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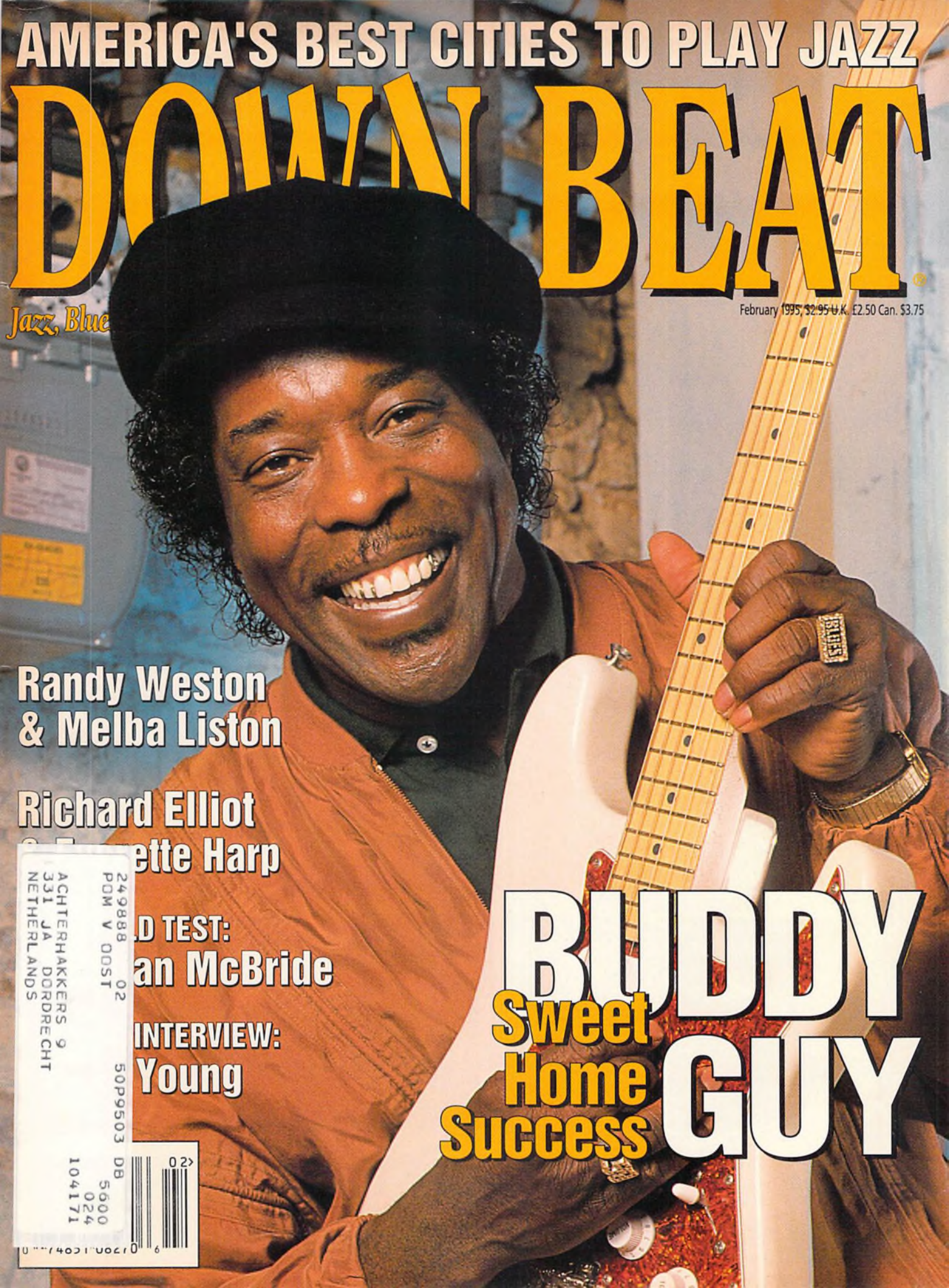
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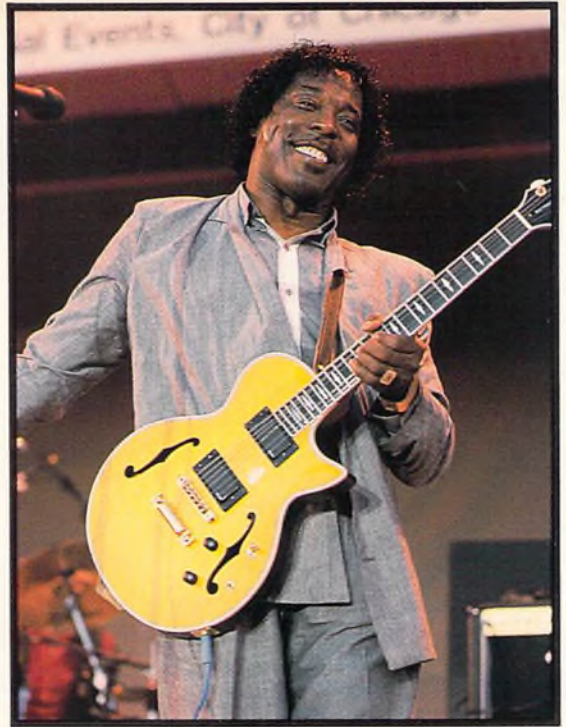



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Sweet Home Success

by Ed Enright

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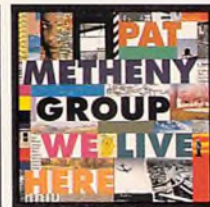
KAREN MILLER

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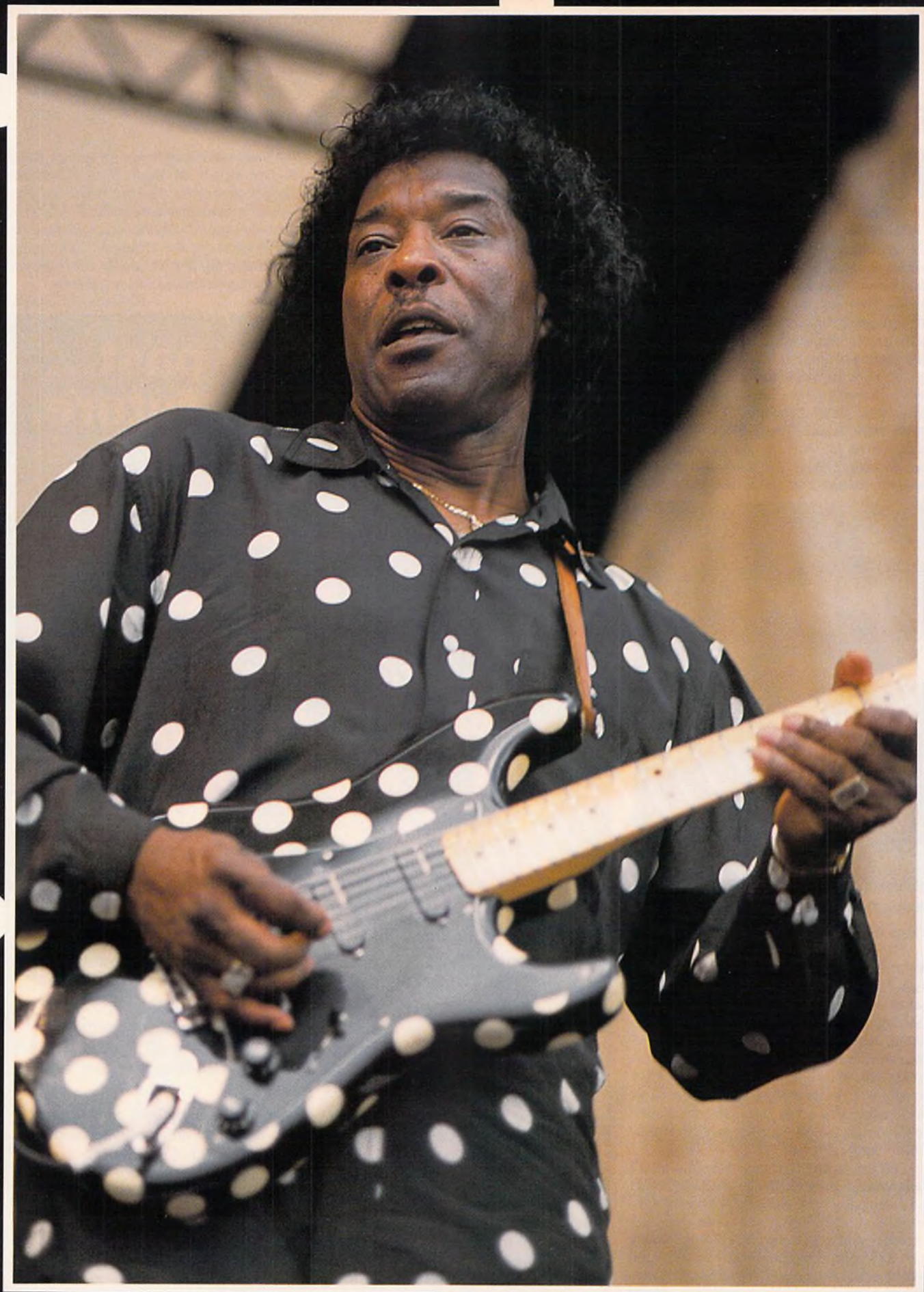
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BUDDY GUY

Sweet Home SUCCESS

By Ed Enright

Respect has never come easy to Buddy Guy. Since his arrival in Chicago in 1957, he's sweated to earn his esteemed place in the world of blues guitarists. He's overcome problems with keeping time that plagued his playing early on. And in spite of some pretty severe whacks to his ego along the way, he's never given up, out of sheer love for the music.

Success has come even harder to Buddy, a native of Lettsworth, La., who has been worshipped for decades by guitar giants like Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and the late Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix. He's been stiffed on payment for gigs and had a gun held to his head. Disgusted with chronic mismanagement by small record companies, he went without a recording contract for nearly 12½ years, starting in the late '70s. And there was a time not too long ago when Buddy struggled to save Legends, his beloved blues club in Chicago's South Loop.

Now, in his late 50s, Buddy finally has gained fame and prosperity. His last two albums on Silvertone, *Damn Right I've Got The Blues* (1991) and *Feels Like Rain* (1992), won Grammys. In 1993, *Billboard* gave Buddy its Century Award, the magazine's highest honor for distinguished creative achievement. Buddy's most recent projects—a new studio album featuring several cuts with Double Trouble (the band that backed Stevie Ray Vaughan) and a live album/video recorded with the Saturday Night Live Band—promise to send his career sailing even higher, hitting upper harmonics that most blues guitarists never dreamed possible. He'll also be seen leading a bar band and playing his own tunes in the movie *Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead* (Miramax), starring Treat Williams and Christopher Walken, when it hits the big screen later this summer. And he says he owes it all to listening to his public.

"You tell me what you want," Buddy says, emphatically, sitting at his office desk at Legends. "I don't go and tell you I'm goin' to shove this down your throat. I look, learn, and listen. I've never been to school for my music, and no one ever sat down and showed me how to play anything on the guitar. I learned it all by watching, looking, and listening. So I listen to my audience right now. They tell me what to do every time I pick the damn thing up and go to the stage."

The new studio album, *Slippin' In*, should appeal directly to

anyone who has witnessed Buddy's live performances (see "Reviews" Dec. '94). It rages with Buddy's penetrating electric guitar and testimonial tenor vocals as he worries his way through tunes like "I Smell Trouble" and pleads his case on "Please Don't Drive Me Away." A chorus of 23 in-the-studio backup shouters gives a crowded-barroom feel to the title track. "Someone Else Is Steppin' In (Slippin' Out, Slippin' In)," a longtime audience favorite. Guy's live-guitar sound was beautifully captured by Eddie Kramer, a record producer and engineer whose credits include Hendrix and Led Zeppelin.

