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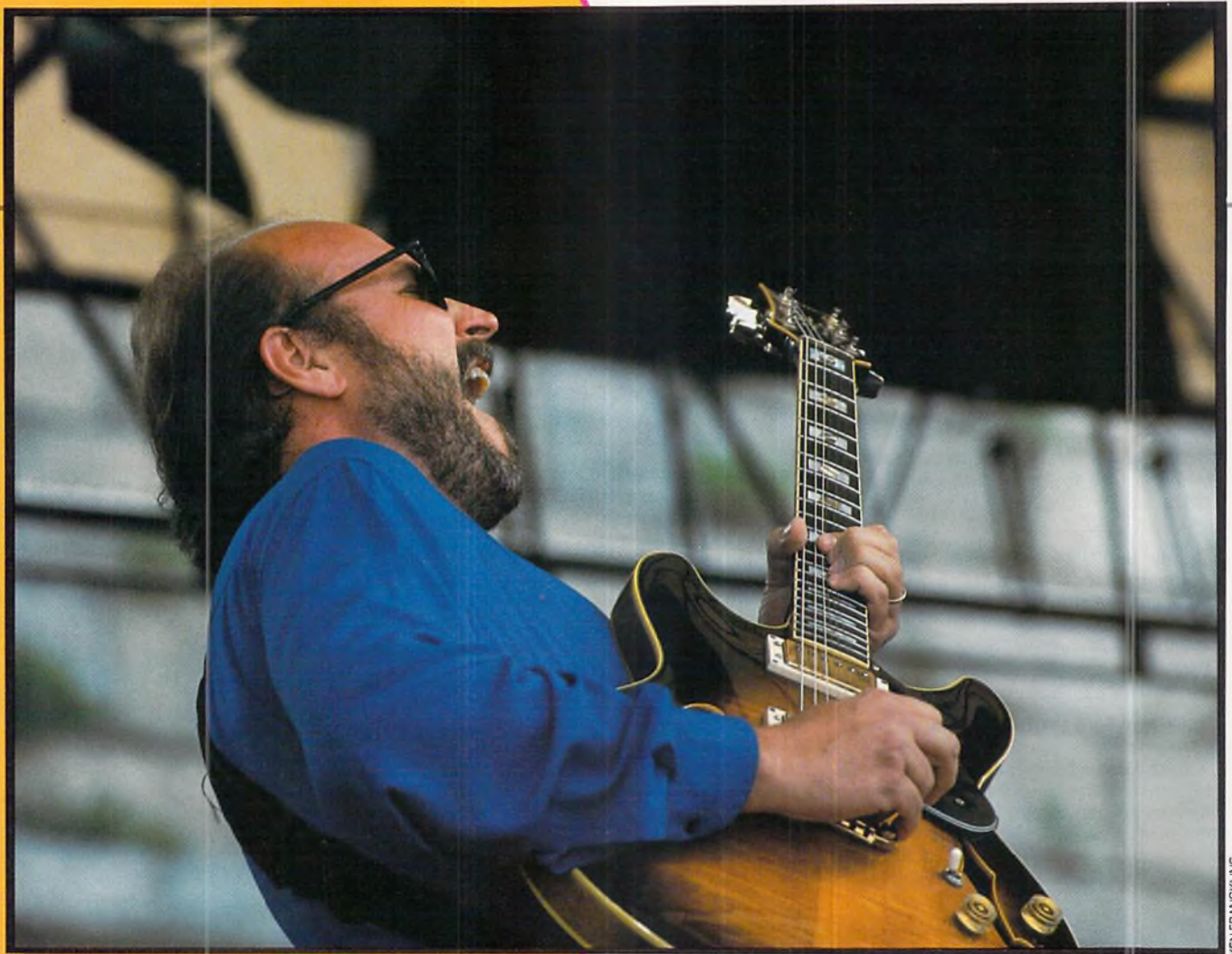
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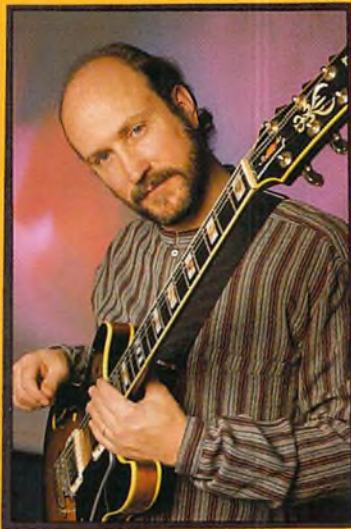
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KEN FRANKLING



CHEUNG CHING MING

At long last, the promise of a meeting between John Scofield and Pat Metheny—the two major forces in contemporary jazz guitar—is fulfilled. A co-led *tour de force* that receives assistance from bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Stewart, Blue Note's *I Can See Your House From Here* brings together two strikingly different improvisational and compositional styles. On one level, John's musical philosophy favors first-takes, while Pat is the technology-minded perfectionist. Yet their common ground is vast and produces results ranging from incendiary to cool, complex to starkly pure.

The stunning project's title refers to how the two guitarists have followed and admired each other's work from a distance since they first met in the early '70s; however, some other folks have been doing some checking out of their own. While Metheny long dominated *Down Beat's* closely watched polls in several areas, in recent years it's been Scofield who has consistently received the most nods of approval. Just this past December, he repeated in *both* the Critics and Readers polls as top votegetter for Electric Guitar and Jazz Electric Combo categories, and he also appeared on the Jazz Album of the Year, Joe Henderson's profound 1993 Verve recording *So Near, So Far (Musings For Miles)*.

Exactly what polls reflect is debatable, and prominence is inevitably fleeting and comes with no guarantees—after all, when Wes Montgomery found himself at the top back in the early '60s, he still lamented his lack of work. But one thing is certain: Scofield's remarkable ability to seamlessly adapt his playing to a variety of grooves while emphasizing spontaneity, phrasing, vocabulary, and group interplay places him at jazz guitar's cutting edge.

In the midst of dealing with a flooded basement (a consequence of

John Scofield

KINGS *of the Jazz Guitar*

by Jim Ferguson

leaving New York City for a more settled life in the suburbs), John found time to get on the phone for a discussion of polls, improvisation, his latest recordings, the new quartet with saxophonist Eddie Harris, and what's up for the rest of '94.

JIM FERGUSON: Past polls include names like Charlie Christian, Oscar Moore, Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, Wes Montgomery, Jim Hall, Kenny Burrell, and Joe Pass. What's your reaction to being in that company?

JOHN SCOFIELD: Part of me feels that I have no right to be there. On the other hand, the other part of me thinks that I play good. So why not me? I've been chuggin' along for a while and getting better. Polls are just a reflection of who's recording and on the scene. There's an inevitable career slowdown that takes place; you either die, like Wes, or get older and don't want to flog it on the road so much. I can see that happening to me, and that's when your name starts to slip down. But it doesn't mean anything about how you play. As a matter of fact, you usually get better as you get older—if you can keep your thing together. Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell, Mike Stern, and I all get about the same number of votes, but if I get 10 more, I win.

JF: Does being a poll winner give you any more clout with a record company?

JS: Not really. If I wanted to make a succession of really 'out' records, I'm sure my company would balk at it whether I'm number 1 or number 10. My records aren't big sellers, but they sell enough to have the record company somewhat trust me to follow my own direction. So being number 1 in the polls doesn't give you carte blanche, although maybe I'm wrong and I'll notice a difference in my career when I'm number 10. Nobody in jazz has it so great, because it's such a small, inbred scene—even up here, having won last year's poll or whatever. What it might mean is that I can have my own band and make a living, so I shouldn't belittle it. It's another piece of the puzzle that involves having made a bunch of records, having been out there for a while, and playing good. It says that people know who you are. It's a career steppingstone.

JF: What are the alternatives to playing on the road for the rest of your life?

JS: I don't know if there are any. Everybody wants the gigs to be good enough so they can stay home with their family and not have to be on the road all of the time. But music and playing the guitar mean more to me than ever. I want the conditions to be good, because it's no fun when the traveling is terrible and the gigs are lousy. But if I

had to do something like teach all of the time, I would really miss what I've been able to do.

JF: Most of the great guitarists have pretty much stuck to the same style throughout their careers, although Jim Hall is one of the best examples of someone who has constantly evolved.

JS: He's a model in terms of someone going forward in their life and music, and incorporating new things and keeping it fresh. In jazz—not just the guitar—he's one of the few figures who has kept his edge. His new stuff is some of the best music I've heard, and I've heard him on some very special nights over the last few years, particularly on one occasion at the [Village] Vanguard about four years ago. I'm 42, and I can already see that keeping it together and staying inspired is a lot of work. I really admire Jim for that.

JF: How do you view your own evolution since your first recordings in the late '70s?

JS: I hope that I have improved, but I don't listen to my early stuff. Records are weird, because of the tendency to think of them as being an absolute representation of how you play. When I look at the big picture, I'm doing the same thing I wanted to do when I was a teenager: playing music on the guitar and getting better at it. Ever since that time, I've been messing around with "Stella By Starlight" or blues in F. I still get better little by little. I'm not a pure jazz player. I don't see how anyone could be these days. The musical situations I've been thrown into that are more r&b, or whatever, have added new things to what I do. If I've improved, it's because I've been in a position to play with inspiring musicians, which has helped me find my own new stuff.

JF: Are the personal frustrations of playing the same as they were 15 years ago?

JS: They're still there, but things are getting better. Improvising jazz on a nightly basis is still a tricky thing. I know I'm not like Herbie Hancock or Joe Henderson, who always play so well and seem to get it happening. I've never heard either of them play less than great. But I also realize that you have to work with what you've got and at least try to get closer to that kind of consistency. I've experienced that over the last 10 or 20 years. In the beginning it was really frustrating, because I didn't sound good all that often. Later, it was even more frustrating because I would sound good more often but I wasn't able to get back to it. I still have bad nights every now and then, but I'm more consistent. Now, when I don't play the way I think I can, I get through it and realize that tomorrow is another day. Even when I miss what I'm going for in the course of a tune, there's always that next chorus, which is another opportunity



HYOU/WELZ

Scofield & Metheny Live

Town Crier/Pauling, New York

Let's face it—we're all suckers for cutting contests. We're intrigued by those moments when two combatants take up their axes, lock horns, and try to blow each other off the bandstand.

And so it was with a sense of great anticipation that we guitar fanatics made the trip to a little club nearly two hours north of Manhattan to witness a guitar summit between the two reigning guitarists of contemporary jazz: John Scofield and Pat Metheny. Backed by drummer Bill Stewart and Scofield's old bass partner Steve Swallow, the two guitarists premiered material from Sco's new album, *I Can See Your House From Here*. (The Town Crier gig was strictly a low-profile affair. No advertising had been done for this three-night engagement.)

Even though the music was made up of then-unnamed originals, Metheny's and Scofield's individual signatures were immediately apparent. Pat tended toward the flowing, almost fragile lyricism that has marked his popular approach, while John went for more angular fare, relying more on roughhewn blues and funk motifs over bop changes. Dressed in his ubiquitous striped shirt, Metheny sat on a stool with his fat-bodied Gibson ES-175 (also his guitar of choice on recent gigs with saxophonist Joshua Redman), spinning cleanly picked legato lines with uncommon ease. Though full of passion, his seamless, scalar approach came across sounding too choreographed, reflecting staunch, perfectionist tendencies. Scofield's nastier edge made this contrast more apparent. Playing his Ibanez semi-hollow guitar, his more aggressive attack had him sounding like Otis Rush with Wes Montgomery chops. On whole, Scofield took more chances, playing strictly in the moment.

Midway through the set, the two reached a soothing accord on a Metheny composition performed on two acoustic guitars. Overall, they had a nice rapport on the bandstand, each accompanying the other unselfishly as they genuinely served the music. I guess when it comes right down to it, though, it's simply a matter of taste, like the difference between nouvelle cuisine and a plate of baby-back ribs.

—Bill Milkowski

for the beginning of a real new idea. It's like the saying, "Tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life." You need to not let stuff throw you off and get you down. You need to instantly get stronger in that improvising way and find the inner strength to play something good right now.

JF: *Can you accurately judge when you're not playing up to your potential?*

JS: Ultimately, you have to trust your instincts. If I feel good, I figure that it's got to be good. I don't want to get into the position of doubting that. But it's complicated. On nights when I feel good, I don't want to listen back to the tape, because it's better to let that feeling remain. But I also know that sometimes when I feel bad, things usually are a lot better than I think,

because I know I can play through it. At the same time, I know that it's not what it can be—and that's the real truth. There are times when I'm so damn picky about myself and everybody else around me that it can cause my playing to get worse as the night goes on. I used to think that you have to be real critical and picky to get at the good stuff, but now I think maybe that's not right. So I'm trying to let that go, open myself up and not be so critical. Playing good is so much a mental attitude. Over the years, the most amazing musicians I've met have had a kind of joyous attitude. Maybe the music happens because everybody's up for it. You spend your whole life going back and forth between different ways of thinking about and approaching this imperfect art form.

JF: *The arrangements on Joe Henderson's So Near, So Far include you doubling or playing counter to the melody. How did they come about?*

JS: [Co-producer] Don Sickler brought the material. I hadn't played most of the tunes before. They were very hip; "All Blues" and "So What" wouldn't have been as effective. Don arranged "Miles Ahead" for quartet from the Gil Evans orchestration. He had actual parts on that one. Generally, the rest of the music was in the form of lead sheets and occasionally indicated a specific place to play a harmony, which was very helpful. The rest of the time I elaborated on the material somewhat. We rehearsed once before going into the studio.

JF: *Was it intimidating to play with Joe Henderson, one of your biggest influences?*

JS: It felt comfortable because the instrumentation was the same as my own quartet. I love playing behind a horn and providing the sound's chords and orchestral parts. I wore out his records when I was a Berklee student, so it was great to hook up with him as an adult. One thing I observed was that he always played perfectly on the first take; we rarely did more than one per tune. The sessions were very relaxed, but when I'd listen back, his playing would just about say it all. It completely encompasses the bebop tradition, plus has the cry of r&b and experimental aspects of the avant garde. He's experienced all of those because of his position in time, and it comes out in his playing. Working with Joe was great, but the gigs we've done since then have been even greater.

JF: *Both Grace Under Pressure with Bill Frisell and I Can See Your House From Here with Pat Metheny pair you with another guitarist. Where were the essential differences between those two projects and players?*

JS: *Grace Under Pressure* was all my tunes; it was my record that Bill played on. *I Can See Your House From Here* is half mine and half Pat's; it's co-led. Frisell has such a unique, personal sound that at times it's almost like you're playing with another instrument. I have no idea how he does that stuff. All I know is that I can't do it. Pat and I are out of the same mold. We're a little closer in style—'normal guitar,' as they say. Both Bill and Pat are high-level musicians, so the act of making music is the same with either one.

JF: *I Can See Your House From Here* is also a kind of reunion between you, Metheny, and Steve Swallow.

JS: Pat and I met in Boston in 1973; I had dropped out of Berklee and was just hanging out. Pat had just come up there to be a guitar teacher. Besides Mick Goodrick, who was the local hero, there was no one else in Boston who played modern jazz guitar that well. Pat was going for a looser kind of approach and was influenced by hip sax players like I was. That same year, Gary Burton got Swallow a job teaching at Berklee; he was the bass player when Pat joined Gary's band. I also met Swallow, and we started our trio a couple of years after that. He's been a big influence on both Pat and myself. We see him as one of our direct teachers. He was one of the first really good jazz musicians on any instrument that we met. He was also influential as a composer. In Boston it became a thing to learn his "Falling Grace," which represented a certain pinnacle of modern chord improvisation.

JF: *You've played with Frisell more than you have with Metheny. Did it make a noticeable difference?*


JS: Not really. In fact, Swallow remarked about how Pat and I played the heads exactly together. Since we phrase in a similar way,

on some things it might be hard to tell us apart. Pat and I have been fans of each other for a long time. The title of the record refers to how we've been checking each other out, seeing each other from a distance. As with all of the guitar players I know, it's always been a friendly thing, not a mean kind of competition. The real competition is with yourself to get better, and having your peers play great just helps you do that. Bill and I recorded two albums and did some gigs with [bassist Marc Johnson's] *Bass Desires*. Pat and I played together back in 1973 and then jammed in New York a few years after that. About two years ago we had a rehearsal for this record, but his company wouldn't let him do any more sideman stuff. He sat in with my group in Spain last summer. Prior to making the record we played a couple of small gigs.

