

**PHAROAH SANDERS IS BACK!**

# DOWN BEAT

Jazz, B'

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## His Way

Pat Metheny's  
Eclectic Freedom

**JJ Johnson**  
Why Jazz  
Shouldn't Behave

**BASS RAP:**  
John Patitucci  
& Robert Hurst

**CLASSIC INTERVIEW:**  
Wes Montgomery

**Jamey Haddad**  
Blindfolded

**INTRODUCING:**  
*The Hot Box*





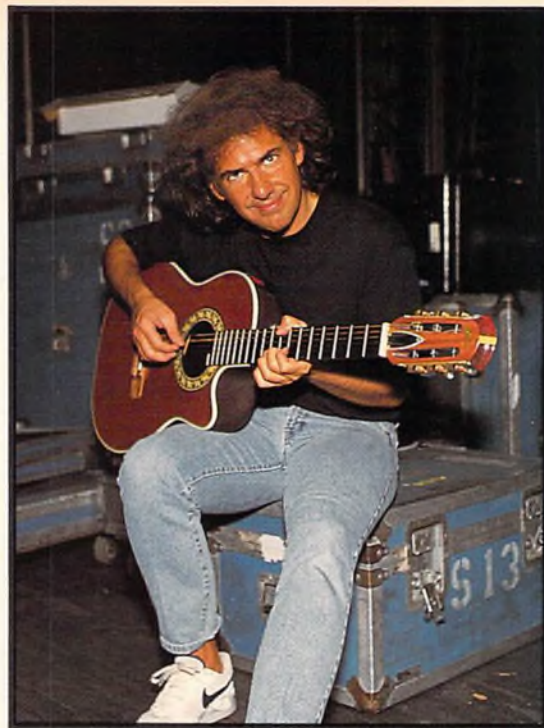
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What hasn't he done? The eclectic Metheny mystique is revealed in a probing interview.

By Howard Mandel

Cover photograph of Pat Metheny by Frank Miceciotta.



STUART BRINN

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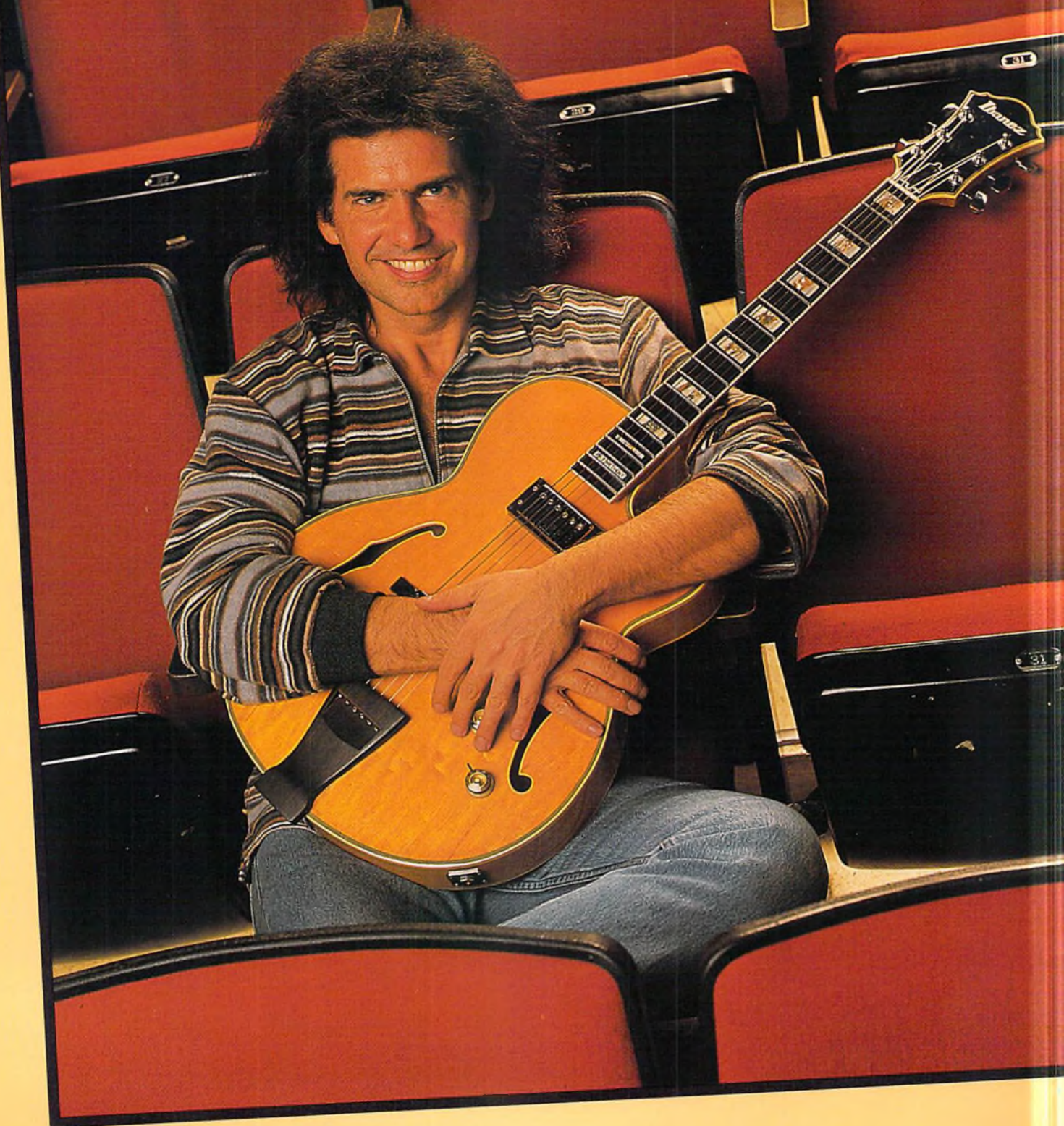
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# PAT ME





# METHENY

## Plays It His Way

By Howard Mandel

**H**e might show up anywhere, play anything: heavy-metal crunch (aka splatter-punk), lyrical lines that lay deep in rich and mellow grooves, pianistic comping behind some roaring young lions, Miles melodies in trio with straight-on jazzers, nuevo fusion, guitar duels or unclassifiable, synth-derived suites with a choir of Cambodians and members of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Since emerging from Columbia, Mo., via Berklee School of Music in the '70s as a van-traveling man in the post-hippie/jazz acolyte mode, guitarist/composer/Group leader Pat Metheny has taken on as wide a range of roles as, say, Robin Williams. And while Metheny's projections span the sound and style spectrums, his signature quality remains earnest consistency. He may be restless; he's never erratic.

According to Metheny himself, his success is twofold: he does as he likes, and people like what he does.

"You'll never hear me complaining about anything," says the ultimate longhaired, jean-clad Fusion Boomer, now 40 and again on the road with his Group, supporting *We Live Here*, their first studio album in six years (see "CD Reviews" Feb. '95). "I've been extremely lucky, and nobody knows it more than me.

"It's not been without working it real hard," Pat hastens to add, because he doesn't want anyone to think he simply won the talent lottery. "I'm not talking about gigging. I'm saying I still practice constantly. I'm *real* interested in trying to get good, and I have been for most of my life now—it's an all-consuming thing. I use pretty much every hour of every day thinking about music, trying to understand what kind of relationship I can have with it, trying to reconcile all the things that interest me about music with my instincts and ideas about what music can be. On the other hand," he muses, "I've been given lots of opportunities since I was 14 years old to play with musicians that were a lot better than me. And, to me, *that's* always the secret."

Aw, come on, there must be more to it than *that*. Everybody knows guys who play better than they do, but not everybody has so steadily climbed the pinnacles of accomplishment as Pat—a pan-stylistic but immediately identifiable player, longterm touring bandleader, in-demand composer, ceaseless experimenter and innovator, collaborator with Ornette Coleman, Joshua Redman, John Scofield, Herbie Hancock and Roy Haynes, among many notable others. Yes, Metheny concedes, there is more:

"I try to listen to everything," he stresses with Midwestern-born-and-bred straightforwardness. "To me, playing is about *listening*. The more I play, the more I realize that's true. When I'm playing, I don't even *think* about playing; all I think about is, 'What would I like to hear if I was listening to *that*?' And then I play *that*."

"The players I've played with that I've been most inspired by and impressed with are, across the boards, the best listeners. It's a challenge to absorb information through your ears, really understand it and breathe it into yourself in the heat of battle. A give-and-take has to go on inside yourself in terms of how much you're going to participate—if you're the soloist, it's going to be a lot—and how much you're going to absorb. To me, Herbie Hancock is one of the exceptional listening talents of all time, he hears so deep inside the music. Charlie Haden is a great example of that, too, and Jack DeJohnette is an amazing listening musician. It's a quality I aspire toward and try to work on."

How does listening affect composing?

"Well," Metheny considers, "obviously composition and improvisation are closely related. My initial efforts as a composer were built upon my need to find a starting place for things I wanted to do as an improviser. It wasn't enough for me to play standard tunes, even though that's what I grew up doing. And for the first years that I played all I wanted to do was understand the breakthroughs of John Coltrane and Charlie Parker. Anybody serious about playing has to address that."

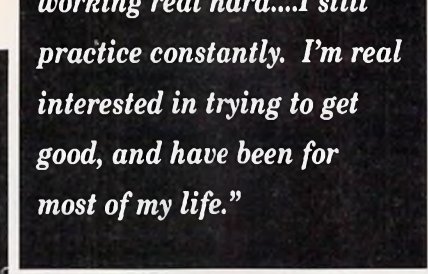
"But at a certain point, there were things I wanted to address that I wasn't finding in the forms of Tin Pan Alley-type songs or blues, and that's how I started thinking more about composition. In time, my writing—particularly for my band—has become more a matter of using the instruments available, and those that are emerging that intrigue us. Both myself and Lyle Mays are trying to expand the power of what's possible with a three-to-five-piece rhythm section-based band, and also looking for a balance between written material and improvisation."

"That's always been a challenge in jazz, particularly when you're dealing with sonorities and textures that have no precedent." This early-on proponent of guitar synths and drum machines, who urges listeners to check out his albums as he recorded them, on headphones, *loud*, grins, "We use a lot of instruments that never existed before."

**I**f new gear has stimulated Metheny's imagination, his career takes off from his belief in individualistic expression. "When I first got the chance to make records, I thought I was only going to get to do one or two, so I'd try to get my own music out there, try to develop my own thing. This goes back to my experience as a kid in Kansas City: I was around musicians who



*"It's not been without working real hard....I still practice constantly. I'm real interested in trying to get good, and have been for most of my life."*



Pat Metheny with Billy Higgins and Joshua Redman at the 1993 San Francisco Jazz Festival

were so clear about their identities. . . . Of all my favorite players, there's only one. You know, there's only one Freddie Hubbard, and there can never be a repertory group simulating Freddie Hubbard. When Milt Jackson's gone, that's it; Ron Carter, Gary Burton, all of them the same way. Because it's not about notes on paper, it's about vibe and spirit and soul.

