

JACKIE McLEAN - CAUGHT AT THE VANGUARD

DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Jon Faddis & Wallace Roney

Life After Dizzy and Miles

Frank Zappa
The Satirist Is Silenced

Phineas
Newborn Project

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Frank Zappa

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DOWN BEAT

DOWN BEAT

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JON FADDIS

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BY

WALLACE RONEY

TERI BLOOM

DOWN



NOW THAT

By K. Leander Williams

Proteégés

THEY'RE GONE

Jon Faddis

and

Wallace Roney

Discuss Life

After

Dizzy and

Miles

Jon Faddis and Wallace Roney are sharing a laugh between poses. Faddis, broad-shouldered and affable, clearly wants this to continue. "Wallace, do you ever get cats who come up to you and say, 'Now that Miles is gone, you're the cat, man'?"

Even though, in the case of Faddis, you have to insert "Dizzy" for "Miles," both the weight and absurdity of the inquiry remain intact. (Do we ever think of mountains or other natural wonders as being replaceable?) Fortunately, however, it's the kind of question that Faddis, a trumpeter who has found the meaning of life through the mastery of his instrument and the guidance of great men, can now toss off nonchalantly. At 40, he has weathered queries of a similar stripe almost from the minute he reached New York from Oakland, Calif., 22 years ago.

But as Faddis—current musical director of the two-year-old Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, featured soloist in the recent Lincoln Center performance of the ballet *JAZZ* (Six Syncopated Movements) as well as on an upcoming Lalo Schifrin/London Philharmonic release, and currently on tour with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra—moves out of the shadow of his departed friend and mentor Dizzy Gillespie, in the public mind, 34-year-old Roney seems inextricably linked to the late Miles Davis. He's been gigging with Tony Williams for seven years now, and when the remaining members of Davis' last earthshaking quintet of the '60s went on tour in 1992 as the Miles Davis Tribute Band (see **DB** Sept. '92), Roney got to see the world in the presence of giants. That same year, when Gerry Mulligan recreated Davis' classic "Birth Of The Cool" sessions from 1949-50, Roney made that date also. And, as last year's recording and video *Miles & Quincy Live At Montreux* illustrate, the ailing Prince of Darkness also considered Roney a rather capable deputy—their moving *pas de deux* on "Solea" was as lyrical as it was haunting.

As Roney's commitment to Muse Records neared its end last year, the jazz division at Warner Bros. readily snapped him up. However, until the new Wallace Roney Quintet's inaugural sessions are issued this coming summer (former Miles Davis producer Teo Macero is on board as executive producer for some of the tunes, and some tracks are said to feature strings, percussion, additional brass, and vocals), the trumpeter's fans can savor *Crunchin'* as well as watch for *Munchin'* (his final session for Muse; see p. 40) and the soon-to-be-released *A Tribute To Miles Davis* (Qwest/Reprise), by the Miles Davis Tribute Band, including Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Ron Carter.

K. L. WILLIAMS: Wallace, now that the Montreux thing is out, how do you feel about the way the press has treated your relationship with Miles Davis? Is it becoming uncomfortable?

WALLACE RONEY: I don't think it's uncomfortable. How could I? Miles was an artist the world idolized, and whom I definitely idolized. The difference is that he took an interest in me also. So all I'm trying to do is take the things I got from him, assimilate them through myself, and fulfill whatever he saw in me. If there's any problem, it comes from people who want to penalize me for having his approval.

KLW: Jon, haven't you been through that?

JON FADDIS: Well, I'm still going through it, actually. It's the same as with Wallace. People refer to me as "Dizzy Gillespie's protégé"; that's the first thing. And, of course, I still "sound like Dizzy." But I think they do it for convenience's sake, though. Y'know, the need to label everything.

WR: It's funny, because everybody plays Dizzy's licks. To me, Jon doesn't play anymore like Dizzy than, say, a Fats Navarro or anybody else. Listen to Miles at Antibes [from *In Europe*]. He plays Dizzy's licks on "Joshua."

KLW: Isn't it almost like what Miles said about Louis Armstrong that time—that you couldn't play anything on a horn that Louis hadn't played already?

JF: Yeah, and the difference is what you can do. You take some ideas from your influences and filter it through your own stuff. There's a lick that is associated with Dizzy [scats the riff]. That's Roy Eldridge on "After You've Gone." I didn't even know that until Jimmy Owens told me. And after I went out and bought "After You've Gone," I had to admit that Dizzy took this idea directly from Roy, and I'd always thought it was Dizzy's.

WR: I saw Dizzy on TV one time, and even *he* couldn't discern the difference between himself and Roy.

KLW: Right there you have the continuum.

WR: There's always been one—since King Oliver. The way Oliver played his quarter notes, Louis Armstrong played them, too. He just added a little more to it. Miles always wanted to play like Dizzy. He told me all he was trying to do was play Dizzy's stuff with Freddie Webster's tone. Even Lee Morgan. . . . I remember what Lee said about Clifford Brown: "It just feels so good to play like Clifford." He felt the same way we all feel. No one is trying to stifle the music. Everyone is just trying to grow themselves.

KLW: Do you think the public really understands the creative process?

WR: I think the public does, but critics don't. The public reads what the critics write. Sometimes I don't know who I'm playing for anymore.

JF: It really doesn't matter because the information is out there. If people take the time to listen to Wallace closely, sure, they'll hear the Miles influence . . . but it's not like, BOOM!—there's Miles Davis. You have to take the time to study a little bit. And you even have to know what Miles sounded like.

KLW: Wallace, what can you tell me about your sound?

WR: Well, I'd say that my idol, my inspiration was Miles; but I think I articulate the trumpet like Clifford Brown and . . .

JF: . . . [laughing] When Wallace first got to town, all he wanted to play was "Joy Spring."

WR: [smiling] I got some things from Woody Shaw, and some things—like the way he played turnarounds—from Kenny Dorham. Miles played those types of turnarounds, too, but he didn't use, like, tritone substitutions on them the way Kenny did. So I used some of Miles' advanced approaches to harmony on Kenny Dorham's tritone substitutions.

KLW: And you, Jon?

JF: Well, most of the guys I listened to are the older, pre-Dizzy cats like Roy, Charlie Shavers, of course Louis Armstrong, and Cootie Williams.

KLW: Why is that? Was that music easier to come by in Oakland when you were coming up?



"People refer to me as 'Dizzy Gillespie's protégé'... And, of course, I still 'sound like Dizzy.' But I think they do it for convenience's sake. Y'know, the need to label everything."

—Jon

JF: Yeah, but for me . . . it's still a learning process. The guys definitely played differently in the '30s and '40s. And when there was a session, man . . . I saw Panama Francis a couple of weeks ago in Nice, and he told me that one night Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers wore out three drummers! [Roney laughs] They played from 2 a.m. till 11 the next morning. You just don't see that kind of stuff anymore.

WR: Ummmmhmm.

JF: But to answer the question, I guess it's like what Louis said about simply playing a melody. It's something that's very, very important and very, very difficult. I feel

like I'm still learning how to do it.

KLW: Were there still regular jam sessions when you came to New York?

JF: There were, but obviously not as much as in the '30s and '40s. [pauses] That's actually one of the things I miss. When I was growing up and playing, I used to go out to different places and jam every Saturday. I sort of miss that camaraderie with cats. I'd like to play with Wallace more. The last time we played together at the Five Spot we had a good time.

WR: That was fun.

JF: Then everybody goes in different directions. Wallace here, I go there . . .

WR: . . . [laughing] Yeah, on that Five Spot gig, Faddis started playing like me—messin' with me a little; because he can do that shit.

JF: [both laughing] Somebody said, "Man, they switched horns!"

KLW: Do either of you think that, say, the lack of a close-knit jazz community has hurt the music's development?

JF: Well, personally, I think it has to a certain extent. But I once asked Dizzy about that, and Dizzy said, "Each generation has its own modus operandi." Meaning they'll do what they have to do. So even if a lot of cats decide they want to stay home and practice with, like, Jamey Aebersold or something, if it helps them to get where they need or want to get, then it's okay.

KLW: Can we talk about mentorship? I know, Wallace, you met Miles late in his career.

WR: No, I met Miles in 1984. But he didn't sponsor my career or anything. I just loved him as an artist from childhood—used to go see him everytime he played in Philadelphia. I came to New York for the first time at 16, 1976, and played with Philly Joe Jones at Ali's Alley. That was like the beginning. And I used to try to come up to New York all the time and hear what I could hear, see who I could see, bug who I could bug. Jon can attest to that, 'cause one of the first people I found was Jon. I used to go to his gigs and see all these great cats—Woody, Johnny Coles.

I actually met Dizzy and Clark Terry earlier; they were real nice to me when I was a little boy. Dizzy was the first one who told me about opening the throat of the mouthpiece and cutting the mouthpiece short. That was the thing about Dizzy, man. He was always excited about something.

KLW: About the music . . .

WR: Yeah, he'd always come up to you and say [puts on Dizzy's voice], "Y'know what I figured out?" Or, "Check this out." He was always trying to hip you to something.

KLW: Explain that.

WR: He just said opening up the throat makes the hole bigger. And if you cut the mouthpiece down a little shorter, he thought the air got

through faster.

JF: You get a better response, because you can hit the note quicker. I think he got that from Mario Bauza.

WR: That's where Dizzy got that?! Anyway, that's exactly what he used to say—about the response. So I found an old mouthpiece that was actually shorter, and saw that it works. After that, I started doing it.

KLW: With jazz-education programs springing up around the country, is coming to New York still that important?

WR: As long as this city is the base for people like Faddis, Clark Terry, Betty Carter, and McCoy Tyner . . . yeah.

JF: I think so, too. But there's another side to that also. I know a lot of young musicians come here and say [alters his voice], "Wow, I'm in New York, now I'm going to be a great jazz musician." And even though they can play, they don't know how to deal with New York—which is a whole 'nutha animal. That's something you can't teach anywhere else. Assuming they are up to the challenge of being great jazz musicians, you can't tell them what it's like in New York.

WR: In essence, you should learn whatever you can learn about your instrument in school. But you also have to supplement your scholastic knowledge with what I call a "master's knowledge." I watched Jon, I watched Johnny Coles, then spoke to Dizzy, and hung with Miles, y'know. Faddis was always gettin' on me about breathing. Clark Terry stressed articulation. I felt like Miles was my finishing school, 'cause you know he didn't give up his stuff too easy.

JF: New York is also the place for drummers. I mean, I'm not always able to travel with my own group, and when I pick up a local rhythm section, one of the hardest things to find is a drummer I like to play with.

KLW: Y'know, I've heard the funk cats say that, too. What is it exactly that you can't find elsewhere?

JF: Well, I once had a talk about young drummers with J.C. Heard. He said he didn't think drummers nowadays realized that they had to be able to play in any style, and at any tempo. If you got on the bandstand with Bird, Dizzy, and Don Byas, you had to be ready to hit "Cherokee" for an hour. No questions asked. Young cats like Lewis Nash, Kenny Washington, and "Smitty" Smith, they have that ability. They all live in New York.

KLW: Let's continue talking about versatility. Jon, you mentioned Panama Francis earlier, a drummer who did quite a bit of studio work on early rock & roll records in the '50s. Do you feel that your time on the studio circuit enhanced your playing in any significant way?

JF: Certain elements of my playing, yes, because it gave me experiences that I'd never have otherwise. If you question those experiences, and the music that you played, who knows how you'll end up. I'm comfortable where I am right now. If I went back and tried to change those things, I'm not sure where I'd be.

When I first came to New York, like Wallace, I was also a young cat in town playing with many great people—Mingus, Gil Evans, Ellington's band, Basie's, and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis. Norman Granz asked me to put together a band and go on the road; but to tell you the truth, man, at the time I was scared. The money was real good in the studios, the work was easy, and I got to stay in town. I was away from the music for a bit, but it gave me other experiences.

WR: Now to me, that's a man with integrity. Critics can say



"Faddis was always gettin' on me about breathing. Clark Terry stressed articulation. I felt like Miles was my finishing school, 'cause you know he didn't give up his stuff too easy."

—Wallace

whatever they want, but basically you should just be able to follow your own creative impulses—to play whatever feels good to you.

After people saw or heard the Montreux thing, critics acted like I shouldn't have done it. It was like, what was I supposed to do when Miles, my idol, asked me to play with him?! Say no?! 'Cause such-and-such might not like it? If it was one of them, they'd probably have been there even if they couldn't play, talkin' about how they'd had a religious experience or something.

KLW: Before he died, Duke Ellington said he wasn't sure if all the diversity in contemporary jazz could be contained under one heading. Since

we've established that this is a continuum, how do each of you feel about jazz musicians and critics warring amongst themselves?

WR: I don't like the idea of anyone trying to hurt artists, because the arts deserve respect. As for musicians, they should just go ahead and try to deal with their own music instead of whining about what someone else is doing.

KLW: How about you, Jon?

JF: Well, for the most part, I really respect anybody who's trying to deal with this instrument. It's just so difficult. So far, I've been able to play with just about every other trumpet player and get along. Only a couple have given me bad vibes or whatever. [laughs] And even though I may not like the way they play, I feel we're all still trying to deal with this [holds up trumpet], and trying to do something that we love. I don't particularly care for the infighting, or criticism.

KLW: Do you think it hurts the music at all?

JF: No, I think it reflects on the individual. It will hurt the music only in the sense that the people who read and believe such things will base their opinions on them—instead of separating the fiction from the reality.

DB

EQUIPMENT

Jon Faddis plays a Schilke S-42 medium-bore trumpet with a sterling-silver body, a tuning bell, no spit valves, and a few other modifications made by Scott Laskey. The mouthpiece is a custom Schilke. Faddis' flugelhorn is a modified Besson from the mid-'60s with a custom lead pipe. He has a choice of three mutes: a Dizzy Gillespie-designed harmon mute made in Sweden, a Dizzy Gillespie adjustable cup mute, and a Dennis Wick straight mute.

Wallace Roney plays a Miles Davis model green-anodized Martin Committee trumpet with a custom-made, deep-cup mouthpiece comparable in diameter to a size 1C.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Jon Faddis
HORNUCOPIA—Epic 46958
INTO THE FADDISPHERE—Epic 45266
LEGACY—Concord Jazz 4291
with Slide Hampton
DEDICATED TO DIZ—Telarc 83323
with Milt Jackson
BEBOP—EastWest 90991
with various others
TO DIZ WITH LOVE—Telarc 83307
with Billy Harper
JON & BILLY—Evidence 22052
Wallace Roney
(for additional listings,
see DJB Mar. '91)
MUNCHIN—Muse 5533
CRUNCHIN—Muse 5518

SETH AIR—Muse 5441
OBSESSION—Muse 5423
with Miles Davis Tribute Band
A TRIBUTE TO MILES DAVIS—Owest/Reprise 45059
with Miles Davis
MILES & QUINCY LIVE AT MONTREUX—Warner Bros. 45221
with Tony Williams
TOKYO LIVE—Blue Note 799031
NEPTUNE—Blue Note 798169
with Geri Allen
MAROONS—Blue Note 799493
with Vincent Herring
DAWNBIRD—Landmark 1533
with Gerry Mulligan
RE-BIRTH OF THE COOL—GRP 9679



DALE YUDELMAN

The Satirist Is Silenced

FRANK ZAPPA

By Dan Ouellette

Shortly after Frank Zappa's death, his daughter Moon Unit was on the 818-PUMPKIN Zappa hotline informing mourners that in lieu of flowers they could send donations in her dad's name to the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association or to a favorite environmental cause. For those musicians and listeners financially restricted, Moon suggested, "Just play his music. . . . That will be enough for him."

Nothing could be more appropriate for the iconoclastic genius composer/performer, who lost a lengthy battle against prostate cancer on December 4, two-and-a-half weeks before his 53rd birthday. Zappa—who in his more than 30-year musical career was also known as an outspoken political critic, sophomoric humorist, and crass satirist—died at his Laurel Canyon home in the North Hollywood Hills on a Saturday evening. He was buried without fanfare in a private ceremony the next day.

A music workaholic, Zappa was busy up to the end producing the album *The Rage And The Fury—The Music Of Edgard Varese* by the European 26-piece avant-garde orchestra Ensemble Modern (due out later this year) and putting the finishing touches on the double-CD *Civilisation, Phase III* (due

out in April on Barking Pumpkin/Rhino).

In his healthier days, Zappa employed two shifts of recording engineers to keep up with his insatiable energy. But, as he said last April in one of his last formal interviews, he was forced by his illness to cut back. "I used to be a night owl, but now I'm in bed by six or seven in the evening. It's hard for me to work a real long day anymore. If I can put in a 12-hour shift, then I feel I'm really doing something."

With more than 60 albums to his credit, Zappa adventurously covered a universe of musical terrain ranging from '50s doo-wop to 20th-century classical music by Stravinsky and Bartók. He punched out heady rock on his mean guitar and served up "jazz from hell" experiments on his computerized Synclavier DMS keyboard. With a lifelong flair for creating genre-jumping, postmodernist music, Zappa—beginning with the debut Mothers of Invention record *Freak Out!* in 1966—released albums that folded into several different styles of music, cross-referencing such seemingly disparate domains as classical with reggae and melodic r&b with dissonant avant-garde musings. He fused it all into a sometimes-brilliant, frequently madcap, always-spin-on-a-dime concoction of distinct and inimitable Zappaesque music.



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

"Growing up, I had no outlet in music to express my discontent. It all seemed so idiotic. The only reason I got musical training was because my high school needed a marching band at its football games."



ing to perform his serious orchestral works, and finally, trademarking his name.