JF: *So you saw this album as an opportunity to enter each other's musical world.*

JS: Right. Pat really owns the kinds of vibes and moods on tunes like "Message To My Friend" and "Say The Brother's Name," which has a bossa kind of groove. But there are some surprises. For instance, this is the first time I've recorded with acoustic guitar. On "Message To My Friend," Pat plays a nylon-string and I play one of his steel-strings [made by Canadian luthier Linda Manzer]. Then on "Say The Brother's Name," he plays electric and I play acoustic. I used to think that acoustic guitar would immediately make me sound like Earl Klugh or Ralph Towner—that I'd lose my voice; but I'm starting to not care. Now I want to find a place for the acoustic in my music, because it has such purity. The main problem is that you can't funk out with it.

JF: *Although you might be thought of as the nastier player of the two,*

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you and Pat seem well matched on the more rocking tunes like "The Red One."

JS: That might seem to be more my turf, but Pat can play funky, too. This record is one of the few times he's recorded with distortion. "The Red One" refers to his red Roland guitar-synth thing.

JF: How did Pat's technology-minded approach to the studio affect the recording?

JS: He's into taking more time by layering and changing stuff. My history—especially over the last few years—has been to get a good take and leave it. But those differences didn't cause any difficulties, because we knew we'd be entering each other's territory. On the other hand, Pat also understands the process of just playing and hoping for the best. If those techniques make things sound better, then they're advantages in the long run. Overall, it's a pretty live album.

JF: What projects are on the horizon?

JS: I just finished a recording with my new quartet—Eddie Harris on tenor, Larry Goldings on piano and organ, and Don Alias on percussion. I've been a big fan of Eddie's for a long time. He's really versatile in that he can get funky as you want and also play very advanced, intervallic stuff. We do those "Compared To What" and "Freedom Jazz Dance" grooves. It's that kind of soul jazz from the late '60s, but now it seems new. We make a good pair, even though we're from different generations. Pat and I will be touring together this summer, while Eddie and I have a bunch of gigs scheduled for the fall; so this year is pretty much taken up.

JF: Are there any other guitarists you'd like to team up with?

JS: I just realized that [John] Abercrombie and I recorded together years ago. I've done a couple of albums with Frisell, and now there's the one with Pat. Those were the three main guys I thought I could create a group sound with. Jeff Beck? I'd love it. I also like Carlos Santana a lot. The more I've heard him, the more he seems to be pretty cool and pure. So who knows? **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Since 1979, John Scofield's main guitar has been an Ibanez AS-200, which he outfits with D'Addario strings. When he's in New York he uses two Sundown combo amps; in Europe or on the road he uses two Mesa/Boogie Mark IIIs. His effects include a Roland CE-3 analog chorus pedal, a Pro-Co Rat distortion pedal, an Ibanez analog chorus pedal, and an Ibanez three-band equalizer.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

<i>I CAN SEE YOUR HOUSE FROM HERE</i> —Blue Note 27765 (with Pat Metheny)	<i>OUT LIKE A LIGHT</i> —enja 4038 as a sideman
<i>WHAT WE DO</i> —Blue Note 99586	<i>SO NEAR, SO FAR</i> —Verve 314 517 674-2 (Joe Henderson)
<i>GRACE UNDER PRESSURE</i> —Blue Note 98167	<i>INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE</i> —Manhattan/Blue Note 96545 (Vince Mendoza)
<i>MEANT TO BE</i> —Blue Note 95479	<i>STRAIGHT TO MY HEART</i> —Blue Note 95137 (Bob Belden Ensemble)
<i>TIME ON MY HANDS</i> —Blue Note 92894	<i>THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE</i> —Blue Note 93598 (McCoy Tyner)
<i>FLAT OUT</i> —Gramavision 79400	<i>YOU'RE UNDER ARREST</i> —Columbia 40023 (Miles Davis)
<i>PICK HITS</i> —Gramavision 18-8805	<i>DECOY</i> —Columbia 38991 (Miles Davis)
<i>LOUD JAZZ</i> —Gramavision 18-8801	
<i>BLUE MATTER</i> —Gramavision 18-8702	
<i>STILL WARM</i> —Gramavision 18-8508	
<i>ELECTRIC OUTLET</i> —Gramavision 8405	

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Tales Of Captain Blood

JAMES BLOOD ULMER

By Howard Mandel

Playing the Knitting Factory last New Year's Eve, guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer was like a bear roused from hibernation—growling lyrics semi-intelligibly, hulking in front of his black rock band with heavy-limbed grace, swatting out clotted lines and chords as though funk clears the way for springtime. But Ulmer hasn't been napping; rather, the U.S. is asleep on him.

After five years without an album on an American label and with three fresh recordings available in '94, Blood should be blinking in the light and basking in the glow of newfound fame. As the Blues Preacher (also

the title of his most recent stateside release), he attacks pop forms with the authority of a hustling working man. For *Harmolodic Guitar With Strings*, Blood wins consideration as an improvising composer, his relative freestyle formally underscored by the Quartette Indigo (violinists Gayle Dixon and John Blake, violist Ron Lawrence, and cellist Akua Dixon Turre). With his fourth Music Revelation Ensemble album (featuring saxists Sam Rivers, Arthur Blythe and Hamiet Bluiett, bassist Amin Ali, and drummer Cornell Rochester), Ulmer redeems his personal promise for a jazz loaded with explosive energy, reconceived harmo-

nies, collegial interaction, and compelling rhythmic syncopations.

But Blood's been stalking the fringe of popularity and the frontiers of new music a long time now, keeping his eyes open wide and his good humor intact. After all, on his recording debut, the now-impossible-to-find classic of clangor *Tales Of Captain Black*, he led Ornette and Denardo Coleman and Jamaaladeen Tacuma. Blood had a good run on Columbia in the early '80s, self-producing *Free Lancing*, *Black Rock*, and *Odyssey*, and worked with Bill Laswell on *America—Do You Remember The Love?* for Blue Note in '87. He still kills audiences in Europe, from which come some of his orneriest albums, including *No Wave* (live from the Moers Music fest) and *Are You Glad To Be In America* (with David Murray, Oliver Lake, Olu Dara, and Ronald Shannon Jackson, among others). In his youth Ulmer worked the chitlin' circuit, backing singers and organists. He knows the pathways of a music career are unpredictable. Having already come a good distance from his birthplace of St. Matthews, S.C., he trusts he'll get somewhere, if not where he thought he was headed. He'll roll with that.

"I lived in Detroit for five years before I came to New York; Detroit was a place where every jazz musician who was important—John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon—spent time. For about six months I played at a club called the Blue Bird there, where the owner was very much in love with jazz. At the end of my gig he said, 'Listen: You can play the guitar, so I want you to take this month and go to New York and find Miles Davis. Tell him I sent you to play with him.' I said, 'Good, give me the money, I'm ready to go.' He did, and I came to New York. I never found Miles. But I found Coleman! And he said the natural way I play is harmolodic!"

This was news to Blood, who had spent most of his Blue Bird time chomping at the bit, taking chord dictation on the bandstand from organist Hank Marr, waiting for a chance to solo at a stretch equal to the horns'.

"The role of the guitar used to be limited," Blood recalls. "You took one or two choruses, then the horn player took about 12 and you played backgrounds. Made me want to get my own band, so I could do what I wanted to as a guitar player.

"Mainly, the guitar had to play like the piano part. I never felt it was a full guitar part. If you're following a piano chart, you play chords in thirds. You can play sevenths, but you only got four fingers. Now, if I had nine fingers I could play bigger chords, 13ths or whatever. But Marr would be playing standards and calling the changes to me—'11th chord, ninth, flatted five-seven, major seven,' and I'd have to condense that down

into three or five notes. And everybody else was *improvising*.

"I thought improvising was a very wonderful thing to do, like a salutation or praying to yourself," chuckles Ulmer, who also uses his Muslim name Damu Mustafa Abdul Musawwir. "It got so I wanted a chance to do that, to play a very, *very* long solo."

Blood abandoned his old style upon being "initiated" by Ornette—whose concept of divergent unisons makes solo and background distinctions irrelevant—and got the chance to stretch out when he met drummer Rashied Ali.

"Rashied was in the *zone* about playing free, and I hadn't played free with nobody before. So I had to figure out how to prolong my solos, and find out what the guitar itself does. It's a rhythm instrument like a piano, but it's not a piano. The piano is so big, it makes a lustrous, cushy sound. I wanted to find out how to play my three little notes and get a big, full sound.

"I did it playing from the drone, really designing a tuning system. If I wanted to play in D, I would take the lower E string and put it on D. So when I play the D I can play that, get a whole new sound from the drone, and it will be more equalized into the key. I can play all the notes—it could be D minor or D major of D major 7 with a minor five, or . . .

"My original concept of tuning to the drone was to change each string to the same keynote. You could call that diatonic harmonolodic tuning. You tune up to the note, to the sound. But after getting into that for a while I learned how to get what I want from the original tuning, which is basically all fourths, and use five strings for the guitar and one for myself.

"Since I've got two E strings, I use one of those for me. One for me, one for the guitar. I give it the harmonolodic approach, and maintain the drone and am still able to play all 12 notes in a chromatic scale. Which is a little different than playing in the key, because in the key you have to stick to the eight notes of the key; but in the drone, you can have the drone which rings like a key, and you can also play alternative notes. You know what I'm saying."

Maybe yes, maybe no—anyway, you hear what Blood's *playing*, which is a line of nearly infinite possibility, outrageous dissonances, and blues inflections wedded to a drone similar to that against which sitarists play. Blood willingly discusses his system in detail, demonstrates on an instrument at hand, theorizes as he continues. But his basic message is, "You are allowed to play *all* the notes." And he recommends *Odyssey*, his trio album featuring Charles Burnham on violin, as a most successful result of the

"I have the same audience, it seems to me, wherever I go.

I'm not hooked up to no commercial audience, but everyplace I've played seems to know my music."



method. *Odyssey* sounds like a rocking blues raga hoedown.

Blues Preacher, however, is stone black rock: rhythm-heavy, guitar-laden, with urgent vocals and a deceptively live mix.

"I've made three, what I call, blues records, and this one took the longest," Blood explains. "I must have been in the studio 14 times to get that live-in-the-studio sound, to record music we can play live onstage.

"First, we recorded one guitar and bass with the drums to get good, strong drum tracks; like the drummer, Aubrey Dayle, is playing the song with the band. Hopefully, we got bass tracks that way, too, so it was all synced up. If not, I erased the bass tracks as well as the first guitar tracks. The bass player, Mark E. Peterson, overdubbed every bass part of his that wasn't solid enough, then I did a guitar part for the main chordal structures of the songs. Then I put two rhythm-guitar tracks on top of that. Then added Ronnie Drayton's rhythm and lead tracks on top of my guitar.

"Then we laid in the vocals over the rhythm, and whatever the background was, and any leads, all the improvisations. This is for the nine songs I produced myself. On 'Angel,' William Patterson—he's a guitar player, too—he laid down keyboards, bass, and drums in his home. We put that up on the 24-track in the studio, and did the same process, going over it track by track. He put keyboards to my sound. I never used them before.

"You can get a good, real live studio recording if you live with the band for a month, rehearse every day, and you got the studio in your basement. I used to line the guys up at the mic and record everybody all together. Made whole records in six or eight hours. But the studio is such a dead place, it's better to record it like we did this time. It was live—just separate."

"Rock & roll is far out, because it goes for the fullest guitar sound possible, heading for more even if they have to use two or three guitars to get it. But the thing about rock is, the music is not as advanced as the words. I

like the music part," insists Ulmer, whose voice can be effectively sweet and plaintive, or a hoarse roar. "I like words, too, but I put them in perspective. Singing is singing, and playing music is playing music to me. I've been singing songs, and it's much different than playing guitar.

"When I started playing music I was singing all the time, but I left it out for a long while. I don't really think nothing should be left out—if you can do something at all, you should do it. You don't want nothing laying around, hanging dust on it. You got to find a use for everything you have.

"To me, there ain't but two categories of music: when you're singing and when you ain't. If I'm going to a gig to play music, and don't have to sing, I'm more relaxed. If I have to sing, I'm more upset." He has a wheezing fit of laughter, then straightens up. "The categories of jazz, rock, punk, funk, I think people do that to market the music, but I don't think it's a real thing players do in their heads.

They used to call my music all kinds of things—punk, funk, harmonolodic, jazz, fusion—and I can see why. Before, I tried to do everything at once. I would have the band play one song, and we'd say we wanted to go 10 degrees into the audiences' mind while we were playing. We wanted them to experience every kind of twist we could put on them. I'd say 10 degrees like if you were talking from one to 10. . . . And if I played 10 different kinds of songs, or 10 different approaches to a melody, you'd listen and might come out humming one or two. If I'm playing only one thing, a person either likes it or doesn't like any of it.

"But now I want to separate the styles of my music, I don't want to play all mixed-up. If I'm feeling all songs, I play all songs. If I make a record of songs, I don't add instrumentals, or long drum solos, and nobody is telling a story. Same way in the harmonolodic music we play—everything is totally harmonolodic. Now I don't do but three things: I do records of songs [e.g., *Blues Preacher*], I have the Music Revelation Society which plays harmonolodic music in instrumental form, and I write music, such as the string quartet music with guitar."

One of Blood's most telling songs on *Blues Preacher*—deeper than the rave-up "Let Me Take You Home" and as personal as the concluding "Angel," which he sings in duet with his longtime partner Irene Datcher—claims "Jazz Is The Teacher (Funk Is The Preacher)."

"If you play jazz, you can learn a lot about music," the guitarist explains. "It's a very technical form of learning how to play music; you almost have to go to school. In fact, you *have* to go to one school or another, such as

playing with somebody a lot, to learn how to play jazz. Because jazz is involved. It's about chord changes, modulations, and you have to learn it. If you can't learn it, then you can't play jazz.

"And funk is the preacher, appropriating preaching style, where the statement is felt in the words. That's what straight funk is."

What of blues?

"Well, I like gospel, because I like spirituality, more than I like blues," admits Blood, who was a member of the Southern Sons vocal quartet in his boyhood. "My family was tripping out on spirituals, and spirituality got to mean—to me—coming closer to what you think is the truth, instead of how something sounds. To be spiritual is to be truthful with something. A blues musician can be spiritual if he's truthful with the music."

One more gulp of Blood Ulmer's spiritual truth?

"I have the same audience, it seems to me, wherever I go. I'm not hooked up to no commercial audience, but everyplace I've played seems to know my music. Because I make a recording somewhere every year,

sometimes two or even three. Somebody hears it. They're the ones who like my music, who come and hear me play. I'd like to play in America again, like I did in '81, '82, '83, '84—but something happened: seems

the money dried up. If someone is really thirsty for something, they probably go get a drink, don't you think?"

Yeah. Even if they have to go to Europe, or Japan. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

"I play basically two guitars," James Blood Ulmer growls like a bear aroused from hibernation. "With the Music Revelation Ensemble I play a 1956 model Gibson Birdland guitar, and with the blues band"—his group with second-guitarist Ronnie Drayton featured on his new album *Blues Preacher*—"I use a Steinberger, with very light Steinberger strings.

"I use medium-gauge, flat-wound Gibson strings on the Birdland. I never had a particular reason for using the lighter strings on the Steinberger, then I realized they're designed to be

complementary with the guitar, and easier to bend. Now, I play with a certain vibrato on either of the guitars, but I've got to be careful with the Steinberger *not* to overdramatize the strings; 'cause I practice on the Birdland so I have the muscles to play that guitar. When I pick up the Steinberger, my job is much easier, but I've got to watch not to overdo it.

"There are two amps I use, and I demand one of them every time I play: either a Fender Twin Reverb or a Roland model 120. And I use a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(Most of the following are unavailable in the U.S.)
BLUES PREACHER—DIW/Columbia 57302
HARMOLODIC GUITAR WITH STRINGS—DIW/Disk Union 878
BLACK AND BLUES—DIW 845
PHALANX/IN TOUCH—DIW 826
ORIGINAL PHALANX—DIW 801 (with George Adams)
AMERICA—DO YOU REMEMBER THE LOVE?—Blue Note 85136

LIVE AT THE CARAVAN OF DREAMS—Caravan of Dreams 85004
ODYSSEY—Columbia 38900
BLACK ROCK—Columbia 38285
FREE LANCING—Columbia 37493
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Big Band Meets Rockabilly

BRIAN SETZER



By Brooke Comer

Brian Setzer is the ultimate non-conformist. In the 1980s, when his peers were modeling their music on Peter Frampton and Van Halen, the 20-year-old New York guitarist/vocalist fueled his three-man group the Stray Cats with a rockabilly sound. The act could pack local clubs, but the sound wasn't marketable by record-company standards. Setzer moved the band to London where his trademark Gretsch, hard-driving rhythms, and a blend of angst and soul in his voice helped put the Stray Cats on the UK charts. By 1982, "Built For Speed" and "Gonna Ball" literally hit home, and the Strays finally found fame in America—as an import.