Half of *Slippin' In* was recorded in Austin, Texas, with drummer Chris Layton, organist Reese Wynans, and bassist Tommy Shannon, all members of Double Trouble and close friends who hadn't played with Buddy since Vaughan's death in August 1990. Buddy says he dug playing with the Austin locals even before he befriended Vaughan in the early '80s.

"I used to go to Austin before Stevie got so big," he says. "And there's a famous club that I still go down to now called Antone's. And man, I never did have to take a band down there, still don't, and I didn't have to rehearse it or nothin'. Every time I walk in, those guys be playin' the stuff like Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf or Little Walter or anybody you want. So, this is all I need. And Reese, Tommy, and all those guys, they know how to play this. When I get to playin' with musicians like that, they have a tendency to bring somethin' out of Buddy Guy, somethin' Buddy Guy didn't even know was in me myself."

The rest of *Slippin' In* was recorded in Chicago with Buddy's regular bandmembers, guitarist Scott Holt, Greg Rzab on bass, and Ray "Killer" Allison on drums. Special-guest pianist Johnnie Johnson, a 30-year veteran of Chuck Berry's bands, played on both the Austin and Chicago sessions. Johnson comps percussively under and over Buddy's blues, filling out the melodic lines with right-handed honky-tonk runs and spelling out tasty turnaround substitutions with his left.

Johnson and Buddy first met when the two were invited by Eric Clapton to be part of the all-star blues lineup at a London Royal Albert Hall show in 1990. "Eric had flown us there, and we were in the same hotel," Buddy remembers. "And I get this call about seven in the morning. He said, 'I'm Johnnie Johnson.' I said, 'I'm longin' to meet you.' He said, 'We can do breakfast.' I said, 'Well, fine, give me a chance to jump in the shower, about half an hour, and I'll be there.' He said, 'No, no, I'll come over

and knock on your door.' He came into my room and opened a briefcase and took out a half pint of Crown Royal and two glasses and said, 'Here's breakfast!' I said, 'I'm glad to meet you, but I can't have that kind of breakfast,' and he laughed. Now, he doesn't drink anymore . . . what a great man."

Buddy says Johnson's acoustic piano playing on the album brought him back to his early days, when he recorded with Otis Spann (Muddy Waters' keyboard player), and even before that. "I forget I got an electric guitar in my hand when you play that acoustic piano," Buddy says. "It takes me way back to when I was listening to Little Eddie Boyd. It brings that out in me, and I ain't gonna sit here and tell you I ain't old enough to know that."

Back in the early years of Buddy's career, the blues also called for horns. Saxes, trumpets, trombones: they added an edge and a brilliance—and occasionally an element of cheesiness—to late-'50s and early '60s recordings by artists like B.B. King, Muddy Waters, and T-Bone Walker. So in 1958 and '59, when Buddy recorded his first singles for Cobra Records' Artistic label ("Sit And Cry"/"Try To Quit You Baby" with Otis Rush and Willie Dixon, and "This Is The End"/"You Sure Can't Do" with Ike Turner's band), horns naturally were included in the mix. And when he played live, Buddy took along his own horn players (saxophonists A.C. Reed and Bobby Fields and a trumpeter known as "J.C."), even when he couldn't really afford them.

These days, Buddy isn't used to playing with brass sections. But he did so recently, and with perhaps one of the most recognizable stage bands in show business. Last spring, he played four engagements with G.E. Smith and the Saturday Night Live Band, two shows at Irving Plaza in New York City and two at Legends. Johnson also made the gig. All four shows were filmed and recorded to audio.

Characteristically humble, and slightly nervous, Guy played down his experience and abilities during the show's second night at Legends. He stepped up to the mic after his first tune: "I'm the worst when it comes to playing with a big band, because I say, 'What the fuck am I doin?'" Buddy proceeded to lay down the law that night, playing circles around backup guitarist G.E. Smith, cueing the horns with his guitar, jazzing the crowd with grooves only Buddy Guy can cut. You could hear direct references to Muddy Waters and B.B. King, then echoes of Hendrix and Vaughan, with Buddy right there in the middle. It was like watching the entire blues-rock lineage come full circle.

Several months later, Guy reflected on his performance. "I felt big, but I felt like I wasn't as tight as I should have been. Because when I haven't had much time to really relax with a big band, I'm always thinking that I'm making too many mistakes, and that's when I make the mistakes. I just wished I had a little more time to feel more comfortable with them than I was."

The gig evolved from an instant camaraderie that formed when Buddy performed with the band on the set of *Saturday Night Live* on March 20, 1993. "I wasn't a feature on there, but the guys in the band know me," he said. "I went in and jammed the whole show with them, and someone said it was sounding so good, they just



Eric Clapton jams with Buddy Guy at a Chicago club in 1987.

wanted to hear me with the big band."

The album and video, still untitled at press time, are due out early this summer. Buddy says he might consider taking the Saturday Night Live Band on the road if the record does well. "I'll wait 'till my fans tell me," he says. "If I could give another seven, eight, 10, 12 people work playing in the big band, fine. I'd be more than happy."

The audio portion of the live album is being engineered by Eddie Kramer, while the video is being put together by Michael Oblowitz, who produced the video for Buddy's 1991 recording of "Mustang Sally."

Indeed, Guy has come a long way since he recorded his first singles in the late '50s. Between

1960-67, he made numerous records as a leader on the Chess label and worked his sonic magic on recordings by other Chess artists like Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, and Koko Taylor.

But Guy's dealings with label owner Leonard Chess and his producers were rocky at best. In fact, he claims they criticized his playing from the start. "When I first came to Chicago, everybody was saying, 'Buddy, you sound too much like B.B. King. You've got to get your own thing.' Or, 'You sound too much like T-Bone [Walker], or whoever.'"

Meanwhile, future monsters like Clapton, Beck, and Hendrix were listening to Guy on records by Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, and copping his style lick by lick. "Everybody [at Chess] was saying I didn't have nothin', and now here these kids are telling me, 'I got this from you.' And I say, 'How did you get that from me? I didn't have nothin'.' And we laugh about that now. Because I was told by Willie Dixon and some other people, 'Man, that's not going to make it. That sounds too much like B.B.' But in the meantime, I was playin' my Strat through my Fender Bassman amp, and there was a tone I was getting out of there that I guess nobody was playing at the time."

Buddy, who was ignored the first time he approached Chess in 1957, was eventually brought into the fold by bluesmen like Waters, Wolf, Williamson, and Walter. "For example, they got ready to do this acoustic album by Muddy Waters [*Folk Singer*, 1963, with Willie Dixon on upright bass], and they told Muddy to go to Mississippi and get somebody old to back him up because the college kids had started to like real blues, acoustic blues. Muddy set the session up for the next day and called me up. I went in, and Leonard started calling me all kinds of things before I started playing. Muddy told him to shut the fuck up and listen. I started playing [on an f-hole acoustic], and Leonard came out and said, 'Motherfucker, how did you learn that?'" And I said, "Well, everything I learned, I learned through listening to these people."

After making his final recording with Chess backing up Koko Taylor on her hit single "Wang Dang Doodle"—Buddy went on to record albums on the Vanguard, Atlantic, and Alligator labels. He kept up a rigid schedule of live performances in the '70s and '80s, even going on tour opening for the Rolling Stones with harmonicist Junior Wells, his longtime collaborator. But he never achieved the widespread success of the big-name rock acts that drew their inspiration and material from his generation of bluesmen.



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Buddy Guy sings the blues with longtime friend and collaborator Junior Wells.

Buddy's biggest break came in 1990, shortly after his appearance with Clapton at Royal Albert Hall. He got an offer from Silvertone Records, one that now reeks of better-late-than-neverness. "They told me, 'We'd like to sign you, and we would want to support you.' And I said, 'Well, I really want to play Buddy Guy, because I never had the chance to play Buddy Guy before. I want you to hear that, because I'm a Johnny Come Later now; everybody else says these are Buddy Guy licks, and Buddy Guy has never played them himself.' They said, 'We're not going to tell you what to play, just give you a good supporting band. Won't you come to London and make this session?' And I said, 'Thank you, I'll sign.'"

The resulting album, the critically acclaimed *Damn Right I've Got The Blues*, featuring Clapton and Beck, achieved gold-record status in Canada, New Zealand and the U.K., won a Grammy, and went on to win Blues Album of the Year in *DB's* 1992 Critics and Readers polls. A book of the same name (Woodford Press, 1993)—written by Donald Wilcock and full of interviews with Buddy, Junior Wells, Dixon, Vaughan, Clapton, Robert Cray, and Beck—tells the story of Buddy's career up through the success of this landmark album.

"If I'd had my way 30 years ago, I think I could have done the same thing," Buddy says. "But I was more of a listener than I was a player. And by meeting the Becks and Erics and Stevies, they would tell me, 'Man, when you get into the studio you've got to play Buddy Guy.' And I knew that all the time, but when Willie Dixon or someone like that would tell me who I'm soundin' like, that I needed something of my own, it worried me. And now, I wake up sayin' I shouldn't have given a damn what worried me. I should have worried them more about me goin' and cuttin' loose."

Buddy, who lives comfortably with his wife and two teenaged children in Flossmoor, Ill., just south of Chicago, spends his nights at Legends when he's not on the road. "My wife, Jennifer, wouldn't let me miss a night," he says. "If I missed a night, she'd think I'm sick."

Along with his recent success on the six-string, Buddy has proved to be a decent club owner, too. But, like his career, it's come at no small expense. "I put up a hell of a fight for this club to stay open," he says, over the quick pulse of a local band beginning its Wednesday night set. "Now, the club is doing very well. Now, people from all over the world come. They walk in the door, and the first thing they say is, 'Wow, this is Buddy Guy's blues club.'"

Buddy opened the club in June 1989 with two particular goals in mind: to fill the void created by the disappearance of so many

Chicago-area blues clubs, and to give young people an opportunity to be seen and heard by important people.

"No one goes to no city and walks down the street and says, 'You got a young man or a young lady here who can play guitar?' But if you got a club like this and they come here and hear this kid play, then their chances may be like mine or Muddy's or Stevie's. So this is my main goal about the club, to have some door open where some young person can hopefully someday say, 'They discovered me in Buddy Guy's place.'"

"You look now, and [the clubs] aren't there anymore. And now that I own this one, I can understand why. If I had just depended on this one keeping the doors open the first three-and-a-half years, I would have said I gotta close. But I would come in off the road, and right after I got my record out, we had made a little money, [the club manager] would call me up and say we haven't paid the tax, the rent isn't paid, and all that. My wife would look at me and say, 'Better go keep the doors open for your children so they have somewhere to play.' And if I had 10, 15, or 20 thousand [dollars], I would put it in here."

Legends holds an open jam session every Monday night; musicians under 21 are welcome if accompanied by a parent. "That's when you can really see a lot of the young people here," Buddy says. He's even been known to get up and jam once or twice, although he prefers to sit back and watch. "I wish I could disguise myself and not let them know who I am, and sit there and catch it all so they won't say, 'There's Buddy,' [and be intimidated] just because I put a pretty good record out."

Buddy says he's thinking about opening another club in another city, but he'll be more serious about it after the release of the live album and video later this year. "I don't want to compete with the House of Blues and these types of things. I just want a blues club where you can find something happening every night. We need it; there's no places to go for these young people."

Buddy takes a seat at the bar and greets the people around him, shaking hands with whoever walks in the door and recognizes him. When left alone, he's quiet: sometimes he looks up at the TV and watches coverage of the day's sports events, other times he just sips his drink and checks out the band.