"As a young guy I saw older musicians who had this vibe. [Back home,] when Tommy Ruskin hit his cymbal, the whole world changed, the room took on this Tommy Ruskin vibe. To me, that became the goal.

"I mean, it's a given that you have to deal, you have to play hip notes, have to play with a good groove, play deep inside the changes, play over the changes, *outside* the changes. Some people make careers out of the fundamentals—but I think to go to the next level you have to find your own way of looking at music, thinking about melody, sound and what music is to you.

"The fundamental thing Lyle and I have done in terms of form and structure and the sonic details of how to make records with electric instruments, using a wider palate of sound, is more notable than just one of the colors we've used," Metheny insists. "South American inflections are one color, like turquoise. To speak of music in a visual sense, I've become more interested in a dense kind of sound-painting in the past few years—that's the thing that connects the last four or five records I've done.

"Early on, the geographical terrain I grew up in implied a lot of space, and that affected me esthetically. I remember as I was playing, thinking about fields—a tree, then a lot of space, then another tree, then a lot of space. I let things take time to unfold. But *We Live Here*, *Secret Story* and *Zero Tolerance For Silence* all have been so dense there's no white on the canvas: as my life has gotten more complicated and full of information, I've filled every hole. *Song X* was a record that dealt with density; Ornette [Coleman] wanted to have this dense thing, and it was a challenge for me, harmonically—but it really worked on one track, 'Endangered Species.' *Offramp* and *Rejoicing* have areas of greater density, too; so does *Question And Answer*, with Dave Holland and Roy Haynes. I may be near the end of that now, and ready to look at more space again. But density has intrigued me for years, back to 80/81.

"You know," Metheny segues, as if sliding from a tightly constructed ensemble passage into an expansive solo, "I think of all my records as one long record. The way your career is marked in stone by the records you make; that used to bother me, you know, that your new record is who you are. That's from the pop world, and it's become that way in jazz now, too. But I don't see the records as being an end in themselves, 'cause I've known my band always sounded better live.

"Of course, records are what you leave behind, and being with Geffen, I've had the chance to spend a little more bread and more time on some of them than with ECM. For instance, *Secret Story* was huge, a compositional album involving a lot of players, and the culmination of a bunch of things for me personally. I did a complete scale model of it with synthesizers in the studio that took six months in itself. The final album production took four months, on and off.

"But then, *Question And Answer* took six hours—which was the way that record *should* have been done. *Song X* took a week. Depending on what the record needs, that's what we do. It's great to have that kind of freedom—it's a privilege."

**P**at says he's never been pressured by his record labels, and takes guidance mostly from those close to him.

"Before I go into the studio, I go out and have a long talk with myself about what it is I want to accomplish, what kind of a record I want to make, and what it's going to take for that to happen. I'm fortunate to be in a band with Lyle, [bassist] Steve Rodby and [drummer] Paul Wertico, who have the same vision of what's good that I do. We're all different, but we've done thousands of gigs together, Lyle and me for 18 years, Steve for 14 years, and Paul for 12. We've grown up together. We know when it's happening and when it's not, and we're the most critical group of people you'll ever meet when it comes to our music; we're a tough crowd.

"It's much easier to have a bunch of guys like that to lean on than to be out on my own, as on *Zero Tolerance* and *Secret Story*—though there, too, I've got to give credit to Steve Rodby, who's become involved in a production level, and also David Oaks, our production manager for live sound for 15 years, who I trust more than anyone in terms of knowing when I'm playing well. But the first track of *Zero Tolerance*, I'd put that on the top five of all the things I've recorded. It deals with melody in a similar way to how I always think about melody, but uses a different vocabulary and is for me a very strong expression of how I want to grab different pictures of melody and get away from diatonic sound toward *pure* sound—where it stops being about notes, and is about *sound*, instead. In this sense, I've always had a deep appreciation for Derek Bailey's view of what the guitar can do as a generator of sonic events, as well as how he delineates space.

"I used to talk to Jaco [Pastorius] about this stuff when we had our trio. Sometimes the transformation into pure sound happens in a harmonic way, sometimes in a melodic way, sometimes it's a texture thing—the *sound* of it, rather than the *notes* of it. Obviously *Zero Tolerance* is mostly about texture, less about marking up space with events on a canvas than how you can create



the illusion of density. But you can be the greatest musician, know everything there is to know about harmony and substitutions and rhythm and over-the-bar lines and the hippest modern stuff, you can listen and hear all these great things and talk about it for days and write papers on it, study it to death—or you can put it on and it's going to make your wallpaper look different, it's going to function on a whole ton of levels. To me, the best music does *that*.

"The reason I'm a musician is to go out and play, to be an improviser. It's the most fun part. The hardest part is writing the music—that's torture, especially now that close to 200 songs of mine are recorded. To sit down to write a new record, it's like, well, here we go again. Before I get to the good stuff, I have to dig for a month just to get to new territory.

"Recording is a different kind of torture, though it can be fun—but you work, often over a long period of time, and you wonder, 'Is this good enough?' At the end of a day you don't know; you can only hope. But going out and playing for people is such a pleasurable experience.

"There's a real sense of accomplishment to playing a gig, and it's what we live for, regardless of all the discussions about what is and what's not jazz. I mean, I spend a lot of time and energy developing a context for me and the guys in the band to explore what we have to explore, as musicians, through improvisation and a real personal relationship to the music, through finding grooves, hitting them, expanding them and sort of throwing the stuff around.

"That's something that can only happen at its best night after night after night, throughout a tour. When you go out and play 40 gigs with somebody you get to see what the real deal is, and that goes for your own self, too. You see how you're really doing, how you can play that tune, night after night after night, and find something cool to play that's really different from the night before. I love that experience." **DB**

#### EQUIPMENT

"In the middle of all the junk I've got there's still the same guitar, a Gibson ES-175. I started playing at age 14. But I'm also using an Ibanez signature model, one of two that's going to be issued this year.

"The Ibanez PM-1 is an exceptional guitar, like one I've been using as a studio guitar for about 10 years; it's on *Question And Answer*, Joshua Redman's *Wish* and an album I did with Bruce Hornsby [*Harbor Lights*]. It's a straightahead jazz guitar, just one pickup, somewhere between their George Benson model and a Gibson L5, and it sounds good through almost anything. It's got what people might think of as my sound, that lower range yet bright thing.

"The PM-2 has a shape that allows fuller access to the high part of the neck, a lot of frets so it's like a Gibson ES-335.

"My old Acoustic 134 amp I used from when I was 17 years old—it's nearing the end of its long life, and I've switched to a Digttech 2101, a guitar preamp with a bunch of fancy bells and whistles in it. It's got the real clear sound I need. In terms of the modern guitarists, I'm one who doesn't use much distortion. My basic tone is hard to get because it's a mid-range sound, and I play loud, by jazz standards. That mid-range sound, full-up, can destroy almost any amp, but this particular preamp can make that sound."

Metheny also has a Coral electric sitar and a Roland GR-330 guitar controller that interfaces with a Synclavier For acoustic guitar, he uses Linda Manzer-designed six- and 12-stringers and an Ovation nylon-string guitar.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*WE LIVE HERE*—Geffen 24729 with Joshua Redman  
*ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SILENCE*—99998 *WISH*—Warner Bros. 45365  
*THE ROAD TO YOU*—Geffen 24601 with Dave Holland and Roy Haynes  
*SECRET STORY*—Geffen 24468 *QUESTION AND ANSWER*—Geffen 24293  
*LETTER FROM HOME*—Geffen 24245 with Bruce Hornsby  
*STILL LIFE (TALKING)*—Geffen 24145 *HARBOR LIGHTS*—RCA 66114  
*SONG X*—Geffen 24096 with Lyle Mays  
*TE-VOU!*—Dreyfus 36569 *AS FALLS WICHITA, SO FALLS WICHITA*  
with John Scofield *FALLS*—ECM 21190  
*I CAN SEE YOUR HOUSE FROM HERE*—  
Blue Note 27765

gary  
burton



makoto  
ozone

face to face



gary burton & makoto ozone



face to face

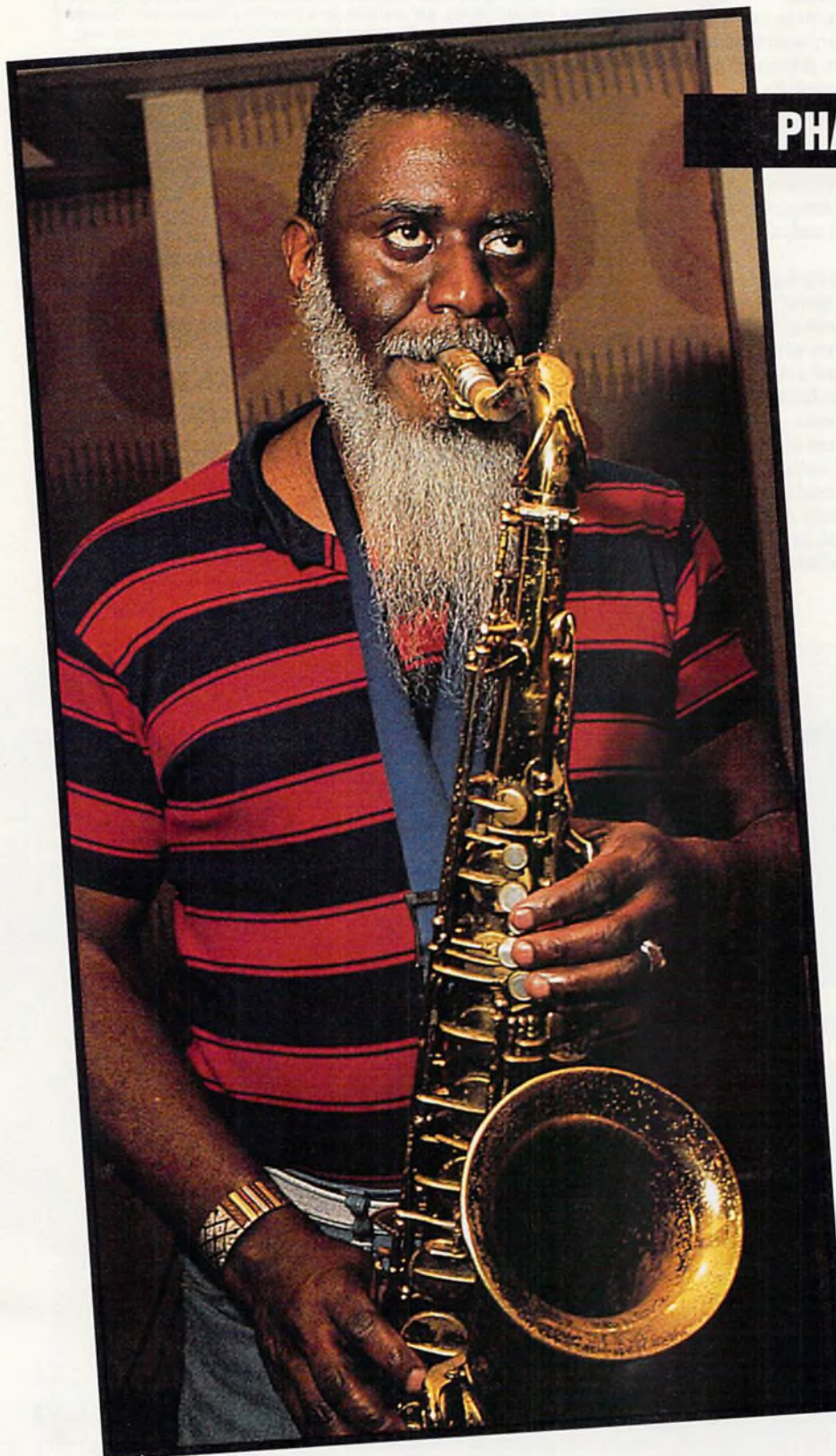
gary burton and makoto ozone will lure you into their flight of fantasy with this spirited collaboration. Combining a range of jaunty and soulful shimmerings with imagination and undaunting nerve, "face to face" is a stunningly eclectic repertoire. Who could refuse an invitation to experience a festival, complete with all the appropriate fireworks?