The Brian Setzer Orchestra is a new direction even Setzer's oldest fans, who know his tendency to take the path less traveled, could never have expected. The fusion of such unlikely genres—big band and rockabilly—sounds dubious. But the Brian Setzer Orchestra offers up an aural palette as colorful as Setzer's wrist-to-shoulder tattoos.

Today, Setzer doesn't look like a big-band leader. His pompadour is bottle-blonde, his clothes are neo-punk, and his piercing eyes dart around the room. Physically, he's no Hank Williams clone, but his rockabilly roots run deep, back to the Elvis records of his early childhood. The big band came later.

"My biggest influences were '50s rockabilly guitarists like James Burton, Scotty Moore, Cliff Gallup. That's my meat and potatoes," says Setzer. "Then, when I was 16, I started going to the New York jazz clubs. I'd sneak in, 'cause I was underage, to see Joe Pass, Chuck Wayne. That stuff blew me away."

His first experience hearing live big bands made such a strong impression on him he

still remembers it today. "I was about 16, and a drummer friend, Joe Martinetti, and I went to see the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. We wanted to see what those guys were about. And it was just amazing. It was music. Yeah! Seventeen guys making chords like you never heard. I loved it. We'd make up excuses to go talk to those guys. Joe brought in a bass-drum pedal once to show Mel Lewis. He asked him, 'What do you think of this pedal?' Mel looked at him like he was crazy. We'd do anything just to get their attention, talk to them."

Four years later, the Stray Cats were in London and jump blues was the big revival. When Setzer listened to Clarence Gate-mouth Brown, Wynonnie Harris, and Amos Millburn, he heard not only a scaled-down, big-band sound, but a gritty edge akin to his rockabilly roots. "I thought it was cool that Clarence Gate-mouth Brown was fronting a 'small' big band. It proved that guys were flirting with the idea back then, even though nobody ever did it with a full-on big band except [Count Basie guitarist] Freddie Green, and he wasn't a frontman."

Freddie Green's "chunka-chunka" sound thumped in the back of Setzer's brain for years. He remembers listening to Green as a child and thinking the chunka-sound came from the way the drummer played with brushes. "Later, I tried to get that sound out of my guitar, and I realized it won't work with a solid-body. You need an archtop guitar with F holes."

Green's sound was a primary influence for Setzer's orchestra. "I love Freddie," says Setzer, "but he was always way in the back." When the big-band idea finally took shape in '91, Setzer brought his Freddie Green-style guitar up front. "I was listening to a lot of big band. It was great stuff, but something was missing. There aren't [many] guitars in big bands, except for Freddie. Those guys didn't have amps in those days. Now we do, and

there still aren't any guitarists fronting big bands. I thought it was a cool idea, and its time had come."

On Setzer's latest release, *The Brian Setzer Orchestra*, one song in particular—"My True Love"—seems to complete the bridge between big band and rockabilly. "I wanted to do that," Setzer said. "You can hear it if you listen: I'm playing Freddie Green-style guitar under electric guitar."

A guitar-fronted big band. Sounds simple in theory. In reality, "it was tough," says Setzer. "I thought I'd never get the guys to play together, never get the charts written, never make any money. Well, the last part's still true anyway."

Forming the band was easier. Setzer's neighbor, trumpeter Michael Acosta, invited him to a jam session one night. "He was throwing [Thelonious] Monk charts at me, like, 'We're gonna freak out this rock guy,' but I held my own." Acosta was impressed. But that didn't stop him from nixing Setzer's big-band idea when the guitarist suggested it.

"Mike told me to forget it, that it involved too many guys and too many problems, which is why big band died—nobody could make any money." Setzer, who went all the way to London to get the record deal he couldn't find in America, doesn't give up easily. Acosta came around, brought in top players from L.A.'s session pool, "and we did it on a fluke," Setzer remembers. "Mike would say to the guys, 'Come on down, check this out,' and when they played the gig, they got into it."

Setzer had his band listen to jump blues as inspiration before going into the studio to record *The Brian Setzer Orchestra*. "Playing rock & roll over jazz charts brings an edge to the music. I wanted to steer them away from a jazzy direction so they'd really rock. But I also wanted those little tricky parts that Mike and Mark Jones came up with when

they wrote the charts." Setzer wrote half the tracks (his goal is to write all the tracks on the next recording) and collaborated with Acosta and Jones. "We'd come up with an idea, Mike would write out the trumpet line, then Mark would write the trombone line that fits under it. Mark wrote all the harmony and counterpoint, which I can't do. I'm definitely no Billy May or Quincy Jones."

Setzer admits that the collaboration was "a lot of pressure off my shoulders, which was great. I'm not a hog with credits, or getting all the attention." He didn't mind asking for help with his Freddie Green-style rhythm guitar technique, either. Setzer caught up with big-band guitarist Al Viola at a gig, and "Al tied some loose ends together, showed me chord substitutions, and most of all showed me what not to do. I was playing the whole chord, and in a big band, you only need three notes. The band will fill in. Nobody'd ever showed me that."

Nobody'd ever showed Setzer how to lead a big band, either. "The trick," he says, "was getting them to follow my vision. But I didn't want this to be the Quincy Jones *Quintessence* album. I want this to be my own thing. Yeah, the band has to follow my vision on charts, but on solos they blow. They do *their* own thing."

Innovation has a built-in integrity when it comes from the heart, which has served Setzer well over the years. He's never been one to diminish his personal expression by catering to a mass market. He wondered if his fusion of orchestral jazz and rhythm guitar would alienate both rockabilly and big-band purists. Then he remembered some advice Bob Dylan gave him on a record date for Dylan's *Empire Burlesque*. "He understood what I was going through, since he'd risked offending the folk purists when he went electric, while he wasn't electric enough for the other crowd. He told me to follow my instincts. He said, 'Just play it where your heart lies.'" **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Brian Setzer plays a Gretsch 6120SS Brian Setzer model to get his rock sound. For jazz, he uses a Gretsch Synchronomatic when he's playing live and an old D'Angelico archtop in the studio. He uses D'Addario strings: 11-gauge on his 6120 and 13-gauge on his Synchronomatic. He uses stock Filtertron pickups and wires three blonde Bassman amps from Fender, circa 1962, in sequence.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA—Hollywood HR61565
with the Stray Cats
ROCK THIS TOWN: BEST OF STRAY CATS—EMI
E21Y-94975
CHOO CHOO HOT FISH—JRS 73333-35812-2

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Of Science & Sinatra

ANTHONY BRAXTON

By John Corbett

No other figure so handily condenses the hopes and fears of contemporary musical discourse as composer/multiple-reedman Anthony Braxton. Since emerging in the mid-'60s, he's been a veritable lightning rod for writers, holding out for some the great non-white hope of musical progress and exploration, at the same time drawing from others vitriolic and dismissive attacks for "over-intellectualization" and treacherous mergers of jazz with

contemporary classical music. "I read in *Coda* magazine that our music was a poor example of Webern," he wrote in 1969, in liner notes that were never used for his important solo album *For Alto*. "The jazz musicians say it is not jazz and the classical musicians say it is not classical."

Can you think of another post-'60s musician associated with the avant-garde who has *three* full-length studies in print? Graham Lock's 1988 book *Forces In Motion* has now been followed by Ronald Radano's *New Musical Figurations* and a book in German by writer/bassist Peter Niklas Wilson. If you add a forthcoming tome by scholar/trombonist Mike Heffley (who, like Wilson, has also recorded with Braxton) and throw in Braxton's own *Tri-Axiom Writings* and *Composition Notebooks*, not to mention liner notes by Braxton and a list of journalists long enough to fill his incessant output of discs with verbiage, you begin to get the picture. What's refreshing, if not surprising, is the fact that there's so little redundancy in these studies—a clear testament to the breadth, depth, and richness of Braxton's sound world.

"For me, this is a kind of validation of the path I've taken in my work," he says on the phone from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., where he is currently chairman of the Department of Music. "I have felt from the very beginning that the dynamic implications of the restructural musics from the '60s time cycle, what I call the 'sixth restructural cycle' musics, were important; and that the seventh restructural response from musicians like myself and the AACM, but also including musicians like Frederic Rzewski, David Behrman, Pauline Oliveros, was legitimate. I'd like to hope that the spectrum of writing will give future students of music an opportunity to consider some of the breakthroughs from, say, the last 27 years, in my case.

"I think the interest in my work goes back to the fact that I have, at every point, tried to document how my processes have evolved. And finally, we find ourselves having to justify what happened in the last 30 years because we're confronted with a power structure that says nothing existed, everything stopped, or everything went crazy after 1960, when Coltrane did *Ascension*, or whatever. In the case of my work, I can talk to you about what happened. I can tell you how I started with it and how I proceeded with it, like it or not. It's evolved in a consistent way, and I can show how it's related to other things. So my work has become, or maybe will become, one of the ways to look around some of these dynamic arguments and start looking for how these experiences might relate to the future. Whatever the merits or demerits of my work, I was always *trying* to do something. I

might have blown it, but at least I've documented it in a way where there'll be a lot to read about!"

Most recently, and strangely, Braxton was used by writer Tom Piazza in a *New York Times* piece concerning jazz at Lincoln Center. "I was surprised to see my work again being used in the spectacle-diversion games of the marketplace and media," he admits. "It is fashionable now to put down Wynton Marsalis or Stanley Crouch, but in fact I find myself thinking, 'I will *distance* myself from this.' I used to say I was a jazz musician, and all the jazz musicians said, 'No, you're not.' So I thought about it, and said, 'Wait a minute, if I say that I'm a classical musician, then I can do whatever I want, *including* play jazz! If I say I'm a jazz musician, then I have to play jazz 'correctly.'"

"All of this is part of what the jazz world has become, what jazz journalism has become, what the jazz recording complex has become. An attempt to enshrine blackness and jazz exoticism and contain it within one definition-space runs contrary to the total progression of the music. So now there's suddenly a controversy at Lincoln Center. Why, if I were president of Lincoln Center, I would choose the musicians I liked myself. My disagreements with those guys have more to do with . . . how can I put it, I find their use of the phenomenon of 'balance' to be profoundly *creative*," he says with uncharacteristic sarcasm.

Braxton sees this all presaging what he calls a "techno-minstrel period." "The new minstrel era is being manifested, in my opinion, by the images portrayed on television, also by a concept of 'blackness' that would be open to the kind of manipulation that is historically consistent. By chopping off the innovation of the music, you have chopped off anything to grow from. If bebop and dixieland are it, that's great, but that's a Eurocentric idea, anyway."

He laughs hard, then sobers a bit. "You can put this in your article if you want to get me shot, but what the heck: The African-American intellectual community from the '60s/'70s time cycle has now embraced Eurocentricity on a level that boggles the mind. Remember now, I'm called the 'white negro.' Nobody wants to use those terms, but I'm supposed to be the embodiment of that which has not been black, when in fact I never gave one inch of my beliefs or experiences. What is this notion that you can corral blackness? That's a marketplace notion. You can be sure that when you start hearing arguments about what is properly black we're moving toward another spectacle and diversion cycle and a narrowing of possibilities. But you show me one person in the last 30 years who has grown up in America

*"I might have been wrong
when I thought the kids would
be dancing to my music and
I'd have \$5 million by 1970.
But with the exception of that,
it was a sound career move!"*



and who hasn't had to confront MTV, Bruce Springsteen, or my man Frank Sinatra."

In specific, Braxton suggests looking at four current tendencies: "One, the African-American community is no longer gonna be able to hide behind the concept of bogeyman, and as we begin to look into the next thousand years we aren't going to be able to blame the Europeans for every problem on the planet. Two, the concept of marketplace alignment that we see in this period, which has happened before with the early New Orleans period, would seek to, in many cases, build an idea of 'blackness' that would be more limiting than equal to the processes Jelly Roll Morton was talking about. I'm seeing New Orleans used in this time period to crush the composite aspirations of the music. How unfortunate! Three, I think, if you're an African-American, this is a great time to have a *comedy TV show*. Four, we're going to find ourselves forced to look at America in terms of where we are and where we'd like to be as we get ready to move out into the new millennium—I feel that our diversity is part of our strength. I align myself with the people who respect Frank Sinatra, even if they don't want to give him four or five stars! There's no reason to disrespect the guy, he is one of our masters."

That's right, Braxton's a big fan of Ol' Blue Eyes . . . and the whole Rat Pack. And Barbra Streisand (particularly her version of "Who's Afraid Of The Big Bad Wolf?"). And Johnny Mathis. And Tony Bennett and Nat King Cole. "I have been warming up of late," he fesses, "to Natalie Cole, as well. That's one of the wonderful areas given to us, the American song-form tradition. I'm trying to get tickets to see Sinatra when he comes to Connecticut. I'd do anything to see my man! He's an old guy, he sings like an old guy, but he's a great master who's come to his old and senile period, and I want to hear it! I'll love every moment. It's past perfect pitch, past all of that. It's got heavy life-experience!"

"The music that pushed my button was more than a word 'jazz.' It was individuals who were approaching the music in a certain way, with a certain set of value systems and

intentions, a certain honesty and humility. There was respect for similarities and differences." It's in the flow of this broadminded tradition that Braxton situates himself, placing a high premium on the ethic of innovation and ecumenicalism that perhaps was once more fully associated with jazz. "Nowadays, when you say 'jazz' it's like going to a dixieland festival, there's a way to play and you better not step outside of that or it's not jazz. They've closed off the definitions in a way that's laughable. I'm not jazz, but I'm what jazz *used to be!* When the 'ism' is more important than the 'is,' you have jazz. And . . . swing it, baby!"

Of course, Braxton's distancing himself from the jazz arguments hasn't exactly made him central to "new music," either. "I've had to build an involvement in the cracks, because no definition camp wanted to respect me as a person, as an African-American, as an American. The classical guys were never interested in me. 'A black guy with a saxophone—are you kidding? Give me a break!'" Without the official recognition of these camps, in the tradition of maverick loners like Harry Partch and John Cage, Braxton has pursued the development of his panoramic, highly personal approach to composition and performance.

Over the last 10 years, he has been working diligently on a theoretico-poetical musical model based on a science-fiction city/state metaphor, replete with storytelling based on a set of characters—check the liner notes to New Albion's *Composition 165* and hat ART's *2 Compositions (Ensemble) 1989/91* for examples of Braxton's stories. These pieces synthesize many aspects of his work, combining his preoccupations with science (which appeared early on, in the erector-set-like schematic titles of his '70s works), ritual and mythology, humor, and humanism. He likens the extensive territory in these fantasy lands to Plato's *Republic*. "In my system I will be able to discuss the philosophical implications of the various arguments in the *Tri-Axial Writings*, and at the same time, as far as the 3-D components of that information, give the kindly traveling musician the possibility to move in that space with all kinds of worked-out, choreographed, sequential materials that can be re-targeted inside of that experience."

In October, at the Contemporary Improvised Music Festival in Den Haag, Holland, I had the pleasure of seeing Frederic Rzewski perform Braxton's "Composition 171," for piano and narration, which took the audience on a didactic tour (narrated by an uncostumed Rzewski as a mounted tourist guide, though missing the slide-projected maps and prompts which were called for

in the score) through regions that were at once musical and geographical. Braxton's "Composition 174" (for four percussionists), recently performed at Arizona State, "demonstrates a similar logic, in that a group of mountaineers will be scaling a mountain—in fact, they will be demonstrating *gradient* logic interactive components, and as such will be demonstrating the theoretical and poetic implications of my system."