He's visibly comfortable in his own, legendary surroundings. It's a life that suits him just fine: "Sometimes entertainers get so big, they have to isolate themselves. Please believe me, I don't ever want to get like that. I think that's the time I would start thinkin' maybe I should quit playin'. Because I would miss people." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Buddy Guy's polka-dotted Stratocaster electric guitar was made by the Fender Custom shop in Nashville, Tenn. (Fender also manufactures a Buddy Guy Signature Stratocaster.) He uses a Fender Bassman amp, Ernie Ball guitar strings, Shure Bros. microphones and wireless systems, and Dunlop wah-wah pedals and effects.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

SLIPPIN' IN—Silvertone 41542	THE VERY BEST OF BUDDY GUY—Rhino R2-70280
FEELS LIKE RAIN—Silvertone 41498	
DAMN RIGHT I'VE GOT THE BLUES—Silvertone 1462	with Junior Wells
STONE CRAZY!—Alligator 4723	PLEADING THE BLUES—Evidence 26035
A MAN AND THE BLUES—Vanguard 79272	LIVE IN MONTREUX—Evidence 26002
HOLD THAT PLANE!—Vanguard 79323	ALONE & ACOUSTIC—Alligator 4802
THIS IS BUDDY GUY!—Vanguard 79290	DRINKIN': TNT 'N' SMOKIN' DYNAMITE—Blind Pig 1182
THE COMPLETE CHESS STUDIO RECORDINGS—Chess 9337	ORIGINAL BLUES BROTHERS LIVE—Intermedia 5004
I WAS WALKIN' THROUGH THE WOODS—Chess 9315	HOODOO MAN BLUES—Delmark 612
LEFT MY BLUES IN SAN FRANCISCO—Chess 31265	COMING AT YOU—Vanguard 79262
BUDDY GUY—Chess 9115	SOUTHSIDE BLUES JAM—Delmark 628
MY TIME AFTER AWHILE—Vanguard Twoler 141-42	BUDDY AND THE JUNIORS (with Junior Mance) MCA 10517
	with Muddy Waters
	FOLK SINGER—Chess 9261

The Spirit Of Collaboration

MELBA LISTON & RANDY WESTON



CHIEUNG CHENG MING

By Zan Stewart

At its core, jazz is about the new, the fresh, the previously unheard idea, the unspoken thought. As drummer Shelly Manne once noted, "Jazz is never saying the same thing *once*." An art form that staunchly strives for innovation, jazz doesn't easily suffer repetition, detests clichés, eschews comfort.

And with improvisation its primary fact, jazz has emerged as the art of the

individual, the role of the single performer taking precedence over the collective effort. Even in the periods when musicians have been united in a mutual thread of conception, as in the beginnings of bebop, it was still the primary participants (e.g., Parker, Gillespie, Monk) who were seen as dominant influences, not a gaggle of artists working together for a common goal. That's why the lengthy teaming of two artists in collaboration runs so against form. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Miles Davis and Gil Evans. John Lewis and Milt

Jackson. Cedar Walton and Billy Higgins. Randy Weston and Melba Liston—these prolonged relationships are the exception, not the rule.

Arranger/composer and former trombonist Liston and pianist/composer Weston possess one of the music's longest partnerships. The pair met around 1956-57, when Liston, a native of Kansas City who was raised in Los Angeles, was playing and writing for Dizzy Gillespie's big band. In her fruitful career, she's also composed for Count Basie, Gerald Wilson, Quincy Jones,

and many others. Weston, who was born in Brooklyn and was initially moved by the playing of Thelonious Monk, needed someone to craft charts for an album of waltzes.

Since then, the two—both 68—have worked together on numerous projects, with Liston writing the arrangements mostly to Weston's compositions on *Uhuru Africa* (1960), *Tanjah* ('73), and recently, *The Spirits Of Our Ancestors* ('92) and *Volcano Blues* ('93). Many of these albums—as one can sense from the titles—have an African flavor: Weston has been enthralled with the largest continent since he was a youth, and has lived in Morocco. The pianist's latest solo album, *The Splendid Master Gnawa Musicians Of Marrakech*, features Gnawan percussionists and singers from Morocco. He also has a solo-piano album, *Marrakech In The Cool Of The Evening*, due out this spring. As for Liston, who suffered a severe stroke in 1985 and is paralyzed on her right side, she's writing charts at her Macintosh home-based setup for a project that will be recorded with Weston early this year.

Liston and Weston were interviewed via a conference call: Weston was in Berlin, where he was touring with his trio, a group of Gnawan musicians from Morocco, and bluesman Johnny Copeland, while Liston was at home in Los Angeles. Many of their spontaneous and affectionate responses to questions, and answers, are included to give readers a glimpse into the intimate nature of their relationship.

ZAN STEWART: *How long has it been since you two have seen each other?*

MELBA LISTON: Not that long . . .

RANDY WESTON: I was out there, what, a month ago?

ZS: *Were you talking about your new project at that point?*

RW: Exactly. We're going to do strings and a trio, and Melba's going to do the charts.

ZS: *That should be great.*

ML: I hope so. [laughs]

RW: Hope the piano player shows up! [more laughter from both]

ZS: *What made you decide to use strings?*

RW: Melba did such beautiful arrangements with the Boston Pops, with John Williams conducting, when we did my piece "Three African Queens" in 1981. It was wonderful, and she wrote such beautiful arrangements. I've always wanted to do an album with Melba with strings.

ZS: *Melba, have you started working on this at all?*

ML: Oh yeah. I have a tribute to Lady Day, to Billie Holiday, and others. I can't even think.

RW: I threw so many tunes at her.

ZS: *Are these all originals, Randy?*

RW: Yeah, a combination of spirituals, ballads, a couple of African lines.

ML: I have three or four of them started.

ZS: *These days, how do you work together? Melba, when Randy comes to Los Angeles and you get together, what really goes on?*

ML: [laughs and whoops—as does Randy]

ZS: *In a musical way!*

ML: He comes over and he comes in the music room and we just . . . start. I don't know! [Randy's still laughing.]

ZS: *For example, did he bring in some tunes, did he play some tunes for you?*

ML: We know all the tunes already. I have the music.

ZS: *Do you show him sketches?*

"We kind of laugh at ourselves, 'cause when someone asks us to explain what we do, we never do explain what we do. . . ."

—Randy

ML: I show him some sketches and he shows me some sketches and we just go all around.

ZS: *It's such a long collaboration—36 years now, right?*

ML: I don't know [both laughing].

ZS: *Well, the first album was Little Niles, right?*

ML: Yes.

ZS: *That was 1958. But you two had met prior to that. According to Randy's memory, you met at Birdland when you were playing with Diz.*

ML: Yeah, that's right.

ZS: *Randy, do you remember that?*

RW: Of course, I remember that. I'll never forget it [laughs].

ZS: *So what first struck you about Melba? What do you think led to the first seeds of even getting together and saying hello and meeting each other?*

RW: Some things you can't really describe. Number one, just seeing a woman playing trombone in a big, except for her, all-male orchestra. I never saw that before. That was the first thing. The second thing, this was an incredible orchestra, so I knew she had to be fantastic. And she was very beautiful in addition to all of that, right? And then Diz introduced her, featured her on an arrangement she did on "My

Reverie." And I heard the arrangement and it was so beautiful. I introduced myself to Melba, and I shook her hand, and that was it.

ZS: *Why did Melba come into your mind when you wanted an arranger?*

RW: There are some things that you just can't explain that happen in life. I don't think Melba can explain it, either. Osmosis you wanna call it, vibrations you wanna call it, spiritual contact you wanna call it. Next thing I knew I was in her apartment playing these waltzes for her and asking would she do the arrangements, and that was it.

ML: That was beautiful, too, when he came to my apartment and played the waltzes.

RW: On a comparison—and I'm not comparing it musically—but like Strayhorn and Duke, I sometimes couldn't tell who was who. Melba had a way of taking my melodies and doing an arrangement and she would add some lines of hers—those lines might be my lines, in a very creative way. She's taken my music and just expanded it.

ZS: *Well, Melba, can you tell me something about how you took his music for The Spirits Of Our Ancestors album and interpreted it?*

ML: No, I can't. [laughs]

RW: Forget it, man, you got a little Monk on your hands, you know what I mean? You got a little Thelonious Monk on your hands. [really laughs] She can't tell you too much.

ML: I can't now 'cause I'm working on something else and I'm involved in that right now.

ZS: *So when you're involved in something like that, is it basically the way you just think about that?*

ML: Yeah.

ZS: *Melba, can you talk a little bit about how you put these new pieces together?*

ML: I don't know. I'm working on "High Fly" now, and I'm in the second or third chorus of it, and I'm stranded right now. I don't know what to do right this minute, but I will have a piano solo or something. I just don't know. I just know that I'm gonna go on, I've gotta go on.

RW: It's hard to explain this to you, but Melba, she's a creative arranger. In the true sense of the word, that's the way she is.

ZS: *I guess one of the things I'm interested in now is, what do you do when you're stuck. Do you listen, do you not listen?*

ML: I listen to Randy playing solo, I listen to *Tanjah*, other albums.

ZS: *Does that help you prepare?*

ML: Yeah. It tells me to go or stop or do something. I will do something. [Randy laughs.] I don't know right now. And I have a stroke you know, so I can't talk too much, but I'll write it. [laughs]

ZS: *I'm sorry about the stroke. It's been some time, and obviously your spirit has not been affected, and that's wonderful [both laugh]. Perhaps, that's partly due to the*

healing power you find in music?

ML: Yes indeed, yes indeed.

RW: That's the very thing I'm talking about. I'm touring now with the Gnawan people from Morocco. These are spiritual people, and their music is very powerful. These people are healers, and their music made me realize that Louis Armstrong was a great healer. When we play this music we see people smile and feel happy. And that's a tremendous feeling for us and those musicians in the traditional society that's part of them—to heal people with music. And that's been passed on to the Americans. Jazz, you feel good if you listen to it, you feel good if you play it. You feel good if you write it. Was Louis Armstrong just a great jazz guy who was coming out of New Orleans? Or was he put on this planet to bring us something. Over there, in Africa, they have another concept.

ZS: On *The Spirits Of Our Ancestors*, it struck me how many of the written parts sounded like your playing, Randy.

RW: Exactly. And [like a mind reader], coming out with things that aren't in my head, but she's got it and gone. [laughs a lot]

ZS: Randy, how did you feel when you first heard the music that Melba had written for the album?

RW: The thing was that the spirits were in the studio. All the tremendous musicians who were there [the album was a big band date featuring such guests as Dizzy Gillespie and Pharoah Sanders] and everybody giving their all. And then Dizzy came in and took it on another level. Because I discovered Melba because of Dizzy Gillespie. And most people on this planet, Dizzy has touched them somewhere or somehow. Because he had the incredible combination of being a master musician, arranger, bandleader, comedian, but he also had a way of helping a lot of artists, exposing a lot of artists . . . Lee Morgan, Melba Liston, Charli Persip. So when Dizzy came to the studio, to see him and Melba together was so beautiful, I can't describe it, just so wonderful.

ZS: What was that like for you, Melba, to see Dizzy like that?

ML: Well, I loved him all the time. I've been in love with him since 1940—something. I'm just in love with him, you know? So any time I see him is a thrill. That's all it is.

ZS: How did you decide to do the *Volcano*



CHEUNG CHING WING

Blues album?

RW: That was [producer] Jean-Philippe [Allard]'s idea. It scared the hell out of me. Yeah, man! Why? Do you know how many blues albums must have been made on this planet? [much laughter] He scared the hell out of me when he said that. I was reluctant, but he's such a wonderful guy, he believes in our music so much. He kept saying, "Man, you can play the blues, I like how you play the blues." So I said, "Help, Melba Liston!" [both laugh] So that's how it happened.

ZS: So who picked the tunes?

RW: I did.

ZS: I thought that was a pretty extraordinary group of tunes, from "Harvard Blues," done originally by singing great Jimmy Rushing with Basie in the '40s, to "Chalabati Blues," which has an African flavor. And the wonderful "In Mystery Of," which, Randy, you have recorded several times. So what led you to decide to have such a broad range of blues tunes?

RW: Well, it was from my experience; I think Melba's the same. I have very rich experiences, and you kind of call up those experiences. I remember how much I loved Jimmy Rushing and how much I loved "Harvard Blues," one of my favorite songs of Jimmy Rushing, and how much I loved Basie, so I had to do Basie. I remember, with "Volcano" [a calypso blues also recorded by Basie in the '40s], it always knocked me out. I heard Basie playing it, and that just cracked me up. In the '40s. Those cats were doing everything, man; we'll never catch up.

