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Gerry Mulligan

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me



M I S



Geri Allen and Hank Jones are an elegant pair, sharing the deftness, flexibility, and devotion to the cultivation of musical skills found in jazz's greatest exemplars. Their age and gender differences are insignificant compared to the mutuality of their interests: composition, improvisation, leading combos, serving as accompanists. Incidentally, they're both from Michigan.

Both are graced with humor and humility, high ambitions and quiet self-assurance—both are creative and busy. Allen's recent *Maroons* (Blue Note) features original small-group pieces. Last fall she toured Europe with Betty Carter, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette, and she composed the suite "Sister Leola, An American Portrait" for a Jazz at Lincoln Center commission and performance last August. Jones records for Verve—most recently, *Handful Of Keys: The Music Of Fats Waller*—and gets the choicest gigs, with a trio at Tavern on the Green, for instance. He plays sublime duets

with Benny Carter on that master's *Legends*, and several of his 1940s and '50s albums are currently available on Savoy Jazz.

Despite their distinct experiences and styles, Ms. Allen and Mr. Jones have reached some common conclusions. Having met once in the New York musicians union hall, they chatted a second time in Manhattan's Steinway Hall.

HOWARD MANDEL: *Was there any time during which you were both in Michigan?*

HANK JONES: Oh, no. I joined Jazz at the Philharmonic on tour in '47, and I'd been in New York a couple years by then. I left Pontiac in the early '40s and went on to Flint, Saginaw, Ann Arbor, Bay City, places like that, with what used to be called territory bands, like Benny Carew's Orchestra. Benny was a good drummer whose orchestra never left the Michigan-Ohio-Indiana area. Lucky Thomp-

By Howard Mandel

son, Wardell Grey, and other Detroit musicians worked that band, playing arrangements similar to those of Basie, Duke Ellington, and Jimmie Lunceford in sort of a nondescript style. It was a little dance band—usually two tenor saxes or a tenor and a trumpet. We couldn't get too elaborate, but it was workable.

HM: *Geri, what in your background is similar?*

GERI ALLEN: I came up learning in the Jazz Development Workshop, an organization Detroit musicians—including Marcus Belgrave, Bernard McKinney, and Roy Brooks—put together; Kenny Garrett and Bob Hurst came up in that band, too. We learned transposing there, we heard Thad Jones' music and Ellington's—for me, for the first time as a player. I was just crawling, then, trying to learn.

It was community-based and workshop-oriented. Marcus put bands together based on what was needed for performances in clubs and larger concerts—which might feature a tap dancer or someone like that; so we experienced aspects of the earlier tradition. But I don't think the scene was as vibrant as when Mr. Jones was there. We weren't working all the time.

HJ: Hank, please.

GA: [*blushes*] Okay. . . .

HJ: Or Mr. Hank. [*Geri laughs.*]

HM: *Hank, you performed at a New York City-sponsored Charlie Parker tribute last summer. Did Bird's music interest you on first hearing?*

HJ: It certainly did. When I first came to New York I was playing in the style reminiscent of Teddy Wilson's or Fats Waller's, a modified kind of stride. But when I got to New York I went right to 52nd Street to see what was happening, and Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were there with a group consisting of Max Roach, either Bud Powell on piano or Al Haig, and Curly Russell or Gene Ramey on bass.

Dizzy and Charlie were playing fantastic unison lines—"Allen's Alley," "Moose The Mooche," "Hot House," those things. The solo work was incredible. Without instrumental facility, dexterity, and accuracy you couldn't play their style properly, because they used every chord possible to play in any given line of chords, at way, way up tempos. It was exciting, and I couldn't get enough of it. It definitely affected my style.

I couldn't do it immediately—it hadn't sunk in enough for me to think in that vein. I don't think anybody can pick it up quickly, but over the years I absorbed some of it. A lot of musicians I met in New York at the time didn't like the Parker-Gillespie style and rejected it out-of-hand. Some of them were pretty fair musicians; I don't know the reasons they rejected it, and I wouldn't ascribe any to them. But the ones who accepted it did so in good faith, and went ahead and tried to play in the style.

Now there's no question of the validity of this style. You know that the style had validity because it's still around, and has withstood the test of time.

HM: *Did you adjust your piano technique to the style?*

HJ: You play less stride when you play bebop, although it's possible to play stride and bebop with the right hand. When George Shearing came to this country he was unique, using a stride left hand and bop right hand. Erroll Garner used 4/4 repeated chords in the left hand with his right-hand style, which is impossible to describe.

But when you play bop, you almost 100 percent abandon the stride. You can use it for harmonic emphasis and for a balanced approach with a group, and you might use a modified stride to accompany the right hand if you're playing solo. But from my perspective, it's better to use a very modified bebop style or no bebop style at all solo. What you think and what you play may be two different things, of course. But I think I take more of an Art Tatum approach—which is not a bop approach, though the bop musicians incorporated some of his harmonic devices. That would be my *at-tempted* approach, though by no means do I think my playing's on the level of Tatum's! Heaven forbid! Tatum would spin in his grave!

HM: *When Hank came to bebop, Tatum, Teddy Wilson, and Earl Hines were still very active. Geri, when you arrived, were your predecessors so evident? Or should I ask: which pianists did you have under your fingers?*

GA: Mr. Jones. . . .

HJ: Hank.

GA: Yes, sir. Mr. Hank Jones, for instance. Tommy Flanagan. Of course, I'd listened to Bud Powell, the bebop pianists, and Thelonious Monk. Regarding this, I have a question for Mr. Jones.

HJ: Hank.

GA: . . . Hank Jones, regarding his relationship with Mr. Monk and Nat Cole. Where would you place yourself as their musical peer?

HJ: I would not consider myself their peer. I consider myself a student of those players, who were, and are, some of the experts. I say "are" because I think a pianistic style never dies. I always think of Tatum as being present because his style lives. If you've created a style like that, it has a life of its own. I've admired all the pianists you mentioned—and I hear a lot of Nat Cole in quite a few pianists; Oscar Peterson, in particular, was influenced by him. But I think at some point most pianists are. Maybe you don't even realize it, because it's such a natural style.

Every pianist is influenced by whatever he's heard or been exposed to. Learning is a process of absorption and rejection, or editing. You hear, you edit, you assimilate.

GA: I never got to see the great pianists Mr. Jones is mentioning alive. Everything I continue to learn from Bud Powell and Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk is from recordings and small bits of videotape. Fortunately, some documents allow you to see how they played and their technique.

HM: *Are you at a disadvantage that way?*

GA: I'm of a different generation; the best I can do is to study the tradition and the great pianists, try to live in the present in terms of my own environment and what I experienced growing up, and be honest about that. You can never duplicate someone else's greatness; you have to find your own way. That's part of what the tradition is about.

When I moved to New York in 1979, the club scene seemed strong. I heard McCoy Tyner, Cecil Taylor, and John Hicks, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and other AACM people.

HM: *Did you adapt yourself to AACM concepts?*

GA: They were the ones most open to giving me work; I worked with Oliver Lake first, then with Lester Bowie. Later, on a record with Ralph Peterson, my love for bebop tradition was exposed, and I began to get calls for that.

When I was at Howard University, Wallace Roney and I spent a lot

of time practicing together, trying to learn bebop language. That was really my foundation in terms of playing the piano. I was always trying to compose, but my efforts then were parallel to my study of the piano. Not until the past three or four years have I found a way to make what I compose and study one cohesive thing.

Perhaps, what I'm doing now is more inclusive, encompassing my respect for the whole spectrum of the music, because I can embrace the spectrum through composition. I can touch on all these different areas I love now.

HJ: When I came to New York and heard an entirely different concept than I'd been exposed to, I tried to do what Geri's done. I tried to amalgamate my approach with bebop style. I didn't completely abandon my previous style, because it required a two-handed approach, which I've always thought is the correct approach to the piano. Bebop almost compels you to abandon that. So I tried to build something new. To develop an original approach is the goal—sometimes conscious, sometimes not—of most musicians, I think, but it's a very difficult and elusive goal. It probably comes closer to fruition if, as Geri has, you combine creativity through composition with your concept of the bebop thing.

I don't want to completely go with *any* style to the extent that it destroys what *I* have. I don't think any player should completely abandon his or her approach, because you might have something to say that's different and viable. If you abandon it to accommodate some other style wholly, you lose something in the process.

HM: Geri, when you accompany Oliver Lake, Lester Bowie, Dewey Redman—who don't even share repertoire—what do you carry from one to the next of your own? What do you adapt?

GA: I've recently had the honor to work in duo settings with Betty Carter, and she's brought me back to my roots, to the standard repertoire. My approach has a lot to do with what will make her comfortable, but at the same time I'm bringing the experience of playing open forms. We play the structures—it's very important that the forms remain exact when you're playing across bar lines and placing 1's in unusual places. They're always there, even if the downbeat's not so explicit.

The bebop tradition already did all this. I'm shifting the emphasis, but everything comes from that tradition. My experience from playing open forms comes into it to allow, for instance, time to float while I keep the pulse going. I try to translate ideas I've gotten playing with Oliver and Lester and others into the bebop context while respecting it—not stretching it too far.

You walk a tightrope, though, because when you work with other musicians you want to project your ideas while a collective thing is happening. It's like sharing a room, or being married; you have to move in order for the other person to move, and they need to move, too. I've sometimes been strongheaded about projecting my ideas, and maybe I've offended people I've played with. But I've learned. You try to find ways to make everything balance, from minute to minute, in your musical relationships.

HJ: You've brought up a very important point: That whatever is



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being played contemporaneously must of necessity build on what happened earlier. That's the way things go. You build on what has been established, what has been laid out in procedural directions, then you go from there. Nothing exists in a vacuum; that explains the whole thing.

HM: Can musicians begin at a further remove from the tradition than reinterpreting it in an idiomatic way?

HJ: Is there a point at which the departure from the basis maintains no relation to the basis anymore? Can you reach a point where you're suspended in midair?

GA: Part of our tradition is that we draw from our roots. Everybody I've worked with feels that way. And the composition I wrote for my Jazz at Lincoln Center commission drew from different traditional places—maybe not literally. I tried to

stand in my own shoes at the same time. But the blues, the rhythms. . . . It was about swing, and coming from an established place. We have textures that reflect our own personalities; but the roots, the base, the music's center of gravity comes from everything established before us.

HJ: There will always be musical links to previous periods; they reestablish that something compatible with whatever is going on currently did happen earlier. Music should have that compatibility, and be a mosaic. If it were one thing exclusively, it would get stale and not have much interest. It has to include various elements, and over time more of the composer's own musical views should come to the fore, like cream rising to the top.

GA: But right now, it seems there are different camps in the music pulling at each other. One side, maybe the more visible side, suggests you have to do things in certain ways that conform to their ideas. To me, that's not what the tradition suggests—which is to study your forebears with respect, but to also try to find your own voice. Mr. Jones . . .

HJ: Hank.

GA: . . . you mentioned that there were musicians in the bebop era, predecessors of it, who rejected it, who didn't want the music to change, who perhaps fought against it changing. But musicians of your spirit took on the battle, even if they were rejected by some of the elders. You were embracing a tradition, but you were saying, "Yeah, this is beautiful, but I've got to go my way." I feel there's a certain pull—not from masters of your calibre, great musicians like you seem to be open to that process. But among some others there's a fear of change, a fear that things are moving on and they have to either resist it or flow with the changes. Miles Davis chose to flow through the popular elements happening in music; that's an interesting approach. There are as many different approaches as there are people doing it. I'd like them all to be allowed to happen.

HJ: I think you have to be open to ideas. I try to be. Who can say who's right? Only the test of time will tell, and we can't wait around for that. You have to go in the direction you believe in today.

The evaluation of a performance—by a critic, listener, or musician—should be based on how well or efficiently the performer does what he's attempting to do. What was the object? What was he

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END FARBBER

aiming for? How close did he get to that goal? There are certain fundamentals, like the basic rules of harmony as we know them. But you can stretch and bend the rules of harmony in all sorts of ways. Your work should conform in some sense to the basic rules, should be within the parameters, let's say—but there are outer limits to the rules. Sometimes you don't strictly stick with the rules. What are rules, anyway? They're meant to be broken. Then it depends on the concept of the performer or the composition, what they're trying to do, and on the particular day you're listening, what was accomplished.

Success and the appropriateness of an idea might depend on the

period the performer's trying to express. If you're playing period music, is the performance within its parameters? Does the interpretation apply? If you're playing some different kind of music—exploratory music, new music, a new composition—does what you're doing fit? Maybe fit is the key word. Does it *fit* what you're trying to express?

HM: *Mustn't realities of business be taken into account? You worked on the CBS staff in New York for almost 20 years. Did you have to constrain ideas to work there?*

HJ: Even before that, when I worked with Hot Lips Page, after I'd heard Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie! There was a fight going on in my mind; making a living took precedence, so I went on the road with Hot Lips Page for three or four months of one nighters in the Deep South.

There are times when you make concessions, but it need not change your mental direction, your overall objective. You have to keep that in perspective. This is the point you want to reach, so you aim for that, *regardless*.

The CBS thing was an example of that. Most of the time during those 15 or so years, I wasn't playing the kind of music I'd prefer to play. Musicians used to say, "What are you working on this staff for? You could be out making a lot more money"—I don't know about that, but—"out doing something that you would probably enjoy a lot more." I said, "It's providing me an economic base for trying to build something." I didn't lose my objective. It may have slowed me down a bit. I would have been a lot further on the road to where I want to be musically had I not worked at CBS. It had an inhibiting influence; you couldn't do the things you wanted to do. So, I did a lot of recording in those days. Perhaps not enough, I'm afraid, to offset

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CBS's negative effects.

But the bottom line is this: You set yourself a goal and work for it. Music is like any other field of endeavor—you set yourself an objective, you work towards it, you don't let anything deter you, whether your peers agree with you or not. Maybe they're wrong, and maybe you're right.

GA: But there's enough room for everybody, hopefully.

HJ: That's right. There should be a willingness to explore new ideas and let musicians perform who have a different musical approach than what you yourself are used to. You shouldn't be afraid to expose people to different ideas, and to open yourself. I don't get asked about these matters by the powers that be. . . .

GA: Which is a travesty. People like Mr. Jones should be consulted, their ideas respected and presented. That's what a program like Lincoln Center's should represent: an opportunity to learn from the masters who are still in the trenches. And those masters include people like Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, too. It would be a great shot in the arm for the music community to experience the whole of our music, because it's broad. I sure would be in the front row. May I ask Mr. Jones a question?

HJ: Only if you call me Hank.

GA: Okay, Hank. Do you consider there to be a Detroit piano school?

HJ: I've heard that question asked many, many times. To tell you the truth, I can't see it. I don't think there's any such. Perhaps due to the fact that pianists congregated there at one time—Lonnie Scott, Art Tatum, Morgan Garreau, who might have been Tatum under another name; pianists in Detroit may have been inspired. But the short answer is no. I don't know a Detroit school.

GA: Perhaps you're the father of it, if I may suggest so. A lot of

people have patterned themselves after you. If you're not aware of it, I'm here to tell you.

HJ: If that's the case, even more people will be impressed by your stylings and your energy at the piano. I'm sure you've inspired many students already, and this will happen more as your music circulates further. And I will be in the front row. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Gerri Allen's pianos are provided by Steinway & Sons, while Hank Jones endorses Wurritzer pianos.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- | Gerri Allen | Hank Jones |
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| <i>MAROONS</i> —Blue Note 99493 | <i>HANDFUL OF KEYS</i> —Verve 314 514 216 |
| <i>THE NURTURER</i> —Blue Note 95139 | <i>LIVE AT MAYBECK RECITAL HALL, VOL. 16</i> —Concord Jazz 4502 |
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| <i>HOMEGROWN</i> —Minor Music 004 | <i>THE HANK JONES QUARTET-QUINTET</i> —Savoy Jazz 0147 |
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| <i>IN THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON</i> —JMT 834 426 | <i>THE ESSENCE</i> —DMP 480 (Ray Drummond, Billy Higgins) |
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| <i>SEGMENTS</i> —DIW 833 | <i>THE GREAT JAZZ TRIO: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD</i> —East Wind 35JD-6 (Ron Carter, Tony Williams) |
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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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GERRY MULLIGAN

By Mitchell Seidel

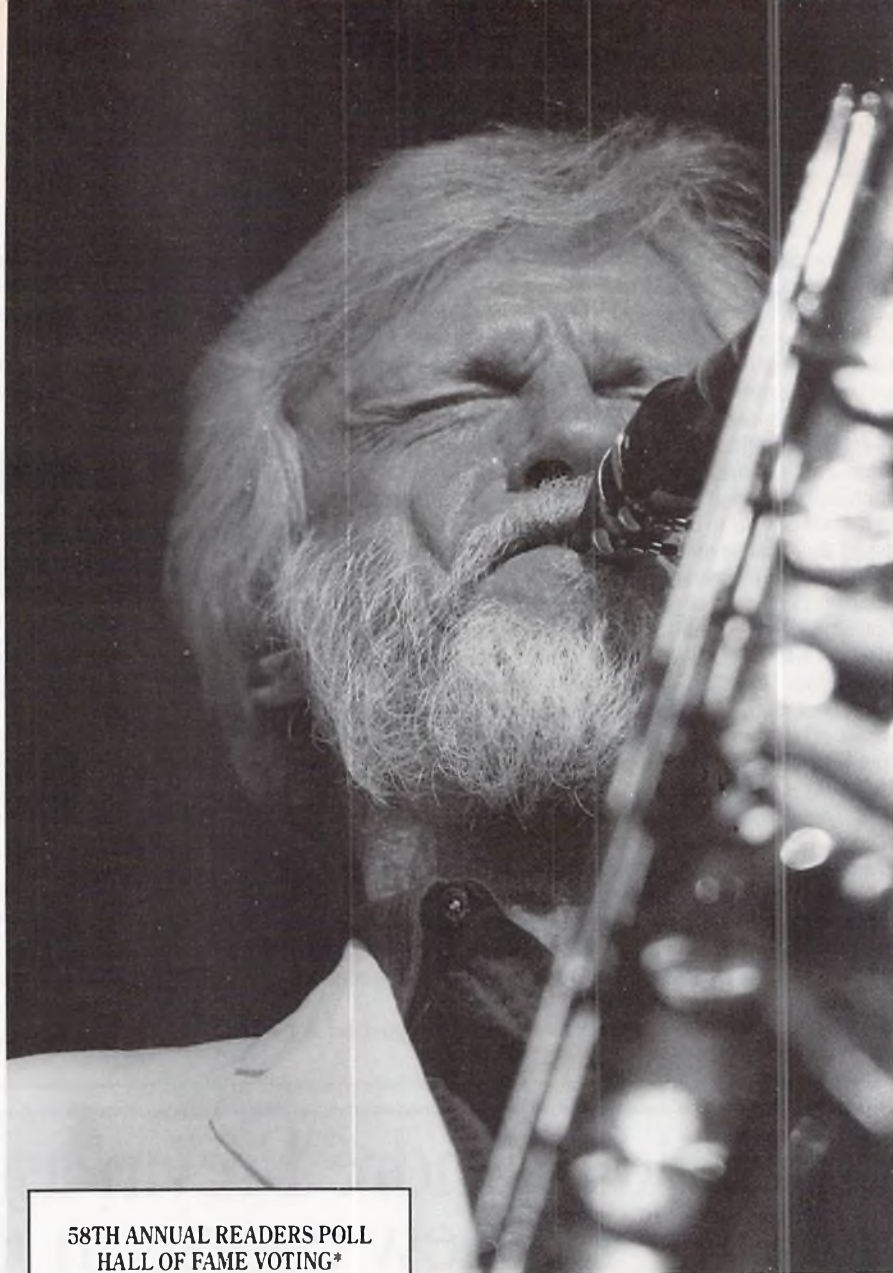
It comes as no surprise that after more than four decades at the forefront of jazz that Gerry Mulligan has been voted into the **Down Beat** Hall of Fame. The only surprise is why it took so long. The readers of **Down Beat** magazine corrected the oversight by electing Mulligan in the 58th Annual Poll. And, deservedly so.