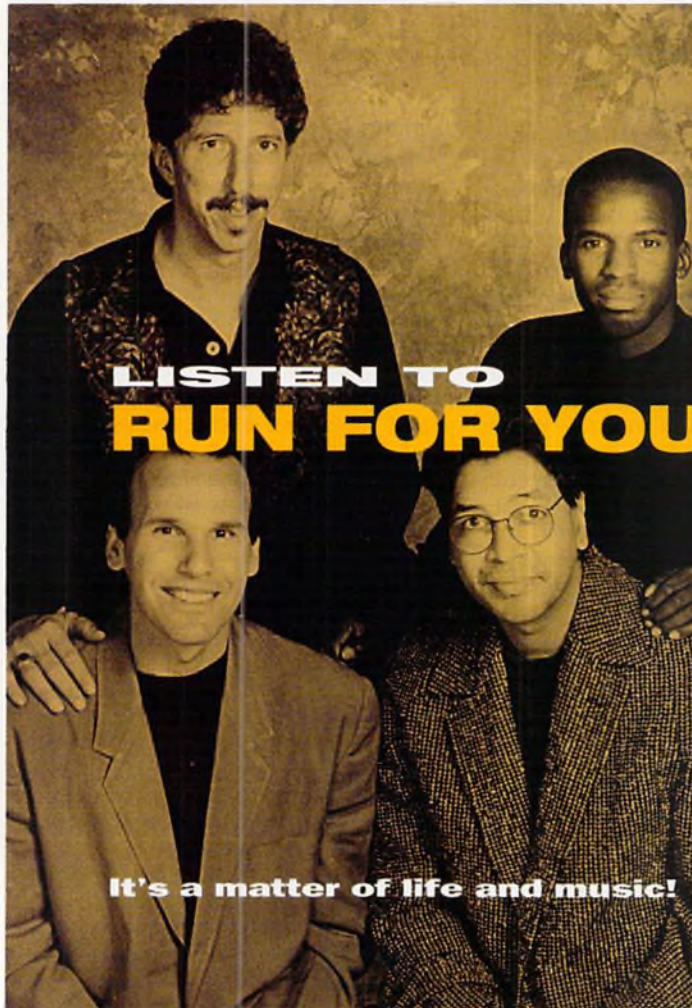
Braxton's poetics, stories, and science references might beg the question: What does his music sound like? It's so wide you can't get around it, of course: jagged and smooth, disparate and unified, consonant and dissonant, abstract and down-to-earth, able to leap from Lou Donaldson to Karlheinz Stockhausen in a single bound. As a way in, you might start with his solo music, which has grown considerably since 1968. Where his early solos isolated particular aspects or techniques, Braxton now blends them in search of undiscovered timbral possibilities. For instance, "No. 170c (+77d+99f)" (subtitled "Ojuwain's pep talk," in reference to one of his fantasy



HYOUWELZ

characters), from *Wesleyan (12 Alto Solos) 1992*, integrates forced, high squeaks with key-pad slapping and a ghostly parallel line of growled vocalizations. These, he says, will eventually constitute fully scripted vocals to be "spoken in tongues" while simultaneously playing the sax.

Looking ahead, Braxton is excited about the future, stimulated by a recent demonstration of artificial sonic environments by composers Morton Subotnick and Joan LaBarbara. "The act of experiencing music won't be so much about putting a CD on, as much as taking advantage of new processes in technology. CD-ROM is just the beginning, I feel. One aspect I hope to arrive at would be akin to a sonic Jurassic Park, a three-dimensional composite state that will invite the traveling listener, musician, experiencer to visit 12 states of geometric identities, within each state a type of people, 12 states of language components, imagery components, gesture components. We have arrived in the future," he says, echoing a proclamation from Sun Ra. "We are now in the post-future, and only the jazz musicians



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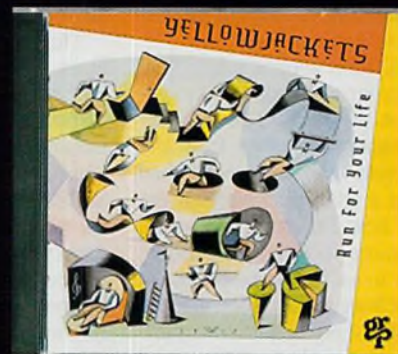
Russ Ferrante (Keyboard)

Bob Mintzer (Saxophone)

Jimmy Haslip (Bass)

Will Kennedy (Drums)

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are arguing about 'How High The Moon.'"

With all of his wide-eyed enthusiasm for the future, Braxton remains entranced and involved in a variety of traditions. At times, he unquestionably plays jazz (he just finished a record of Charlie Parker tunes with Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg, tenor saxophonist Ari Brown, trumpeter Paul Smoker, bassist Joe Fonda, and drummer Pheeroan Ak Laff), though that doesn't necessarily make him a "jazz musician." He'd rather not be hemmed in by those definitions, and it only seems right to respect that wish. Still, in a way, Braxton considers himself a traditionalist (he *has* released two records called *Standards* and two called *In The Tradition*). "They're using tradition to kill the tradition. When you stop to think about it, what's all the controversy about? I've kept my nose on

the grindstone about the tradition. I might have been wrong when I thought the kids would be dancing to my music and I'd have \$5 million by 1970. But with the exception of that, it was a sound career move!"

As this comment brings us to the end of our phone conversation, I read to Braxton from the *For Alto* notes that he forgot he wrote back in '69. "If this record doesn't sell a million copies I will be very disappointed.

Already I am making room on my mantle for a gold record and I am going to have parties and I am preparing an acceptance speech." At this, the nearly 50-year-old laughs his sparkly, wonderful, slightly loony laugh. "That's perfect! I was ready for the *big time!* Beautiful life. I've had a strange career, but I must say, music has made the difference. Tell 'em, in the '90s kids will be dancing to Braxton. We'll all make a billion!" **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Braxton's giant armada of instruments has remained consistent. He plays Selmer saxes and clarinets, except for his Buffet C melody and Lido contrabass saxophones. His contralto and contrabass clarinets are Meadow Leblanc, and he plays a Haynes flute and an Artley alto flute.

His mouthpieces are Brillhart Level-Air 4-Star on his saxes and stock Selmers on his clarinets. He likes Rico Royal reeds, and he's moved up to #2. "I'm an old man, John," he says "I can't take too much pressure—I'm moving into my ballad period"

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DUO (LONDON) 1993—Leo 193
WESLEYAN (12 ALTO SOLOS) 1992—hat ART 6128
(VICTORIAVILLE) 1992—Victo 021
4 (ENSEMBLE) COMPOSITIONS 1992—Black Saint 120124
COMPOSITION NO. 165 [FOR 18 INSTRUMENTS]—New Albion 050
WILLISAU (QUARTET) 1991—hat ART 61001/2/3/4
2 COMPOSITIONS (ENSEMBLE) 1989/1991—hat ART 6086
EUGENE (1989)—Black Saint 120137
EIGHT (1 3) TRISTANO COMPOSITIONS 1989—hat ART 6052
SEVEN COMPOSITIONS (TRIO) 1989—hat ART 6025
ENSEMBLE (VICTORIAVILLE) 1988—Victo 07
19 [SOLO] COMPOSITIONS 1988—New Albion 023
FOUR COMPOSITIONS (SOLO, DUO & TRIO) 1982/1988—hat ART 6019
FIVE COMPOSITIONS (QUARTET) 1986—Black Saint 120106
QUARTET I (COVENTRY) 1985—Leo 204/5
QUARTET (BIRMINGHAM) 1985—Leo 202/3
SIX COMPOSITIONS (QUARTET) 1984—Black Saint 0086
FOUR COMPOSITIONS (QUARTET) 1983—Black Saint 120066
COMPOSITION 96—Leo 169
COMPOSITION 98—hat ART 6062
PERFORMANCE (QUARTET) 1979—hat ART 6044
DORTMUND (QUARTET) 1976—hat ART 6075
TOWN HALL (TRIO & QUINTE) 1972—hat ART 6119
3 COMPOSITIONS OF NEW JAZZ—Delmark 415
 with various others
MOMENT PRECIEUX—Victo 02 (Derek Bailey)
DUETS VANCOUVER, 1989—Music & Arts 611 (Marilyn Crispell)
DUETS (1989)—Music & Arts 786 (Mario Pavone)
BIRTH AND REBIRTH—Black Saint 120024 (Max Roach)
OPEN ASPECTS (DUO) 1982—hat ART 6106 (Richard Teitelbaum)
THE AGGREGATE—Sound Aspects 023 (ROVA Saxophone Quartet)
EIGHT DUETS HAMBURG 1991—Music & Arts 710 (Peter N. Wilson)

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Elektric/ Akoustic Afterlife

DAVE WECKL

By Josef Woodard



HARRISON FUNK

Dave Weckl enjoyed seven years of plenty as Chick Corea's main timekeeper. Beginning in 1985, when he was 25, Weckl's trademark touch—his subtle-but-potent pulse and supple polyrhythmic sense—became a critical component in Corea's Elektric band, as well as in the Akoustic Band. Umpteen world tours, several albums, and wide acclaim in the drumming world ensued.

Then, in 1992, he decided enough was enough. He gave Corea notice and returned to the less stable, but more varied, life of the musical free-agent.

Today, Weckl is circumspect on the subject of life before, during, and after Corea. "It was great to be able to play for as many people as we were in a year. I miss that. But I was going nuts being out there so long and not really having time to progress myself to get better, to another level. I couldn't do it on the road. It's always a Catch-22: You can't have both or everything."

In his post-Corea period thus far, Weckl has taken sideman work, including a stint with another dynamic pianist, Michel Camilo, with whom Weckl played when he first hit New York 15 years ago. You can also hear Weckl on Jeff Beal's album, *Three Graces*, as well as on *Another World*, by bassist/former bandmate John Patitucci, who also spent seven years with Corea before going off on his own.

As for Weckl, he has also just released his third, groove-driven solo album, *Hard Wired*, and plans to form his first official band and start gigging this spring. But, coming off of the trying tour schedule with Corea, he's not keen on pounding the pavement again soon. "I don't want to become a full-time leader and go on the road. That's not something I'm dying to do, because I will die doing that."

Like Weckl's previous solo album, *Heads Up*, the new one is a collaboration with his musical pal from St. Louis, keyboardist Jay Oliver. "We wrote all the tunes, except for 'Where's Tom?' which is a Jeff Beal tune. That's also the most jazz-oriented thing on the record. Everything else on the record is more—dare I say the word—fusionistic. For lack of a better word, it's a contemporary slamfest. What can I say? It's the way I like to play. I like it to be musical. I like there to be a great dynamic range."

Overall, *Hard Wired* is, on the surface, a fairly accessible adventure in rhythmic feels, fueled by aspects of funk, post-bebop, Latin, rock, and world-music concepts. Casual listening finds an unpretentious, fusion-based song set, on which the drums are eloquent but don't unduly seize the spotlight. Closer inspection reveals some sophisticated strategies and mutating rhythms, such as on the punningly titled "Dis' Place 'This." Weckl said, "That's one of the things I've been noted for—the displaced rhythms, the 'where's 1?' thing."

The song "Afrique" taps into West African polyrhythms, a new area of inspiration for Weckl, as it was for Patitucci on his *Another World* album. "When I first started getting into West African music, it was always very hard for me to hear where the pulse was. Then I was told by West African musicians that all their music was in 12, no matter what it is. Once I heard that, if I listened to a Salif Keita piece or some other West African thing that I didn't understand, I would get the subdivisions and count those as triplets and listen for the bass' downbeat, and there it would be. You could hear it in a million different ways."

Weckl also used his time away from the road to work on a couple of DCI educational videos, including the drum/percussion ses-

sion *Working It Out, Part 1 and 2* with percussionist Aldredo Reyes Sr., and also an extension of his 1987 video package, *The Contemporary Drummer Plus 1*. But, whereas that earlier project targeted advanced drummers, the new video is aimed at a more rudimentary level.

Weckl explained, "I felt that there was a big void in the market for beginner-to-intermediate players, where you could just groove, but with the same level of musicality. John Patitucci and I did this together as a duet. It's basically groove stuff, with nothing too complicated. It's for the kids who want to practice time."

Natural-born musicians are not necessarily natural-born teachers, but Weckl has a long involvement with education, both by creating teaching materials and doing drum clinics. He maintains a pragmatic approach to the business of imparting knowledge and inspiration.

"Rather than try to come off as an intellectual, professor type, I figure the people who are going to be getting the most out of this are the kids, so it has to be approached from that level. They have to be able to understand what you're saying very easily. The product that I put out is something that I [see] in terms of what I would have wanted to have as a kid growing up."

Not one to rest on laurels, he is interested in continuing his own education as well. "Not only has this transition period I'm in allowed me time to play with other people, but it's also given me time to study on my own. Anyone who looks at it as getting to a level and reaching some degree of success and thinking, 'That's cool, now I can stop'—forget it. That's not going to last very long. My attitude has always been to keep going, to keep practicing the instrument, and try to get to the next level."

Born in St. Louis in 1960, Weckl moved to New York at age 19, but has called Los Angeles home for a few years now. He got a full-scale Californian initiation in mid-January, when the devastating predawn 6.6 earthquake struck.

Talking with him three days after the major trembler, Weckl was still rattled. "We're sitting right on the fault line, and we're about two miles from the epicenter, so we got hit pretty good. It was the most violent thing I ever felt. The best analogy is a freight train hitting the house first and then continuing to run through the house to the room behind. But my house fared better than most in the neighborhood."

Earthquake anxiety aside, does he miss the opportunities to play jazz that he encountered while in New York?

"The whole issue of L.A. musicians vs. New York musicians, I think, has changed over the last 10 years quite a bit. I lived in New York for 12 years, and I once had that attitude. That's why I moved to New York instead of Los Angeles when I was 19, because of the feel of the musicians and the place.

"Anymore, there is still that certain vibe, to a certain degree. But there are great musicians out here who burn. But a lot of that is due, also, to the fact that a lot of New York musicians have moved out here."

There remains the curious fact that, despite the high regard for Weckl's technical fluidity and graceful intensity in the jazz world, his attraction to jazz is only part of the larger picture of his interests.

"I enjoy playing jazz—if we're talking bebop or straightahead things—only for very short periods of time. Even with Chick's Akoustic Band, I always went through it and thought for a couple of weeks that it was great. But I like to hit and express the emotion of the drums with a certain volume level. A basic drum set just plain does not work with an acoustic piano and acoustic bass.

"If I had to do it over again, I would recreate the drum set for acoustic jazz so that it's coming from more of a Trilok Gurtu approach, just the way the drums sound. It's something that takes a great deal of control, if you're going to play musically so that you can hear what everybody else is doing."

By this point, Weckl feels a bit misunderstood, colored by a reputation that is not entirely of his own choosing.

"Over the last 10 years, I've slipped into this reputation as being a jazz drummer—busy, a lot of notes, that kind of thing. The point of it is, before I got with Chick and was doing all that kind of stuff, I loved to play '2' and '4.' I was doing dates and records like Peabo Bryson, Diana Ross, the Honeydrippers, that kind of thing.

"I always love to try and maintain differ-

"I enjoy playing jazz—if we're talking about bebop or straightahead things—only for very short periods of time."



ent styles and try to be able to play them all. I lost the chance to do that when I went out on the road full-time—not that I'm regretting any of that, but that's just the way it is. You get the exposure doing one thing, and that's what you're labeled as."

But hasn't Weckl always claimed Buddy Rich as perhaps the primary influence on his own early development on the drums?

"Buddy will always be, as far as the instrument is concerned, one of the biggest inspirations. Throw style out the window; this has nothing to do with style. It's basically the ability to play the instrument. It's like a Michael Jordan approach on drums. Obviously, you have to be musical, and you have to approach it from a very musical view. But, man, just the ability—that's always been an amazing inspiration."

What is Weckl's assessment of Corea's new incarnation, the Elektric Band II?

"Everybody sounds great, and it doesn't sound anything like the old band. It's great in that way. Chick would never do that anyway, just continue what the old band was. He's always the master of creation. It's nice to hear a new concept coming from him after basically living with him for seven years.

"[Corea's new drummer] Gary Novak is an incredible young talent. As a young kid, he was coming from my style, which came out of [Steve] Gadd and [Vinnie] Colaiuta.

"There are a lot of ways to look at that. If

you let yourself go and not think about progressing and doing other things, it would be very easy to sit back and think, 'Wow, now I'm jealous, I should never have let that gig go. . . .' But that's the fun of progression. I'm happy for him and for that progression, and at the same time, it's very challenging for me now to sit back and say, 'What's next?'"

What is next?

"Right now, believe it or not, I'm looking to do something really different—the approach of something like a Sting gig or a Peter Gabriel-type of gig. I love that music. That's not to say that I would want to do any pop or rock tour that came along. For me to want to go out and want to play that kind of music, it would have to have some kind of integrity that really means something to me, musically.

"It's a juggling act, but it's something I'm working real hard at now to try and get people to know that, yeah, I still want to do freelance things and be a sideman and play with different people, and yes, I am trying to get my group together and do some things with that, as well. And yet I'm still trying to stay home and do some studio work, and also get into a musical situation with more of a pop-rock thing. Given all that, I don't know. You figure it out," he laughed.

This penchant for diversity in his worklife is nothing new. "That was my goal, as a teenager. I had started to achieve that kind of thing in New York, but then came the decision to go out on the road with Chick, because I loved the music so much, and he was always one of my idols. I would never regret that decision. It's partly responsible for everything that has happened in my career at this point.