ZS: One of the things you have said, and I don't think it can be said often enough, is about the blues. What was it about learning the blues that was so important to you when you were first coming up?

RW: Well, the elders told us, if you want to play jazz, you gotta play the blues. [both laugh]

ZS: Do you ever get tired of playing the blues? [much laughter all around]

RW: When you hear the real blues piano

players and the real gospel players, it's another thing. I try to capture what I can, but I'm from New York, born in New York, it's a different vibe. You know what I'm saying? [Melba still laughing] You've gotta live closer to the earth to play that music.

ZS: Melba, what makes you laugh when Randy's talking. You laugh a lot. Do you just love talking to him?

ML: Yeah [more laughter], I do.

RW: Sometimes you have to crack up and laugh, you know. [laughs] We kind of laugh at ourselves, 'cause when someone asks us to explain what we do, well, we never do explain what we do, and when we have to do it, we have to laugh at ourselves trying to describe what we do.

ZS: Randy, there's obviously something very magical between you and Melba, and you bring a lot of joy to her. I know it goes both ways, but I really thought that was very important.

RW: Well, she's a special lady, and you don't have too many people like that on the planet, you know? And she's so low-key and so withdrawn, and that's why she doesn't get enough attention.

And sometimes, when you're around masters, you have to watch and listen, that's what I learned, from being around Monk. You can learn a lot that way. And I've thought about Melba: there are so many great people who are very quiet, and because of that, they just don't get the proper recognition that they should. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

At home in Brooklyn, Randy plays a Steinway baby grand piano. Given his druthers, he'd choose a Bosendorfer. Melba's equipment includes a Macintosh computer and Roland DX-50 electronic keyboard.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(See **DB** Nov. 90 for additional Weston listings)
THE SPLENDID MASTER GNAWA MUSICIANS OF MOROCCO—Antilles 314 521 587
VOLCANO BLUES—Antilles 314 519 269-2
THE SPIRITS OF OUR ANCESTORS—Antilles 314 511 896-2
THE HEALERS (WITH DAVID MURRAY)—Black Saint 120118
MONTEREY '66—Verve 314 519 698
JAZZ A LA BOHEMIA—Fantasy/OJC 1747
PORTRAITS OF DUKE ELLINGTON—Verve 841 312
PORTRAITS OF THELONIOUS MONK—Verve 841 313
SELF PORTRAITS—Verve 841 314
TANJAH—Polydor (out of print)
MUSIC FOR THE NEW AFRICAN NATIONS—Colpix (out of print)
DESTINY RIDES AGAIN—United Artists (out of print)

Everette Harp & Richard Elliot

Love Horns

A Look At The Contemporary Sax Phenomenon

by Jonathan Widran

Dutch saxophonist Candy Dulfer may have put it best in the title cut to her gold debut album in 1991: "Everybody needs a little S-A-X. . . ." Her emergence onto the pop charts that year with the infectious "Lily Was Here" typifies a trend that began in the '70s with the superstar emergences of soul-based hornmen Grover Washington Jr. and David Sanborn, that has made Kenny G the best-selling instrumental artist of all time, and that continues today at a rampant and increasingly popular pace in fiery-yet-friendly young players like Warren Hill, Dave Koz, Boney James . . . one look at the contemporary jazz charts and the list seems endless.

Since the advent of New Adult Contemporary radio formats, the sax's seductive timbre has gained the instrument a new generation of fans who know what they like, but could scarcely devise a definition of what constitutes jazz. Just as Washington, Sanborn, and L.A. Express funkmeister Tom Scott drew inspiration from pioneers like Sonny Rollins, Hank Crawford, and Stanley Turrentine, today's brightest stars have turned to any combination of legends for guidance while developing even the most commercial brand of chops and individual voices.

No two young saxmen better typify pop music's amazing hold on the horn than Richard Elliot and Everette Harp. Both grew up listening to a consistent mix of r&b and jazz, and both were accomplished pop/soul sidemen (Elliot with Kittyhawk and Tower of Power, Harp with Anita Baker, among others) before forging high-profile careers as solo artists.

On the strength of eight popular solo albums since the mid-'80s (including his latest, *After Dark*), Elliot (whose primary focus is tenor) is one of the genre's top

touring draws, performing over 120 dates per year. His last album, *Soul Embrace*, sold over 250,000 copies worldwide. Under George Duke's executive production, Harp's self-titled 1992 debut and his current *Common Ground* have become bestsellers, selling worldwide upwards of 150,000 copies each.

During a recent roundtable discussion, both were more than eager to share their views on the burgeoning sax phenomenon, their own popularity, the backlash of jazz purists against their chosen genre, and the issue of art vs. commerce.

JONATHAN WIDRAN: *Why is the music you play so popular, and why is the sax in particular so successful? What exactly are listeners responding to?*

EVERETTE HARP: It's grown so much because of the age factor, because it appeals to such a large age bracket. It appeals to baby boomers, young people, and older folks alike. From an urban point of view, it strikes those who love traditional as well as modern r&b. Pop listeners who in the '80s were listening to Duran Duran are growing up and are looking for a mellower kind of music. They're gravitating toward things that are more accessible than what's on the pop charts now. Pop and urban music have changed so much. This genre offers some of the sounds that those two things had going for them in the '80s. The vocals add some color to it, too. Straightahead jazz intimidates those people, but this lighter side of jazz works.

RICHARD ELLIOT: I would emphasize the idea that it's really contemporary instrumental music as opposed to jazz. I've gotten questions from mainstream critics that wonder why my sound is billed as jazz. First of all, I don't consider it jazz. I know "contemporary instrumental" is a very

broad term, but, bottom line, it has elements of all different kinds of music. Conversely, jazz is made up of a lot of things, too, and it's a continually developing art form. As far as the audience goes, these are people who grew up listening to Led Zeppelin and Jefferson Airplane, or Cameo and Parliament . . . they've grown out of banging their heads and are looking for something more refined, but which still has passion to it.

As far as the sax goes, you've heard the parallel of the sax being the closest instrument to the human voice. Sort of a cliché, but it's one of the most expressive horns. It's easier to put nuances into a sax than into a trumpet or trombone. From a pop standpoint, horns went out for a while, but they've made a comeback.

EH: Back in the '80s, when George Michael came up with "Careless Whisper" and Billy Ocean did "Caribbean Queen," those songs brought it back to mainstream pop. Then along came Kenny G, who really pushed it in front. I was playing in pop/r&b bands, and those two songs made people go crazy for more sax.

JW: *I've seen a lot of negative reviews from critics less than enamored by this genre. What do you make of purists who say it's unchallenging garbage?*

RE: First of all, I don't play my music for critics. That can have a detrimental effect. Critics represent one opinion. The biggest mistake an artist can make is second-guessing critics or radio. That thinking will blow up in your face. The artist won't be creatively satisfied because they tried too hard to keep ahead, and it ends up sounding contrived. I don't play my music for my musician friends. They don't make good audiences. If the day comes when people stop coming to my shows, or the records stop selling, then I'm making a mistake. I

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HARP & ELLIOT

PHOTO BY KAREN MILLER

don't think it would be wise to play obscure music they don't relate to.

The music that I grew up listening to was not obscure. My roots are more steeped in r&b. I studied jazz, I loved Dexter Gordon as a hero, not so much because I wanted to be a mainstream artist, but I was a student of different tones.

EH: Dexter had that big fat tone. . . .

RE: I loved guys like Junior Walker, King Curtis more than most jazz guys, though. Obviously everyone wants to be accepted. You always want to be accepted by as many people as possible. Reading a bad review does affect me. Reading negative things is never an uplifting experience. But it's not a ruling force in my life.

I never wanted to create a revolution between records, but more of an evolution. I'm still trying to master my approach. I

consider myself in all ways a developing artist. The way I push the envelope is in more subtle ways. The last albums were more machine-oriented, sequenced, while the new one is more acoustic, organic.

EH: I love the album cover, by the way. Very suave.

RE: They screwed up, actually. They used Billy Joel's cover. . . . Compositionally, I'm not looking to take big left turns for now. If it becomes stagnant, then . . . thing is, the audience will let me know when things aren't working for them. If I put out something uninspired, a rehashing, it won't sell.

EH: I don't know if you ever experienced this. I only have two projects out. Most liked the new one better, but a handful of people asked me if I was ever going to do

another record like the first one. Of course, you want to please the audience, but I said, hopefully not.

I want each one to be different. I put 13 cuts on *Common Ground*. I did the jazz and non-pop stuff for me. If I give them six or seven cuts that remind them of the first one, which also took a few turns, then they also might perk up and listen to something they weren't expecting. This is the first one I produced myself, and I was like a kid in a candy store. I could do things I wanted to do. I recorded the straight-ahead tunes first. They made it a good album. But mainstream critics who don't like this music shouldn't be reviewing it. It's not fair to those reading the reviews.

RE: I chose my musical direction in high

school, and just by nature, it's more commercial. Kittyhawk was Adult Contemporary before it existed. It was hard to find a market. Stations played older jazz styles, but I was doing the kind of things I'm doing now in the late '70s. I started doing solo records in 1984, when I was with TOP.

EH: I have the LP of *Trolltown*. Very rare.

RE: Most people burned those!

EH: Both in composing and producing, if it's what I hear, it's what I put on the record. I listen to a lot of things today, not just jazz, but I enjoy a lot of different music. When I was growing up in Houston, one of my first heroes was Turrentine, then Coltrane, Parker, Cannonball . . . at the same time, there was Grover, Hank Crawford . . . I use all of those influences in my production. George Duke is helpful when it gets too busy, because I have so many ideas.

JW: Let's get to the G question. What is it that makes him in particular such a phenomenon?

RE: I deal with some of the guys behind the machine that launched him. You have to have a good production, with the potential to be successful. The entity of Kenny G is a good product. The melodies are hooky and

melodic. The harder aspect is finding a brilliant man like Arista's Clive Davis to see that potential. They made a major commitment of around a million dollars, well spent. They kicked ass, were relentless. Once it played out at NAC, it settled down, then they kept pushing. Then there's that intangible thing, the right thing clicking at the right time. Kenny's ability to put on a good show didn't hurt, either.

EH: It's like George Benson and Chuck Mangione, though Kenny's success is going on longer. Every decade or so, an instrumentalist hits it big. Back in Houston, they were already pulling *Duotones* off the shelves in '86. Months later, there was a video, then more exposure. A record company has to view an album not only as jazz that will sell 30 or 40 thousand, but more. That happened with my first.

Someone told me that was good enough, but I thought it was shortsighted. It's not just the music. You have to create an image.

RE: You can't buy success, though. A lot of artists have had the money behind them, but bomb, anyway. . . .

It's more important to do what you enjoy doing. It's important to me to sell records, because it perpetuates my ability

to make more. So I have to be businessminded. It's hard to throw curveballs at audiences. You have to sort of lead them along, maintain continuity while easing into new areas with finesse.

EH: When I toured with Anita Baker, if she didn't do "Sweet Love," they would be angry. That's more of a showbiz thing, giving people the favorites live, but it shouldn't dictate your record. The one thing that NAC has sort of mandated is that an artist do cover tunes. On my first album, the record company wanted the Janet Jackson tune. I gave in to it, as a business move. But I didn't want it to overshadow the original songs. It's been proven that covers open doors.

JW: There are so many sax players competing for chart space in your genre. How does one stand out above the crowd?

EH: Everyone comes from influences. Richard, you said you come from big soul sounds, and that's what you focused on. I came from a long line of Texas influences, switching from tenor to alto. Sanborn's influence is everywhere, but if you really listen to the different nuances, certain distinctions, a few players are able to stand out. If they borrow from Sanborn, well, the



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things I love about David, the young players are continuing. At some point, the key is to create your own style.

RE: I developed my sound by not focusing on one particular player. I listened to a lot of different people. I went to school with guys whose main goal was copping Michael Brecker. The key is blending several different influences.