Mulligan has played alongside some of the best in the music, including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Billie Holliday, Wynton Marsalis, and Stan Getz. Born in New York in 1927, Mulligan first earned fame as an arranger for Gene Krupa at the age of 19. He then joined Miles Davis' groundbreaking Birth of the Cool band, a collection of musicians that radically changed the direction of postwar jazz.

Moving to California in the early 1950s, Mulligan continued this work with his own 10-piece group while forming a quartet with trumpeter Chet Baker and drummer Chico Hamilton. In the late '50s, he formed another influential pianoless quartet with trumpeter Art Farmer, bassist Bill Crow, and drummer Dave Bailey. In 1960, the 13-piece Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band was created, a pianoless big band that set the tone for big-band jazz into the '60s and continues to be an influence today.

Initially known as an arranger, Mulligan soon proved he was equally skilled as a player, taking the baritone saxophone in a different direction than had been heard in

"Having joined the 58th Annual Readers Poll proper in 1952, the Readers Poll Hall of Fame is now in its 42nd year.



MITCHELL SEIDEL

58TH ANNUAL READERS POLL HALL OF FAME VOTING*

186	Gerry Mulligan
138	Dave Brubeck
132	J.J. Johnson
102	Joe Henderson
96	Joe Williams
84	Horace Silver
84	McCoy Tyner
60	Wayne Shorter
54	Milt Jackson
51	Charlie Haden
51	Sonny Stitt
45	Clark Terry
45	Phil Woods

both swing and bebop contexts and helping to create what became known as the "West Coast" jazz sound. The public and critics concurred on his talent, and Mulligan went on to top the **DB** polls through some four decades. In the mid-'70s, he picked up the soprano saxophone, and he has played clarinet in dixieland settings as well.

While conceding that the soprano "is a bastard" to master, Mulligan is quick to point out that the baritone is not difficult in the same ways that the soprano is. "The difficulty for the baritone," Mulligan pointed

out, "is to be able to make a sound on the thing that will project. It's an instrument that when people try to get volume out of it, they get a lot of noise."

"I came to the baritone with an idea of what I wanted to sound like, and then proceeded to try to do it. It meant experimentation until I found a mouthpiece that would do what I want. Once I found that, I was on my way to being able to get out of the horn what I wanted."

Mulligan couldn't have picked a more unusual time to develop a melodic sound on the saxophone. The bebop revolution placed a premium on the speed with which ideas could come from a horn, and his style was to head away from the hard-edged bop techniques expounded by baritone players like Serge Chaloff.

"I always thought of it as a melodic instrument. There're two totally different approaches, and Serge and I represent those approaches," he said.

"Adrian Rollini played bass saxophone, and had a very melodic approach. It was

actually long after I had begun to play baritone that I heard records of Adrian Rollini playing. And he had the kind of approach that was the direction I had gone. It's quite possible that as a kid I heard Adrian Rollini, anyway [on radio]. It's quite possible that that influence was stuck in my memory banks even though I wasn't aware of what or who it was.

"If I, as a kid, had my choice of stringed instruments to play, instead of picking the violin, I probably would have picked the cello. In this instance, instead of picking the alto sax, I picked the baritone. It was in a similar register. Why the lower register appeals to one kid over another, who knows the answer to that? Ever ask somebody why they play tuba or bass fiddle? We all have our peculiarities.

"A lot of that thing of playing the baritone as a melodic instrument, it's creating an illusion that I'm actually playing higher than I am. In order to do that, it has to be very melodic. Then, people are not aware of the register so much."

These days, Mulligan and his wife, Franca, make their home in suburban Connecticut, close enough to New York for work and far enough away for comfort. He continues to work in a variety of contexts. Along with the Concert Jazz Band, which was revived in the '70s and again in the late '80s, he toured in 1992 with a tentette that paid tribute to his collaborations with Miles Davis as the Re-Birth of the Cool band, and currently works with a quartet that includes Ron Vincent on drums, Ted Rosenthal on piano, and Dean Johnson on bass. He also has made some forays into chamber-orchestra music and teaching, having been honored by the Andre and Clara Mertens Contemporary Composers Festival at the University of Bridgeport, only the second jazz composer (the other being Dave Brubeck) so honored in its 22-year history.

An article in *The New York Times* quoted Dr. Karl Kramer, chairman of the school's music department, as saying that Mulligan was chosen for the honor because "the faculty felt he was the dean of American jazz composition."

"It feels a little exaggerated to me, because I feel fairly much like a musical illiterate," Mulligan laughed. "I try my best to pick up the knowledge I need as I go along. Everything I set out to write, especially if I start writing for the [chamber] orchestra, I have to figure out my method as I go along, because I have no training in the field. My concern is always for music and musicality, so that's what I aim for.

"It feels like just a little bit of hyperbole, to call me the dean of American jazz composition," he continued, chuckling. "But I love hearing it. I'm extremely flattered."

At the other end of the spectrum, Mulligan's re-examination of the 40-year-old *Birth Of The Cool* material left him with mixed feelings. He concedes that 1992's "Re-Birth" excursions weren't everything he had expected, but added two concerts in Brazil last year were much more satisfying.

"It was interesting. The reason I did it was to see how it felt to use that stuff [again], how it felt to play it, how differently younger players might approach the thing, and what might have been done in any way of expansion. I learned a lot from it; had a good time."

A request from a Brazilian promoter had Mulligan put the band together again for concerts in Rio and Sao Paulo. "I'm glad I did, because the band really sounded great. It felt great. It felt the way I'd hoped it had felt last year, but it never really jelled.

"Whatever it was [in Brazil], there was a

tremendous ensemble feeling to it. It was a much lighter feeling," he said, adding that he ranks the Brazilian concerts with his tentette as some of the personal musical highlights of the past year.

"There are three or four things that have happened that I really wished were on tape, because I would love to know if it was just my imagination or it was really as good as I thought it was," he laughed. "People record things all over the place, and just about everything else is taped, except these three nights.

"Two of them were when Wynton Marsalis and I played together. Once at Town Hall [in New York], and once in Chicago [at Ravinia]. And the other time was in Sao Paulo with the tentette. It was just my bad luck that it wasn't recorded. Especially the things with Wynton, because he and I were talking

DOWN BEAT HALL OF FAME

Readers Poll

- 1952** Louis Armstrong
- 1953** Glenn Miller
- 1954** Stan Kenton
- 1955** Charlie Parker
- 1956** Duke Ellington
- 1957** Benny Goodman
- 1958** Count Basie
- 1959** Lester Young
- 1960** Dizzy Gillespie
- 1961** Billie Holiday
- 1962** Miles Davis
- 1963** Thelonious Monk
- 1964** Eric Dolphy
- 1965** John Coltrane
- 1966** Bud Powell
- 1967** Billy Strayhorn
- 1968** Wes Montgomery
- 1969** Ornette Coleman
- 1970** Jimi Hendrix
- 1971** Charles Mingus
- 1972** Gene Krupa
- 1973** Sonny Rollins
- 1974** Buddy Rich
- 1975** Cannonball Adderley
- 1976** Woody Herman
- 1977** Paul Desmond
- 1978** Joe Venuti
- 1979** Ella Fitzgerald
- 1980** Dexter Gordon
- 1981** Art Blakey
- 1982** Art Pepper
- 1983** Stephane Grappelli
- 1984** Oscar Peterson
- 1985** Sarah Vaughan
- 1986** Stan Getz
- 1987** Lionel Hampton
- 1988** Jaco Pastorius
- 1989** Woody Shaw
- 1990** Red Rodney
- 1991** Lee Morgan
- 1992** Maynard Ferguson
- 1993** Gerry Mulligan

Critics Poll

- Coleman Hawkins
- Bix Beiderbecke
- Jelly Roll Morton
- Art Tatum
- Earl Hines
- Charlie Christian
- Bessie Smith
- Sidney Bechet/Fats Waller
- Pec Wee Russell/Jack Teagarden
- Johnny Hodges
- Roy Eldridge/Django Reinhardt
- Clifford Brown
- Fletcher Henderson
- Ben Webster
- Cecil Taylor
- King Oliver
- Benny Carter
- Rahsaan Roland Kirk
- Lennie Tristano
- Max Roach
- Bill Evans
- Fats Navarro
- Albert Ayler
- Sun Ra
- Zoot Sims
- Gil Evans
- Johnny Dodds/Thad Jones/
Teddy Wilson
- Kenny Clarke
- Chet Baker
- Mary Lou Williams
- John Carter
- James P. Johnson
- Edward Blackwell



Mulligan, Dizzy Gillespie, and Milt Jackson rehearsing for Dizzy's Dream Band in 1981

MITCHELL SEIDEL

about doing some recording together for years, and this would have given it some direction."

Playing duets with Marsalis, Mulligan

said the counterpoint and interplay "worked so well. It worked better with him than anybody since Chet.

"[Wynton] approaches things with such a

cooperative attitude. When you're doing counterpoint, that's what you're doing. He and I together were listening, and able to adjust to each other. For whatever reason, we found ourselves going in directions *together*, it was so easy. The lines just jelled and weaved in and out as if we'd been doing it all our lives. It was exciting, and I'd love to do more of it."

Of all the music Mulligan has made, one style that escaped his attention until now is Brazilian. That has been remedied with a new album with singer Jane Duboc called *Paraiso*. The collaboration dates back a decade, when the two met on tour and Mulligan expressed interest in recording a Brazilian album.

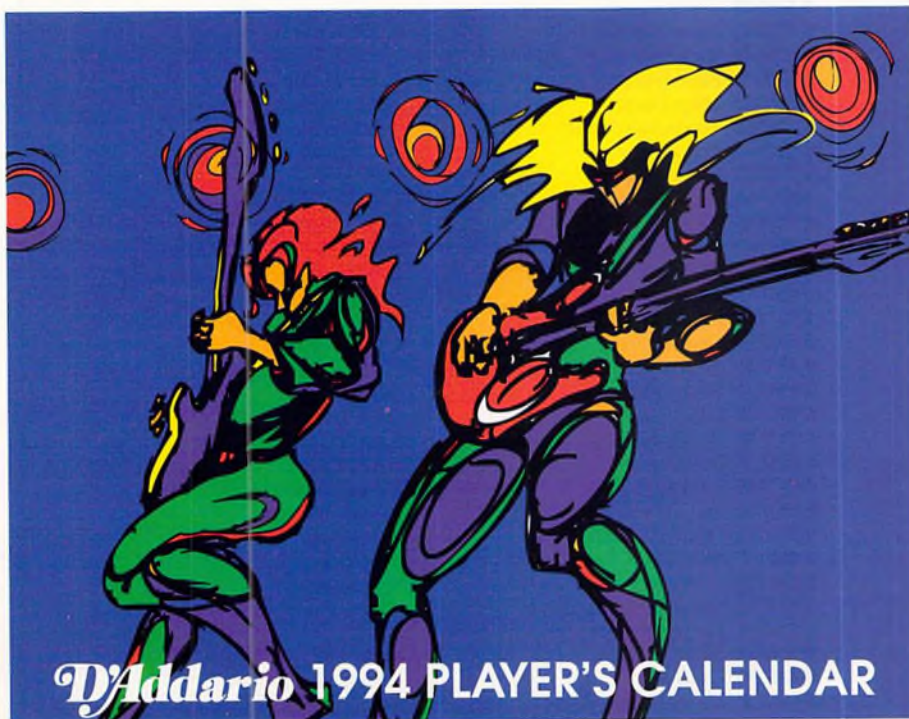
Over the years, Mulligan developed a reputation, somewhat earned, of being a difficult person at times, a tad demanding both of others and of himself. Bandstand admonishments to audiences are delivered on occasion with some self-deprecating sarcasm. But Mulligan acknowledges that the years have taken the edge off his demeanor.

"It's a long process. I feel I had a long adolescence," he chuckled. In fact, a two-part article in *Down Beat* some 34 years ago was interesting in its exploration of Mulligan's character, quoting musicians he had worked with over the past decade about how he had matured as a musician and individual.

"It was nice to read all that . . . I recall that. It feels good when the guys say that. I've always felt like I'm sitting on a keg of dynamite. I've been like that all my life. Part of that is my nervous system and metabolism. I've a short fuse, and trying to get control of it is a job of dealing with your mind," he said. "In recent years, I discovered I had hypoglycemia. It's like the opposite to diabetes. If you take sugar or anything like sugar into the system, the body produces this surge of insulin. And as a consequence, I finally realized this had a big effect on how quickly my moods would change, because the blood sugar would be up and down like a yo-yo.

"A doctor friend of mine who was examining me said when it went down, it was a wonder I could drag myself around, because I have low blood pressure, anyway. That, combined with low blood sugar, was just devastating. He said it causes tremendous mood swings. With all those things together, it's not been easy."

With such a varied career, it is difficult, if not impossible, for Mulligan to pin down career highlights. One could point to the time he went on stage with Charlie Parker, or playing at last year's inaugural celebration for President Bill Clinton, or collaborating with Miles Davis, Paul Desmond, Bob



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THE PLAYER'S CHOICE

Brookmeyer, or Thelonious Monk. Then there were the times just hanging out and talking with Bird, or Mulligan's treasured hours spent talking with Duke Ellington and Harry Carney.

"I've had lots of highlights. There've been moments of satisfaction with just about every band that I've had. Usually, my satisfactions are based on what happens in my relationships with other musicians and other people," he said.

"That's one of those apples-and-oranges

EQUIPMENT

Mulligan plays a gold-plated Conn baritone saxophone, serial #M189588. He also has a Selmer soprano sax, serial #183036, and two Buffet clarinets: RC and Festival models. Mulligan uses a Gale mouthpiece and Vandoren reeds, strength 4-5, on his baritone.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

CD, or not CD, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler to wait patiently for the slings and arrows of outrageous reissue programs, or go forth into the mines of vintage vinyl. Despite appearances, some of Gerry Mulligan's better music remains unissued on compact disc. While a selection of his Verve saxophone encounters has been reissued, the only session that remains available in its entirety is the one with Ben Webster. Similarly, only a small sampling of the 1960 vintage Concert Jazz Band is available. Capitol's 1953 tenette dates, a natural extension of Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool*, are unavailable on CD. And if you try finding the 1972 A&M session, *The Age Of Steam* (a Mulligan favorite, incidentally), you'll do better looking in the bins at your local vinyl recycler rather than the CD rack.

GERRY MULLIGAN QUARTET AT STORYVILLE—Pacific Jazz CDP 944722

MULLIGAN PLAYS MULLIGAN—Fantasy/OJCCD-003-2

GERRY MULLIGAN/PAUL DESMOND—Fantasy (LP) OJC-273

LITTLE BIG HORN—GRP GRD-9503

RE-BIRTH OF THE COOL—GRP GRD-9679

CALIFORNIA CONCERTS VOL. 1—Blue Note B21Y-45860

CALIFORNIA CONCERTS VOL. 2—Blue Note B21Y-45864

COMPACT JAZZ: GERRY MULLIGAN AND THE CONCERT JAZZ BAND—Verve 838-933-2

WALK ON THE WATER—DRG CDSL-5194

with Chet Baker

CARNEGIE HALL CONCERT—CBS Associated ZK-40689

GERRY MULLIGAN QUARTET FEATURING CHET BAKER—Fantasy/OJCCD-711-2

THE BEST OF GERRY MULLIGAN—Blue Note CDP 7 95481 2

with others

MULLIGAN MEETS MONK—Fantasy/OJCCD-301-2

GERRY MULLIGAN MEETS BEN WEBSTER—Verve 841 661-2

GERRY MULLIGAN MEETS THE SAXOPHONISTS—Verve 827 436-2 (Paul Desmond, Zoot Sims, Stan Getz, Johnny Hodges, and Ben Webster)

BIRTH OF THE COOL—Capitol CDP 7 92862 2 (Miles Davis)

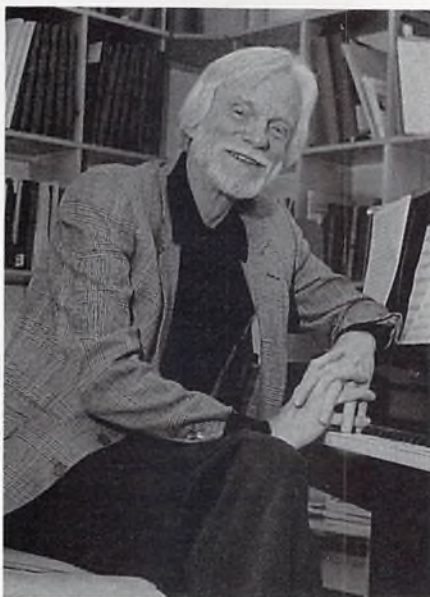
NIGHT LIGHTS—Verve 818 271-2 (Bob Brookmeyer, Art Farmer)

KONITZ MEETS MULLIGAN—Blue Note B21Y-46647 (Lee Konitz)

SOFT LIGHTS AND SWEET MUSIC—Concord Jazz CCD-4300 (Scott Hamilton)

PARAISO—Telarc CD-83361 (Jane Duboc)

ANNIE ROSS SINGS A SONG WITH MULLIGAN—EMI-Manhattan CDP 7 46852 2



MITCHELL SEIDEL

"I've always felt like I'm sitting on a keg of dynamite. I've been that way all my life."



questions. The early days with Chet and Chico were one thing, and then later on with Brookmeyer was another, and then with Brookmeyer and Zoot it was something else, and with [Art] Farmer it was something. I've had all these great associations, and each one of those things musically was different from the other, and each one of them gave me different kinds of experiences and have their own special meanings.

"In a lot of ways, I've been very fortunate. As I was saying earlier, physically, it's not been an easy life. But the rewards have been tremendous in so many other ways." **DB**

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Solo Status

MARCUS MILLER

By Patrick Cole



Here's a thumbnail sketch of a fast-track resume that most bass players would love to call their own:

- Became a studio musician at age 16.
- Did studio gigs with Miles Davis when he was 22.
- Wrote and produced (with Tommy LiPuma) Miles Davis' "Tutu" at age 25.
- Performed on and produced David Sanborn's Grammy-winning albums *Straight From The Heart*, *Double Vision*, and *Upfront*.
- At 27, began writing motion-picture soundtracks for Spike Lee's *School Daze*, *Siesta* with Miles Davis, and most recently, *Boomerang*.
- Produced and wrote material or albums for Al Jarreau, Luther Vandross, the Yellowjackets, Spyro Gyra, and Aretha Franklin by age 32.

Impressive, without a doubt. But if you ask Marcus Miller whether he's impressed, he might nod and then say he'd like to see one more credit: a list of successful solo albums. After all, he has the right to be critical because it's his resume you've just read.

"I think if I were just a bass player, I would have been where I am now five years ago," Miller says about his solo career. "But I know who I am, and I know that I couldn't just play the bass and have that be all that I do."

Miller, who is regarded as a legendary session man and producer at the age of 33, certainly has few regrets about focusing on producing and arranging others early in his career. Now, he wants to take the next logical step. After a decade of helping other musicians find their voices, he wants to find his own and break out as a solo artist.

This isn't Miller's first declaration of solo-hood. His first album, *Suddenly*, and his second effort, *Marcus Miller*, garnered respectable reviews. Yet they didn't carry him to the top of the charts and make him a household name like Stanley Clarke. Three years ago, he joined forces with former Return to Forever drummer Lenny White and keyboardist Osborne Gould Bingham Jr., and launched the Jamaica Boys. Looking back, Miller admits the albums reflected his skills as a soloist but left him no room for improvement.