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# Pharoah



## PHAROAH SANDERS

By Martin Johnson

**T**here seem to be several established routes for veteran jazz greats to follow en route back to mainstream prominence. One path: do thematic albums dedicated to jazz greats (thereby offering two angles). Another: highlight the best of the younger players on the scene. A third: begin writing new music and profoundly reinterpreting classics.

Pharoah Sanders has followed none of these routes, yet, he is—please pardon the hypespeak—hot. In the last year he has done stellar work in a wide variety of musical styles. He participated in and adorns the cover of the *Stolen Moments Red Hot + Cool* album, the jazz/hip-hop fusion project to benefit AIDS research (see **DB** Oct. '94). He joins with Maleem Mahmoud Ghania and Gnawa musicians of Morocco for a cross-cultural exchange on *Trance Of Seven Colors*. And in more of a straightahead jazz vein, he has recorded *Crescent With Love*, an album on which most of the tunes are associated with Sanders' mentor, John Coltrane (see "CD Reviews" Mar. '95). This diverse agenda is not part of a systematic effort by Sanders to win followers in all precincts. He's merely making the gig. An aspect fully evidenced by his response to being called a jazz musician.

"I have never said I was a jazz player; I'm just a player. I get jobs with whoever calls me, you know, and I perform in whatever the situation may be," he says with obvious irritation rising in his voice. Then, for emphasis, he adds, "I am most certainly not a jazz player."

Similar sentiments would no doubt be echoed by members of jazz's new republican congress. Pharoah's entry into John Coltrane's band in 1965 coincided with the leader's move into a deeper, more spiritually (and sonically) wrenching phase. Together, they made dissonant and challenging work. Sanders is barely recognized by the jazz conservatives, most of whom end their exploration of 'Trane before his final phase. Pharoah's work has

MITCHELL SEIDEL



# S R e t u r n

always been about much more than the shrieks and squeals that some would reduce it to, but even that aspect of his repertory is finding a new audience. Art rockers and free-music fans are embracing his music because they find in it an unbridled passion free of economic uncertainties and social complications. In the harrowing cries of Pharoah, Charles Gayle and David Ware, perhaps people are finding the polar opposite to ambient, or new-age club, music. In some ways, it's also easy to find a religious element in such powerful music; Pharoah says that for him, making music is "like a prayer."

Given that he is a titan of the tenor saxophone, it's a bit of a surprise to realize that Pharoah is a man of medium height and build. His famous angled-white beard, which makes him look like an Egyptian deity, is trim and lean. He seems cordial but wary when we meet at his apartment just west of Manhattan's Worldwide Plaza business complex. The walls of the apartment are decorated with Asian and Arabic tapestries, the sofa and tables are cluttered with CDs, a couple of Selmer tenors, and dozens of mouthpieces. In the corner is a big-screen television and a stack of jazz videocassettes.

Before we can get into the small-talk phase of the interview, he asks to see my list of questions. "There are certain things I'd rather not discuss," he explains. Among the topics he rejects are his recent Knitting Factory gig with Gayle, the new generation of jazz traditionalists, and, to my surprise, John Coltrane. Pressed, he heaves a sigh, closes his eyes for a moment, then says, "Some things I'm through talking about."

But how can this be? *Crescent With Love*, his new recording, seems like a dedication to Trane. "I love John's music," he says, "but it wasn't my idea to do that record." His ambivalence becomes clearer as he explains the sequence of events leading up to the recording.

"The record company called me about doing some of John's tunes. I must have agreed. It was *not* my idea to do any of those tunes. They had a list of tunes. I got paid. My men got paid. We went on from there. It wasn't something that as a growing person I would choose to do at this time. I settled for it."

*Crescent's* producer, drummer Carl Allen, sees it differently. "Pharoah and I would talk; it wasn't a situation where we said,

'Pharoah, here are the tunes.'" He said Pharoah contributed William Henderson's "Song For Shyla" to the songlist. Allen and his partner, saxophonist Vincent Herring, formed Big Apple Productions four years ago, and *Crescent* typifies one of their missions: to shed new light on veteran jazz greats. Before producing Pharoah, the duo worked with Dewey Redman, Lee Konitz and Nat Adderley.

**"I feel that in every country there are musicians who are on a very high level spiritually, and that's who I'd play with. Maybe even go on a world tour."**

"We wanted to show a side of Pharoah that people rarely see, a softer, gentler side. People are used to seeing him playing out or a little avant garde," says Allen. "That's why we focused on ballads."

If Sanders was at all displeased with the arrangements it didn't come out during the recording. "The date played itself," says Allen. "He started to play and it was eerie, but in a good way. If you closed your eyes, you would have thought that John Coltrane was in the room. It was incredible. Pharoah filled the room with so much positive energy."

Evidently the feeling from the music was so good that the producers and the label decided to make *Crescent* a double CD. "The way he was playing, only an idiot would walk up to him and say, 'That was nice, Pharoah,' but can we do it again in half the time?"

Doesn't Allen believe that this kind of project places Pharoah in the shadow of Coltrane? "I think the shadow is part of his

historical significance. Pharoah fully understands Coltrane's music, and you can hear that in his playing. It's not like these are guys who are trying to look like Miles and walk like Miles. Pharoah sounds like Coltrane, but he has his own identity. So yeah, I think it happens, but I don't think it's a problem."

Both Allen and Sanders hint that the rave reviews and strong radio airplay have attracted whispers of interest from major labels, and such a scenario is not far-fetched. Although they are still shoving kids-in-suits down our throats in record numbers, the majors are taking an interest in the veterans on the outside. Columbia has released *Carry The Day* by Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus, and the group is at work on another. Leo Smith, another veteran AACMer, has released *Kulture Jazz* (ECM), his first well-distributed release in years. And Polygram has given Ornette Coleman his own imprint to release new and vintage material.

**S**anders' diverse agenda certainly adds to his attraction. He was characteristically tight-lipped about his involvement in the *Red Hot + Cool* project (which resulted in a recording, a live concert and a video document of the show). "They called me and I really didn't know what was going on with them, but I did it since it was kind of a benefit. Something positive would come out of it."

All of the planners of the project agreed on Sanders' involvement. "It was probably [producer] Earle Sebastian's idea to get him, but Pharoah was on everybody's list of people who should be involved in this project," said Jonathan Rudnick of the Groove Academy, one of the planners on the event. "In Europe, his influence is huge. 'The Creator Has A Master Plan' is a classic, and Galliano [a British jazz-funk group] used his 'Om Allah Om' as the inspiration for their 'Prince Of Peace.' His music is very spiritual, and it embodied what we all wanted."

Pharoah collaborates with former members of the Last Poets, Umar Bin Hassan and Abiodun Oyewole, to do the LP classic "This Is Madness." While the poets declaim lines, some of which were recast from ranting about white supremacy to rants about apathy and denial in the face of the AIDS crisis, Pharoah raises a holy



# JUST RELEASED



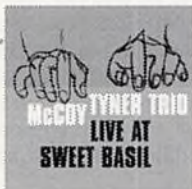
## New Orleans Collective

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## Live At Sweet Basil

### McCoy TYNER

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## Sound Circle

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### CARLA WHITE

LEW TABACKIN  
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# RECENTLY RELEASED

## Crescent With Love

### PHAROAH SANDERS

WILLIAM HENDERSON  
CHARLES FAMBROUGH  
SHERMAN FERGUSON

ECD 22099



## A Tribute To Wes Montgomery

### PROJECT G-5

TAL FARLOW  
HERB ELLIS  
JIMMY RANEY  
CAL COLLINS  
ROYCE CAMPBELL ECD 22101



racket, lending both a sense of urgency and anguish to the situation. The bonus CD includes a well-intentioned remix of "The Creator Has A Master Plan," about which Pharoah had no comment.

Of his recent work, *The Trance Of Seven Colors* seems like the recording Sanders regards most fondly. He had met Moroccan musicians who were versed in Gnawa styles in California in the late '80s, and he drew on those experiences for his collaboration with Maleem Mahmoud Ghania and Gnawa musicians. He even wrote "Peace In Essouria," a dedication to the guitarist Sonny Sharrock (with whom Pharoah recorded both in the early '70s and early '90s), who had passed away just days before the recording session took place.

"It was very exciting," he said of the sessions. "They build on the music, add things in layers; everybody gets involved."

It is often said that Gnawa music has healing powers, but Pharoah said that that didn't enter his thinking when he composed the tune. "I guess that could have been happening," he said slowly, tilting his head back as if trying to access the memory of the session.

"I just gave them the music, and from there each person started building on it. We listened back to it, and that was very different for me to hear low-pitched string instruments. It's amazing what you can do with something like that. I'd like to do some more [cross-cultural projects] like that, maybe China or Japan, and work with some koto players.

"I feel that in every country there are musicians who are on a very high level spiritually, and that's who I'd like to play with. Maybe even go on a world tour with them."

Of course he would probably get more of a response if he took the music from *Crescent With Love* on tour, but that goes without saying. Coltrane aside, when asked about his other key influences, he talked about Little Rock, Ark., in the late '50s.

"Jimmy Cannon, my high school band instructor, was my teacher and idol. There were also a lot of guys who came down from Memphis to work and get paid in the clubs there.

"I was only in high school, but I would dress up—put on a suit, put a little thing here [*pointing at his lip*], like I had a mustache and some dark shades, and sneak into the club. I had to walk a little different

and talk a little different, but I met some good players like Gilbert Capers. It was a good scene until they closed it down."

