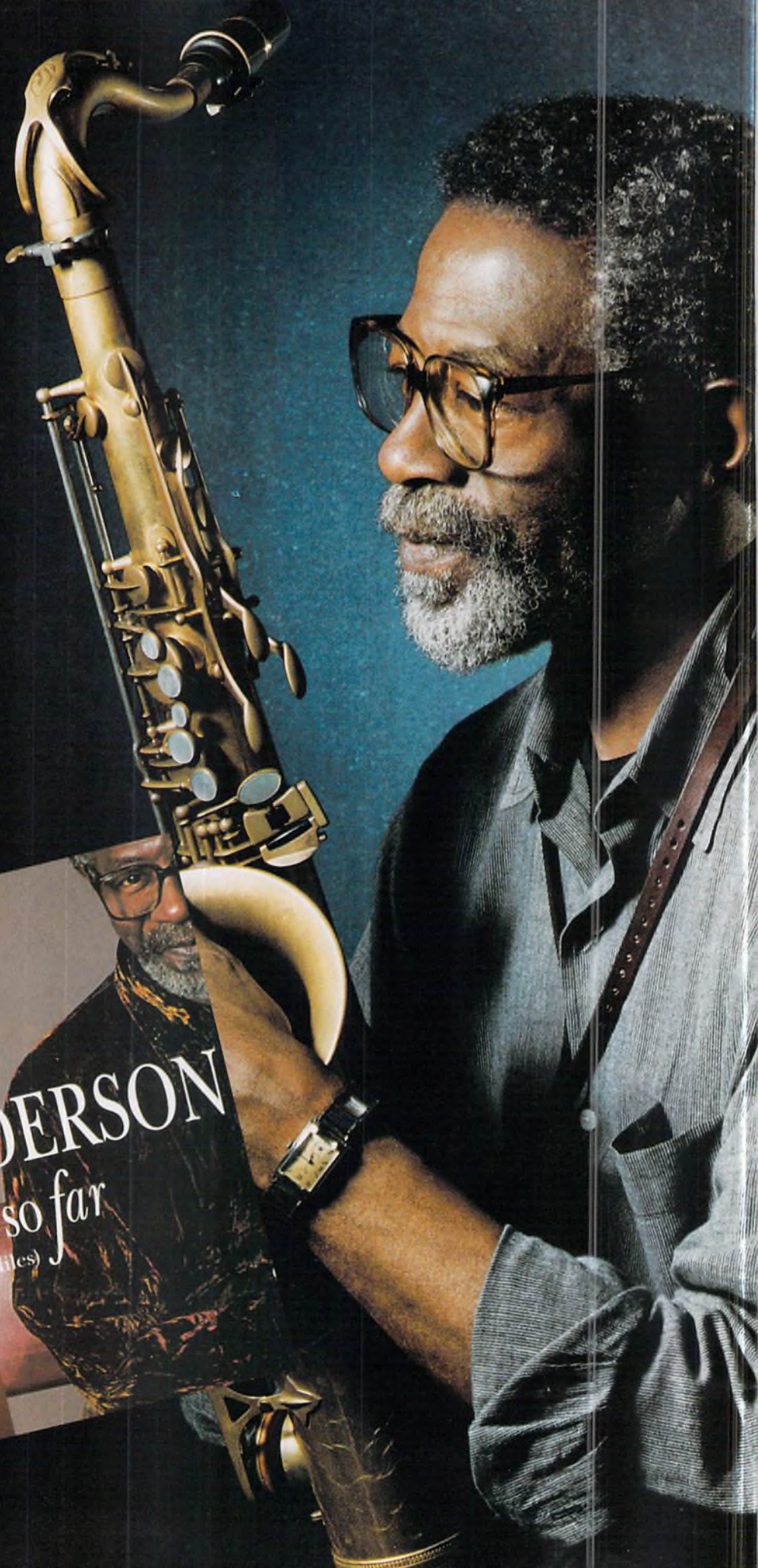
Joshua Redman plays a Selmer Mark VI saxophone, circa 1959. He uses Hemke or Vandoren reeds. His microphone brands vary, and sometimes he doesn't use them at all.

**SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

(For additional listings, see June '93.)

WISH—Warner Bros. 9 45365-2 T-BOP—Soul Note 121196-2 (as a sideman)  
 JOSHUA REDMAN—Warner Bros. 9 with Eric Fellen, Jimmy Krieger  
 45242-2

DOWN BEAT'S  
**58th**  
Annual  
Readers Poll



This year's edition of the Readers Poll shakes things up a bit. Having said that, mention should be made of the obvious: smokin' Joe Henderson does it again, winning the triple crown. (The Critics Poll did as much in August.) More than 3,000 voters from around the world put Henderson on top in the Jazz Album, Jazz Artist, and Tenor Saxophonist categories. This is the first time in DB history that an artist has won double back-to-back triple crowns for both polls.

The surprises begin with Red Rodney's band upsetting Wynton Marsalis' for best Jazz Acoustic Combo and Henry Threadgill (with help from his *Too Much Sugar For A Dime* album), unseating Carla Bley and Muhal Richard Abrams for Composer of the Year honors. But that's not all: The '93 Critics voted him top Talent Deserving Wider Recognition in the Arranger category, with credits going to various projects, including his 5-star *Turandot* recording (see "Reviews" May '93). The Readers have done the Critics one better, handily placing Bob Belden on top as Arranger of the Year.

A final note: We've decided to keep you in suspense on the 1993 Readers Poll Hall of Fame winner, who'll be featured in our January issue. —John Ephland

### JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 378 **So Near, So Far (Musings For Miles)**, Joe Henderson (Verve)
- 116 *Haunted Heart*, Charlie Haden & Quartet West (Verve)
- 64 *From The Soul*, Joe Lovano (Blue Note)
- 56 *CITI Movement (Griot New York)*, Wynton Marsalis (Columbia)
- 44 *Harlem Renaissance*, Benny Carter (MusicMasters)
- 40 *Too Much Sugar For A Dime*, Henry Threadgill (Axiom)
- 32 *Universal Language*, Joe Lovano (Blue Note)
- 32 *At The Five Spot*, Thelonious Monk & John Coltrane (Blue Note)

### JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 432 **Joe Henderson**
- 136 Branford Marsalis
- 88 Wynton Marsalis
- 68 Joe Lovano
- 66 David Murray
- 40 Charlie Haden
- 34 Benny Carter
- 32 Red Rodney

### TENOR SAXOPHONE

- 837 **Joe Henderson**
- 348 Sonny Rollins
- 327 Joe Lovano
- 246 David Murray
- 204 Branford Marsalis
- 84 Michael Brecker
- 60 Johnny Griffin
- 45 Gary Thomas



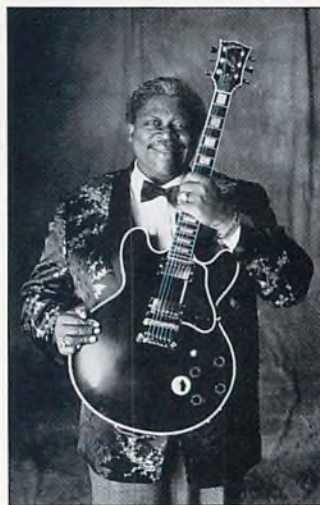
### BLUES/SOUL/R & B ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 216 **Boom Boom**, John Lee Hooker (Pointblank)
- 96 *Feels Like Rain*, Buddy Guy (Silvertone)
- 86 *Someone To Love*, Charles Brown (Bullseye Blues)
- 80 *Goin' Back To New Orleans*, Dr. John (Warner Bros.)
- 56 *Robben Ford & the Blue Line*, Robben Ford & the Blue Line (Stretch)



### BEYOND ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 210 **Ten Summoner's Tales**, Sting (A&M)
- 189 *Bone Machine*, Tom Waits (Island)
- 186 *Kiko*, Los Lobos (Warner Bros.)
- 150 *Tanga*, Mario Bauza (Messidor)
- 54 *Kamakiriad*, Donald Fagen (Reprise)
- 48 *3 Years, 5 Months & 2 Days In The Life Of ...*, Arrested Development (Chrysalis)



### BEYOND ARTIST OF THE YEAR

- 212 **Sting**
- 128 Tom Waits
- 68 Prince
- 57 Tito Puente
- 54 Peter Gabriel
- 48 Eric Clapton
- 42 Lyle Lovett
- 42 John Zorn

### BLUES/SOUL/R & B GROUP

- 294 **B.B. King**
- 246 Neville Brothers
- 105 Kinsey Report
- 102 Robert Cray
- 93 Dirty Dozen
- 63 Albert Collins
- 60 Charles Brown
- 60 Ray Charles
- 60 Buddy Guy

### BLUES/SOUL/R & B MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 248 **B.B. King**
- 166 John Lee Hooker
- 158 Buddy Guy
- 96 Ray Charles
- 66 Charles Brown
- 48 Robert Cray
- 32 Albert Collins
- 32 Prince
- 30 Dr. John

### BEYOND GROUP

- 219 **Los Lobos**
- 165 Kronos Quartet
- 159 Tito Puente
- 78 U2
- 75 Living Colour
- 66 Jerry Gonzalez & the Fort Apache Band
- 54 Prince/NPG
- 54 Sting



## JAZZ ACOUSTIC COMBO

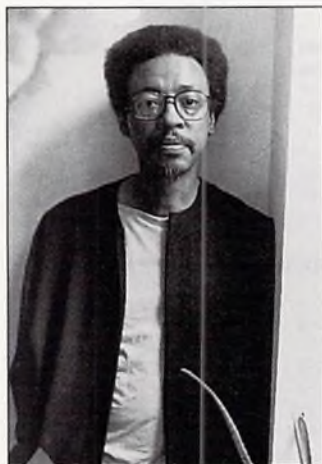
- 378 **Red Rodney**  
 237 Wynton Marsalis  
 174 Phil Woods  
 147 Charlie Haden  
 147 Bobby Watson  
 135 Modern Jazz Quartet  
 96 Keith Jarrett  
 84 Tony Williams  
 78 Branford Marsalis  
 42 Art Ensemble of Chicago  
 42 Roy Hargrove

## JAZZ ELECTRIC COMBO

- 306 **John Scofield**  
 196 Pat Metheny  
 108 Chick Corea  
 98 Ornette Coleman  
 90 Brecker Brothers  
 84 Yellowjackets  
 76 Bill Frisell  
 48 Bela Fleck  
 48 Joe Zawinul  
 40 Henry Threadgill  
 36 Chico Hamilton

## JAZZ BIG BAND

- 579 **Count Basie Band**  
 315 McCoy Tyner Big Band  
 204 Charlie Haden's Liberation  
 Music Orchestra  
 Sun Ra  
 203 David Murray  
 162 Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin  
 72 Rob McConnell  
 66 Illinois Jacquet  
 60 Jimmy Heath  
 51 Gerry Mulligan



JULIUS ALLEN

## COMPOSER

- 207 **Henry Threadgill**  
 180 Benny Carter  
 168 Wynton Marsalis  
 132 Carla Bley  
 84 Pat Metheny  
 78 Muhal Richard Abrams  
 78 Randy Weston  
 63 Julius Hemphill  
 60 Ornette Coleman  
 57 Bobby Watson



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STEVE SINGER

## ARRANGER

- 279 **Bob Belden**  
 195 Carla Bley  
 153 Benny Carter  
 129 Toshiko Akiyoshi  
 108 Frank Foster  
 108 Henry Threadgill  
 99 Jimmy Heath  
 87 Slide Hampton  
 87 Wynton Marsalis  
 78 Bob Mintzer  
 69 Sun Ra

## ALTO SAX

- 342 **Phil Woods**  
 222 Bobby Watson  
 201 Jackie McLean  
 116 Ornette Coleman  
 89 Kenny Garrett  
 83 Benny Carter  
 74 Frank Morgan  
 53 Steve Coleman  
 44 Lee Konitz  
 35 David Sanborn  
 33 Greg Osby

## BARITONE SAXOPHONE

- 664 **Gerry Mulligan**  
 312 Hamiet Bluiett  
 204 Nick Brignola  
 72 John Surman  
 42 Ronnie Cuber

## TRUMPET

- 561 **Wynton Marsalis**  
 556 Red Rodney  
 404 Lester Bowie  
 285 Roy Hargrove  
 256 Tom Harrell  
 196 Arturo Sandoval  
 104 Jon Faddis  
 104 Wallace Roney  
 104 Clark Terry  
 84 Terence Blanchard  
 84 Freddie Hubbard  
 77 Don Cherry  
 71 Art Farmer

## TROMBONE

- 325 **J.J. Johnson**  
 201 Steve Turre  
 127 Ray Anderson  
 36 Curtis Fuller  
 36 Bill Watrous  
 31 Frank Lacy  
 29 Craig Harris  
 22 Delfeayo Marsalis  
 19 Robin Eubanks  
 19 Slide Hampton

## CLARINET

- 444 **Don Byron**  
 383 Eddie Daniels  
 187 Buddy DeFranco  
 80 Alvin Batiste  
 49 Kenny Davern  
 36 Ken Peplowski  
 27 Paquito D'Rivera



DONNA PAUL

## SOPRANO SAX

- 409 **Steve Lacy**  
 398 Branford Marsalis  
 265 Wayne Shorter  
 97 Bob Wilber  
 83 Jane Ira Bloom  
 70 David Liebman  
 30 Eric Person

## FLUTE

- 312 **James Newton**  
 211 James Moody  
 187 Lew Tabackin  
 146 Frank Wess  
 134 Dave Valentin  
 109 Hubert Laws  
 94 Henry Threadgill  
 53 Kent Jordan



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Mark VI	1956	#64000
Mark VI	1963	#104000
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Mark VI (excellent condition)	1966	#130000
Mark VI (high F#, silver-plated)	1966	#129000
Super Action #0 II (silver plated)	1966	#135000
1992	#462000	
<b>Model Tenors</b>		
Buescher True Tone (Gold-Plated)	1921	#74000
Buescher True Tone (Silver-Plated)	1929	#249000
Buescher Aristocrat (heavily engraved)	1942	#297000
Buescher Aristocrat (Gold-Lacquered)	1942	#295000
Buescher 40M (Silver-Plate, heavily engraved)	1938	#285000
King Super 20 (Silver Neck and Bell)	1960	#376000
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Conn (10M)	1940	#288000
Conn (10M)	1942	#306000
Conn (10M) silver plated	1943	#309000
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Super Balanced Action (high F#, mini)	1957	#67000
Mark VI	1957	#67000
Mark VI (high F#)	1967	#141000
Mark VI	1970	#179000
<b>Model Allos</b>		
Buescher True Tone (Gold-Plated)	1927	#205000
Buescher True Tone (Gold-Plated)	1930	#252000
Buescher Aristocrat	1935	#272000
Buescher Aristocrat (Gold-Plated)	1935	#270000
Buescher Aristocrat	1936	#280000
Buescher Aristocrat	1936	#300000
Buescher 40M (Gold Lacquer) heavily engraved	1949	#320000
Conn 6M (silver plated)	1932	#253000
Conn 6M	1935	#270000
Conn 6M	1936	#275000
Conn 6M	1938	#284000
Conn 26M	1940	#291000
Conn 6M	1942	#305000
Conn 6M (silver plated)	1945	#312000
King Super 20 (silver neck, side pearls)	1946	#299000

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### Answers to questions

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## PIANO

- 318 **Tommy Flanagan**
- 315 Kenny Barron
- 198 McCoy Tyner
- 195 Oscar Peterson
- 153 Geri Allen
- 132 Keith Jarrett
- 105 Don Pullen
- 96 Mulgrew Miller
- 81 Hank Jones
- 81 Marcus Roberts
- 63 Gonzalo Rubalcaba
- 63 Cecil Taylor
- 54 Herbie Hancock
- 47 John Hicks
- 45 Benny Green



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## ORGAN

- 356 **Jimmy Smith**
- 346 Don Pullen
- 261 Joey DeFrancesco
- 89 Barbara Dennerlein
- 60 Jimmy McGriff
- 55 Jack McDuff
- 31 Charles Earland