"I listen to those albums now, and they're cool, except that I don't know if I had a strong sense of myself," he says during an interview at his manager's West Hollywood office on Sunset Boulevard. "After the second album, which I did in 1983, I said to myself, 'You

need to stop making your own albums, because you can't force your voice to come.'"

Miller says that he didn't find his voice until he had worked with the late Miles Davis and spent the past three years making his current release, *The Sun Don't Lie*. "Up to now I don't know if I really knew who I was," says Miller, wearing black boots, a black Fedora, and white t-shirt donning Miles Davis' face. "I was a chameleon, and I still am a chameleon in that I could find a voice that could fit with the different people I work with. But I want to make my record sound like *me*."

Not only was he in search of a voice, he also sought to become a formidable producer and arranger by working with an eclectic group of musicians, ranging from Davis to Vandross. "Particularly with Miles," Miller says. "He gave me incredible freedom to do what I wanted to do as long as I just worked with him. When you play bass and you want to do an album as a bass player, it's pretty important to have some kind of ability to at least compose or arrange. Otherwise, you're not going to be able to create a proper forum for the bass."

Miller's big moment of validation as a producer came when he was recording the Grammy-winning *Tutu* with Davis. During the third take of the title track, Davis paused and asked the 25-year-old Miller a question that he could hardly believe. "Miles said, 'Hey, when are you going to tell me what to do?'" Miller recalls. "And I said, 'What?! Tell you what to do?' And he said, 'Yeah, I need some direction; now tell me what to do, motherfucker.' That was the defining moment for me."

The Sun Don't Lie is the work that begins to define Miller and his musical tastes. It sounds funky one moment, soulful another, and jazzy four tracks later. Like his career, Miller's voice has range. On the album's title track Miller solos with a rich sound that resembles an acoustic bass played with a bow. That sound was inspired by two of his favorite bass players, Paul Chambers and Jaco Pastorius. Meanwhile, he lays down a funky bassline while letting steel drummer Andy Narell and keyboardist Joe Sample stretch out. On the tune "Scoop," Miller reverts to a slapping technique reminiscent of his work on several tracks of Davis' *Amandla*. "I know I will never have one voice," he says. "It's just not me."

To make sure that his album finds an audience, Miller and his manager, Patrick Rains, decided to forego a record deal from a major label and release the album themselves. The pair decided to use a strategy that unknown independent artists sometimes use. First, Rains financed the record himself, while Miller wrote and produced it, hiring musicians ranging from vocalist Maurice White to saxophonist Everette Harp. Next, they leased the record to JVC in Japan and Dreyfuss Jazz in Europe; the album was released in those countries last summer.

"That would put us into areas where there is more long-term career potential," Rains says. Initially, Miller was concerned that the album wasn't being released in the United States first. But Miller later learned that the album's Japanese release had created a buzz back home. That was a promotional boost that many albums don't receive.

Then Rains and Miller began talking to U.S. record companies. The album, which cost more than six figures to produce, had a high price tag. But some labels were still interested, including GRP Records president Larry Rosen. In the end, Rains and Miller turned down Rosen's offer. What convinced them to take a risk and go the independent route was that most record labels can only promote a record fervently for a few months after its release. After that period, other records have to be released, and Miller's album would no longer become a priority. But if he and Rains were calling shots on the album, they could work the

"I said to myself, 'You need to stop making your own albums, because you can't force your voice to come.'"



album for, say, nine months or even a year.

That led to the creation of a quasi-record company with Rains and Miller in charge. They hired radio-promotion firms and marketing specialists to push the album. So, instead of being at the mercy of a record company's promotion department with limited time and resources, they could work the album without constrictions.

"Right now, I think there is a window of opportunity," Rains says. "We've done exactly what we would have done if we had signed to Warner Bros. or GRP. We've already committed the money to advertising, we've gone out to the marketplace, and we've gone to radio. It will take a little longer to get the record out. But the fact of the matter is that the record will stay out there longer."

As for the future, Miller is already at work on his next release. He has set no timetable for its completion. He has no theme or specific notions for it other than to let the best ideas come to him.

Miller's laboratory is his home studio in L.A. It is equipped with a drum machine, synthesizers, 24-track mixing board, and his bass guitars. Also

leaning up against the wall is his bass clarinet, a cousin of the first instrument he had ever played. He also practices his bass in the studio when he's not on the road. "Actually, when I'm on the road, I practice more," he says. "I practice bebop because that's the most difficult music there is."

Miller says his goal is not to be the next Stanley Clarke or even Jaco Pastorius, but just to be Marcus Miller. "I think if I were on my way to being the next Jaco, I would have been there already," Miller says modestly. "He was 25 or 26 when he was playing that stuff. I have grown really slowly, but I have absolutely grown. But I think what he did is different from what I'm going for."

"Jaco and Stanley Clarke are my idols," he continues. "They represented what I was going for when I was a kid. Stanley Clarke was 22 or 23 when he made all our jaws drop. I didn't play my fretted bass for a year or two because I was 'Jaco-ing' out. But as you get older, you start realizing that you find out who you are and find out what's in your realm. I think what I do is more rooted in r&b. I don't want to just play the bass; I want to integrate the bass in my music."

Now that Miller is on the road to finding his voice, he says that his main goal is to refine it. "I can't really describe my voice," he says. "The music I want to make, when you hear it 50 years from now, I want it to be for these times. The problem when you're making contemporary music, you don't know if the music is going to end up lasting, because you're making it for the moment. But Bird [Charlie Parker] and others weren't sure that the music was going to last; they just made the baddest music they could make at that moment. That's what I'm trying to do." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Miller's main basses are a 1976 Fender Jazz Bass, Fodera four-string fretless, two Roger Sadowsky fretted five-string basses, and a graphite Modulus six-string fretless bass. He also has a Buffet bass clarinet he bought in 1991.

For pickups, Miller uses Stock amps, AKG 414 mics, and Neuman 57's.

In his home studio, he has a host of keyboards that include a Roland S-770 sampler, Ensoniq KS-32 and VFX EPS-60 keyboards, Yamaha DX-7, and Mini-Moog. An Akai MPC-60 serves as a drum machine. He also keeps an E-mu Proteus synthesizer handy.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE SUN DON'T LIE—PRA 5042
THE JAMAICA BOYS—Warner Bros. 26076
MARCUS MILLER—Warner Bros. 25074
SUDDENLY—Warner Bros. 23806
with Miles Davis
TUTU—Warner Bros. 25490
WE WANT MILES—Columbia C2-38005
THE MAN WITH THE HORN—Columbia 36790
with David Sanborn
UPFRONT—Elektra 61272
STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART—Warner Bros. 25150
BACKSTREET—Warner Bros. 23906
AS WE SPEAK—Warner Bros. 23650
VOYEUR—Warner Bros. 3546
HIDEAWAY—Warner Bros. 3379
DOUBLE VISION—Warner Bros. 25393 (Bob James)
with Scritti Politti
CUPID & PSYCHE '85—Warner Bros. 25302

with Kevin Eubanks
FACE TO FACE—GRP 1029
with Luther Vandross
THE NIGHT I FELL IN LOVE—Epic 39882
GIVE ME THE REASON—Epic 40415
NEVER TOO MUCH—Epic 37451
with Aretha Franklin
JUMP TO IT—Arista 9602
with Spyro Gyra
INCOGNITO—MCA 5368
with Grover Washington, Jr.
COME MORNING—Elektra 562
WINELIGHT—Elektra 305
SKYLARKIN'—Motown 37436-5232



STEVE PHILLIPS

Dianne Reeves

Jazz Sings A New Song

TODAY'S YOUNG SINGERS

By Willard Jenkins

While the crucible of jazz remains squarely in New York, there is fine jazz being made all over the country. And nowhere is this more clear than in the case of jazz singing. In any major or secondary market, you are likely to find any number of capable, if not exciting, jazz vocalists.

Stop at the nation's capital, and you'll find established Ronnie Wells, and emerging Maija or Melissa Walker. In San Francisco, it may be Kitty Margolis or Ann Dyer, to mention just two. Detroit offers Naima Shambourger. Try Debbie Duncan or the Peterson sisters, Patty or Linda, among a crop of would-be jazz vocal practitioners in the Twin Cities. Among the riches of Chicago you might encounter veteran Geraldine de Haas or the dramatic Rita Warford. In Milwaukee there's a woman named Jessie Hauk who swings mighty hard; and we haven't even been below the Mason Dixon

line yet, where untold riches like New Orleans' Germaine Bazzle or Durham, N.C.'s sassy Eve Cornelius await the ears.

This is a very fertile period in jazz vocal-ese. Yet, the road to landing a gig, record contract, and some name recognition appears to be as tough as ever. From this rough world, and admittedly short list of singers, we might ask: Who's out there to succeed the Betty Carters, Shirley Horns, Abbey Lincolns, and Sheila Jordans—not to mention the apparently retired Carmen McRae and Ella Fitzgerald? Conversely, where are the new Joe Williams, Jon Hendricks, or Mark Murphys coming from?

The leading women aspirants: Carmen Bradford, Madeline Eastman, Nnenna Freelon, Carmen Lundy, Vanessa Rubin, Cassandra Wilson, and let's not forget the superb voice of Dianne Reeves. Percolating just below the surface are such potential contenders as Karen Allyson, Patricia Bar-

ber (perhaps closest to Horn with respect to her considerable piano talents), Trudy Desmond, Roseanna Vitro, Renee Manning, expatriate Deborah Brown (Europe), Jeanie Bryson, Judy Niemack, Judi Lovano, Carla White, and north of the border we have Jeri Brown (Montreal) and Raneé Lee (Toronto). Some, like Jeri Brown, have found shelter in academia (à la many jazz instrumentalists), all the while yearning for a breakthrough.

Another interesting case in point in this second group is the extraordinary voice of Rachele Farrell—who may well turn out to be one of those singers who vacillates between the jazz and pop worlds, like Phyllis Hyman, Jean Carn, Dee Dee Bridgewater, or, at various puzzling points in her checkered recording career, Dianne Reeves. The latter four are big voices with bona-fide jazz chops who chafed at being labeled jazz singers (in interviews Farrell has also made such noises), failed to make much impact in crossing over, and never made the breakthrough their rich talents once seemed destined for.

Ever heard of Eden Atwood, Nora Yorke, or Laverne Butler? If their record companies have any say in the matter, you will. Atwood is recently out on Concord Jazz, with the other two to follow on other labels. For once, men are decidedly in arrears in the jazz vocal esthetic. If you eliminate Harry Connick, Jr., who seems bound for the Cole-

Sinatra-Bennett arena, choosing to be more pop than bop, and the incomparable Bobby McFerrin, we're left with John Pizzarelli (like Shirley Horn, another instrumentalist who sings), Australian Vince Jones, new Concord Records artist Tom Lellis, and perhaps the most promising male jazz vocalists to debut this decade, Kansas City's Kevin Mahogany and New Orleans' Philip Manuel. Mahogany and Manuel both have admirable phrase-turning abilities, the swing factor, and rich baritone instruments. But why are there so few men stepping up to the mic?

Jazz vocal master and lyricist Jon Hendricks espouses something of a global theory for the dearth of new jazzmen with voice: "I think the reason is, generally speaking, we're living in the midst of a deculturalization program—it's practically murdering the music. All the dope in neighborhoods, the destruction of the church—this does not create the kind of cultural climate where we had all the great male vocalists coming out of. Even the women are offered more money to sing nothing, rather than sing jazz. All this general breakdown of our society—deliberately conspired from



Kevin Mahogany

ALLEN MATTHEWS

without—is creating a dearth of not only male jazz vocalists but instrumentalists as well. It's a cultural genocide. Our cultural leaders aren't addressing this."

According to recording artist Vanessa

Rubin, whose first two outings have resulted in good notices and chart-topping success, one of the greatest difficulties facing jazz vocalists is "maybe just being labeled 'jazz.' It's no problem with me because I define myself by reference points. I know what I'm doing is jazz; it's jazz and there's no mistake about it! Everybody knows that swing and bop is jazz. I don't do anything that's questionable; I want it to be very clear what I do. The fact is, there are long-term rewards in doing jazz, but there's no immediate gratification in terms of material rewards. You're just not gonna make money doing jazz right away. And it takes a long time to be good," she adds.

From a different point in the spectrum is Minneapolis' Debbie Duncan, on the brink of her first release, something of a boutique effort on the local Igmod label. "As a female jazz vocalist," Duncan feels, "the hardest thing is dealing with the record companies. If they've already picked up one or two singers that fit their profile, they have a quota; and once they have their quota, that's it. Sometimes it doesn't even make a difference if you're a good singer or a bad singer. The hardest thing is dealing with things that

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don't have anything to do with the music."

Duncan's forthcoming release, while admittedly on a small label with a limited run, will nonetheless fill a void in her career. "These days you have to have a product to send to the companies," she continues. "What I decided to do is make a product with a local label that maybe a major label will pick up. You need to be heard; it's next to impossible to make those festivals and things if you don't have a product," she concludes.

Singers, as is true for anyone else playing jazz, must dedicate themselves for the long haul, which isn't easy in these times of instant gratification. "Jazz people are very critical," according to Rubin. "They guard jazz very selfishly. They tend not to give a lot of credit to people that are new at it. You've gotta live life, have many life experiences to bring to this music, to *really* tell the stories."

Kevin Mahogany's debut recording for enja has been something of a phenomenon this year (see "Riffs" Dec. '93). With little or no hardcore marketing, the record has spent



Vanessa Rubin

a good deal of time on the charts. In fact, Mahogany relates that his is the first enja release to ever make the *Billboard* chart! He stands virtually alone in terms of emerging

male jazz vocalists getting noticed. "I think the major labels want to put black men in the crossover and r&b category, put them with strings, et cetera," is how he explains the dearth of young males singing jazz.

So what made him turn his mellifluous baritone voice towards the art of the improvisers? "A combination of things. I started out playing baritone sax in big bands in Kansas City. In the mid-'70s I got turned on to Jon Hendricks, Bobby McFerrin, Al Jarreau . . . that turned me on to singing. In '81, I decided to be a full-time vocalist." No fool, Mahogany recognizes the fact he's got virtually an open field in which to work. "I actually think [breaking into the jazz business] would be much harder if I was a female. Now, I think the major labels are going to start scrambling for male jazz vocalists." Mahogany's mentor Jon Hendricks has kind words to say about the man from KC: "I'm just wild about Kevin Mahogany. He's got the respect, the reverence . . . I see very big things for him."

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Madeline Eastman

Bay Area's honey-voiced Madeline Eastman, who has been championed by critics from Leonard Feather on down the line. Her two CD releases have both been on a label she and fellow singer Kitty Margolis share, Mad-Kat Records. Despite the two releases, she still yearns for that elusive contract, pointing to the hardest aspect of being an emerging jazz vocalist: "Getting a record contract—a *real* record contract," Eastman states, "so you have some *real* money behind you. Mad-Kat has worked about eight-million times better than I thought it would. The most frustrating thing for me is still doing it all myself—management, booking, recording, distribution, et cetera.

"I've been out of the country about six times this year," Eastman continues, "and I've been on the road all year long, and it's all been set up by me—sending out the stuff [e.g., CDs, bio kits] . . . hustling. I do feel it takes away from the creative process. Something is going to break for me in the near future because work is escalating all the time—I'm working, getting good response from critics and radio." Perhaps one of the keys to such an artist getting her records noticed has been the fact that they've been uniformly fine productions, utilizing several well-known supporting musicians, including Cedar Walton, Phil Woods, Rufus Reid, Tony Dumas, not to mention husband and drummer Vince Laeteano.

Embarking on her third release for BMG/Novus, Vanessa Rubin had to labor long and hard for her record contract. How important is the record contract to her career? "It enables me to have product that I can have distributed worldwide so I can have more name exposure. Anybody can have a record; that record has to get out to the people, it has to have distribution. It's a vicious cycle, and there really aren't any guarantees. Being with a record company is like a marriage—it takes work and give-and-take

on everybody's part."

Capturing the essence of jazz singing is a difficult achievement, one which Rubin feels the true jazz listener knows almost intuitively. "People know jazz singers when they hear them. If you really know jazz, you can hear it. It's one of those intangible things, either you have it or you don't." In the midst of our conversation, the phone rang. Rubin excused herself to answer it, and lo and behold it was Kevin Mahogany, which

begged the question as to why so few men. "There are a lot of male vocalists singing jazz—qualified vocalists. But they're not getting recording opportunities. There was a period when the [recording] industry wasn't interested in signing jazz vocalists; there was a big gap. Now they're running around snapping up female vocalists." **DB**

Willard Jenkins is executive director of the National Jazz Service Organization.

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Funk From The East

TRILOK GURTU

By Larry Birnbaum

Musically, the world is his stage. "We're just trying to say that music is one," says percussionist extraordinaire Trilok Gurtu. "It's not West and East anymore; it's gone universal. It's possible to play with anybody, if you are open and you adapt." The Bombay-born, Hamburg-based Gurtu is best known for his tenure as the late Collin Walcott's replacement in the group Oregon and for his super-sideman stint with John McLaughlin's electro-acoustic trio. But in the last few years he's stepped into the solo spotlight, recently releasing his third album, *Crazy Saints*, which features Pat Metheny, Joe Zawinul, and Gurtu's mother, vocalist Shobha Gurtu. "For me," he says, "this record represents a very egoless experience from all the participants. Everybody was so giving, and that's what the record is about—the cooperation between all the musicians."

Asked whether his style should be classified as fusion or world music, Gurtu replies: "It's very hard to categorize not only my music but the music of anybody who is trying to do something different. I think it's the experience that you have gathered from everywhere. In my experience, I gathered a lot from Africa, South India, jazz, Jimi Hendrix, Cream. I heard everything in Bombay—Motown, Otis Redding, Sly Stone."

On *Crazy Saints*, Gurtu characteristically blends elements of jazz, rock, and classical music—both Indian and European—to create a variety of atmospheric textures and moods. "Manini," for example, features the remarkable interplay of Metheny and Shobha Gurtu. "My mother is singing through changes," says Trilok. "This is very rare. Not many Indian musicians of her caliber have done this. And Pat complements my mother in such a different way, in his own way and not in an Indian way. I never told Pat what to do. I just said, 'I want you to play like Pat.' And he did such an amazing job."

"The Other Tune," one of two duets between Gurtu and Zawinul, sounds like a well-rehearsed performance by longtime musical partners. In fact, Zawinul testifies:



MITCHELL SIEGEL

"It was our first soundcheck, just to get acquainted. I had never heard him live, and I had never met him before. We met at about five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, and around 7:30 we just sat down and played for the first time ever. And from beginning to end, 'The Other Tune' is exactly what came out of that first meeting. For some funny reason, when we did our little breaks and stuff, we always came out at the same time."

The album's material is by Gurtu and pianist Daniel Goyone, with the exception of Zawinul's improvised compositions and one traditional tune, "Tillana." "'Tillana' is a South Indian song about a century old," says Gurtu. "But it's quite funky for that time, and I love it because it's so close to jazz. Daniel said we should rearrange it and make it a little bit beboppish, so he put it together with the chords. For me, it's like a funk rhythm, but this is classical Indian drumming. And I put in the cello and bass clarinet, because I love Western classical music. I like Bartók very much."

The main attraction, of course, is Gurtu's amazing arsenal of percussion: a unique assemblage of Western drums and cymbals, Indian tablas, and exotic small instruments that range from a gong that's dipped into a water bucket to a pair of smooth stones gleaned from a sushi bar. Rubbing the stones together, Gurtu mimics the chirping of insects; he tosses in a small shaker and a bird call, and—voilà!—it's the sound of a rice paddy. Some of his most remarkable percussive tricks are done by mouth, a technique he learned as a teenager when he got a job dubbing Indian movie soundtracks.

"We had to do the sound effects—horses, trains, lions, all kinds of things."