EH: For you, there are less contemporary tenor players, too. It helps you stay distinctive, a big soulful sound on a less-used instrument.

RE: Miles said it all when he said, "The hardest thing for a musician to do is sound like himself." I treat sounding anything like another player like a cancer.

EH: I think the songs are what determines what consumers buy, in the long run. A certain sound, a certain tune will strike a chord.

RE: A good live show is also a must. And you can get away with doing certain things live that you can't do if you want radio play. A lot has to do with the visual element. You can bring many other, more aggressive, things across. You can take your songs to a new level live.

JW: Who among today's younger players do

you admire most?

RE: Kirk Whalum. Sanborn agreed with me. I usually gravitate toward tenor players. He has an amazing amount of feeling and nuance in his playing. I also like Joshua Redman.

EH: I grew up in Houston, and was totally enamored with Kirk's playing. He's the only

guy in the world who can play one note, and I cry when I hear it. I can listen to Coltrane, Brecker . . . and they can't do it to me. When I hear Kirk, I can almost hear words. Communication is what makes a great sax player.

RE: Having a voice, creating your own style, that's the measure of a true artist. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Everette Harp plays a Balanced Action Selmer alto saxophone with a Beachler 7 mouthpiece, a King Super 20 silver-bell tenor saxophone with a Guardala King mouthpiece, and a Selmer Mark VI soprano saxophone with a hard-rubber Selmer H

mouthpiece. He uses La Voz reeds.

Richard Elliot plays an L.A. Sax model 80 tenor saxophone with Rico reeds and a Strathon 7-Star mouthpiece. He also plays an Akai EW1, and Electro Voice, AMEK and Digidesign products

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Richard Elliot

AFTER DARK—Blue Note Contemporary 27838

SOUL EMBRACE—Manhattan 98946

ON THE TOWN—Manhattan 96687

WHAT'S INSIDE—Manhattan 73565

TAKE TO THE SKIES—Manhattan 73348

THE POWER OF SUGGESTION—Manhattan 73321

TROLLTOWN—Manhattan 96682

INITIAL APPROACH—Manhattan 73283

with various others

ON TOP OF THE WORLD—Tenacious 9206 (Alphonse Mouzon)

THE SURVIVOR—Tenacious 9201 (Alphonse Mouzon)

FROM MY WINDOW—Brainchild 9412 (Richard Smith)

KEY WITNESS—Positive 7773 (Gregg Karukas)

ROCKIN' THE BOAT—CMG 8023 (Richard Smith)

REFLECTIONS—CGR/SinDrome 1808 (Peter White)

HOLD AN OLD FRIEND'S HAND—MCA 6267 (Tiffany)

TIFFANY—5973 (Tiffany)

Everette Harp

COMMON GROUND—Blue Note Contemporary 89297

EVERETTE HARP—Manhattan 96242

with various others

RHYTHM OF LOVE—Elektra 61555 (Anita Baker)

THE SUN DON'T LIE—PRA 60201 (Marcus Miller)

WHEN DOVES CRY—Metro Blue 29515 (Bob Beiden's Manhattan Rhythm Club)

SO FAR AWAY—Noteworthy 9401 (Michael White)

RHYTHM STORIES—Atlantic Jazz 82590 (Bobby Lyle)

SUMMERHOUSE—Positive 77779 (Gregg Karukas)

SAX BY THE FIRE—GTS 3-4573 (John Tesh)

SNAPSHOT—Warner Bros 9 45026 (George Duke)

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Lester Young: Pres Talks About Himself, Copycats

By Pat Harris

This "Classic Interview" with Lester Young is reprinted from our May 6, 1949 issue.

The trouble with most musicians today is that they are copycats. Of course you have to start out playing like someone else. You have a model, or a teacher, and you learn all that he can show you. But then you start playing for yourself. Show them that you're an individual. And I can count those who are doing that today on the fingers of one hand."

It was the Pres talking: Lester Young, a pioneer of the "new" jazz, whose friends find themselves in the peculiar position of

trying to persuade him to tolerate the majority of musicians who can't meet his standards.

Pres has the well-deserved reputation of being uncomfortably shy, and would be content to gaze silently at his pigeon-turned feet rather than talk. Shy about everything except playing the horn.

"My father, William H. Young, was a carnival musician. He could play all the instruments, although he liked the trumpet best. He taught voice, too.

"I played drums from the time I was 10 to about 13. Quit them because I got tired of packing them up. I'd take a look at the girls after the show, and before I'd get the drums packed, they'd all be gone.

"For a good five or six years after that, I played the alto, and then the baritone, when I joined the Art Bronson band. [editor's note: Don't try to make Lester's time estimates jibe. They don't.]

"Ran away from my father when I was about 18. We were in Salina, Kansas, and he had a string of dates down through Texas and the South. I told him how it would be down there, and that we could have some fine jobs back through Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa, but he didn't have eyes for that. He was set to go.

"Art Bronson and his Bostonians. Played with him two or three or four years. Anyway, I was playing the baritone and it was weighing me down.

"I'm real lazy, you know. So when the tenor man left, I took over his instrument. But we stuck to Nebraska and North Dakota. Only time I went through the South was with Basie, and it was different then.

"I worked at the Nest club in Minneapolis when I first heard Basie's band. Band at the Nest wasn't anyone's, really; they gave it to different people every week.

"Used to hear the Basie band all the time on the radio and figured they needed a tenor player. They were at the Reno club in Kansas City. It was crazy, the whole band was gone, but just this tenor player. I figured it was about time, so I sent Basie a telegram.

"He had heard me before. We used to go back and forth between Minneapolis and Kansas City. When I joined the band he had three brass, three reeds, and three rhythm. I'd sit up all night and wait to go to work.

"But Basie was like school. I used to fall asleep in school, because I had my lesson, and there was nothing else to do. The teacher would be teaching those who hadn't studied at home, but I had, so I'd go to sleep. Then the teacher would go home and tell my mother. So I put that down.

"In Basie's band there always would be someone who didn't know his part. Seems to me that if a musician can't read, he should say so, and then you help him. Or you give him his part before. But Basie wouldn't. I used to talk to him about it, but he had no eyes for it. You had to sit there and play it over and over and over again. Just sit in that chair.

"I joined Fletcher Henderson in Detroit in 1934. Basie was in Little Rock then, and Henderson offered me more money. Basie said I could go.

"Was with Henderson only about six months. The band wasn't working very much. Was with Andy Kirk for six months about that time, too. Kirk was wonderful to work for. Then back to Basie until 1944 and the army."

DB



Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra

Desert Lady/Fantasy
 Columbia 57856

★★★★★

On one coast or the other (not to mention around the world), the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra has existed for better than two decades as a powerful jazz voice, in the big-band tradition yet always free of the stigma of anachronism. The fresh-sounding musical excitement generated by this 16-piece ensemble comes not so much from its exceptional players but from the brilliant composing and arranging of Ms. Akiyoshi, whose value to the international jazz community is incalculable.

The title track is an awesome work, texturally varied, multi-colored, detailed, evocative of a beautiful and exotic faraway land (somewhere east of Marrakech and west of Karachi?) where a strong feeling of suspense hovers in the air. Akiyoshi brings to it the easeful narrative pace of a distinguished film director, and she gives painstaking attention to how the orchestra can be used to supply her unfolding musical story with convincing melodrama. Soloist Lew Tabackin, playing piccolo, summons a lyricism to match the band, and his striking moments in the opus bracket a long, spellbinding movement in which Akiyoshi's inclusion of a short tape of trilling female Somalian singers initiates a forceful, distinctive outburst from trombonist Conrad Herwig and the pitting of reeds versus brass. The return of the wondrous theme is spellbinding. And flautist Tabackin's right there to guide the piece to its vanishing-like-vapor close. Fifteen-plus minutes pass so quickly.

Akiyoshi's non-cinematic songs merit repeated plays as well. "Harlequin Tears" bounds to life in the fingertips of Toshiko the masterful bop pianist, then surges swingingly with the entrance of the brass and woodwinds, only to proceed under the artistic propulsion of tenor man Tabackin and trombonist Luis Bonilla. The tune's last section has the painstakingly precise orchestra suggesting overlapping, exploding fireworks in the grand finale of an Independence Day celebration. Dazzling and substantial. Akiyoshi offers the full throttle "Hiroko's Delight" as the showcase for her four trumpeters, while "Hangin' Loose" strikes a balance between relaxation and urgency. Tabackin takes over on "Broken Dreams," soloing throughout his composition with an affecting individualism that has cogent melodic phrases acting as

pangs of conscience.

The album comes warmly recommended.

—Frank-John Hadley

Desert Lady/Fantasy—*Harlequin Tears; Desert Lady/Fantasy; Hangin' Loose; Hiroko's Delight; Broken Dreams; Bebop* (57:25)

Personnel—Akiyoshi, piano; Lew Tabackin, tenor saxophone, piccolo; Jerry Dodgion, Jim Snidero, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Walt Weiskopf, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Scott Robinson, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Michael Ponella, John Eckert, Greg Gisbert, Joe Magnarelli, trumpet; Herb Besson, Luis Bonilla, Conrad Herwig, trombone; Tim Newman, bass trombone; Doug Weiss, bass; Terry Clarke, drums; Daniel Ponce, congo drums (2).



Pat Metheny

We Live Here
 Geffen 24729

★★★ 1/2

Bob Curnow's L.A. Big Band

The Music Of Pat Metheny & Lyle Mays
 Mama Foundation 1009

★★ 1/2

Retreating from more venturesome projects, Metheny turns to commercial jazz with a vengeance on what may be his funkiest album yet. With cool samba choruses, buoyant synthesizer washes, strutting backbeats, and the cleanest guitar picking this side of Segovia, he and his regular band recapture the spirit of George Benson or Wes Montgomery in their respective pop-jazz heydays, but with original tunes rather than pop covers.

From the dreamy samba-funk of "Here We Stay" to the steely staccato blues of "The Girls Next Door" and the wistful bossa balladry of "Something To Remind You," Metheny, Mays, and company breathe life into music that might otherwise turn deadly, breaking from the creamy-smooth formula only on the aggressively modern title track and the closing "Fast," where Metheny gives a whirlwind display of virtuosity that leaves the listener gasping for air. Overall, the group manages to achieve the self-effacing background

quality of a well-crafted movie soundtrack.

If Metheny's group sounds cinematic, Bob Curnow's big-band adaptations of his and Mays' music are strictly made for TV. Curnow, a former Stan Kenton trombonist, has arranged a dozen Metheny/Mays tunes in the brassy, hard-charging Kenton style, and sure enough, there's an affinity—lots of color and texture but not too much swing. Each number is a solo vehicle for one or more of the 20 musicians—flugelhornist Bobby Shew on the mellow "Always And Forever," guitarist Paul Viapiano on the driving "See The World," soprano saxophonist Bob Sheppard on the rhapsodic "The First Circle," pianist Bob Cunliff on the rapturous "Letter From Home." But it's the rich, sonorous ensemble work that commands most of the attention, defusing the material, so to speak, without losing its distinctive character.

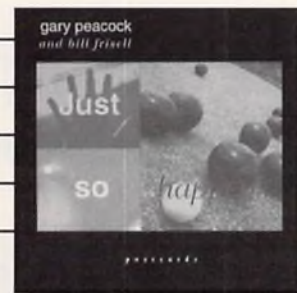
—Larry Birnbaum

We Live Here—*Here To Stay; And Then I Knew; The Girls Next Door; To The End Of The World; We Live Here; Episode; Something To Remind You; Red Sky; Stranger In Town* (67:09)

Personnel—Metheny, guitar, synthesizer; Lyle Mays, keyboards; Steve Rodby, bass; Paul Wertico, drums; David Blamires, vocals; Mark Ledford, voice, flugelhorn; Luis Conte, percussion.