## SYNTHESIZER

- 436 **Joe Zawinul**
- 309 Lyle Mays
- 188 Chick Corea
- 162 Sun Ra
- 82 Herbie Hancock
- 44 Wayne Horvitz

## ACOUSTIC GUITAR

- 312 **John McLaughlin**
- 251 Jim Hall
- 186 Joe Pass
- 159 Kenny Burrell
- 74 Ralph Towner
- 45 Howard Alden
- 40 Charlie Byrd
- 40 Herb Ellis
- 36 Pat Metheny

## ELECTRIC GUITAR

- 361 **John Scofield**
- 214 Bill Frisell
- 204 Pat Metheny
- 122 Mike Stern
- 85 Kenny Burrell
- 77 Jim Hall
- 70 Sonny Sharrock

## ELECTRIC BASS

- 507 **Steve Swallow**
- 270 John Patitucci
- 247 Bob Cranshaw
- 183 Stanley Clarke
- 171 Marcus Miller
- 66 Jamaaladeen Tacuma
- 65 Bill Laswell
- 54 Gerald Veasley

## ACOUSTIC BASS

- 412 **Charlie Haden**
- 260 Ray Brown
- 206 Dave Holland
- 143 Ron Carter
- 71 Christian McBride
- 43 Rulus Reed
- 34 Anthony Cox
- 34 Robert Hurst
- 34 Cecil McBee
- 33 Ray Drummond



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## DRUMS

- 441 **Max Roach**
- 348 Jack DeJohnette
- 246 Elvin Jones
- 192 Tony Williams
- 96 Billy Higgins
- 84 Roy Haynes
- 84 Victor Lewis
- 81 Al Foster
- 69 Marvin "Smitty" Smith
- 63 Joey Baron
- 63 Lewis Nash
- 54 Peter Erskine
- 45 Chico Hamilton
- 45 Paul Motian

## PERCUSSION

- 453 **Airto**
- 417 Tito Puente
- 192 Naná Vasconcelos
- 189 Trilok Gurtu
- 150 Famoudou Don Moya
- 117 Poncho Sanchez
- 99 Jerry Gonzalez

## VIOLIN

- 526 **Stephane Grappelli**
- 170 John Blake
- 150 Jean-Luc Ponty
- 142 Billy Bang
- 84 Leroy Jenkins
- 64 Mark Feldman
- 50 Johnny Frigo

## VIBES

- 678 **Milt Jackson**
- 284 Gary Burton
- 268 Bobby Hutcherson
- 140 Steve Nelson
- 104 Lionel Hampton

## MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

- 526 **Toots Thielemans (harmonica)**
- 292 Steve Turre (shells)
- 98 David Murray (bass clarinet)
- 80 Bela Fleck (banjo)
- 74 Bob Stewart (tuba)
- 38 Howard Johnson (tuba)
- 30 Don Byron (bass clarinet)

## MALE SINGER

- 424 **Joe Williams**
- 222 Bobby McFerrin
- 156 Mel Tormé
- 94 Mark Murphy
- 82 Tony Bennett
- 56 Jon Hendricks
- 54 Ray Charles
- 46 Jimmy Scott
- 36 Harry Connick, Jr
- 28 Al Jarreau

## FEMALE SINGER

- 320 **Betty Carter**
- 297 Shirley Horn
- 250 Abbey Lincoln
- 158 Cassandra Wilson
- 135 Ella Fitzgerald
- 125 Carmen McRae
- 120 Sheila Jordan
- 35 Bonnie Raitt
- 35 Diane Schuur

## VOCAL GROUP

- 612 **Take 6**
- 417 Manhattan Transfer
- 237 New York Voices
- 174 Hendricks Family
- 87 Jacki & Roy
- 57 Sweet Honey in the Rock
- 45 Zap Mama

# Waltz For Bill Evans

JOHN McLAUGHLIN

By John Diliberto

**H**e's led the Mahavishnu Orchestra and composed for symphony orchestras, but *Time Remembered: John McLaughlin Plays Bill Evans* may be his most classical recording yet. If your image of Bill Evans is set in dusky nightclubs bathed in a halo of cigarette smoke, then you may be in for a surprise with John McLaughlin's interpretations of the pianist's work, which sound more comfortable with the rustling of concert programs than the clinking of glasses.

"It's a more classical, maybe more European view of Bill's music," admits guitarist McLaughlin from a hotel in Cologne, Germany. But for the seemingly ageless musician, who nevertheless turns 52 in January, that was an essential element of Evans' art. "I think we should remember that in this period of the late '50s with Miles, Bill and Gil Evans both brought this very strong color of the French impressionists, Ravel, Debussy, and Satie, especially from Bill," says McLaughlin, who, having played with Miles Davis, can lay claim to the same lineage. "This was a predominant color and influence he brought into jazz music. Of my own favorite colors, Ravel is my favorite composer; so it's true, it doesn't have this night-clubby atmosphere. But it has this atmosphere of a studio in Milan, and we're playing his music, and it's beautiful music."

It's been 13 years since the death of Bill Evans, the pianist who didn't so much burst on the scene as insinuate himself among its firmament right at the roots. His reputation was cemented in 1959 on Miles Davis' seminal *Kind Of Blue*. Evans' breath-like chords and moody edges suffused Davis' music and his own albums for the next two decades. He was particularly influential for his highly empathic trio recordings along with, among others, his introspective duets with guitarist Jim Hall.

McLaughlin saw Evans in concert many times in the 1970s, although they never played together. It was *Kind Of Blue* that seduced a young, 17-year-old British guitarist in much the same way many lovers may have been seduced by Evans' own music. "If



MITCHELL SEIDEL

you listen to Bill's music, he's essentially a romantic," agrees McLaughlin. "And for me, the guitar is a romantic instrument. And I felt that if I transcribed it for a number of guitars, I could get this essential character, translated from the piano and the way he played, to the acoustic guitars."

Which explains McLaughlin's unusual orchestration of Evans' music, using the European Aighetta Quartet, a classical guitar ensemble, aided by Yan Maresz (a student of McLaughlin's and a composition graduate from Julliard) playing an acoustic bass guitar. It's a surprising choice for interpreting Evans. After all, McLaughlin spent the last several years working in a trio with percussionist Trilok Gurtu and various bassists, roughly the same format that Evans made his own.

"I played piano before guitar," says McLaughlin, although not claiming the proficiency of an Evans, "so I could have done that: taken the classic rhythm section, played the melody, used substitution chords, and played Bill's tunes and improvised. But I always look for the hard way out. I've loved his music for so many years, and I just wanted to do it with the guitar."

**M**cLaughlin could have taken the route Evans did on *Conversations with Myself*, where he over-

dubbed his own piano. "In the beginning, I thought I'd do all the parts," reveals McLaughlin. "But when I really started to analyze it, I felt it would be too much me and not enough of the playing and feeling of the playing. I like the fact that you hear different sounds and different tones on the guitar. And we played together. That's the really important thing, that we played together; I think it's much more beautiful this way." In fact, McLaughlin wrote the music for the five other musicians over which he improvised.

Of course, these are classical musicians, not jazz improvisers. And while Evans was influenced by classical music, and even composed works in a third-stream vein such as *Symbiosis*, his music was always about improvisation and interaction on the most intuitive and intimate level.

"Let's not kid ourselves, you're not going to get classical guys to swing," admits McLaughlin. He was under no illusions since he'd composed *The Mediterranean* for orchestra and guitar a few years ago. And yet, the Quartet devoted literally hundreds of hours mastering their parts. (He hopes to record his second concerto, "Europa," next year with Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony.) He also has an earlier template for a classical approach to Bill Evans' music. In 1986, the Kronos

Quartet departed from their usual 20th-century classical fare to record *Music Of Bill Evans*. Despite the presence of longtime Evans associates, Jim Hall and bassist Eddie Gomez, McLaughlin felt the performances never captured Evans' spirit.

"I've written for orchestra, and you ask them to do things they don't know how to do, and the end result is a little corny," he says sadly. "That's the problem I had with the Kronos Quartet; and I dig that quartet. But to try to emulate something that's not from your roots, that's really hard."

*"I think that essentially Bill was a poet. . . . He was a poet and a heartbreaker, and he broke my heart in '59."*



One of McLaughlin's solutions was to select Bill Evans' slower ballads rather than time-twisting excursions like "Periscope" or "T.T.T. (Twelve Tone Tune)," although he did give the former a shot. The other was to write changes for the guitar quartet, almost as if they were taking improvisational leads from Evans' tunes. "It's a little pretentious, I know," laughs McLaughlin, "especially with Bill. But since I wrote the music with the idea that I would improvise with them, in the music that they're playing, there's a kind of counterpoint which allows me to respect implicitly the harmonies that Bill had and develop them in a new way with the accompaniment of the other guitarists. It allowed me to be spontaneous, but at the same time I was able to interact with the music they were playing and phrase in a way that would work well with the counterpoint they were doing. So, that forced me to be more restrained and lyrical, because Bill was supremely lyrical, and maybe a little more austere, which is a quality I found in those pieces."

Which doesn't mean you can expect a slow-motion John McLaughlin here. On tunes like the stately "Waltz For Debby," the guitarist seems to literally levitate out of the piece, his improvisation soaring in rapture before descending back into the melancholy theme.

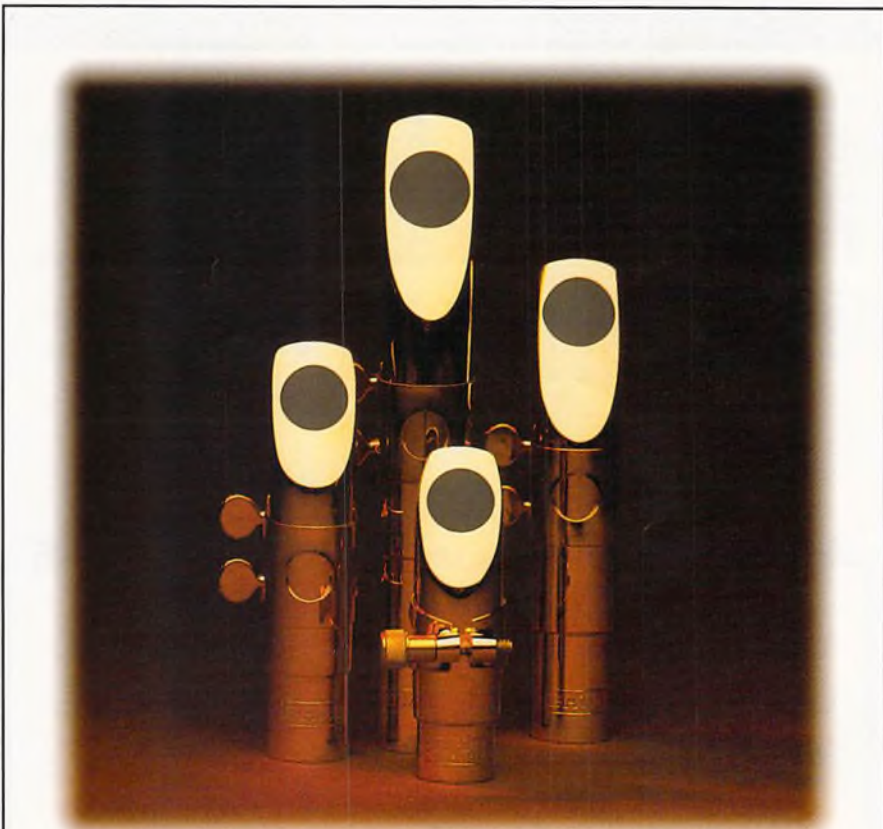
In fact, a sense of melancholy and loss pervades the album. Evans took some hard roads in his life, including addiction to heroin and alcohol. McLaughlin, who had experienced his own radical life changes from the '60s scene into his '70s spiritualism, knows those changes well, and he hears them in the

music of Bill Evans.

"As a musician, the story you tell is your own life story," he reflects. "We know he had drug problems, yet he was able to continue to be creative; but he paid a heavy price and died young. But I think that essentially Bill was a poet, and a lot of poets die young. He was a poet and a heartbreaker, and he broke my heart in '59. But he had trouble with

booze, and you can hear it in the records where he gets angular and slightly aggressive. But, for me, he was really sublime when he would play a ballad. It'd bring tears to your eyes."

Nowhere is that more evident than on "Turn Out The Stars." "The title is so evocative and provocative at the same time," says McLaughlin, "because it's really kind of



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**EQUIPMENT**

John McLaughlin is between worlds with his equipment setup, adapting to the many different projects he's engaged in. For *Time Remembered*, he simply used an Abraham Wechter acoustic guitar. "He's a luthier based in Michigan who's been making my guitars since the Shakti days [the mid-'70s]," says McLaughlin. For the Evans project, McLaughlin transcribed the scores into Coda's Finale.

He is also working with an electric setup for the first time in years. He's pulled out a Gibson 175-D and runs it with no processes or effects except for

the Sony M-7: "It's really powerful with digital EQ, and it gives you a stereo signal out of a mono input."

McLaughlin's contemplating dusting off the MIDI setup he employed with his most recent trio. He runs his acoustic "through a Photon MIDI converter, triggering a Yamaha TG-77 synthesizer. It's really powerful," exudes the guitarist, "because you've got advanced DX technology with the wave-form sampling, and you can mix them all around. For the creation of sounds it's really tremendous." He rounds it off with a Lexicon LXP-15 reverb unit.

**SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

(For additional listings, see *DB* May '91.)

*TIME REMEMBERED: JOHN McLAUGHLIN PLAYS BILL EVANS*—Verve 314 519 861-2  
*QUE ALEGRIA*—Verve 837 280-2  
*LIVE AT ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL*—JMT 834 436-2  
*"THE MEDITERRANEAN CONCERTO"*—CBS 45578  
*ELECTRIC DREAMS*—Columbia/Legacy 48892  
*ELECTRIC GUITARIST*—Columbia/Legacy 46110  
*MY GOALS BEYOND*—Rykodisc 10051  
*DEVOTION*—Celluloid 5010

with the Mahavishnu Orchestra

*INNER WORLDS*—Columbia 33908  
*LOVE DEVOTION SURRENDER*—Columbia 32034  
*VISIONS OF THE EMERALD BEYOND*—Columbia/

Legacy 46867  
*APOCALYPSE*—Columbia/Legacy 46111  
*BETWEEN NOTHINGNESS & ETERNITY*—Columbia 32766  
*BIRDS OF FIRE*—Columbia 31996  
*INNER MOUNTING FLAME*—Columbia 31067

with Shakti

*SHAKTI*—Columbia/Legacy 46868  
*A HANDFUL OF BEAUTY*—Sony SRCS 7015 (Japan only)

with Al Di Meola & Paco De Lucia

*PASSION GRACE & FIRE*—Columbia 38645  
*FRIDAY NIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO*—Columbia 37152



LAWRENCE N. SHUSTAK

Bill Evans: Time remembers him

"turn out the universe." McLaughlin's rendition is at once haunting and awe-inspiring.

McLaughlin has no plans to continue his Evans tribute with a tour or follow-up recording. The Aghetta Quartet has its own career, and the rehearsal time for another group of musicians would be formidable. Instead, he's already off on another project that will put him in touch with the electric guitar for the first time in years. He's performing in an organ trio with ex-Miles Davis sideman Joey DeFrancesco and drummer Dennis Chambers that will take him toward a decidedly different dynamic than the Evans project. "The acoustic guitar, forget it with a Hammond organ and Dennis, who is so strong," laughs McLaughlin. "Coming out of the album for Bill, this is like night and day."

Working with DeFrancesco also continues his ongoing relationship with the spirit of Miles Davis. It was Davis who introduced the pair with this recommendation: "He's a motherf\*\*ker!" says McLaughlin, invoking Davis' hoarse snarl.

Miles Davis may be an obvious subject of a McLaughlin tribute, and he has covered a few Davis tunes in the past. But it's John Coltrane who first leaps to mind. "I'd like to play with Elvin [Jones] at some point, because I have such a love for Elvin, and that quartet with Coltrane that was so powerful. So maybe, I could play with Elvin and do an homage to Coltrane at some point, because I owe such a debt to this man and have such a love of his music."