In live performance, Gurtu's body language is no less impressive. Standing, kneeling, crouching, or sitting cross-legged on a rug, he scurries among the precisely scattered array of instruments, switching effortlessly from traps to tablas to temple blocks. "I was playing in London," he recalls, "and a reviewer said he was waiting to see where the drummer was, because I was on the floor, and no one could see me. But my setup just came from having nothing. I never had enough money in India to own a drum set, so I made my own. Actually, so many people play the drum kit better than me that I thought I should find something of my own, and that's what I did."

Now 42, Gurtu began studying tablas at five, inspired by a percussion-playing older brother. His father's father was a sitar player, his mother's mother a singer and dancer. His own mother is a prominent singer of *thumri* music, a semi-classical North Indian style. "It's also based on dancing," says Gurtu. "In India, a big part of playing the drums is how to accompany the dancer. That's why I loved James Brown, doing all those steps. But I heard James Brown later. We never had the facilities that the younger generation has now, so it was a struggle just to hear somebody's records. If somebody had gone abroad and brought back a new record, I took a train to hear it."

"When I was young, I earned money backing singers, and when I was about 16 I started working in movies. I also worked in five-star hotels; that's when I heard [John]

Coltrane and Hendrix and everything. I came across the record *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, and Elvin Jones knocked me out. At 20 or 22 I went to Paris with a progressive group, Waterfront. I used to play Hendrix tunes on tabla, but nobody gave a damn." Back in Bombay, Gurtu played the Jazz Yatra Festival with Charlie Mariano. "Charlie was the first Western musician I played with."

In 1977 Gurtu traveled to New York with Indian pop singer Asha Bhoshle. "I loved the music and the positive competition—that hunger and enthusiasm for music—but I couldn't stand the one-upmanship, so I left and went to Germany. I played drums and tabla with a rock group there, but the money was very bad; so I went to Sweden and worked with Don Cherry, and through Don Cherry I studied Ornette Coleman's music." He went on to work with Archie Shepp, Jan Garbarek, Philip Catherine, Shankar, Gil Evans, Airto Moreira, and Paul Bley, and recorded with Catherine, Shankar, Mariano, Bley, and Barre Phillips.

After a year or two in Europe, Gurtu moved to Woodstock, New York, to teach at Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio. "That's how I met Jack DeJohnette, Pat Metheny, Nana Vasconcelos, and Collin Walcott," he says. "I met Collin, but I didn't know anything about Oregon. I didn't even know that he played with them or what they were playing. Somehow it never interested me." Walcott mentioned Gurtu as his possible successor in the group, and after he was killed in a 1984 car accident, the casual suggestion came eerily true. "People are still moved by that," says Gurtu, "but it's tiring after a while. All these questions—the fans and the friends coming over—it makes you feel this paranoia. I get like, 'How long am I going to have to listen to this?'"

In 1988, John McLaughlin, having seen Gurtu perform with Charlie Mariano at a festival in Germany, invited him to join his trio, which at different times included bassists Jeff Berlin, Kai Eckardt, and Dominique DiPiazza. "We started off acoustic," says Gurtu, "but we couldn't get enough volume on stage, so after a while, John put a synth in the guitar. I remember it was in Ft. Worth; and wow, the whole music changed after that. With John, I could really bite into the drums. That was good, because I could play drums and percussion and a little tabla with John, and with Oregon more tabla and percussion and less drums. I also did some composing with them, and [Oregon guitarist] Ralph Towner helped me to arrange the chords. But I had to stop playing with Oregon when I played with John, because I couldn't do two things at the same time."

Shortly before joining McLaughlin, Gurtu had recorded his first solo album, *Usfret*, an open-ended session where only the percus-

"... my setup just came from having nothing. I never had enough money in India to own a drum set, so I made my own."



sion parts were written. "I did *Usfret* with Don Cherry, Ralph Towner, L. Shankar, Jonas Hellborg, my mother, and Daniel Goyone, who has been my musical brother for six or seven years," he says. "I took Indian themes and experimented with them." *Living Magic*, a more structured album, was released in 1991, featuring Jan Garbarek on saxophone and Nana Vasconcelos on percussion, along with an Indian *veena*, African *kora*, and a cello.

Crazy Saints, recorded in the spring of 1993, is Gurtu's most ambitious effort yet. "Normally, on a record you just play, play, play, but I didn't want to do that," he says. "I wanted to say something with the music—composing, not drumming. Drumming is one part of music; harmony is one part of music; and I wanted to put all these elements together. When I started composing, it was just like natural improvisation to me, and then it started building up. I really put a lot of effort into this record. I had to stop playing with John, so I could focus. I was getting all these ideas, so I would take my cassette recorder and go for a walk and sing the whole time. I would come home and listen to it; and you know, when you play it back, you think, 'Something is missing there.' So I played the cassette for Daniel [Goyone], and he said, 'Good stuff, man. Let's rearrange it.' But I didn't put myself in the forefront; I was just trying to learn."

To flesh out the forefront, Gurtu recruited

Metheny and Zawinul. "I've known Pat for quite a while," he says, "but I never thought we would play together. Pat invited me to his concert when he played in Hamburg, and his manager played me his latest album, where he's playing with Indonesian and Cambodian singers. And I said, 'Oh, man, he loves this'; so I called him. And he said, 'Trilok, if your mother is there. . . .' He likes vocals. So it was a great honor for me that he came. He's a very lovely person, and he told me he has a lot of respect for my work."

The rest of the album was already complete when Zawinul signed on. "We just knew each other from the telephone," says Gurtu. "We had wanted to play together for years, but it never came about. But this time I was supposed to do four concerts in August, and I just said, I want to have Joe, so I called him. At first he thought I just wanted him on the tour, but then I told him I wanted to record a duet with him, and he got excited. I played him the other pieces we had already recorded, and he could see what else we needed. And it was all improvised. We just played, and it was so easy, I couldn't believe it. He was so nice and cooperative, and he was really pushing me. I didn't expect all that. We also got along on tour. Besides playing music, we went out to eat and had a little schnapps; so it was fun—not just working and sitting on an airplane."

As Zawinul tells it: "I saw a video he did with John McLaughlin; and after that, I wanted to play with him. He had this forward drive that I liked—it was my beat—and I liked the way he set his drums up. He is a fantastic musician, and playing with him was really a great experience. We did four concerts—Sardinia, Calabria, Switzerland, and Modena, Italy—and it really clicked. We had a wonderful rapport, and next year we're going to play in America; I'm going to do the summer festival season with him as a duet. I want to find those master musicians who are not just limited, and Trilok is a master musician." DB

EQUIPMENT

Gurtu plays a pair of handmade tablas, a customized drum kit with cymbals, and a collection of small percussion instruments. The kit includes 10-inch and piccolo Brady snare drums, 6-, 8-, 10-, and 14-inch Melanie tom toms, a Sonor bass drum with an inverted foot pedal, and a Sonor conga. The cymbals, all Zildjians, include 12- and 13-inch pairs of hi-hats, 18-inch pang and K. flat-ride cymbals, a riveted 22-inch A. Custom ride cymbal, and 8-, 10-, and 12-inch K splash cymbals.

The miscellaneous percussion includes temple blocks, cowbells, shakers, stones, hand cymbals, bells, a coconut shell, a duck call, a coiled wire, a thunder sheet, a 22-inch Wuhan gong, and a plastic water bucket. Recently, Gurtu acquired a 2290 delay unit from TC Electronics. "I'm not an electronic drummer," he says, "but for voice and percussion it gives you a big sound. You can play something, recall it, play on top of it, and improvise with it."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

CRAZY SAINTS—CMP 66
LIVING MAGIC—CMP 50
USFRET—CMP 33

with John McLaughlin
QUÉ ALEGRIA—Verve 837 260
LIVE AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL—JMT 834 436

with Oregon
ECOTOPIA—ECM 833 120
45TH PARALLEL—Portrait 44465

with others
THREE DAY MOON—ECM 1123 (Barre Phillips)
SONG FOR EVERYONE—ECM 823 795 (Shankar)

Key

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



John McLaughlin

TIME REMEMBERED—Verve 314 519 861: PROLOGUE; VERY EARLY; ONLY CHILD; WALTZ FOR DEBBY; HOMAGE; MY BELLS; TIME REMEMBERED; SONG FOR HELEN; TURN OUT THE STARS; WE WILL MEET AGAIN; EPILOGUE. (40:13)
Personnel: McLaughlin, with the Aigietta Quartet: Francois Szonyi, Pascal Rabatti, Alexandre Del Fa, Philippe Loli, acoustic guitars; Yan Maresz, acoustic bass guitar.

★ ★ ★ ★

He always said Bill Evans was a major influence. Subtitled *John McLaughlin Plays Bill Evans*, this music is a living testament to the late pianist by that ol' quick-change guitar-slinger. For the record, it started with "Waltz For Bill Evans" and the Miles Davis/Bill Evans penned "Blue In Green," acoustic guitar pieces then-Mahavishnu John McLaughlin played on his 1970 spiritual manifesto *My Goals Beyond*.

Reconciling Evans' lush, lyrical, and romantic worlds with his own blitzkrieg sensibilities, McLaughlin takes an unusually low profile for *Time Remembered*. Evans' debt to turn-of-the-century Impressionists Ravel, Debussy, and Satie proves an ideal point of departure for his guitar and the European Aigietta Quartet, as he writes new material for the Quartet to go with classic fare from the Evans book that McLaughlin in turn improvises over. (His touching "Homage" is the only original.)

His guitar speed is muted, one would imagine, to allow Evans' tricky yet thoroughly hummable melodies to shine through. And yet, if it weren't for the edge McLaughlin—who produced the album—brings to certain pieces with his solos, *Time Remembered* could well have turned into simply a fresh, lovely but restrained affair. When it came to power and sheer volume, Evans was no McCoy Tyner, but there is a weight, full-bodied lushness, and

yearning to Evans' piano that's almost lost in the flurry of strings and pleasantness here, not to mention lack of rhythmic propulsion.

Then again, when you consider how such tunes as "Waltz For Debby," "Very Early," and "Time Remembered" seem to cry out for an almost sensual preoccupation with melody alone, it's no wonder McLaughlin "lost it" to the point of practically submerging his characteristic guitar sound and rhythmic drive in the mix. Here's the paradox: Despite the instrumentation and lack of a traditional jazz esthetic, McLaughlin's heartfelt tribute keeps the legendary pianist's music front and center even as it showcases the guitarist's uncanny skill at reinventing himself. —John Ephland



Jane Bunnett

SPIRITS OF HAVANA—Messidor 15825-2: HYMN; OCHUN; YO SIEMPRE ODDARA; SONG FROM ARGENTINA; QUIRINO; LA LUNA ARRIBA; G.M.S. (GANDINGA, MONDONGO, SANDUNGA); EPISTROPHY; YEMAYA; SWEET DREAMS; SPIRITS OF HAVANA. (64:54)

Personnel: Bunnett, flute, soprano saxophone; Merceditas Valdés, vocals; Guillermo Barreto, timbales; Larry Cramer, trumpet, flugelhorn; Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Hilario Durán Torres, Frank Emilio Flynn Rodrigues, piano; Kieran Overs (Kiki), bass; Ahmed Barroso, guitar; Roberto Garcia Valdes, bongo; Ernesto Rodrigues Guzman, tumbas; Grupo Yoruba Andabo, clave, chao, bata, tumbas, shakere, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

Given the spiteful continuation of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, it requires a Canadian musician and a German record company to show us the beauty of Cuban music in its totality today, whether it was spawned in Yoruba ritual or on the Havana dance floor. *Spirits Of Havana* documents Bunnett's 1991 collaboration with a cross-section of Cuba's most vital musicians. Alternately sweet and fiery, it is an album that will pull your heart-strings when it is now moving your feet.

Bunnett's empathy for the various materials is palpable, both in her arrangements—the supple Lucumi hymn "Ochun" is drop-dead gorgeous—and in solos such as her riveting salsa-infused reading of Monk's "Epistrophy." Her rapport with her Cuban colleagues is effusive, their interplay brimming with simple joy. The sparks fly when Gonzalo Rubalcaba digs into "Epistrophy," the doves coo when Merceditas Valdes sings, and erstwhile drummers dive for cover when Grupo Yoruba Andabo unleashes their fierce cross-rhythms.

Having established a solid reputation as a

soprano saxophonist, flutist, and writer, Jane Bunnett takes a giant step forward as a leader on *Spirits Of Havana*. Now, with the Cold War cold in its grave, can we get more direct access to Bunnett's cohorts? —Bill Shoemaker



Ruby Braff

VERY SINATRA—Red Baron 53749: STREET OF DREAMS/THE LADY IS A TRAMP; THIS LOVE OF MINE; I HEAR A RHAPSODY; THE SECOND TIME AROUND; NEW YORK, NEW YORK/MY KIND OF TOWN; YOU'RE SENSATIONAL/I'LL NEVER SMILE AGAIN; PERFECTLY FRANK; ALL THE WAY; I'M GETTING SENTIMENTAL OVER YOU; NANCY; COME FLY WITH ME. (44:10)

Personnel: Braff, cornet; Vic Dickanson, trombone; Sam Margolis, clarinet; Dick Hyman, piano, organ; Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar; Mike Moore, bass; Mel Lewis, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Randy Sandke

I HEAR MUSIC—Concord Jazz 4566: WILDFIRE; THANKS A MILLION; SAY IT; DREAM SONG; MUDDY WATER; WITH A SONG IN MY HEART; SEE YOU LATER; I GOTTA RIGHT TO SING THE BLUES; DOMINO; I HEAR MUSIC; I LOVE LOUIS; LULLABY FOR KAREN; BENNY GOODMAN POSTSCRIPT. (52:16)

Personnel: Sandke, trumpet; Ken Peplowski, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Ray Kennedy, piano; John Goldsby, bass; Terry Clarke, drums; Benny Goodman, talk (13).

★ ★ ★ ★

Anyone can rebel against his parents. And usually does. There's something noble, on the other hand, in the character of the person who can kiss off his peers. He is the real individualist. Here are two, both of whom meet in Louis Armstrong, though from different angles.

Ruby Braff should have been a '50s hard-bopper by generational logic. But he stood his ground as a traditional romantic and evolved into a kind of songographer. It was lonely duty in the often inelegant world of jazz, but the world finally came around. In 1981, he played an engagement at Michael's Pub doing a Frank Sinatra repertoire. This album, originally produced by Ken Glancy and released on Finesse, was one of the fruits.

Braff is one of jazz's few genuine master players. And *Very Sinatra* is among his best of the songbook group. There are uncanny flashes of Armstrong's sound and vibrato here. Yet, his own voice is never compromised, always in perfect focus. It's quite amazing. Braff is a wonderful improviser, but an even greater interpreter. It's not his way to brush off a good song after the first chorus. He puts it on a pedestal, then dances around it, over it, through it; it's always at the center of his

playing. The songwriter is his costar, not a silent partner. Mel Lewis, Dick Hyman, Mike Moore, and Bucky Pizzarelli provide a plush-and-swinging suspension system, and Vic Dickenson and Sam Margolis cameo on two cuts.

With Randy Sandke's first Concord album, *I Hear Music*, the label now adds another spiritual disciple of Braff to its catalog. One of the nice things about players like Randy, who like nosing around Brian Rust territory for fresh old tunes, is the little gems they find. Who would have thought "Muddy Water" would have made good feed for jazz. If Braff can do Sinatra, why not Sandke on the Rhythm Bcys?

Though one doesn't hear in him the degree of personal voice Braff has, he is still an accomplished player of the first-rank in the neotraditional realm. This self-produced set is a solid, contemporary showcase for his diversity as a player, writer (six originals, though two are merely treatments on "Liza" and "Shine"), and presumably arranger. Ken Peplowski's tenor is the ballast in the ensembles, and he solos consistently well.

—John McDonough



Steve Coleman & Five Elements

THE TAO OF MAD PHAT FRINGE ZONES—Novus 63160-2: *THE TAO OF MAD PHAT*; *ALT-SHIFT RETURN*; *COLLECTIVE MEDITATIONS I (SUITE)*—*CHANGING OF THE GUARD/GUARDS ON THE TRAIN/RELAX YOUR GUARD/ALL THE GUARDS THERE ARE/ENTER THE RHYTHM (PEOPLE)*; *INCANTATION*; *LAID BACK SCHEMATICS*; *POLY-MAD NOMADS*; *LITTLE GIRL ON FIRE (FROM LITTLE GIRL I'LL MISS YOU AND FIRE REVISITED)*. (75:54)

Personnel: Coleman, alto saxophone, piano (2); David Gilmore, guitar; Andy Milne, piano, keyboards; Reggie Washington, electric bass; Oliver Gene Lake, Jr., drums, percussion; Roy Hargrove, trumpet (6); Josh Roseman, trombone (6); Matthew Garrison, electric bass (6); Kenny Davis, bass (5,6); Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn, percussion (5,6).

★ ★ ★ ★

Steve Coleman's previous Five Elements reeled with Promise, lacking the intangible nudge to put them over the edge to Realization. Their experiments in meshing advanced compositional strategies with funk rhythms and even Gil Scott Heron-ish raps were consistently bold, yet there were enough passages of formulaic third-generation fusion to second-guess Coleman's premises. Recorded "live before a studio audience," *The Tao Of Mad Phat Fringe Zones* reflects a considerable streamlining of Five

Elements' game plan, as Coleman simply lets the groove carry the compositions on its back, rather than flirt with profundity.

With stereotypical fusion rhythms, the thematic material of "Polymad Nomads" would have been rendered bellicose. Propelled by Oliver Gene Lake, Jr.'s slinky go-go beat, "Polymad Nomads" instead comes off as an on-the-money synthesis of George Russell and Chuck Brown and the Soul Searchers. Lake also demonstrates a keen ability to mix the funk with striking jazz-oriented chops as he prods the leader's serpentine solos on the title track. The fluid, long lines Coleman employs in more straightforward settings rush over his infectious vamps and patterns like fast water over smooth stones.

Though the languid lyricism of "Incantation" and the smoldering introduction of "Little Girl On Fire" are effective off-speed stuff, Coleman sticks with the heater for the most part on *The Tao Of Mad Phat Fringe Zones*. He gets you swinging.

—Bill Shoemaker



Eliane Elias

ON THE CLASSICAL SIDE—EMI Classics CDC 5486 2 1: *JUNGLE FESTIVAL*; *PRELUDE*; *ON THE STRINGS OF A VIOLA*; *LITTLE LAME GIRL*; *CLOWN*; *FLY LITTLE BIRD*; *SONATINE*; *FRENCH SUITE No. 5*; *MAZURKAS*. (65:07)

Personnel: Elias, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

Aziza

AZIZA—Columbia CK 53415: *CHARGAH*; *MY BAL-LAD*; *EXPROMPT*; *QUIET ALONE*; *INSPIRATION*; *I CAN-NOT SLEEP*; *ORIENTAL FANTASY*; *MOMENT*; *BLUE DAY*; *CHARACTER*; *TEA ON THE CARPET*; *CEMETERY*; *REFLECTION*; *AZIZA'S DREAM*; *TWO CANDLES*. (74:07)

Personnel: Aziza Mustafa Zadoh, piano, vocals (2,5,8).

★ ★ ★ ½

Would you follow Eliane Elias anywhere? *On The Classical Side* takes Elias through the looking-glass into the realm of Ravel, Chopin, J.S. Bach, and Heitor Villa-Lobos. Elias chooses short works for solo piano well-suited to her strengths, which emphasize rhythm and counterpoint. She turns in a solid performance of classical repertoire, rendered straight up without compromise.