"But it's just a matter of breaking the label once you are labeled. But that's just the way it is. The biggest thing is just to have the personal time to try and get some other things happening, and practice again, for a change." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Weckl plays a Yamaha maple custom kit, with three rack toms across the top—8 x 8, 10 x 10, 10 x 12—and a 12 x 14 floor tom. On the left side, he places either an 11 x 13 tom or a 4 x 12 snare on a tom-tom stand: "Sometimes, I like to use a little high-pitched snare drum on the left."

A new addition to his drum kit is an aluminum-shell version of his signature Yamaha snare, in two sizes, 6.5 x 14 and 5.5 x 14. His bass drum

is a 22 x 16, and for his cymbals, he uses Zildjian K's.

Stick-wise, Weckl uses signature Vic Firths. He also relies on AKG microphones, and Latin Percussion equipment. The percussion on his new album was programmed using an E-mu 3XP sampler triggered by a Yamaha SY99. He uses Macintosh computers with Performer music sequence software.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

HARD WIRED—GRP 9760
HEADS UP—GRP 9673
MASTER PLAN—GRP 9169

with Chick Corea

THE CHICK COREA ELEKTRIC BAND—GRP 9535
LIGHT YEARS—GRP 9546
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER—GRP 9564
INSIDE OUT—GRP 9601

BENEATH THE MASK—GRP 9649
CHICK COREA AKOUSTIC BAND—GRP 9582
ALIVE—GRP 9627

with various others

ANOTHER WORLD—GRP 9725 (John Patitucci)
THREE GRACES—Triloka 7197 (Jeff Beal)
PUBLIC ACCESS—GRP 9599 (Steve Khan)
STEP IT!—Evidence 22080 (Bill Connors)



Meditations & Divine Offerings

CHARLES LLOYD

By Tom Conrad

Charles Lloyd sits naked in the lotus position on the top level of the steam room. Undeterred by the heat and the dense fog, his voice is clear, melodious, and caressing, not unlike his tenor saxophone. "I'm trying to get to the place where the tone is just the distillation of essence, and that quality of suchness or purity can come through. It's a selfless kind of high. It's like a benediction. I'm still trying. When I was young I was a very good swimmer and diver. I won competitions. But I don't do that anymore. I'm trying to be a musician now. In music, I've never gotten good enough to quit."

Stories about Charles Lloyd always begin with *Forest Flower*, because what happened is remarkable. The album was recorded at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1966, and it became one of the first jazz records to sell a million copies. It struck a chord in a generation whose anthems were provided, not by jazz musicians, but by Jimi Hendrix, Cream, and the Grateful Dead.

Lloyd brought together avant-garde liberties, impressionistic harmonies, elements of what we now call "world music," and variants on rock rhythms. The blend acted on its audience like a siren's call. And there was another quality that helps explain the phenomenon of *Forest Flower*: a hypnotic, lyrical intensity that sounded like . . . rapture. The Flower Generation may not have been

big on jazz, but it was very big on rapture.

Lloyd underwent one of the rarest of experiences for a jazz musician: He became a star. His quartet (which introduced Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette along with veterans Ron McLure and Cecil McBee) played on the same bills with Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, and Santana at rock shrines like the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco. Lloyd's albums received heavy airplay on the liberated FM stations of the late-'60s counterculture. His band toured Europe, the Far East, and the Soviet Union. Then, at the pinnacle of his success, Charles Lloyd walked away.

After *Forest Flower*, the most widely known fact about Charles Lloyd is his self-imposed exile. Searching for precedents, critics have cited Artie Shaw, or Sonny Rollins. But the Shaw analogy is inexact, and Rollins used to drop out and regroup for only a year or two. Charles Lloyd disappeared for most of two decades.

"Back then, when I had my first quartet, I thought that my music could change the world. When I found out that I was wrong, I embarked upon a long journey of trying to change my character and transform myself."

Lloyd went in search of the "inner life" he had lost during 10 years on the road. He meditated in Malibu, studied Eastern religious thought in Big Sur, and walked in the woods. He still played his tenor saxophone and his flutes, but rarely in public.

Then in 1981, 17-year-old piano prodigy Michel Petrucciani, who had heard Lloyd's early albums in his native France, made a pilgrimage to Big Sur. Petrucciani was severely disabled by a rare bone disease, but he played piano, Lloyd says, "like an avatar." Lloyd was struck by "the beauty of Michel's being," and was inspired to play concerts and record again. A quartet with Palle Danielsson on bass and Son Ship Theus on drums made two well-received European tours in 1982 and 1983, and two live albums were recorded (one of which, *A Night In Copenhagen*, has been reissued by Blue Note). But Lloyd's return was short-lived. When Petrucciani struck out on his own, Lloyd retreated again into silence.

Then, toward the end of the decade, he returned. One of the people closest to Lloyd, his friend and manager Stephen Cloud, attributes the decision to a near-death experience from an intestinal disorder. "Charles was a few hours from death," Cloud says. "When he survived, he came out of the hospital with a decision: to rededicate himself to the great tradition, the jazz art form."

Lloyd put together a new quartet featuring Swedish pianist Bobo Stenson. When the new group appeared at Montreux in 1988, Swiss critic Yvan Ischer wrote of "a quartet endowed with Grace . . . practically being born under our eyes." Later, ECM founder/producer Manfred Eicher used a different metaphor: "I really believe this is

the refined essence of what music should be. All the meat is gone; only the bones remain." In the last five years there have been several world tours and three albums for ECM. Unlike the group with Petrucciani, this quartet has announced its presence on the American scene, having played the Playboy, JVC, and Melon festivals. In the summer of 1993, after 27 years, Lloyd made a dramatic return to Monterey.

Today Charles Lloyd lives in Montecito, Calif., outside Santa Barbara, in a Spanish-style hacienda on 10 acres. The San Ysidro mountains rise steeply on three sides of the property, but in front the land falls away and the vistas extend to the ocean. The rooms (large and bright except for the "meditation room") are a tasteful clutter of antiques, overflowing bookcases, sheet music, a Steinway grand,

"I play for those miraculous moments when the music opens up and you know that you're home."



photographs, *objets d'art*, and whimsical paintings of dreamscapes by Charles' wife, Dorothy Darr.

Out on the front porch wearing a floppy hat and a blue Montecito Sports warm-up suit after his early-morning visit to the steam room, Lloyd's statements about his music are not so much responses to questions as they are insistences on elemental esthetic and spiritual truths. He is not interested in the "how-to" of craft, but in essence. "Music for me was everything. It was my door to higher consciousness. What I hear and what I feel is not about technique, and it's not about being a musician as such. It's more about . . . imparting something." He chooses his words carefully, squinting as he stares to the distant Pacific. "When you start playing an instrument, you should play long tones, so that you can control the triple pianissimo all the way up to forte and then back without vibrato. You start simple . . . just with the sound. And here I am at this stage in life still trying to play long tones—trying to get to the essence of the tone."

Lloyd's first ECM album, *Fish Out Of Water* (released in 1990), evokes that essence. The opening a capella tenor saxophone emanations are just above a whisper, light on the surface but dark underneath. The "long tones" proceed with such smoldering slowness, emerging from repose to search and aspire. The tonal atmosphere is so rapt, so focused on the quest for an inner path, that nothing disturbs the stillness.

"I've been so blessed to play with great musicians, and to hear them every night. I don't really take authorship. It's like an individual offering. And then, when you mix it with a lot of love, at a certain level, you get met and it becomes a divine offering."

Over the course of a morning and early afternoon, whether conducting a tour of the house and grounds, playing the piano, or sorting through photographs ("That's me and Coleman Hawkins in the kitchen at the Village Vanguard"), his thoughts always return to the music. Like one of his saxophone solos, he may start in one place and fly far away, but he always returns because "there's such a oneness to all of this."

He remembers Ornette Coleman and Eric

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Dolphy and Charlie Haden in Los Angeles; John Coltrane and Charles Mingus and Coleman Hawkins in New York; Duke Ellington and Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney in Antibes. "All these great masters that I served with and played with, they live in me. I stood on their shoulders, and they all inspired me. There's a thread that runs through all of this. I look upon all these great masters as sages. They're bringing forth elixirs and truths. I've been blessed. So many people have helped me. I too must serve the music. But I still don't have the sound I hear."

On *The Call*, Lloyd's new release, the quartet has moved to another level: Collective improvisation on the edge of the moment suddenly feels seamless.

Lloyd's last three albums on ECM contain only original compositions. Asked about whether he has any interest in playing standards, his hands go to his golden face as he strives to find the words to contain the mystery. "I am standards, you know. It's happening nonstop. I don't have lines of demarcation. Do I play standards? As far as I'm concerned, the whole thing is a tribal dance. My message is an urgent one. It's a call to all the sisters and brothers to come home."

When he talks of his new group—which includes Stenson, Billy Hart on drums, and Anders Jormin on bass—Lloyd's voice takes on a special intensity. "My father was a football coach. He was always proud of his teams. I'm very proud of my orchestra. But it's not selfish. It's not about someone's solo. Sometimes Bobo has to be cellos and voices and sometimes Billy Hart has to be the

whole drum choir of the universe, the rhythm of the world. Billy's the best. He's not about keeping time. I'm always in the music, even when I'm not playing my instrument. Sometimes I'm playing Bobo. When I look over, there's Anders, found in the music. . . . There's Bobo, just devoted to the music. . . . I play for those miraculous moments when the music opens up and you know that you're home."

Lloyd's discourse reveals a fortunate son in a perpetual, Buddah-like state of personal reflection: "I am blessed that for whatever reason I got the saxophone, because it is an extension of myself. It somehow makes me whole when I can hold on to it. Sometimes when I'm playing, I really don't have to hold on. It's like levitation is happening. . . . It's weightless. . . . It's effortless. . . . It's so unto itself." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

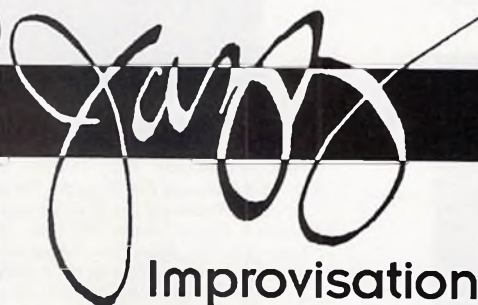
Once he became resigned to the necessity of discussing his equipment, Lloyd listed his instruments with precision: "I have two vintage, gold-plated C. G. Conn tenor saxophones. They are very old. Older than me. The mouthpiece is an Otto Link 7-star. I use Hemke #3 reeds. The C flute is a Powell. The alto flute is a Haynes. The bass flute is an Artley. My piano is a seven-foot Steinway B. Oh, and I also have a Chinese oboe, maker unknown."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE CALL—ECM 78118-21522-2
NOTES FROM BIG SUR—ECM 314 511 999-2
FISH OUT OF WATER—ECM 841 088-2
A NIGHT IN COPENHAGEN—Blue Note 85104
MONTREUX '82—Elektra/Musician 60220
FOREST FLOWER: CHARLES LLOYD AT MONTEREY—Rhino/Atlantic (scheduled for reissue in 1994)
DREAMWEAVER—Rhino/Atlantic (scheduled for reissue in 1994)
DISCOVERY—Columbia 9067 (Japan only)
 with various others
ACOUSTIC MASTERS—Rhino/Atlantic (Cedar Walton, Buster Williams, Billy Higgins—scheduled for release in 1994)
MAN FROM TWO WORLDS—Impulse! 127 (Chico Hamilton)

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Key

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



Charlie Haden

ALWAYS SAY GOODBYE—Verve 314 521 504: *ALWAYS SAY GOODBYE; NICE EYES; RELAXIN' AT CAMARILLO; SUNSET AFTERNOON; MY LOVE & I; ALONE TOGETHER; OUR SPANISH LOVE SONG; BACKGROUND MUSIC; WHERE ARE YOU MY LOVE; AVENUE OF STARS; LOW KEY LIGHTLY; CELIA; EVERYTHING HAPPENS TO ME.*

Personnel: Haden, bass; Ernie Watts, tenor saxophone; Alan Broadbent, piano; Larance Marable, drums; Stephane Grappelli, violin (9).

★★★★★

Charlie Haden's cinematic *Always Say Goodbye* reconstructs the romantic atmosphere of post-WWII Los Angeles, remembered (or imagined) through films like *The Big Sleep*. In his sequel to the wonderfully evocative *Haunted Heart*, Haden edits cameo appearances—by the likes of Django Reinhardt with Stephane Grappelli, and Duke Ellington with Ray Nance—into the project as flashbacks. Quartet West performs an aching ballad like "Alone Together," highlighted by Haden's solo, followed by a gentle fade and dissolve into Jo Stafford's recording of the tune.

Haden manages these transitions with a grace and respect absent from the necrophilic pop practice of recording duets with the departed. The risk is that these classic recordings may upstage the business at hand. It seems unfair to Ernie Watts' yearning tenor on "My Love And I" to encourage comparison with Coleman Hawkins. Watts and pianist Alan Broadbent are the stars of this production, with Watts charging through the enlivening bop of "Relaxin' At Camarillo" and Bud Powell's "Celia." Haden is more a directorial presence, contributing the lovely, melancholic title composition and guiding the proceedings.

As tasteful as the quartet performances are, when the credits roll, the flashbacks linger. The album closes with the ghostly voice of a young Chet Baker singing "Everything Happens To

Me." Haden worked with the trumpeter late in his life, and the inclusion of this song is poignant and overwhelmingly ironic.

—Jon Andrews



Rob Wasserman

TRIOS—MCA/GRP 4021: *FANTASY IS REALITY; BELLS OF MADNESS; PUT YOUR BIG TOE IN THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS; WHITE-WHEELED LIMOUSINE; COUNTRY (BASS TRILOGY: PART 1); ZILLIONAIRE; DUSTIN' OFF THE BASS; EASY ANSWERS; SATISFACTION (BASS TRILOGY: PART 2); HOME IS WHERE YOU GET ACROSS; SPIKE'S BULLS (BASS TRILOGY: PART 3); GYPSY ONE; GYPSY TWO; AMERICAN POPSICLE. (57:16)*

Personnel: Wasserman, string bass, electric upright bass, percussion, background vocals; various artists, including Brian Wilson, Carnie Wilson, Elvis Costello, Marc Ribot, Bruce Hornsby, Branford Marsalis, Edie Brickell, Jerry Garcia, Willie Dixon, Al Duncan, Bob Weir, Neil Young, Chris Whitley, Les Claypool, Matt Haimovitz, and Joan Jeanrenaud.

★★★★★

SOLO—Rounder 0179: *THIRTEEN; LIMA TWIST; SUNWAY; PUNK SIZZLE; CLARE; LADY BE GOOD; STRUMMING; BASS BLUE; BASS SPACE; APRIL AIRE; FREEDOM BASS DANCE; ODE TO CASALS; SARA'S RAINBOW SONG. (33:00)*

Personnel: Wasserman, acoustic bass.

★★★★★

In the midst of a proliferation of star-studded compilation albums, Rob Wasserman sets the standard for future collaborative projects with *Trios*, the remarkable conclusion to his bass trilogy spawned by 1983's *Solo* and continued with 1988's *Duets*. What is so extraordinary about Wasserman's latest is how such a disparate cast of pop, blues, rock, jazz, and classical artists in eight different trio settings made an album that, while eclectic in its musical vision, maintains a cohesive unity throughout. While Wasserman's brilliant bass playing is the common denominator, the real unifying factor is the spirit of enthusiastic and creative collaboration at work.

The adventurous improvising at the heart of *Trios* results in magical tunes like the pop gem "Fantasy Is Reality/Bells Of Madness," where Beach Boy Brian Wilson and vocalist/daughter Carnie Wilson sing together for the first time; the whimsical "Zillionaire" Edie Brickell, Jerry Garcia, and Wasserman wrote from scratch; the jazz charged "White-Wheeled Limousine," where songwriter Bruce Hornsby, Branford Marsalis, and Wasserman deliver a blowfest; and the effervescent "Dustin' Off The Bass," featuring the late blues great Willie Dixon in his last recording.

Trios is also a bass lover's dream. Wasserman not only stretches the sonic possibilities of the instrument, he explores its expressiveness, range, and flexibility. He taps, strums, slaps, bows, flutters, and plays pizzicato in a multitude of voicings, hues, and textures and even cloaks himself in the spirit of Ornette Coleman to offer horn-like slashes on the funky "Home Is Where You Get Across."