A control freak who ultimately trusted only his inner circle of colleagues, friends and family, the irascible Zappa at times found himself at odds (that sometimes led to irreconcilable rifts) with some of the musicians who worked for him. Yet, for former band members like drummers Terry Bozzio and Chad Wackerman and trombonist Bruce Fowler, working with Zappa was not only the most challenging musical experience they've encountered, but also the most inspiring.

Bozzio, who in 1975 out-finessed 50 other auditioning drummers, speculates that some former group members may not have seen eye-to-eye with Zappa because he was such a genius. "I think some guys were jealous of Frank being the kingpin. But he was Mt. Olympus, and we were mere mortals." Bozzio, currently touring as an ostinato-oriented, solo-drum show, cites Zappa as a role model: "We'd all love to be just like him in our own way. He's an archetype. He put on the red shoes. He did it 18 hours a day every day. He rode that wave. Frank was a strong, uncompromising guy who believed in his artistic principles. He was convinced and lucky enough to have those convictions about himself early enough in his life to follow through on them."

Wackerman, who worked with Zappa from 1981 to 1988, also had to pass a grueling audition that consisted of reading intricate and complex classical notation, playing polyrhythmically in such odd time signatures as 21/16, and then following Zappa's guitar lead into Latin, Cajun, reggae, and heavy-metal grooves. "He pushed everyone who worked for him," Wackerman recalled. "He'd ask me to play something incredibly complex. When I couldn't do it, he'd get more specific and ask me to play something even more difficult. I couldn't do that, either; but as I would try, I'd



TERI BLOOM

The *Yellow Shark*, the album released shortly before his death, is a masterpiece of dissonant, whimsical, and haunting contemporary orchestral music. Arranged by Zappa and performed in concert by Ensemble Modern, it's a suite-like collection of some of his classic works, "Dog Breath Variations," "Be-Bop Tango," and "G-Spot Tornado," and such newly commissioned pieces as "Get Whitey" and "None Of The Above."

The album was recorded in the summer of 1992 at concert halls in Frankfurt, Berlin, and Vienna. Zappa, who noted that he'd never heard such accurate performances of his works, attended two of the shows in Frankfurt. He even conducted the whirlwind "G-Spot Tornado" before being forced to return home because of his worsening condition. "The audiences loved it. If I hadn't been so sick, the experience would have been exhilarating. Unfortunately, it was excruciatingly [painful]. It was hard to walk, to just get up onto the stage, to sit, to stand up. You can't enjoy yourself when you're sick, no matter how enthusiastic the audience."

Toward the end Zappa spent his time cloistered in his house, composing on his Synclavier and recording in his state-of-the-art home studio called the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen. He also exercised strict creative and business control over all aspects of his career, including maintaining his own song publishing rights, recording for his own Barking Pumpkin label, running a mail-order and merchandising company called Barfko-Swill, operating the Honker Home Video arm of his empire, fielding requests from orchestras and chamber groups seek-

come to realize I was playing what he had first asked me to play."

Fowler first joined Zappa in 1973 for his *Overnite Sensation* touring band (with Jean Luc Ponty, George Duke, and Ian Underwood) and played with him on and off for the next two decades. The son of longtime *DB* education columnist Dr. William L. Fowler, Bruce was well-versed in the complex rhythms Zappa was compositionally fond of. Brothers Tom and Walt were also part of various Zappa ensembles. "He liked us because we were an orchestral tool for him," said Fowler.

Fowler said that Zappa was a hard taskmaster, putting his bands through hours of practice. "But it was all fun when we did the actual gigs. Sometimes Frank wouldn't give us the set list until right before the show. But we knew the material so well we could be spontaneous." Fowler noted that Zappa stretched his audiences as well. "He was real proud to bring music to the masses of people who wanted to get freaked out by him. He wanted to play Bartók for those guys."

Zappa's propensity to shock and even outrage people with his idiosyncratic music and his bold political views often made him an easy target of critics bent on dismissing his dissenting vote against the status quo. Did Zappa ever think that he would influence and help shape listeners' opinions? "Nothing I've ever done has been motivated by the idea of trying to impact or influence anybody. We did the goofy songs for a laugh, to have fun. If the music amused someone else, that's really good. If it didn't, who gives a fuck?"

On the other hand, talking last spring,

he voiced a quiet hurt over the fact that his music rarely gets airplay in the United States. "A lot of people in this country don't know I exist. It helps to have a large and devoted audience overseas. I mean something to people in other parts of the world."

While his biggest Stateside hit, "Valley Girl," was a novelty tune, and a significant portion of his pop-oriented work falls far short of the genius plateau, Zappa's importance as a composer and performer promises to be increasingly recognized in the years to come. In 1969, DB's Larry Kart concluded his article on Zappa by prophesying: "... there is still the music, and if any of us are around in 20 years, I think we'll be listening to it." Twenty-four years later, Terry Bozzio is even bolder in his predictions: "Frank will be the only guy mentioned 200 years from now when people are discussing the great music of our era."

Zappa was pleased with the increase in recognition his works were receiving. Last year, he reported that the president's own U.S. Marine Corps Band in Fairfax, Virginia, requested the score of "Dog Breath Variations," and the Connecticut-based dance group Iso was granted permission to choreograph a performance based on *The Grand Wazoo* album. "You'd be surprised at how many orchestras and chamber groups all over the world play my music every year," Zappa said. "I get requests for scores all the time. But I won't grant permission if I feel there's not enough money budgeted for proper rehearsal time. I'd rather not have the music played than have it performed in a sloppy way."

Yet Zappa also voiced his disappointment that more of his works weren't getting performed. "I get a lot of requests for the same few pieces, such as 'Dupree's Paradise.' But no one is willing to take on difficult pieces of my repertoire. Except in Europe, no one has performed my large orchestral works. I'd like to see pieces like 'Sinister Footware'—which was only done once by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra—be performed more often."

In conversation with Zappa, he was visibly tired as he meandered through such subjects as his displeasure with the Clinton administration's "health Nazi" approach to banning cigarette smoking at the White House and his well-publicized bout over music censorship in 1985 with Tipper Gore and the Parents Music Resource Center. He was animated when talking about projects in the wings and the unexpected success of his song "Plastic People" (from the 1967 *Absolutely Free* album), a tune that not only helped spawn a countercultural generation of authority-questioning American youth, but also became an underground hit and cry for freedom in the then-Iron Curtain country of Czechoslovakia. "I had no idea that song



Zappa (first row, center) with the early Mothers

made the impact it did there," said Zappa, who later developed a close friendship with Czech president and playwright Václav Havel. "It came as a shock to me that there was even a group called the Plastic People."

He was moved to recite some of the song's lines: "Take a day and walk around/Watch the Nazis run your town/Then go home and check yourself/You think we're singing 'bout somebody else." This led Zappa to comment on today's political landscape in America: "[That song's] relevant today in the United States. There's been an incredible rise in racist and fascist attitudes, most of them being helped along by the Republican Party. That Republican National Party Convention [in '92] was just unbelievable. Even the set decor looked like a Nuremberg rally. Hate-mongers like Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson and the rest of the featured speakers were convinced they were going to win again."

Speaking personally, when it came to his illness that had gone undetected by his doctors for nearly 10 years before finally being diagnosed in 1990, Zappa was subdued and reticent to say much more than, "I'm fighting for my life. I've surprised everybody by sticking around this long."

When asked if working on his music was therapeutic, Zappa grew agitated. "I don't do it for therapy. I do it because that's what I've always done. What's your alternative? Stay in bed or work? If you still have musical ideas, then you go to work until you can't work anymore."

DB

Hot^o NEW RELEASES



Maybe the Moon is the sixth release from IMAGES, the nationally acclaimed jazz group from Colorado. Currently receiving solid national airplay as it climbs the charts from coast to coast, *Maybe the Moon* features: *Without You, Maggie Pond, Room248 and Promise Me.*
FHR 9301



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For Phineas: (l-r) Harold Mabern, Mulgrew Miller, James Williams, and Geoff Keezer; below: Phineas Newborn Jr.

Truth, Justice & The Blues

PHINEAS NEWBORN PROJECT

By Mitchell Seidel



In the pantheon of jazz pianists, his technique has been mentioned by knowledgeable fans and critics as ranking with that of Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson. In an era when the driving force behind piano style was Bud Powell, he managed to forge an approach so unique as to make any attempt at copying it seem almost cliché. He was Phineas Newborn Jr., and is remembered some five years after his death as one of the major contributors to the music.

Born in Whiteville, Tenn., near Memphis in 1931, Newborn was part of a musical

family. His father, Phineas Newborn Sr., was a local bandleader in Memphis. The junior Newborn played a variety of instruments by the time he was a teenager, including tenor saxophone, trumpet, baritone horn, french horn, and vibes. His brother, Calvin, a guitarist, can be heard on many of his recordings.

Following his emergence in the 1950s, Newborn's career was marked by streaks of brilliant recordings and relative obscurity. In the *Encyclopedia Of Jazz In The Sixties*, Leonard Feather points to the dark side of Newborn's genius when he comments that the pianist's career "went into a decline as a consequence of emotional illness."

When healthy and playing, few could match Newborn. His extraordinary pianistic style, marked by tandem runs played with equal facility by both hands, was offset by a humble, shy, introspective personality.

This is all said by way of introduction to a tribute band touring the Midwest this month called "The Phineas Newborn Jr. Project." Pianists James Williams, Harold Mabern, Mulgrew Miller, and Geoff Keezer have

recorded a new album titled *The Key Players*. Calling themselves the Contemporary Piano Ensemble, the four are currently touring the country with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Tony Reedus. Pianist Donald Brown has been added to selected dates as his teaching duties allow.

The pianists met up at Columbia Records' New York offices—with Brown joining in by conference call—to discuss the man and the music they want more people to know.

"He was the first really major great performer that I got to see live," said Donald Brown. "The fact that I was in a position to go hear him once or twice a week really inspired me in a way I can't express. He had a great impact on me."

Rather than find that much technique intimidating, Brown said it was inspirational. "In someone of that stature, I never heard him from a technical standpoint. The thing that I noticed was the emotion and the passion he played with, because he was such a giving person offstage as well. He had a way of making you think that anything's possible."

"Junior," said James Williams, using the nickname reserved for those who knew Newborn well, "I never heard him say anything but positive things about people. He was always full of compliments and liked to encourage people."

"I never heard this man put anybody down. I never even heard him raise his voice," said Harold Mabern, who recalled first hearing Newborn in about 1950, when Mabern was 14 and Phineas was 19.

"When I first met Phineas, I was totally impressed," Mabern said. "Even though I was just getting into music, I couldn't believe the piano could sound this way."

Asked if hearing such a young talent could be discouraging for an aspiring musician, Mabern noted: "That could have easily happened, but I was so overwhelmed with his genius and his presence and his ability to do so many different things and play with both hands—play bebop, play pretty, play ballads, block chords, blues, boogie-woogie—that it actually did a lot to help me. It made me secure within myself. When you hear somebody this great at that age, you don't have to worry about being jealous of anybody else, because you're not going to

find too many people who play any more piano than that."

Donald Brown's first encounters with Newborn date back to 1972, during his days as a student at Memphis State University, the same year he met James Williams. There was a short-lived Memphis club called the Gemini where Newborn played and his disciples gathered.

"We were just students," said Williams. "This wasn't a club that had a high profile all the time, but it had a lot of good music. I think they probably had live music every night. I recall some of the other musicians from Memphis State playing there. This club didn't last but a few years, but it really served a great purpose.

"I think I actually heard Junior play in person before I heard his recordings. When I heard him and went to the record store the next day, they didn't have any of his albums. I ordered every record they had listed in the category. I didn't know which ones were considered to be the classics . . . but I figured anyone who plays with that kind of emotional depth and expressiveness, anytime they touched the piano it was going to be something worth hearing."

Williams added that young musicians would seek out Newborn beyond his weekend gigs, visiting clubs where he hung out, hoping to hear him sit in. "I would go to hear him anytime I thought he would even *be* in a club. We were just like groupies."

Miller, who moved to Memphis in 1973, recalled being turned on to Newborn by Williams. "James always had all the records," he said. "I remember vividly sitting one evening in his music room, and he said, 'Check this out.' I said, 'Who is that? What is that?' It was just unbelievable."

Keezer is another Newborn convert, again courtesy of Williams. His introduction came at an International Association of Jazz Educators Convention in Atlanta in 1986, when Williams demonstrated Newborn's arrangement of "All The Things You Are" with his left hand.

"I said, 'Wow, if he's doing that kind of thing, I'd better check him out.'" Keezer said, in what had become a standard response. "[Pianist] Cyrus Chestnut was down there, and he told me the same thing: 'Man, you've got to check out Phineas Newborn.'"

Upon returning to Wisconsin, Keezer's intense scouring of local record stores produced two albums—*A World Of Piano* and *The Piano Artistry Of Phineas Newborn*. But soon he was searching for more. "I tried to learn everything on all those records, every solo," he said.

Although he never met Newborn, Keezer said the lessons gleaned from listening to those records have had a big impact on his style.

"His philosophy of playing has become sort of a base for mine. I don't try to copy him, but just the way Phineas orchestrates everything he plays. You have inside lines, the bass, the treble. It sounds like a big band—or a small symphony orchestra. If you took the way Phineas played 'Manteca' by Dizzy Gillespie, he's playing practically every part from that band arrangement. If you looked at the score and looked at the transcription of Phineas, you could find everything there."

"One of the many great things about Phineas is that he sort of summarized everything that was going on around him at the time," said Miller. "Not only the history, but you could hear all of the things that were going on in jazz at the time."

"Also, many of those trio records, they were made with sidemen who weren't necessarily part of a traveling band. To listen to those records today, it's just amazing what kind of inter-reaction, feel, and cohesion that's there," he added, noting that Newborn's sidemen included Oscar Pettiford, Kenny Clarke, Sam Jones, Louis Hayes, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, and Ray



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Brown.

Harold Mabern, a self-taught pianist, said his most valuable lessons came at Newborn's side, watching how the legend played and listened.

"He taught me how to orchestrate; he played a full piano," Mabern said, adding that pianists who grew up around Newborn simply had to accept the concept of developing a strong left hand. "He really freed us just by our watching him."

Mabern said, when he asked Newborn to show him something on the piano, "He would always play it fast. Not to be malicious, but that was just his way. He had fast fingers. That's one of the things that helped cultivate my ear. I had to dissect it and put it together my own way."

"I tell people Phineas didn't play with two hands; he played with 10 fingers," Williams said. "If I had to summarize it in a humorous way, it would be: truth, justice, and the blues."

"James mentioned something the other day," Mabern added. "We all have favorites, and sometimes the lists might change, but Phineas is always number one with me. I just want to do whatever I can to pay some tribute to him for what he taught me." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

The Phineas Newborn Jr. Project is co-sponsored in part by the Keyboard Division of Yamaha Corp. of America. The company is providing the tour with four matching grand pianos that will travel with the musicians to every stop they make on the tour.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

The Contemporary Piano Ensemble

THE KEY PLAYERS—DIW/Columbia 57754

Geoff Keezer

WORLD MUSIC—DIW/Columbia 52958

HERE AND NOW—Blue Note 96691

OTHER SPHERES—(release and label pending)

Mulgrew Miller

KEYS TO THE CITY—Landmark 1507-2

WORK!—Landmark 1511-2

HAND IN HAND—Novus 63153

James Williams

JAMES WILLIAMS MEETS THE SAXOPHONE MASTERS—DIW/Columbia 53430

THE MAGICAL TRIO—EmArcy 832 859-2

THE MAGICAL TRIO VOL. 2—EmArcy 838 653-2

Harold Mabern

STRAIGHT AHEAD—DIW/Columbia 48961

RAKIN' AND SCRAPIN'—Fantasy/OJC-330

LIVE AT THE CAFE DES COPAINS—Sackville 2016

Donald Brown

CAUSE AND EFFECT—Muse 5447

PEOPLE MUSIC—Muse 5406

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION—Muse 5385

Phineas Newborn Jr.

A WORLD OF PIANO!—Fantasy/OJCCD-175-2

THE NEWBORN TOUCH—Fantasy/OJCCD-270-2

THE GREAT JAZZ PIANO OF PHINEAS NEWBORN JR.—Fantasy/OJCCD-388-2

HARLEM BLUES—Fantasy/OJCCD-662-2

BACK HOME—Contemporary C-7648

PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE—Contemporary C-7622

THE PIANO ARTISTRY OF PHINEAS NEWBORN JR.—Atlantic 90534-2

WHILE MY LADY SLEEPS—Bluebird 07863-61100

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TV Or Not TV?

TOM SCOTT

By Josef Woodard

When Chevy Chase began designing his talk show last year, he put in a call to an old friend, Tom Scott, to handle the musical duties for a new, deadpan-gonzo variant on the ever-popular talk-show theme. Although the show was cancelled within two months, it gave Scott another window of TV opportunity—after leading the band behind the similarly short-lived Pat Sajak Show (see **DB** Mar. '89).

For the Chase show, Scott's band included Eric Gale, a holdover from his Sajak show band, and keyboardist David Goldblatt, who headed up the band behind the defunct Dennis Miller Show. "We're two-fifths failed talk-show people," Scott laughed.

By comparison with the other talk-show bandleaders—Branford Marsalis, Max Weinberg, Michael Wolff, even Paul Shaffer—saxophonist/composer/arranger Scott is a grizzled veteran. Although Scott's experience on the Sajak show was his first regular TV gig, he's worked on episodic TV dating back to the late '60s. He's composed, arranged, and conducted background music for such shows as *The Bold Ones*, *Dan August*, *Barnaby Jones*, *Kate's County*, *The Streets Of San Francisco*, *Baretta*, the Emmys, and *The Carol Burnett Show*. And it runs in his blood: Scott's late father, Nathan, was a seasoned TV composer whose work on countless shows can be heard nightly on Nickelodeon.