The Music Of Pat Metheny & Lyle Mays—(*It's Just*) *Talk; Always And Forever; The First Circle; Letter From Home; Are We There Yet?; If I Could; See The World; Minuano (Six Eight); Dream Of The Return; Every Summer Night; In Her Family; Have You Heard*. (73:02)

Personnel—Curnow, conductor; Bob Sheppard, soprano and alto sax, flute, clarinet; Danny House, alto sax, flute, clarinet; Jerry Pinter, Rob Lockart, tenor sax, flute, clarinet; Tom Peterson, baritone sax, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet; Bobby Shew, Wayne Bergeron, Buddy Childers, Don Rader, Ron Stout, trumpet, flugelhorn; Rick Culver, Andy Martin, Alex Iles, Chuck Hughes, trombone; Dana Hughes, bass trombone; Bill Cunliffe, piano; Paul Viapiano, guitar; Tom Warrington, bass; Steve Houghton, drums; Brian Kilgore, percussion.



Gary Peacock/Bill Frisell

Just So Happens
 Postcards 1005

★★★★

Pairing the understated acoustic bass of Gary Peacock with the over-the-top electric guitar of Bill Frisell initially seems like a mismatch. The largely improvised duets that make up *Just So Happens* succeed because the

players listen and respond to each other so well.

Don't mistake *Just So Happens* for a Frisell project. Peacock generally calls the shots, firmly establishing the shape, direction and momentum of these pieces, while his partner embellishes and decorates the structures, as with "Only Now" and "Through A Skylight." Peacock turns in a masterful, always musical performance, and producer Ralph Simon records his warm, woody tone with exceptional presence and depth. The impressionistic but forgettable "Wapitis Dream" is billed as the bassist's first recorded arco bass playing since his tenure with Albert Ayler.

Though supportive, Frisell's playing is quirky and elusive. He often seems content to nibble around the edges, adding some color or texture. Aside from his warm, lyrical playing on "Good Morning Heartache," he's rarely the center of attention. One suspects that the *two* versions of "Home On The Range" were Frisell's idea, particularly when Peacock's "tom-tom" rhythms threaten the guitarist's bucolic optimism. With the textures of "N.O.M.B." and the blues feeling of "In Walked Po," the duo hits its stride, developing independent, but perfectly complementary ideas.

—Jon Andrews

Just So Happens—*Only Now; In Walked Po; Wapitis Dream; Home On The Range 1; Home On The Range 2; Through A Skylight; Red River Valley; Reciprocity; Good Morning Heartache; N.O.M.B.; Just So Happens.* (51:50 minutes)

Personnel—Peacock, bass; Frisell, electric and acoustic guitars.



Bobby Byrd

On The Move

Instinct 295.2

★★★ 1/2

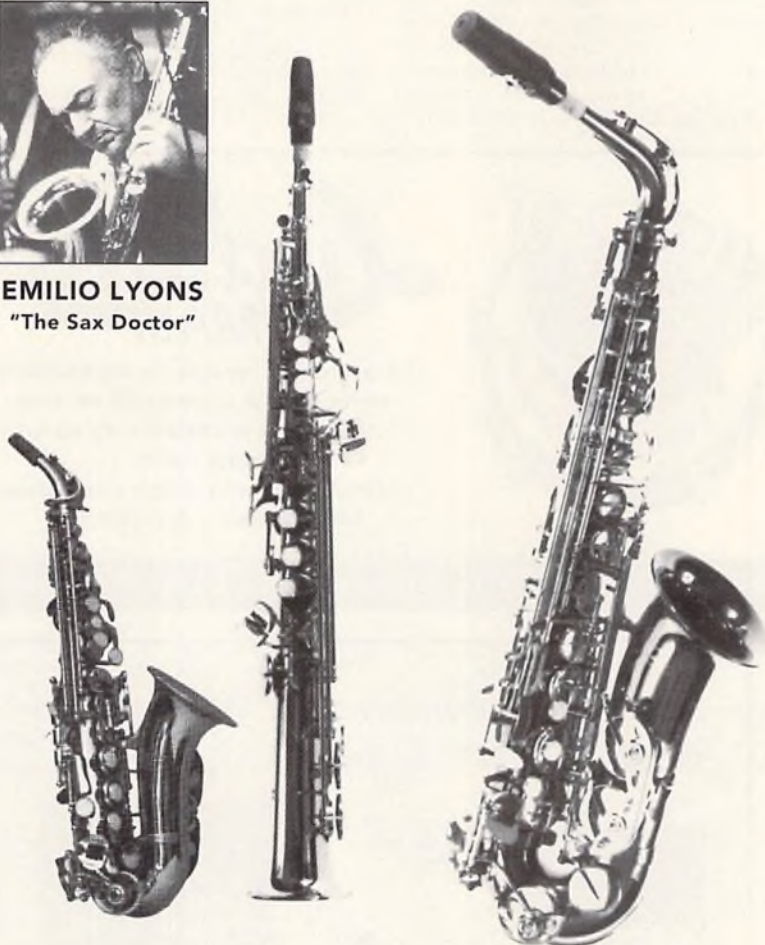
Bobby Byrd and his wife Vicki Anderson (who sings backup here) were key vocalists in James Brown's outrageously funky extended JBs family. One of the original Famous Flames and co-scribe of "Sex Machine," Byrd sang "Sayin' It And Doin' It Are Two Different Things" and "Never Get Enough" in 1972 (first issued on two sides of the same 7" single on Brownstone)—both are masterpieces of movement-induction, with contagious riffs and surprise hits with the rhythm stick. Here, on *On The Move*, these numbers receive a faithful remake, backed by an excellent band, bathed in the kind of horny horn-work that typified the P-Funk/JBs experience. One version of "Never Get Enough" features the soulful sax of

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Jacko Peake—Byrd's take only misses Godfather Brown's supportive ugh-interjections and orgasmic screams.

The years have added to the burr in Byrd's vocal box. On soul stirrers like "The Way To Get Down" and "Sunshine" (which spotlights Anderson's still-searing voice and the brassy Tower of Power horns) he almost sounds like Otis Clay or latter-day Bobby Bland. "Try It Again" is head-cockin' funk, while "I'm On The Move" sports a smoother groove. "I Got It" chronicles Byrd's "revival" by the German Soulcieté label, from whom Instinct

licensed the release; in the same vein, "Back From The Dead" is ironically the disc's only dead-spot, its pocket (and ghoul lyrics) not nearly as deep as it might have been. Judging by *On The Move*, though, the sentiment stands: Bobby Byrd's back.
—John Corbett

On The Move—*Try It Again; I'm On The Move; The Way To Get Down; Sayin' It And Doin' It Is Two Different Things; Never Get Enough; I Got It; Sunshine; Back From The Dead; Never Get Enough.* (46:05)

Personnel—Byrd, vocals; Bartlett Anderson, organ, keyboards; Jerry Preston, bass; Tony Byrd, drums; Bruno

Speight, Bobby Latham, guitars; Michael Spiro, Miss Cee, percussion; Vicki Anderson, Carleen Anderson, Keisha Byrd, background vocals; Lloyd Obie, Gregorie Mayfield, Sultan Muhammad, Abdul Ra'ool, Tower of Power Horn Section (7), Jacko Peake (5), On The Move Horns, horns.



Scott Hamilton
Organic Duke
Concord Jazz 4623

★★★ 1/2

It's been a long time coming. More than 20 feature albums and 17 years into his internationally acclaimed Concord recording career, Hamilton has finally gotten around to fulfilling a pledge he made to himself back in the early '70s regarding work with an organ player. At long last, too, the tenor man now devotes an entire session to songs from the gold depositories of Duke Ellington and Johnny Hodges.

Hamilton infuses his bluesy, swinging interpretation of 10 gems with all the creative skill of that one-in-a-million jazz baby boomer who has developed a highly personal approach from intimate knowledge of swing era tenor titans (Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Ben Webster) and stellar post-swing saxophonists (Zoot Sims, Stan Getz, Art Pepper). Hamilton's a supremely self-confident player, whether addressing the Ellington-Hodges poetry of *The Far East Suite's* "Isfahan" or playing phrases in deceptively blithe tones on "Just A-Sittin' And A-Rockin'" or "Love You Madly." Hamilton has an articulate and vibrant partner in La Donne, a respectable bop pianist who the past few years has rekindled a long-dormant interest in the B-3. But Le Donne is too much of a good thing, really, getting more solo room than necessary on many songs at the expense of the marvelous tenor player.

Picky, picky. "The Old Circus Train Turn-Around Blues" gets faded before it's ready to quit, and on a few numbers the presence of Hamilton's regular bassist Dennis Irwin seems superfluous since Le Donne stays active on the pedals. And it's a drag that two little-known Ellington tunes Hamilton has performed in clubs, "The Feeling Of Jazz" and "Tonight I Shall Sleep," didn't turn up on this appealing album.
—Frank-John Hadley

Organic Duke—*Jump For Joy; Blue Hodge; Moon Mist; Paris Blues; Casile Rock; Just A-Sittin' And A-Rockin'; Rockin' In Rhythm; Isfahan; Love You Madly; The Old Circus Train Turn-Around Blues.* (58:29)

Personnel—Hamilton, tenor saxophone. Mike Le Donne, organ; Dennis Irwin, bass; Chuck Riggs, drums.



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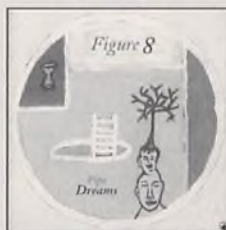


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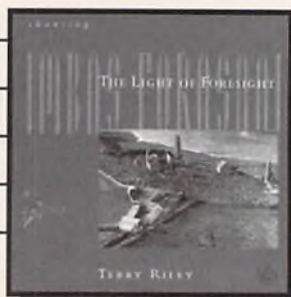


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**Terry Riley/Rova
Saxophone Quartet**
Chanting The Light Of Foresight
New Albion 064

★★★ 1/2

A part from its "jazz" repertoire, the Rova Saxophone Quartet moonlights by exploring improvisational "new music" by composers like Alvin Curran and now Terry Riley, whose swirling, raga-influenced compositions became cornerstones of the "minimalist" movement. Although Riley multi-tracked his own soprano saxophone for *A Rainbow In Curved Air* (1969), he

writes primarily for keyboards in just intonation, and occasionally for the Kronos Quartet. Composed for Rova on a synthesizer, *Chanting The Light Of Foresight* dares the quartet to play Riley's swirling repetitive figures and unusual tunings.

Inspired by the legendary Cattle Raid of Cooley in 8th-century Ulster, the work opens with "The Tuning Path," a maddeningly uneventful series of tones and drones in the style of Riley's mentor, LaMonte Young. Absent a special interest in "resonant intonation," it's better to start with "The Pipes Of Medb/Medb's Blues," where individual soloists improvise on Riley's cyclical, Eastern-influenced melodies (most notably Bruce Ackley's bluesy soprano solo) while a saxophone chorus realizes complex harmonies. "The Chord Of War," composed by Larry Ochs and Steve Adams, employs a similar structure while pitting soloists against each other in combat. "Chanting The Light Of Foresight" offers a dynamic conclusion and a melodic highpoint, with Rova negotiating Riley's tortuous, mesmerizing lines in tight formation.

You wonder how these guys breathe. It's more impressive still that Rova performs this demanding work in concert. —*Jon Andrews*

Chanting The Light Of Foresight—*The Tuning Path: The Pipes Of Medb/Medb's Blues: Song Announcing Dawn's Combat: The Chord Of War: Ferdi's Death Chant: Chanting The Light Of Foresight.* (52:03)

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

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Shepps In The Night

by John Corbett

Of the great tenor saxophonists to emerge in the heat of the 1960s, Archie Shepp stands in perfect position to be whitewashed from jazz history. You hardly hear him mentioned anymore. True, the last decade of mediocre recordings and concerts (owing, it is said, to total loss of lip) has done nothing to help his historical cause, but we should not forget that at one time he was one of the best. Along with his outspoken, embittered political recitations (evidence of earlier ambitions as an actor), he had under-emphasized abilities as a composer and a good ear for raggedly perfect arrangements. Shepp's unmistakably throaty tone—at once drunkenly wavering and pointedly aggressive—and his supple, bluesy, creatively sour phrasing appeared on some of the most important recordings of free music, some of them made with Bill Dixon, Cecil Taylor, Marion Brown, and John Coltrane, but many of them Shepp's own.