Coinciding with the release of *Trios* is the welcomed CD reissue of *Solo*, Wasserman's acoustic bass masterpiece that garnered him widespread recognition as an innovative bassist. *Solo* chronicles his early bass experiments as he blends the melodic with the rhythmic. The result is a combination of simple purity, rich intimacy, and raw energy. *Solo* isn't as captivating as *Trios*, but it stands well on its own as an impressive collection of bass compositions that inspired Wasserman to further expand the boundaries of his instrument. —Dan Ouellette



Miles Davis Tribute Band

A TRIBUTE TO MILES DAVIS—Cwest/Reprise 2-45059: *SO WHAT; R.J.; LITTLE ONE; PINOCCHIO; ELEGY; EIGHTY ONE; ALL BLUES. (59:02)*

Personnel: Wallace Roney, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, tenor and soprano saxophones; Herbie Hancock, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

★★★

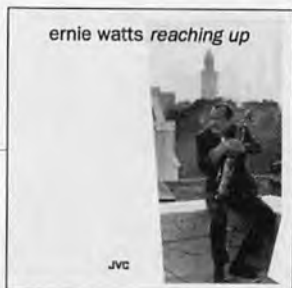
Finally. After all the hoopla of previous tribute albums, this one had the potential to knock 'em all out of the box. Alas, like the self-conscious kid given free rein in a store full of all kinds of goodies, the Tribute Band stays pretty much in the aisles, looking straight ahead, only occasionally glancing left and right to grab for something new.

To be fair, these guys are on the money with this stuff. It's beautiful to hear the medley of "R.J.," "Little One" followed by "Pinocchio," all numbers that've pretty much been ignored since Miles' passing. And the funky "Eighty One" cooks at a nice, slow tempo. Turning the clock back to '59, the band takes the closer "All Blues" at close to its original rolling tempo. Roney's mute sweetly and serenely guiding this classic Davis waltz. Certain liberties are taken along the way as well, most notably Hancock's wayward comping and Shorter's occasional atonal fits. And Williams, true to form, pushes the band like a seasoned rock drummer. The music is presented in a way that wisely downplays the Roney/Davis connection, instead putting the band out front.

Two views predominate. One, that the band is executing this Davis program in a near-flawless manner, providing interesting if not intriguing variations on a theme of Miles, circa '66 (the music they toured with in '92). The other view is that they're coasting, with arrangements that've been tweaked here and there on material that suggests the proper name for this group should be the Miles Davis Trad Band. Apart from Roney, everyone here (the button-downed Ron Carter included) played a significant part in Davis' bridge music, the stuff that led to the well-known *Bitches Brew*-and-beyond material. (The black-hole year for everybody doing tributes, from Joe Henderson to Keith Jarrett to the Lincoln Center Jazz Ork, seems to be 1968.)

Like its VSOP predecessors with Freddie Hubbard and Wynton Marsalis, the Tribute Band is more about convention, the convention of playing out of today's predominantly post-bop bag. In so doing, the more experimental treats they once savored remain untouched.

—John Ephland



Ernie Watts

REACHING UP—JVC 2031-2: *REACHING UP*; *MR. SYMS*; *I HEAR A RHAPSODY*; *TRANSPARENT SEA*; *THE HIGH ROAD*; *INWARD GLANCE*; *YOU LEAVE ME BREATHLESS*; *SWEET LUCY*; *ANGEL'S FLIGHT*; *SWEET SOLITUDE*. (66:00)

Personnel: Watts, tenor, alto saxophones; Arturo Sandoval, trumpet (1,5); Mulgrew Miller, piano; Charles Fambrough, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★★★★★

Watts is the epitome of post-Coltrane tenor men. On this album he meets a spiritual soulmate in DeJohnette. Although the dialog doesn't rehash Trane and Elvin Jones, it has the same fiery tone. From this saxophone-and-drums axis, we have the complementary and countervailing forces of Fambrough's broad-shouldered bass and Miller's eye-of-the-storm piano.

From the instrumentation one might expect a harder-hitting version of Charlie Haden's Quartet West, one of Watts' many gigs. There are echoes, particularly on the saxman's lyrical "Inward Glance." But altogether this album is a steamier romance, a less reflective workout, partly due to DeJohnette's energetic undercurrent, partly because these are self-motivated, self-contained masters on the same triumphant wavelength. Watts' "Angel's Flight" captures the group at its most intense. It's roll for roll, punch for punch in the tenor and drums.

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CD REVIEWS

Miller gathers himself after this blitz and leads the rhythm section into a swinging trio statement. Good balance.

"I Hear A Rhapsody" and "You Leave Me Breathless" reinforce how Watts can form confident statements from a familiar melody. His solo on Coltrane's "Mr. Syms" shows the sweep and scope of his homage and derivations. Sandoval hasn't come as far as the saxophonist in achieving a personal sound. Still, his burning, Miles Davis-influenced runs are an asset to the attitude of this date.

For sustained mastery within the post-Coltrane school, this album illustrates the refinements and excitement possible when virtuosi come together. Boss sounds, as they say.

—Owen Cordle

vored by the leader's lyrical bent, this album is a most mature work.

—Owen Cordle



Peter Leitch

A SPECIAL RAPPORT—Reservoir 129: *RELAXIN' AT CAMARILLO; NAIMA'S LOVE SONG; NEW RHUMBA; GOODBYE; AVENUE B; BLUES ON THE WEST SIDE; JITTERBUG WALTZ; STRAYHORN MEDLEY; A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING/LOTUS BLOSSOM; LAZY BIRD.* (68:11)

Personnel: Leitch, guitar; John Hicks, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★★★★

This is a warm, often exhilarating session. Leitch incorporates a harmonic sensitivity akin to Jim Hall's, but he's a more extroverted swinger. Where he draws you into his expositions with warmth, Hicks grabs you with an intense, highly charged edge. As the title says, this group exhibits a unity of listening and responsiveness. One notes the ever-appropriate rhythms and commentary of "Smitty" Smith in accompaniment and in several solo exchanges.

The general tone is upbeat. "Goodbye" and "Strayhorn Medley," the ballads, don't harbor darkness. They contain lovely moments of orchestral guitar: lines, chords, arpeggios, implied rhythm all at once. In the faster performances—"Jitterbug Waltz" and "Lazy Bird"—Leitch's improvisations flow effortlessly: implications of a laidback approach while cooking. On Ahmad Jamal's "New Rhumba" (famous for the Miles Davis/Gil Evans version on *Miles Ahead*) and Leitch's "Avenue B," the group grooves on the rhythmic base of the tune.

The guitarist, pianist, and bassist have been recording and gigging together for almost 10 years. Drummond, whose breadth of beat matches his rotund physique, is the kind of bassist who never wears thin. Hicks' "Naima's Love Song" offers a fine example of his percussive lyricism. For mainstream swinging fla-



Bobby Sanabria & Ascension

IN NEW YORK CITY ACHÉ!—Flying Fish 70630: *ELEGBA; GUARDIAN OF THE CROSSROADS; BRINDANDO EL SON; QUE RIGO ES; EL SAXOPHON Y EL GUAGUANCO; BLUE MONK; PLENAS EN CADENAS; TWO GENERATIONS, PART I; INTRODUCTION: LLEGUE; LLEGUE; DELIRIO; DO YOU KNOW?; LA CUMBIAMBA; CARIBBEAN FIRE DANCE; TWO GENERATIONS, PARTS II & III; ADIOS, MARIO.* (57:24)

Personnel: Sanabria, drums, timbales, congas, percussion, chorus; Gene Jefferson, alto sax, flute (2-4,8,10); Jay Rodriguez, tenor, soprano sax, flute (4,8,10,11); Barry Danielian, trumpet, chorus (2,12); Paquito D'Rivera, clarinet (14); John Di Martino, piano (4,8-10,14); Oscar Hernandez, keyboards (2,12); Lewis Khan, violin (4), trombone (8,10); Julio Virella (2), Edgardo Miranda (12), guitar; Donald Nicks, bass (2,4,8,10,12,14); Hiram Remón (1-5,9-12), Eddie Rodriguez (1-3,12), vocals, percussion; Tito Puente, timbales (6,13); Eddie Bobé, percussion (5,10); Horacio Jimenez (2), Tatyana Calzado (8), chorus; Brian Young (3), Chris Theis (3); Max Hyman (7), spoken word.

★★★★ 1/2

Humberto Ramirez

ASPECTS—TropiJazz 81146: *ASPECTS; CHAPTER 27; RUMBERO SIEMPRE; AT PEACE; EL MINISTRO; AMANDA; A GOLDEN VIEW; CAMINO AZUL; A TOUCH OF BEAUTY.* (50:16)

Personnel: Ramirez, trumpet, flugelhorn; Justo Almarío, tenor sax (3), flute (1); José Luis Encarnación (2,4-8), tenor, soprano sax; Luis Marin (1,4-6,8,9), Edsel Gómez (2,3), Russel Ferrante (7), piano; Osvaldo López (6-8) guitar; Martín Santiago (1,5-8), Eddie Gomez (2), Bobby Valentin (3), Oscar Cartaya (4), bass; Albert Julian (1,2,4-8), Alez Acuña (3), drums; Freddie Camacho (1,4-8), percussion; Roberto Roena (1,3,5), bongos; Tito Puente (3), timbales; Giovanni Hidalgo (3), congas; Humberto Ramirez Sierra (9), flute; Javier Gánara (9), french horn; Oscar Patrana (9), trombone; Jorge Cabeza, Jaime Medina, David Betancourt, Carlos Rodríguez, José Irizarry, Enrique Collazo, Francisco Morla, Víctor Sánchez, violins (9); Javier Matos, Edgar Marrero, violas (9); Orlando Guillot, Rosalyn Lanneli, Federico Silva, contrabasses (9).

★★★

The Latin jazz explosion of the last couple of years just keeps on booming, despite a shortage of venues, a paucity of awards, and a general lack of attention from the media. Nuyorican drummer and percussionist Sanabria has worked with Mongo Santamaria, Mario

Bauza, Dizzy Gillespie and others, but this is his first album as a leader. His ethnically diverse group includes pianist John Di Martino, saxophonists Gene Jefferson and Jay Rodriguez, violinist/trombonist Lewis Khan, and vocalist Hiram Remón, plus guests like Tito Puente and Paquito D'Rivera, but the emphasis here is more on rhythm and structure than solo virtuosity. Sanabria takes a scholarly interest in the music, and his versions of forms like the Cuban *guaguanco*, Puerto Rican *plena*, Columbian *cumbia*, and Venezuelan *joropo* are as exactly authentic as they are intense. Many tracks use no jazz elements at all, but those that do, like Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk," Joe Henderson's "Caribbean Fire Dance," Paquito Pastor's "Llegué," and Sanabria's own tribute to the late Mario Bauza, "Adios Mario," swing with as much authority as the salsa jams.

Berklee-schooled Ramirez became a successful arranger for salsa and Latin-pop stars in Puerto Rico before releasing his first solo album in 1992. This follow-up disc is more focused and consistent, making greater use of Ramirez' island-based regular band, Jazz Project, and less of invited guests. On uptempo numbers like "Rumbero Siempre" and "El Ministro," Ramirez' trumpet crackles hard-bop licks over the band's hot salsa beat, but the album is dominated by laid-back, radio-ready lite-jazz arrangements (featuring Ramirez and José Luis Encarnación), that owe more to Chuck Mangione than Ramirez' professed idol Lee Morgan.

—Larry Birnbaum

measuring the merits of a work. The offerings of Lincoln Center Jazz, however, are uniquely dependent upon the merits of others' work. In the present album, a miscellany of assorted "fundamentals" drawn from live LCJ concerts between August 1991 and February 1993, it has tossed a wide net over music from the Red Hot Peppers ("Jungle Blues") to John Coltrane ("Dahomey Dance"), thus leaving the final album unprotected by the armour of a theme or central idea.

More important, the best candidates for canonization, it would seem, are settled texts,

not improvisations. Text has final form. "Jungle Blues" comes charging out of antiquity intact with banners flying and Michael White's clarinet shimmering. So, I suppose, does "Multi-Colored Blue" in its way, a pretty but welterweight Johnny Hodges vehicle from Newport 1958. Norris Turney may still have the best lock there is on Hodges, but surely there are stronger works upon which LCJ can build its canon. Anyway, it has final form.

Trios, quartets, and extended string-of-solos blowing pieces, on the other hand, are inclined to remain works-in-progress. Exceptions? Yes.



Jazz At Lincoln Center

THE FIRE OF THE FUNDAMENTALS—Columbia 57592: *JUNGLE BLUES*; *TRINKLE TINKLE*; *ELLINGTON'S STRAY HORN*; *HOOTIE BLUES*; *BOLIVAR BLUES*; *DAHOMEY DANCE*; *YOU'RE MINE YOU*; *THE CRAVE*; *FLAMENCO SKETCHES*; *MULTI-COLORED BLUE*. (69:14)

Personnel: Wynton Marsalis, Ulmar Sharif, Marcus Belgrave, Joe Wilder, Lew Soloff, trumpets; Freddie Lonzo, Britt Woodman, Wycliffe Gordon, Art Baron, trombones; Michael White, clarinet; Norris Turney, Charles McPherson, Todd Williams, Frank Wess, Wes Anderson, Jerry Dodgion, Bill Easley, Joe Temperley, saxophones; Marcus Roberts, Kenny Barron, Mulgrew Miller, Jay McShann, Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Dan Vap-pie, guitar; Curtis Lundy, Reginald Veal, Christian McBride, Chris Thomas, bass; Wycliffe Gordon, tuba; Herlin Riley, Lewis Nash, Kenny Washington, Billy Higgins, Clarence Penn, drums; McShann, Milt Grayson, Betty Carter, vocals.

★ ★ ★

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One tries in reviewing to keep in mind intent in

The taut, internal disciplines of "Flamenco Sketches" (from Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*) are indestructible in the care of Wynton Marsalis, Todd Williams, and Wes Anderson. But consider the two pieces by Thelonious Monk: "Bolivar Blues" by Marcus Roberts and "Trinkle Tinkle" by Kenny Barron. Both are excellent performances. But Monk virtually vanishes after the first chorus. If jazz repertory is merely musicians improvising on jazz standards,

what's the big deal? Having an original on hand is, of course, convenient, as we do on "Hootie Blues" with Jay McShann, whose voice hasn't moved a key in 50 years. And Charles McPherson gives a singing, non-literary sense to Charlie Parker's first recorded solo. Clearly, though, this simple blues was smiled on by fate and would not otherwise warrant special treatment today.
—John McDonough



Dixieland Ramblers

BACK HOME AGAIN . . . STILL RAMBLIN': INDIANA; JA-DA; BASIN STREET BLUES; UNDECIDED; ROYAL GARDEN BLUES; GEORGIA ON MY MIND; BILL BAILEY; WON'T YOU PLEASE COME HOME; DARK-TOWN STRUTTER'S BALL; DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS; ALL OF ME; SWEET GEORGIA BROWN; JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE.
Personnel: Ralph Faville, trumpet; Art Katzman, trombone, violin; Mike Bennett, clarinet; Ron Seaman, piano; Stan Freese, tuba; Jay Goetting, bass; Tom Stevenson, drums.

★ ★ ★

Dixieland has been so thoroughly demystified and marginalized over years of repetition, the only thing that remains surprising is how much fun it is from time to time in limited doses. Here is the sort of good, journeyman dixie that is played for kicks at trad festivals by musicians who invariably have their day gigs. The Ramblers, a Minneapolis group of long standing, play the standard repertoire with a natural ease and no fuss over period details. The rhythm section is mainstream swing with no press rolls or cow bells. Mike Bennett's clarinet is graceful in the post-Goodman manner without the edgy intonation of New Orleans. And Ralph Faville leads with gentle precision and solos thoughtfully. (Custom Studios, Minneapolis, MN)
—John McDonough

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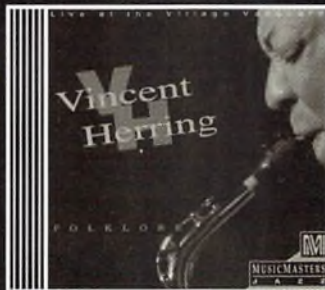
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Cyrus Chestnut

REVELATION—Atlantic 82518-2: BLUES FOR NITA; ELEGIE; LORD, LORD, LORD; MACDADDY; SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER; LITTLE DITTY; 187; DILEMMAS; REVELATION; PROVERBIAL LAMENT; CORNBREAD PUDDING. (60:09)
Personnel: Chestnut, piano; Clarence Penn, drums; Christopher J. Thomas, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

Charles Chesnut, the first major Afro-American novelist, was noted for his ability to spin off

colorful and imaginative folk tales, smartly laced with mother wit and insight. There may be a variation in the spelling of their names, and they may not be related, but pianist Cyrus Chestnut certainly possesses a similar verve, intelligence, and storytelling ability at the keyboard.