Don't hold the TV connection against Scott. He's virtually a textbook case of a highly qualified West Coast musician-for-hire. His jazz roots and chops are certifiable, and he played a critical role in the pop-jazz fusion boom of the '70s, doing now-legendary work with Joni Mitchell and Steely Dan. But Scott has also pulled a lot of journeyman duty and done his share of faceless jazz-funk. Through it all, he maintains the clarity and good cheer of a gifted show-biz professional.



Tom Scott and Grover Washington, Jr., (r) in the recording studio for Scott's new album

Inquiring jazz fans might ask: Will the real Scott stand up? Is that him, making the innocuous contemporary jazz on some of his 20 albums as a soloist? Or is that him, behind the lustrous neo-mainstream jazz sonorities of his last album, *Born Again*, on which he retraced his roots to his days with his hero, Oliver Nelson? Last year, Scott also spent quality time with his jazz muse working with the GRP All-Star Big Band. Or was that him, leading the TV band in a nightly parade of commercial lead-ins?

It's all part of the portrait of the artist as a multi-faceted professional.

Scott met Chase in the late '70s through a mutual friend, singer Libby Titus. Scott went on to produce a comedy album for Chase, and kept in touch over the years. When Chase called Scott with a job offer, the saxist was initially "less than totally enthusiastic about it—not because I don't enjoy Chevy. I do. He makes me laugh, and he's a good guy. But I thought, what the world does not need right now is another talk show with people coming out hawking their wares."

After the first few shows, critics far and wide were calling the show something a little odious. In a green-room interview just after the foul reviews started pouring in, Scott was typically unperturbed and philosophical about the critical barrage.

"We're in a so-called talk-show war period here, and columnists and commentators get a tremendous amount of mileage out of the subject. And they often feel compelled to

express an opinion right out of the chute, one way or another. Opening night: 'Well, is it a hit or a miss?' As if they have any clue what's going to happen. If I could tell you the shows I've done that have gotten great reviews that have gone into the toilet four or five months later, and conversely, shows that didn't get good reviews, but that people seemed to love. . . .

"I tell you, I've been through this before. I wish people would say nicer things. *Variety* [ran] a good review, where [the reviewer] actually got it. Chevy does not have a great deal of an elitist following, and for that, he takes a tremendous amount of heat. But I'll tell you, he's a very hip guy."

"Chevy himself told me this years ago, and it stuck with me. He said, 'You know, Tom, people will not remember what columnists or reviewers say. All they'll remember is the name. I just want them to say my name a lot, and spell it right in the paper. What they say is absolutely unimportant.' And I think, if you can avoid the natural tendency to take these things to heart, he's right."

Bad reviews aren't about to derail the gung-ho resolve of this 45-year-old, seasoned musician. Scott's most groundbreaking work came in the '70s, when he began grafting pop structures and funk rhythms with jazz with his L.A. Express band. Today, he laughs at the idea of his being on the cutting edge of the fusion boom. "Who knew? I don't think anyone wakes up one day and says, 'You know, I think I'm going to

invent a musical style today.”

His band lured a turnaway crowd every Tuesday night at the Baked Potato in L.A. One visitor was Joni Mitchell, who hired the entire band to record behind her for *Court And Spark* and tour behind the release (heard on *Miles Of Aisles*).

Another high watermark of Scott's career came in the '70s when Steely Dan asked him to write—and play on—the intricate horn charts for their *Aja* and *Gaucho* albums. “I heard a test pressing of *Aja* that Walter [Becker] brought over. I put it on and listened to it, and thought, man, this is great. It's far too esoteric for the average pop record buyer. It won't sell 10 copies. Of course, the thing went on the charts and stayed there for about a year.

“But it was a great experience. They let me alone. They said, ‘Look, we'd like seven or eight horns.’ I said, ‘Well, if you want that much, you're not going to get triads. That will be seven or eight different notes. You're going to have some polychords in there.’ They said, ‘Great.’

“So I went home and wrote it just like it was Oliver Nelson or something. I used Oliver often as a model, because I learned so much from him about voicing when I played in his band. I suppose he comes from the Duke Ellington school of how to voice the real juicy kind of extended notes, but voice them real low so they kind of rub down in there and get this real rich, *ooh-ahh* kind of sound. It's the unexpected notes that are in the low-mid area that I love. That's the deal.”

This past summer, his work was heard publicly on the widely touted Steely Dan tour, with the arrangements pared down to a three-sax horn section. Scott, who caught the show in Los Angeles, says, “They managed to extract the essence of those arrangements. Speaking as the guy who wrote the charts, I can tell you that I was very impressed.”

Arranging for horns is one expressive outlet Scott doesn't get much chance to exercise, except with his charts for the GRP All-Star Big Band, or special jobs such as an arrangement for 10 saxists for the Clinton Inauguration. “It was a medley of ‘Arkansas Traveller’ and ‘Heartbreak Hotel,’ written in kind of a Count Basie style, if you can imagine all those elements together,” Scott smiles.

As for Scott's latest project, *Reed My Lips*, he enlists the help of friends and outside contributors, including musicians Grover Washington, Jr., vocalist Jerry Lopez, David Paich, and Paul Jackson.

“It's not a jazz album,” Scott commented. “What would we call it? It's more of an urban, groove-oriented album. A lot of the material is not mine. Either I've co-written or solicited outside material. I've found

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some wonderful material.

"I think the songwriters have been greatly advanced in this era of synths, when guys can sit at home and assemble some kind of home studio without a tremendous amount of dollar investment and come up with demos of songs that are pretty good. I have solicited material from outside writers

before, but I've never had so much good material as this time, so much potentially useable material.

"That certainly took the pressure off of me, because I usually write anywhere from half to three-fourths of the albums. This being my 21st solo album," he starts swaying, as if dizzied by the thought, "it's nice to

get a little help on that end, because there are times when I feel that I've written just about everything that I care to say as a composer," he laughs. "I'm kind of repeating myself sometimes."

Sometimes, the creative-collaboration process took unusual turns. "I sent one of the songwriters, Rick Hawm, a DAT tape of me just jamming, noodling around. He listened to it, and he would sample little pieces that would intrigue him, and write them right into the song. So I'm featured on my own record, sampled. It's a different kind of a sound. It's nothing I would play normally, the way he's chosen to use my stuff to insert it into his song."

Much of the new album was concocted at home on Scott's Macintosh, which he used to create an elaborate sketchpad for live players to play off of. "Sometimes what I'll do is write the thing at home and use my palette of colors from my synthesizer. If I hear it pretty much the way I think it should be, I'll go ahead and play it, put it on the tape, and use the best of it. Then I'll go in the studio with the band and have them play with the parts I want to keep. So they're playing it with a much firmer concept.

"It's much better than going in with nothing and telling them, 'Well, I'm going to bring in strings here and have this happen here. . . .' It's all there for them now. They can respond to it. In fact, I record myself—the melody and/or the solos—at home with my synths accompanying me. So the guys can then respond totally to what the album is going to sound like when it's done."

It would seem that, for the moment, Scott is veering away from the jazz impulse and more toward the pole of accessibility. But that particular A-word suits him fine.

"I'm just doing what feels right to me at the time," Scott asserts. "I've been very lucky. In 21 albums, I've never had any record company come to me and say, 'You have to do this, or else.' I've always had, artistically, almost complete freedom. Now, obviously, with that freedom comes a certain awareness that I am making a record here, and I hopefully want to get some airplay and get some people interested in it, and maybe sustain a career doing it. That, I would presume, points me in a certain direction.

"I want my music to be accessible, whether it's jazz or r&b or loops or erotic rap. I've never had a problem with this old debate of art versus commerciality. If I want to do something just for art's sake, I'll do it on my own time, and be perfectly happy doing that, by the way, and not necessarily having to share it with anybody."

Scott flashes an ear-to-ear grin. "As you might gather, I love this job. I still feel like I'm the guy who's getting paid to do what I love. I'm still not sure what it is I want to do when I grow up." DB

EQUIPMENT

For his saxophonic equipment, Scott enthuses, "I'm a Dave Guardala devotee, personally and professionally." Scott uses a Guardala soprano, new black-nickel alto and tenor saxes, and Guardala mouthpieces.

He also plays a Yamaha silver soprano sax, an old Selmer baritone that he's had since 1966, and a Selmer soprano. In the electronic mode, he

plays a Yamaha WX7 going through a Roland SP700 sample player.

In his home studio, he uses a Macintosh FX computer, on which he uses primarily Opcode's sequencing program, Studio Vision. His notation program is Professional Composer, made by Mark of the Unicorn. For a keyboard controller, he uses a Yamaha KX76.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

REED MY LIPS—(GRP 9752)
BORN AGAIN—GRP 9675
KEEP THIS LOVE ALIVE—GRP 9646
THEM CHANGES—GRP 9613
FLASHPOINT—GRP 9571
STREAMLINES—GRP 9555
TARGET—Atlantic 80106
DESIRE—Elektra—Musician 60162
BLOW IT OUT—Columbia 46108
with GRP All-Star Big Band
GRP ALL-STAR BIG BAND LIVE!—GRP 9740
GRP ALL-STAR BIG BAND—GRP 9672

with Joni Mitchell
FOR THE ROSES—Asylum 5057
COURT AND SPARK—Elektra 1001
MILES OF AISLES—Elektra 202
with Steely Dan
GAUCHO—MCA 37220
AJA—MCA 37214
with Thelonious Monk
MONK'S BLUES—Columbia 9806
with George Harrison
33 & 1/3—Dark Horse 26612

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The Swinging Foundation

CHRISTIAN McBRIDE

By Larry Birnbaum

The session is running overtime at the midtown Manhattan studio where bassist Christian McBride has been shooting an educational video with classical violinist Midori and members of saxophonist Joshua Redman's band. Casually dressed in a black porkpie hat, green cardigan, and blue jeans, McBride thumps out a solid, swinging bass line on the band's final take of "Summertime," then packs up as Midori reads a few last lines from cue cards. With his husky build (he tried boxing for a couple of months but quit for the sake of his hands) and a voice as deep and sonorous as his instrument's, McBride could be intimidating, but instead he's gracious and affable at the end of a long day's work.

"I'd really like to play with as many musicians as I can," he says, "so I can take all these musical experiences and put them in a funnel. And when it's time for me to make my statement, I can take all those wonderful musical experiences and come out with something I can share with the rest of the world."

At 21, McBride has already recorded on more than 50 albums, by artists ranging from old masters like Benny Carter, Betty Carter, Joe Henderson, and Freddie Hubbard to young lions like Roy Hargrove, Joey DeFrancesco, Cyrus Chestnut, and Joshua Redman. "I've been blessed to be able to work with Christian," says Redman, "because he's the most in-demand bass player out here. He's really one of the greatest musicians I've ever played with. I think a lot of people feel great connections with him. That's one of his gifts: being able to hook up with anybody."

Despite lavish kudos from musicians and critics alike, McBride remains unassuming. "I just want to play, that's all," he says. "I can't be getting sidetracked, because I have too much responsibility playing with all these great musicians. I'll take the recognition if it comes, but it's nothing I'm really looking for." Asked about his favorite sessions, he responds, "I'm not saying this to be cocky, but I actually don't remember a lot of them. The ones I can think of off the top of my head are all of Benny Green's records; they were fun to do. And doing the album with Freddie Hubbard was a dream come true. Wallace Roney's album was my first recording ever [1990], and that's always memorable. Javon Jackson's album, because that was my first time playing with Elvin Jones. And Benny Carter's album, of course, with Doc Cheatham and Hank Jones. To this day, I look at that record and say, 'Damn, did I do this?' That session really made me say, 'Hey, you can't mess around now, playing with these cats.'"

One reason McBride is in such heavy demand is that he concentrates on supporting his fellow musicians. "He plays the foundation when the foundation needs to be played," says Redman. "The main function of the bass is to provide a solid pulse down low and to anchor the harmony by playing the roots."

"It got away from that in the late '60s and '70s," says McBride. "But now it's coming back around to where the bass players are recognizing that their job is to hold everything together, and you can't do that if you're drifting all over the place. Whatever you're going to play, it should have some melodic

sense to it. Even Ornette Coleman played the blues, and he played melody. It was not conventional, but Ornette had his roots together.

"I really enjoy listening to every aspect of the music. Of course, I appreciate one thing more than another, but it's all got its place. But there's a kind of bass-player's jinx. Miles [Davis] even said in his book [*Miles—The Autobiography*] that when he had his band, everybody kept talking about Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams, and they'd tend to leave out Ron Carter. It's like, 'Oh, the bass player. I forgot about him.' That's why bass players owe a lot to Charles Mingus, not only for his playing, but because he was one of the first cats to come out verbally and say, 'This is what's happening.' Mingus opened things up.

"But Ron Carter was my first major influence, and then came Paul Chambers and Sam Jones. Every bass player out there influences me in some way, but right now the top three on my totem pole are Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, and Ray Brown." "I'm glad to be one of his idols," says Brown. "But this guy has really got a handle on it, and he's going to be magnificent."

Although he's known as an acoustic purist who mics his bass directly into club or studio mixing boards without the benefit of an amplifier, McBride is an outspoken funk and fusion fan. "Jaco Pastorius was my main influence on electric bass. I have a Fender Jazz Bass, and I play it almost every day; but I don't get a chance to play it too much in public anymore. But yeah, Jaco, Alphonso Johnson, and the r&b bass players like Bootsie Collins and James Jamerson—those

were, and still are, my main men."

Born in Philadelphia on May 21, 1972, McBride started playing electric bass at age 8, inspired by his father, Lee Smith. "My father used to work with a lot of the major r&b acts in the '70s, like Billy Paul, Blue Magic, Major Harris, and the Delfonics. After he left the r&b scene, he started working with Mongo Santamaria, and that was the first time I actually sat down and really listened to what was going on; and right away I wanted to play the bass." McBride's great-uncle, Howard Cooper, played upright bass with drummer Sunny Murray and vibraphonist Khan Jamal, and kept a collection of vintage bebop albums. "He more or less turned me on to jazz, with all of those records," says McBride. "My great-uncle played with a lot of avant-garde cats, but you'd be surprised how much tradition he's rooted in."

McBride played classical bass at Philadelphia's High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and took private lessons with Neil Courtney, the assistant principal bassist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He also played r&b gigs with various pickup bands; but like his schoolmate and best friend Joey DeFrancesco, he had already given his heart to jazz. "I met Wynton Marsalis when I was in 11th grade, and he came to Philadelphia to do a workshop," says McBride. "He asked me, 'What do you play?' And I said, 'Bass.' He said, 'Go get it.' So I ran and got my bass, and we started playing a duet. After the workshop was over, he said, 'Come down to the Academy of Music next week'; and he called me up on stage there to sit in with his band. I didn't know he was going to do that, and it shocked me to death."

In August 1989, having won a partial scholarship to the Juilliard School, McBride arrived in New York, where he continued his classical studies with bassist Homer Mensch. But the lure of Big Apple jazz proved overwhelming, and he dropped out after one year. "I was living at the YMCA," he says, "because Juilliard didn't have any dormitories at the time, and I didn't have a telephone. One day my classmates were saying, 'Some man named Bobby Watson's been walking around looking for you.' I think Bobby had heard about me from Wynton. So I went to lunch, and he was waiting for me in the cafeteria, and I did my first gig in New York that weekend. Talk about being thrown into the pit: it was Bobby Watson, James Williams, and Victor Lewis, and it was like an iron brand going into me. I played with Bobby for the next year and a half, but I never recorded with him."

For lack of a phone, McBride lost a chance to join Betty Carter's band, but later recorded on her album *It's Not About The Melody*. "He goofed," says Carter, "but ev-

erything worked out for the best for him. I wouldn't have been able to keep him, anyway, because he was such a natural. Now he's so busy, you can hardly get him; but even before he got to New York, the word was out about this young bass player in Philadelphia who was a monster."

McBride did manage to hook up with Benny Golson for a European tour, and soon was working regularly with Roy Hargrove. "We both were playing with Bobby Watson when Roy started his first band," he says. "To this day, playing with Roy was one of the most profound musical experiences I've ever had. It's great to play with legendary musicians like Benny Carter, but for me, playing with Roy was just as great, because his first band included Antonio Hart and Steven Scott."

"Then Roy's band broke up, and Benny Green's band started, so I went with Benny. He was my first best friend in New York; Benny and Wallace Roney and Jesse Davis really helped me when I first got to town. Benny and I were playing with Freddie Hubbard—Carl Allen was also in that band—and that's how his trio got started. We just took that rhythm section and did the first album, *Greens*, and it just went on from there. It's been almost three years now, and I'm still working with Benny. That band is still together." "Christian is like a sponge," says Green. "He absorbs everything, and he's able to reinterpret it in a personal manner."

As of this writing, McBride is on the verge of signing a major-label contract and hopes to record his first session as a leader in the spring. "I'm not really looking to start my own band right away, because I know I'm not ready for that yet. I don't know if I will ever be able to throw my sideman role away, anyway. I mean, I'm a bass player, so I'm always going to be playing behind somebody else." Meanwhile, McBride will be back on the road with Benny Green, touring the Midwest with the Contemporary Piano En-

semble (a four-piano group featuring Mulgrew Miller, James Williams, Harold Mabern, and Geoff Keezer; see p. 24), and record on Joshua Redman's next album. "I don't know if I believe in the concept of genius," says Redman, "but if genius exists, he definitely has it."