In 1959, Pharoah moved to Oakland and played in blues and rhythm & blues clubs while attending junior college. He met Coltrane briefly, and they toured pawn shops for horns and mouthpieces. In 1962, he moved to New York and played a lot of jazz, blues and odd jobs. By this time he had developed his own unique style and was getting calls from like-minded musicians such as Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman and Sun Ra.

"I would go by everyday to rehearse with them [Sun Ra's Arkestra]. If we weren't rehearsing, the Sun would talk to us about

different things, because he was very knowledgeable about things I hadn't even thought about. I was amazed by how much he knew about history.

"I worked with them quite a few times back then. At the time, I didn't have my own place, so when I left [the Arkestra], I was

out on the street. For about two years, I lived on the streets. I met quite a few other musicians on the streets. It was hard times. Everyone who stayed in New York City struggled till daylight came. I used to give blood to make five dollars. Since a slice of pizza was only 15 cents and a candy bar cost only a nickel, if I had a dollar, that would take care of you and me all day long!

"I realize now that I should have waited to come to New York, but I came and waited it out."

His break came when he saw Coltrane playing at the Half Note in '63. "I was outside. I couldn't go in because I was dirty and all, but John saw me and let me in. We exchanged . . . well, he gave me his number, and I tried to stay in touch with him. We started talking a lot. . . ." He lets the point drift off as if to say the rest is history.

Does he listen to any of the old recordings he made back then? "Oh yeah. I listen to them. I'm always amazed about the mouthpieces I used. How could I let something that worked so well get away from me?"

Droll and evasive as that may sound, Pharoah is not kidding. Although, to his fans, his life's work seems to be the defining of the post-Coltrane tenor saxophone, for Pharoah, the quest for a good reed and mouthpiece might be part of the equation. "I go through whole boxes of them without

**"I'm always amazed about the mouthpieces I used. How could I let something that worked so well get away from me."**

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finding one good one," he says, gesturing toward the box of reeds lying on his sofa. "The boxes look pretty and everything, but inside . . . well, I guess they [the manufacturers] have to make a living, too."

Pharoah tries to hear as much music as possible, and he allows that he is particularly impressed with pianist/reedman Bheki Mseleku and drummers Sherman Ferguson and Cindy Blackman, among others. He practices hatha yoga to improve his breathing because "it's a natural way to stimulate yourself."

Finally, he looks at me and smiles, "What would you like to know about John Coltrane?" Oooh, where should we start, I think. "Body And Soul" from *Live In Seattle, Ascension*, spirituality? Pharoah sees my wheels turning, and with no loss of avuncularity, clarifies himself. "No, what *one* question on your notepad were you going to ask me?"

(Damn!) Okay, do you feel that Trane gets too much credit for your sound? He pauses, but doesn't withdraw into himself. "I can't say. It could go either way. A person does a lot of things on their instrument that are natural: things they've been doing all their life. But they may be similar to things someone else is doing.

"I've always tried to do my own thing. It may not go as far as the ceiling," he adds with a chuckle. "I just try and play as straight as I can."

DB

#### EQUIPMENT

Pharoah Sanders plays a Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone. He also plays some of their older models from time to time.

His search for a reliable reed and mouthpiece has been an epic quest and is detailed in the story.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*CRESCENT WITH LOVE*—Evidence 22099  
*A PRAYER BEFORE DAWN*—Evidence 22047  
*HEART IS A MELODY*—Evidence 22063  
*SHUKURU*—Evidence 22022  
*REJOICE*—Evidence 22020  
*JOURNEY TO THE ONE*—Evidence 22016  
*WELCOME TO LOVE: PHAROAH SANDERS PLAYS BEAUTIFUL BALLADS*—Timeless 358  
*MOON CHILD*—Timeless 326  
*AFRICA*—Timeless 253  
*THEMBI*—MCA/Impulse! 5860  
*KARMA*—MCA/Impulse! 39122  
*TAUHQID*—GRP/Impulse! 129

with various others

*STOLEN MOMENTS RED HOT + COOL*—GRP 9794  
*THE TRANCE OF SEVEN COLORS*—Axiom 314-524 047 (Malcolm Mahmoud Ghania)  
*SOLOMON'S DAUGHTER*—Evidence 22083 (Franklin Kiermyer)  
*ASK THE AGES*—Axiom 422-848 957 (Sonny Sharrock)  
*LOVE AND PEACE*—Evidence 22087 (Elvin Jones/McCoy Tyner)  
*THIS IS FOR YOU JOHN*—Timeless 235 (Benny Golson)  
*KABSHA*—Evidence 22096 (Idris Muhammad)  
*ED KELLY & PHAROAH SANDERS*—Evidence 22056 (Ed Kelly)  
*JOURNEY IN SATCHIDANANDA*—MCA/Impulse! 33119 (Alice Coltrane)

with John Coltrane

*LIVE IN SEATTLE*—GRP/Impulse! 2-146  
*EXPRESSION*—GRP/Impulse! 2-131  
*THE MAJOR WORKS OF JOHN COLTRANE*—GRP/Impulse! 2-113  
*LIVE IN JAPAN*—GRP/Impulse! 4-102

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J. J. JOHNSON

# At Home with J.J.

By David Whiteis

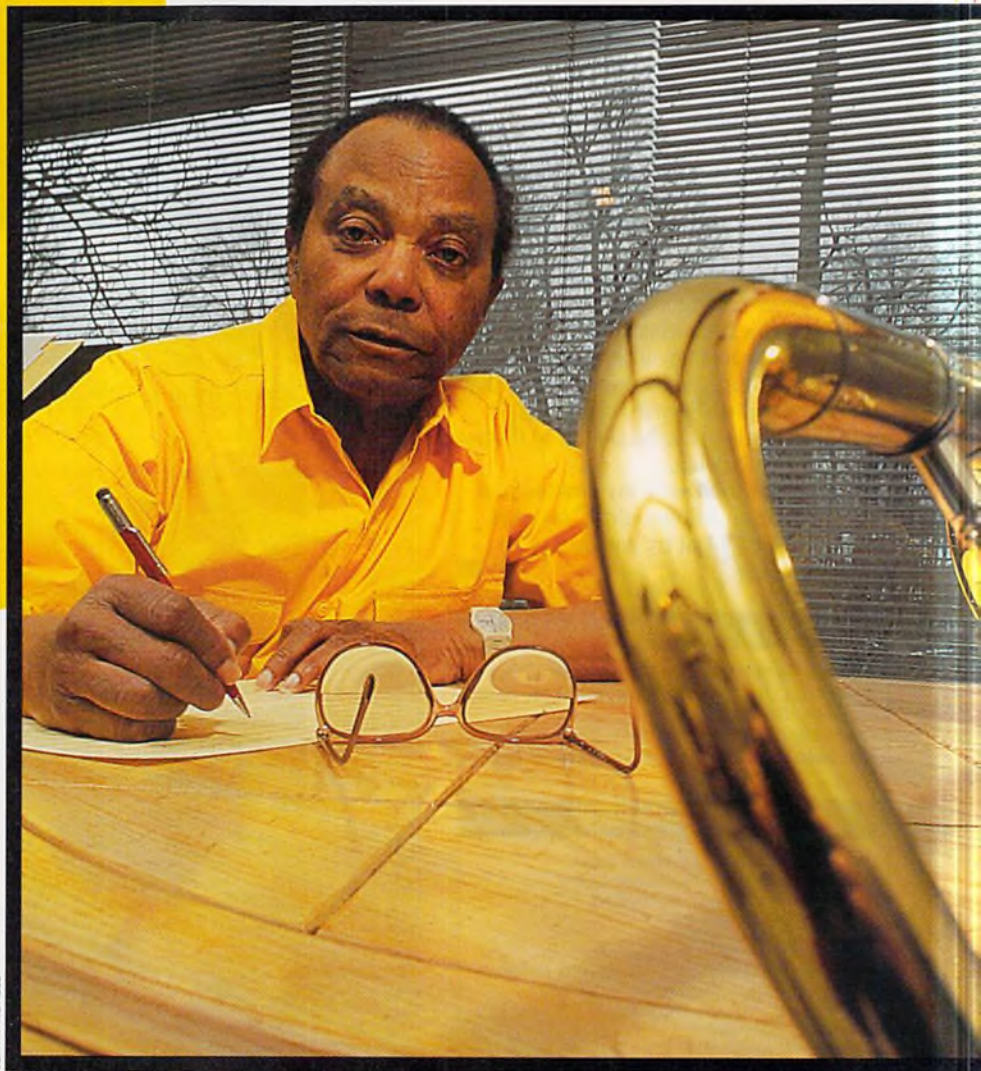
**F**or a man who's had several major "comebacks" in recent years—the latest being *Tangence*, a new album that features orchestrations by Robert Farnon and some fresh ideas from the leader himself—it's no wonder J.J. Johnson has been keeping himself awfully busy.

"Out of 12 months, I'm on the road I'd say about seven," the trombonist said recently at his Indianapolis home, one day before his 71st birthday. "In the last few months my quintet has been to Europe twice, Brazil once, been to Japan once, plus all the activity we do on the domestic front."

Johnson's current domestic-front activity includes preparing for a well-earned appearance and tribute—billed as *An Evening With J.J. Johnson*—at Lincoln Center, scheduled for Nov. 18. After that there'll be more touring, including a rare appearance in Indy itself at the Jazz Kitchen. That gig, which will include Rufus Reid on bass, Renee Rosnes on piano and others to be named later, will be the first J.J. has led in his hometown since leaving there with Benny Carter back in the '40s.

A number of prominent jazzmen have hailed from Indianapolis (the Montgomery brothers, Slide Hampton and Freddie Hubbard come immediately to mind), but some people might consider the Hoosier capital a strange place for an urbane fellow like Johnson to *return* to. Johnson has obviously heard that before. One of the tunes on his recording *Quintergy: Live At The Village Vanguard* (an earlier "comeback" event that celebrated his reemergence from Los Angeles, where he'd spent the better part of the '70s and '80s composing themes and scores for TV) is pointedly titled, "Why Indianapolis—Why Not Indianapolis?"

Johnson's house is nestled away on a quirky little tree-lined avenue in a tranquil residential section that feels suburban but is actually only about six miles from downtown. Inside, the decor reminds you of one of Johnson's solos: creatively juxtaposed angles complement one another with elegant smoothness, and everywhere there's a lot of space to move around in and



JERRY MITCHELL

explore. Outside the window on this crisp, January day, snow filters softly to the ground against a backdrop of bare trees, creating a near-mystic sense of tranquility.

In this house, on this block, J.J. the world-famous jazz musician is simply Mr. Johnson, good neighbor. That's just the way he wants it:

"I like it that here, I'm John Doe. It's very comfortable, and I look forward to it. I live here, my home is here, my second wife, Carolyn, is here. My first wife, who passed away a few years ago, was Vivian. We were married for 43 years.