What is most rewarding about Chestnut's style—and it is quite evident on "Elegie," one of two tunes he did not compose on this debut album—is the way he designs musical puzzles and then cleverly unravels them. At the beginning of this process is a spare, economical approach that builds in harmonic density and rhythmic complexity. "Macdaddy" is taken at a brisk tempo, and Chestnut displays the speed and finesse that was a hallmark of his performances with Betty Carter. His facility is no less engaging at a slower pace, and his reading of the traditional composition "Sweet Hour Of Prayer" suggests more than a passing acquaintance with the music of the black church. Here he is amazingly graceful, etching a solemn, contemplative mood.

But Chestnut offers his full arsenal of invention on "Dilemmas," with bassist Christopher Thomas and percussionist Clarence Penn ably abetting him as they assemble a marvelous orchestral piece, spiced with dashes of Latin and straightahead pizzazz. "Revelation," with its melodic angularity and vibrant chords,

conjures Theolonious Monk. It's a Chestnut solo, and a bravura statement. —Herb Boyd



Myra Melford

ALIVE IN THE HOUSE OF SAINTS—hat ART 6136: *EVENING MIGHT STILL*; *PARTS I & II FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT GOES WEST TO REST*; *AND SILENCE*; *THAT THE PEACE*; *BREAKING LIGHT*; *LIVE JUMP*. (74:20)

Personnel: Melford, piano; Lindsey Horner, bass; Reggie Nicholson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Tension and release: the pleasure of breaking down and straightening up, of letting go and then regaining composure, of going "out" and

coming back "in." This is one of the oldest and most trustworthy musical techniques, and it is a form of pleasure that Melford and trio revel in. Like their two studio releases (*Jump* and *Now & Now*, both on Enemy), this superb live recording features Melford and trio alternating back and forth between elegant, romantic simplicity and unbridled, sharp-edged energy—a reminder that real romantics are sometimes prone to violent outbursts.

More than Don Pullen or Dave Burrell, Melford covers territory between the in/out extremes. On the episodic "That The Peace" she builds excitement through a march section (possible influence of Henry Threadgill, with whom she's studied) into a sustained, thunderous group improvisation, followed directly by a cool groove in 5. "Evening Might Still" and "Live Jump" (new, faster version with a funky solo-piano intro) are bouncy, major-mode romps; "And Silence" finds her toying with the tune, settling back into the rhythm and changes with a tight line, roll, or trill, then diving way out, mounting tension again. Nicholson is ultra-sensitive, able to slip far out on a limb, then pop right back into a pivotal swing; I like everything about Horner but his arco tone (hear "Frank Lloyd Wright").

An immediately appealing disc, her most vibrant yet, *Alive In The House Of Saints* should win Melford many new fans. —John Corbett

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Jazz Communion

by Howard Mandel

The Complete Blue Note 1964-66 **Jackie McLean** Sessions (Mosaic MD4-150; 61:43/68:00/60:00/57:12: ★★★★★^{1/2}) have the sound of a social-musical circle pushing at or expounding within its envelope. Trumpeters Charles Tolliver and Lee Morgan (together on one ballad), pianists Herbie Hancock, Larry Willis and Harold Mabern, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, bassists Cecil McBee, Bob Cranshaw, Larry Ridley, Herbie Lewis and Don Moore, and drummers Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Clifford Jarvis, and Jack DeJohnette give so much distinction to their chores they become fullscale collaborators—in the cases of Tolliver, Morgan, Willis, and DeJohnette via compositions as well as improvised provocations.

From the start, alto saxist/bandleader/composer McLean, a seasoned pro in his early 30s at the time of these recordings, advances the bebop lineage he'd been given by its founders beyond such worthy goals as exciting speed, fresh melodic twists, and harmonic exploration. The late David Rosenthal writes in his informative liner notes, McLean's "ability to create moods and project his personality" had matured. His renewed health and confidence, previous experiments with form, and iron chops benefit these six sessions.

"Action" is perhaps the first true realization of McLean's ambitions in the set, coming at the end of disc 1. Eleven minutes long, the work (which served as the title track to its LP issue) has a tight ensemble chart of ferocious energy, blowing away genre expectations with an opening wail that turns into a closely voiced tune before launching an alto probe based on steady-quick Higgins and Hutcherson's irregular placements.

Tolliver is almost as unfettered, certainly as hot as McLean, inventing then re-propelling phrases he links to scalar ideas. His efforts on three sessions climax with a solo on his own "Jackknife," and include attractive modal tunes like the Trnish "On The Nile."

McLean occasionally acceded to Blue Note's fondness for typical blues, bossas, and boogaloes, with stronger results than his bands achieved essaying "My Old Flame," "Right Now," for instance, is memorable for the Hancock back-beat that offsets its swinging bridge; it's here in a two-and-a-half minute longer (not better) alternate as well as the originally issued version—and that's the only previously unreleased music in this box, which begs the question of "completeness." Is this really all there is? Why start in '64? Why not include McLean's long unavailable *Old And New Gospel*, with Ornette Coleman?

Though McLean and company seemed sometimes to vent frustration with the limiting specifics of hard-bop, and indeed from '64 to '66 refashioned its vocabulary to speak to concerns of ever broader implication, in 1993 the saxist works within familiar stylistic parameters. On *The Jackie Mac Attack Live* (Verve 314 519 270 2; 55:50: ★★★★★) he swings harder than ever, his passion just as urgent

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though somehow sleeker, with pinpoint focus and a razor edge. McLean's able pianist Hotep Idris Galeta, bassist Nat Reeves, and tough drummer Carl Allen respond to his pungency, and he takes energy from them, too. The saxist finds new offshoots of the already kinky lines to "Round Midnight," the currently overplayed classic of modern repertoire; after 30 years, he remains the man whose rapacious technique serves his uncontrived outpouring of fervid expression.

The Complete Blue Note Recordings Of Don Cherry (Mosaic MD2-145; 60:03/61:30; ★★★★★) present the uniquely imaginative trumpeter's most enduring musical achievements: two suites with tenor saxist Gato Barbieri, bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Ed Blackwell from December '65; two more adding saxophone fireman Pharoah Sanders, vibist and pianist Karl Berger, and second bassist Jean Francois Jenny-Clark from '66; and five fully developed pieces (including the 17-minute "Unite") in quartet with Sanders instead of Barbieri from November '66. Though there is no previously unissued material here, the reissue in its entirety deserves to be considered anew. Only Eberhard Jost's book *Free Jazz* (Da Capo) has noted its worth.

A brass player more interested in personal sound than virtuosic technique, whose allegiance to Ornette Coleman's concept of emo-



JIM MARSHALL

Mid-'60s McLean: advancing the bebop lineage

tive melodiousness supplants hard-bop's competitive rigidities. Cherry weaves broken bugle calls, lovely tune fragments, and vocalizations from a colorist's pallet into sustained, collectively improvised lyricism. His brilliant cast of equals celebrates jazz as song that

arises freely and naturally from human experience and communication.

Blackwell, at his most nimble and melodic, is recorded perfectly by Rudy Van Gelder. Gato is Cherry's impassioned soulmate throughout "Complete Communion" and "Elephantasy," ending phrases and ripping from his heart and guts the next ones. Sanders' improbably deft piccolo on "Symphony For Improvisers" (the so-titled LP included the sidelong "Manhattan Cry," for which we turn here to disc II; it's slated for Blue Note Connoisseur treatment later this year) adds the most snappy, detailed highline of any American music since John Phillip Sousa.

Elsewhere, Pharoah shrieks, roars, and zooms about on tenor as though clearing the path for everyone else. Grimes is implacably secure and lets Jenny-Clark claim his own space. Cherry knows where the music wants to go, and helps it get there like a pied piper leading kids who skip along in unpredictable, charming, and utterly inimitable fashion. Mosaic producer Michael Cuscuna's essay and never-before-available session photos stand in for the sorely missed original color cover art. Cherry's music has a challenging ranginess and overall joy that is missing in too much of what is accepted as jazz today. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place; Stamford, CT 06902) **DB**

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Django On My Mind

by Bill Milkowski

Django Reinhardt was a gypsy genius, a mythic figure with a tempestuous personality who was blessed with a gift that is difficult to comprehend and certainly impossible to duplicate. His command over the instrument was so astounding and his intuitive powers so keen that he could seemingly embellish melodies as effortlessly as one breathes. And the fact that he attained such superior prowess on the instrument with only two functional fingers on his fretting hand is positively mind-boggling. Writer Paul Meurisse likened the experience of witnessing Django in full flight to the feeling of "parting company with the real world."

Djangophiles will have ample opportunity to part company with the real world by checking out the 10-CD set *Djangology* (7806602-92; avg. 69 min.; ★★★★★), compiled by EMI France and released in the States by Blue Note. Featuring 243 selections and nearly 12 hours of music, this mammoth project is easily the greatest collection of Django Reinhardt recordings ever assembled in one set. Complete with a 68-page French/English book and featuring extensive biographical information and a wealth of classic Django photos, *Djangology's* list price of \$80 is a bargain.

Volume 1, *Georgia On My Mind*, documents the Quintet of the Hot Club of France from 1936-'37. For guitar fans and students, this disc in particular is a revelation, full of breathtaking examples of Django's genius. His playing here is marked by fast, cleanly executed flurries of 16th and 32nd notes, inventive use of harmonics, magnificent filigrees, and challenging arpeggios as well as his signature tremolos and ascending or descending chromatic figures. Underneath it all, he comps with forceful rhythmic accents that seem to make the music surge forward. (Perhaps the best example of this driving, rhythmic technique can be heard on the exhilarating "Mystery Pacific" from Volume 2, *Sweet Georgia Brown*.) The sheer kinetic power that Django generates here on his acoustic Maccaferri guitar gives the Hot Club Quintet an unparalleled kind of intensity.

On the early Hot Club tracks from Volume 1, there is a pronounced gypsy quality to Django's playing, but his phrasing also bears the stamp of Louis Armstrong, particularly on those tunes when he is playing in the company of Freddy Taylor, a singer/tap dancer from Harlem who was working in Paris in 1936. Satchmo's influence can also be heard in violinist Stephane Grappelli's playing on those playful swing staples ("I'se A Muggin'," "Nagasaki," and "Shine"). Another marvel of these tracks is the telepathic hookup that Grappelli and Reinhardt seem to have. Their musical bond is as intuitively tight as Bird and Diz, perhaps best exemplified on a magnificent interpretation of "Body And Soul," recorded two years before Coleman Hawkins' classic version.

Volume 2, *Sweet Georgia Brown*, contains more classic Hot Club fare from 1937, including Django extrapolations on "The Sneak Of Araby"



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Breathtaking guitar genius: Django Reinhardt

and Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood." There are also two rare, unaccompanied-guitar pieces to savor, the very gypsy-flavored "Improvisation" and the elegant "Parfum." But the bulk of this disc documents the guitarist's sideman work in 1937 with Coleman Hawkins and His All Star Jam Band and Dicky Wells and His Orchestra. (Hawkins' harmonically rich solo on "Out Of Nowhere" is particularly brilliant.)

Volume 3, *Minor Swing*, highlights Grappelli's exchanges with second-violinists Eddie South and Frenchman Michel Warlop while also featuring guest soloists like trumpeter Bill Coleman and clarinetist Christian Wagner. Django largely plays an accompanist role on this disc of swing era standards, though he does get to break out in full gallop on Hot Club renditions of "Viper's Dream," "Paramount Stomp," "Swingin' With Django," and a beautiful Reinhardt ballad, "My Serenade."

Volume 4, *Tea For Two*, highlights Django as a featured player with a "sweet" orchestra led by violinist Warlop and a more spirited aggregation led by French trumpeter Philippe Brun. Django's collaboration with American jazz great Benny Carter in 1937 is represented by three swinging tracks, "I'm Coming Virginia," "Farewell Blues," and "Blue Light Blues." And his duets with Grappelli on "Sugar" and "Stephen's Blues" again showcase their special chemistry.

Volume 5, *Body And Soul*, covers Django's work from 1938 through 1940 and includes important collaborations with harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler and trumpeter Rex Stewart and His Feetwarmers featuring clarinetist Barney Bigard. On Volume 6, *Daphne*, the American swing era esthetic is fully assimilated into the music of French bandleaders Alix Combelle and Philippe Brun. Django is merely a sideman in the 11-piece Combelle Swing Band, but he does make his presence felt more strongly in the smaller Brun Jam Band. The most significant tracks on this disc are by the revamped Quintet of the Hot Club of France with clarinetist Hubert Rostaing substituting for Grappelli (a lineup clearly influenced by the Benny

Goodman Sextet). They strike a unique accord on the original 1940 recording of Django's most famous composition, "Nuages," along with Django's frantic klezmer-flavored "Rhythm Futur," full of fretboard bravado and taken at a breakneck pace.

On Volume 7, *Nuages*, Django again plays a fairly pedestrian role in French big bands led by Combelle and Noel Chiboust. This disc is distinguished, however, by his 1940 work with the new Hot Club Quintet featuring clarinetist Rostaing. Included here is a new version of "Nuages," highlighted by Django's unprecedented use of false harmonics in the first chorus, and the first recording of another Django classic, "Swing 41."

Volume 8, *Swing 42*, covers a stretch from 1940 through 1942 and includes Django's work with Combelle's Trio of Saxophones band and the more polite Pierre Allier Orchestra, a French counterpart to the Glenn Miller and Harry James dance bands of the day. Django's best work on this disc can be heard in the recordings with his own Hot Club Quintet. His playing by this time, though still inventive and full of passion, is more restrained and evenly paced. He seems to have consciously edited out some of the gypsy flash and excessive embellishments that marked his playing in the original Hot Club Quintet.

Volume 9, *Manoir de mes Reves*, covers the war years from 1943 through 1945 and includes the first recording of Django's "Douce Ambiance." This disc also features four numbers by Django and his 18-piece American Swing Band, including the first recording of his classic "Djangology," his answer to Charlie Christian's "Solo Flight" with the Goodman Orchestra. Volume 10, *Echoes Of France*, covers 1946 through 1948 and focuses on the emotional reunion of Django and Grappelli. On tunes like "Coquette," "How High The Moon," and "Lady Be Good," the same buoyant chemistry is still there. Though they reportedly had clashing personalities, these two were truly in-sync on the bandstand, inspiring each other from chorus to chorus. Musically, they were soulmates who displayed a special *joie de vivre* every time they played together.

Two other recent Django releases of note are French imports that chronicle Reinhardt's early years. *Un Geant Sur Son Nuage* (Melodie 40025; 41:32; ★★★½) covers 1935 through 1939 and includes Django in the company of American swing era stars like trombonist Dicky Wells, violinist Eddie South, saxophonists Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter, trumpeters Rex Stewart and Bill Coleman, and his Hot Club mate Grappelli. (All of this material is included in the EMI boxed set.) *Django Reinhardt 1934-1935* (Classics 703; 67:17; ★★★½) focuses on his early sessions with various French bands, including the Michel Warlop Orchestra with a young Stephane Grappelli on piano. Three rare trio sessions from 1934, culled from private acetates, are marred by hissing but still convey Django's incredible power and charisma. Also included are Django's Pathe recordings with the Patrick Dance Orchestra, which patterned itself after the Dorsey Brothers Band, and his first Ultraphone sessions with the Hot Club Quintet, recorded 60 years ago. A must for collectors. **DB**

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Trumpeter titan Wallace Roney and his partner, pianist Geri Allen, brought in a sextet for a week-long stint here at Catalina's recently. But it was a sextet mainly in the mathematical sense: for the most part, only three or four performers



KIM REIERSON

Robert Hurst and Wallace Roney: a casual blowfest

were on stage at a time, as Roney, Allen, and saxists Kenny Garrett and Ravi Coltrane extrapolated at length.

What the show lacked in preparation and potential for interactive organization, it made up for in improvisational firepower. This was no carefully planned, arrangement-oriented show, but a casual blowfest among young, distinctive post-mainstream players whose differences provided telling points of contrast. It could be rewarding to hear a group of players such as this navigating a more personal terrain based on original material, but the agenda on this gig was to stick to the standards trade and see what happened.

Roney consistently seized the spotlight, combining a fierce technique with an enigmatic, exploratory spirit. Whether with the terse, tumbling energy of his solo on a brisk "Well, You Needn't" or his tough-to-the-touch, roughhewn lyricism on "What's New," Roney rose to the level of his parade of recent kudos. Garrett, too, was on his finest expressive behavior—leaving his pop-jazz instincts in the closet—as loopy phraseology and appealingly angular ideas spilled from his articulate horn.