Most of Elias' selections have roots in period dance music, which is no surprise given the sway and buoyance of her jazz recordings. The pianist's vibrant, colorful interpretations of countryman Villa-Lobos' work form the heart of the project. Like Elias' own compositions, Villa-

Lobos' themes were inspired by Brazilian folk music. His "Festa No Sertão (Jungle Festival)" is fluid, complex, and multi-directional. "Prelude" from "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4" establishes a bridge between Bach and Brazil. Elias brings the requisite sensitivity to Ravel's intricate "Sonatine," and she smoothly negotiates the contrapuntal challenges of Bach's "French Suite No. 5 In G Major." Elias' crossover listeners should find *On The Classical Side* rewarding, so long as no one expects to hear a samba break out during a Chopin Mazurka.

Aziza's solo-piano music blends contemporary jazz styles, classical figures, and the folk music of her native Azerbaijan. The opening bars of "Chargah" establish Chick Corea as a prominent, recurring influence. The 23-year-old pianist shares Corea's love of bravura gestures. She has a busy sound, fluent and active, and she tends to embroider passages with trills, flourishes, and crescendos. "Inspiration" may be the most intriguing track, featuring Aziza's percussive, scattin' vocal. "Oriental Fantasy" is the album's centerpiece, slowly developing a locomotive rhythm with Aziza's left hand hammering out rumbling bass chords. Over the course of 74 minutes, the intensity and melodrama of Aziza's playing can be wearing. "Aziza's Dream" provides a relaxed, spacious change of pace. Sometimes less is more.

—Jon Andrews



Ray Brown

BASSFACE—Telarc 83340: *MILESTONES*; *BASE FACE*; *IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING*; *TIN DIN DEO*; *CRS - CRAFT*; *TAKING A CHANCE ON LOVE*; *REMEMBER*; *MAKIN' WHOOPIE*; *PHINEAS CAN BE*. (68:20)

Personnel: Brown, bass; Benny Green, piano; Jeff Hamilton, drums.

★ ★ ★

Benny Green

THAT'S RIGHT!—Blue Note 84467: *WIGGIN'*; *AIN'T SHE SWEET*; *THAT'S RIGHT*; *SOMETHING I DREAMED LAST NIGHT*; *CELIA*; *HOAGIE MEAT*; *CUP-CAKE*; *JUST A TADD*; *GLAD TO BE UNHAPPY*; *ME AND MY BABY*. (52:20)

Personnel: Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

A trio is defined by its pianist, even when its leader is bassist Ray Brown. And Benny Green is a pianist of numerous definitions, most of which get their turn on these two CDs.

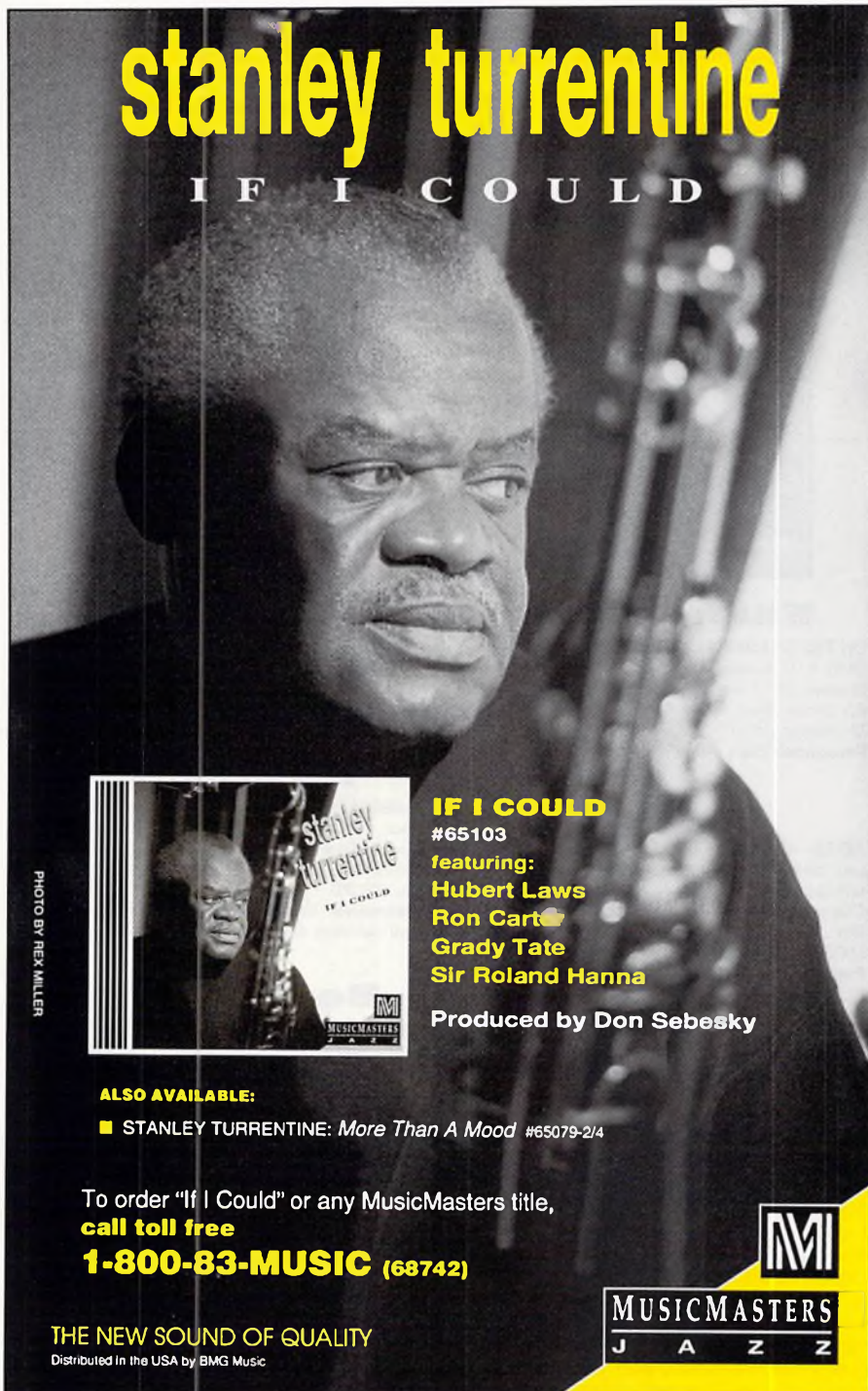
The Brown group sounds settled and sure of its material before a live club crowd. The loosely outlined arrangements unfold with predictable excellence and goodwill. These pros

know how to pace a performance and cap a solo. Green has a great set of hands that can gallop deftly through swift single-note thickets. But they prefer the larger forests of harmony and big, percussive chords the size of oaks. He has Oscar Peterson's appreciation of the startling contrast, though few fresh approaches to it. On "Taking A Chance," dense, double-barreled runs buzz a spacious and rather sleepy solo introduction like a couple of Mes-

serschmitts—one of many patented Petersonisms he has mastered with aplomb.


Aside from having fewer bass introductions and a bit more focus on straight piano, *That's Right!* remains a fairly standard trio session with half original pieces and the rest standards. It is really a collection of trios, from Nat Cole to Bud Powell, depending on which way Green's versatility leans (though it never leans beyond bebop).

For Green, who moves entirely according to his own agenda, it is the better showcase of the two. There are a few "tribute" pieces to veterans like Gerry Wiggins and Tadd Dameron, mostly in name only. His penchant for interpolation carries him off a bit on "That's Right," or is it "My Heart Belongs To Daddy?" The accountants will decide. Nevertheless, given the limitations of the trio format, Green has come up with a very nice piece of work. —John McDonough



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Personnel: Mathias Rüegg, conductor, arranger; Lauren Newton, voice; Karl Fian, trumpet; Herbert Joos, flugelhorn, double trumpet, alhorn; Christian Radovan, trombone; John Sass, tuba; Harry Sokal, soprano and tenor saxophones, flute; Roman Schwaller, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Wolfgang Puschnig, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute, piccolo; Uli Scherer, acoustic and electric pianos, melodica; Woody Schabata, marimba, vibes; Jurgen Wuchner, bass; Wolfgang Reisinger, Janusz Stefanski, drums, percussion.

★★★★★

From No Time To Ragtime documents the 1982 edition of Mathias Rüegg's dynamic, eclectic big band, heard rarely on this side of the Atlantic. Despite its title, which suggests an overly broad repertory performance, this is a cohesive, often electrifying concert of reinventions and alchemy devised by VAO mastermind Rüegg. Through a series of "Variations About," he transfigures rarely covered compositions by the likes of Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Anthony Braxton until the themes have been "arranged, orchestrated, extended, altered and alienated." (Rüegg later applied the same method to *The Minimalism Of Erik Satie*, with more ascetic results.)

This is not an academic exercise, but instead, a rousing, energetic blowing session. With Ellington and Mingus as strong influences, Rüegg achieves an extended, orchestral palette through his use of Lauren Newton's voice and Woody Schabata's vibes. Newton's remarkable scatting on "Variations About [Coleman's] Silence" is guaranteed to enchant, irritate, or both. Rüegg's take on Roswell Rudd's "Keep Your Heart Right" evokes Mingus, emerging as a swaggering showpiece

for duelling tenors Roman Schwaller and Harry Sokal, topped by an extended, searing coda from altoist Wolfgang Puschnig. "Jelly Roll, But Mingus Rolls Better" references both Morton and Mingus, with frenzied solos by Schwaller, Puschnig, and trumpeter "Bumi" Fian, leading to a cathartic resolution. You get all this, plus excellent live sound.
—Jon Andrews



Various Artists

BACK TO THE STREETS: CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF DON COVAY—Shanachie 9006; *CHAIN OF FOOLS; HE DON'T KNOW; CHECKIN' OUT; SOOKIE SOOKIE; I STOLE SOME LOVE; LETTER FULL OF TEARS; THREE TIME LOSER; VICTIMS; LONG TALL SHORTY; MERCY MERCY; WE CAN'T MAKE IT NO MORE; PONY TIME; SEE SAW; SOMEBODY'S ENJOYING MY HOME; THUNDER; BACK TO THE STREETS.* (61:45)

Personnel: featured artists include Ron Wood, Robert Cray, Bobby Womack, Iggy Pop, Peter Wolf, Arlene Smith, Johnny Colla, Corey Glover, Ben E. King, Jim Carroll, Todd Rundgren, Gary U.S. Bonds, Chuck Jackson, Nona Hendryx, Barrence Whitfield, Billy Squier, Mick Taylor, Chuck St. Troy, Jimmy Witherspoon, Johnny Kemp, Paul Shaffer, Anton Fig, Sid McGinnis, Will Lee, Muzz Skilling, Noel Redding, Britt Savage, Jon Tiven, Sally Tiven, Vernon Reid, and the Uptown Horns.

★ ★ ★ ★

Don Covay wrote some great I-done-you-wrong and Lord-have-mercy r&b tunes covered by dozens of soul and rock artists, including Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Chubby Checker, and the Rolling Stones. On this Jon Tiven/Joe Ferry-produced all-star bash that celebrates the singer/songwriter, there are several exceptional tracks, such as Ron Wood's spunky interpretation of "Chain Of Fools," the great soul-stirrer Bobby Womack's aching plunge into "Checkin' Out," Iggy Pop's raw snarl through Steppenwolf's underground FM hit "Sookie Sookie," ow-ow man Barrence Whitfield's boisterous ride through "Pony Time," and Nona Hendryx's emotive reading of "We Can't Make It No More."

As with most of these kinds of tribute packages, not all the tunes here are hit-making material. Yet, you are hard-pressed to detect any of the musicians and singers turning in lackluster performances. Particularly refreshing treatments of Covay's tunes are given by Jim Carroll (the upbeat, shoo-woppin' "Long Tall Shorty") and husky-voiced blues belter Jimmy Witherspoon (the swinging "Thunder"). The biggest surprise of the collection is rocker Billy Squier's unrestrained treatment of "See Saw."
—Dan Ouellette

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Frank Sinatra

DUETS—Capitol 89611: *THE LADY IS A TRAMP*; *WHAT NOW MY LOVE*; *I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU*; *SUMMER WIND*; *COME RAIN OR COME SHINE*; *NEW YORK, NEW YORK*; *THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME*; *YOU MAKE ME FEEL SO YOUNG*; *MEDLEY: GUESS I'LL HANG MY TEARS OUT TO DRY, IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING*; *I'VE GOT THE WORLD ON A STRING*; *WITCHCRAFT*; *I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN*; *MEDLEY: ALL THE WAY, ONE FOR MY BABY*. (45:42)

Personnel: Sinatra, Luther Vandross, Aretha Franklin, Barbra Streisand, Julio Iglesias, Gloria Estefan, Tony Bennett, Natalie Cole, Charles Aznavour, Carly Simcn, Liza Minnelli, Anita Baker, Bono, vocals; Frank Szabo, Bob O'Donnell, Charlie Davis, Conte Coridoli, Oscar Brashear, Rick Baptist, Warren Luening, Jerry Hey, Gary Grant, trumpets; Dick Nash, George Bohanon, Dick Hyde, George Roberts, Tommy Johnson, Lew McCreary, Charlie Loper, trombones; Jim Thatcher, Brian O'Connor, Steven Becknell, french horns; Tom Scott, Lanny Morgan, Dick Mitchell, Gene Cipriano, Jack Nimitz, Bob Cooper, saxophones; Kenny G, soprano saxophone (13); Bill Miller, piano; Michael Melvojn, keyboards; Chuck Berghofer, bass; Ron Anthony, guitar; Gregg Field, drums; Emil Richards, percussion.

★★★★

Here are four stars to welcome back to the bins the man we all thought had said his farewells to

recording 10 years ago. Yes here he is, none the worse for a decade's wear and raring to go.

The smartest thing about this record is that it never goes against the grain of the singer's music persona, despite the unexpected pairings. Everybody plays in Sinatra's ballpark here and works by his rules. And everybody profits. For artists like Bennett and Streisand, these are natural environs. Hearing Bennett and Sinatra tear up "New York, New York" is like watching Dempsey and Louis step into the ring together.

For Vandross and U2's Bono, though, this is less familiar turf. But they sound wonderful. It's as if they'd nursed some secret desire to do really grown-up music, but could never dare admit it without sounding like a quising to their juvenile fan base. What's remarkable is how embracing Sinatra's big-band music actually turns out to be.

One can never anticipate exactly how the fussier Sinatra fans will take to a project like this. But it seems they should be grateful. This is powerhouse singing from a man who obviously still takes his instrument very seriously. Some performances here will assume their place in the Sinatra canon of classics. Compare this charred "One For My Baby" with the youthful 1947 Columbia version, or even the take from *Only The Lonely* (1958). Here it has the resonance of Olivier's second Lear. He has grown into the part. Kenny G accompanies.

While the standard repertoire is fine, so much remains undone. Sinatra had never recorded "Lady Be Good" with its wonderful verse, for instance. Or "Love Me Or Leave Me," "Sophisticated Lady," "Lush Life," and "Seems Like Old Times." By the evidence of *Duets*, it's not too late.

Of course, there's a nimbus of sentiment surrounding this album that can distort critical impartiality, not unlike the current *Miles & Quincy* release from Miles Davis and Quincy

Jones. Sinatra is not only reunited here with the label of his prime, Capitol, but 13 of the tunes and arrangements (more or less) he recorded for it. Even the cover art gives us the snap-brim Sinatra standing before an old Neumann U-47, as if nothing had changed since 1956.

Well, things have changed. But it's a lucky century whose finest popular singer is also the one who seems headed for the longest tenure as a force in music, from the first Harry James sides in 1939 to this. This is a triumphant return to form.
—John McDonough

★ 1/2

What a bore. The hype surrounding *Duets*—"the recording event of the decade" as one ad puts it—shows us the seedier side of the record/marketing/music industry. Not only were these performances not true duets (the guest artists *phoned in* their vocals via the marvels of technology), as Sinatra sings alone with the band in the studio, but the arrangements are weak seconds and thirds to the originals. Since technology was the silent partner here, Frank should've just sung along with any number of earlier charts, prior to his "Something Stupid"/"My Way" era of a quarter-century ago.

Sadly, the 77-year-old Sinatra just doesn't know when to go home. Sure, it's fun for old time's sake, but most of these songs have been done to death: "New York, New York" (Bennett's groping vocals help make Sinatra sound almost respectable), "The Lady Is A Tramp," etc. I must admit, Bono's whispering, subversive lines on "I've Got You Under My Skin" do add a taste of the surreal to what is already a weird concept. And Kenny G, my god, his soprano toots help Ol' Blue Eyes get out the door with some style and grace on the closing medley, his horn doing more for the music than all the showy big band stuff on the other tracks.

The Voice is doing himself no favors by staying in the ring, his warbly singing a mockery to his earlier greatness. When it's not boring, it hurts to listen to The Man now. Sinatra reminds me of the boxer who, pounded silly by his opponent, somehow manages to remain standing, somehow refusing to go down. He's still in the game, but so what? —John Ephland

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Marc Johnson

RIGHT BRAIN PATROL—JMT 849 153-2: *THEY LOVE ME FIFTEEN FEET AWAY; BATUKI BURUNDI; NETCONG ON MY MIND; RIGHT BRAIN PATROL; HERU NAZEL; INSIDE FOUR WALLS; YOU; AFTER YOU; WHISPERS; LOG O' RHYTHM; LIGHT IN YOUR EYE; THE CALL.* (48:09)

Personnel: Johnson, bass; Ben Monder, electric, acoustic guitars; Arto Tunçboyacıyan, percussion, voice.

★ ★ ★ ★

John Abercrombie

NOVEMBER—ECM 519 073-2: *THE CAT'S BACK; J.S.; RIGHT BRAIN PATROL; PRELUDE; NOVEMBER; RISE AND FALL; JOHN'S WALTZ; OGEDA; TUESDAY AFTERNOON; TO BE; COME RAIN OR COME SHINE; BIG MUSIC.* (69:25)

Personnel: Abercrombie, guitar; Marc Johnson, bass; Peter Erskine, drums; John Surman, baritone and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet (1,2,6,8,10).

★ ★ ★ ★

Since we last heard from the trio of John Abercrombie, Marc Johnson, and Peter Erskine (in 1989), each has moved on to new projects. *November* is an unexpected reunion of this solid, well-balanced group, with the added attraction of John Surman's reed work on five tracks. A melancholy, autumnal feeling pervades this session, very much in the ECM style.

Abercrombie has shelved his guitar synthesizer, which added so much to the trio's sound, but his playing retains its distinctive, occasionally harsh tone. Surman's contribution is a shot in the arm. "The Cat's Back" takes shape through open improvisation, emerging out of Surman's bluesy bass clarinet and Johnson's arco bass, rapidly gaining momentum as Surman probes the upper reaches of his instrument's range, intertwining with Abercrombie's guitar.

Abercrombie's "To Be" and "J.S." and Surman's "Ogeda" are graceful, mid-tempo features for Surman's bass clarinet, baritone and soprano, respectively, and he achieves a warm, glowing sound on all three reeds. A wonderful, underrated player, Surman has spent too much of the past decade in the company of only synthesizers and tape machines. Drummer Erskine's playing is consistently lively and inventive; ECM has rarely recorded him with such depth and presence. The trio's radiant treatment of "Come Rain Or Come Shine" on *November* makes you wish they had played a few more standards this time out.

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PHIL MARKOWITZ JUNIOR MANCE DAVID LOPATO ARNIE LAWRENCE BILL KIRCHNER VIC JURIS

Marc Johnson's current venture is Right Brain Patrol, a guitar-bass-percussion trio which could be considered an extension of his Bass Desires group (made up of two guitars, bass, and drums) and the Abercrombie trio. Both discs reviewed here include Johnson's tune "Right Brain Patrol," but this earlier version, centered on Johnson's propulsive bass line, has more cohesion and urgency than the treatment on *November*. The flip side to Johnson's spacious "ECM sound" comes with Tunçboyacıyan's exotic, Brazilian-flavored tunes, featuring Arto's percussion and wordless vocals and Ben Monder's guitars. "They Love Me Fifteen Feet Away" or "The Call" will necessarily recall Al Di Meola's *World Sinfonia*, another regular engagement for the busy Tunçboyacıyan.