Don't expect it anytime soon, however, since the Evans project was 11 years in gestation. But John McLaughlin, who doesn't often do covers, needs no special reason to pay tribute. When I suggest that the Mahavishnu Orchestra was an electric testament to the music of Coltrane, he agrees. "It's true," he says humbly. "Every time I play, I make an homage to the people I love who had an effect on me." **DB**

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# Brave New Band

CHICK COREA

By Zan Stewart

**C**hange is an ever-present aspect of the musical world inhabited by Chick Corea.

When the keyboardist/composer started his band Return To Forever in the early '70s, it was a lyrical quintet that showcased the effervescent vocals of Flora Purim and tenor saxophone dynamo Joe Farrell. Soon, Corea traded in that light, ebullient quality for the knife-edge bite of an exhilarating electric quartet that ultimately comprised guitarist Al Di Meola, bassist/holdover Stanley Clarke, and drummer Lenny White.

After various incarnations, RTF disbanded in 1978, and 10 years later, after leading a variety of mostly acoustic ensembles, Corea once more tackled the plugged-in genre. He formed his new Elektric Band, churning out the kind of complex, high-energy music that marked the last years of RTF.

Now, Chick Corea is going up yet another road. His new Elektric Band II is outfitted with an almost brand new cast. Replacing longtime regulars Frank Gambale, John Patitucci, and Dave Weckl on guitar, bass, and drums, respectively, are Mike Miller, Jimmy Earl, and Gary Novak. (Saxophonist Eric Marienthal remains on board.) With this fresh crop of performers, the native of Chelsea, Massachusetts, is heading into, for him, unexplored musical territory, seeking a more open feeling to his music, and, arguably, less freneticism. Corea's latest release, *Paint The World*, documents both the current band and his musical shifts (see "Reviews" Oct. '93).

"I really wanted to go for a much less thought-out, produced, composed music," says Corea, wearing grey slacks, a grey T-shirt, and tennies as he relaxes on a vintage 1930s couch in the music room of the large home he and his wife, keyboardist/singer Gayle Moran, share in a secluded area of Los Angeles.

"I just wanted less written notes, varying tempos of songs, leaving more parameters open for freedom to interpret the music differently. So a few of the elements that I was using got changed. I always felt maybe in the Elektric Band that the areas of music



PHOTO: VIBEL Z

that we dealt with were not quite wide enough for me."

Then why did you keep exploring them? he's asked.

"Well, it was a group thing," Corea says with directness, looking his guest right in the eye. "It was because I didn't want to be a dictator about it. And at that time, it was the fun thing to do. But after the years went by and I kept reviewing how it felt on our live dates, and on record, I knew I wanted something else. I wanted this new band to blow more."

Corea also made a decision to use fewer keyboards. "I think my own use of the electronics with the Elektric Band took a curve," he says. "It started out very high, then got higher, and from that point, at about the second record or so [1987's *Light Years*], it gradually came down. I did a real elimination on *Paint The World*. I let go of 80 percent of the synthesizers I was using. Now I've just got a couple of little guys left."

There was also the thought that a differ-

ent sound was needed to keep the Elektric Band interesting and vital for its leader.

"I found I really wanted to hear just an electric guitar sound, not a synthesized guitar sound, and not just an acoustic drum set, but a *small* acoustic drum set," Corea goes on. "There are different tastes and styles of music, and I just honed mine up a bit and brought in some elements that feel very comfortable to me. For instance, the way I like to play keyboards and piano, I need a certain lightness in the rhythm section, and therefore a small kit of drums really works."

"And I found a young, vibrant guy in Gary Novak, who likes to play a small kit of drums without electronics. He doesn't consider it some kind of hysterical chore to play jazz rhythms; which has always been part of the groove I like."

Corea said he sought out a fresh corps when he discerned that Gambale, Patitucci, and Weckl—all of whom had been with his Elektric Band for many years—were devoting more and more time to their own proj-

ects. "It became obvious that Frank, John, and Dave were going to go off and start their own bands, so I found new guys," Corea says simply.

**B**eing an L.A. resident since 1976, when he and Moran moved from an apartment in New York City to their present home, Corea looked locally for his replacement personnel, and there they were.

"Each guy has a different how-did-I-find-him story," says Corea. "I'd heard Mike Miller on record, and I'd liked what I heard, and my friends kept telling me, 'This guy's good.' So he came down and sat in at a rehearsal with the band, and I liked him a lot."

Novak, the son of Chicago pianist Larry Novak, first piqued Corea's interest during a live performance. "I had heard him play once, outdoors somewhere with Brandon Fields, and really dug it, remembered it," Corea says, smiling. "He's got some Weckl licks, but he's got his own way of swinging and playing. His name kept coming up, and I heard him again on a tape, and I thought, 'This could work out.' So I brought him down to a rented rehearsal hall, set up the piano, had Jimmy Earl come by, and we played all afternoon."

Earl filled in for Patitucci on Corea's last world tour with the Elektric Band, so he was a natural to take the bass slot in the new band. "Jimmy came in on that tour and played great," Corea says. "So, when I started to put the new band together, I played with Jimmy and Gary to see how they would work. The chemistry was kind of instant. Jimmy gets a really unique sound. He's got an open mind, musically, and he's always ready to try something. I just found in him a good partner to experiment with."

Earl, Miller, and Novak are all youthful veterans of the Los Angeles studio music scene who have recorded or performed with many of the top contemporary jazz bands.

It's clear from listening to *Paint The World*, recorded this past spring, that Corea's intuition for selecting musicians remains as keen as ever. There's a liveliness and open flavor to the recording. Corea certainly feels that way. "What I like is that it went down real easy, there was no effort in making it, and it's exactly what we played," he says.

*No overdubs?*

"None," Corea says adamantly. "I said I wanted to capture the sparkle that we got in the rehearsal room and put it down, because I'm not gonna produce something different than what it sounds like."

Corea prepped his partners for the recording session by sending out charts way ahead of time, and then running down those arrangements, sometimes in simple one-on-



Gary Novak (far left), Eric Marienthal, Corea, Jimmy Earl, and Mike Miller

one rehearsals. "Then the whole band got together for two or three days, playing a few hours each day," he says. "I didn't want to overrehearse it. It's interesting how detrimental rehearsals can be. Then when we went in the studio, I prepared everybody for the fact that we weren't going to labor at this, so don't head toward thinking that you can change anything you're gonna now do."

This process allowed Corea and his colleagues to make *Paint The World* by using only first-takes.

"If you don't know the music and you're using a second-take to learn it, then you shouldn't be in the recording studio, you should be at a rehearsal hall," he begins. "If you know the music and you're using the second-take to do something better, you're invalidating yourself. If you continue that concept, then you might as well keep doing it for 14 years, and then you really get good, and then you record that."

Corea said the Elektric Band II will keep him and his cohorts busy until the fall of '94, when he begins a tour with his new version

of the Akoustic Band. Now called the Quartet, the acoustic unit includes Novak, Patitucci, and saxophonist Bob Berg.

On yet another front, Corea and his manager, Ron Moss, founded Stretch Records last year, a label distributed by GRP that's devoted to new projects as well as reissues of previously issued albums, most of which were recorded when Corea was signed to Warner Bros. Of his involvement in Stretch, Corea says, "My opinion is asked and I give my opinion on all things musical." For instance, the pianist is currently planning to release a quartet date with saxman Joe Henderson, bassist Gary Peacock, and drummer Roy Haynes that was recorded at the 1981 Montreux Jazz Festival. "I listened to the quality of the tape, and it's a rough mix that wasn't so great, but we can remix it, and get a great tape out of it," he says. "Then I suggested that we send Roy, Joe, and Gary tapes of it and see if they think it's okay to put this record out. So, that's kind of my way of operating the company." Corea has also appeared on several Stretch albums, including those by Bob Berg and Eddie Gomez.

As for the Elektric Band II, its tour includes 70 dates in the U.S., then a break for the December holidays, and then Europe (where he'll play Germany, but not the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, where he's been denied performances due to his membership in the Church of Scientology—see "News" Oct. '93). Next, the band heads for the Far East, and in the spring, to Australia, followed by South America.

"Paint the world, man!" Corea says with a hearty laugh. "That's it, that's the game."

DB

## EQUIPMENT

Corea has cut back to just three keyboards for the current band. One of these is the Fender Rhodes Stage 73 MIDI electric piano, a prototype model of which there are only two (the other is owned by keyboardist John Novello). The Rhodes "has a timbre that allows the other timbres of the instruments in the band to fit better," he says, "and I find myself playing more sparsely on it. I use it more as an accompanying instrument."

For the first time in a few years, Corea is again playing the Yamaha grand piano with the Elektric Band II. His third instrument is a Yamaha SY-99 keyboard synthesizer. Corea also plays the Yamaha KX5 portable MIDI controller, which looks like a keyboard but makes no sound unless patched into a synthesizer.

For synthesizers, Corea utilizes the Studio Elec-

tronics MIDIMOog and the Roland D-550. For MIDI units, he employs the Gulbransen KS20 (for the Rhodes) and a Forte Music "Mentor" MIDI processor for the other instruments. Corea gets his power from a Tubeworks "Blue Tube" preamp (for the Rhodes and KX5) and a Walter Woods power amp.

Other miscellaneous equipment: a Yamaha TX802 FM tone generator, a Gambatte digital wire system (for the KX5), an Akai S1100 digital sampler hooked to a PS Systems 44 megabyte disc drive, a Lexicon PCM 70 digital effects processor, and a Studiomaster Proline 16-2R studio mixer.

Corea's equipment setup was designed and installed by his musical production assistant, Eric Seijo.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(For additional listings, see DB Feb '91)

### as a leader

PAINT THE WORLD—GRP GRD-9731  
BENEATH THE MASK—GRP GRD-9649  
INSIDE OUT—GRP GRD-9601  
TAP STEP—Stretch 1109  
TOUCHSTONE—Stretch 1104  
THREE QUARTETS—Stretch 1103

THE BEST OF—Blue Note 89282  
PLAY—Blue Note 95477 (with McCoy McFerrin)

### as a sideman

ENTER THE SPIRIT—Stretch 1105 (Bob Berg)  
NEXT FUTURE—Stretch 1106 (Eddie Gomez)  
MIRRORMIRROR—Verve 314 519 092-2 (Joe Henderson)



LISA SEIFERT

# Jazz Artists, Jazz Chroniclers

ARTHUR TAYLOR & MILT HINTON

By Michael Bourne

**“W**ere chroniclers,” said Arthur Taylor, laughing with Milt Hinton. “We were wondering why you wanted to talk to us together. I said it’s not just the music.”

They’ve always been much more than musicians.

Milt Hinton is one of the masters of the bass and a musical godfather to bass players around the world. He grew up in Chicago and worked with Freddie Keppard and Eddie South, among others, before joining Cab Calloway’s band in 1951, a whole new career happened when Jackie Gleason opened the doors to the New York studios. Hinton played on Gleason’s *Music For Lovers Only* album series, and ever since, when not gigging with the greats, especially with Louis Armstrong in the ‘50s, he’s recorded with virtually everyone in jazz and beyond: Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand, Percy Faith, Quincy Jones, Branford Marsalis, you name it.

But there’s more to the Judge, as he’s known to friends and fans. Milt Hinton is a

photographer whose intimate glimpses of musicians on the road, in the studios, and just being themselves for more than 50 years have become a candid history of jazz. *Bass Line*, written with David Berger and published by Temple University Press in 1988, is Hinton’s memoir of a jazz life in words and photos. *Over Time*, collected with David Berger and Holly Maxson and published by Pomegranate Artbooks in 1991, offers a gallery of jazz portraits from Louis Armstrong to Lester Young. He’s also involved himself with oral-history projects, including conducting about a dozen extensive interviews with Teddy Wilson, Quentin Jackson, Danny Barker, Jo Jones, and others between the early ‘70s and early ‘80s on grants from the NEA. Hinton’s interviews are now collected at the Institute for Jazz Studies at Rutgers—and Hinton’s home in St. Alban’s, Queens, full of photos, recordings, writings, and other memorabilia, is in itself a virtual archive of American music.

Arthur Taylor is a drummer’s drummer. He grew up in New York alongside Sonny Rollins, Jackie McLean, Kenny Drew, and others of the second generation of bebop. In

the ‘50s and ‘60s, he recorded on more than 200 albums (especially for Prestige), among them classics of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Red Garland, Gene Ammons, and many more, including the epochal *Giant Steps* and *Miles Ahead* sessions. He settled in Europe in the early ‘60s but returned to the United States in the early ‘80s; in recent years he’s fronted a band of young musicians, Taylor’s Wailers, with bassist Tyler Mitchell, pianist Jacky Terrasson, and saxophonists Abraham Burton and Willie Williams, featured on *Wailin’ At The Vanguard* (see “Reviews” Nov. ‘93).

But there’s much more to Arthur Taylor. A.T. is also a unique historian whose very personal interviews with fellow musicians began out of curiosity but became a vocation. Taylor’s collection of musician-to-musician interviews, *Notes And Tones*, first published in Belgium in 1977 and now expanded and reprinted by Da Capo Press, offers the insights and musings of 29 musicians, including Miles Davis and fellow drummers Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, and Kenny Clarke, all of them talking about music, and much more.



**MICHAEL BOURNE:** *Before every interview, I always wonder whether the musicians will talk, but you're both great talkers and great listeners.*

**ARTHUR TAYLOR:** I've always admired Milt Hinton as a musician, as a person, as a gentleman. But when I saw his first book, I flipped. This was something else. I said, "Where does this man find the *time*?" Being such a great musician, he's in demand; and with the schedule he keeps, I put it to you, how do you do it?

**MILT HINTON:** I like doing it. I've been doing this for years, taping all these wonderful musicians who preceded me, and I'm still doing it with young people today, taping them. I have hours of Eubie Blake, Perry Bradford, hours of guys nobody thought to talk to. The stories are unbelievable. I've kept these tapes, and I'm hoping someday to do something with them.

I was on the jazz panel of the National Endowment for the Arts, and at that time they were giving \$100,000 to one ballet company but only \$20,000 to all of jazz. Willis Conover and I asked the government to let us make some oral-history tapes with some of these older guys, let them tell the stories; and finally they let us do a few. I was fortunate to get the opportunity to interview Jo Jones.

**AT:** I had that opportunity, too.

**MH:** I loved Jo Jones. We loved to play together. They wanted five one-hour tapes. I took him to my house, set up the brandy and beer, sat him down and had three tape recorders going. I found out things I don't think anybody really knew about him. I found out nobody ever asked him about his childhood. Everybody started like Jo Jones was born in Basie's band. He resented that.

**AT:** He told me about his early career when he was dancing.

**MH:** I sent 13 one-hour tapes to the Library of Congress. I got a citation from the Smithsonian Institution for that. Jo wanted me to do a book for him, but I didn't have the time.

**AT:** I interviewed Jo Jones when I was living in Paris. I've done maybe 250 interviews, and Jo Jones was one of the most striking. I'm reluctant to put it out. He was so rough. He broke down when he was talking about all the things they'd done to Prez [Lester Young] in the army. He was hysterical. It was frightening.

**MB:** *You both confirm something that's obvious from reading Notes And Tones, that when musicians talk to musicians they'll say things they won't say to journalists.*

**AT:** That's right.

**MH:** That is true.

**MB:** *Notes And Tones isn't so much interviews as conversations between friends.*

**AT:** It's things I want to know. If I'm talking with Milt Hinton, I want to find out things I don't know.



*"None of my children are involved in music. . . . I've been collecting photos and books and writings, I've got tons of it, and they're not interested."*

—Milt Hinton

**MB:** *Judge, in his memoirs, says he doesn't consider himself an artist as a photographer, but anyone who looks at his photos knows he's an artist.*

**AT:** I don't consider myself an artist, either.

**MB:** *But do you consider yourself a journalist?*

**AT:** I don't consider myself a journalist, either. I play music for my personal enjoyment. I'm very selfish. I hope you like it, but if you don't like it, that's not my problem. I play it for the pleasure I get from it, and I play it because I knew I didn't have to get up in the morning and go to work. I could sleep late, and you can go to the front of the line if somebody likes you, and beautiful women are available and everything like that. It wasn't like I had this big love for music.