"People talk about Jimmy Blanton, who turned the whole bass world on its ear back in '40 and '41," says Ray Brown. "A lot of people thought it was his soloing, but it was his rhythm playing. That's the essence, and that's where you find out where a guy's heart is. And Christian is almost like another Jimmy Blanton. He's got the basic ingredients—the intonation and the time—which are the essential things for jazz music."

"I love him," says Betty Carter. "I'm in love with the musician; I'm in love with what he does; and I'm really glad he came along when he did. I think he's probably the best out there now, and I just hope he continues to mature. He's got everything: the knowledge of the instrument, rhythm, everything. And you know who he is when you hear him. It's very rare that a musician comes along and right away you can hear his imprint, his identification."

For all his vaunted jazz prowess, McBride still has a couple of other aspirations. "It is a goal of mine to further pursue my classical career," he says. "I don't have the time to deal with it right now, but sooner or later I'd like to grease my classical chops back up. I would love to do a classical record one day, but I can't even think about documenting any kind of classical material right now. I really need to practice. And I'm looking forward to the day I can have a summit meeting with the Godfather of Soul, because James Brown has been my number-one inspiration since I was six or seven years old. One dream I have is to do a trio album with him. So I'm waiting to hook up with JB, and I feel it coming. I really feel some kind of karma is going to bring me and James Brown together real soon." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

McBride plays a Czech-made 1920 vintage Juzek bass, using Thomastik Weich strings and an

Electro-Voice RE 20 mic. He also owns a Fender Jazz Bass

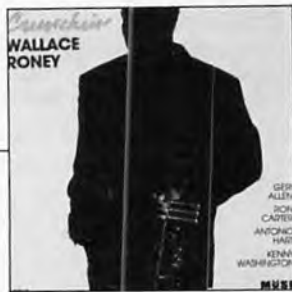
SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Benny Green
GREENS—Blue Note 96485
TESTIFYIN'—Blue Note 98171
THAT'S RIGHT!—Blue Note 84467
 with various others
PUBLIC EYE—Novus 3113 (Roy Hargrove)
PART III—Columbia 47063 (Joey DeFrancesco)
OBSESSION—Muse 5423 (Wallace Roney)
KENNY KIRKLAND—GRP 9657 (Kenny Kirkland)
THE TIME IS NOW—Criss Cross 1051 (Don Braden)
FOR ART'S SAKE—Candid 79501 (Donald Harrison)
SOMETHING TO CONSIDER—Verve 849 557 (Stephen Scott)
COOKIN' AT THE CONTINENTAL—Antilles 314-510 724 (James Clay)
KENNY DREW JR.—Antilles 314-510 303 (Kenny Drew Jr.)
SHADOWS—Timeless 379 (Gary Bartz)

HAND IN HAND—Novus 63153 (Mulgrew Miller)
FOR THE FIRST TIME—Novus 3120 (Antonio Hart)
LUSH LIFE—Verve 314 511 779 (Joe Henderson)
ME AND MR. JONES—Criss Cross 1053 (Javon Jackson)
HOT BRASS—Candid 79518 (Ricky Ford)
LIVE AT FAT TUESDAY'S—MusicMasters 65075 (Freddie Hubbard)
IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MELODY—Verve 314 513 870 (Betty Carter)
SPIRIT WILLIE—enja 7045 (Willie Williams)
LIVE IN CONCERT—Novus 63158 (The Jazz Futures)
KNOW IT TODAY, KNOW IT TOMORROW—Red 123255-2 (Victor Lewis)
JOSHUA REDMAN—Warner Bros. 9 45242 (Joshua Redman)
LEGENDS—MusicMasters 65087 (Benny Carter)
IT'S A MATTER OF PRIDE—GRP 9753 (Billy Taylor)

Key

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



Wallace Roney

CRUNCHIN'—Muse 5518: *WOODY 'N YOU; WHAT'S NEW; ANGEL EYES; SWING SPRING; TIME AFTER TIME; WE SEE; YOU STEPPED OUT OF A DREAM; MISTERIOSO.* (54:32)

Personnel: Roney, trumpet; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone (1,2,4,6-8); Geri Allen, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

★★★★

Wallace Roney walks a tightrope. He encourages identification as the rightful heir of Miles Davis while asserting his own identity. *Crunchin'* (along with the forthcoming *Munchin'*, recorded at the same time) is a strong, traditional recording that serves as an homage to Davis and an opportunity for Roney to express other aspects of his playing. Roney gathers contemporaries, plus elder statesman Ron Carter, for straight-ahead blowing on familiar old songs.

It is impossible to listen to Roney's performance on "Angel Eyes" without thinking of Miles. The saloon song becomes a vehicle for Roney's remarkable phrasing and expression. Without copying Davis, Roney shows the ability to temporarily inhabit an emotional space that was Miles' domain. Geri Allen's accompaniment, here and throughout *Crunchin'*, maintains the sense of tension and mystery associated with the acclaimed Davis group of the mid-'60s.

Two Monk compositions, "We See" and "Misterioso," get fine ensemble performances, with Carter providing a strong blues foundation for the latter. Antonio Hart immediately grabs your attention. Heard mostly with Roy Hargrove, he has a full, beautiful tone on alto sax, and he's an imaginative soloist. Like Allen, Hart turns in his best work on the Monk tunes, and on a speeded-up, Latinized version of "You Stepped Out Of A Dream."

—Jon Andrews



STEVE LACY DOUBLE SEXTET: CLANGS

Steve Lacy Double Sextet

CLANGS—hat ART 6116: *THE OWL; TORMENTS; TRACKS; DOME; THE NEW MOON.* (52:58)

Personnel: Lacy, soprano sax; Steve Potts, soprano, alto saxes; Hans Kennel, trumpet; Glenn Ferris, trombone; Irene Aebi, Nicholas Isherwood, voices; Bobby Few, Eric Watson, pianos; Sonhando Estwick, vibraphone; Jean-Jacques Avenel, bass; Sam Kelly, percussion; John Betsch, drums.

★★★★★

Steve Lacy Octet

VESPERS—Soul Note 121260-2: *MULTIDIMENSIONAL; IF WE COME CLOSE; GRASS; WAIT FOR TOMORROW; ACROSS; I DO NOT BELIEVE; VESPERS.* (51:07)

Personnel: Lacy, soprano sax; Steve Potts, soprano, alto saxes; Ricky Ford, tenor sax; Irene Aebi, voice; Tom Varner, french horn; Bobby Few, piano; Jean-Jacques Avenel, bass; John Betsch, drums.

★★★★★

It is said that temperance and wisdom come with age. Like the sound he gets from his straight horn, 60-year-old Steve Lacy's ensemble music has grown less strident, more restrained, maybe wiser. For proof, compare these two recordings, both of which feature augmented versions of his longstanding sextet, with '70s classics like *Trickles* or *Troubles* (both Black Saint). *Vespers* is lovely music, but I find myself preferring *Clangs*, fondly recalling the folly of his youthful extremism, longing a bit for something that burns white-hot, like *The Flame* (Soul Note).

On *Vespers*, Lacy applies his unmistakable compositional style to a song cycle with texts by Bulgarian poet/politician Blaga Dimitrova. Typically, he repeats melodic lines to ask musical questions that are never fully answered, but left dangling. Very French in sing-song character, the tunes ride a line between grandeur and pomp; Aebi's singing is theatrical, cabaret-like. Potts blows a great fringe-bop alto solo on "Multidimensional"; Varner takes a burning round on "Grass," later joined by Potts' soprano for a solemn duet; Avenel ends "Across" with an exquisite bass solo. But what is most remarkable on *Vespers* is Lacy's mastery of the compositional midrange, the way he uses the added french horn and tenor sax to enhance contrapuntal motion in the themes' inner voices (am I alone in hearing this as a slight return of Lacy's dixieland origins?). Check out how this is applied to the samba-ish sexiness of "I Do Not Believe."

From its screech-owl opening, *Clangs* connects with a more clamorous place in Lacy's career. Composed in the early '70s and refined periodically since then, these five songs use texts from painter Wassily Kandinsky ("The New Moon") to poet Guillaume Apollinaire ("The Owl"). Isherwood's deep voice nicely complements Aebi, and Lacy's great, lumbering themes get muddier in the middle than on *Vespers*, especially when the brass and two pianos lodge huge blocks of static sound mass under Potts' aching alto, Estwick's shimmering vibes, and Kelly's hand percussion on "Torments." Slashing lines cut open "Tracks" before its orchestral theme and outré group improvisations, while "Dome" rings tubular bells, vibes, and pianos (one on the keys, one inside on the strings) over a supercool bass strut, wah horns, and dadaist Kurt Schwitters' words (Aebi sounds terrific singing in German, exposing an underlying Marlene Dietrich connection). Sharing the sagacity of experience and the recklessness of youth, *Clangs* is consummate later Lacy.

—John Corbett



Antonio Hart

FOR CANNONBALL AND WOODY—Novus 63162-2: *STICKS; SACK O' WOE (BAG O' TROUBLE); ORGAN GRINDER; THEME FOR ERNIE; WOODY I; (ON THE NEW ARK); CANNONBALL; BIG "P"; NINE WEEKS; REFLECTIONS ON WOODY; ROSEWOOD.*

Personnel: Hart, alto, soprano (3,8,10) saxophones; Darren Barrett, trumpet (1,2,7,9,10), flugelhorn (6,8); Nat Adderley, cornet (2); Craig Handy, tenor saxophone (3,5,7,10); Mark Gross, alto saxophone (3,5,10); Steve Turre (3,5), Slide Hampton (9), Robin Eubanks (3,5,10), trombone; Carlos McKinney, Mulgrew Miller (3,5,10), piano; Omar Avitel (1,2,4,6,8), Ray Drummond (3,5,7,9,10), bass; Jimmy Cobb (1,2,7), Victor Lewis (3,5,9,10), Nasheet Waits (4,6,8), drums.

★★★★ 1/2

Antonio Hart, exacting historian and joyous builder upon jazz traditions, pays surefire tribute here to the works and ebullient spirits of two sadly neglected geniuses in recent jazz history: Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, genial giant of the alto, and Woody Herman Shaw II, master trumpet craftsman. Hart captures the lean, edgy quality and scintillating syntax (if not the roundest tone) of Adderley better than many more aggressive, ripper-sounding peers; he's the scholar among them, with degrees under his belt and a hankering for more.

Hart has researched tunes nicely and had the luxury of handpicking rhythm teams. Links with the past are forged with cameos by estimable cornetist Nat (long brother's co-

leader) and Shaw's trombonists, Steve Turre and Slide Hampton. Hart's alto (and newly found, sprucely played soprano) and writing take precedence, so solos are apportioned with discretion; but this shared tribute reflects the core of *joie de vivre* that Cannon and Woody shared, and serves their memories well.

The party mood Hart sets with the opening two tracks (Nat gets pert and slightly nasty on "Sack") is not revisited explicitly, though Adlerley veteran Jimmy Cobb gives these two and Jimmy Heath's full-yet-fleet "Big 'P'" an extraordinarily deft boot. Hart moves on to the small-band writing and arranging that Shaw so loved, and delivers crackerjack, extroverted, big-boned nonet transformations of bold Shaw classics "Organ Grinder" and "Woody I," separated by a set ringer—Hart's superb ride on the beautiful ballad "Theme For Ernie." The closer is a lovable, comfortable chart of the gay "Rosewood" that finds everyone lifting off, particularly regular trumpeter Darren Barrett and pianist Mulgrew Miller. —Fred Bouchard



Muhal Richard Abrams

FAMILY TALK—Soul Note 120132-2: *Meditation 1; Drumbutu; DizBirdMonkBudMax (A Tribute); FamilyTalk; Illuso; Sound Image Of The Past, Present And Future.* (72:09)

Personnel: Abrams, piano, synthesizer, conductor; Jack Walrath, trumpet; Patience Higgins, tenor sax, bass clarinet, english horn; Warren Smith, vibes, timpani, marimba, gongs; Brad Jones, bass; Reggie Nicholson, drums, marimba, bells.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

After opening on a particularly ponderous note with "Meditation I," the spiritual leader of the AACM kicks this sextet into high gear with the turbulent "Drumbutu," a 17-minute extravaganza that features spirited blowing by Walrath and Higgins while also showcasing Abrams' flowing lyricism in a solo-piano section.

"DizBirdMonkBudMax (A Tribute)" crackles with energy, taking Abrams back to his days as a successful bop pianist in Chicago before forming the AACM in 1965. The 16-minute piece shifts nimbly back and forth between a Latin rhythm and a swinging 4/4. Higgins solos over this straightforward backdrop with a hardy tone and flowing attack while Walrath's solo sparkles with ideas. Each band member steps forward to solo against the band in very conventional bebop fashion (very atypical for Abrams—but then, this is an homage).

An experimental piece in the finest AACM

tradition, "Family Talk" seamlessly weaves touches of Dolphyesque bass clarinet, Jo Jones hi-hat licks, quotes from "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Jitterbug Waltz," military drum beats, a taste of Miles' muted trumpet, down-home blues, and a myriad of other sources into a kind of dream sequence of sound that surrounds and engulfs the listener. The finale, "Sound Image Of The Past, Present And Future," is a one-man synth *tour-de-force* that recalls some of Frank Zappa's ambitious experiments with the Synclavier. This stuff is positively celestial (Sun Ra?) and light years away from the bebop pianist he used to be. —Bill Milkowski



Curtis Fuller

BLUES-ETTE PART II—Savoy 75624: *Love, Your Spell Is Everywhere '93; Sis; Blues-ette '93; Is It All A Game?; Capt' Kid; Five Spot After Dark '93; How Am I To Know?; Along Came Betty; Autumn In New York; Manhattan Serenade.* (55:21)

Personnel: Fuller, trombone; Benny Golson, tenor sax; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Al Harewood, drums.

★ ★ 1/2

One wishes that the rebirth of the Savoy label, now owned by Denon, were better. Judging by the personnel, this first new recording on Savoy in 20 years looks like a winner. But it is a curiously flat session, with a tepid approach from everyone.

Three of the tunes (marked "93") appeared on the original *Blues-ette* album, recorded in 1959 with this same personnel except for Drummond, who replaces the late Jimmy Garrison. The first, "Love, Your Spell Is Everywhere '93," sets the tone for the rest of the album: cool head, velvety trombone (tinged with a bit more spittle than usual), slurring tenor reminiscent of Lucky Thompson, sparse bop piano, comfortable bass and drums. The trombone/tenor blend, one of the warmest sounds in jazz, especially suits the laidback temperament of this album.

Fuller's solos have a clipped, sing-song quality. His tone seems less full than usual. This is especially evident on "Autumn In New York." On his own "Capt' Kid," a calypso, he fares better, with lilting rhythmic phrases.

Golson checks in with four compositions on the album—all typically smooth and well-crafted—but performance-wise his fleet, oblique lines and quizzical tone reflect an off or cautious day. Flanagan, too, is caught up in the detached, perfunctory atmosphere.

—Owen Cordle

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Charles Gayle

CONSECRATION—Black Saint 120138-2: *O FATHER; RISE UP; JUSTIFIED; GLORIOUS SAINTS; THY PEACE; REDEMPTION.* (67:28)

Personnel: Gayle, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Vattel Cherry, William Parker, bass; Michael Wimberly, drums.

★★★★★

This is intensely spiritual music; just check the song titles. No quotes from Broadway show tunes, no variations on rhythm changes, no references to Rollins or Webster or Dexter. Just

pure, honest improvising in the moment with an unbridled emotionalism that is at once frightening and beautiful. Closer in spirit to Coltrane's cathartic *Interstellar Space* than Albert Ayler's more melodic flights on, say, *Love Cry* or *Spiritual Unity* (though Gayle's ferocious falsetto overtones have often been compared to Ayler's).

The two-bass theory works well, allowing one to bow (usually Parker) as a complement to Gayle's incendiary voice while the other acts as a grounding force. Their separate roles are featured on "Justified" and "Thy Peace," a dark vehicle for Gayle's bass-clarinet work. And Wimberly's drumming throughout is interactive and propulsive without being intrusive.

The neo-con crowd will call it bullshit, but Gayle won't care. He burns white-hot with conviction that can't be denied. All the credit (or blame, depending on which camp you're in) for bringing Gayle to the public eye must go to Michael Dorf, the proprietor of the Knitting Factory in New York, who has provided Gayle with a regular Monday night gig and released his first two albums on the Knitting Factory Works label (1992's *Repent* and 1993's double-CD, *More Live*).

—Bill Milkowski



Joshua Breakstone

WALK DON'T RUN—Evidence 22058-2: *LULLABY OF THE LEAVES; TELSTAR; RAM-BUNK-SHUSH; PERFIDIA; WALK DON'T RUN; A TASTE OF HONEY; APACHE; CARAVAN; SLAUGHTER ON 10TH AVENUE; BLUE STAR.* (60:57)

Personnel: Breakstone, guitar; Kenny Barron, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

★★★ 1/2

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early '80s, guitarist Josh Breakstone has made great strides toward combining personality with grace. Here, he performs songs mostly associated with instrumental rock & roll or pop groups of the early and mid-'60s: the Ventures, the Surfaris, the Tornadoes, the Tijuana Brass. The material, no matter how slight or tired, is imaginatively recast with plenty of charm and a distinct sense of swing. Breakstone's fine playing shows a sincere love for melody even as the group's musical sophistication replaces the unabashed fun of the originals.