Johnson's strongest assets are his lyrical writing and playing and his knack for associating himself with terrific guitarists. Ben Monder is a find, a versatile player who's worked with artists as diverse as drummer Rashied Ali and violinist Michal Urbaniak. His ability to play effectively in several modes is a key to this trio's stylistic change-ups. Monder plays sensuous, slow blues on his "Netcong On My Mind," and has beautiful tone and articulate phrasing throughout. He's the perfect guitarist for Johnson, capable of evoking Abercrombie, Bill Frisell, or John Scofield as needed.

—Jon Andrews



Ethnic Heritage Ensemble

DANCE WITH THE ANCESTORS—Chameleon 61494-2: *OCEANS DEEP*; *ORNETTE* (WRITTEN FOR ORNETTE COLEMAN); *HIT ME*; *TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN*; *ALIKA RISING* (WRITTEN FOR ALLISON); *ODE TO THE CRUSADER* (DEDICATED TO DIZZY GILLESPIE); *MIS-TAKEN BRILLIANCE*; *NIA*; *GWENYANA* (WRITTEN FOR GWENYANA BLACKBURN); *DANCE WITH THE ANCESTORS*. (61:33).

Personnel: Kahil El'Zabar, earth drums, African thumb pianos, trap drums, percussion, vocals; Joseph Bowie, trombone, congas, percussion, vocals; Edward Wilkerson, Jr., tenor saxophone, alto clarinet, percussion, vocals.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Dance With The Ancestors is a tribute record with a contemporary agenda. The Ethnic Heri-

tage Ensemble would like to bridge the gap between the ancient elegance of African music and the latter-day American music derived from the African impetus.

Fittingly, the opener, "Oceans Deep," establishes the model that pervades much of the CD. It begins with Kahil El'Zabar on East African thumb piano and Joseph Bowie on congas, laying down a soothing backdrop for Ed Wilkerson, Jr.'s meditative tenor sax. The relaxed Eastern funk almost suggests snake charming until Bowie reenters on trombone. Accompanied by some good-time scatting, he quickly changes the music to a jaunty swagger.

Although drum chores shift from cut to cut ("Nia" employs the trap set, but the Duke, Dizzy, and Ornette tributes do not), and vocals move from scat to the title track's updated gospel and Ghanaian chant, here as elsewhere the trio delivers a skillful layering of jazz essentials. The resulting music is stripped-down at first, but achieves weight with the introduction of each new rhythm, melody, or color. Overall, *Dance With The Ancestors* combines the solemnity of a sacred burial ground with the life-goes-on sashay of a second-line processional.

—K. Luander Williams



Vandermark Quartet

BIG HEAD EDDIE—Platypus PP 001: *KISS THE PLOW*; *EXPLODING NOTE THEORY*; *DOG CLICHES*; *JACK KIRBY WAS RIPPED OFF*; *LAST DATE*; *BLUE COFFEE*; *INGRID'S NAPKIN #29*; *COURTESY DESK*; *SINNER SINNER*; *NOT ACTUAL SIZE*. (61:03)

Personnel: Ken Vandermark, tenor sax, bass clarinet, clarinet; Todd Colburn, electric guitar; Kent Kessler, bass; Michael Zerang, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Brash, charged-up, and excessive, the Chicago-based Vandermark Quartet roars out of the blocks, grafting out-jazz improvisations onto rock beats. Finesse is not a high priority. Ken Vandermark's horns and Todd Colburn's over-the-top guitar lay down hummable r&b riffs ("Kiss The Plow," "Dog Cliches") in unison before launching near-chaotic solos. Vandermark and bassist Kent Kessler worked with the late Hal Russell and various NRG groups. Vandermark's hyper, overheated lines on tenor and bass clarinet suggest Albert Ayler and Eric Dolphy channeling through David Murray. Colburn's rude, dissonant blasts help define the group's high-energy sound and attitude, but threaten to overwhelm the work at hand. I bet these guys are *really* loud in concert.

—Jon Andrews

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Etc & Jerry Bergonzi

ETC PLUS ONE—Red 123249-2: *SPLURGE; DAYS GONE BY; ONCE MORE; HANK; WITHOUT YOU; PHANTOM OF THE BOPEA; EVANESSENCE; APRIL NIGHTS; CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE; SPLURGE, TAKE TWO.* (71:12)

Personnel: Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Steve La Spina, bass; Fred Hersch, piano; Jeff Hirshfield, drums.

★★★★

Dick Katz

3WAY PLAY—Reservoir RSR CD 127: *THREE LITTLE WORDS; SOLAR; YOU'RE MY THRILL; STEEPLCHASE; THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MEAN SO MUCH; MONK'S DREAM; LIMEHOUSE BLUES; STAR CROSSED LOVERS; BLUES IN MY HEART; THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES; SAMBUHAN; THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE.* (62:46)

Personnel: Katz, piano; Steve La Spina, bass; Ben Riley, drums.

★★★★

Jerry Bergonzi's presence lends a wild atmosphere to *ETC Plus One*. It is your typical New York, Michael Brecker-meets-Joe Henderson tough sound, with a Charles Lloyd-like sensitivity coloring the ballads. Hersch's "Phantom" catches the tenor man's aggressive side, but there are plenty of examples of his reflective side, too: producer La Spina's "Without You" and "April Nights" as well as Hersch's "Evanescence," obviously a tribute to the late pianist Bill Evans. It is the Evans-like chordal display and the clipped feeling of swing that flavor Hersch's piano.

Giving the album a fine counterpoise against Bergonzi's gruffer approach are La Spina's Scott LaFaro-esque nimbleness, high-register lines, and interplay, along with Hirshfield's adaptive drumming.

Dick Katz begins *3way Play* in an Evans chordal bag, but soon reveals a penchant for the fluid lines associated with Teddy Wilson, who was once his teacher. This breadth—from Wilson to Evans, and including Monk ("Monk's Dream") and Ellington ("Star Crossed Lovers")—marks Katz as much orchestrator as thematic improviser. This is only his third album as a leader in 26 years, which is a vast underexposure of a great talent. Thanks to producer Mark Feldman, we have a gem of an album. La Spina's walking lines show that he's a strong traditional player as well as a high-wire soloist. Riley, whose beat has an infectious, dancing lilt, has rarely sounded as inspired. (Check out his solos and exchanges on "Solar," "Steeplechase," and "Limehouse Blues.") Above all, check out the harmonic sensibility and tasteful touch of Katz.

—Owen Cordle



Rob Parton

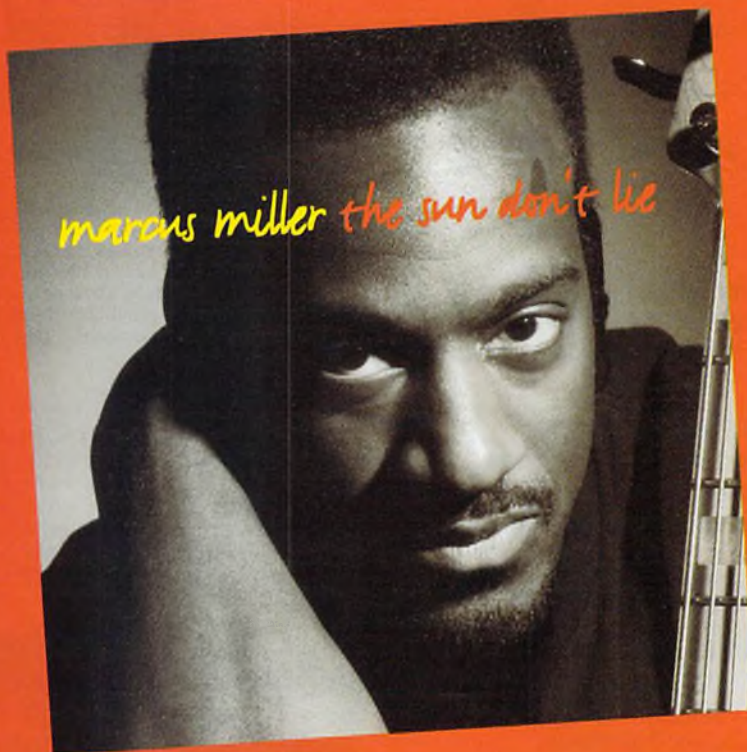
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Personnel: Parton, Mike McGrath, Al Hood, Tom Reed, Mark Thompson, Steve Smyth, trumpets; Jack Schmidt, Brian Jacobi, Jim Martin, Mike Young, trombones; Bob Frankish, Ian Nevins, Mark Colby, Greg Mostovoy, Kurt Berg, Brian Budzik, saxophones; Larry Harris, piano; Stewart Miller, bass; Bob Rummage, Eric Montzka, drums.

★★★★

This is good stuff. Though not a salute to Count Basie (as the title might suggest) or a trip through the Basie repertoire, Rob Parton and



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his Jazztech Big Band nevertheless deliver a program that no fan of Basie's later bands would turn his nose up at. The tempos are more up than down, which is the best way to showcase a big band, I think; and Parton's armour-piercing brass section is well schooled in the Basie dynamics.

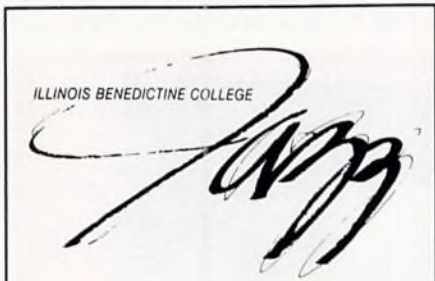
The talent isn't wasted on tacky material. For the most part, the in-house writing is above average, and "Summertime" gets a particularly fresh makeover as a medium-fast swinger with some slithery plunger patterns from trombonist Jack Schmidt. The saxophones are nicely

balanced into the charts and get several places to solo as a section, nowhere better than on Sonny Rollins' "Doxy" and Trane's "Giant Steps." Though the section sounds a little metallic and brittle in this studio setup, the ensemble attack and phrasing are on the money. Basie would probably applaud.

—John McDonough

as a leader (surpassing *Black Pastels*). Roberts displays highly vocalized tone and phrasing, especially with the bow on "Autumn Leaves," and a strong rhythmic sense throughout. He explores a range of effects from folksy to automotive, and gets flexible, intelligent support from Django Bates' subtly effective keyboards and Arto Tunçboyacıyan's versatile percussion. They combine sensitivity, humor, and swing to follow Roberts through tuneful, episodic originals, with "Saturday/Sunday" and "Little Motor People" the highlights.

—Jon Andrews



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Hank Roberts

LITTLE MOTOR PEOPLE—JMT 514 005-2: SATURDAY/SUNDAY; SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW; ONLY MINUTES LEFT; MY FAVOURITE THINGS; LITTLE MOTOR PEOPLE; DONNA LEE; BLACK AS A SUNNY DAY; AUTUMN LEAVES; 30'S PICNIC. (61:34)

Personnel: Roberts, cello, vocal, jazz-a-phone fiddle; Django Bates, piano, synthesizer, tenor trombone; Arto Tunçboyacıyan, percussion, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Hank Roberts threw the dice, leaving Bill Frisell's group and other ventures (Arcado and Miniature) in search of new, more personal vehicles for jazz cello. So far, he's a winner. *Little Motor People* achieves the distinctive identity Roberts wants in both composition and performance; it's his best, most consistent project



Russell Malone

BLACK BUTTERFLY—Columbia CK 53912: JINGLES; WITH KENNY IN MIND; DEE'S SONG; CEDAR TREE; AFTER HER BATH; I SAY A LITTLE PRAYER FOR YOU; BLACK BUTTERFLY; ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT; THE OTHER MAN'S GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER; GASLIGHT; SNO' PEAS. (63:41)

Personnel: Malone, guitar; Gary Motley, piano; Paul Keller, bass; Peter Siers, drums; Steve Nelson, vibes (2,4).

★ ★ ★

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rhythm-section mate. At present, I hear a lot of pleasant, technically adept, warm fretwork but nothing particularly distinctive. Ditto for Malone's sidemen on this, his second album as a leader. The lone exception is Nelson, who creates a kind of swinging moodiness on the two Malone tributes, "With Kenny [Burrell] In Mind" and "Cedar [Walton] Tree."

The opener, recorded by Montgomery in 1959, shows Malone's chops over an uptempo stop-time. "I Say A Little Prayer For You" wanders into pop-jazz territory—but not too far. The title tune (an Ellington piece) is laidback like "Li'l Darlin'." Altogether everything is pretty mild-mannered.

Motley, Keller, and Siers are new to me. The pianist suggests a more intense Wynton Kelly (e.g., his quotes from "I've Found A New Baby," which are a favorite cliché). Like Malone, these three have no trouble swinging, but one keeps wishing that the fires were hotter.

—Owen Cordle



David Sylvian/ Robert Fripp

THE FIRST DAY—Virgin 0777 7 88208 2 6; *GOD'S MONKEY*; *JEAN THE BIRDMAN*; *FIREPOWER*; *BRIGHTNESS FALLS*; *20TH CENTURY DREAMING*; *DARSHAN*; *BRINGING DOWN THE LIGHT*. (63:30)

Personnel: Sylvian, vocals, guitar, keyboards; Fripp, guitar; Trey Gunn, Chapman stick, vocals; David Bottrill, sampled percussion, programming; Jerry Marotta, drums, percussion; Marc Anderson, percussion; Ingrid Chavez, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Armed with an electric guitar, Robert Fripp can be a malevolent force, capable of inflicting crushing power chords or relentless, convulsed solos. Fripp has subordinated these facets of his persona in recent years, preferring "Frippertronic" guitar loops or his acoustic League of Crafty Guitarists over rock music as vehicles for improvisation. Even in the last edition of Fripp's King Crimson, the guitarist usually played rhythm, shunning the limelight in favor of singer/guitarist Adrian Belew.

The First Day rocks hard and mean, offering sustained Fripp lead guitar in a context rarely heard since his mid-'70s King Crimson incarnation. At first glance, David Sylvian's introspection seems like a mismatch for Fripp's intemperance. Since disbanding the Roxy Music-influenced group Japan, Sylvian has generated moody, meditative solo work, with oblique, mystical lyrics. The collaboration works, as Fripp pushes Sylvian to extend his vocal range. Sylvian helps craft appropriate tunes, and

encourages Fripp to play like Fripp.

After "God's Monkey" and "Jean The Birdman," concise, hook-filled tunes featuring Sylvian, Fripp dominates the project. "Firepower" and "20th Century Dreaming" surround Sylvian's brooding vocals with brutish guitar chords before giving way to extended instrumental vamps, centered on Trey Gunn's vibrant Chapman stick. These vamps support Fripp's twisting solos and Sylvian's atmospheric electronics, though at greater than necessary length. Fripp's leads quote vintage Crimson as well as Jimi Hendrix. "Darshan" exhaustively

explores a 17-minute funk riff. Somewhat reminiscent of *Pangaea*-era Miles, it's the most successful use of dance music either Fripp or Sylvian has achieved. Fripp launches solos from these repetitive rhythm beds, much as he would use Frippertronics or the League of Crafty Guitarists. The tactic diminishes the power of Fripp's playing somewhat by eliminating any catharsis. But that's quibbling.

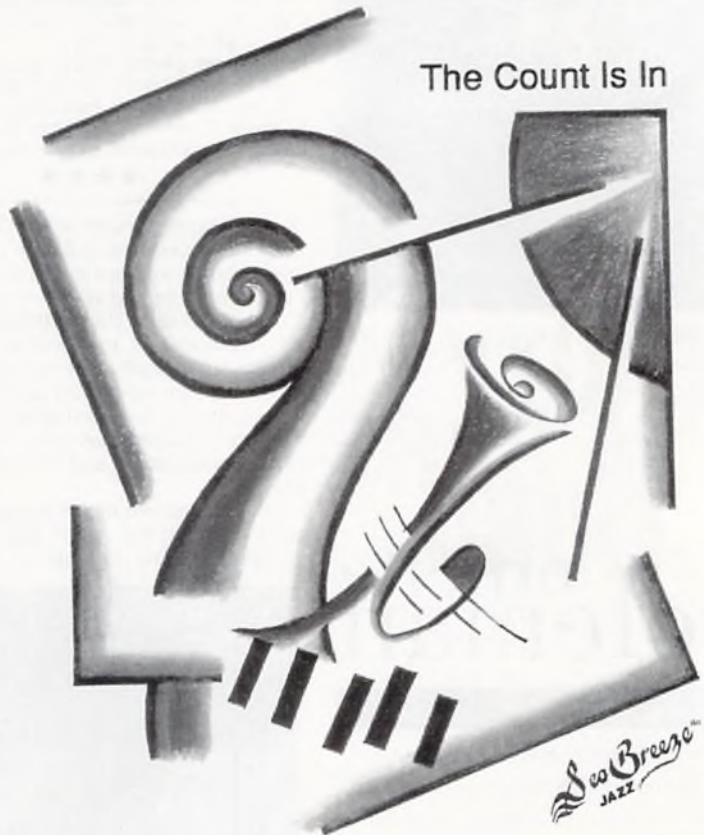
Fun in the car and ideal for tormenting neighbors, *The First Day* will serve as a high-quality Fripp fix until the next King Crimson revival.

—Jon Andrews

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CD REVIEWS



George Clinton

HEY MAN . . . SMELL MY FINGER—Paisley Park/Warner Bros. 25518; *MARTIAL LAW*; *PAINT THE WHITE HOUSE BLACK*; *WAY UP*; *DIS BEAT DISRUPTS*; *GET SATISFIED*; *HOLLYWOOD*; *RHYTHM AND RHYME*; *THE BIG PUMP*; *IF TRUE LOVE*; *HIGH IN MY HELLO*; *MAXIMUMISNESS*; *KICKBACK*; *THE FLAG WAS STILL THERE*; *MARTIAL LAW (HEY, MAN . . . SMELL MY FINGER)*. (70:20)

Personnel: Clinton, vocals; featured artists include Herbie Hancock, William "Bootsy" Collins, Yo Yo, Maceo Parker, Fred Wesley, Flea, Foley, Dennis Chambers, DeWayne "Blackbird" McKnight, Bernie Worrell, and Bill Laswell.

★ ★ ★ ★

There's a party going on where George Clinton does his business, and it hasn't sounded this fine, fresh, or inspired in years. Here, Clinton has hit another one of his strides. After all, if James Brown is the Godfather of Soul, the P-Funkmeister is the godfather of soul's techno-rap progeny. Clinton was laying the groundwork for hip-hop 20 years prior, dishing up strange but funk-fortified sonic stews and rubbery linguistics, all the while honing a mystique as cosmic as it was carnal or socio-political.

Clinton taps into rap, but plays by his own rules, avoiding the grit of sex and violence prevalent in some of the genre. Clinton waxes

poetic where others hit the street: he talks about "Painting The White House Black" in symbolic rather than militant terms.

Then there is the human funk factor. Avoiding the hermetic, sample-heavy approach, Clinton insists on being the ringmaster of a real-time funk circus. This ensemble affair with a cast of nearly a hundred, features folks like Herbie Hancock, Maceo Parker, Foley, Dennis Chambers, and Bootsy Collins. Mix-wise, the organic flow of sounds, personalities, and styles flexes to include a sweet and nostalgic soul ballad in "If True Love," an eery scat vocal intro to "Rhythm And Rhyme," and diagonal tonalities in the horn solos on "Way Up." "If being is what is, I is," Clinton preaches on "Maximumisness," an ambiguous anthem co-produced by Bill Laswell, who is, like Clinton, a fellow maximizer of the group-effort esthetic.