"The reason for moving back to

Indianapolis was very uncomplicated, really. Having lived in New York for a number of years—no regrets—having lived in Los Angeles for a number of years—again, no regrets—the decision to make a change was made by my first wife and myself, to bring about a dramatic change in our lifestyles and our lives, and a likely place to consider was Indianapolis. We were both born and raised here; this was our roots.

"I've never performed here with my own group. I decided a long time ago that I prefer to have Indianapolis be my haven of rest, my home—not a place where I do the



same things I do on the road, but a place where I do different things, namely: Rest! Revamp! Chill out! Re-think! Re-evaluate! Explore! Compose! Arrange! I need this quietness for all those things.”



**J**ohnson speaks the way he plays, with unquenchable fire and a heartfelt passion for accuracy and precision. When a topic moves him he'll lean right into you, eyes ablaze, and his voice will take on some of the stentorian intensity one usually associates with his trombone playing. But no matter how fast the words come, he always makes sure to pick exactly the right ones.

Asked, for instance, about his '50s-era transition from a role as section man in the Count Basie band to becoming a soloist navigating the untamed territories of bop, he'll concur that the leap required some

major adjustments. He wants to add a few qualifiers, however, to the “bebop” category into which he's sometimes pigeonholed:

“The first challenge for me was to become familiar with that jazz language. That was a specific language of jazz, a syntax, if you will. So the first order of business had nothing to do with the trombone; the first order of business was to become familiar with the syntax of that genre.

“That's what it's all about; it's all about

upper register, he never plays a lot of high notes, he never plays a lot of fast notes. All he plays is lyric lines that seem to go well together and form a certain *syntax* that appeals to me very much. If you listen to that, you'll *hear* what I'm talking about!” (You'll also hear it, by the way, on J.J.'s own composition—logically titled “Syntax”—on his 1992 album *Let's Hang Out*.)

That same singleminded determination and certainty of vision is responsible for some innovations on Johnson's new

**“I decided a long time ago that I prefer to have Indianapolis to be my haven of rest, my home — not a place where I do the same things I do on the road.”**

*syntax*. It's not about the difficulty of the trombone, or a guy playing this fast, that fast. *Syntax* is the key word here, the key element here—in jazz, period! Always has been, always will be!

“I have a problem with that word, ‘bebop.’ We all know that Dizzy Gillespie created that word himself. But in my opinion, Dizzy Gillespie was much bigger. His persona, his intellect, his whole being was much bigger than that little box that has a label on it that says ‘bebop.’ And I can only hope that I, too, am bigger than the label that's put on J.J. Johnson from time to time, ‘J.J. Johnson the bebop trombone player.’ I hope that I have matured beyond that little box.

“My first hero, improvisation-wise, was Lester Young. It was his mindset that intrigued me. [Trombonist] Dickie Wells was not known to play a lot of notes—oh, but what notes he played! As a matter of fact, he played very few notes in a given solo, but they were a *wonderful few notes!* Very well-selected, very well-chosen. And the interesting thing about that is that this was not something that he conscientiously thought about; it was his mindset about the genre.

“One of my favorite jazz solos is Miles Davis' wonderful solo on ‘So What.’ In my opinion, it's the perfect example of that word that I call the key word, *syntax*, in that there is no virtuoso playing in Miles' solo at all. He never comes out of the mid-to-upper register, never is he screaming in the

recording that are sure to get folks talking. As the liner notes make plain, Johnson for years had wanted to do a project with Robert Farnon, a respected classical arranger and film scorer who's done jazz orchestrations for Sarah Vaughan, Dizzy Gillespie, Johnny Mathis and George Shearing.

“I knew it was going to be a very ambitious undertaking,” he said. “We knew we wanted a typical Robert Farnon treatment, which calls for a [full-sized] orchestra—that's what Farnon is all about.

“I approached it with a measure of trepidation: ‘Well, J.J., you've got Robert Farnon, you've engaged his services, now what are you going to do?’ It took two years, almost, for me to pick the material for that album. Each piece was a very special piece in that I thought long and hard before including it in the list of tunes to do.

“I can truthfully say that one of the tunes that gave me some difficulty in deciding as to whether to do it or not was ‘The Meaning Of The Blues.’ I had to do a lot of soul-searching, because I was greatly intimidated—and I use the word ‘intimidated’ because that is the correct word—by the marvelous treatment of that tune by Miles Davis and Gil Evans. It's hypnotic, it's wonderful, it's marvelous, it's beautiful, it's gorgeous! When I listen to it I'm mesmerized by it!

“So I said, ‘J.J., what in the world can you do with “The Meaning Of The Blues” with



Miles and Gil having done what they did? How dare you even attempt it?' But attempt it we did, and it's history now that we included it on the album. And it came off very well, and I feel good about that."

These days, beboppers find themselves in the ironic position of getting corralled into the "traditionalist" camp in the ongoing debates over authenticity, deviance and upholding tradition. To avoid being pigeonholed, you need either a healthy sense of irony or an iron determination not to be compromised; Johnson falls decidedly into the latter group.

"I have been accused by some of my fellow musicians, some of my fellow trombone players, of being more adventurous in my playing nowadays, and I think that's a nice compliment. So maybe I'm the traditionalist that [some idealogues] accuse me of being, or maybe I'm not. I don't know.

"I don't feel that I should subscribe to any formula or format. When I go on the bandstand to perform, I let the chips fall where they will. I'll have a friend, a fellow

musician, a fellow trombone player say, 'Wow, J.J., I never heard you do that before; I never heard you *think* that way!'

"I welcome it! It's not that I'm trying to all of a sudden do something different; it

find out what my little creation sounds like, how I can improve on it, change it, modify it, whatever—so it works out very nicely as a part of my tool kit."

Computer technology, although a boon to composition, arrangement and musical self-development, has yet to capture Johnson's fancy as an actual performance medium. In his view, no one has come up with a synthesized sound that can capture the humanity and soul of a

live performance on real instruments.

"It does not breathe," he says. "It does not have the human element. It's so precise and so mathematical that it sounds very cold. The key manufacturers have been working at the drawing board to get rid of this cold, non-human feeling; there's an element in some of the programs called 'humanizing' your efforts.

"I don't think they will ever create a synthesizer or an electronic-music formula that will take the place of a *cooking* jazz quartet or jazz trio or jazz quintet. There's nothing that's ever going to take the place of warm-blooded guys who know their craft and who are on the bandstand *fired up*—no

**"I know of no reason why jazz. . . should sit down in a little corner and behave itself, and never venture out in any direction, and never be 'bad,' and never be 'annoying,' and 'Mind your manners!'"**

happens on its own volition—this is not something you conscientiously do—just as with the evolution of jazz and the various genres that seem to take off and go in strange regions. It just comes out that way. *Thank heaven* it comes out that way!"

One need only glance around Johnson's computer room to see how eagerly he embraces the new. In an age when many people 30 years younger than him find themselves intimidated by the very word "computer," Johnson has leapt into the information age with the gusto of an eager young sideman digging his chops into his first bop solo.

"My hobby is MIDI. I often play back to

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way!"

Johnson is adamant to point out, however, that he in no way disparages experimenters —acoustic, electric, digital or otherwise— in jazz. Nor, for that matter, is he bothered by the neo-traditionalist young lions. If true artistic enlightenment is to let a thousand flowers bloom, J.J. Johnson wants to be there to smell the whole orchard.

"I know of no reason why jazz and the jazz genre should sit down in a little corner and behave itself, and never venture out in any direction, and never be 'bad,' and never be 'annoying,' and 'Mind your manners!' Jazz *should not*, it never has, it never will, nor *should* it ever. *Therefore*, I strongly support those persons who would deviate from the norm and try things, and explore things, and experiment with things.

Otherwise, jazz would still be sitting in a corner and behaving itself, being not naughty, and being a nice little boy. I see no reason for that, and I don't endorse that line of thinking at all.

"There's *nothing* I know of that's negative about any aspect of jazz that's going on at the moment. I approve of all of it! Whether it's jazz-rap, jazz-rock, jazz-you-name-it, it's wonderful! And the wonderful thing about it is, it happens when it ought to happen.

"*It will go forward!* I know of no untimely occurrences in the evolution of this genre that we're talking about. Everything I know

about, *bar none*, happened when it should have happened. That's the way it's going to always be.

"You want to know about the future? We don't know! And that's what's good about

jazz; I'm *glad* that we don't know what's going to happen with jazz! That's wonderful! I love that more than anything else! *We don't know* what's going to happen! That's the fun of it all!"

DB

#### EQUIPMENT

J.J. Johnson plays a Yamaha .691 trombone, with a normal tenor bore. He also plays a custom-made trombone:

"It's a prototype of my own design that was executed by Larry Minick in California. Everyone thinks it's a bass trombone—it is a tenor trombone. It has a conical bore: where the mouthpiece is inserted into the slide it's the same as a normal tenor trombone; then, as it rounds the bend past the spit valve, it gets into a little larger-sized bore; then, past the coupler, it starts to expand even more; then, around the bend past the tuning slide, it flares out into this 12-and-a-half-inch bell. This

trombone is to a trombone as a flugelhorn is to a trumpet: it's a little darker, a little mellower."

Lately he's been experimenting in his practice studio with a Yamaha euphonium, as well.

For composing by computer, Johnson uses two different musical-notation software programs: Finale and Mosaic. His basic hardware is a Macintosh Quadra 650; the laser printer to print out his scores is also a Mac. For his synthesizers, he has a Kurzweil keyboard controller MIDI'd up with an E-mu Proteus I, E-mu Proteus II, Yamaha 2G-77, Kurzweil K2000, E-mu Vintage Keys and E-mu Procussion.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

TANGENCE—Verve 314-526-588

LET'S HANG OUT—Verve 314-514-454

VIVIAN—Concord Jazz 4523

STANDARDS: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Antilles 314-510059

QUINTERGY: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Antilles 422-848214

SAY WHEN—RCA Bluebird 6277

CONCEPTS IN BLUE—Fantasy OJC 735

THE EMINENT J.J. JOHNSON. VOLS. 1 & 2—Blue Note 81505/81506

THE TROMBONE MASTER—Columbia 44443

J.J. JOHNSON AT THE CAFE BOHEMIA—Fresh Sound 143

TROMBONE BY THREE—Fantasy OJC 091

EARLY BONES—Prestige 2-24067

J.J. AND KAI—Savoy Jazz 0163 (Kai Winding)

POEM FOR BRASS—Columbia (out of print)

PERCEPTIONS—Verve (out of print)

with various others

THE ARTISTRY OF STAN GETZ—Verve 2-314-511 468

STAN GETZ & FRIENDS—Verve 835 317

THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME—Fantasy OJC 745 (Al Grey)

WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN—Pablo 2310-911 (Joe Pass)

THE GREAT KAI AND J.J.—MCA/Impulse! 42012 (Kai Winding)