—Frank-John Hadley



McCoy Tyner Big Band

JOURNEY—Verve 519 941-2: *SAMBA DEI BER* (DEDICATED TO JEAN-FRANCOIS); *JUANITA*; *CHOICES*; *YOU TAUGHT MY HEART TO SING*; *PERESINA*; *BLUES ON THE CORNER*; *JANUARY IN BRASIL*. (59:42)

Personnel: Tyner, piano; Earl Gardner, Virgil Jones, Eddie Henderson, trumpets; Steve Turre, Frank Lacy, Slide Hampton (1), trombones; John Clark, French horn, hornette; Tony Underwood, tuba; Doug Harris, alto saxophone, flute; Joe Ford, alto saxophone; Billy Harper, John Stubblefield, tenor saxophones; Avery Sharpe, bass; Aaron Scott, drums; Jerry Gonzalez, percussion, trumpet; Ronnie Cuber, baritone saxophone (1); Waltinho Anastacio, percussion (1); Dianne Reeves, vocal (4).

★ ★ 1/2

The big sound of McCoy Tyner's piano is a natural for big-band accompaniment. In fact, some of the best Tyner on record can be heard in the midst of horns at turns driving and supporting him. And yet, *Journey* has a tendency to come across as stiff and halting. Case in point: Tyner's irresistible "Blues On The Corner" is severed from its swinging roots by a cluttered arrangement and tentative playing. There's also a sense that this is a New York studio band with featured soloist McCoy Tyner; certainly not a McCoy Tyner big band.

It should be mentioned, however, that Tyner's rhythmic conception generally prevails, bursting and rolling on the uptempo tunes even when he's laying out, while the ballads "Juanita" and "You Taught My Heart To Sing" receive a gentle push in his solos. On the latter, Tyner's soft, swinging touch and sensitive horn charts complement Dianne Reeves' smooth-yet-husky voice like velvet on naked skin.

As with some of his other big-band outings (as opposed to Tyner's enlarged small-group dates), the impression is one of too many loose parts and not enough cohesion. Certainly, there are strong solo voices in addition to Tyner—

particularly trombonist Steve Turre and tenorist Billy Harper. And a tune like Tyner's lovely "Peresina" escapes the snags of too much monkey business, as Tyner, Harper, and trumpeter Eddie Henderson's solos are wisely given center stage amidst a sympathetic, relatively understated chart. In like fashion, the uptempo, swinging "Choices" ends up being the only number that combines fierce solos with a robust, supportive chart. But throwaways like "January In Brasil," "Samba Dei Ber," and the wasted "Blues On The Corner" suggest *Journey* was pretty much a rush job.

—John Ephland



Medeski Martin & Wood

IT'S A JUNGLE IN HERE—Gramavision R2 79495: *BEEAH*; *WHERE'S SLY?*; *SHUCK IT UP*; *SAND*; *WORMS*; *BEMSHA SWING-LIVELY UP YOURSELF*; *MOTI MO*; *IT'S A JUNGLE IN HERE*; *SYEEDA'S SONG*; *FLUTE*; *WIGGLY'S WAY*. (55:18)

Personnel: John Medeski, organ, piano, Wurliizer horn arrangements; Billy Martin, drums, percussion; Chris Wood, bass; Steven Bernstein, trumpet, flugelhorn; Josh Roseman, trombone; Jay Rodrigues, tenor, alto saxes; Dave Binney, alto sax; Marc Ribot, guitar.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

The simmering "Beeah" starts things off with keyboardist John Medeski delivering juicy conversation-like utterances and waves of mirthful and rapturous organ flourishes while Martin fervently clips out the drumbeats and Wood follows Medeski's lead with bubbling bass riffs. The remainder of the set is driven forward in this fresh and adventurous vein. The trio uses a horn section to help play the mellifluous head of the slow and moderately solemn "Where's Sly?" a number with an unobtrusive funk undergirding, dramatic horn swells, and Medeski's downright bluesy electric-piano runs. On "Shuck It Up," the group catches an uptempo groove and Medeski grinds out earthy organ eruptions complemented by melodic-to-avant piano exclamations.

The introspective "Sand" works as a short pause before the trio tunnels into the playful and comic "Worms," where MM&W as well as guest guitarist Marc Ribot each unfurl loopy and mischievous solos. Other noteworthy tracks include the ebullient funk-swing through Monk's "Bemsha Swing," which is embellished and reggae-flavored by Bob Marley's "Lively Up Yourself," and the enticingly gorgeous, calming cover of King Sunny Ade's "Moti Mo"

—Dan Ouellette

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**Anthony Braxton/
Evan Parker**

DUO (LONDON) 1993—Leo 193: *PARKBRAX ≠ 1*; *BRAXPARK ≠ 2*; *PARKBRAX ≠ 3*; *BRAXPARK ≠ 4*; *PARKBRAX ≠ 5*. (47:43)

Personnel: Braxton, Parker, saxophones.

★★★★ 1/2

Anthony Braxton

COMPOSITION 96—Leo 169: *COMPOSITION 96*. (55:35)

Personnel: Braxton, conductor; 37-piece orchestra, including Julian Priester, trombone.

★★★★ 1/2

Along with three double-CD sets of Anthony Braxton's quartet music recorded live in 1985, these two recent releases secure the London-based Leo label's importance as an outlet for the ceaselessly prolific reedman/composer. Weighing in on opposite sides of the size spectrum, these marvelous discs also showcase very different sides of Braxton's multifarious musical personality, ranging from the long-form compositional strategy of "Composition 96" to the more intimate free improvisations with Evan Parker.

Indeed, though he's expressed waning interest in completely open playing of late, on *Duo (London) 1993* Braxton proves himself to be one of its most skilled practitioners—sensitive, reactive, relaxed, and full of ideas. Parker is thoroughly stunning, dovetailing lyrical lines with Braxton's staccato extrapolations, dropping out and sneaking back in with his trademark flutter, palpitating swoops, and organic swells. For those who know him as a soprano-man, here's some fine tenor work to chew on, as well; check the minute-or-so solo on the first track. On "ParkBrax ≠ 3," the two move together with absolute deliberation and clarity, creating lush lines and accompanying harmonies, and in a flash dispelling the myth of vanishing melody in improvisation and the cliché that equates free saxophones with sronk. The more agitated "BraxPark ≠ 2" and

"BraxPark ≠ 4" (where they hit a patch of icy, long, high tones that work euphoric alchemy on the eardrums) find them playing friendly games of cat & mouse—sustaining, supporting, matching, breaking off, and in places sharing tips on tonguing the reed.

Composition 96 was completed in 1980. Making use of four slide projectors as visual counterpoint, it was recorded in its excellent debut performance in Seattle that year. Typically fascinating liner notes from Braxton-expert Graham Lock detail the pivotal role of the composition in the evolution of Braxton's "multiple line musics." Four dense major sections feature various portions of the orchestra, each of which darts and spins around with a high degree of independence; it's an exhausting listen in which all sorts of associations and microcosmic activities take place, like a beehive packed with busy musicians. As relief and transition, Braxton structured in three rests during which the orchestra improvises long, gentle tones. It's a highly rewarding work that coheres even as it runs in different directions.

—John Corbett



Chad Wackerman

THE VIEW—CMP 64: *CLOSE TO HOME*; *ACROSS THE BRIDGE*; *BLACK COFFEE*; *EMPTY SUITCASE*; *INTRODUCTION*; *STARRY NIGHTS*; *ALL SEVENS*; *ON THE EDGE*; *JUST A MOMENT*; *THE VIEW*; *FLARES*; *BASH*; *DAYS AWAY*. (58:52)

Personnel: Wackerman, drums, various percussion; Jimmy Johnson, electric bass; Jim Cox, piano, organ, clavinet, various synthesizers; Walt Fowler, trumpet, flugelhorn; Allan Holdsworth (1,4,5,8,9,13), Carl Verheyen (2,3,6,7,10,11), electric guitars.

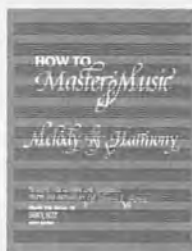
★★★

The first three fusion pieces on drummer Chad Wackerman's outing make for an insipid start. Bland melodies with repetitive phrasings and predictable solos set him and his band on a course seemingly doomed to mediocrity. It's not until the mysterious "Empty Suitcase," with its touch of funk, an extended trumpet solo, and playful guitar and piano comping, that the album gets interesting.

"Introduction" has Cox twisting and turning through his organ solo and guitarist Allan Holdsworth charging into an angular, rock-informed run.

After a calming acoustic ballad, the entire band then launches into the best piece, "All Sevens," an engaging tune featuring trumpeter Walt Fowler and Cox, who drops in clusters of dissonant piano doodlings. Other highlights

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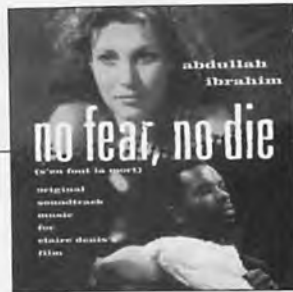
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include the short but energetic full-band improvisation "On The Edge," "Flares" (noteworthy for Carl Verheyen's guitar workout), and the finale, "Days Away," with Holdsworth's seesaw guitar riffs and Fowler's roving trumpet work. Disappointing down the stretch is Wackerman's solo spotlight, "Bash" (listed out of order on the album liner and cover), which, compared to his energetic beats throughout the rest of the CD, sounds more bashful than bashing.
—Dan Ouellette



Abdullah Ibrahim

NO FEAR, NO DIE—enja-liptoe 88815 2: CALYPSO MINOR; ANGELICA; MEDITATION, II; NISA; KATA; MEDITATION, I; CALYPSO MAJOR. (45:35)
Personnel: Ibrahim, piano; Ricky Ford, tenor saxophone; Horace Alexander Young III, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Jimmy Cozier, baritone saxophone, clarinet; Frank Lacy, trombone; Buster Williams, bass; Ben Riley, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

ZIMBABWE—enja 4056-2: KRAMAT; GUILTY; BOMBELLA; DON'T BLAME ME; ZIMBABWE; IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND; FOR COLTRANE, No. 11. (41:49)
Personnel: Ibrahim, piano, soprano saxophone; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone, flute; Essiet Okun Essiet, bass; Don Mumford, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Abdullah Ibrahim's music can be heard as a wedding of traditional African sources to Duke

Ellington's orchestral sound. *No Fear, No Die* is Ibrahim's second score for a Claire Denis film (his first was *Mindif*), but this film takes place in a grimy Parisian suburb, not Africa. As Ibrahim downplays the African cadence and lilt so characteristic of his compositions, the undercurrent of Ellington's influence grows stronger. You hear Duke most in Ibrahim's horn arrangements, in the warm, rich textures of "Nisa" and "Meditation, II," the swing of "Angelica," and in the vocalizing of Frank Lacy's trombone, Ricky Ford's tenor sax, and Jimmy Cozier's baritone. Bassist Buster Williams fills a prominent role in this venture, stating the themes of "Calypso Major" and of "Angelica," the most overtly African composition. This change of pace for Ibrahim sparks some exceptional, rewarding music. My only question is, how can such intimate, romantic sounds describe a film about cock-fighting in a Parisian bus stop?

The reissue of *Zimbabwe*, from 1983, revisits Ibrahim's memorable association with Carlos Ward. Ibrahim mixes the characteristic African sounds of "Kramat" and "Zimbabwe" with standards, including a fine duet version of "Don't Blame Me" with Ward on alto saxophone. The small-group setting is unusual, as Ibrahim currently prefers the broader palette of his Ekaya ensemble, or the simplicity of solo piano. Ward is a strong presence, soaring on alto as well as flute ("Kramat," "For Coltrane, No. 11"). Ibrahim's soprano sax leads, joined by Ward's flute, on a transformed version of "It Never Entered My Mind."
—Jon Andrews

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Ahmad Mansour

PENUMBRA—Timeless 404: *DAYLIGHT SAVINGS; UNTIL; BYGONES; BITTERSWEET ROAD; CIRCA; PLAYBACK; PENUMBRA; HERE & NOW; END OF...* (57:00 minutes)

Personnel: Mansour, guitar; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Marc Copland, piano; Terje Gewelt, bass; Ian Froman, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Seemingly taking inspirational cues from the ECM heyday when Jan Garbarek and Pat Metheny were busy melding jazz with American and Northern European folk sensibilities, guitarist Mansour's quintet explores a deceptively calm and reflective mode of music-making on *Penumbra*. Favoring the lean tone and attack of his Stratocaster over a more standard jazz guitar, Mansour has an abiding command over his vocabulary of pensive swelling chords and brisk,

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crisply articulated linear forays, with a probing intensity readily reminiscent of Metheny in an antsy mood.
—Josef Woodard



Ted Nash

OUT OF THIS WORLD—Mapleshade 01532: *OUT OF THIS WORLD; HOPE; CITY HALL; SIXTEEN AND EIGHTEEN; SADNESS; NECESSARY RISKS.* (77:01)
Personnel: Nash, tenor saxophone; Frank Kimbrough, piano; Ben Allison, bass; Tim Horne, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

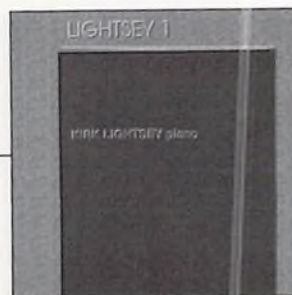
You can tell a lot about a band by the cover

tunes it chooses. Here, "Out Of This World," a Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer composition that John Coltrane adopted for his modal explorations, embodies this quartet's style: a blend of straightahead grooves and post-bop harmonics that encourages plenty of extended blowing.

On six songs, including five originals (recorded in concert with Mapleshade's usual pristine aural setup), the New York-based band comes across as a strong unit with accomplished soloists. Kimbrough is featured on his own "Hope," a poignant ballad, weaving in a Bill Evans vibe with the emotional depth it takes to create a personal voice. On the bluesy, Ornette-ish "Sadness," also his, and the album's uptempo songs, he adds occasional Tynesisms to good effect. Nash, inspired by classic-quartet-era Trane, plays the more lyrical end of the spectrum. He occasionally edges toward raw emotion, as when he and drummer Tim Horner duet, à la Trane and Elvin, on a few choruses of the title track.

This band may not be forging its own new jazz style, but listen to "Necessary Risks." It's fast and hot, Nash noodles Ornette-like. Kimbrough's dissonant syncopations add tension, the rhythm section burns. Not out of this world, but certainly a nice bit of it.

—Suzanne McElfresh



Kirk Lightsey

LIGHTSEY 1—Sunnyside SSC1002D: *FEE FI FO FUM; HABIBA; TRINKLE TINKLE; MOON RA; FRESH AIR; WILD FLOWER; NEVER LET ME GO.* (38:39 minutes)
Personnel: Lightsey, piano, flute (5).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

1982 started a cycle of heavy activity for pianist Kirk Lightsey. *Lightsey 1* retrieves this early, slightly uneven solo recording, which showcases Lightsey's agile, intricate playing and establishes some essential characteristics, including Lightsey's continuing interest in compositions by Wayne Shorter. This set features a relaxed treatment of Shorter's "Fee Fi Fo Fum" with a blues feeling and a graceful "Wild

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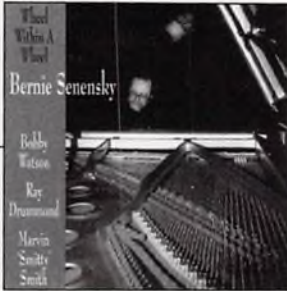
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Flower." Lightsey is acrobatic as he works through the complexities of these tunes, adding counter-melodies and asides. Lightsey's "Habiba" and Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle" are the other standouts, showcasing Lightsey's deft touch and sense of rhythm.

—Jon Andrews



Bernie Senensky

WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL—Timeless 410: *BOP-BE; ADAM; LOLITO'S THEME; WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE?; SOUL EYES; WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL; NO MORE TEARS; SILVER TRANE; FLOATING; EYE OF THE HURRICANE.* (69:27)

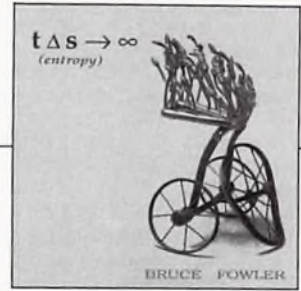
Personnel: Senensky, piano; Bobby Watson, alto, soprano sax (4); Ray Drummond, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

In the main, a solid mainstream outing from this Canadian pianist, teaming up with New Yorkers Watson, Drummond, and Smith, who provide superb accompaniment through a program of mostly Senensky. At the keys, Senensky is fully in control, smooth and straight but not slinky; check out his economical solo on the Latin-grooved "Lolito's Theme." Watson is himself: typically articulate soloist, soulful and fiery, sometimes sweet. And rhythmists Drummond and "Smitty" swing it like a set should be swung.

Senensky writes better for movement in high-gear, as evidenced on "Silver Trane" and the excellent kick-off, "Bop-Be." The lower the tempo, the lesser the interest—his mid-speed tunes like "Adam" and "No More Tears" (the disc's weakest spot, next to Drummond's harmonically drab, shapeless, but aptly titled "What Is Happening Here?") are less compelling. The group proves that it can sway its way through the right down-tempo material with a tender reading of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" that culminates in a gorgeous cadenza from Watson.

—John Corbett



Bruce Fowler

ENTROPY—Fossil CD 1005: *CANON DE CHELLY; FLAMERS; LOVE DREAMS; THE RAT; ENTROPY; SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN; MAN'S EPITAPH; FLOATIN'; A BASH FIT FOR A KING; BULLIN.* (53:57 minutes)

Personnel: Fowler, trombone, spoken word; Steve Fowler, alto sax, flute; Tom Fowler, bass, violin; Walt Fowler, trumpet, flugelhorn; Chester Thompson, drums; Billy Childs (1-4,7-10), Kei Akagi (5-6), piano; Kurt McGettrick, baritone sax, E-flat contrabass clarinet; Phil Teele, bass trombone; Suzette Moriarty, french horn; Albert Wing, tenor sax.