How could we neglect classics like *Fire Music*, *Four For Trane*, or the less-known but equally excellent *On This Night* (Impulse! 125; 71:54; ★★★★★). Recorded in 1965, featuring an assortment of players, including vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson (frequent Shepp collaborator at the time), bassists Henry Grimes and David Izenzon,



Archie Shepp (1975): raw, ragged brilliance shining through

and drummers Rashied Ali, J. C. Moses, Joe Chambers, and Edward Blackwell (who plays African rhythm logs on three cuts), this fine record has now been reissued with numerous outtakes. Here we find Shepp in an extremely

adventurous, omnivorous mode. There's the tempered, classical soprano voice of Christine Spencer on the title cut, the sneaky composition "The Mac Man," a sweet and lovely take on "In A Sentimental Mood," three versions of the edgy tenor flight "The Chased," and Shepp reciting his incendiary poem "Malcolm, Malcolm, Semper Malcolm."

Shepp's successful years extended long past the end of the '60s. Even after he backed off the more radical musical and polemical positions of yore, he continued to blow strong and think straight, and some of his mid-'70s records are lost treasures. Pre-eminent, perhaps, is *Steam* (enja 2076; 63:45; ★★★★★), a super 1976 live trio recording with bassist Cameron Brown and late, great drummer Beaver Harris. Typical of Shepp concerts at that time, things take time; driving takes on Cal Massey's "A Message From Trane," Ellington's "Solitude," Bronislav Kaper's "Invitation," and Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha" are taken past 10-minutes each, while Shepp's own triple-time title tune gets shorter shrift and Monk's "52nd Street Theme" only appears as a teasing 30-second snack. (Tech note: It seems like a microphone was resting on Harris' bass drum, making an unpleasant thump in the mix.)

Two volumes of *Parisian Concert* (Vol. 1, Impro 01; 50:40; ★★★★★; Vol. 2, Impro 03; 60:48; ★★★★★), recorded a year later, follow the same general mold, with extended solos, and a charged rhythm section, this time consisting of bassist Brown, pianist Sigfried Kessler, and drummer Clifford Jarvis. The second volume features some of Shepp's second horn; his unaccompanied soprano intro to "Sophisticated Lady" leads to a thoughtful quartet version, though late in his solo the impending emboucher problems seem to make themselves heard. Like most of his '70s concerts, the two discs feature tunes by Duke, Trane, and Bird; on the first volume he also includes two gems from trombonist Grachan Moncur III. Taped (rather badly) live in Montreal in the same year, *The Rising Sun Collection/ Archie Shepp* (Just A Memory 0005; 58:33; ★★½) substitutes Charles Persip on drums and Dave Burrell on piano. This quartet works more or less



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identical material—Shepp hoots 'n' toots his way through a rousing version of Moncur's "Sonny's Back" before launching into "The Girl From Ipanema," "Donna Lee," "In A Sentimental Mood," a soprano version of "Steam," and Burrell's suave "Crucificado."

In a different vein, Shepp made a pair of duet records with pianist Horace Parlan in 1977, and they stand toe-to-toe with his best '60s Impulse! records. Where *Trouble In Mind* finds the perfectly suited twosome playing blues standards, *Gain' Home* (SteepleChase 31079; 51:13: ★★★★★) collects 10 gospel and spiritual classics, including Ellington's "Come Sunday." Of all discs, this may be the best single place to hear unadulterated Shepp, still at full strength. His raw, ragged brilliance shines through like a saved soul.

In 1979, Shepp culminated his interest in pan-Afro-American music—from blues, r&b, soul, funk and gospel to free-jazz, Afro-Latin, hard-bop, and balladry—first expressed on late-'60s records like *Mama Too Tight* and *Attica Blues*. *Attica Blues Big Band* (Blue Marge 1001; 45:40/50:27: ★★½) was recorded live at the Palais des Glaces in Paris. The 30-piece ensemble included in its ranks trumpeters Charles McGhee and Malachi Thompson, trombonist Steve Turre, saxists Marion Brown and John Purcell, guitarist Brandon Ross, a string section, conductor Ray Copeland (without trumpet), and several vocalists including tenor Joe Lee Wilson. On the whole, the project has a variety-show feel, the big circus tent stretching to include a showy vocal version of Horace Silver's "Strollin'," the airy, highly improvised "Antes de Andios" (written and sung by violinist Terry Jenoure), Randy Weston's "High Fly," and Shepp's own best-known composition, "U-Jaama."

Also during the late '70s, Shepp recorded tribute records for Trane, Sidney Bechet, Horace Silver, and several dedicated to Charlie Parker. *Tray Of Silver* (Denon 8548; 43:25: ★★★★★) features three quick Horace Silver tunes, two of which augment Shepp's tenor with Howard Johnson on bari ("Nica's Dream") and, more interestingly, on tuba ("Cookin' At The Continental"). The sturdy rhythm section of Roy Brooks (drums), Takashi Mizuhashi (bass), and Mickey Tucker (piano) takes "No Smokin'" at a sizzling pace, and Shepp stretches out liberally on the one non-Silver piece, Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now." *Lady Bird* (Denon 8546; 41:45: ★★½) has a promising quartet lineup: Jaki Byard on piano, Cecil McBee on bass, Roy Haynes on drums. The novelty item is that Shepp plays alto sax only—Bird he ain't, but his fuzzy alto sound isn't disagreeable. "Donna Lee" and "Relaxin' At Camarillo" sound great, with intriguing solos from Byard and fantastic drumming from Haynes (McBee, as usual, sounds like he's playing a plywood bass). But "Now's The Time" is hopelessly approximate, the head a shambles.

A more together quartet session from '82 produced *Soul Song* (enja 4050; 45:22: ★★½), with Kenny Werner on piano, Santi DiBriano on bass, and Smitty Smith on drums. Harkening back to an earlier Shepp epoch, the rhythm section burns Tranishly behind his intense, dramatic poem "Mama Rose." "Take this ex-cannibal's kiss," he half-sings, "and turn it into a revolution." That revolution changed things forever—socially and musically—and Shepp was in the front ranks. **DB**

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CD REVIEWS

Swingers & Singers

by Larry Birnbaum

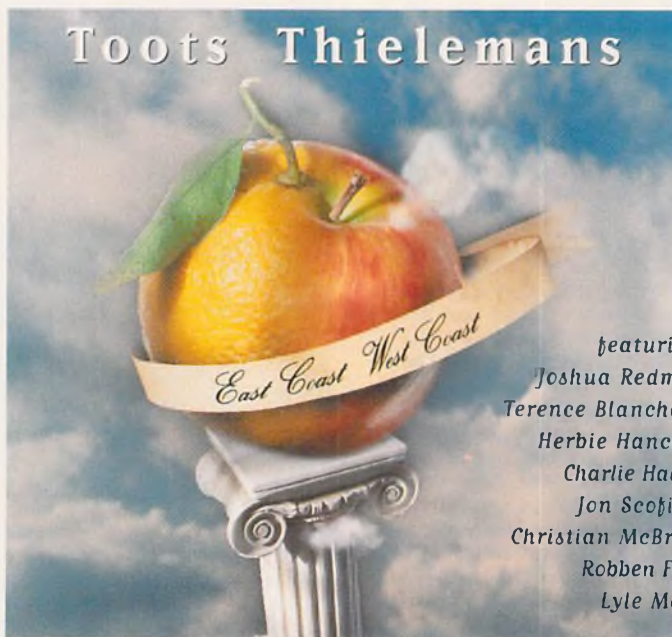
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terpieces like "Black And Tan Fantasy," "Mood Indigo," and "Rockin' In Rhythm," there's commercial fluff like "The Peanut Vendor" and "When You're Smiling," but it all bears the touch of genius.

Long overshadowed by Ellington and Count Basie, **Jimmie Lunceford** led one of the finest big bands of the '30s. GRP's second volume of Lunceford reissues, *For Dancers Only* (GRD-645; 58:19; ★★★★★½), spans the years 1935-37, when his repertoire turned more commercial. But Sy Oliver's arrangements, with their driving riffs and pearly voicings, swing even such staid standards as "Swanee River" and the hopelessly hokey "The Merry Go Round Broke Down." And on originals like "Organ Grinder's Swing," "Harlem Shout," and the cartoonish "I'm Nuts About Screw Music," the band is brilliant, with hot solos by saxophonists Willie Smith and Joe Thomas and trombonist/guitarist Eddie Durham that anticipate r&b as well as bebop.

Fletcher Henderson pioneered big-band jazz, launching the careers of Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and Don Redman. But only Hawkins remained by 1931, when the first recordings on *Tidal Wave* (GRD-643; 62:25; ★★★★★) were cut, and Henderson's reputation was in decline. The material harks back to the '20s, including a remake of Henderson's early hit "Sugar Foot Stomp," but propulsive rhythms and bright solos by saxophonist Hawkins, trumpeter

Rex Stewart, trombonist Benny Morton, and clarinetist Russell Procope impart a timeless sense of energy. On the concluding tracks, from 1934, the band sounds smoother but less lively, with Ben Webster ably replacing Hawkins. Henderson comes into his own as an arranger on tunes like "Down South Camp Meetin'," later a hit for Benny Goodman.

The two-CD **Louis Armstrong** collection *Highlights From His Decca Years* (GRD-2-638; 61:43/61:55; ★★★★★½) opens with four tracks from his mid-'20s heyday, then jumps 10 years and runs spottily through the mid-'50s. It's downhill all the way, as Armstrong steadily deteriorates from a creative artist to a popular entertainer who sings gravelly duets with Ella Fitzgerald and Bing Crosby. His trumpet virtuosity remains intact, but his New Orleans style and material ("Struttin' With Some Barbecue" and "Muskrat Ramble") are increasingly out of sync with the watered-down swing charts of the various large and small bands he recorded with. Ultimately, he reunites with Crescent City colleagues Zutty Singleton and Sidney Bechet on "Perdido Street Blues" in 1940, but somehow the old magic is gone.

The double-CD *The War Years (1941-1947)* (GRD-2-628; 64:40/63:73; ★★★★★) amply documents **Ella Fitzgerald's** early solo career, when she turned away from the lightweight novelties that established her with Chick Webb's band. Backed by subdued pop arrangements, her girlish

soprano, flawlessly intoned and enunciated, delivers lugubrious ballads like "Jim" and "He's My Guy" with little emotion beyond a restrained wistfulness. She's more animated later on oddball numbers like "Cow Cow Boogie" and the calypso hit "Stone Cold Dead In The Market" (with Louis Jordan), but she doesn't scat at all until her almost wordless version of "Flying Home" in 1945. A fixture on the r&b charts in these years, her style was decidedly pure pop, her career as a great jazz singer still to come.

Mildred Bailey won fame with Paul White-man's band in the '20s as the first female crooner, a soft-voiced distaff counterpart to Bing Crosby. But during the period covered by *The Rockin' Chair Lady (1931-1950)* (GRD-644; 62:09; ★★★★★½), she enjoyed only middling success as a solo artist, perhaps because her bluesy style was already anachronistic. She showed excellent taste in material with songs by Fats Waller, Benny Carter, Kurt Weill, and Hoagy Carmichael, and her relaxed phrasing gracefully shades both lyrics and melodies. But the long succession of slow ballads eventually grows tedious, and the arrangements grow progressively more commercial. Best are four tracks recorded in 1935 with Bunny Berrigan, Johnny Hodges, Teddy Wilson, and Grachan Moncur, including a version of Bessie Smith's first hit, "Down Hearted Blues," where Bailey, who was white, sounds much blacker than Ella. **DB**

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All Aboard The Connoisseur Ship

by John Corbett

To be a connoisseur means to investigate the details, to notice subtle differences, distinctions, marks of excellence. It means to be in the know—*deep* in the know. Blue Note Records' new Connoisseur Series is an intelligently chosen, solidly produced, and long-overdue attempt to bring American listeners up to date on music that jazz fans from Europe and (especially) Japan have known about for ages. The Japanese have been licensing and releasing rare and lesser-known back-catalog Blue Notes with particular relish over the last few decades—indeed, in some cases, Japanese vinyl is now almost as collectible as original pressings.