With Clinton's potent new album, he comes, ever so funky, full-circle, and meets the musical moment on his own terms. —Josef Woodard

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Larry Coryell

FALLEN ANGEL—CTI 67236-2: *INNER CITY BLUES; FALLEN; NEVER NEVER; ANGEL ON SUNSET; STARDUST; MISTY; I REMEMBER BILL; PIETA; THUS SPOKE Z; STELLA BY STARLIGHT; MONK'S CORNER; WESTERLY WIND; THE MOORS.* (51:44)

Personnel: Coryell, acoustic, electric guitars; Jeanie Bryson (2), Klyde Jones (1-3), vocals; Richard Elliot, tenor sax (2,3); Chris Hunter, alto sax (9); Ted Rosenthal (8,11), Mulgrew Miller (5,6,9), piano; Don Sebesky, Jamie Lawrence, synthesizers.

★ ★ 1/2

A third of the way into Larry Coryell's latest album, and I'm perplexed. The first three tunes feature slick pop vocals by Klyde Jones and Jeanie Bryson with Coryell pretty much playing the role of accompanist. Sure, he does cut loose with fine, bluesy acoustic-guitar stings on the slightly funky cover of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," but it sounds as if Coryell's just a guest on his own gig. He even waives center stage on track 4, where he sits in with Wes Montgomery, thanks to an advance in modern recording technology similar to what made it possible for Natalie Cole to duet with her late dad. To further confuse matters, Coryell gets trapped into an ill-advised, synth-beat reggae version of "Misty." That's where the Creed Taylor-produced collection bottoms out. The damage is done; however, the album improves appreciably from that nadir. There are a couple of gorgeous pieces and a clipping Coryell/Mulgrew Miller blow through "Thus Spoke Z" before the CD climaxes with the highly charged and angular guitar/piano dialog between Coryell and Ted Rosenthal on "Monk's Corner."

—Dan Ouellette

Soul Limbo

by Larry Birnbaum

Atlantic's *Complete Stax/Volt Singles 1959-1968* documented the heyday of Stax Records, the label that created the classic sound of Memphis soul. Now Fantasy has released an equally massive, fully annotated nine-CD boxed set, *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles, Vol. 2: 1968-1971* (Stax 9SCD-4411-2; 75:00/78:00/79:00/75:00/76:00/76:00/73:00/73:00/70:00: ★★ ★ 1/2), tracing the transitional years when the label struggled to maintain its identity following the loss of its brightest stars, Otis Redding and Sam & Dave, and the termination of its crucial distribution deal with Atlantic, which appropriated the entire Stax/Volt back catalog.

The soul scene turned inward after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., presenting problems for a label whose owners, songwriters, and studio musicians were largely



Booker T. with the Staple Singers

white. Stax founders Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton gradually withdrew from active management, leaving the operation in the slippery hands of Al Bell, who ran the label into bankruptcy in 1975. Spending lavishly, Bell turned Stax from a singles-oriented production company into a full-scale manufacturer, prodigiously increasing output at the expense of artistic integrity and staff morale. As recording activity shifted from the label's original Memphis studio to Muscle Shoals or Detroit, key players like Booker T. Jones and Steve Cropper drifted away, and the patented Stax sound deteriorated into a generic formula.

In an atmosphere of turmoil and alienation, Stax nevertheless managed to produce a remarkable amount of good material; although as time went by, the hits were fewer and further between. The buffoonish, middle-aged **Rufus Thomas**, bitter that his early contributions to the label were unappreciated, enjoyed an amazing resurgence with dance novelties like "Do The Funky Chicken" and "Push And Pull." His daughter **Carla Thomas**, along with fellow label stalwarts **Eddie Floyd** and **William Bell**, cranked out a steady stream of respectable if unspectacular product, while artists like the **Staple Singers** and **Johnnie Taylor** emerged as soul stars of the '70s. When they weren't backing singers, the two Stax house bands, **Booker T. & the MGs** and the **Bar-Kays**



Isaac Hayes: hit albums vs. hit singles

(reconstituted after most of its original members died in the same plane crash as Otis Redding), cut some of the era's most creative funk instrumentals.

In this chronological collection, the first disc is top-heavy with hits, including Floyd's "I've Never Found A Girl" and "Bring It On Home To Me," Booker T. & the MG's "Soul Limbo" and "Hang 'Em High," and Taylor's landmark "Who's Making Love." As the lean sound of organ, horns, and guitar gave way to poppish string arrangements, chart positions dropped, but Taylor, Floyd, the MGs, and the Thomases continued to score. In 1969, longtime Stax songwriter **Isaac Hayes** broke through as a solo artist, but though his abbreviated singles sold fairly well (e.g., "Walk On By," "By The Time I Get To Phoenix"), it was his albums, with their extended versions of songs Hayes did not write, that made his reputation.

The hits slowed to a trickle by 1970, with Taylor and Rufus Thomas carrying most of the weight, but then the Staple Singers came on strong with songs like "Heavy Makes You Happy" and "Respect Yourself," and **Jean Knight** had a #1 smash with "Mr. Big Stuff." Hayes, taking a much more modern approach than his label-mates, scored with "Never Can Say Goodbye" and the best-selling "Theme from Shaft," while the newly signed **Little Milton** marked a bluesy return to traditionalism on "That's What Love Will Make You Do."

The misses far outnumber the hits, but artists like Jimmy Hughes, the Mad Lads, the Soul Children, the Emotions, Judy Clay, Jeanne and the Darlings, Margie Joseph, Ollie & the Nightingales, the Dramatics, the T.S.U. Tornados, Barbara Lewis, and the Newcomers all had their moments. Even a forgettable obscurity like William Bell's "Happy" provides food for thought, simultaneously looking back to the Four Tops and forward to the prototypical disco of the Trampmps. Songwriters like Hayes, David Porter, and Homer Banks were never less than craftsmanly, and crack studio musicians like Jones, Cropper, Al Jackson, Wayne Jackson, and Donald "Duck" Dunn could spice up the most tepid performance.

Overall, however, the impact of this weighty collection is one of numbing sameness. One or two dynamite discs could surely be culled from the mass of derivative throwaways; meanwhile, you can just program your own CD player and dance the night away.

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Pleading The Blues

by Frank-John Hadley

Try and count the notes the impassioned Buddy Guy fires off in a typical solo on his wireless guitar. Yowza. Almost as many new blues albums from young firebrands, middle-aged troupers, and wrinkled sages get released on scores of labels during the course of a few months. The heads keep spinning. The recordings reviewed below are among the most rewarding to recently arrive in stores.

The **Holmes Brothers** reach a deep level of expression on their fourth album, *Soul Street* (Rounder 2124; 48:23: ★★★★★). While keeping blues at the foundation of their music, they vigorously and knowingly redesign Lynn Anderson's country music, O.V. Wright's Southern soul, the Falcons' and Fats Domino's classic r&b, Jimmy Reed's pop groove, and gospel. Wendell Holmes—a wonderworker—sets a tone of edgy passion with his growled vocals, and his guitar work has authority, distinction, and reach, conveying the music's poignancy. Popsy Dixon's falsetto and the Brothers' three-part harmonies give the sense of eternity. On the downside, family friend Gib Wharton's weepy steel guitar wears out its welcome on the last third of the album.

Big Daddy Kinsey, the Gary (Indiana) blues kingpin and patriarch of the crossover blues band the Kinsey Report, has an expressive son-of-the-Delta singing voice that goes a long way in explaining the title of his first big-league release, *I Am The Blues* (Gitanes Jazz/Verve 519 175-2; 66:00: ★★★★★½). A Muddy Waters disciple, he infuses the likes of "Mannish Boy," "Got My Mojo Workin'," and Sonny Boy Williamson's "Nine Below Zero" with sensual, steady-rolling excitement. So do James Cotton, Jimmy Rogers, and other noble Muddy associates who make no secret of their ironclad resolve for carrying on the Chicago blues tradition.

Another ageless old-timer, boogie-and-blues pianist **Johnnie Johnson** joins forces with country music award-winners the **Kentucky Headhunters** on *That'll Work* (Elektra Nonesuch 9 61476-2; 49:10: ★★★★★). The collaboration functions in the desired way: fun, fun, and more fun. Two songs evidence Johnson can't sing, but most everywhere he tickles the keys with plentiful spirit and surety, providing the "rock" he once gave Chuck Berry's "roll." As for good singer Mark Orr and the Headhunters, they prove gold records haven't affected their ability to swing and kick up the sawdust like the hungry blues-rockabilly band they must have been starting out in the late-'60s.

Champion Jack Dupree, the late great barrelhouse pianist, filled his playing with lively phrases that had the rhythmic punch of the boxer he once was. Although modestly jubilant on *One Last Time* (Bullseye Blues 9522; 45:37: ★★★★★), his affecting last session, it's the dark and reflective moods the senior citizen creates with his mocha-rich voice and age-old keyboard patterns on "Bad Blood" and "You Can Make It" that stick with the listener. Dupree's brooding emotive power comes without any sense of strain, which can't readily be said of



The Holmes Brothers: reaching a deep level of expression

his Crescent City accompanists on the date.

Awhile ago, guitar man **Ronnie Earl** decided to fly in the face of conventional wisdom and make do without a vocalist. Good for him. The instrumentals-only *Still River* (Audioquest 1018; 62:29: ★★★★★) is a consistently strong musical exposition of his emotional serenity and his constant struggle to keep personal demons at bay. Earl's Stratocaster sings, stammers, purrs, and shouts over or amidst the swelling rhythm waves of Per Hanson's drums, Rod Carey's bass, and Bruce Katz's organ. He and Katz have all the confidence and harmonic knowledge necessary to explore jazz-blues-soul grottos on an intriguing program that spans John Coltrane, King Curtis, and originals inspired by Wes Montgomery, Magic Sam, and *Welcome-era* Santana.

Joe Louis Walker plays guitar and sings with impeccable honesty, this time on his major label debut, *Blues Survivor* (Gitanes Jazz/Verve 519 063-2; 64:39: ★★★★★). This woefully undervalued San Francisco-based musician and songwriter knows everything about decent and indecorous motivations: lust (start with Willie Dixon's "Shake For Me"), responsibility ("Part Of Me"), and hopefulness ("Help Yourself"). Walker may push the limits of his vocal technique, but his fulminant jazzy guitar playing never seems cramped or strained. The funky rhythm section has a feel for the music's dramatic properties, the horns are more showy than exciting, while Latin percussion and churchy backup voices are just superfluous garnishes.

Another important West Coast musician is **James Harman**, whose harmonica rumbles and wails can be devastatingly expressive, usually in a feisty, swaggering manner. His sixth outing, *Two Sides To Every Story* (Black

Top 1091; 51:15: ★★★★★), makes a large impression whenever he puts the tin sandwich to his mouth and stimulates quick-witted originals about wayward women and life on the road; his songs get a jolt, too, from 21-year-old guitarist Kid Morgan and some other shufflin'-and-jumpin' cohorts who are emphatic without grandstanding. It's unfortunate Harman keeps his Hohners in their cases for half the album, electing instead to feature his rather unremarkable singing.

A decent Chicago singer who's a North Side blues bar institution, **Big Time Sarah** interprets songs with a burly tone and ardent confidence with *Lay It On 'Em Girls* (Delmark 659; 51:53: ★★★★★). Obviously an admirer of Koko Taylor, this fortysomething tough mama takes no back-talk from her man, although her contralto betrays hints of a soft spot. Invigorated by her all-male band called the BTS Express, Sarah handles four good songs Willie Dixon gave her and sizes up, for better or worse, material from B.B. King, Bill Withers, Dinah Washington, George Gershwin and Dorothy Heyward, among others.

Solomon Burke's first blues album, *Soul Of The Blues* (Black Top 1095; 56:26: ★★★★★), has a dignified emotional magnetism that decades ago put the estimable singer over as "The King of Rock 'n' Soul." He still has great control over his voice and his capacity for telling stories remains tremendous; updates of Guitar Slim's "Sufferin' Mind," Johnny Ace's "Pledging My Love," and 10 more classic songs he has carefully selected, are turned into gripping affirmances of life. The Black Top House Band, which includes world-class guitarist Clarence Hollimon, amplify Burke's resonant clarity, no more interested in assuming a studied attitude than the inspired and exhilarating singer. **DB**

Tableaux Vivants

by John Corbett

If you're inexplicably fascinated by the nail-polish sheen of top-40 music but cringe at its insipid lyrics and trite musical formulas, you'll definitely want to hear Canadian composer **John Oswald's** *Plexure* (Avant 016; 19:26; ★★★½). Utilizing the same "plunderphonic" method that got a record of his recalled and destroyed by censorious Mounties several years ago, Oswald applies the physics concept of Brownian motion to music, slicing and dicing wee bits of pop songs, tossing the sub-atomic particles together, and letting them swirl in a delicious mix that whisks, almost recognizable, in and out of your peripheral hearing. The piece's various subtitles hint at its whimsical musical connections: e.g., "Ozzie Osmond," "Bing Stingspreen," and "Sinead O'Connick Jr." The accompanying lyric sheet reads like a modernist manifesto, picking out and making up plausible words from the jumble of sound. With a single cut, not even 20 minutes long, *Plexure* is extremely short, but there's a huge amount of music in this dense, exhausting listen, particularly as it approaches a breathless, techno-ecstatic climax.

Zeena Parkins' Ursa's Door (Victo 018; 46:51; ★★★★★) moves much more slowly. It, too, is technologically up-to-date, basking in Ikue Mori's lovely computer-generated drum sounds, which range from watery drips and metallic knife-sharpening to chime-like wood pings and loose, rubberband snaps. The Parkins family string band gives it a down-home, classical feel, though; Margaret (cello) and Sara (violin) accompany their harpist/keyboardist sister and guitarist Chris Cochrane through more than 30 minutes of the title cut and half-as-long "Flush." Zeena's excellent charts range from gypsyish passages and a multitracked slide-guitar blues jam, to angular, expressive, and otherwise playful regions in which noisy textures are juxtaposed with lush string lines or stuttering rhythms.

Where Parkins writes storylike scores, keyboardist **Tony Hymas** often uses a narrator to actually tell the story. Among a spate of recent releases, the two-disc set *Oyaté* (nato 53010; 61:10/52:03; ★★★½) is Hymas' most ambi-



Zeena Parkins: giving it a down-home, classical feel

tious. Employing a remarkable cast of musicians, including tenor saxophonist Jim Pepper; soprano saxophonist Michel Doneda; clarinetist Alan Hacker; guitarists Mike Cooper, Ray Russell, and Jeff Beck; the East West Horn Trio; and the Michael Rennie String Ensemble, Hymas scores backdrops and interludes for a potpourri of fellow Native American poets, singers, and speakers. The results vary wildly in style and format, from the poppish "Naudah Cynthia" and the symphonic "Geronimo" (over which Doneda solos magnificently) to the open, improvised feel of "Quanah Parker" and the synth & chant of "Manuelito." Despite having contrasting parts (a couple of which I didn't like at all), the whole project hangs together as an eloquent statement.

Hymas teams up with Shawnee writer Barney Bush, the Shawnee Nation United Remnant Band, and Tony Coe for *Remake Of The American Dream, Vol. 1* (nato 53012; 69:45; ★★★★★). Bush is a luxuriant, politically sharp writer and a droll, unaffected reader; Hymas' soundtracks here are more of a piece. Reverent and moving, his piano (all acoustic) and Coe's clarinet drop out at dramatic moments; be-

tween sections, the Remnant Band sings traditional songs with deep, unaccented drum pulses. Both releases are gorgeously packaged, with full lyrics, photos, and illustrations (*Oyaté* comes with two sets of liner notes). And, like all releases on the French nato label, the recording quality is impeccable. **DB**

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360° Experience (II)

by John Corbett

A special emphasis of the Black Saint and Soul Note labels' output since their inception in the mid-'70s has been the documentation of Great Black Music in the post-free-jazz tradition. Some of the best work by people like Anthony Braxton, Lester Bowie, and Julius Hemphill has come by way of their offices in Milan, Italy, and an ongoing series of reissues is making much of the back catalog available on CD. **Max Roach** and **Cecil Taylor's Historic Concerts** (Soul Note 121100/1; 51:19/55:24: ★★★★★½) is a two-disc chronicle of the dramatic 1979 encounter between the always forward-looking bebop drummer (who, at the time, was experimenting with players like Braxton and Archie Shepp) and the cutthroat free-piano romantic. The two musicians circle each other in short solos, then pounce into ferocious duets; amid brilliant, all-out energy slaloms, Roach drops down to offer pulses that Taylor, with typical stubbornness, usually refuses to ride—though the two of them connect on deeper levels throughout. A couple of interviews by Jim Luce cap the CD release, which retains notes from an earlier period in the career of neo-conservative Stanley Crouch.

Along with his as-of-yet unreissued *Special People*, **Andrew Cyrille's Metamusicians' Stomp** (Black Saint 120025; 40:27: ★★★★★½) represents the drummer's finest work as a leader, and it's one of the best all-around records of the period. Recorded in 1978, with his group Maono, which included Cecil's tenor saxophonist David S. Ware, trumpeter Ted Daniel, and bassist Nick DiGeronimo, *Metamusicians'* stomps its way through an extended suite ("Spiegelgasse 14"), a couple of other fantastically propulsive Cyrille tunes, and a delicious version of Kurt Weill's "My Ship." All playing is superb, especially Ware's rough-grained tenor, but the real treat is Cyrille's brilliance as a composer. On the more diffuse side, **Leo Smith & New Dalta Ahkri's Go In Numbers** (Black Saint 120053; 45:17: ★★★★★), a live record from 1980, is a gentle, firm, introspective work that drifts metamorphically from



Andrew Cyrille: as a leader, his finest work

shape to shape, commencing with a short flute invocation by Smith. Rarely raising its blood pressure, Smith's quartet (with saxophonist Dwight Andrews, vibraphonist Bobby Naughton, and bassist Wes Brown) delights in matching long tones to the leader's beautiful trumpet and flugelhorn sound, matting them into knotty layers of dissonances and consonances.

As a leader, baritone saxophonist **Hamiet Bluiett** has never really fanned my flames. But his blues-heavy 1981 date *Dangerously Suite* (Soul Note 121018; 45:19: ★★★★★) has points to recommend it: Billy Hart's traps work well with Chief Bey's African percussion, singer Irene Datcher warbles on "Ballad Of Eddie Jefferson" (and *only* there), and Bluiett's "Full, Deep And Mellow" poises the band on the edge of a ballad, where they proceed to dive way out into a frenetic abyss. Bluiett's newest, *Sankofa/Rear Garde* (Soul Note 121238; 59:13: ★★★★★½), is a lean slice, with economical guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassist Clint Houston, drummer Ben Riley, and Bluiett doubling on contraalto clarinet in two spots. Tunes vary from Bluiett-penned blowing vehicles like "Nuttin' Special" and "John" to Mingus' ballad "Diane." The title cut is a mallet feature for Riley, who plays superbly, and former WSQ-mate Julius Hemphill's great composition "C" is given a mean reading. As for Bluiett's baritone, it can be full, deep, and mellow, but I sometimes find his low-register

tone tubelike and his altissimo needlessly squealish. On this rather straight outing, his playing is especially confident, perhaps inspired by his solid companions.

Among Black Saint/Soul Note's other new releases, **Roscoe Mitchell and the Note Factory's This Dance Is For Steve McCall** (Black Saint 120150; 51:08: ★★★★★) is cause for jubilation. In this group, Mitchell has assembled a versatile ensemble with two basses (William Parker, Jaribu Shahid), two drums (Vincent Davis, Tani Tabbal), piano (Matthew Shipp) and winds (Mitchell). This disc is dotted with spacious percussion-and-piano tracks and a triptych of flute tunes (including a version of "The Far East Blues" very different from the one on *Snurdy McGurdy And Her Dancin' Shoes*), but the meatiest parts are the surprisingly sweet outness of "Erica," a circular-breathing soprano sax burner called "The Rodney King Affair," and the elegiac title tune, on which Shipp shows his entrancing, sharp stuff. Mitchell's live duet with pianist **Muhai Richard Abrams, Duets And Solos** (Black Saint 120133; 79:24: ★★★★★), is a slightly less jubilant event. Abrams' brooding 26-minute solo and Mitchell's terse 15-minute saxophone feature are both excellent, but the joint material is strangely inert. "Ode To The Imagination" is a soprano and synthesizer venture utilizing rather pedestrian synth sounds; the more varied four movements of "Reunion" don't get very far. It's much lighter than you'd expect from the combined heft of two such heavies.