★ ★ ★

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and music for Zappa, Beefheart, and the *Short Cuts* movie soundtrack. He sets his strong, clear tone amid brassy stage-band arrangements, takes Miles' "Seven Steps" and a quartet at a "Giant Steps" pace, and gets winningly limpid on ballads ("Flames," "Floatin'"). Fowler's most personal tastes include jokey storytelling ("Rat," "Epitaph"), muscular collective improv ("Entropy"), quirky bluesiness, quotation, and odd syncopation ("A Bash"). One nit to pick: the recording's reverb suits the horns, but leaves the rhythm team sounding disconnected.

—Howard Mandel



Hendrik Meurkens

A VIEW FROM MANHATTAN—Concord Jazz 4585: *MEET YOU AFTER DARK*; *WHISPER NOT*; *PARK AVENUE SOUTH*; *SPEAK LOW*; *NAIMA*; *PRAGUE IN MARCH*; *THE MONSTER AND THE FLOWER*; *BODY AND SOUL*; *MADISON SQUARE*; *MOMENT'S NOTICE*; *A CHILD IS BORN*. (57:44)

Personnel: Meurkens, harmonica; Mark Soskin, piano; Dick Oatts, soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones, alto flute (1,2,4,5,9); Jay Ashby, trombone, percussion (1,2,6-9); Claudio Roditi, trumpet (7); Harvie Swartz (2-5,10,11), Leo Traversa (1,6-9), bass; Carl Allen, drums (2-4,10,11); Portinho, drums, percussion (1,5-9).

★★★

Hendrik Meurkens wants parity. *A View From Manhattan* puts his harmonica on equal footing with reeds and brass. Meurkens' solos have the logic and flow of horn solos, and he achieves some interesting voicings in combination with Dick Oatts' saxophones and flute and Jay Ashby's trombone, especially on Benny Golson's "Whisper Not." Give Meurkens five stars for guts, taking on Coltrane tunes and "Body And Soul" with a harmonica. Up tempo numbers, including bubbly sambas like "Meet You After Dark" or "The Monster And The Flower," work better. Although Meurkens' playing shows remarkable control, I don't hear the expressive range needed for the soulful moods of "Naima" or "Body And Soul." —Jon Andrews

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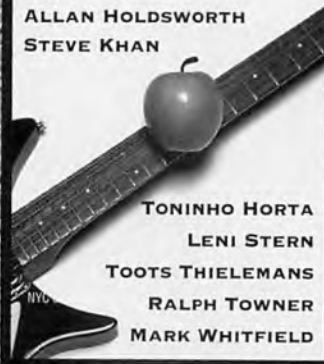
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Wayne Johnson Trio

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3746370052: *BEDROCK*; *KITE MUSIC*; *AN OCCASION
FOR JACKSON*; *NU BLOOZ*; *WONDER MOUNTAIN*;
KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE; *NO EXCUSE*; *TANGLE-
TOWN*; *ROCK RUNNER*; *PORTRAIT OF A YAK*; *BLUE
SOLANUM*. (64:08)

Personnel: Johnson, guitars, synth; Bill Berg,
drums; Gary Willis (2-5,7-11), John Leftwich (1,6),
bass; Rob Whitlock, keyboards (1,6); Don Rob-
erts, bagpipes (1).

★ ★ ★ ★

This Left Coast guitarist recorded with trios in the 1980s for Inner City, Allegiance, and MCA, all around gigs with the Manhattan Transfer. On

Dream, the wide-open, ringing chords of "Bedrock" bring Metheny to mind; but before the song's done, Johnson shows the curious, almost bewildering openness of Bela Fleck. Rob Whitlock can't contain the urge to throw in a Hornsby twist. On "Kite Music" and "No Excuse," Johnson's real feelings and intentions are hidden by the guitar-synth sounds. But the guitarist redeems himself on "Tangletown,"

which rocks all across the board, and on "An Occasion For Jackson," with some gut-wrenching jabs and whistles delivered in a metallic tone reminiscent of Jan Akkerman. He wisely allows Willis and Berg room to let loose, and they take good advantage of the long leash. "Wonder Mountain" has nice ensemble twists written in, but there isn't too much left to the imagination.

—Robin Tolleson

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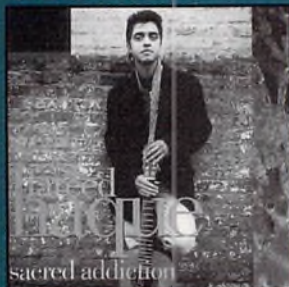
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Andy Sheppard



Rhythm Method

Andy Sheppard

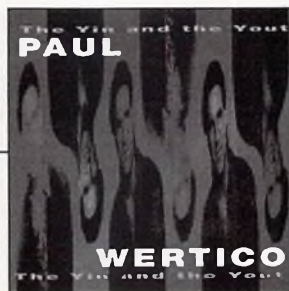
Rhythm Method

Known throughout Europe after of touring as featured soloist with George Russell, Gil Evans and Carla Bley, saxophonist Andy Sheppard has created an album so diverse in style and influence it's nearly impossible to categorize. Sheppard's writing (he penned and arranged all the tunes on the album) follows his wide interests -- from a tender, soprano saxophone showcase as evocative as a lullaby, to a rowdy ten-piece party; searing free improvisation from Sheppard on tenor, to light and nimble ensemble performances. He does it all on his Blue Note debut.



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CD REVIEWS



Paul Wertico

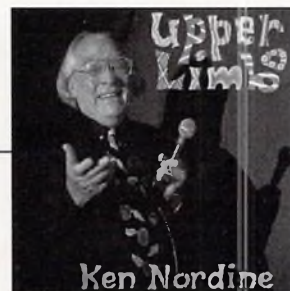
THE YIN AND THE YOUT—verABra 2150 2: PERUVIAN FOLK SONG; DON'T LOOK BACK; THE LONG CHART; DANCE OF THE HUNTERS; FROM HERE TO THERE; DAYS LIKE THESE; ELEMENT 103: THE MAX FACTOR; TRIUNE; COWBOYS & AFRICANS. (48:20)

Personnel: Wertico, drums, acoustic and electronic percussion; Victor Bailey (1,2,6), electric bass; Dave Holland (1,3,4,9,10), acoustic bass; Mino Cinelu, congas (1,10); Richie Beirach, acoustic piano (3,9,10); Barbara Unger-Wertico (2,5-7); Bill Syniar (5,7); Michael Bearden (2,6), various keyboards; Brian Keane, guitars (1,6); Nik John Bariluk (2); Peter Schwartz (2,6), various synthesizers; Howard Levy, penny whistle (1); Jew's harp (1,4); Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone (1,3,4,10); Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone (1,3,4,10), recorder (4); David Mann, alto (2), soprano (6) saxophones; musicians and singers of the Malinke people of Mali (4); Yu Gno Who, guitar synthesizer (2).

★★★★

Exotic textures, polyrhythms, and sound ideas mark this debut solo recording from Metheny band drummer Paul Wertico. Instead of a chops-oriented affair, what we get with *The Yin And The Yout* is more folksy, down-home, people music. Former Flecktone Howard Levy puts his usual/unusual mark on the chugging "Peruvian Folk Song," while Richie Beirach adds a beautiful bed of piano to "Cowboys & Africans" for Liebman, Holland, and Mintzer to do some serious blowing on.

"The Long Chart" and "Dance Of The Hunters" (Lounge Lizards without the humor) show off a darker, more "out" side, with "Don't Look Back" and "Days Like These" the mainstream crossover jazz candidates, solidly melodic but not patronizing. —Robin Tolleson



Ken Nordine

Ken Nordine

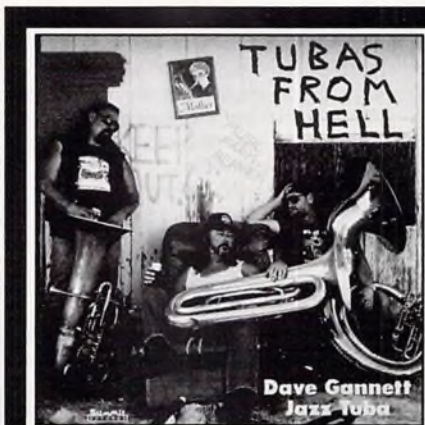
UPPER LIMBO—Grateful Dead 40172: POINT OF TIME; KINGDOM OF NOXT; EMPEROR OF ICE CREAM; CHARLIE BING BANG; RIPPLES; KING OF THE HILL; SPECK OF DUST; AKOND OF SWAT; ALPHABET/NUMBERS; I SOMETIMES THINK; OPERATOR; SING ME A POEM; A KIND OF CRY BLUES; ISLAND. (64:11)

Personnel: Nordine, spoken word; Bonnie Herman, vocals; Eric Hochberg, bass, trumpet; Howard Levy, harmonica, flute, keyboards; Kristan Nordine, guitar, Moog synthesizer, E-mu II sampler; Paul Wertico (1-4,6,8,11), Jim Hines (5,7,9,10,12-14), drums, electric drums.

★★★ 1/2

Devout Catalyst received lots of attention in '91's year-end critics polls and even garnered a Grammy nomination for "Best Spoken Word Performance." In fact, the response to the album convinced Nordine to deliver his Dr. Seuss/Shel Silverstein poetry for the hip adult crowd in front of nightclub audiences, which resulted in this impressive follow-up collection.

On *Upper Limbo*, Nordine delivers rhymes and ruminations at the Vic Theater in his hometown Chicago. While his rhyme-timey word ladders of alliteration on "Ripples" verge on bad poetry, there's a charm to his facile word-plays on such whimsical pieces as "Emperor Of Ice Cream" and "Alphabet/Numbers." There are moments when the sentiment gets too precious ("Sing Me A Poem") and the lyrics too trite ("Island"), but that's balanced by the playfully poignant notion of "Kingdom Of Noxt" and the word-frolic of "Akond Of Swat." Instrumental accompaniment is uneven, ranging from lame synth doodlings to fully developed interpretations of Nordine's poems. However, the music is incidental. The voice in all its euphonic majesty is the true draw. —Dan Ouellette



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Good Mornin' Blues

by Jack Sohmer

Among the 175 tracks that *The Complete Roulette Studio Recordings Of Count Basie And His Orchestra* (Mosaic MD10-149; 10 CDs, avg. 65 min.; ★★★★★½) comprises, there are 21 that were never before released and seven that appeared only on singles. Omitted from this set, though, are the albums the band did in collab-

Also recorded at the sessions that produced the first three albums are such Foster, Jones, and Wess originals as "Blues In Hoss' Flat," "H.R.H.," "Half Moon Street," "The Deacon," and "Segue In C" that were eventually brought together for the stirring *Chairman Of The Board*. On this, Thad, Grey, and Powell receive a little more solo prominence than they enjoyed before. Late 1959 saw the recording of two more albums: Joe Williams' *Everyday I Have The Blues*, which included, along with the title tune and other famous blues themes, "Cherry Red," "Good Mornin' Blues," and "It's A Low Down Dirty Shame"; and the comparatively



Basie doing his "Fats Waller pose," November '59

oration with Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughan, and Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, the uncharacteristic Basie-with-strings album, and any other material that did not involve both Basie and the full band. The set opens with a few previously unissued numbers featuring Joe Williams, after which the band gets into a swinging groove with the 1957-'58 Neal Hefti charts that so quickly earned top ratings for *E=MC²* (aka *The Atomic Basie*) and *Basie Plays Hefti*.

The most frequently heard soloists on these and later Roulette albums are tenormen Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Billy Mitchell, Frank Foster, and Eric Dixon; flutist and saxman Frank Wess; trumpeters Joe Newman, Thad Jones, and Snooky Young; trombonists Henry Coker, Al Grey, and Benny Powell; and, of course, Basie himself. The main writers were Foster, Jones, Wess, Benny Carter, Jimmy Mundy, and Ernie Wilkins. Although the big-toned, boppish Mitchell had replaced Lockjaw by the time of *Basie Plays Hefti*, he was featured only once on that album, in an exciting tenor chase with the Sonny Stitt-inspired Foster on "Countdown." But from Quincy Jones' *One More Time!*, the two well-matched saxophonists are awarded another starring moment on "Rat Race," proving once again that the friendly combat style initiated by former Basie-ites Lester Young and Herschel Evans was still a viable crowd-pleaser.

conservative *Dance Along With Basie*, a direct antithesis to the previous albums in that it concentrated on standard fox-trot ballads arranged in ballroom style by Jones and Foster.

Among the major projects for 1960 were Foster's rescorings of 23 Basie classics from the '30s and '40s, including "Out The Window," "Texas Shuffle," "Topsy," "Swingin' The Blues," "9:20 Special," and "Broadway." These proved so popular that they were packaged in three different formats over the years, a two-LP boxed set called *The Count Basie Story*, two single volumes entitled *The Best Of Basie*, and a three-record set, *The World Of Count Basie*, which incongruously added some more recent hits from 1958 and 1959. The other albums from 1960 were *Just The Blues*, the second to be built around Joe Williams' expertise in this genre, and Benny Carter's *Kansas City Suite*, a surprisingly earthy theme for a composer more noted for his sophistication than an affinity for the romping scene of Basie's youth. Carter also wrote 1961's only album, *The Legend*; but there was considerably more activity in the studios the following year, which saw the completion of *Easin' It*, *Back With Basie*, and *Big Band Scene '65*, a delayed release that Basie shared with Maynard Ferguson. Despite some drastic personnel losses in early 1961 (Williams, Newman, Grey, and Mitchell), Basie eventually recouped



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to the point that the quality of the band would remain assured for decades to come, long after the termination of his contract with Roulette.

The accompanying 32-page, album-sized booklet includes not only the customary discography and list of composer credits, but also a number of previously unpublished session photos by Chuck Stewart, descriptive notes by Chris Sheridan, author of *Count Basie: A Bi-Discography*, and an article on Roulette a&r

man Teddy Reig by Ed Berger. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place; Stamford, CT 06902)

For a more concentrated approach to Williams himself as both a swinging blues and ballad singer, check out *Count Basie Swings/ Joe Williams Sings* (Verve 314 519 852: 42:59: ★★★½), a reissue that, even with its three bonus tracks, "As I Love You," "Stop! Don't!," and "Too Close For Comfort," still comes up egregiously short of contemporary standards. The period covered is 1955 and 1956, and vir-

tually all of Joe's earliest hits—"Every Day I Have The Blues," "The Comeback," "All Right, O.K., You Win," "In The Evening," Joe Turner's "Roll 'Em Pete," and Williams' own "My Baby Upsets Me"—are included, along with such pops of the period as "Teach Me Tonight" and "Please Send Me Someone To Love."

Available separately, *Count Basie: The Golden Years, Vol. 1, 1937* (Jazz Archives 73: 56:15: ★★★★★), *Vol. 2, 1938* (Jazz Archives 74: 63:40: ★★★★★), and *Vol. 3, 1940/1944* (Jazz Archives 75: 63:13: ★★★★★) contain various complete broadcasts and originally unissued studio sessions remastered here for the first time on CD in strict chronological order. The first volume includes the June 30 and November 3, 1937, broadcasts from the Savoy Ballroom and the Meadowbrook, and this means that not only do we hear Billie Holiday on her only recorded performances with the band—"They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Swing, Brother, Swing!" and "I Can't Get Started"—but also Lester Young in full throttle on eight other numbers, including "Shout And Feel It," "The Count Steps In," "Bugle Blues," "I Got Rhythm," "One O'Clock Jump," and "John's Idea." Other major soloists besides Basie are Buck Clayton, Herschel Evans, and singer Jimmy Rushing.

Opening the second disc is a group of six quintet tracks with Buck and Pres previously thought to have come from the *Spirituals To Swing* concert issued on Vanguard. But, in fact, these titles had been cut in the Columbia studios on June 3, 1938, seven months before that concert, and weren't issued until decades later. "Allez Oop," "Don't Be That Way," and "Mortgage Stomp" are all instrumentals, while "Blues With Helen," "I Ain't Got Nobody," and "Song Of The Wanderer" showcase Helen Humes with some beautiful Pres clarinet on the blues and great Hines-like Basie on "I Ain't Got Nobody." Following this is the July 19 "America Dances" transatlantic broadcast of the full band shortly before its opening at the Famous Door. Previously released on Fanfare, this offers extensive solo work by Pres as well as valued spots by Buck, Herschel, Benny Morton, and Dicky Wells. The stompers include "Every Tub," "Oh Lady Be Good," and "One O'Clock Jump." Three isolated 1938 airchecks conclude this album.

Pres was still in classic form for the February 20, 1940, broadcast from Boston's Southland Cafe, and of additional interest here is the inclusion of two heads, "Take It, Pres" and "I Got Rhythm," that were never recorded commercially. Lester is centerstage on four of the eight numbers, and even comes back for a second helping, after solos by Buck and Vic Dickenson, on the five-and-a-half-minute "I Got Rhythm." Jumping ahead four years to a previously unissued studio date from January 10, 1944, we find Herschel's replacement, Buddy Tate, getting most of the tenor solos, but Pres does assert himself on "I've Found A New Baby." The other soloists now are trumpeter Harry Edison and altoman Earl Warren. The four final tracks date from an October 2, 1944, AFRS *Jubilee* broadcast and primarily feature a young, squealing Illinois Jacquet. Thankfully, Edison, Wells, Tate, and Rushing are also on board.