**MB:** *And your book?*

**AT:** It was for my own amusement.

**MB:** *Yes, but even if your music and your book are for yourself, you let it out.*

**AT:** I let *some* of it out. I haven't let all of it out. And the reaction I get from that book is very interesting. I get some rough reaction.

**MB:** *Like what? And what did you expect?*

**AT:** I didn't expect a reaction. I thought, if I ask you a question and tape it and edit it and put it in a book, then what you say is your problem. But then I found out that I'm the author, so I'm responsible for anything in that book. I went to Sweden to do a gig, and I'm playing the drums, and about 15 women are demonstrating against me because of something in my book. Someone in the book is talking about Swedish women and things we used to do when we were very young men, and we'd go to Sweden—and they became furious about it! That's just one example.

**MH:** I've got to tell you something. None of my children are involved in music. They're wonderful people and grew up beautifully, but I don't think they care one bit about what I've done. They won't like seeing this in an article, but I've been collecting photos and books and writings, I've got tons of it, and they're not interested. I've said to a few of my friends, like David Berger—he's like my son—if anything happens to me, don't let nobody throw this stuff out because nobody knows what I've got here. I have all these hours of tapes, some wonderful stories.

**MB:** *Your generation were the fathers to Art's generation, and now in Art's band are another generation. There've been many changes over the years, but what have you observed that's always true?*

**MH:** It's what Shakespeare said: "To thine own self be true!" I teach that to my students. Only you know that you don't know. If you come to me, you must let me know what you don't know. If you tell me you know but you don't know, you're only beating yourself up.

**AT:** The first thing you've got to have is fine manners.

**MH:** Amen!

**AT:** That puts you above all the ugly stuff.

**MH:** Discipline!

**AT:** You keep yourself clean. You educate yourself. And be humble. And people will love you. My people are from Jamaica, and the people of Jamaica are known for fine manners. We were in Jamaica for a festival, and the biggest compliment I got was, "What a well-mannered group of young men!" That meant more to me than them saying it was the greatest music. If you play great music, it doesn't mean you can be a prick. That's what I try to pass on.

**MH:** Music is an auditory art. We go by *sound*. Not who your daddy was. Not your ethnicity. B-flat is the same in Japan as it is here. We can't speak the same language but we can play together. I praise God every day of my life that God let me be involved in music. This is where I get more freedom,



MITCHELL SEIDEL

*"I don't consider myself a journalist. I play music for my personal enjoyment. I hope you like it. But if you don't, that's not my problem."  
—Arthur Taylor*



more respect, more dignity from the world. This is what music means to me. If you show these kids trust, they'll trust you. If you show them dignity and respect, they'll show you. We see that in the Mar-salises, in Jon Faddis, in the kids who've come up. I tell kids if you want me to help

you, come over to my house. I'll be glad to help you. There's no charge, but don't waste my time. They keep me alive. **MB:** *If musicians say things to you they won't say to journalists, what's surprised you that someone's said?* **AT:** It's happened so many times. Sonny Rollins and I were kids together. I've admired him since we were very young. I asked him one of my regular questions:

"Where do you prefer to play? In clubs? In concerts? On records?" He said he prefers playing in his dressing room! Because he sweats on stage and he can't change his shirt!

**MH:** It's like you said before—you play for you! If the people like it, okay. I can take a solo and miss a third of the stuff I intended to play, and I escaped some way and I get a great big hand! I say, "What do they know? They don't play bass!" I've never walked off a record date in my life that I wished I couldn't have another take and make it better.

**MB:** *I've heard musicians say that as much as they dislike critics putting down what they thought was good, they dislike critics praising what they thought was not good.*

**AT:** That's worse.

**MB:** *What questions do critics ask that you hate answering?*

**AT:** Everywhere I go they're going to ask me about *Giant Steps*. It drives me crazy! I tell them I made better records than that with Coltrane. Not that it's not fine, not good work. But even musicians drive me crazy with that. "Wow, man, you played on *Giant Steps*!" So what? I played with Joe Blow, too, and that was fun.

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**MB:** Do your photos and books mean as much to you as the music?

**MH:** I think so.

**AT:** I can take somebody saying I sound like crap on a record, whether I agree or not. But if somebody says anything about my book, I'm ready for some *action!* I'm as proud of this book as any record I've made.

**MB:** Will there be a second volume?

**AT:** Eventually. I started doing interviews on WKCR in 1984. I'm thinking about doing a volume of those interviews. I take it a little further, people like Gil Noble, Rudy Van Gelder, Judge Bruce Wright, the Reverend Butts, not musicians but how they relate to the music. I've got films also. I wanted to make a film originally, but I couldn't afford it, and a book was a cheap way out.

**MH:** There's more to come, believe me. I've been teaching at a couple of universities, and I've been trying to get them to put together something about jazz musicians. Let the music department write it. Let the dance department choreograph it. Let the drama department act it. One of these days we'll get it together, and then everyone will know what a wonderful world this is we live in. 'Cause we've got the *stories!* **DB**

## EQUIPMENT

Milt Hinton owns "an awful lot" of basses and loans basses to promising students. He usually plays either of two basses. When he's on the road, he plays an 18th-century bass given to him 50 years ago by Henry C. Lytton, a prominent Chicago businessman and amateur bassist. When he's in the studio, he plays a rare bass made in 1740 by Matteo Grofelle, the Stradivarius of basses, that he bought in 1936 through teacher/technician Jago Peternella with a loan from Cab Calloway.

Arthur Taylor plays Sonor drums, one set made in Germany in 1938, another set that travels. He also owns a set of Gretsch drums, a gift from Max Roach. He plays K. Zildjian cymbals: a 20-inch sizzle, 18-inch crash ride, and a 14-inch hi-hat. "They're the same cymbals I used on *Giant Steps*. I keep my stuff a long time." A.T. uses Remo heads, and plays with brushes and 747 medium sticks by Pro-Mark. "Sonor gave me bushels and bushels of them."

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### Milt Hinton

(For additional listings, see **DB** May '90.)

*OLD MAN TIME*—Chiaroscuro CR(D) 310

*BACK TO BASICS*—Progressive PCD 7084

with others

*MEMORIES OF YOU*—Contemporary CCD 14066-2 (Terry Gibbs/Buddy DeFranco/Herb Ellis)

*KINGS OF SWING*—Contemporary CCD 14067-2 (Gibbs/DeFranco/Ellis)

*LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE*—Telarc CD-83308 (Lionel Hampton)

*JUST JAZZ*—Telarc CD-83313 (Lionel Hampton)

*TRIO JEEPY*—Columbia CK 44199 (Brantford Marsalis)

*THE YOU AND ME THAT USED TO BE*—RCA/Bluebird 6460-2-RB (Jimmy Rushing)

*LAST OF THE WHOREHOUSE PIANO PLAYERS*—Chiaroscuro CR(D) 306 (Ralph Sutton, Jay McShann)

### Arthur Taylor

as a leader

*WAILIN' AT THE VANGUARD*—Verve 314 519 671 2

*A T.S. DELIGHT*—Blue Note CDP 7 84047

*TAYLOR'S WAILERS*—Fantasy/OJC-094-2

*MR. A.T.*—enja R2 79677

with others

*BOSS TENOR*—Fantasy/OJC-297-2 (Gene Ammons)

*ALL DAY LONG*—Fantasy/OJC-456-2 (Donald Byrd, Kenny Burrell)

*TRANSING IN*—Fantasy/OJC-189-2 (John Coltrane)

*SOULTRANE*—Fantasy/OJC-021-2 (John Coltrane)

*GIANT STEPS*—Atlantic 1311-2 (John Coltrane)

*MILES AHEAD*—Columbia CK 40784 (Miles Davis)

*MILT & MILES*—Fantasy/OJC-012-2 (Miles Davis, Milt Jackson)

*GROOVY*—Fantasy/OJC-061-2 (Red Garland)

*SOUL JUNCTION*—Fantasy/OJC-481-2 (Red Garland)

*ONE FLIGHT UP*—Blue Note B21Y-84176 (Dexter Gordon)

*A DAY IN COPENHAGEN*—MPS 821 288-2 (Dexter Gordon)

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Angel Records: Does the work on *WHAT HEADPHONES?* represent a change in direction for you?

André Previn: In a sense. Jazz is an enduring love of mine, and I've always come back to it. But each time I approach it with a bit of a different perspective.

AR: So what was it that prompted this endeavor?

Previn: I was made aware of the Antioch Baptist Church Choir by a good friend of my family's, who knew I loved gospel singing. She took me to a service, and I was knocked out by the joyous, fervent, and beautiful sounds. I was instantly overcome with the wish to play and record with them.

AR: What other musicians, besides the choir, appear on *WHAT HEADPHONES?*

Previn: I was joined in the studio by good friends and quintessential jazz musicians Ray Brown and Mundell Lowe on bass and guitar, Grady Tate on drums, and a horn section led by Warren



Vache on trumpet.

AR: How did the album's title come about?

Previn: I've never liked wearing headphones while recording, even though it is a very prevalent habit nowadays. So we refused the headphones and just played, free-wheeling and unencumbered, the way we always used to.

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## Ruth Brown

**THE SONGS OF MY LIFE**—Fantasy 9665-2: *SONGS OF MY LIFE; I'VE GOT THE WORLD ON A STRING; WHILE WE'RE YOUNG; GOD BLESS THE CHILD; IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU; TEARS IN HEAVEN; STORMY WEATHER; THEY SAY; I WONDER WHERE OUR LOVE HAS GONE; I KNOW WHY; CAN'T HELP LOVIN' THAT MAN; I'LL BE SEEING YOU.* (70:18 minutes)

**Personnel:** Brown, vocals; Rodney Jones, acoustic guitar; C.I. Williams, alto sax (2,10); Robert Kenmotsu, flute (8), tenor sax (9,11); Bobby Forrester, Hammond B-3 organ (1,6,8-10); Mike Renzi (2-5,7,12), Frank Owens (8,9), piano; Mark Sherman, vibes (2-5,7,8), piano (1,6); William Galison, harmonica (1,6,7); Rufus Reid, acoustic bass; Akira Tana, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

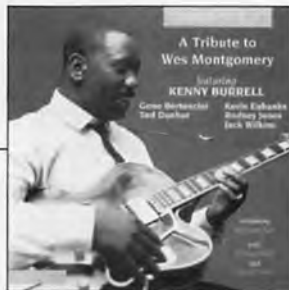
Ruth Brown's latest captures her spirit of sincerity better than any of her recordings since a long-ago meeting with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis. In her readings of gentle songs she treasures, the 65-year-old singer uses her deep contralto to tell of the peace of mind she's achieved after decades in the limelight or shadows of popular attention.

"It Could Happen To You" is an affecting ballad of self-possession, tender but tough-minded, introspective without being wishy-washy—even the spaces Brown leaves between phrases are supercharged with meaning. She and her favorite altman, C.I. Williams, inform "I Know Why" with a romantic serenity that makes provision for heartbreak and pain. Treatments of "God Bless The Child" and the little-known "They Say" honor the contemplative art of Billie Holiday, while "Stormy Weather" addresses another vocalist she holds dear to her heart: Lena Horne. These and other standards, all outfitted with courtly grace by arranger Rodney Jones (who also plays guitar, conducts, and produces), belong to her lifeblood, with only the emotional genuineness

pumped into Eric Clapton's mawkish "Tears In Heaven" sounding strained. She benefits everywhere from simpatico accompaniment.

Take a well-deserved bow, Ms. B.

—Frank-John Hadley



## Project G-7

**TRIBUTE TO WES MONTGOMERY, VOLS. 1 & 2**—Evidence 22049-2/22051-2: *IMPRESSIONS; REMEMBERING WES; GROOVE YARD; CANADIAN SUNSET; FRIED PIES; ROAD SONG; COME RAIN OR COME SHINE; SERENA; YESTERDAYS.* (Vol. 1: 51:59) *MORE BLUES FOR WES; BOCK TO BOCK; FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE; MONTGOMERY BLUE; FINGER PICKIN'; NEVER AGAIN; POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS; SAMBA WES; WEST COAST BLUES/THREE QUARTERS OF THE HOUSE.* (Vol. 2: 47:34)

**Personnel:** Kenny Burrell, Gene Bertoncini, Ted Dunbar, Kevin Eubanks, Rodney Jones, Jack Wilkins, William Ash, guitars; Rufus Reid, bass; Akira Tana, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Seven guitarists and rhythm section come together to pay tribute to Wes. The results are inspired and, of course, swinging. Kenny Burrell gets top billing here out of respect, but all the players are on equal footing with the elder statesman in this guitar gathering that cuts across three generations.

Each player is given a showcase on a tune that Wes had previously cut in his brilliant, if brief, 10-year recording career. The individual personalities emerge, then the whole gang is brought together for one rousing, harmonized finale. Kevin Eubanks comes across as the mighty burner on Coltrane's "Impressions" (recorded by Wes in 1965 on the Verve *Willow Weep For Me* album), while Rodney Jones explores lush, chordal melodies on his own pensive ballad, "Serena." Gene Bertoncini's velvety, swinging touch on nylon-string acoustic sets him apart from the pack on "Groove Yard" (from Wes' 1961 Riverside album, *The Montgomery Brothers*) and on his eloquent original, "Samba Wes."

Jack Wilkins, another warm-toned speed merchant with soul, flaunts some fluid, sweeping techniques on an uptempo "Come Rain Or Come Shine" (from 1962's *Full House*, Riverside), then provides one of the highpoints of Vol. 2 with a beautifully orchestrated solo-guitar performance on "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" (from 1960's *The Incredible Guitar Of Wes Montgomery*, Riverside). The 22-year-old newcomer William Ash takes the octave route on Wes' "Road Song" (from 1968's *Road Song*, A&M) and pulls off some impressive block chording on a swinging "Finger Pickin'." Unsung guitar hero and teacher Ted Dunbar

trades licks with Eubanks on Wes' hip blues, "Fried Pies" (from 1963's *Boss Guitar*, Riverside), and lays down some slick thumb work on his bossa tribute, "Never Again."

Burrell pays tribute to Wes with two originals, the melancholy ballad "Remembering Wes" and the relaxed, grooving "More Blues For Wes." The two ensemble pieces—skillfully arranged renditions of "Yesterdays" and "West Coast Blues"—are basically expanded versions of Burrell's recent work with his three-axe Jazz Guitar Band.

With a number of Wes tributes currently on the market, this one stands out as the most versatile and satisfying project to date. (Note: Vols. 1 and 2 are sold separately.)

—Bill Milkowski



## Jazz Futures

**LIVE IN CONCERT**—Novus 63158-2: *MODE FOR JOHN; STERLING SYLVIA; BLUE MOON; PICADILLY SQUARE; BEWITCHED, BOTHERED AND BEWILDERED; STARDUST; MEDGAR EVERS BLUES; YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS; PUBLIC EYE.* (57:06)

**Personnel:** Marlon Jordan, Roy Hargrove, trumpets; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone; Tim Warfield, tenor saxophone; Benny Green, piano; Carl Allen, drums; Christian McBride, bass; Mark Whitfield, guitar.

★ ★ ★ ★

Ever turn on a disc by a supposedly hot young jazz musician, get hit with a blast of icy studio air, and turn off the CD player wondering what all the fuss was about? This sizzling disc featuring heavily promoted youngbloods is another story altogether.

The live settings make all the difference in this collection, which is compiled from performances recorded at the JVC Newport Jazz Festival and the Festival de Jazz de Vitoria in Gasteiz, Spain, in 1991. You can sense the players pushing each other, with heated results that don't often happen in the cool light of the studio.

This octet takes a mainstream acoustic approach passed down through mentors like Art Blakey and Betty Carter. Members of the group also carry on the tradition of writing their own tunes: Chris McBride's strutting "Sterling Sylvia," Carl Allen's loopyly striding "Picadilly Square," Mark Whitfield's "Medgar Evers Blues," and Roy Hargrove's Miles groove, "Public Eye."

Whether these musicians play old tunes or new ones, their tight ensemble has the effect of multiplying each player's considerable talents. Considering how good they sounded in the summer of 1991, it makes you wonder

how they'd sound reunited today.