The poetic economist Allen appreciated the beauty and seemingly lost art of playing tight and laying out, an especially welcome

trait in the realm of standards. Allen's clenched Monk-ish voicings and bursts of polytonal abstraction were the embodiment of unhurried sophistication. Filling out the rhythm section ably and flexibly were bassist Robert Hurst and longtime Angeleno Ralph Penland.
—Josef Woodard

Don Byron
Knitting Factory/
New York

You never know what to expect anymore when the multi-faceted Don Byron shows up for a gig. But whether the music is klezmer, post-mod eclectic, or this particular evening's flavor, Afro-Cuban, you can always count on the dreadlocked clarinetist to assemble a fire-breathing ensemble. It probably has something to do with Byron's veracity and creative restlessness: Even if his interest lasts no longer than the length of the tour following a record date, Byron challenges his audiences to open themselves up and get into whatever he's into.

Substantial numbers of people are beginning to trust him, too. By the time Byron brought Six Musicians (Kenny Davis, electric bass; Edsel Gomez, electric piano; Jerry Gonzalez, congas, percussion; Graham Haynes, cornet; Ben Whitman, drums) to the Knitting Factory this frigid Friday night in January, he'd already been gigging them to enthusiastic European crowds for close to a year.

Since the gig was the last stop before the band was scheduled to hit the studio, they weren't pulling any punches. After one of Byron's trademark satiric intros—they'd fit just as comfortably in a set by Gil Scott-Heron—the group opened up hard, with the horns splashing color atop the heavy, clave-driven rhythm section. The tune was supposed to be an indictment of neo-con author Shelby Steele, but with Gonzalez' deep-funk congas hurtling everyone forward, the spirit of the piece never moved beyond optimism. Then Gonzalez loosed an equally buoyant solo following a calming interlude by Davis/Gomez on the beefed-up arrangement of "Next Love," a piece the Knitting Factory crowd recognized from 1992's *Tuskegee Experiments*.

The showcase for Haynes came amidst the shifting (fast-to-slow) El Norte rhythms of the next tune, "The Press Made Rodney King Responsible For The L.A. Riots." Davis' funky thumping seemed the perfect foil for trumpet blats that slid into greasy, boppish phrases and well-timed glisses. Never one to be left out, Byron waited for the next piece, "The Allure Of Entangle-



Don Byron: elegant, lyrical, and leaving the crowd begging for more

ment," to dig in. Closing the gig with an elegance and lyrical economy akin to Strayhorn, the ballad led Byron through canny swoops that left the crowd begging for

an encore. Whatever their expectations were at the outset, by the end it was clear Byron had made some new friends.

—K. Leander Williams

Eddie Daniels & Wallace Roney NAMM International/ Anaheim Hilton

This unlikely matchup of separate musical universes held together nicely for a one-shot deal. Brought together by instrument manufacturer G. Leblanc Corp. at Winter NAMM International, reed player Eddie Daniels and trumpeter Wallace Roney tackled two sets of jazz standards with grace, ferocity, and depth—making *music* instead of just making the gig, so to speak.

The real stars here were Roney's working quintet, which kept things kicking while at the same time reining in the frayed ends (e.g., "Whose turn to solo?" and "How do we end this?"). Pianist Geri Allen, bassist Clarence Seay, and drummer Nasheet Waits nailed offbeats with punch and precision. The rhythm section dug in hard on up-tempo bop tunes like "Well, You Needn't," "Lazy Bird," and "Donna Lee," accenting and stopping as a unit, neatly setting up "I" every time.

Daniels' clarinet sang with gut-grabbing tenderness on the ballad "In A Sentimental Mood," and he blew adventurous tenor sax solos throughout the night. Occasionally, Daniels repeated too many licks in succession, à la Kenny G., but on the whole played exquisitely. Roney mixed light, speedy, middle-register trumpet runs with stretched,

outside, high-register pleadings on the burners. Ballads "My Ship" and "Old Folks" brought out the best in Roney—a rich tone mined from someplace deep within—but



Daniels and Roney: separate universes at "I"

posed some phrasing challenges that weren't always met head-on.

Tenor players Antoine Roney and Ravi Coltrane served as reinforcements, and guest drummer Ed Thigpen roused the house on the blues jam "Sandu" and show-closer "Ornithology." Just when you thought it was all over, the group finished off with the looniest, most dissonant set-chaser theme played this side of the Rockies.

—Ed Enright

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Look & Listen

by Kevin Whitehead

One picture, a thousand words; you know what they say, and it's true. Read up for weeks on jazz character Harry "The Hipster" Gibson, but see 10 seconds of one of his '40s soundies in *Boogie In Blue* (Rhapsody, 40 min.) and you really get the message: draped in style, standing hunched over the keys, bobbing his head at the crowd as he eyerolls for the balcony, pounding out manic boogie piano, he's the missing link between Jerry Lee Lewis and Jerry Lewis (he'd bug customers as part of his club act).

This video documentary was made by daughter Arlena Gibson and granddaughter Flavyn Feller, who approach it clear-eyed: Harry used to be famous and is now forgotten, save by Dr. Demento fans who dig "Who Put The Benzadrine In Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine?" Gibson's stylistic split-personality is fascinating: the bebop hipster persona clashes with his decidedly un-boppish piano boogie. (We also hear him play a Bix Beiderbecke piano piece at a '44 concert, very beautifully.) Gibson's novelty status and



Dexter Gordon: as usual, in no hurry

unrepentant dooper philosophy gave him legs in the stoned '70s. Toward the end, living in the desert—he died in 1991, at 75—he was the same self-confident character but looked like a cross between Willie Nelson and Howard Hughes. This is one family project with broad appeal.

Arthur Elgort's *Texas Tenor: The Illinois*

Jacquet Story (Rhapsody, 81 min.) cribs its crisp black & white look from Bruce Weber's *Let's Get Lost*. If Weber's film is about Chet Baker's weathered skin, *Texas Tenor* is about Jacquet's hair—its care and preparation for the stage, how it rides his head, the way he protects it with hats—as symbol for the high style associated with veteran black enter-

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tainers. (His barber used to be Duke's.) The film, shot between '88 and '91, portrays Jacquet as glorious anachronism: traveling swing bandleader, and one of the last proponents of the great Hawkins saxophone tradition.

Texas Tenor is worth seeing just for the sequences where Illinois picks up tenor (or alto) and blows smoke-ring lines a cappella. Interview excerpts—Lionel Hampton, Milt Hinton, Al Hibbler, many others—fill in the historical background, but the real subject is Jacquet now. Backstage at a club, barely grunting a word, he lets a club emcee know he should punch up that stage introduction; we also see how manager Carol Scherick plays the difficult role of his and the band's handler, discreetly trying to maintain order. And there are plenty of performance clips of Jacquet's splendid band. (Note to jazz linguist Per Husby: Jacquet himself pronounces his last name all three ways here.)

Toshiko Akiyoshi deserves much credit for helping keep the big-band tradition going. *Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra: Strive For Five* (View, 48 min., directed by Arnold Rosenthal) dates from about 1986, judging by the lineup; the Chicago venue appears to be Rick's. The program is heavy on Akiyoshi classics like "Mellow Is Yellow" and "Quadrille, Anyone?" Three cameras put you in the band's lap, and subtitles identify the soloists. (Actually, except for featured tenorist/flutist Lew Tabackin, the saxophonists are mis-ID'd, though closing credits unsnarl them.) In a talking clip Toshiko mentions the importance of a band having one voice; hers has. Like Benny Carter, Duke, or Muhal Richard Abrams, she writes felicitous, flowing passages for massed saxes, which betray a distinctive tang.

GRP All-Star Big Band Live (GRP, 59 min., directed by Kikuchi Yasutsune) lacks that individual touch; the music's punchy but generic. (Tom Scott is the nominal leader; arrangers include him, Dave Grusin, and Michael Abene.) Reedist Eddie Daniels and acoustic bassist John Patitucci have their moments, the latter taking one strong solo in the mostly (rightly) discredited upper-register "cello" style. But altoist Nelson Rangell and pianist Russell Ferrante are too fly-weight for the likes of "Blue Train." Only Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie" is really suited to the rhetorical skills of, say, altoist Eric Marienthal. Even so, a "Cherokee" for four trumpets—Arturo Sandoval, Randy Brecker, Chuck Findley, Byron Stripling—should turn up in future brass documentaries. And for once, slick lighting, editing, and camera angles aren't distracting.

Three volumes in the *Jazz At The Maintenance Shop* series—one each spotlighting the **Bill Evans** trio, and the **Phil Woods** and **Dexter Gordon** quartets (Shanachie, 59, 59, and 58 min., respectively) were

directed by John Beyer for Iowa Public TV in the late '70s. The three-camera coverage is competent but uninspired; so is much of the music. Altoist Woods announces that his quartet (with Mike Melillo, Steve Gilmore, and Bill Goodwin) is wrapping up a month's tour, but they sound more road-weary than revved—even if they do play "Shaw 'Nuff," as promised, "faster than hell."

Bill Evans, circa the end of '78, plays with his last rhythm section: Marc Johnson and Pat LaBarbera. Cameras shooting the keyboard from below left, and in medium closeup from the right, let you see how Evans' flat-handed, even attack jibes with the easy clarity of his flowing lines. The pianist does not seem too happy—he's cold to the sound engineer, on mic, cameras running—and sounds less than fully engaged. Yet late in the set he mines the deep and the unexpected from Paul Simon's "I Do It For Your Love," material few jazz musicians would even consider.

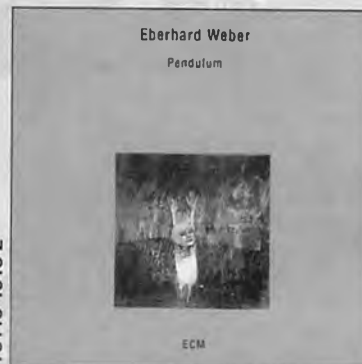
The Dexter Gordon is best of the lot. As usual, he was in no hurry; his crew—with George Cables, Rufus Reid, and Eddie Gladden—squeeze just three tunes into the hour. Dexter had his endearing but time-killing schticks; he recites a verse to "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" before playing it. But he could definitely deliver musically. (You play a tune that closely associated with Lester Young, you better.) On a Coltrane-inflected "Green Dolphin Street," he unifies his solo by quoting "Stranger In Paradise," developing the quote and eventually returning to it. Here, as in the movie *'Round Midnight*, Dexter really came off as Dexter.

At The Jazz Band Ball: Early Hot Jazz, Song And Dance 1925-1933 (Yazoo, 60 min.) is a grab-bag of sequences from newsreels, shorts, race pictures and elsewhere, none placed in context or even ID'd on screen. (Artist and year, not sources, are listed on the carton.) Duke's orchestra and dancers simulate Cotton Club routines on a soundstage; Louis Armstrong sings and plays a few with his '30s orchestra; Chick Webb (offscreen) accompanies a dance contest. There are also curiosities like blackface woman singer Ruby Darby, and corkless Jolson wannabe Charlie Wellman. The vid's touted for its rare footage of Bix, seen more than heard with Paul Whiteman 1928; it's shown twice, the second time with mildly enhanced closeups, but you never see him all that well.

Most riveting is Bessie Smith singing/acting "St. Louis Blues" in a long barroom drama, with a plot that jerks your emotions every which way. (Composer W.C. Handy co-scripted the short; James P. Johnson's the pianist.) But why, in this and every other case, omit the original films' credit sequence? There's some very good stuff here, but the presentation is bewildering. **DB**

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1 Ginger Baker

"The Great Festival Of Destruction" (from *UNSEEN RAIN, Day Eight*) Baker, drums; Jonas Hellborg, bass.

I liked the double-stops, the chords that the bass player was doing. But the mix made it really hard to distinguish the bass. You didn't really need the bass, or you had to lose something in there. It was like jamming with a bunch of conga players out on the sidewalk and no one's listening to anybody. I liked what he was doing. It reminded me of some of the strumming that I like to do, had a real good sense of rhythm and some interesting chord voicings. I'm not really down on the bass thing, it's just a murky arrangement. But if you treat it as a drum solo, it's fine. That's 1 star.

RT: It was Ginger Baker.

That explains it. I was going to say replace the drummer. I don't care who the drummer is, that was just like someone who was not really listening. I guess he'll never be on one of my records now.

2 Miles Davis

"Hannibal" (from *AMANDA, Warner Bros.*) Davis, trumpet; Marcus Miller, bass, keyboards, bass clarinet; Omar Hakim, drums.

Was that Miles with Marcus Miller? That was really good. It was good arranging, real good, strong bass playing, in the pocket stuff, not flashy at all—I like that. And he obviously brought out some good playing in Miles. I was hoping I'd be right. There are certain people that obviously influenced a lot of people. And I don't like the players that you don't know that try to sound like Miles—no one should put their records out anyway, because they're not doing anything, not saying anything. It's like the whole generation of Jaco clones. They're still out there, too. But no, I like that. 4 stars.

3 Pat Metheny

"Law Years" (from *QUESTION AND ANSWER, Geffen*) Metheny, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.

The guitar player sounded like Pat Metheny, so the bassist could have been Charlie Haden or Steve Kodby or Dave Holland. That was jamming. I really like the drums; that might have been my favorite part to that one. But they played together real well. I'll give that 4 stars. It wasn't melodic enough to be Haden. It was a good trio, and they obviously liked playing together. This wasn't like the piece before, where they're playing a piece and everybody's taking a solo. These guys are actually playing together, more of an improv on a theme, and it wasn't like an arrangement or a cute little TV theme song.

ROB WASSERMAN

by Robin Tolleson

As one who enjoys putting himself into the most unusual musical situations, bassist Rob Wasserman has recorded and performed with such diverse artists as Lou Reed, Rickie Lee Jones, Bobby McFerrin, Elvis Costello, and Joe Henderson. Following his critically acclaimed 1988 *Duos* album, his new *Trios* includes Bruce Hornsby, Neil Young, Marc Ribot, Branford Marsalis, and Brian Wilson, among others (see p. 38).

The Marin County, California-based bassist was somewhat uncomfortable with the "blindfold" on. He apologized that he probably should go away for a year to check out more music, and cringed visibly at the idea of giving star ratings to the material. But Wasserman



listened intently, scribbled notes, and added interesting commentary.

4 Ornette Coleman

"Law Years" (from *SCIENCE FICTION, Columbia*) Coleman, alto saxophone; Charlie Haden, bass; Ed Blackwell, drums.

When I started playing the bass, I used to think his style was too simplistic; now I realize it's much more where I'm at, because it's soulful. He just has a great sound and style, and was that Ornette Coleman? Out of the people you've played so far, Charlie is far and away the most distinctive. Definitely 5 stars. I've heard pieces of him in some of these other guys, but he definitely is the classiest one of them all. It does sound like a younger Charlie Haden, too, and there's no bass guitar that can sound like that, that has the soul of an upright with a microphone in front of it that's played like that. The soul doesn't come through.

5 John Patitucci

"Avenue 'D'" (from *ON THE CORNER, GRP*) Patitucci, bass; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums.

It sounds like a current recording, I don't know what they call that kind of music now. Was that John Patitucci? It has that real great technique, real slick, real good tone, real melodic. Is that Mike Brecker with him? I don't listen to either of them too much, but they're both familiar to me. Great horn work. I can't say anything negative about it, because it's really brilliant playing as far as technique goes. But even though the bass solo was terrific, it wasn't really letting go to me. It was just too perfect. But then again,

I'm not very perfect. I like imperfect. I like wilder, played-in-five-different-keys-at-the-same-time kinds of solos, and that was just too slick for me. But he has a beautiful sound and good arranging for that kind of music, so 4 stars. It didn't make me fall asleep, and a lot of that stuff does.

6 Branford Marsalis

"Three Little Words" (from *TRIO JEEPY, Columbia*) Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Milt Hinton, bass; Jeff Watts, drums.

It was one of those old great bass players, I don't know which one. That generation that did all that slapping. When I hung out with Willie Dixon, he was trying to teach me how to do that. His generation knew how to do the triple slaps and all that stuff. That's the predecessor to what the Victor Wootens [of Bela Fleck & the Flecktones] are doing now, except on bass guitar. And in fact when I got Willie an upright electric bass, it started sounding like this weird fusion of modern and old. You could hear how it happened, just different instruments. I don't know, it was terrific. That bass playing made it like going back in time, and yet, I couldn't tell. The horn playing sounded like that, too, like he was really into the traditional thing. You could have thought you were back in the '40s.

RT: It was Branford Marsalis with Milt Hinton.

I might have guessed the great horn playing, actually, but it's just an interesting fusion using the bass player from another generation like that. I wonder if that'll happen with me when I'm 70? 5 stars. DB