Black Saint and Soul Note from time to time release something that makes you wonder about their listening acuity. Violinist **Leroy Jenkins' Live!** (Black Saint 120122; 51:59: ★★★★★½) is one such record, so badly recorded that it makes it difficult to review. An electric band not unlike Jenkins' ensemble Sting, this quintet sports the guitar of Brandon Ross and drums of Reggie Nicholson, Eric Johnson on synthesizer, and Hill Greene on bass. There is evidently an interesting contrast between Ross' processed turbulence and Jenkins' classic FX-less fiddling. Jenkins writes angular, funky tunes, and anything with Nicholson drumming is sure to have fire in its loins. But the recording is just too muddy to sort out what's going on in the lower regions. However, on **Anthony Braxton's 4 (Ensemble) Compositions—1992** (Black Saint 120124; 73:18: ★★★★★½) you can hear pages turn—and many do as the players work through his thick charts. Lush instrumentation contributes to this release's immediate appeal. Indeed, Braxton (who mans batons rather than sax, conducting the four lengthy pieces) pooled the broadest possible timbral palette in a group with trumpet, trombones, reeds, two accordions, organ, percussion, steel drums, marimba/vibes, and prominent (but uncredited) harp. A mighty wind section includes Don Byron, J.D. Parran, and Marty Ehrlich; Amina Claudine Myers inserts brilliant Sun Ra-like organ moments on "Composition 100"; the squeeze-boxes are startlingly unusual in this setting, but form remarkable companionships with the reeds. The four compositions make a logical set, with strong similarities; "Composition 164" is the standout, with its greater variety of dynamic levels and clear sense of development. **DB**

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Brit Bop Goes Hip-Hop

by Larry Birnbaum

Acid-jazz, which originated as a British dance-club revival of '70s jazz-funk, has broadened into a transatlantic movement that sets live and sampled jazz of various eras to a hip-hop beat, adding rap, soul, or dancehall reggae vocals. To hip-hoppers, it offers a sophisticated alternative to the mindless vulgarity of today's "gangsta" rap; to jazz fans, it may just seem like a marketing ploy to impressionable youth, if not a simple rip-off of jazz licks. In any case, the music is drawing enthusiastic club audiences. And since the commercial success of groups like Digable Planets and Guru, major and indie labels alike have jumped on the bandwagon. Three new albums, all from England, represent the still-protean state of the art.

The Rebirth Of Cool (4th & B'Way 162-444 061-2; 50:11; ★★) is a compilation of mostly British material, nearly all in a similar soft-funk vein. The Jazz Warriors establish the mood with a sample-free rearrangement of Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon" that adds little to the original but contemporary studio patina. Amer-

ican-accented raps by the Subterraneans and Outlaw are listless and flat, but Freestyle Fellowship's synthesis of rap and vocalese



The real thing: US3

adds a titillating new wrinkle to the genre. Although he raps in French, the Paris-based MC Solaar is the most engaging wordslinger, while Tokyo's United Future Organization (UFO) turns in the best overall performance on *Rebirth Of Cool*, reciting old-style jazz poetry over

a straightahead beat, virtually dispensing with hip-hop altogether.

Rebirth Of Cool may sport a mock-Blue Note cover, but US3's *Hand On The Torch* (Blue Note 80883; 54:49; ★★½) is the real thing, complete with authorized samples from Alfred Lion's classic catalog. Producers Mel Simpson and Geoff Wikinson cut and splice vintage tunes by the likes of Art Blakey, Grant Green, Bobby Hutcherson, Horace Silver, and Thelonious Monk together with live instrumentals by British jazzers and vocals by Brooklyn rappers Rahsaan and Kobie Powell and dancehall chanter Tukka Yoo. The raps are fresher than the beats (the *new* beats, that is), but both seem stale next to the hard-bop oldies, which save the show by stealing it.

On his best-selling debut album, *The Antidote*, British guitarist **Ronny Jordan** blended hip-hop with contemporary soul-jazz to create what's been called "new jazz swing." *The Quiet Revolution* (4th & B'Way 162-444 060-2; 52:13; ★★) follows up with slick-tongued guest raps by hip-hop jazz pioneer Guru, quiet-storm vocals by Fay Simpson, and a comedic gem of a rap by Dana Bryant on "The Jackal." But when the hip-hop stops, the music goes limp, as Jordan's smooth Wes Montgomery-ish picking fails to rise above bland radio fare. **DB**



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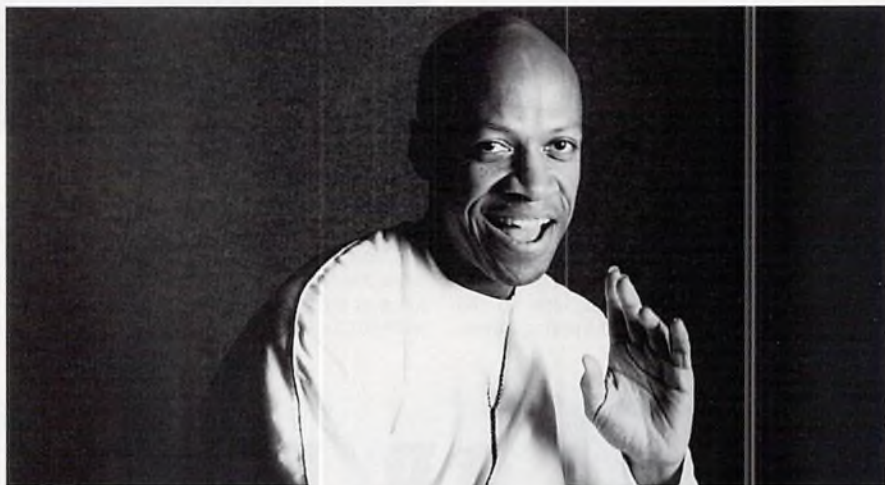
Trance Fusion

by Jon Andrews

In a high-tech musical universe, no tech could be lower than the elemental drums and flutes of ancient musics. The compelling, hypnotic rhythms of those cultures are irresistible sources for musicians investigating electronic and ambient genres.

Steve Roach's music has metamorphosed from the purely electronic into an organic, aboriginal sound without specific cultural identification. *Suspended Memories: Forgotten Gods* (Hearts of Space 11034-2; 64:05:

itive facets of gamelan, setting his expressive, almost mournful suling gambuh (bamboo) flute in electro-acoustic environments ranging from atmospheric to rhythmic, with the percussive "Equinox" the standout. Throughout, Newby experiments with perceptions of time, and his command of suling gambuh recalls world traveler Stephan Micus. **David Hykes'** Harmonic Choir introduced his approach to harmonic chant, an extended vocal technique indebted to Tibetan singing, which generates eerily beautiful overtones. *True To The Times (How To Be?)* (New Albion 057; 43:04: ★★★★★^{1/2}) surrounds Hykes' otherworldly solo voice with swirling keyboard patterns, oud, and



Laraaji: music from another world

★★★★^{1/2}) accelerates this development and establishes a partnership with Spanish guitarist Suso Saiz and Mexican multi-instrumentalist Jorge Reyes. *Forgotten Gods* offers Roach's characteristic blend of acoustic and electronic percussions with clouds of synthetic sound, but grows more haunting and evocative with Reyes' pre-Hispanic flutes and clay percussion and Saiz' supernatural electric guitar textures. As Roach devotes himself to percussion and wind instruments, his keyboards become secondary, adding atmospheric drones and colors to achieve a sense of stillness and deep distance.

Like Roach, **Laraaji** creates music that seems to come from another world or culture. Actually, he's from New Jersey. *Flow Goes The Universe* (Gyroscope CAROL 6602-2; 72:41: ★★★★★^{1/2}) succeeds best when Laraaji uses amplified, treated zither to create sheets of sound, textures, and overtones. Laraaji's zither can suggest the sounds of harp, kora, or dulcimer, sustaining the delicate, introspective moods of "Being Here" or the assertive rhythms of "Zither Dance." Some tracks featuring mbira thumb-piano, vocals, or keyboards add variety to the mix, but do little more than fill out this long-playing CD.

Think of Indonesian music and you may hear chimes, gongs, the "Kecak" Monkey Chant, or the distinctive gamelan scales. **Kenneth Newby's** study of gamelan in Bali and Java inspired *Ecology Of Souls* (Songlines 2401-2; 57:48: ★★★★★). Instead of focusing on relatively familiar aspects, Newby explores medita-

tabla. Hykes acknowledges the influence of Terry Riley, who's achieved similarly mesmerizing keyboard effects without so striking a vocal presence. Hykes' singing can even fascinate listeners who are indifferent to Indian or Tibetan singing, and *True To The Times'* only flaw is the absence of Hykes' voice from its otherwise effective instrumentals.

The sounds of India and the Middle East also lure **Muslingauze**, an enigmatic Manchester-based group inspired by Palestinian causes. *Zul'm* (Extreme 012; 58:11: ★★★★★), named for an Islamic prophet, is constructed around insistent trance-dance rhythms, propelled by electronic and conventional percussion. Muslingauze draws on Northern Indian and Persian influences to decorate infectious grooves like "Fakir" with traditional instruments, drones, and sampled voices. These layers of detail are woven into an exotic, occasionally menacing aural tapestry. The attraction of raga and the subcontinent works more subtly with guitarist **Sanjay Mishra**, whose use of acoustic guitar and MIDI-triggered synthesizer alongside tabla and frame drums necessarily invokes John McLaughlin's recent trio work. *The Crossing* (Frontier FR-0011; 47:45: ★★★★★) alternates straightforward acoustic pieces, in which Mishra plays in Mediterranean or Indian styles, with synth-oriented tracks (e.g., his "Desertscapes" suite) that combine synth and tabla to achieve an orchestral sound. *The Crossing* should appeal strongly to anyone who enjoys McLaughlin's collisions of old and new sounds and technologies. **DB**

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CD REVIEWS

Purple Maze

by Josef Woodard

He came from the Twin Cities, a precocious, pseudonymous figure plying the r&b trade with an androgynous squeal of a voice, an auteur's self-reliance, and a forceful will to bend the rules. It wasn't that **Prince** wanted to break the rules off at the source, and thus lose the music's nourishing rootedness. Instead, he found his spot in the evolutionary chain of the music by persistently pushing the r&b envelope—like James Brown, Sly Stone, George Clinton, and others before him.

He raps around studio paste-ups and the wryly self-revealing, anthemic refrain: "You can be the president, I'd rather be the pope/You can be the side effect, I'd rather be the dope."

Wisely, the comprehensive, non-chronologically ordered three-CD set kicks off with Prince's crowning achievement, "When Doves Cry." His shining hour, in terms of a commercially viable artistic statement, "When Doves Cry" indulges in poetic euphemism instead of titillation. Prince knew better than most that sex and sedition are key ingredients in pushing r&b conventions to new expressive levels, but his litany of navel- and crotch-gazing get old.

History repeats and reinvents itself on this sprawling package—both Prince's own telescoped history and growth, and also his free-



Pushing the r&b envelope: Prince

After 15 years in the spotlight and in his studio-bound hermitage, Prince has built up an impressive body of work—almost dizzying, really. When heard in a retrospective package, **The Hits/The B-Sides** (Paisley Park/Warner Bros. 45440; 75:47/74:39/76:36: ★★★★★^{1/2}), Prince's generous cultural imprint is plain to hear: it's in the house and in your face. (The package is also available in smaller, affordable chunks, as separate single "Hits" CDs, minus the third B-Sides disc in the three-CD set.) The album's arrival also signifies a departure. With 14 albums under the belt, Prince is reportedly hanging up his purple robe—and studio life—altogether.

Whether or not the retirement news turns out to be a crafty ploy or a genuine transition, this package comes just in time. Of late, the Purple One seemed to be slipping off of his cutting edge, rendered slightly moldy by the radical style shifts swirling around him under the hip-hop banner. His efforts to join the new rap/funkstream have been less than triumphant. Sonics and standards of acceptability in sexuality in black music have gone through enormous changes since Prince first holed himself up in the plush, Minneapolis pleasure dome of his home studio in the early '80s.

On this three-hour+ tour, Prince goes from the down-the-middle r&b of his early work, such as "I Wanna Be Your Lover" or his tame version of "I Feel For You"—later brought vividly to life by Chaka Khan—to the unreleased hip-hop plaything, "Pope." Here, Prince

wheeling appropriation of r&b traditions, tailored to his own purposes. Dance-happy ditties like "Let's Go Crazy," "Delirious," and even "1999" stoke the timeless soul train, but cleverly take the fatalistic view of life on the dance floor as an ecstatic, nonrational refuge from the chill of life in the rational, real world.

Never content to abide by conventional wisdoms in the studio, Prince always shuffled the deck of possibilities. He often seemed to run away from self-generated expectations—until we came to expect the unexpected. What made the post-James Brown tighten-up-ish hit, "Kiss," so striking was the stark dryness of the tracks, sans any reverb to lubricate the texture. Similarly, "When Doves Cry" bent rules and lured ears via its daring—but somehow logical—lack of a bass.

Given his whirlwind career thus far, it's easy to get lost in a purple haze when considering Prince's role in pop culture. But, despite his inventive genre-bending, his restless carnality and media image obsessiveness, Prince never waned when it came to the potency of his groove imperative.

It doesn't really matter that he's begging patience by dispensing with his name altogether, replacing it with a symbol that resembles a vulgar infraction of the treble clef—just as Michael Jackson once insisted on being referred to as "King of Pop" (trying to one-up Prince on the totem pole of royalty). What matters is that Prince stayed on his toes, creatively, where it counts. Long live. **DB**

1 Sun Ra

"The Galaxy Way" (from *MONORAILS AND SATELLITES, Evidence, rec. 1966*) Sun Ra, piano.

I'm clueless on this one. It's not an incredibly old piece, but it's not new either because the piano is out of tune. So it's no one for whom pristine piano quality is an issue. I like the harmonic quality and the rambling feel to it. I'll give it 3 1/2-4 stars.

2 NRBQ

"RC Cola And A Moon Pie" (from *UNCOMMON DENOMINATORS, Rounder, rec. 1972*) Terry Adams, piano; Joey Spampinato, bass; Al Anderson, guitar; Tom Staley, drums.

I'm going to take a wild guess and say NRBQ. I like it okay, but there's nothing very distinctive in the piano playing. 2 1/2-3 stars. Growing up near D.C., I got to hear lots of bands like the Nighthawks and a regional group called the Skip Castro Band. You could go out any night of the week and hear this kind of thing done very well. So unless it's a cut above, I'm not all that impressed. At first, I thought it was Johnnie Johnson on the piano, but this was hard-pounding playing. Johnson always had a light, smooth touch even when he rocked. As far as NRBQ goes, I've heard them do some real smokin' pieces. This just wasn't one of them.

3 Carla Bley & Steve Swallow

"Doctor" (from *GO TOGETHER, Watt/24, 1993*) Bley, piano; Swallow, bass.

I'll give this 2 stars. It's a duo playing straight, standard stuff. I've been spoiled by people like Wynton Kelly and Red Garland working a groove in that setting. This doesn't really have a strong pulse. It just doesn't do much for me. I'm probably slagging someone I know, but I wanted to hear some burning here.

4 Marcus Roberts

"Crepuscle With Nellie" (from *ALONE WITH THREE GIANTS, Novus, rec. 1990*) Roberts, solo piano.

Once again, I don't know who this is, but I like it enough to give it 3 stars. It's a piece that's introspective and ruminative. It didn't move me strongly, but I liked the bluesy feeling and the Ives-ian dissonant harmonic touches. Who is it?

DO: Marcus Roberts doing a Monk piece.

I love Marcus Roberts. I think he's truly a great player. I love the way he plays in Wynton Marsalis's band. He burns and swings hard. I like him better in a group setting because he really revs it up.

BRUCE HORNSBY

by Dan Ouellette

Pianist/singer/songwriter Bruce Hornsby burst onto the pop charts in 1986 with his debut, Grammy-winning album *The Way It Is* (RCA). As a session player, he's worked with artists ranging from Bob Dylan to Liquid Jesus. Over the last few years, Hornsby, 38, has been a guest keyboardist for the Grateful Dead and producer of Leon Russell's comeback album, *Anything Can Happen*. His latest album, *Harbor Lights* (RCA), includes jazz noteworthies Pat Metheny, Branford Marsalis, and Yellowjackets bassist Jimmy Haslip (see "Reviews" June '93).

A jazzophile in his pre-rock days who attended the Berklee School of Music and graduated with a music degree from the University of Miami, Hornsby and wife Kathy have twin sons Keith



GREG GORMAN

(named after Keith Jarrett) and Leon (named after Leon Russell). This was his first Blindfold Test.

5 Billy Childs

"Flanagan" (from *PORTRAIT OF A PLAYER, Windham Hill Jazz, 1993*) Childs, piano; Tony Dumas, bass; Billy Kilson, drums.

This pianist definitely isn't one of the greats whose work you transcribe to learn from. This is a standard piece with standard jazz changes. I feel the piano player was scuffin' a bit. Plus, the way he played was too assaultive. I like the area. I like the music, so I'll give it 2 1/2 stars. Watch it be Herbie Hancock. No, it couldn't be. This sounds like someone who hasn't arrived yet. It sounds like the guy is trying to do what Cedar Walton did in the '50s. I may be heavy-handed, but I don't see the reason for making a record like this today. I'm going to change my rating to 1 1/2-2 stars. There's a glut on the market for this kind of playing. People are always telling me I should make an instrumental jazz record. But unless I have a good idea for how to take the music to a new place, I figure why record what would amount to being just another blowing date?

6 Professor Longhair

"Rum And Coca Cola" (from *MARDI GRAS IN BATON ROUGE, Bearsville/Rhino, rec. 1972*) Longhair, piano; Snooks Eaglin, guitar; George Davis, bass; Joseph "Zigaboo" Modiste, drums.

The first person who comes to mind is Professor Longhair, but it doesn't really sound like him. It's not jazz, and it has that New Orleans feel, like the II-IV-I-V of "Iko Iko." It sounds like an Everyman's song. It

could be Fats [Domino]. I like the feel of it. It's very up and boisterous, exuberant. I'll give it 3 1/2-4 stars. It's Professor Longhair? I really like him, but I'm not familiar with his instrumental tunes. This wasn't like "Tipitina" at all.

7 Keith Jarrett

"Blackbird, Bye Bye" (from *BYE BYE BLACKBIRD, ECM, rec. 1991*) Jarrett, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

I can't tell what this tune is, but it sounds like a vamp at the end of a piece. Is this an excerpt or the whole thing? Well, it's definitely Keith Jarrett and probably DeJohnette and Peacock. I like it a lot. It has a great bluesy feel. I'll give it a 4. Keith swings hard. Of course, the telltale sign is his voice. That made it easier for me to know it was him. I love the way Jack plays. We're going to make a record together along with Pat Metheny and Charlie Haden. It's just a matter of when we can all get together to do it.

8 Bill Evans

"Blue In Green" (from *BLUE IN GREEN, Milestone, rec. 1974*) Evans, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Marty Morell, drums.

I'm a sucker for this. This really hits me where I live. Of course, it's Bill Evans playing the Miles/Evans tune "Blue In Green." I love Bill Evans. He moves me emotionally. I love the kinds of voicings he plays. I love the chords, and I love his take on jazz harmony. A lot of people I know in the rock world think it sounds like cocktail music, but for me this is classic. 4-4 1/2 stars. **DB**