—Elaine Guregian



## Richie Cole

**PROFILE**—Heads Up 3022: *PRESIDENTIAL SAX; PAULO; STREET OF DREAMS; ONE FOR MONTEREY; SARAH; VOLARE; WE BELONG TOGETHER; FESTIVAL DE SAMBA; A FOREIGN AFFAIR; LI'L DARLIN'; PARK & RIDE.* (53:08)

**Personnel:** Cole, alto saxophone; Henry Johnson, guitar; Dick Hindman, piano; Rich Kuhns, synthesizer, piano (11); Frank Passantino (1,6,10), Seward McCain (2-5,7-9,11), bass; Scott Morris, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

In the liner notes, Cole alludes to personal

problems that kept him—voluntarily—out of the recording studios for the last four years. Judging by his return album, he may have spent the time listening to Earl Bostic and Jimmy Dorsey. In any event, he has lost none of his cheery sound and agreeable boppish verve.

Although not cutting-edge stuff—what is these days?—these performances check in with a fair amount of melodic logic and rhythmic vitality. There's a bit of airplay jazz on producer Carroll Coates' "Park & Ride," but not enough to spoil an otherwise credible album. Cole has always seemed like Phil Woods with a smile, and here he smiles even more with a crowd-pleasing romantic bent reminiscent of Bostic and Dorsey, especially on the ballads. I am reminded of innumerable dance gigs by his broad expression on "Street Of Dreams," Coates' "Sarah," and Hindman's "We Belong Together." I do not mean this facetiously—those were good days. "Volare," from that same era, shows some of that familiar Richie Cole humor as it ping-pongs between swing and Latin.

Cole's sidemen are all up to par. Hindman certainly equals today's bright, driving norm, and Johnson's Wes Montgomery-influenced approach is heartwarming. Let's hear it for the melody, a shot of romance, and the return of Richie Cole. —Owen Cordle



## American Jazz Philharmonic

**AMERICAN JAZZ PHILHARMONIC**—GRP GRD-9730: *OPEN ME FIRST; NOSTALGICO; AFTERTHOUGHTS: PARTS I, II, III; SYMPHONIC DANCES: 1ST, 2ND, 3RD MOVEMENTS.* (56:07)

**Personnel:** Jack Elliott, conductor; with 58-piece orchestra; principal soloists: Phil Woods, alto saxophone; Ray Brown, bass.

★ ★ ★

The American Jazz Philharmonic, which is in the business of that eternal "experiment in modern music," symphonic jazz, offers four works here, most relatively contemporary but none guilty of any great insurrectionary mischief.

# RAMSEY LEWIS

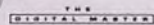
## sky islands

On the incredible follow-up to his GRP debut, *Ivory Pyramid*, Ramsey Lewis is reunited with Maurice White in a special co-production of "Who Are You?". *Sky Islands* also features a rendition of "Come Back To Me" as well as a medley of Ramsey's hits "Hang on Sloopy," *The In Crowd*, *Wade In The Water*".

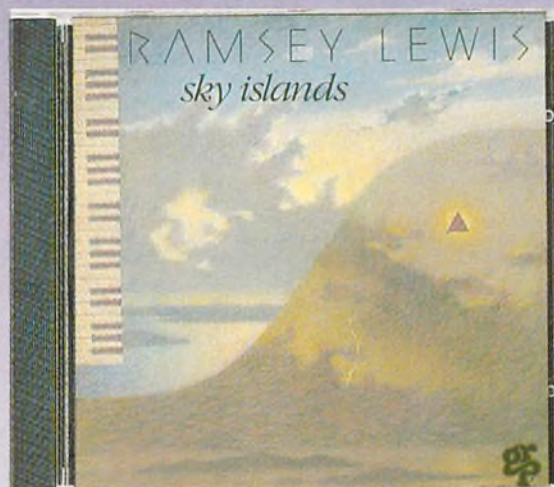
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"Open Me First," by John Clayton, has the feel of a film score from its handsome fanfare forward, and tries hardest to embody the colors of big-band music. "Nostalgico," written for Phil Woods by Manny Albam in 1981, succeeds where so many hybrids of this sort seem to fail, in that it manages to integrate the soloist with the work, which holds its own admirably against Woods' outstanding solo performance. Ray Brown's "Afterthoughts" (with orchestration by Dick Hazard and Ed Karam) is simple and

quietly lush with a lovely theme set on a soft pillow of strings. By its nature, though, a pizzicato bass—even Brown's—is a weak voice in which to entrust a principle theme. It tends to get lost in the instrument's translucence. Moreover, the three-part composition as a whole, though pretty and not pretentious, is little more than a showcase for the soloist.

Claus Ogerman's "Symphonic Dances," from 1971, is the longest (about 23 minutes), the oldest, the most somber, and surely the

most substantial of the works. It has abundantly dark textures and moods and even a sense of architecture. But it also has absolutely nothing to do with jazz. This is perfectly alright, of course, except that it alerts us to the legion of conundrums borne by any orchestra that calls itself a jazz philharmonic. It's an unnecessarily narrow mandate for an orchestra that's really out there to provide a home to works that have no home.  
—John McDonough

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### Junior Wells

**BETTER OFF WITH THE BLUES**—Telarc 83354: *CRY FOR ME BABY; DO A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF; OH, PRETTY WOMAN; GOIN' HOME; WAITIN' ON ICE; BETTER OFF WITH THE BLUES; THE TRAIN; TODAY I STARTED LOVING YOU AGAIN; HONEST I DO; MESSIN' WITH THE KID.* (59:55)  
**Personnel:** Wells, vocals, harmonica; Lucky Peterson, organ, piano; Buddy Guy (1,4,10), Rico McFarland (2,3,5-10), guitar; Jack Cassidy, trumpet (3,5,7,8,10); David Stahlberg, trombone (3,5,7,8,10); Steven Finkle, tenor sax (2,3,5,7,8,10); Johnny B. Gayden (1,4), Noel Neal (2,3,5-10), bass; Paul Cotton, percussion (2); Brian Jones (2,3,5-10), Steve McCray (1,4), drums; Jacqueline Johnson, Jaquelyn Reddick, background vocals (2,8).

★★ 1/2

### Junior Wells With Buddy Guy

**PLEADING THE BLUES**—Evidence 26035-2: *PLEADING THE BLUES; IT HURTS ME TOO; CUT OUT THE LIGHTS; QUIET TEASING MY BABY; I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU; TAKE YOUR TIME BABY; I SMELL SOMETHING.* (48:30)  
**Personnel:** Wells, vocals, harmonica; Buddy Guy, lead guitar; Phil Guy, rhythm guitar; J.W. Williams, bass; Ray Allison, drums.

★★★★

His erstwhile sidekick Buddy Guy has been getting all the attention lately, but Junior Wells is arguably the more distinctive stylist and certainly the more charismatic showman of the two. He's also been more consistent, but you'd never know it from his latest recording, *Better Off With The Blues*, where he struggles to maintain his identity on crossover material performed by a generic-sounding studio band. Wells has tried his hand at James Brown-style funk before, but his gruff rendition of Merle Haggard's "Today I Started Loving You Again" may be his first—and, one hopes, last—stab at country crooning. There are also half-baked attempts at New Orleans and Memphis soul, uncomfortable covers of Albert King and Jimmy Reed tunes, and Delbert McClinton's painfully philosophical title track. Wells is more

at home on the three songs—two old hits and a recent original—where he's accompanied by Guy; but even here, Buddy holds back, and the band can't quite find the groove.

By contrast, *Pleading With The Blues*, a 1979 French session now released in the U.S. for the first time, finds Junior and Buddy on familiar and wholly congenial turf, recapturing the *Hoodoo Man Blues* sound that launched them out of the ghetto. Wells' harp, lost in *Better Off's* horn-and-guitar clutter, shines here amid the sparse, sensitive accompaniment of Buddy's crack band, which features Guy's brother Phil and ace blues drummer Ray Allison. Buddy himself has seldom played better, carting and teasing around and through Junior's vocal lines with exquisite subtlety and taste. The glove-tight support frees Wells to be his downhome self, moaning and chortling through a set of mostly original material. And when he does choose to get funky, on "Cut Out The Lights" and "I Smell Something," the band spurs him on instead of drowning him out.

—Larry Birnbaum



## Harold McKinney & Wendell Harrison

**SOMETHING FOR POPS**—WenHa/Rebirth WCD 200: *CHROMA II; LIKE, WHAT IS THIS?; RAMPART STREET; FESTIVITIES; ARMSTRONG PARK; THREES AND FOURS; STITCH IN TIME; SIR OLIVER; POPS.* (57:13)

**Personnel:** McKinney, piano, vocals (7); Harrison, clarinet (2-4,7-9), tenor saxophone (5).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Two Detroit-based veterans pay graceful tribute to the New Orleans sound. Wendell Harrison's career took off when he switched from saxophone to clarinet in the late '70s. Recipient of a 1993 Arts Midwest Jazz Masters Award (McKinney received one in '90), Harrison translates bop saxophone influences into a distinctive, expressive clarinet voice. Harrison's compositions "Pops" and "Armstrong Park" are highlights, with Harrison soaring into his instruments' upper ranges. "Armstrong Park" pleads for Harrison to feature tenor sax more often.

Pianist Harold McKinney is a strident player with romantic leanings and a strong left. His solo pieces favor ringing chords, and reflect a range of New Orleans piano styles. McKinney's presence can constrain Harrison, requiring finesse instead of encouraging exploration. In all, a playful, exuberant duet that captures the swing of early jazz.

—Jon Andreus

## 360° Experience (I)

by John Corbett

In the 1980s, Italian producer Giovanni Bonandrini's twin labels, Black Saint and Soul Note, emerged as two of the most important independent outlets for fresh musical ideas in jazz. Through the sweets and sour of U.S. distribution deals, they have continued

unabated into the '90s. With a full spectrum of styles from hardwood mainstream to out-on-a-limb vanguard, hardly a branch of the jazz jungle is left un-forested in the Black Saint/Soul Note's 360° experience.

On the inside track, pianist **Michael Coch-rane** has a solid Soul Note disc, *Song Of Change* (121251; 65:28; ★★), with bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer Alan Nelson. Featuring four Cochrane originals and cheery, uptempo takes on standards like "Autumn Leaves," "On Green Dolphin Street," and "Pre-



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Jimmy Knepper: playing and conducting

lude To A Kiss," it's at once refreshing and somewhat unmemorable. One bum note: Cochrane's sleek reading of "Bemsha Swing" irons all of Monk's neat wrinkles out of the tune. A single blowing date at the Jazz Action Center in Nuremberg, Germany, back in 1988, has yielded two discs of *Tenor Tribute*, which link **Arnett Cobb**, **Jimmy Heath**, and **Joe Henderson** in an inter-generational tenor-titan triumvirate. A very young Benny Green is on hand at the keys, alongside bassist Walter Schmocker and drummer Doug Hammond. *Volume One* (Soul Note 121184; 43:33: ★★) is nudged out by the flute-free *Volume Two* (Soul Note 121194; 40:09: ★★★½), though on both you can clearly hear the contrast and continuity between Cobb's roughhewn Texas sound, Heath's smoother, soulful Philly tone, and Henderson's unique post-Trane take. The tunes come from dead-center in the standards bag, most of them associated with other great tenormen. The first volume includes Cobb's "Smooth Sailing," with "Steeple Chase," "Lester Leaps In," "When Sunny Gets Blue," "I Got Rhythm," and a ballad medley; *Volume Two* features "Cotton Tail," "Round Midnight" (a lovely showpiece for Heath), "Autumn Leaves," "Tenor Madness," and "Flying Home."

Joshua Redman may look back at *T-Bop* (Soul Note 121196; 74:32: ★★★★★) his record as a sideman with joint 'bonists **Jimmy Knepper** and **Eric Felten**, as one of his best early efforts. All but two compositions ("Stella By Starlight" and "I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry") are penned by the young Felten, whose self-assurance on the instrument nearly matches the chutzpah it must have taken to invite Mingus-stalwart Knepper to collaborate. Check out the funky "Deconstruction" (and drummer Jorge Rossy's exuberance behind the two-trom/tenor team), the four-tromboned arrangement of "Stella," Redman's meaty tenor solo on the hard-bop "Delphi," and Knepper's silkworm solo on "Ontology." Knepper is also in the house with **Big Band Charlie Mingus**, playing and conducting the all-star ensemble on *Live At The Theatre Boulogne-Billancourt/Paris Vol. 2* (Soul Note 121193; 65:44: ★★★½). "Boogie Stop Shuffle," "My Jelly Roll Soul," "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," and the especially ambitious "The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady" are given long, brassy treatments in the all-too-familiar string-of-solos format. Soloists

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include Randy Brecker (trumpet), Jon Faddis (cornet), Nick Brignola (bari), John Handy (alto), Mike Zwerin (trombone), with Jaki Byard, Reggie Johnson, and Billy Hart in the rhythm section. High point: Clifford Jordan and David Murray play consecutive tenor solos on "Boogie Stop Shuffle"—with styles miles apart, but both at home in Mingus' inclusive music.

Recorded live at the Edward Blackwell Festival in Atlanta in 1987, *From Bad To Badder* (Black Saint 120114; 77:32; ★★½) is a relaxed reunion of the **American Jazz Quintet** (tenor saxophonist Harold Battiste's legendary New Orleans ensemble), which hadn't played together in nearly three decades. For the concert, they unearthed a hefty batch of intriguing original compositions from the band's earlier incarnation, including Battiste's summery "To Brownie" and a couple of gritty charts from Alvin Batiste. Ellis Marsalis contributes elegant piano, Batiste is very inventive on clarinet, Earl Turbinton guests on alto sax, and bassist Richard Payne and drummer Blackwell hang tight. And yet, the group needed more rehearsal time, and the overall date suffers from occasional lapses of focus.

On the contrary, **Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble** (Black Saint 120152; 65:02; ★★★★★) is highly focused. The macroscopic band of the saxophonist/leader of the Microscopic Septet, *Big Trouble* comes out of the Willem

Breker tradition of playful irony, pastiche, nutty compositions with hair-raising arrangements, and loving jabs at the jazz canon. Along with cool versions of two Herbie Nichols tunes, a Raymond Scott number, and a tailor-made take on Steve Lacy's "Hemline," Johnston's own material makes use of unorthodox structures, stories told in music, Joe Ruddick's alternately (or simultaneously) cheesy and brilliant keyboards, David Tronzo and/or Adam Rogers on guitar, Jim Leff's bluesy slide 'bone (check out "Chillbone"), and Kevin Norton's impeccable drum, marimba, and glock work. *Jazz Passengers* and *Lounge Lizards* take heed: you'll be in *Big Trouble* when you try to match wack-for-wack with this superior band.

**Jon Jang and the Pan-Asian Arkestra** brings an altogether more serious edge to an equally colorful large ensemble concept on *Tianamen!* (Soul Note 121223; 53:35; ★★★★★). No mere collider of cultures, pianist/composer Jang deftly integrates double-reeds, Peking Opera percussion, Chinese zither, and pentatonic melodies with riffing horns, Ellingtonian orchestrations, and excellent soloing from saxophonist Melecio Magdaluyo, trumpeter John Worley, Jr., and guest flautist James Newton. Jang's passionate "Come Sunday, June 4 1989" weaves a Chinese, pro-democracy tune together with the theme from Ellington's "Come Sunday" (stated on mouth organ and wooden

flute) and features a piercing suona solo and collective horn blow over burning bass.