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC: THE FIRST CONCERT—Verve 314-521 646

STAN GETZ AND J.J. JOHNSON AT THE OPERA HOUSE—Verve 831 272

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# Defending the Bottom Line

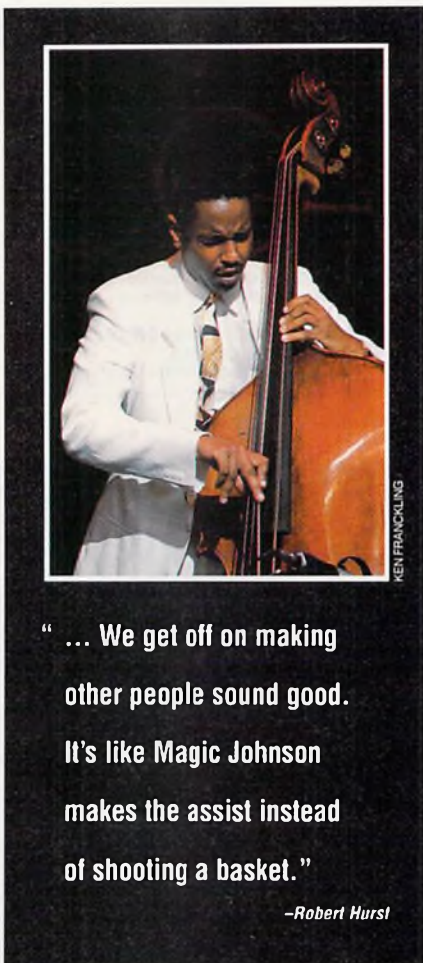
ROBERT HURST & JOHN PATITUCCI

**P**ut John Patitucci and Robert Hurst in a room, get them talking about music, and you'll hear a discourse on the history of jazz one minute, stories about how their peers made fun of their instruments the next. The pair have been longing to rap together about their enviable vocation as rhythm keepers, but it has been virtually impossible. Patitucci circled the world as part of Chick Corea's rhythm section, which kept him on the road sometimes six nights a week a good 150 days a year. Hurst's schedule wasn't too much better, as he toured first with Wynton Marsalis and then with his older brother, Branford. While any musician knows how weary the road can make you, these bassists know that playing, playing and playing has helped them become role models for the instrument's younger generation.

On a rainy day in January, the two Los Angeles-area transplants—and their acoustic basses—finally had a rendezvous at Sony Music's West Coast offices in Santa Monica, Calif. Hurst, who has two albums out under his own name, has been a member of the Tonight Show Band since 1993. Patitucci records and performs with just about everyone while producing his own albums. They talked to **DB** about the trials and thrills of playing those upright monsters they lug around from venue to venue. (Their electric-bass experiences figure in as well.) Patitucci was eagerly awaiting the release of his sixth solo effort, *Mystura Fina*. Hurst proudly offered Patitucci a copy of his recent album, *One For Namesake*, which was fresh from the pressing factory.

**PAT COLE:** *How did the two of you become interested in the bass while other kids you grew up with chose more glamorous instruments like the piano, guitar or drums?*

**JOHN PATITUCCI:** My older brother was a guitar player, so he was playing. At first I wanted to do everything that he was



“... We get off on making other people sound good. It's like Magic Johnson makes the assist instead of shooting a basket.”

—Robert Hurst

doing because he was three years older. My brother got the idea that maybe the bass would be cool because then I could use my fingers and I wouldn't have to use this pick. So when he put an electric bass in my hand, a tiny Telstar, it just felt right.

**ROBERT HURST:** I started on guitar, and I played all the popular songs, like Tito Jackson did with the Jackson Five. And I'm from Detroit, so they played all the Motown stuff with [James] Jamerson on it, the A and the B side. What really made me want to have a bass was when my father took me to

see the Modern Jazz Quartet when I was seven or eight. I sat right in front of Percy Heath, and it was so cool. It was so great to see that, and then he came out to talk to us during the whole break. It was real cool, so I was sold on the bass.

**PC:** *Who were your idols?*

**RH:** For me, you know, Percy or James Jamerson. Percy was the first guy I remember seeing live. But in Detroit all the jazz musicians were always talking about Paul Chambers and Doug Watkins, so those were the first guys I would listen to.

**JP:** Same here as Robert. Jamerson was the first one. My dad used to fix roads in Manhattan, and he came home from the job one time with a box of records. I put on these Wes Montgomery records and then I heard Ron Carter, which started me thinking about the acoustic bass. Once I heard Ron, it was like, I said, “Oh, if that's an acoustic bass then I want that.”

**RH:** It was a definition of the instrument for you.

**JP:** Yeah. And Ray [Brown] came sort of after that. But Ron had a special place for me, and Paul Chambers. Because I became a real Coltrane fanatic after that.

**PC:** *What do you think about each other's work?*

**JP:** I'm excited about it because we used to run into each other on the road. But then he started making records, too. I dig Bob's writing, too, which I didn't get to know until I heard his stuff on the radio.

**RH:** I was excited about hearing John because a lot of bass players turn the bass up real loud on the tracks, and it's like kind of an unnatural bridge, and it's like the bass is in the support role *and* the leader role. But I think John has done a great job of bridging that, like the things he does with the six-string bass and the acoustic bass and with the stuff you did on your orchestral album [*Heart Of The Bass*].

**PC:** *Do you think that bass players are much more rhythmic in their approach to things like composing and performing?*

**RH:** Bass is the instrument that can





BY PAT COLE

KAREN MILLER

provide the melodic content and rhythm. I think bass players make great producers, and Marcus Miller is one of the best producers out there. It's quite diverse, the things he had done with Miles, and the other things he's done with Luther Vandross. He covers the gamut. He can highlight what a singer's doing, and he can highlight the instrumentalist. He makes his own records as well.

**PC:** *When did you feel it was the right time to go solo?*

**RH:** I still haven't gone solo! [laughter] I've just done a couple of records. I'm still trying to develop my concept about how to create things. NBC is taking care of me. I'm still a member of Branford's quartet.

**PC:** *John, you are a solo artist after years with Chick Corea's Elektric and Akoustic bands. You felt the demands of the road.*

**JP:** Yeah, it was too much to do both things. So I left about 1992. But I intended to keep myself available to do some acoustic gigs, a little bit. This last year, we did a three-month tour with the Akoustic

Band. But I didn't really consider that I was just going to do that.

**RH:** Maybe Stanley Clarke can go completely solo, but he's writing movie scores and doing a lot of other things.

**JP:** Yeah, and if you ask them all, they all say the same thing: it's tough. When you're playing the music you really care about, you want to take it out to people. It's difficult. You can do it in little spurts. Playing the music we tend to gravitate to is more about writing and blowing and interaction and less about posturing and figuring out the demographics and all that kind of stuff.

**RH:** Part of the mindset of being a bass player, especially one who is trying to be fundamentally sound, is that we get off on making other people sound good. It's like Magic Johnson makes the assist instead of shooting a basket.

**JP:** Right. It's sometimes like being a traffic cop on the bass because you can influence the harmony, the melody and the rhythm. You're subtly shifting things and throwing a couple of ideas out there. [And]

you're so active in it the whole time. If you're a horn player, you hang, play, take a break. The bass player is playing the whole time.

**PC:** *What's the most important thing you've learned from the leaders you've worked for?*

**RH:** If I could compare working with Branford and Wynton, Branford gives you enough rope to hang yourself. It's like total democracy. I think, as a leader, you have to hire the right cats. I can't create a drum part for Jeff Watts, I can't tell Kenny Kirkland what to play. I've got to have faith that those guys can do it, and they can.

**JP:** The reason why I always wanted to play with Chick was because I wanted to play acoustic bass and electric bass with the same guy. So I had a chance to develop both of them. And he was into that.

**PC:** *Robert, it seems like you're primarily an acoustic bass player, but you do keep an electric bass behind you on the Tonight Show set. Why do you prefer the acoustic to an electric?*

**RH:** Well, it's not really that way. Acoustic



bass has been paying the bills! I was playing electric longer than I had been playing acoustic. I guess the majority of the gigs I have been doing, I've been more expressive on acoustic bass. I don't think there are a lot of guys who can double out there.

**PC:** John, you appear to be someone who likes both instruments. Do you play both and practice with both instruments?

**JP:** Yeah, and like Bob, I don't particularly like it when somebody singles the one out and says, that's your thing. A classic case

would be like when I play with guys who play in the real jazz tradition, and someone will say, "Why do you play with that toy? Why don't you play your real bass?" And then you hear guys on electric say, "You're still playing that dinosaur? When are you going to take it back to the museum?" Those kinds of remarks. And I say, man, people are so closed-minded. And that's a problem when you're trying to do both. They try to pigeonhole you.

**PC:** Who do you listen to now? What CDs



BY YOU VIELZ

"It's sometimes like being a traffic cop on the bass because you can influence the harmony, the melody and the rhythm."

-John Palitucci

do you really like, that inspire you?

**RH:** I've been listening to a lot of West Africa music from Senegal, and the drum-oriented stuff. That's the kind of stuff I'd like to do on my next project. And the same ol' Miles/Trane thing. We were just listening to Monk and Miles and James Brown.

**PC:** Robert, on your current release, *One For Namesake*, what were you doing that you hadn't done before?

**RH:** Mainly just some compositional things. I had been trying to record with Elvin Jones for a long time. Just trying to write for hearing musicians in mind. Most of the things I do compositionally are for the bass. I write a lot of music on the piano, and then I have to learn the stuff like everyone else once I get to the session. I try to surround myself with personnel who can inspire me.

**PC:** How about you, John?

**JP:** On my next album, *Mystura Fina*, which means "fine mixture," I really got into Africa rhythms. I've been into Brazilian music. In the last eight years, I've been into African music, [which is explored] on my last record [*Another World*]. I've been writing with Armand Sabal-Lecco, who is a bass player. It's that West African thing. Cameroon is right in there. And those guys, it's wild because they seem to know about all the other music in Africa. The Cameroonian guys are amazing because they seem to be versed in all the other stuff. So I learned a lot hanging out with Armand. He's like an incredibly energetic musician. Music is bursting out of him.

**PC:** Robert, you'd probably like to focus

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completely on your solo career, but the economic realities don't permit it. How do you make your career work financially?

**RH:** I'm real blessed that I have a steady job. It kind of hinders my solo work because I can't go on the road and support my records. So there's a trade-off there. My main focus is to remain sane while I'm doing this daily grind so I can write as much music as I can and play with as many people as I can.

**PC:** Is it tougher for bass players to go out there and get an audience than it is for a saxophone player?

**RH:** I'd say it's a little harder from the nature of the instrument. You can't jump out in the audience and dance around and do all those things. You can't hold a high note forever and get the girls screaming. From that standpoint it takes a little longer.