DB

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Sighs & Whispers

by John McDonough

Time was when a small reissue or two could focus fresh media attention on a forgotten artist, or a forgotten period of an active one. As the layers of recorded pop culture have piled up, though, it now takes a powerful event of critical mass to blast through the accumulation to get noticed. **Frank Sinatra—The Columbia Years (1943-1952) The Complete Recordings** (Columbia/Legacy 52866-77; 12 CDs, avg. 73:00 min.: ★★★★★) certainly is such an event. And so, to a lesser degree, is **Bing Crosby: His Legendary Years, 1931-1957** (MCA 10887; 75:50/73:58/74:08/75:20: ★★★★★½).

The Sinatra collection offers 293 tracks, including 25 unissued items. A few alternates have been substituted for master takes, but the masters probably will be picked up in an album of 60 Sinatra V-Discs due from Columbia in July. As for the 10 Sinatra sides from 1939 with Harry James, which mark the beginning of his career and might have been gathered on a separate "bonus" CD, we can probably expect them later this year under James' name.

The sound is nothing less than a breakthrough. It has a consistent presence and clarity that is extraordinary, from the earliest sides on. Producer Didier Deutsch has wisely avoided mastering from 78s and used 33⅓ acetate "safeties" (and tape after 1951). Note the characteristics of the occasional surface noise, which, bless 'em, they didn't shave off with the rest of the highs. Save for an odd dropout at 30 seconds into "I've Got A Home In That Rock," the sound is flawless. Compare the magnificent sonics here to Columbia's 1986 box collection of Sinatra. Though given the full digital treatment, the sound there was compressed and '40s-ish.

If it's kudos to the producer, though, it's raspberries to the designers. They'll be the death of literacy in this country if anyone will. The dolt here is Tony Sellari, whose often tasteless and annoying layouts for the album booklet insist on overprinting six-point text on faded photos, rendering both, as if by some alchemy of incompetence, into spaghetti. Will Friedwald's important and knowing (except for a mean snipe at Linda Ronstadt on p. 117) notes are the principle victim of this design cliché, which is good for a star off the rating. All is not lost, though. In a nice touch, label art tracks period designs. And each CD volume reproduces cover art based on the Sinatra albums of the '40s and '50s.

Enduring artists inevitably create their own orthodoxies, which frame everything they do and are difficult to amend. Sinatra launched himself as a purveyor of velveteen romance and longing and hardly stepped out of that role until the end of his Columbia period. The result here is a long, long trail of slow tempos and plush backgrounds by Axel Stordahl that have much in common with the coming Capitols.

It has been the party line to write off the Columbia Sinatras as the work of a skilled but callow youth, an impression Columbia has not seriously contested until now. This set should



Sinatra: velveteen romance and longing



Bing: casual, cracker-barrel charm

change that notion. The music whispers to you. You want to lean in and listen. It is exquisitely intimate. Here is the basis of Sinatra's power to draw his audience into a private emotional orbit. Also, more than I had realized, these were the years Sinatra built the core of the repertoire that he would revisit so many times over the rest of his career (e.g., "The Song Is You," "One For My Baby"). We who listen to jazz with sometimes an excess of reverence and partiality are inclined to praise only those singers who reconfigure a song through improvisation, as if anything less is uncreative; as if the song were not enough. This leads us to undervalue those "uncreative" singers who "just" sing. We miss the point of the classical nature of much of the best popular music, where the text is sacred and those who honor it with virtuosity and intelligence, as Sinatra consistently does here, are no less artists for doing so.

Though love songs dominate, there are novelties, too, especially after producer Mitch Miller's ascent at Columbia. The much-discussed but seldom-heard "Mama Will Bark" is here, considered by many the nadir of Sinatra's disc career. But maybe by taking Sinatra on the basis of his own orthodoxy, we deny him license to do the kind of silly material that Bing Crosby could do with ironic nonchalance.

The MCA Crosby set (101 sides, four unissued) is historically more interesting by far. It traces the evolution of modern pop singing—i.e., Crosby—from its bungalow-style beginnings in the hotel dance band to the concert-sized castles of strings and french horns erected for him by Victor Young and John Scott Trotter. Crosby's voice evolves with uncanny timeliness, from the husky baritone of the 1931 Brunswicks to the mellow pipe organ that everyone knows from "White Christmas" on. The turning point seems to come around "What's New" late in 1939, reminding us that by the time Sinatra first recorded with Axel Stordahl in 1942 (for Victor), the construction was essentially complete and ready to walk into.

Most of the important Crosby work of the period is here, along with a few bits of studio chitchat, a funny breakdown, and a 1943 Rhythm Boys reunion on "Mississippi Mud" that's deliciously p.i.—politically incorrect.

Both the early Brunswicks and many of the Deccas bear the mark of Jack Kapp, who produced much Crosby work and kept the crooner on a tight commercial path. (A good survey of his jazz sides is collected on *Bing Crosby And Some Jazz Friends*.)

Though many regard Sinatra as a child of Crosby, they are unlike in a fundamental way. Sinatra, the volatile, complex, and private one, seemed to draw you into his life when he sang. A poignancy and emotional verisimilitude swirled around him. Crosby, on the other hand, was Mr. what-you-see-is-what-you-get, full of casual, cracker-barrel charm that was friendly and irresistible, especially on duets with Louis Armstrong and Johnny Mercer. And yet, he let no one inside.

Sinatra is enough of an actor so that when his voice slipped, the actor easily picked up the slack. Crosby, who never had to face serious vocal erosion, was the pure musician. Even his talk had rhythm to it. Listen to "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy." Sinatra never swung a phrase or squeezed a pitch quite like Bing. Some regret that Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald never recorded an album. More to regret is that Ella and Bing didn't. They were natural partners.

Sinatra swings in bold, jabbing, staccato italics on an unusual concert album recorded in 1962, *Sinatra And Sextet: Live In Paris* (Reprise 45487; 74:05: ★★★★★). With the singer a hot item again, Warner Bros. has dipped into the trunk for some vintage, unreleased material. The occasion here was his Paris debut (at the Lido), one stop on a world tour. But the 25-tune concert comes across today less as the event it might have been at the time than simply a document of Sinatra's straight concert lare of the period. Nevertheless, this performance is fresh and spontaneous with occasional asides and even some passing throat problems on "Nancy." The format has a looseness to it that permits nice phrasing variations within the basic style of the studio sides. The sextet—featuring pianist Bill Miller, vibraphonist Emil Richards, Al Viola on guitar, and reed player Harry Klee—is compact and swinging, and delivers not jazz so much as miniatures of Sinatra's big-band charts like "Chicago." **DB**

Blues Redux

by Larry Birnbaum

Pop music tends to age quickly, but the blues, at its best, is timeless, which may be why the genre has figured so prominently in the current CD reissue boom. The new torrent of old product includes blues of every style and era, some previously available only on obscure bootleg LPs, if at all. Formats range from haphazard collections aimed at new listeners to comprehensive packages geared to completists, with quality varying wildly from one album, or even one track, to the next.

Not quite a reissue, *Delmark 40th Anniversary Blues* (Delmark, DX-2; 73:20; ★★★★★) includes a wealth of material from the Chicago label's entire history, right up to the latest releases. "New" artists like Jesse Fortune and Willie Kent are in fact seasoned journeymen, but they can't rekindle the studio fire of Junior Wells and Magic Sam, who respectively open and close the album. In between are the piano blues of Roosevelt Sykes and Speckled Red, the "classic" blues of Edith Wilson, the slide-guitar blues of J.B. Hutto, and even the mandolin blues of Yank Rachel, with some of the best performances coming from older country artists like Sleepy John Estes, whose "I'd Been Well Warned" sounds like unplugged heavy metal.

John Lee Hooker's *Everybody's Blues* (Specialty 7035-2; 57:42; ★★★★★) includes eight bone-chilling solo tracks from 1950-'51, when he was at the height of his powers, plus 16 second-rate tracks recorded with a band in 1954. On the earlier numbers—hard-grind boogies like "Do My Baby Think Of Me" and doomy stomps like "Strike Blues"—he sings bitterly of loss and revenge, accompanied only by his spooky guitar and patting foot. Here he seems totally artless, possessed by some primal force. But on the later material, most of which was not originally issued, his irregular rhythms clash with the band's even time. Fighting awkward arrangements contrived for the r&b market, he sounds less soul-stricken than merely ill at ease.

Sonny Boy (Rice Miller) **Williamson's** eight early '50s tracks on *Clownin' With The World* (Alligator 2700; 44:05; ★★★★★), originally on the Mississippi-based Trumpet label, were also previously unissued, but not for lack of quality. His sly, playful vocals and high, keening harmonica sparkle on tunes like "She's Crazy" and "I'm Not Beggin' Nobody," the former featuring pianist **Willie Love**. The album also includes eight tracks by Love, but though "Take It Easy, Baby" and "Nelson Street Blues" were local hits, Love's homely singing and playing are less interesting than Little Milton's edgy guitar accompaniment.

In his long career, **Honeyboy Edwards** has worked with legends from Charlie Patton to Robert Johnson to Muddy Waters. On *White Windows* (Evidence 26039-2; 45:28; ★★★★★½), a CD reissue of a 1989 Blue Suit LP, his voice and slide guitar hauntingly evoke the entire Delta tradition with material by Waters, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Bukka White, and others. His technique is creaky and his tempos glacial,



John Lee Hooker: bone-chilling and totally artless

but that just adds to the aura of ancient majesty he brings to classics like "Roll & Tumble Blues" and his own "Drop Down Mama."

New Orleans pianist **Champion Jack Dupree** worked in Chicago and New York before moving to Europe, where he helped inspire the British blues scene. His prolific European output was mostly mediocre, but his 1940-'41 debut recordings for the Okeh label, compiled on *New Orleans Barrelhouse Boogie* (Columbia/Legacy 52834; 68:19; ★★★★★), are magnificent. Dupree's rollicking rhythms make up for his limited keyboard technique, and his bluff singing is crudely effective. His floating triplets foreshadow Fats Domino's, and his druggy "Junker Blues" is the model for Domino's "The Fat Man" and the Crescent City anthem "Junco Partner."

Pianist **Mercy Dee Walton**, who migrated from Texas to California, sounds like a rural Charles Brown on *One Room Country Shack* (Specialty 7036-2; 55:42; ★★★★★½), cut in 1952-'53. Smooth and mellow but lacking Brown's jazzy sophistication, Walton scored a pair of r&b hits, "Lonesome Cabin Blues" (heard here in a re-recorded version) and the title track, before his death in 1962. His honeyed baritone and laid-back piano go down easy as Southern Comfort, but his commercialized duets with female vocalists Lady Fox and Thelma sound strained.

The mistitled *More Jump Blues* (Rhino R2 71133; 46:20; ★★★★★) is actually an r&b collection from the mid-'50s, when rock & roll dominated the pop, r&b, and country charts alike. Combining well-known tunes like Big Joe Turner's "Boogie Woogie Country Girl" with obscurities like Louis Prima's "5 Months, 2 Weeks, 2 Days," it aims to please rather than educate, and largely succeeds. Weak efforts by over-the-hill artists like Wynonie Harris and Lloyd Price are more than balanced by full-strength rockers like Big Maybelle's "That's A

Pretty Good Love" and Lavern Baker's "Voodoo Voodoo."

The Houston-based Duke and Peacock labels pioneered the fusion of soul and blues that now dominates what's left of the black blues market. *Duke-Peacock's Greatest Hits* (MCA 10666; 42:51; ★★★★★½) contains not only such soul-blues landmarks as Junior Parker's "Next Time You See Me" and Bobby Bland's "I Pity The Fool" but doo-wop and soul numbers by artists like the El Torros and Carl Carlton. Many numbers are too familiar, but James Booker's organ instrumental "Gonzo," his only charted hit, is a rare gem.

O.V. Wright was strictly a soul singer, but his gospel-based songs have become standards in the contemporary blues repertoire. *The Soul Of O.V. Wright* (MCA 10670; 51:24; ★★★★★) collects material from his 1965-'73 prime, recorded for Duke-Peacock's subsidiary Back Beat label. Working with producer Willie Mitchell and what was to become the Hi Records rhythm section, Wright preserved and purified the classic sound of Memphis soul, creating masterpieces like "I'd Rather Be Blind, Crippled And Crazy," "A Nickel And A Nail," and "Drowning On Dry Land."

At 34, Mississippi-born, Chicago-bred **Melvin Taylor** represents a new generation of blues. Although he can play funk, jazz, or psychedelic rock, he sticks to the 12-bar basics on *Plays The Blues For You* (Evidence 26029-2; 38:28; ★★★★★), a 1984 session recorded in Paris for the Isabel label. With firm support from keyboardist Lucky Peterson, bassist Titus Williams, and drummer Ray Allison, Taylor displays a mind-boggling guitar technique, tossing off intricate, convoluted runs with effortless precision and deep-dyed blues feeling. His unpolished singing is less of a drawback than his stylistic conservatism, but jazzy tunes like "Tribute To Wes" and "Groovin' In Paris" hint at his true potential. **DB**

Evolutionary Elvin

by Larry Birnbaum

Elvin Jones' five-year tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet established him as one of the greatest drummers of all time, a polyrhythmic tornado who blew away bar lines without missing a beat. Since then, he's led his own Jazz Machine (among others), modeled after Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers but serving less as a proving ground for up-and-coming players than a congenial setting for its leader's chops. Jones' patented "high-energy" drumming, with its implied rather than openly stated pulse, has remained essentially unchanged over the years; but in increasingly conservative contexts, it's come to sound more like an evolutionary outgrowth of bebop than a revolutionary leap.

Very Rare (Evidence 22053-2; 69:13: ★★★½) reissues a luminous 1979 studio date featuring Art Pepper, Roland Hanna, and Richard Davis together with a more perfunctory 1978 live-in-Japan performance by the Jazz Machine. Pepper's dark-toned alto lines, ruffled by occasional Trane-ish flurries, soak up Jones' restless rhythms, reflecting back cool, clear light. But when Elvin backs only Hanna and Davis he sounds too busy or too subdued, as though he were struggling to restrain himself. In the Japan concert, the twin-tenor front line contrasts Pat LaBarbara's smooth modalism with Frank Foster's husky blues; but the music, including a 27-minute half-version of "A Love Supreme," is mostly watered-down Coltrane, relieved by Roland Prince's winding, exploratory electric-guitar runs.

Live At The Village Vanguard, Vol. 1 (Landmark 1534-2; 66:31: ★★★), from 1984, features Foster and LaBarbara again, along with pianist Fumio Karashima and bassist Chip Jackson. Here, though, the material, except for a 20-minute capsule version of "A Love Supreme" and the modalized Japanese folk song "Tohryanse, Tohryanse," runs to ballads, blues, and bop, and Jones himself is unusually even-tempered. The warm, relaxed performance may have lit up the club, but on wax the long tracks, with more than ample solo space for all, lack the fire or imagination to sustain interest.

Recorded in 1990, *When I Was At Aso-Mountain* (enja 7081 2; 66:51: ★★★) is jointly credited to Jones and Japanese pianist Takehisa Tanaka, whose wistful approach to standards like "Stella By Starlight" and "You Don't Know What Love Is" brings out the drummer's relatively delicate side. Sonny Fortune's tenor and flute etch sinuous figures in the few spaces he gets to fill, while Cecil McBee's overmic'ed bass buzzes deep and fat through everything. Tanaka's refined, slightly brittle playing doesn't quite mesh with the limber, powerful band, and Jones' solo eruptions only make the piano sound more fragile.

Jones' latest album, *Going Home* (enja 7095 2; 59:47: ★★★★★), features a youthful new Jazz Machine, including Ravi Coltrane and Javon Jackson on saxophones, trumpeter Nicholas Payton, Kent Jordan on flute, and Brad Jones on bass, plus veteran pianist Willie Pickens. Jones himself seems rejuvenated:



BOSTON W. MOODY

Jones: undiminished power

when he crackles the beat behind Coltrane's still-tentative blowing, the presence of Ravi's father is almost palpable (and Elvin's career seems to have come to full-circle). Jackson, Jordan, and Payton show poise, maturity, and spirit, if not much originality, while Pickens' masterly grace all but steals the show. Jones displays more subtlety than ever on laid-back blues (e.g., "Going Home") and ballads ("You've Changed") and his power is undiminished when he winds out on "The Shell Game" and "April 8th." In general, the band's tight, tricky ensemble work is exhilarating; *Going Home* leaves you wanting more. **DB**

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Blue Serge

by Bill Shoemaker

Serge Chaloff was a quintessential jazz tragedy. A hugely gifted baritone saxophonist who shot to the heights of big-band fame as one of the Four Brothers of Woody Herman's late-'40s Second Herd, Chaloff's career as a leader stalled because of heroin addiction and erratic behavior. Despite being a central figure in the teeming Boston bop scene that also produced altoist Charlie Mariano, trumpeter Herb Pomeroy, and the equally ill-fated pianist Dick Twardzik, the perennially poll-winning Chaloff only presided over eight sessions before cancer claimed him at 33 in 1957. Collected on *The Complete Serge Chaloff Sessions* (Mosaic MD4-147; 46:17/58:37/58:57/42:09: ★★★★★), and augmented by the thorough scholarship of Dolphy biographer Vladimir Simosko, these sessions are an intriguing document, detailing how fame kissed Chaloff, and how fate kissed him off.