For a touch of the truly tasteless, take a peek at *It's Time For The Fringe* (Soul Note 121205; 65:46; ★★★★★), from the 20-year-old Boston (insane) institution **The Fringe**. If you can get to the music, you'll find a sensitive, passionate, democratic free-jazz trio that just *happens* to be dressed up as Neanderthal Men on the cover photo. Saxophonist George Garzone is a versatile player, shifting gears smoothly between lyrical post-bop linearity and roaring overblow; drummer Bob Gullotti and bassist John Lockwood are ideal partners, both daring and capable. With their sixth album, *The Fringe* deserves to be recognized by fans of free music beyond their devoted Beantown circle. Tenor saxophonist **Ellery Eskelin's Figure Of Speech** (Soul Note 121232; 52:49; ★★★★★½) is a powerful outing. Eskelin's controlled vibrato and gruff, muscular tone are a joy to hear, and he knows how to pack more than one peak into a solo, spinning multiple yarns as he goes out long on the unaccompanied intro to the title cut. His front-loaded, sometimes funky charts provoke top-notch playing from the oddly instrumented trio—Arto Tunçboyacıyan on drums, cymbals and hand percussion, and Joe Daley on tuba. This music lives up to the high standards set by *Black Saint* and *Soul Note* a decade back. **DB**

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## Tania Maria

**OUTRAGEOUS**—Concord Picante 4563: *DEAR DEE VEE*; *CONFUSION*; *SHE'S OUTRAGEOUS*; *BOM BOM BOM TCHI TCHI TCHI*; *HAPPINESS*; *AMEI DEMAIS*; *TA TUDO CERTO*; *I CAN DO IT*; *MINH MAE*; *HAPPINESS 2*; *GRANADA*; *GRANADA VIGNETTE*. (54:51)

**Personnel:** Maria, keyboard, vocals, synthesizer; Mitch Stein, guitar, mandolin; Tom Barney, Sergio Brandão, Darryl Jones, bass; Ricky Sebastian, Buddy Williams, drums; Don Alias, Reinaldo Fernandez, Claudio Silva, Jorge Silva, percussion; Rio, vocal (5); ZéLuis, sax, flute (1,3,7)

★ ★ ★

**THE BEST OF**—World Pacific CDP 0777 798634 2 6: *DON'T GO*; *MADE IN NEW YORK*; *I DO I LOVE YOU*; *VALEU*; *BRONX*; *TONOCA VIGNETTE*; *CHULETA*; *PLEASE DON'T STAY*; *O BOM E*; *CA C'EST BON*; *MARGUERITA*; *210 WEST*. (57:26)

**Personnel:** Maria, keyboards, vocal; Buddy Williams (1,5,7), Dave Weckl (2,3), Steve Gadd (4,6,8,11), Kim Plainfield (9,10,12), drums; Tom Barney (1,10,12), Anthony Jackson (2,3,5,7,8), Eddie Gomez (4,6,11), Leo Traversa (9), bass; Dan Carillo, guitar (1,3,8,9,12); Sammy Figueroa (1-3,10,11), Steve Thornton (4,6-10), Onyx Aquino (5), Isidro Bobadilha (5), Airto Moreira (7), Don Juarez (11), Tony Nogueira (11), Manolo Badrena (12), Luis Conte (12), percussion; Eumir Deodato, drum programming (1,2); Ted Lo (7,9), Robbie Kondor (10-12), synthesizer; Lew Soloff, trumpet (10,12); Jay Ashby, trombone (10,12); Jim Clouse, saxophone (10,12); Tatiana Kressmann, background vocals (3).

★ ★ ★

Too jazzy to prosper in her native Brazil, Tania Maria found fame in Paris before moving to New York in 1981. From an unpretentious pianist who also sang, she became a glamorous vocalist who also plays keyboards, perfecting a radio-friendly formula that combines husky Portuguese and English ballad singing and fleet vocalese with fusion textures and funk-edged samba rhythms. After a successful recording streak on Concord Picante, she switched to World Pacific, but her career languished, at least in the U.S. Now that she's back with Concord, World Pacific has reissued selections from four of her albums as a best-of compilation. But since neither her style nor the quality of her work has changed appreciably over the past decade, it's not easy to distinguish her best from her worst.

*Outrageous* begins auspiciously with a propulsive scat-samba but soon drifts into dreamy ballads and tepid funk-fusion. "Bom Bom Bom Tchi Tchi Tchi" builds from a lilting bossa to a driving carnival samba, while "Happiness" offers the novelty of a samba/hip-hop rap. In general, though, there's not much melodic or rhythmic variation. Maria is blessed with a rich, pliant voice, but her keyboards provide little

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more than percussive coloration.

*The Best Of Tania Maria*, drawn from the albums *Made In New York*, *The Lady In Brazil*, *Forbidden Colors*, and *Bela Vista*, sounds remarkably similar to *Outrageous*, although her English is more heavily accented, and the arrangements are more reminiscent of early Return To Forever. Moreover, tracks from different albums with different personnel sound remarkably similar to one another. It's unflaggingly pleasant, certainly a notch above what passes for "contemporary" radio fare. But like *Outrageous*, it's best appreciated one cut at a time; taken all at one sitting, it just fades into the background. —Larry Birnbaum

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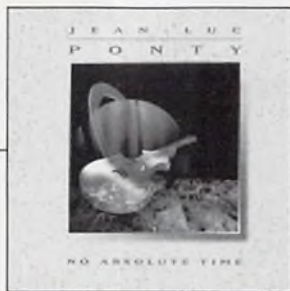
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**Jean-Luc Ponty**

**NO ABSOLUTE TIME**—Atlantic Jazz 7 82500-2:  
*No Absolute Time; Savannah; Lost Illusions; Dance Of The Spirits; Forever Together; Caracas; The African Spirit; Speak Out; Blue Mambo; The Child In You.* (56:53)

**Personnel:** Ponty, acoustic, electric violins, synthesizers; Wally Minko, piano, keyboards; Martin Atangana, Kevin Eubanks (9), guitar; Guy Nsangue, bass; Moktar Samba, drums, percussion; Abdou Mboup, Sydney Thiam, percussion.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

**KING KONG**—Blue Note 89539: *KING KONG; IDIOT BASTARD SON; TWENTY SMALL CIGARS; HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A HEAD LIKE THAT; MUSIC FOR ELECTRIC VIOLIN AND LOW BUDGET ORCHESTRA; AMERICA DRINKS AND GOES HOME.* (43:49)

**Personnel:** Ponty, electric violin, baritone viola; George Duke, electric piano, piano; Gene Estes, vibes, percussion (1,6); Buell Neidlinger, bass (1,5,6); Wilton Felder, Fender bass (2,3); Ian Underwood (1,6), Ernie Watts (2-4), alto, tenor saxophones; Arthur D. Tripp III (1,5,6), John Guerin (2-4), drums; Frank Zappa, guitar (4); Donald Christlieb, bassoon (5); Gene Cipriano, oboe, english horn (5); Vincent DeRosa, french horn, descant (5); Arthur Maebe, french horn, tuben (5); Jonathan Meyer, flute (5); Harold Bemko, cello (5); Milton Thomas, viola (5).

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

On his latest album, jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty soars over a percolating undergirding of West African polyrhythms, gliding lyrically into the fusion zone of jazz-pop-world music. His trio of percussionists, while never really getting the opportunity to break loose into a rhythmic orbit, drum, clop, scrape, and, on the gently swinging "Dance Of The Spirits," even knee-slap out an array of colorful multi-textured beats. Ponty's distinctively fast-and-fluid violin soloing is exquisite throughout, with noteworthy improvisational stretches on the bright, funk-tinged title piece, the bubbling "Speak Out" percussion fest, and the r&b-treated "Blue Mambo." Not as impressive is Ponty's synthesizer work, which at times gives the album a pop sheen that makes the recordings sound overproduced. Although most of Ponty's compositions fly, a couple don't. "Caracas" catches fire momentarily, but never fully develops, while the end number, "The Child In You," also stalls.

While there are few surprises on *No Absolute Time*, nothing could be further from the truth on the recently reissued *King Kong*, the extraordinary 1969 album that helped establish Ponty as a versatile and progressive jazz violinist. Remarkably fresh except for George Duke's electric piano, *King Kong* showcases the virtuoso Ponty diving headlong into the compositional genius of Frank Zappa. There is an eloquent duet with tenor saxman Ernie Watts on the moody "Twenty Small Cigars" and a jazz hoe-down on "How Would You Like To Have A Head Like That" (his sole composition here), where FZ spins off a couple measures worth of steady guitar licks. But where Ponty really gets to stretch is on the ambitious, whimsical "Music For Electric Violin And Low Budget Orchestra," Zappa's 20-minute suite-like piece where the violinist twists and turns through straightahead and free jazz, 20th-century classical and rock stylings. The fitting end to *King Kong*, which

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—Dan Ouellette



## Cassandra Wilson

**BLUE LIGHT 'TIL DAWN**—Blue Note B4 0777 7 81357 4: *YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS; COME ON IN MY KITCHEN; TELL ME YOU'LL WAIT FOR ME; CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT; HELLHOUND ON MY TRAIL; BLACK CROW; SANKOFA; ESTRELLAS; REDBONE; TUPELO HONEY; BLUE LIGHT 'TIL DAWN; I CAN'T STAND THE RAIN.*

**Personnel:** Wilson, vocals; Brandon Ross, Chris Whitley (12), various guitars; Kenny Davis, Lonnie Plaxico (10), bass; Olu Dara, cornet (5); Don Byron, clarinet (6); Charles Burnham, violin (1,10); Lance Carter, drums, percussion; Vinx, percussion, voice (4,6); Kevin Johnson, Bill McCellan, Jeff Haynes, Cyro Baptista, percussion; Gib Wharton, pedal steel guitar; Tony Cedras, accordion (2).

★★★★★

*Blue Light 'Til Dawn* immediately impresses as Cassandra Wilson's strongest, most consistent recording. With producer Craig Street, Wilson creates a new environment for her distinctive vocals: acoustic, open, and earthy. They've jettisoned keyboards and most horns, opting for bare-bones support from Brandon Ross' blues and classical guitars, African/Brazilian percussion, and a little bass. Street never crowds his singer with frills. Wilson's low, smoky voice predominates as she hovers and swoops, shaping melodies and carrying the songs.

Alongside torch songs, notably a stark "You Don't Know What Love Is," Wilson brings a jazz singer's phrasing and nuance to Robert Johnson tunes, South African harmonies, and folk/pop material from Van Morrison and Joni Mitchell. She sees beyond distinctions of style and genre, pulling these elements together, emphasizing themes of restlessness and unrequited love.

Brandon Ross doesn't get the attention he deserves playing with Henry Threadgill and Leroy Jenkins, but his versatility and feel for Delta blues are vital. Wilson's approach to Robert Johnson softens the menace of his songs, but preserves the gritty essence (Cassandra's "Hellhound On My Trail," voiced by Olu Dara's cornet, sounds no more ominous than a schnauzer.) Part jazz, part blues, and with a lot of "beyond," *Blue Light* should win her many new admirers

—Jon Andrews

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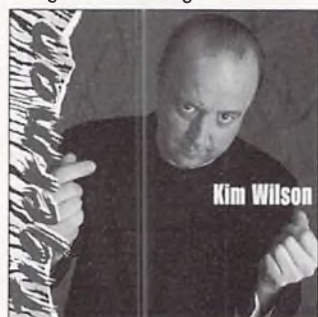
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## CD REVIEWS

### Life's A Beach

by John Ephland

Only one of them actually surfed. And he died in a drowning accident. Then again, great music doesn't necessarily come from direct experience. The All-American **Beach Boys** the subject of a gazillion repackaged greatest-hits sets and a Vegas-style parody of themselves, weren't always that way. A sunny blend of Chuck Berry, doo-wop, and the Four Freshmen (with a splash of Eddie Cochran and the Ventures), their music held an innocent, creative charm; a charm that eventually left every other band that tried to imitate their massive appeal in the sand.

But there's more. As the Beach Boys matured beyond their early-'60s fun, fun, fun, the music started getting sophisticated, complex, and quirky. Oddly enough, fans and critics alike couldn't handle the dive to murkier waters. (You might say direct experience was showing up more and more in their music.) It was a dive that, from 1966 to the early '70s, showcased "pop genius" Brian Wilson and "his hand-picked messengers" at their most creative, their playing and singing reflecting the angst of life beyond adolescence in a war-torn America.

*Good Vibrations: Thirty Years Of The Beach Boys* (Capitol C2 0777 7 81294-4; 76:44/76:20/76:52/76:02/76:40; ★★★★★), named after Wilson's 1966 superhit, is an impressive five-CD set (the fifth disc devoted to intriguing alternate takes and rare studio miscellanies). Subtitled *Thirty Years Of The Beach Boys*, the package gets its name from—and starts with—the band's first top-10 hit, 1963's "Surfin' U.S.A." (actually, a demo version previously unreleased). The collection ends with their most-recent #1 million-selling single, 1989's "Kokomo." In between are another 139 songs (over six hours of material) and a wild, 60-page booklet.

Wilson was joined by brothers Carl and Dennis (the surfer, cousin Mike (hot dog with a hat) Love, and friends David Marks, Al Jardine, and Bruce Johnston, among others. But it was Brian, with the occasional collaborator, who wrote, arranged, and produced most of the music. In fact, by the time "I Get Around," "California Girls," and "Don't Worry Baby" were



Cars, stars, and scars: mid-'60s Beach Boys  
Dennis (far left), Al, Mike, Brian, and Carl

produced, in 1965, Brian had quit touring with the band, having suffered his first nervous breakdown. And yet, his freedom from the band helped him to focus on writing and what seemed to be his favorite toy, the recording studio. (*Pet Sounds*, the band's 1966 masterpiece, came as a direct result.) Over time, there emerged a defined method to his madness, so to speak. Starting with a variety of top-notch session players in L.A., Wilson would record instrumental tracks, eventually adding the band's vocals to them in a kind of patchwork quilt. (The band consistently used instrumental tracks on their albums, in time utilizing a variety of instruments not normally associated with pop or rock.)

Music from the legendary, experimental *Smile* album that was never released appears on discs 2 and 5, amounting to about 30 minutes. After their split with Capitol in 1969, the band recorded with and without Brian for Warner Brothers and CBS. Selections from *Sunflower*, *Surf's Up*, *Holland*, and *Carl And The Passions: So Tough*, the best of the batch, are included here, along with cuts from the other records. The music from *Sunflower*, *Surf's Up*, et al., clearly shows brothers Carl and Dennis coming out from under Brian's shadow, with strong writing, production, and vocals of their own.

From the beginning, however, it was Brian's ear for melody, instrumentation, and vocal harmony (who can forget his signature falsetto!) that put the band on the musical map. No less an authority than Beatle Paul McCartney had this to say about *Pet Sounds*: "No one is educated musically 'til they've heard that album."

Sadly, since those turbulent days of Watergate, the Manson murders and beyond, the band, when it hasn't been recording songs for motion picture soundtracks, has learned to live off its past as an oldies act. In fact, you can hear it happening a third of the way through disc 4, after 1973, as the music—albeit new—starts to sputter for good. One might ask, how could the Beach Boys—a radically original cultural institution—do this to themselves, essentially devolving into an arena-sized lounge act? Then again, ask yourself this question: What shape would the Beatles be in if they'd hung in there for 30 years?

DB

**A Blue Deeper than the Blue,**  
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## European Echoes

by John Corbett

**E**uropean jazz has long had to withstand the slings and arrows of protectionist Americans who see the music as inherently U.S.-vs.-them. It should be clear by now, however, that some of the most important and engaging sounds on the market are imports, often from small European labels.

For instance, take **Carlo Actis Dato Quartet's** *Bagdad Boogie* (Splasc(h) 380; 68:35: ★★★★★). Italian saxist/bass clarinetist Dato has an extensive catalog of releases for the excellent Splasc(h) label (whose roster includes everything in Italian jazz—mainstream, fusion, free-bop, improvised). His quartet plays all original music, trotting out tunes laced with folk and popular Italian influences, parade-like marches, carnivalesque melodies, free jazz, and a strong dose of the giggles. Sharing the frontline with fellow multiple-reedman Piero Ponso, Dato plays appropriately balmy solos (check out the baritone intro to the shifting 16 minutes of "Gare Centrale De Bamako") through charts that are at once silly, charming, and musically fertile. Also on hand are versatile percussionist Fiorenzo Sordini and bassist Enrico Fazio (whose own quintet has several worthwhile outings).