**PC:** Some say that you play acoustic bass to get respectability. What do you think?

**RH:** I think whatever instrument you play, you have to be well-versed in the history of that instrument. I think it's better if you play acoustic bass. As far as the

contemporary thing is concerned, a lot of the bands that I've seen get an r&b cat to cover the gig.

**JP:** And Bob Cranshaw . . .

**RH:** Yeah, Bob Cranshaw. Those guys know what Ray Brown played, they know what Paul Chambers played, they know the tradition.

**PC:** If the bass didn't exist, what instrument would you play?

**RH:** Let me see . . . I think I'd be a cook or something! [laughter]

**JP:** That's hard to say. I think a lot of us are frustrated piano players. But the tenor [saxophone]. Man, every time I hear a tenor, I say, "Man, why don't I go buy one of those things?" Then I think about how I would sound, and I stop right there. I don't think anything excites me more than a Coltrane record. Actually, nothing even matches it, nothing even comes close when I listen to those records. It's so strong on all levels. Occasionally, we would all like to be drummers because we're bass players. **DB**

#### EQUIPMENT

When John is playing acoustic bass, he plays a Pollman. If the gig calls for an electric, he plays a Yamaha custom-made John Patitucci six-string bass or a custom-made fretless six-string bass. His acoustic equipment includes a Walter Woods amplifier, a Fishman bass blender box, a Wilson pickup and a Crown GLM-100 microphone. His electric equipment consists of Stewart power amps, a Mackie mixer, T.C. Electronic preamp, Yamaha SPX-1000 reverbs, Lexicon reverbs, and a Yamaha volume pedal.

If it's an acoustic gig, Robert uses either a German-made Hawkes bass (c. 1900) or an American-made David Weebe bass (c. 1950). His electric equipment includes Sadowsky or Zon guitars, Hartke speakers and Fishman transducers.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

##### John Patitucci

MYSTURA FINA—GRP 9802  
ANOTHER WORLD—GRP 9725  
HEART OF THE BASS—Stretch 1101  
SKETCHBOOK—GRP 44886  
ON THE CORNER—GRP 56687  
JOHN PATITUCCI—GRP 9560

with various others

GRP ALL-STAR BIG BAND LIVE!—GRP 9740  
CROSSROADS—GRP 9610 (Eric Marienthal)  
NEPENTHE—GRP 9607 (Eddie Daniels)

with Chick Corea

AKOUSTIC BAND—GRP 9582  
BENEATH THE MASK—GRP 9649  
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER—GRP 9564  
AKOUSTIC BAND ALIVE—GRP 9627  
INSIDE OUT—GRP 9601  
LIGHT YEARS—GRP 9546

##### Robert Hurst

ONE FOR NAMESAKE—DIW/Columbia 66236  
PRESENTS: ROBERT HURST—DIW/Columbia 57298

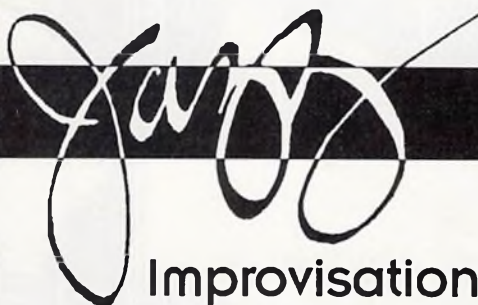
with Branford Marsalis

BLOOMINGTON—Columbia 52461  
THE BEAUTIFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN—Columbia 46990  
CRAZY PEOPLE MUSIC—Columbia 46072

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J MOOD—Columbia 40308  
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# Wes Montgomery: Biggest Six-Stringer Since Charlie Christian

By Ralph J. Gleason

*In the following "Classic Interview" with Wes Montgomery, from our July 20, 1961 issue, the legendary guitarist reflects on his influences during his rise to jazz stardom. We reprint this article to mark the release of Impressions, a two-CD reissue of Montgomery's Verve sides from the early 1960s.*

**F**ew jazz musicians have had the rise to professional acclaim that John Leslie (Wes) Montgomery—the guitar-playing member of the Indiana Montgomery family—has had in the last two years.

Up until that time almost unknown to the jazz public outside his native Indianapolis, Montgomery was heralded by Cannonball Adderley, Gunther Schuller and other musicians who heard him and was brought by Adderley to the attention of Orrin Keepnews of Riverside Records, who promptly recorded him.

Since that debut (his second, for he had toured with Lionel Hampton for two years in the early '40s), Montgomery has run away with the New Star award for guitar in *Down Beat's* International Jazz Critics Poll (1960) and today seems a cinch to live up to his billing as the "best thing that has happened to the guitar since Charlie Christian."

For the last year, Wes has worked with his brothers, Buddy (vibes) and Monk (bass), as the Montgomery Brothers. The other two Montgomerys are half the



original Mastersounds quartet which, a few years ago, won the **DB** Critics Poll for best new small group.

Pinned down recently between rehearsals and pool games (shooting pool is his only hobby), Wes discussed guitar players (including himself) with the ease and familiarity born from years of listening.

**I** started in 1943, right after I got married. I bought an amplifier and a guitar around two or three months later. I used to play a tenor guitar, but it wasn't playing, you know. I didn't really get down to business until I got the six-string, which was just like starting all over to me.

"I got interested in playing the guitar because of Charlie Christian, like all other guitar players. There's no way out. I never saw him in my life, but he said so much on the records that I don't care what instrument a cat played, if he didn't understand and didn't feel and really didn't get *with* the things that Charlie Christian was doing, he was a pretty poor musician—[Charlie] was so far ahead.

"Before Charlie Christian I liked [Django] Reinhardt and Les Paul and those cats, but it wasn't what you'd call new. They didn't impress me like Charlie Christian did. I mean, he stood out above *all* of it.

"*Solo Flight* was the first record I heard. Boy, that was too much! I still hear it! He was *it* for me, and I didn't look at nobody else. I didn't hear nobody else for about a year or so. Couldn't even hear them.

"I'm not really musically inclined. It takes guts, you know? I was 19 and I liked music, but it didn't really inspire me to go into things. But there was a cat living in Indianapolis named Alex Stevens. He was about the toughest cat I heard around our vicinity, and I tried to get him to show me a few things.

"So eventually what I did was I took all of Charlie Christian's records, and I listened to them real good. I knew what he was doing on *that* guitar could be done on the one I had because I had a six-string. So I was just determined I'd do it. It didn't quite come out like that, but I got pretty good at it, and I took all the solos off the records. I got a job playing just the solos, making money in a club. That's all I did—played Charlie Christian solos and then laid out!

"Then I went on the road with the Brownskin Models and later with Snookum Russell. Ray Brown was in the band at that time. I didn't realize he was playing so much bass until I heard him with Diz!

"Hamp was the only big band I went with—1948-50. I didn't use any amplifier at all. He had a lot of things for the sextet, but he never got to record that group.

"I'm so limited. I have a lot of ideas—well a lot of thoughts—that I'd like to see done with the guitar. With the octaves, that was just a coincidence, going into octaves. It's such a challenge yet, you know, and

there's a lot that can be done with it and with chord inversions like block chords on piano. But each of these things has a feeling of its own, and it takes so much time to develop all your technique.

"I don't use a pick at all, and that's one of the downfalls, too. In order to get a certain amount of speed, you should use a pick, I think. You don't *have* to play fast, but being able to play fast can cause you to phrase better. If you had the technique you could phrase better, even if you don't play fast. I think you'd have more control of the instrument.

"I didn't like the sound of a pick. I tried it for, I guess, about two months. I didn't even use my thumb at all. But after two months

**"My aim is to be able to move from one vein to another without any trouble. . . . To me, the biggest thing is to keep the feeling within your playing regardless of what you play."**

time I still couldn't use the pick. So I said, 'Well, which are you going to do?' I liked the tone better with my thumb, but I liked the technique with the pick. I couldn't have them both.

"I think every instrument should have a certain amount of tone quality within the instrument, but I can't seem to get the right amplifiers and things to get this thing out. I like to hear good phrasing. I'd like to hear a guitarist do this: instead of playing melodic lines, leave that and play chord versions of lines. Now, that's an awful hard thing to do, but it would be different. But I think in those terms, or if a cat could use octaves for a line instead of one note. Give you a double sound with a good tone to it. Should sound pretty good if you got another blending instrument with it.

**O**ther guitar players? Well, Barney Kessel. I've got to go for that. He's got a lot of feeling and a good conception of chords in a jazz manner. He's still trying to do a lot of things, and he's not just standing still with guitar, just settling for one particular level. He's still going all he can, and that's one thing I appreciate about him. He's trying to phrase, also. He's

trying to get away from the guitar phrase and get into horn phrasing.

"And Tal Farlow. Tal Farlow strikes me as different altogether. He doesn't have as much feeling as Barney Kessel to me, but he's got more drive in his playing, and his technique along with that drive is pretty exciting. He makes it exciting. I think he's got a better conception of modern chords than the average guitar player.

"A lot of guitar players can play modern chords, they can take a solo of modern chords, but they're liable to leave it within the solo range that they're in. They're liable to get away from it and then come back to it, get away from it and come back to it. Tal Farlow usually stays right on it.

"Jimmy Raney is just the opposite from Tal Farlow. They seem like they have the same ideas in mind, the same changes, the same runs, the same kind of feeling. But Jimmy Raney is so smooth. He does it without a mistake, like some cats play piano; they couldn't make a mistake if they wanted to. That's the way Jimmy Raney is. He gives it a real soft touch, but the ideas are just like Tal Farlow's to me.

"And then George Henry, a cat I heard in Chicago. He's a playing cat. He asked could he play a tune, and so he gets up there, and that's the first time I ever heard a guitarist phrase like Charlie Parker. It was just the solos; the chords and things he used were just like any other cat, you know. And there's another guy from Houston who plays with his thumb.

"And naturally, Reinhardt, he's in a different thing altogether. And Charlie Byrd. You know, I like *all* guitar players. I like what they play. But to stand out like Charlie Christian . . . well, I guess it's just one of those things.

"My aim is to be able to move from one vein to another without any trouble. If you were going to take a melody line or counterpoint or unison lines with another instrument, do that and then, maybe after a certain point, you drop out completely, and maybe the next time you'll play phrases and chords or something, or maybe you'll take octaves. That way you have a lot of variations, if you can control each one of them and still keep feeling it. To me the biggest thing is to keep the feeling within your playing regardless of what you play, and that's hard to do.

"Sometimes I'll do nothing but listen to records. All kinds, over and over. Then after a while, it breaks and I don't even want to hear them. I think it's because at the times I don't want to hear, I've heard so much it's got me confused and I'm so far away from it on my instrument—from the things I've been hearing—that I've got to put it aside and go back to where I am. And try to get out of *that* hole!

"I was surprised to win the **Down Beat** thing. I think I was playing more in 1952 than ever."