In the first two batches of Connoisseurs, which include records by Bobby Hutcherson, Freddie Redd, Don Cherry, Johnny Griffin, Andrew Hill, and Kenny Dorham (in addition to those reviewed here), Blue Note makes a few direct indications of its desire to go head-to-head with foreign competitors. First, the records are simultaneously released on CD and audiophile LP—presumably to appeal to vinyl-only snobs weaned on legendary Japanese grooves. (Funny that this comes so close



Walking the line between jazz convention and formal exploration: Wayne Shorter

on the heels of Blue Note's back-to-vinyl non-Connoisseur records—funky stuff, mostly—released in hopes of being sampled last year; the first 12 Connoisseurs would make extremely

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challenging hip-hop fodder.) Like Japanese Blues Notes, the Connoisseur Series records are re-released in a limited edition, enhancing the snoot appeal for collectors. And even the packages nod in the direction of Japan, with little flaps of paper covering the CD spines just the way Japanese discs do.

Musically, Blue Note has covered a lot of ground in 12 discs. Perhaps their most important accomplishment is to have reissued some of the music that walked the line between jazz convention and formal exploration. This is the most unfortunately overlooked aspect of Blue Note's activities—great records by Grachan Moncur III, Andrew Hill, Jackie McLean, Sam Rivers, Pete LaRoca, and Larry Young recall a time when the fence that separated inside and outside had a few extra gates in it. Case in point: **Wayne Shorter's *The All Seeing Eye*** (Blue Note 29100; 44:29: ★★★★★)—a 1965 session with trombonist Moncur, alto saxophonist James Spaulding, trumpet/flugelhornist Freddie Hubbard, and a rhythm team of Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Joe Chambers. Shorter composed a loose suite of deity-related tone poems; the four compositions are long and sectional, with striking, unmeasured sections punctuated by fascinating ensemble arrangements and driving drumwork from Chambers. "Genesis" contains a startlingly adventurous solo from Hubbard, pure high notes and engaged trumpet slurs emanating directly out of Shorter's energetic tenor solo. Spaulding and Hancock burst forward on the bubbling "Chaos" (which unfortunately fades out mid-epiphany), while the minor-mode "Face Of The Deep" is a relaxed, unusually voiced ballad. Wayne's free-jazz flugelhornist brother, Alan Shorter (who made a fabulous full-length record for Verve), makes a dark-toned cameo on "Mephistopheles," a compulsive, pedal-pointed meditation on the Prince of Darkness.

In 1966, **Ornette Coleman** scandalized the jazz world with *The Empty Foxhole* (Blue Note 28982; 38:49: ★★★★★½), his first recording in four years and a record on which he and bassist Charlie Haden are joined by Ornette's 10-year-old son Ornette Denardo "Denny" Coleman on drums. Like Ornette's mid-career turn to violin and trumpet, a move that he'd taken public a year earlier, the inclusion of young Denardo was a slap in the face to orthodoxies of jazz training, consistent with Ornette's search for a natural and un-adult-erated music. Painter Jean Dubuffet had already demonstrated in 1960 that naive music experiments could be successful when undertaken by a creative mind, and *The Empty Foxhole* confirms the fact. On trumpet ("The Empty Foxhole," "Freeway Express"), Ornette is fluid, given over to glissing and bright vocal runs; on "Sound Gravitation," the disc's most daring cut, his violin playing his stark, textural, but still recognizably Ornette; the remaining alto sax pieces show Coleman to be the genius the MacArthur Foundation has recently named him. Denardo is remarkable—responsive, inventive, and lacking any standard jazz-drum clichés or mannerisms. Nearly three decades later, it's still shocking, revealing, brilliant music.

Before he had made it clear his destiny was to remain fully within Sun Ra's orbit, tenor saxophonist **John Gilmore** was one of the super young boppers to debut on Blue Note. On *Blowing In From Chicago* (Blue Note 28977; 46:36:

★★★★), a jam-session style set recorded in 1957. Gilmore shares the spotlight with the sharpened tenorman **Clifford Jordan** (then known as Cliff), backed by a hard bop dream-band of Horace Silver at the keys, Curly Russell on bass, and Art Blakey on drums. On Jordan's "Bo-Till," Silver takes a truly stunning piano break; he quotes Ellington on the bonus track, "Let It Stand," a nice addition to the public archive. After unison heads, each tune is a showcase for solos, and both saxists are outstanding—enough cold, raw metal and smoky, blues breath in their sound to confirm that they're from the home of that other great Chicago sparring team, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt.

The great Chicago bassist Wilber Ware and multi-instrumentalist Ira Sullivan appear on saxophonist **J. R. Monterose's** wonderful 1956 debut as a leader, *J. R. Monterose* (Blue Note 29102; 48:43: ★★★★★). With Silver at the piano and Philly Joe Jones on drums, it, too, is a hard-bop plum. Sullivan limits himself to trumpet, playing a pleasant foil to Monterose's bright, rhythmically charged, stagger-phrased tenor work. Perfect material, too, with three Monterose originals (plus an alternate take of his "Wee-Jay"), Paul Chambers's slinky "Beauteous," Donald Byrd's cool "The Third," and Philly Joe's Latin-cymbaled, onomatopoeic "Ka-Link."

Another lesser-known tenorman who made substantial contributions to the Blue Note catalog is **Tina Brooks**. His 1960 record, *True Blue* (Blue Note 28975; 50:23: ★★★★★½), with Hubbard, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Art Taylor, was also his first at the helm, after appearing on organist Jimmy Smith's Blue Note classic *The Sermon!* Jordan is a boxy comper, a tidy; thoughtful one-note-run soloist, and the Jones/Taylor team bounces without too much of a hard edge. Brooks' "Theme For Doris" is a stunning minor lope. The title cut, also by Brooks, is reminiscent of Lee Morgan's fab hard-bop blues blowers; this reissue includes an alternate version of it, along with two takes of the equally bluesy "Good Old Soul."

But for sheer blues fix, go no further than **Baby Face Willette's *Stop And Listen*** (Blue Note 28998; 49:53: ★★★★★½). Sporting the customary organ trio lineup, with guitarist Grant Green (what Blue Note reissue series would be complete without the master of the big jazz-box?) and drummer Ben Dixon, organist Willette pulls out all the right stops. His sound is never overly roller-rinkish, but just plush enuff. Check out his takes on "Willow Weep For Me" and "Worksong"—you'll find him picking chords with his left hand, laying down a proud bassline with his foot, and simultaneously varying and elaborating on the main theme with his right hand. Sometimes he pecks at a note or chord, toying with the organ like a primitive electronic instrument; elsewhere he rides a note through changes, varying intensity with the pedal. Green's his usual brilliant linesman and Dixon juices minimal beats for a full glass of swing, but Willette's so strong you'd be forgiven for not noticing them. Blue Note recorded many fantastic organists—Smith, Big John Patton, Larry Young, Shirley Scott, Jack McDuff, Freddie Roach—but none better than Willette.

From structurally adventurous and harmonically innovative to groovy, greasy, cookin', and sizzlin'—with this batch of reissues, Blue Note hopes to make connoisseurs of us all. **DB**

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BLINDFOLD TEST

FEBRUARY 1995

Christian McBride

by Dave Helland

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to identify the musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a five-star system. No information about the recordings is given to the artist prior to the test.

Nine years ago, Wynton Marsalis invited a 15-year-old bassist to join him on stage at Philadelphia's Academy of Music. Since then, Christian McBride has played hundreds of club, concert, and festival dates and on nearly 80 recordings with leading jazz musicians of all ages, from contemporaries Benny Green, Roy Hargrove, and Joshua Redman to Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, and Benny Carter. "My number-one desire was to play with living legends," says McBride. "It's made me see there's a real subtle difference between people who have played for so long and people who are just starting out, and the biggest difference is they can do everything a younger player can do without struggling so hard."

McBride's just-released debut as a leader, *Gettin' To It* (Verve), features Redman, Hargrove, and Steve Turre in addition to a bass choir with Ray Brown and Milt Hinton. This is McBride's first Blindfold Test.

Israel "Cachao" Lopez

"Descarga '93" (from *Paquito D'Rivera's 40 Years Of Cuban Jam Session, Messidor, 1993*) Lopez, bass.

That's got to be Cachao. This is my first time ever hearing him, really, but I knew what he would sound like when I finally did hear him. This is fabulous. I knew he had great bow technique but, wow, that was something else. 5 stars.

Rufus Reid

"It's The Nights I Like" (from *Tana Reid's Blue Motion, 1993*) Reid, bass; Akira Tana, drums.

Was that perhaps Charlie Haden? Wasn't Charlie. Damn. The song itself was very, very pretty. The bass wasn't really out in the forefront, but as there was no piano for most of the track, the bass player really took care of business. 3½ stars for overall performance.

Oscar Pettiford

"The Gentle Art Of Love" (from *Deep Passion, Impulse!, 1956*) Pettiford, bass.

Oscar Pettiford gets 5 stars all the time. I've never heard anyone incorporate the bass as part of a harmony and part of the melodic lead as well as Oscar Pettiford did. Something Ray Brown told me about Oscar is that he really liked to play short notes, whereas most bass players after a certain time period, around the '50s, the bass notes became more resonant. The full value of the note was actually played most of the time whereas Oscar played real short notes [scats]. Like real staccato sounding, which really gave it a great effect for those beautiful lines he played.

Ray Drummond

"Sophisticated Lady" (from *Continuum, Arabesque, 1994*) Drummond, bass; Steve Nelson, vibraphone.

I don't know who did "Sophisticated Lady" with just vibes. Once again, as with Rufus Reid, he's right there, taking care of business, playing the melody real straight, the way it is supposed to be played. It's good. Give it 3 stars.

DH: This is Ray Drummond.

Really? Wow. Ray's notes are usually shorter than this. His



notes are really long and they ring on this one. Usually he's playing like Oscar. This is great.

Stanley Clarke

"Goodbye Pork-Pie Hat" (from *Live At The Greek, Epic, 1994*) Clarke, bass.

[Immediately] Stanley Clarke. He's just as distinctive on electric bass as Jaco Pastorius, but I don't think anybody knows how great of a bass player he actually is. This is almost straight-up rock & roll. I wish Stanley Clarke would just get a piano player and a drummer and go into the studio to lay down some tunes and just play some bass. I would give this 3½ to 4 stars because he's Stanley and he's my homeboy, but I know there's much better Stanley than this out there.

Robert Hurst Jr.

"Detroit Red" (from *Presents Robert Hurst, DIW/Columbia, 1992*) Hurst, bass.

This must be Robert Hurst. 5 stars for Bob. He's not only a wonderful bass player, but I didn't realize how great of a writer he is. His first album is brilliant. Bob was one of my main influences all through high school.

Jimmy Blanton

"Jack The Bear" (from *Ellington's The Blanton-Webster Band, RCA/Bluebird, 1939*) Blanton, bass.

I should have known this from the beginning. "Jack The Bear" is something I've gotten familiar with only in the last year. But Ray Brown opened my eyes to something—if you listen to what really made Blanton great, it was the way he played time. You can really tell where a guy's thing is when you listen to him walkin' and keep that band together. He was the master. 5 and beyond.

Ray Brown

"Equinox" (from *3 Dimensional, Concord Jazz, 1991*) Brown, bass.

Is this Ray? I literally call him "Dad" in more ways than one. Ray says Jimmy Blanton was the man that really turned him around forever. Ray Brown was the man who turned me around forever. The more I listened to him, the more I became hooked. I didn't realize I had listened to him and ingested all this subconsciously. From that point on, Ray Brown's been my main man. Anything he does gets 5 stars from me.

DB