Roman pianist **Enrico Pieranunzi's** duet with Yankee bassist **Marc Johnson**, *The Dream Before Us* (IDA 028CD; 56:42: ★★★½), was



ART ILLMAN

Evan Parker: one-man sonic adventure

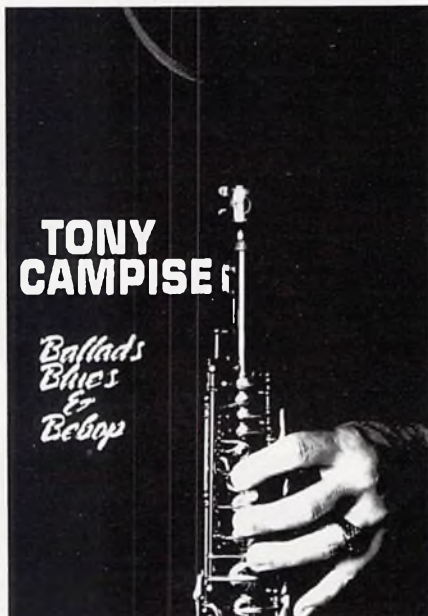
warmly recorded by the French IDA label. The two work on an even field, Johnson's deep, all-acoustic basswork an up-front partner for Pieranunzi's gentle but firm approach. At times, the improvised dialogue wanders harmonically—on "Something There" or the disc's three "Impromptu"s, Pieranunzi sounds most like Paul Bley, replete with his less viable, more sentimental hues. The duo also plays surprising versions of "Night And Day," "All The Things You Are" (mutated and renamed "All The Things We Are"), "On Green Dolphin Street," and Lee Konitz's "Subconscious-Lee."

From percaso Productions in Zürich, Switzerland, comes a delightful little group with an odd moniker. **Day & Taxi's** debut *All* (percaso Pro-

duction 11; 63:55: ★★★★★) comes packaged with a gorgeous Gilbert & George painting on the cover and a disc chock full of jubilant trio music. Percaso label-chief Christoph Gallio leads the group, playing distinctly Lacy-ish soprano and eloquent, rarely strident alto saxophone; bassist Lindsay L. Cooper (not to be confused with the reedwoman from England) and drummer Dieter Ulrich stretch out on the trio's elastic compositions, creating and filling space around tunes like Cooper's manic "Chook" and Gallio's reserved "La Petite Princesse." Particularly nice to hear Ulrich get so much out of a bare-bones kit, not unlike the best work of Dennis Charles.

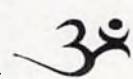
Anyone who thinks they know about contemporary saxophone music but hasn't heard the solo-soprano work of Brit **Evan Parker** is gravely mistaken. Taking the most extreme elements of late Coltrane—overblowing, multiphonics, biting and slap-tonguing the reed, cross-patterned fingering—Parker has combined these with seamless circular-breathing and rolled them into a one-man sonic adventure, certain to dumbfound you on first exposure. Though the evolution of his approach has been documented on vinyl, the newly issued *Conic Sections* (ah um 015; 70:17: ★★★★★), recorded in 1989, is its first appearance on a full CD (a few solo cuts may be found on *Process And Reality*, on the German FMP label). Sound is very roomy, the natural reverb adding another level to the saxophonist's multi-vocal soloing. On *Conic Sections* Parker blows a hole clear through the theory that nothing genuinely new comes to jazz by way of European tradewinds.

DB



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## Buck On Wing

by Kevin Whitehead

In jazz lore, nothing's more alluring than marathon Kansas City jams of the '30s, where crowns were contested and players swung till they dropped; in practice, nothing's deadlier than an endless string of solos by a non-cooking band.

*The Complete CBS Buck Clayton Jam Sessions* (Mosaic MD-6-144; 64:20/ 59:55/ 52:58/



Graceful moodsetter: Clayton

60:05/ 42:06/ 61:13: ★★★★★)—six installments taped between 1953 and '56, about a dozen players on each—lie closer to K.C. heaven than Sisyphian solo hell. Conceived by George Avakian and John Hammond—they told trumpeter **Buck Clayton** he was the leader after the first session—as a dignified alternative to Jazz at the Philharmonic wilding, the Clayton jams were heavy on Basie-ites and -isms, starting with Buck himself. With his graceful phrasing, singing tone, and deftness with several mutes, he crafted melody statements that put everyone in the right mood; he personified what they were aiming for. Plus, musicians liked him.

Naturally, the spotlight's on the soloists—like Coleman Hawkins, Julian Dash, and Buddy Tate on tenor, and Benny Powell, Urbie Green, Trummy Young, and J.C. Higginbotham among the trombones—but the rhythm section is the main reason these sessions endure. The original '53 team was Basie's best: Freddie Green, Walter Page, and Jo Jones, plus Sir Charles Thompson on piano. Afterwards, the section's character grew a bit more assertive—Milt Hinton replaced Page, and Jimmy Jones, Billy Kyle, and mystery man Al Waslohn took turns on piano—but the (time) feel stayed remark-

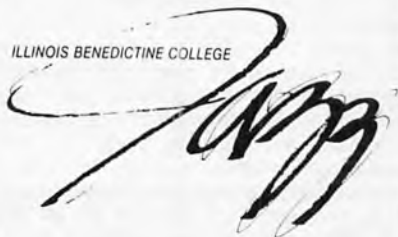
ably consistent, even on a date where Bobby Donaldson replaces Jones. This nicely captured music is a testament to Jo Jones' genius: you can barely hear him. That effortless relaxation, the pulsation without violence, the elegance and force which define Kansas City jazz, built from the drums up. Feathering four beats most of the time, with an occasional snare crack or flaming lull to jolt the mesmerized, Jones is master of subtle persuasion.

To further spur soloists, idle horns fill in behind with gentle backing riffs cooked up on the spot, via pantomime, whispered asides, and other signals musicians used to shape music spontaneously, decades before Butch Morris got credit for conducting improvisers. Avakian could edit tape ingeniously, imposing light structure on a piece through artful (re-)ordering of segments, conspicuously on the old LP version of "Robbins' Nest" (not included), assembled from two takes heard here. Still, most of these performances worked well enough as is to make it onto LP uncut. In a few cases where master tapes were lost, edited takes are provided here—notably a delirious "Jumpin' At The Woodside" interspersed from two sessions where Jones is the rhythm section's only constant. The tempo stays true.

Of the soloists, Hawkins inevitably dominates; Trummy Young and pianist Ken Kersey get off inspired shots; open-horn trumpeter Joe Newman or cornetist Ruby Braff serves as Buck's contrasting foil. The revelation is altoist Lem Davis, who sometimes cuts across the fine rhythmic grain with the obstinacy of Pee Wee Russell; Davis' style is a not-wholly digested amalgam of hip bop licks, blunt r&b gestures, and original, whittled phrases. He reminds us of a too-often ignored function of the jam session: learning how to make your concept fit with other musicians, without getting flak for experimenting. This time Jo doesn't fling a cymbal at the altoist.

Regarding the traditionally big, photo-studded Mosaic booklet: there's a chatty but informative, personal but not egoistic style of annotation Dan Morgenstern excels at; he even makes rosters of soloists read lively. Morgenstern weaves his way through these sessions as gracefully as Clayton and company. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place, Box D, Stamford, CT 06902; (203) 327-7111) **DB**

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— Steve Swallow

## Mainstream Maelstrom

by Jack Sohmer

**B**ecause of the growing number of young listeners becoming interested in jazz, many labels have found it advisable to produce broad-based, introductory anthologies so as to serve the needs of these newer converts. *Original Jazz Masters Series, Vol. 1* (DA Music 3701; 42:59/55:19/44:31/48:19/46:25: ★★★) is one such collation drawn from the catalog of Black Lion. A British label known for its quality releases of top-ranking American and European jazzmen, Black Lion has specialized in a wide variety of traditional, swing, and bop artists, whose performances run the entire gamut of mainstream jazz styles.



Howard McGhee: haphazard presentation

Unfortunately, though, a serious production error resulted in the omission of any information regarding the sources, dates, and personnel for the performances included in this collection. But a representative of DA Music explained this blunder to us in advance with the assurance that future releases will include all pertinent data. In any case, all of these recordings are listed in the comprehensive *Swing and Modern Jazz* discographies by the Belgian expert, Walter Bruyninckx; and, since they all appeared on Black Lion LPs, either in the form of first-time releases or reissues, it shouldn't take more than an hour or so to locate all 50 titles. But the obvious catch is that the very segment of the public that DA Music wishes to target, the new collectors, is the one least likely to own this invaluable, but expensive reference source.

Each disc is programmed to present as broad a coverage of contrasting styles as is possible within the Black Lion catalog, but strangely with no sense of historical progression or developmental relationship. Thus, on the first three discs, we find such stylistically unrelated performances as Ben Webster's "Stormy Weather," Louis Armstrong's "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans," Sonny Stitt's "Autumn In New York," Louis Jordan's "A Man Ain't A Man," Don Byas' "A Night In Tunisia," Pee Wee Russell's "Gabriel

Found His Horn," Howard McGhee's "Sharp Edge," Ellington's "Take The 'A' Train," Lee Konitz's "Sound Lee," and Sidney Bechet's "On The Sunny Side Of The Street," as well as 20 additional tracks by some of the same and other artists. The remaining two discs are sequenced in a similarly haphazard fashion, and while none of the selections are poor examples of the musicians involved, neither is their random manner of presentation a logical way to introduce this music to a new and probably already confused audience.

Half of the 32 artists selected for inclusion are represented by two or three tracks each, and these include such carelessly sequenced giants as Armstrong, Bechet, Russell, Ellington, Webster, Hines, Basie, Tatum, Wilson, Monk, and Miles, as well as Stitt, Grappelli, Gonsalves, Nat Cole, and Donald Byrd. There are also 16 other artists of comparable prominence, including Buddy Tate, Dexter Gordon, Zoot Sims, Ruby Braff, and Bill Coleman, who appear only once. But because this "best of the best" collection offers so much in the way of

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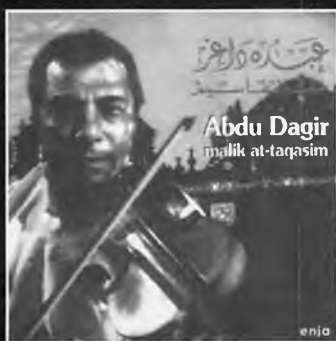
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diversity, it should be clear that the sheer number of stylistically different performances prohibits any sort of meaningful detailed discussion. The only real surprises here are the two discographically unlisted tracks with Miles Davis. A little guesswork and some research in Bruyninckx's *Vocalists Discography* revealed them to be from a mid-'40s Earl Coleman session that also included Gene Ammons. But neither Bruyninckx nor Davis biographer Jack Chambers were able to provide the titles, "Don't Explain To Me Baby" and "Don't Sing Me The Blues," which are here released on discs 1 and 4, respectively. **DB**



**Kevin Eubanks**

**SPIRIT TALK**—Blue Note 89286: *LANDING; CONTACT; UNION; SPIRIT TALK; EARTH PARTY; INSIDE; GOING OUTSIDE; JOURNEY; LIVIN'*. (53:00)

**Personnel:** Eubanks, acoustic, electric guitars; Kent Jordan, flute; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Dave Holland, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★★★★

**GUITARIST**—Discovery 71006: *THE NOVICE BOUNCE; INNER-VISION; YESTERDAYS; EVIDENCE; URBAN HEAT; THE THUMB/BLUES FOR WES; UNTITLED SHAPES; BLUE IN GREEN*. (44:38)

**Personnel:** Eubanks, acoustic, electric guitars; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Ralph Moore, tenor sax; Charles Eubanks, acoustic piano; David Eubanks, acoustic bass; Ronnie Burrage (2,3,7), Tommy Campbell (5), Roy Haynes (4), drums.

★★★★

On the first track of Kevin Eubanks' debut

recording, *Guitarist*, released on Elektra/Musical in 1983 and reissued recently by the Discovery label, he unleashes a solo of blue stings on his acoustic guitar, quietly but forcefully putting a swing and bite into it. When he brings the band into the picture for the spirited and straightahead "Inner-Vision," he once again demonstrates his guitar aptitude by charging note-for-note with tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore for an exhilarating stretch. His most adventurous playing shows up on the reflective "Untitled Shapes," one of his introspective and elegant compositions. *Guitarist* ends with a calming, solo acoustic-guitar cover of "Blue In Green."

My only complaint with Eubanks' performance on his first outing was his tendency to try to cram too many accelerating licks into a measure. Ten years and nine albums later, the guitarist in Branford Marsalis' Tonight Show Band still shows how fleet he is, his latest release successfully tempering his need for excessive speed. He muses more on *Spirit Talk*, opting to go the acoustic-guitar route for most of the album, and he also engages in more instrumental conversations with members of his stellar ensemble. The dialogue he and trombonist/brother Robin (who also gave great low-end support on *Guitarist*) deliver on "Union" is spine-tingling in its improvisational beauty. In addition, he joyfully frolics alongside bassist Dave Holland on "Going Outside."

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which also features the enchanting lyrical flute playing of Kent Jordan.

Other noteworthy pockets of music on *Spirit Talk*, a celebration of sorts of spiritual extraterrestrials: the back-to-back trio numbers—the grooving “Earth Party” (guitar/bass/drums) and the pensive, hushed “Inside” (trombone/guitar/bass)—and the two end pieces, the exquisite acoustic-guitar solo through “Journey,” which then opens into a full-ensemble romp through the upbeat “Livin’.”

—Dan Ouellette

BLUES FOR HOWARD; CHEROKEE; BLUE TRAIN; 'S WONDERFUL; SISTER SADIE. (64:00)

**Personnel:** Arturo Sandoval, Randy Brecker, Chuck Findley, Byron Stripling, trumpets; George Bohanon, trombone; Eddie Daniels, clarinet; Eric Marienthal, Nelson Rangell, Ernie Watts, Bob Mintzer, Tom Scott, saxophones; Phillip Bent, flute; Gary Burton, vibraphone; Russell Ferrante, Dave Grusin, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Dave Weckl, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Since the Metronome All-Star sessions of the '30s to this album, ad hoc, all-star bands have implicitly promised more than they've given. I can think of barely a classic among them. On the other hand, I can't recall many duds, either. It's insurance.

And there's not much that's dudly here. More an occasion celebrating itself, it's one the musicians, led by Tom Scott, rise to with a fair amount of Olympic virtuosity. The proceedings are hectic, loud, and often very fast, in the manner of a musical triathlon, leaving one with rather pleasantly jangled nerves. A frantic “Oleo,” with a dash of Cecil Taylorisms from either Grusin or Ferrante and some pretty muscular section passages for the reeds, tells you what you're in for. It doesn't get much slower than “My Man's Gone Now.” And “Cherokee” is a slash-and-bash merry-go-round for the brass, not to mention catnip for the crowd.

—John McDonough

## A Giant, First And Last

by Kevin Whitehead

**T**his batch of **John Coltrane** discs spans his first- and last-known recordings, a stretch of just 21 years. *The Last Giant: The John Coltrane Anthology* (Rhino/Atlantic 71255; 67:18/60:23: ★★★★★) is a sensibly compact, mini-box annotated by Lewis Porter, Ira Gitler, Amiri Baraka, and others.

Like other twofers in the Rhino series, it's quirky. Only seven of 19 tracks were recorded for Atlantic, and six of them come from just two LPs, *Giant Steps* and *Coltrane's Sound*. Other stuff comes from leader and sideman dates for Prestige, Riverside, and Blue Note. There's also a 25-minute “My Favorite Things” from '61, with Eric Dolphy on flute, and an excerpt (poorly recorded) of “Ogunde” from Coltrane's last public performance, May 23, '67. Most valuable are five early Trane tracks, starting with “Hot House” from a 1946 Navy jam session, where he plays alto. Trane's green, grappling with half-digested Bird; but even at 19, he balances double-time phrases against pregnant silences, a lifelong signature.

Some folks say Coltrane didn't find his style till he was 30. Wrong. By 1951, playing tenor with Dizzy Gillespie (on two tracks), he'd already developed his heraldic tone. By '54, with



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LEE TANNER

John Coltrane: a career divisible by chapters, he still denied us closure.