To get a firm grip on how much talent Chaloff had, go directly to his masterful last session, a '56 quartet date for Capitol with Sonny Clark, Leroy Vinnegar, and Philly Joe Jones. On mid-tempo standards like "I've Got The World On A String," Chaloff is alternately robust and tender, tossing off dancing lines that are topped with romantic sighs. His balladry is sly, knowing, but dolloped with big-eyed innocence. The interplay between Chaloff and his cohorts is consistently brimming with dovetailing banter, especially remarkable for a unit that hadn't even rehearsed before the tape rolled.

Yet, Chaloff's legacy is fuller than even this exceptional date suggests. The sessions with Mariano, Pomeroy, Twardzik, and altoist Boots Mussulli, which make up the bulk of the collection, place Chaloff in his native habitat—the

hard-swinging, often erudite charts of the Boston boppers. Here, Chaloff is equally endearing, but a bit scrappier, making a more



Chaloff: quintessential jazz tragedy

obvious effort to make fully formed statements in his solos. Beyond bringing together Chaloff's complete output as a leader, this typically well-packaged Mosaic box also affords the opportunity to check out a bygone scene that produced exceptional music. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place; Stamford, CT 06902) **DB**

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Eddie Who?

by Bill Milkowski

A batch of new reissues from various labels gives us ample opportunity to reassess the chameleonic career of **Eddie Harris**. Primarily a tenor saxophonist (though he also plays piano, trumpet, sings, and once recorded a raunchy standup comedy album that predates Eddie Murphy by a decade), the Chicago native evolved from smooth-toned Getz clone to downhome funk-master to electronic pioneer.

All those sides are captured on the double-CD, *Artist's Choice: The Eddie Harris Anthology* (Rhino/Atlantic Jazz R2 71514; 78:09/71:54: ★★★★★½). The earliest track here is his 1961 Vee-Jay recording of "Exodus," a fairly tame though swinging rendition of that movie theme that also happened to rack up a million sales for him. The anthology ignores his ensuing years with Columbia and leaps ahead four years to material from his 1965 Atlantic debut, *The In Sound*. Included here are a lush reading of "The Shadow Of Your Smile," a burning tempo on "Love For Sale," his own "Cryin' Blues," and the Harris classic, "Freedom Jazz Dance," all featuring Cedar Walton on piano and a stellar rhythm section of Ron Carter and Billy Higgins. This unit was reunited a year later for two straightahead albums, *Excursions* and *Mean Greens*. Two tracks from each album are here, featuring some of Eddie's finest tenor work. Harris' noteworthy collaboration with Les McCann at the 1969 Montreux Jazz Festival is represented by the soulful "Cold Duck Time," another Harris original. But it's his playing on 1968's "Listen Here," another million-seller, that helped establish Harris as a godfather of funk. In the early '70s, he got deeper into the funk with more commercial, danceable fare like "Is It In" and "Funkaroma."

His groundbreaking work with electric mouthpieces, around which Harris played his Varitone sax, are best represented by "Live Right Now" from his 1968 *Plug Me In* and the Sun Ra-ish title track from his startling 1969 album, *Free Speech*. And his sense of humor comes across on the vocal tracks, "Get On Down" from the 1975 *I Need Some Money* and "It's All Right Now" from the 1976 *That Is Why You're Over Weight* (which sounds like Eddie's answer to Clark Terry's "Mumbles"). He reunites with his old Army buddy, trumpeter Don Ellis, on "Steps Up," another challenging intervallic workout along the lines of "Freedom Jazz Dance" (from the 1977 *The Versatile Eddie Harris*). And he shows further versatility by taking "Giant Steps" at a 2/4 Latin beat instead of the usual 4/4.

Vee-Jay meanwhile has reissued *Exodus To Jazz* (NVJ2-904; 40:00: ★★★★★½), the 1961 album that first put him on the charts (and includes his take of "Exodus" referred to above). The treat of this early Harris project, apart from his robust tone and flowing ideas on a set of mostly bop-influenced originals, is the presence of the criminally underrecorded guitarist Joe Diorio. He proves to be a capable foil on uptempo romps like "A.T.C." and the aptly named "Velocity." Eddie dips into his Stan Getz mode on the lovely Rodgers & Hart ballad



Plug me in: funk godfather Eddie Harris

"Little Girl Blue," and he goes to church on "Gone Home." The great Chicago pianist Willie Pickens (currently with the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine) also turns in superb performances on this showcase for the then-24-year-old saxophonist.

Vee-Jay's other recent release, *The Lost Album Plus The Better Half* (NVJ2-913; 57:00: ★★★★★), contains material from a previously unreleased album from 1962, featuring an impressive frontline for half of the CD of Harris on tenor, Bunky Green on alto, and Ira Sullivan on trumpet. They come on aggressive and angry with "The Dancing Bull" before settling into some smoother Oliver Nelson-influenced swing on "Antidote." The 15-minute burner "Cuttin' Out" is fueled by Melvin Rhyne's organ and features incendiary solos by Eddie and Bunky. The loose shuffle blues "Shakey Jake" gives Rhyne a chance to strut his stuff while also showcasing Joe Diorio's remarkable fluency on guitar. The rest of the material here is culled from an album originally titled *Half & Half*, which apparently included lame vocal adaptations of movie themes. The vocal stuff has been cut, leaving a too-brief rendition of Charlie Parker's "Kansas City Blues" and a swinging version of the movie theme "Lawrence Of Arabia" that, unfortunately for Eddie, didn't hit like "Exodus." And dig the live-party sounds on the festive calypso, "Yea, Yea, Yea." Eddie never sounded so happy.

DB

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VIDEO REVIEWS

Last Dates (And Other Engagements)

by Kevin Whitehead

On the afternoon of April 13, 1964, in Oslo, Eric Dolphy told **Charles Mingus** he was leaving the bassist's band to pursue a solo career in Europe. The concert they played that evening is out as *Charles Mingus Sextet* (Shanachie, 59 minutes, directed by Bjørn Bryn). It's terrific, as if Eric's leaving aroused their fire. The musicians are clustered beside Jaki Byard's piano, for the multiple cameras' convenience—we may see five players in one long shot, or Mingus comping over tenorist Clifford Jordan's shoulder, or drummer Dannie Richmond and Chaz playing time together. Close-ups abound: here is the Mingus-fingering lesson bass players long for. We also see Eric play those leaping intervals, and Clifford (looking cool in little round shades, before John Lennon got his) hand-signaling trumpeter Johnny Coles, to set up background riffs, pre-Butch Morris, pre-John Zorn. The wonderful music includes "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress," "Parkeriana," and the blues Mingus announces as "Goodbye Eric Dolphy, Hurry Back." Every Mingus fan should see it.

Bassists will also love *Zardis, The Spirit Of New Orleans* (Rhapsody, 88 min., dir. Preston McClanahan), a 1989 documentary without narration but with plenty of expert testimony from veteran bassist and "neighborhood musician" **Chester Zardis** (he died the following year, at 90). Also on hand are musicians Danny Barker and Milt Hinton (who delivers a jazz-bass mini-lecture), and experts Bill Russell and Alan Lomax (whose long monolog at the end of the doc seems designed to expand a 75-minute film to public-TV length). The New Orleans atmosphere is heavy—Bertha Zardis cooks up some shrimp etoufee—and you see and hear Chester play with Barker, trombonist Louis Nelson, trumpeters Kid Sheik Colar and Wendell Brunious, and clarinetist Michael White, among others. Set your VCR for slow-tracking when Zardis and Hinton demonstrate slap-bass technique, and you'll learn more in a minute than you can reading any informational text.

Dizzy Gillespie's *A Night In Chicago* (View Video, 53 min., dir. Arnie Rosenthal) provides no date or location. It's from Rick's Cafe Americain in the mid-'80s, judging by the decor and personnel: pianist Walter Davis, Jr., electric bassist John Lee, drummer Nassyr Abdul Al-Kahbyyr, and the impressive baritone saxist Sayyad Abdul Al-Kahbyyr. Medium and long shots give you the feel of being in the house. Dizzy mostly clowns, cakewalking around the stage to the



Eric Dolphy: a fascinating study

band's rather too-evident amusement; he doesn't even touch his horn for the opener, "Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac." But there are benefits to his conserving strength: he plays a couple of lovely, unhurried, muted ballads, "Embraceable You" and "Round Midnight."

Buck Clayton And His All Stars (Shanachie, 54 min., dir. Yannick Bruynoghe), from Brussels 1961, is an informal sound-stage-and-shirtsleeves affair, a video equivalent of **Buck Clayton's** LP jam sessions (see "CD Reviews" Dec. '93). Buck shares the stage with horns Emmett Berry, Dicky Wells, Earle Warren, and Buddy Tate (who really shines), rhythm men Sir Charles Thompson, Gene Ramey and Oliver Jackson, and blues shouter Jimmy Witherspoon. All get featured spots. No great visual details here—it's shot to address a fan's, not a musician's, needs—just a lot of fine, swinging Kansas City-style music.

Monk In Oslo (Rhapsody, 33 min.), filmed 4/15/66, features **Thelonious Monk** with tenorist Charlie Rouse, bassist Larry Gales, and drummer Ben Riley. They perform "Lulu's Back In Town," "Blue Monk," and "Round Midnight," which Monk's rambunctious comping keeps from getting too sedate. There are some good close-ups of Monk's flat-fingered, crossed-hands technique (you only have to see Monk play to know he knew exactly what he was doing). He does his little bear dance around the piano while Rouse solos, just as his feet do pendular swings about the pedals while he plays; but director Harald Heide Steen Jr. doesn't let Monk's moves upstage the band. Steen does capture the poetry of faces: Gales blandly staring into space as he solos; Monk's expressive face quietly reacting to one nice Rouse chorus.

Some of that Mingus/Oslo footage turns up in Hans Hylkema's *Last Date* (Rhapsody, 92 min.), which mostly traces the last weeks of **Eric Dolphy's** life, from the June 2, '64, Dutch broadcast that became his album *Last*

Date, to his death in a diabetic coma in Berlin on June 29. In part, it's about his ongoing impact in Europe—on pianist Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink (who worked with him in Holland), on a musicologist who transcribes his solos, on biographer Thierry Bruneau (who sees Dolphy as a living "friend and father"). However, we also visit Los Angeles to see Dolphy's home and studio, and hear from his aunt and colleagues Red Callendar, Buddy Collette, and Roy Porter. (Byard, Ted Curson, and Richard Davis are interviewed in New York, Eric's fiancée Joyce Mordecai in Paris.) There isn't a whole lot of live Eric to see; the Mingus clips are excerpts. But the film closes with a long stretch of Eric's "Serene," from an unidentified quintet's TV appearance, perhaps from Paris that same spring. An actor who neither sounds nor looks like Dolphy plays him in one or two thankfully brief scenes. It's a shade too long, but *Last Date* is a fascinating study of a dedicated musician cut down just as his career was really taking off.

The same title could have served for **Miles Davis & Quincy Jones Live At Montreux** (Warners/Reprise, 75 min., dirs. Gavin Taylor, Rudi Dolezal, Hannes Rossacher). The music has been much discussed by now ("CD Reviews" Nov. '93); Miles had returned at last to Gil Evans' enduring, cool, orchestral charts. In truth, it's anticlimactic. Davis sounds alright, but for insurance keeps Wallace Roney at his right hand to hit the bold, clear, high notes, and keeps altoist Kenny Garrett near to spell him as soloist. Rehearsal footage and Quincy Jones' comments honestly reveal Miles' limited role in shaping this project, despite lots of fawning commentary from associates. The concert footage comes off jittery, with lots of fades from one POV to another; a camera may zero in on a player doing nothing significant at the time. It's late to complain about excessive hero worship of Miles, but obsession takes a bizarre turn here. As a reverse tracking shot leads Miles from stage door to stage, in slow-motion, you half expect Jack Ruby to emerge from the shadows.

By contrast, **Harry Connick, Jr.'s** *The New York Big Band Concert* (Columbia, 90 min., dir. Jill Goodacre) makes the Montreux vid look like character assassination. In rehearsal, we see the serious auteur personally choreographing his players' corny stage moves. Connick does have an easily swinging vocal delivery, but in performance—making glib asides, playing the drums loud, doing a soft-shoe, milking the crowd for applause, and literally crawling along the risers at one point—his bids for attention suggest not Sinatra but sleep-deprived Jerry Lewis stumbling through a telethon's final hours. **DB**

1 GRP All-Star Big Band

"Donna Lee" (from *ALL-STAR BIG BAND LIVE!*, GRP, 1993) personnel as guessed, except Nelson Rangell, piccolo; Tom Scott, arranger.

That's Eddie [Daniels], one of the few of us [clarinetists] around, playing "Donna Lee" by Bird. His sound is so beautiful, his control is perfect. The vibes player must be Gary Burton. Must be the GRP Big Band. The very fine piccolo solo must be by Eric Marienthal. The arrangement with the unison is very good, probably Bob Mintzer. Doesn't sound like Dave Weckl to me on drums, but he drives the band just great. Some tracks I don't like, but this one I loved. 5 stars.

2 Artie Shaw

"Besame Mucho" (from *THE LAST RECORDINGS*, MusicMasters, 1954/92) Irv Kluger, drums; Tommy Potter, bass.

Sounds to me like [Tito] Puente and Woody [Herman]; *Woody Goes Latin*, I think. The bebop licks might be by Buddy De Franco, but the sound's not so pretty. "Besame Mucho" is a much-used tune, but I don't think it's Cuban; Carmen Mercedes McRae recorded it with Cal Tjader. [Carmen, if you're reading this, get well soon!] The percussionists sounded like they really knew what they were doing—not often the case! If the bass player is not Al McKibbin, he must be Latin! 3½.

3 Nick Brignola

"Au Privave" (from *WHAT IT TAKES*, Reservoir, 1990) Randy Brecker, trumpet; Kenny Barron, piano.

Extremely fine clarinet playing. The high register on the saxophone can be very expressive, but on the clarinet it can be horrible. It's easy to make it sound like . . . lemons!—know what I mean? This guy had that facility of playing through the whole instrument with so much beauty. Who is it? Let me think. [later] Alvin Batiste! His sound is less pure [than Daniels'], but he really knows the instrument! 4 stars. The pianist sounds like Kenny Barron playing with right hand only. The trumpeter sounds like Wynton [Marsalis].

4 Benny Goodman Trio

"Who" (from *AFTER YOU'VE GONE*, RCA Bluebird, 1935/87) personnel as guessed.

Ah, Benny! It had to be before Lionel

PAQUITO D'RIVERA

by Fred Bouchard

Clarinetists may still be as rare as Chen's teeth these days, but Paquito D'Rivera, Cuban expatriate saxophonist extraordinaire, is finding much to crow about on the stick. He's dropped soprano saxophone from his armory and now plays clarinet almost as much as his alto. "I think the clarinet is in a healthy state," says the ebullient Cuban, taking Boston by storm on Dizzy Gillespie's Birthday weekend at Sculler's Lounge leading his United Nation Orchestra. "Don Byron is playing beautifully; so is Ken Peplowski. Buddy DeFranco's still around. Phil [Woods] is playing again. It's important to bring the instrument back. You see kids playing clarinet now in the university. One of my dreams is to do a clarinet album, but it's hard to convince a record company."

On the Cuban front is the recently released *Paquito D'Rivera Presents 40 Years Of Cuban Jam Session* (Messidor). D'Rivera was given no data on



these licorice discs; all leaders play clarinet (except #1 and #7). Thanks to Steve Schwartz of WGBH-FM (Boston) for use of Studio B and "Tenderly."

Hampton entered the band—very old! Teddy [Wilson]'s such a genius of piano. Benny was my main influence. My first influence was my father—a classical saxophone player; he introduced me to the music of Benny and Artie Shaw, later on Dizzy and Charlie Parker. My first album was *The 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert*; Teddy and [drummer] Gene Krupa were on that, too. Also Toots Mondello and Ziggy Elman! Benny was not the best improviser of all those guys, but he had the best sound.

The people I admire the most through the eras have beautiful or distinguished sounds: Coltrane, Clark Terry, Miles Davis, Bird, Al Gallodoro—the lead altoist for the NBC Orchestra in the '40s. Benny had that pretty sound that I love so much! It's magic! The King of Swing, no? 10 stars, but Benny has to share them with Krupa and Teddy!

5 Pablo Moura & Raphael Rabello

"Domingo" (from *DOIS IRMAOS*, Caju Milestone, 1992) Rabello, guitar.

El Señor Pablo Moura! Beautiful clarinet player from Brazil; I recognize him immediately. I admire him very much. I heard him through Claudio Roditi, Leni Andrade, and Portinho. He's a Brazilian original—that's what counts. When I learn any music, I go to the roots. I like *chorinhos* very much. The

guitarist used seven-string guitar, because Brazilian bands don't use bass. 4½.

6 John Carter

"Juba's Run" (from *FIELDS*, Gramavision, 1986) Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet; Andrew Cyrille, drums.

I hear dogs barking! Very interesting piece. Probably Hamiet Bluiett playing bass clarinet; he's a scary baritone player, too. The clarinetist—maybe John Carter—knows the instrument first, then, coming from the tradition, he has a completely different approach to it. Many free jazz players have no schooling, but this guy knows what he's doing—and [has] the creativity. This music is not my cup of tea, but he impressed me very much. I give that 4 stars. The drummer can *swing!* Billy Higgins?

7 Duke Ellington

"Tenderly" (from *ELLINGTON INDIGOS*, Columbia, 1957/89) personnel as guessed.

Sounds like Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet with the Duke Ellington orchestra. So simple: just melody! But what colors! Such originality—and quality! Some have originality, but then they play the clarinet with a plantain instead of a mouthpiece, and they think it's quality! I like that very much: 5 stars. DB