To Talk About You," that lovely Eckstine ballad Coltrane loved, which he ends with a fevered three-minute solo cadenza. The fast-and-fiery blues, "Chasin' Another Trane," is from the fabled Vanguard '61 stand, with Roy, bassist Reggie Workman, and Dolphy. (Tyner comps on the first two choruses and returns to hit a closing chord 15 minutes later.) Eric's tongue-talking alto bears comparison with that cadenza above; who influenced who here?

The cover of *Transition* (Impulse! 124; 51:59; ★★★½), from June of '65, comes from the LP of the same name. But the program's somewhat different, to avoid duplication of previous reissues and include material left over from *Kulu Se Mama*—"Welcome," a rubato hymn echoing of "Happy Birthday," and the Elvin/Trane duet "Vigil," which anticipates 1967's *Interstellar Space* with Rashied Ali (whose title track is in the '92 *Major Works* box). The classic quartet, which would dissolve within the year, has entered its most roiling "free" phase. But for all the turbulence in "Transition," Garrison's walking eighth notes keep it swinging; Elvin's loose gait provides a similar function on much of the five-part "Suite." Garrison's folksy strumming interlude is straight outta early Charlie Haden.

*Expression* (Impulse! 131; 51:17; ★★★) comes from February and March '67 sessions, the latter being Coltrane's last studio date. (One March track, released on a '70s LP, is added to the original program.) The band is now pianist Alice Coltrane, Garrison, and Rashied; Pharoah Sanders' piccolo is featured on one long, diffuse track. The prayer-like compositions ("Ogunde") grow more prayer-like, the turbulence more turbulent, the modal swirling more static. Coltrane was very considerate to critics, giving us a career neatly divisible into distinct chapters, but he denied us closure. This music is inconclusive, as if he's trying to break through to a place he never found. *Expression* and *Transition* could fairly swap titles. **DB**

alotist Johnny Hodges on the riffing "Thru For The Night," his leaping entrance announces he's entered his first mature phase. He was 27. *The Last Giant*—foolish title—isn't the comprehensive early Coltrane set we need, but it does whet your appetite for one.

*The Paris Concert* (Pablo/OJC 781; 41:47; ★★★), with the classic quartet—pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drum-

mer Elvin Jones—is of uncertain date (probably November '62) and origin. What's certain is, the band's burning. "The Inch Worm," usually in no big hurry, really gets a move on, spurred by Coltrane's soprano. The other tracks are a 26-minute romp on "Mr. PC.," which these days we must point out refers to the late bassist Paul Chambers, and an almost perfunctory "Ev'rytime We Say Goodbye." There is a conspicuous phasing problem—as on the 1979 LP issue—which is obvious from the opening applause, and occasionally detracts from the high-energy, high-quality music.

The outstanding *Newport '63* (Impulse! 128; 56:52; ★★★½) finds Roy Haynes subbing as the quartet's drummer; his triplet-happy rollicking gives the band a different punch than Elvin's free-style polyrhythms. (Damn, maybe Roy really is the triplet drummer on that *Monk/Trane Five Spot* CD!) Haynes and Trane have a long "Impressions" mostly to themselves, free and surging, full-boil. The other *Newport* tracks are the inevitable "Favorite Things" and "I Want

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## Charles Fambrough

**BLUES AT BRADLEY'S**—CTI 67235-2: *Duck Feathers; Blues For Bu; Andrea; Better Days Are Coming; Steve's Blues.* (55:00)

**Personnel:** Fambrough, bass; Joe Ford, soprano saxophone; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Steve Turre, trombone, shells; Bobby Broom, guitar; Bill O'Connell, piano; Ricky Sebastian, drums; Steve Berrios, percussion.

★ ★ ★

## Fambrough/ Kirkland/Watts

**JAZZ FROM KEYSTONE: THUNDER & RAINBOWS**—Sunnyside 1055D: *Black Nile; Alycia; The Impaler; Rainbow; Kasploosh; You And The Night And The Music; Dance Of The Niblets; Opal Rose; Blooski.* (52:13)

**Personnel:** Charles Fambrough, bass; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

★ ★ ★

Two sides of Fambrough: the loose, in-the-groove side on *Blues At Bradley's*; the intense, high-powered side on *Thunder & Rainbows*. In both setups, here is a bassist more felt than seen—despite the occasional bass solo. His virtues include a powerful tone, the requisite LaFaro-esque solo technique, rock-solid time, and the ability to lock in with two very different drummers.

*Blues* has the edge on variety, mostly due to the scope of the soloists, despite the preponderance of bluesy material. On the trio album, once it is established that Kirkland is a Tyner man on the modal and uptempo tunes and an Evans fancier on the ballads, the game is over. Even so, one stays tuned for the home-run derby.

"Duck Feathers," a Fambrough-Harrison ditty, sets the tone of *Blues*: Sebastian's second-line drumming leads to a JB Horns-like ensemble and various degrees of funk in solos all around. "Blues For Bu" is churchy, with Turre getting in some juicy wah-wah licks. The trombonist switches to shells near the end of the new-age-y "Andrea," another Fambrough original. Turre and Broom (shades of B.B. King and Kenny Burrell) are the most consistently rewarding soloists.

*Thunder*, a studio album produced by former Keystone Korner owner Todd Barkan, generates its heat on numbers like Wayne Shorter's "Black Nile," Watts' "The Impaler," and the standard "You And The Night And The Music." These tunes are full of Watts' lumpy, hammered, sometimes breathless figures, reminiscent of Elvin Jones. Fambrough walks up the proverbial storm. The rainbow side of the trio appears

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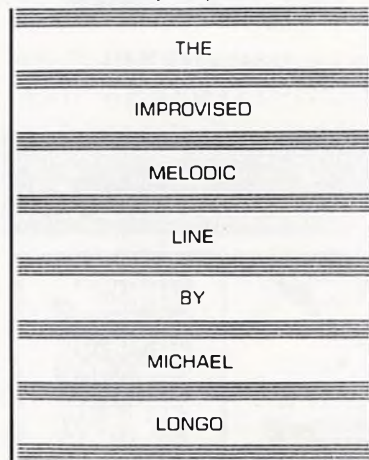
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on Keith Jarrett's "Rainbow" and Fambrough's "Alycia" and "Opal Rose." We are reminded in Barkan's liner notes that this trio was the rhythm section in Wynton Marsalis' first quintet. *Tempus fugit.* —Owen Cordle



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## Loved Ones

**THE PRICE FOR LOVE**—Hightone 8048: *PRETTY BABY; I CAN'T TAKE IT; CUT YOU LOSE; LOVE & GONE; JAGUAR BLUES; LICKIN' STICK; I TOLD THE TRUTH; FALLING IN LOVE; THE PRICE FOR LOVE; HIGHTONE HOP; DON'T PUT YOUR SPELL ON ME; NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS; SHE'S INTO SOMETHING; DEVIL'S MOON.* (48:50)

**Personnel:** Bart Davenport, lead vocals, harmonica, acoustic guitar; Mike Therieau, bass guitar, slide guitar, backing vocals; John Kent, drums; Xan McCurdy, lead guitar; Scott Mathews, piano, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

Welcome to the wonderful time-warp music of the Loved Ones, who, in a few short days in the studio, kicked out a retro collection of raw & rockin' tunes informed by the roots music of the

'50s and '60s. Working with a grit factor of 9 on a scale of 10, the youthful quartet (aided here and there by co-producer Scott Mathews' percussive fills) launches into a non-stop dance party of chugging boogies, spunky rumba-flavored r&b numbers, and hook-laden rockers. Highlights include the racing, slide-guitar-lubricated "Jaguar Blues," the sizzling, harmonica-led instrumental "Hightone Hop," the spitfire blues take on "Lickin' Stick," and the melodically rich and rhythmically clanging "Devil's Moon." —Dan Ouellette



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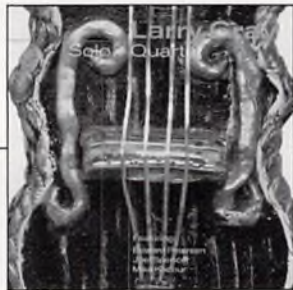
SECRET LOVE; BOSSAMI; CHEROKEE; THEME FROM "TAXI DRIVER." (56:06)

**Personnel:** Philip Harper (2-5,8,9), Nathan Breedlove (1,6,7), trumpet; Vincent Herring (1-6,8), Mark Ivan Gross (7), alto saxophone; Stephen Scott, piano; Essiet Essiet, bass; Yoichi Kobayashi, drums; Jamal Haynes, trombone (7,8); Bob Kenmotsu, tenor saxophone (7-9).

★★★★

Good Fellas isn't a band so much as a concept. Drummer/producer Yoichi Kobayashi assembled a leaderless collective of young traditionalists for this 1991 blowing session with atmospheric urban blues (check out Sadik Hakim's "Witches"), Latin themes, and standards. Vincent Herring is particularly impressive, contributing fervent, inventive alto solos and composing "Almost Always," a yearning after-hours tune well-suited to the *film noir* theme. Blakey alumnus Philip Harper is comfortable in this environment, playing aggressively and with a penetrating tone on "Candy" and "Taxi Driver." Stephen Scott's piano accompaniment throughout is subtle, understated, and highly effective. "Cherokee" may be the most revealing track, as everyone solos, with Harper and Herring the standout high-speed performers.

—Jon Andrews



## Larry Gray

**SOLO + QUARTET**—Premonition 66917-7736-2: *BLAME IT ON MY YOUTH; BABY CYNTHIA'S WALTZ; CHANGE PARTNERS; WHO IS THE DRUMMER?; INTROSPECTION/SORROW; BIRD LEAVES; SONG FOR BOBBY HUTCHERSON.* (60:34)

**Personnel:** Gray, bass; Edward Petersen, tenor, soprano saxophones; Joel Spencer, drums; Mike Kocour, piano.

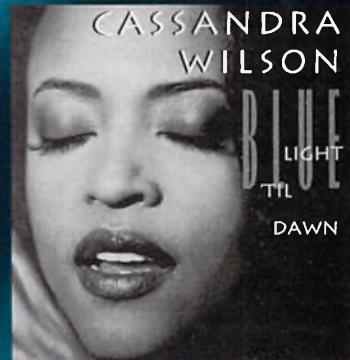
★★★★ 1/2

So far, bassist Larry Gray's following has been confined to Chicago, where he's worked with the likes of Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Williams, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. *Solo + Quartet* bids for broader recognition with sophisticated acoustic jazz, straight-ahead, but without anachronism. Gray's fine quartet features Ed Petersen on saxophone, whose controlled, lyrical solos on "Blame It On My Youth" and "Bird Leaves" (Gray's clever reworking of "Autumn Leaves") build in intensity and abstraction. Gray has a strong melodic sense and technique, somewhat reminiscent of Dave Holland. Focus on his playing during "Baby Cynthia's Waltz" or "Song For Bobby Hutcherson," and he's always up to something interesting and musical.

—J.A.

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## 1 Abbey Lincoln

"Devil's Got Your Tongue" (from *DEVIL'S GOT YOUR TONGUE*, Verve, 1992) Rodney Kendrick, piano; Marcus McLaurine, bass; Yoron Israel, drums.

It's got to be Abbey. I know Abbey's voice from the first note. This must be her latest album. I can tell by the lyrics that she composed this song. She has a unique quality in her voice that's so unlike other singers, a certain kind of timbre that's indescribable. You can hear that she comes from Billie, but she's got a coloring that's all her own. This is a beautiful arrangement, a very supple acoustic context with the piano. I give it 21 stars. I love Abbey's music, the music she writes herself, because I think she's one of the best lyricists out there.

## 2 Shirley Horn

"Makin' Whoopie" (from *LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS*, Verve, 1993) Charles Ables, guitar; Tyler Mitchell, bass; Steve Williams, drums; Gary Bartz, alto saxophone.

Shirley Horn. She can play some piano, too. I give her a 5. I love her style, because it's so off-the-cuff. It's spare and economical but very beautiful, with precise phrasing.

## 3 Nnenna Freelon

"Skylark" (from *NNENNA FREELON*, Columbia, 1992) with orchestra.

Is this Sarah [Vaughan]? Then it's somebody who sounds like her. Don't tell me somebody has copped. Somebody has stolen. It should be against the law. Is this Nnenna Freelon? I guess when you're young, it's okay to sound exactly like somebody, because you're in the process of learning. But at some point, you have to build a unique style, which is what jazz is about. Otherwise, it's just imitation. That's how I feel about it. She has a gorgeous voice, and the arrangements are very lush, very nice, but it's directly out of Sarah. I hate to compare things, but the arrangement and everything is nice, so I'll give it 2½ stars.

## 4 Carmen McRae

"Get It Straight" (from *CARMEN SINGS MONK*, BMG/Novus, 1990) Al Foster, drums; George Mraz, bass; Charlie Rouse, tenor saxophone; Larry Willis, piano.

Carmen McRae. Thelonious Monk. I always wanted to do Monk. I always felt that he was such an underserved composer, because there's so much of his work and so many ways to deal with it. I never met Carmen, but I've seen her perform, and I've always been really taken by her and her extraordinary

## CASSANDRA WILSON

by Larry Birnbaum

Cassandra Wilson has established herself as the preeminent female jazz singer of her generation. Her smoky contralto moans, sighs, purrs, and soars through a repertoire that ranges from the blues to Broadway and beyond. Born in Jackson, Mississippi, she pursued her career in New Orleans and then New York, where she hooked up with the spacey trio Air and the funky M-Base Collective. In 1986, she recorded the first of her nine solo albums, scoring a commercial breakthrough three years later with *Blues Skies*, a set of standards.

Refusing to be pigeonholed, she forged ahead with Latin, reggae, hip-hop, and gospel explorations, culminating in her latest album, *Blue Light 'Til*



*Dawn* (Blue Note), an atmospheric strings-and-percussion session where she radically reinterprets material by Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, and Robert Johnson, among others (see p. 47). This is her first Blindfold Test.

sense of rhythm and intonation. She has incredible intonation, to do what she does. Yeah, 101 stars.

## 5 Lisa Sokolov

"Ding Dong" (from *ANGEL RODEO*, *Laughing Horse*, 1993) David Gonzalez, guitar; Mike Richmond, bass; Jim McNeely, piano.

Somebody European? South American? American? Who is it?

LB: Her name is Lisa Sokolov.

This is painful. I think conceptually it's interesting, but I don't think the technique is there to really implement it. It's interesting that she could choose a song like this from *The Wizard Of Oz*. It goes along with her vocal philosophy. 1½ stars.

## 6 Zusaan Kali Fasteau

"Invocation" (from *PROPHECY*, *Flying Note*, 1993) Ron McBee, berimbau.

I like this already. Sounds like Indian music. I have no idea who it is, but I like it. This is nice. I give this 5 stars. It's spare, and I like sparcity these days. She's got that microtonal thing happening. This is beautiful.

## 7 Lena Horne

"How Long Has This Been Going On" (from *STORMY WEATHER*, BMG/Bluebird, 1990).

It sounds like someone who listened to Billie [Holiday], someone who's got great articulation and a great voice, with a Southern accent. Who is it?

LB: Lena Horne, from 1945.

I was going to say Lena. I haven't heard really early Lena like this, but the accent kind of tipped me off. It sounds like somebody who's got something else happening, theater or something, which would explain the articulation. Lena's got that great articulation. I give her 5 stars-plus.

## 8 Betty Carter

"I Should Care" (from *IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MELODY*, Verve, 1992) Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Ariel J. Roland, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Betty. I love the way Betty curves. People complain about her pitch thing, but I love the way she winds and curves and bends the whole harmonic structure of a song, because that's just what she does. Some people complain about it, but it turns me on. I don't know why.

LB: Do you know the title of this album?

*It's Not The Melody*, and she's exactly right. She's one of the true singing improvisers, and those are rare. There are not many vocalists who can approach harmony and melody the way that she does, and improvise. I give it 5 stars. I love this album because I think it's so bizarre—the phrasing and the things she does. For me, as a singer, it's very helpful to listen to an album like this, because Betty has vision. She's always doing something that's a little bit like I do, I guess, which is to go into uncharted grounds. Now she's hit the heights, but I remember listening to her when I was in my early 20s. She played down in New Orleans and drew a crowd of five or six people, and I thought that was just insane. But she's always been ahead of her time.

DB