**DB**



# CD REVIEWS

KEY

Excellent  
Very Good  
Good  
Fair  
Poor

★★★★★  
★★★★  
★★★  
★★  
★



## Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Diz  
Blue Note 30490

★★★★

On his sixth Blue Note record, acclaimed Cuban pianist Rubalcaba proves he's worth every word of praise he has yet received. He's rhythmically forceful, tuneful, technically dazzling and not afraid of harmonically ambiguous material, which he controls like a master. And when Rubalcaba aims at the heart, he's an expert marksman; his balladry intelligently bears little of the ballistic speed of his up-tempo Gatling gun runs.

True to its title, *Diz* sports a few Gillespie tunes, including a nicely revamped version of "A Night In Tunisia." Diz's "Woody 'n' You" is the disc's most thoroughly Latin cut (though Rubalcaba often slips a few slinky parallel-handed Latin riffs or cross-rhythms into other solos), and the pianist is quite brilliant on it. He peels off exciting, breakneck lines with the ease of a deep breath, and a couple of the thrilling, dizzying passages lock in on tight arpeggios, building tension like a dam, then releasing it in a torrential stream of notes. Similarly, Rubalcaba sticks on a trill at the tail of Bird's "Ah-Leu-Cha," riding it all the way out.

On "Hot House," impressive drummer Julio Barreto shows his flashy, splashy stuff, propelling the pianist with fireworks that sizzle, pop and explode beneath him. Can't say that I like Ron Carter's bass *sound*, but on pieces like this he's absolutely right there, hooking up solidly with the busy drummer. Rubalcaba's stunning introduction to "Donna Lee" finds him checking out some unusual, piquant voicings, and he and Carter come together wonderfully on the trio's unique outro for the tune, which chills out into a puff of cloudy chords.

When the threesome switches gears, though, the pathos meter starts to peak. Benny Golson's "I Remember Clifford" and Charles Mingus' "Smooch" are moving and uncluttered, their compositional loveliness allowed to ring out clear and strong, and an unaccompanied piano take on Gillespie's "Con Alma" closes the disc on a poignant, soulful note.

—John Corbett

Diz—*Hot House*; *Woody 'n' You*; *I Remember Clifford*; *Donna Lee*; *Bouncing With Bud*; *Smooch*; *Ah-Leu-Cha*; *A Night In Tunisia*; *Con Alma*. (56:33)

Personnel—Rubalcaba, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Julio Barreto, drums.



## Dick Hyman

From The Age Of Swing  
Reference 59

★★★★½

Here is one of the purest-sounding swing dates in recent memory. About the music, there is little mystery; and thankfully, little revisionism. For fans of the genre (and others it's to be hoped), it should slip on as easily as an old but still-sleek pair of jeans.

You'll note from the titles a refreshing propensity for the seldom-heard. How odd so few over the years have addressed themselves to the blues according to Ellington/Hodges on "Dooji Wooji" or Goodman/Christian on "Soft Winds." "Moten Swing" pays homage to the original Bennie Moton record, though maybe a bit too literally in preserving the clipped, staccato ensembles. This is not a repertory ensemble, obliged to replicate the dated little details that owe more to period than to music. Once the performance opens up, however, an agelessness takes over that characterizes the rest of the CD.

Swing functioned at various levels of commercial intent in its heyday, but the spirit of this album is based on the kind of small-group work whose ambitions were the most self-directed. Its essential beauty and integrity therefore travel easily over time, unencumbered by the pop idioms peculiar to the period. The simplicity and directness of the rhythm section, especially with Bucky Pizzarelli's acoustic guitar, point inevitably to Basie.

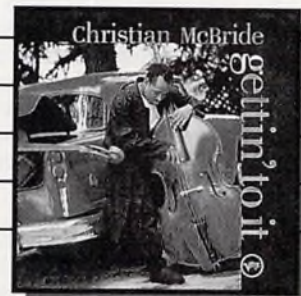
There is also a magnificently open, almost daring acoustic quality to the sound, rare today in jazz recording where microphone-itis has a way of making all bands sound alike. You'll hear the distance between the instruments with the kind of natural presence that was once a Vanguard trademark and which George Avakian used to catch on the Buck Clayton jam sessions for Columbia.

Most the players here, save Hinton, made their reputations after the fact, as it were, but still established clear swing identities. The exception, of course, is Hyman, who is a complete delight throughout. If the same criteria that define great actors also applied to great musicians, Hyman would be the Olivier, the Streep, of his trade. But the versatility so prized in actors becomes an encumbrance in jazz and has left Hyman undervalued in an art that honors those who speak in a single voice and distrusts those endlessly fluent in so many.

—John McDonough

From *The Age Of Swing*—*From The Age Of Swing*; *You're Driving Me Crazy*; *Moten Swing*; *Topsy*; *Moonglow*; *Them There Eyes*; *Dooji Wooji*; *Soft Winds*; *What Is There To Say?*; *'Deed I Do*; *Rose Room*; *I Know What You Do*; *Mean To Me*; *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*; *From The Age Of Swing*. (66:08)

Personnel—Hyman, piano; Joe Wilder, trumpet; Urbie Green, trombone; Phil Bodner, Frank Wess (5, 8, 12), alto saxophone; Joe Temperley, baritone saxophone; Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar; Milt Hinton, bass; Butch Miles, drums.



## Christian McBride

Gettin' To It  
Verve 314 523 989

★★★★

What's amazing about young jazzers with straightahead inclinations is not that they do the thing at all, but that they do it so well. Bassist Christian McBride, at the tender age of 22, has become many players' first-call: his time is flawless, his tone solid, his solos swing and his bowing hits the mark like Robin Hood's. Meaning his debut as a leader to be a "summation of all my personal musical experiences," McBride's convened his peers and (for one tune) his role models. The results are admirably accomplished, never rough or startling.

The bassman gracefully delineates moderately bright and ballad tempos on his six well-turned, original tunes that extoll the influences of Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Cedar Walton and (to a less-marked degree) James Brown. Redman, Turre and Hargrove blow in sextet, quintet and quartet settings with thought, care and a measured amount of flare. Drummer Nash is a crisp rhythm partner and elegant ensemble accentuator, never more so than when using brushes. Pianist Chestnut provides deftly varied backdrops, quickly flashing interludes and witty references, building his "Black Moon" statement, for example, on Gershwin's percussion "Rhapsody" piano motif.

"Too Close" and "Stars" are bass-heavy trios; "Splanky," a happy blues through which Ray Brown, Milt Hinton and McBride, otherwise unaccompanied, don't walk so much as they skip. McBride rides "Night Train" alone, slap-sticking amid strong arco and pizz phrases. That he can pull all this off first time out with such easy command ought to be—maybe is—gratifying surprise enough.

—Howard Mandel

Gettin' To It—*In A Hurry*; *The Shade Of The Cedar Tree*; *Too Close For Comfort*; *Sitting On A Cloud*; *Splanky*; *Gettin' To It*;



*Stars Fell On Alabama; Black Moon; King Freddie Of Hubbard; Night Train.* (55:38)  
**Personnel**—McBride, bass; Roy Hargrove, trumpet, flugelhorn; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Steve Turre, trombone; Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Lewis Nash, drums; Ray Brown, Milt Hinton, bass (5).



## Medeski Martin & Wood

### Friday Afternoon In The Universe

Gramavision 79503

★★★★

Cartoon music for the '90s. Kids will love it. (Early into "We're So Happy" a child's playful voice briefly erupts.) Adults with an open mind will dance with the kids. The cartoons aren't manic Bugs Bunny; try Spider Man or some of the groovier cats from *Doonisbury*.

There's lots of organ, but *Friday Afternoon* is not your typical B-3 trio. That's partly because MM&W mixes genres, Medeski switches keyboards and the writing reflects the band's influences: early fusion, rock & roll, Mingus, probably Sun Ra, to name a few. "We're So Happy" shows them at their best, the song's flow and enticing variety of moods serving as variations on . . . happiness. There are a series of brief, contrasting interludes that run the length of the album, tying *Friday Afternoon* together and providing it with nice sonic and stylistic contrasts. "Last Chance To Dance Trance," where organ and piano meet to produce the album's romantic highpoint, suggests a tango one moment, a spin around the roller rink the next. The six-minute title cut joins a few of the interludes as a kind of daydream music, with floating organ washes, arco bass and periods of soft jungle drums with electric piano.

Everything is MM&W material except for the 47-second closer and an Ellington rarity, "Chinoiserie," where Medeski cranks out some honky-tonk piano followed by organ on this almost-straightahead number (there's even a drum solo, to boot). The production is dressed-down, slightly grainy; in other words, close to perfect. On the down side, the band relies on an enjoyable but ultimately generic shuffle swing beat for too much of the album, a funky beat that may be a signature but undermines the distinctiveness of the material.

It may not be the big production '93's *It's A*

*Jungle In Here* was (sporting a four-piece horn section and guitarist Marc Ribot); and the psycho-pop of last year's *Lunar Crush* (Medeski with guitarist David Fiuczynski) sounds scary by comparison. Still, *Friday Afternoon In The Universe* somehow confirms the band's place in this strange world of jazz. —John Ephland

**Friday Afternoon In The Universe**—*The Lover; Paper Bass; House Mop; Last Chance To Dance Trance (Perhaps); Baby Clams; We're So Happy; Shack; Tea; Chinoiserie; Between Two Limbs; Sequel; Friday Afternoon In The Universe; Billy's Tool Box; Chubb Sub; Khob Khun Krub (Thai for "Thank You").* (57:06)

**Personnel**—John Medeski, organs, piano, wuritzer, clavinet; Billy Martin, drums, percussion; Chris Wood, acoustic bass, harmonica, wood flute; Danny Blume, guitar (6); Tonino Benson, raygun, vocal (6); Carl Green, Thai flute (15).



## Gary Burton/ Makoto Ozone

### Face To Face

GRP 98052

★★★★½

In the liner notes to *Face To Face*, Gary Burton says, "This duet thing is totally different." He is correct. The decision to play without a rhythm

section imposes austerity. On the opening track, "Kato's Revenge," the vibes and piano—instruments so similar in timbre and pitch—threaten to cloy, and the double voices stating the extended thematic line sound busy. But "Monk's Dream" is next, and you begin to hear it: the mesmerizing segues as the roles of soloist and accompanist and co-conspirator alternate. Burton and Ozone play Monk's tilting song in unison. Then they split like two Olympic figure skaters, swooping away from one another in huge loops only to come together again and twirl. By the time you get to "For Heaven's Sake" you are thoroughly bought in. Burton impeccably traces it while Ozone softly comps with his subtle, silken touch until his turn comes. Two threads pay out and intertwine. They don't play this song—they distill it.

An interesting sidebar: The other most important piano/vibes album of the past year—*Manhattan Moods* by McCoy Tyner and Bobby Hutcherson on Blue Note—shares two songs. Burton/Ozone's "Blue Monk" is funkier, while "For Heaven's Sake" turns both partnerships inward—and few instrumental combinations can reach so profoundly inward as this one in the hands of masters.

Performances like Ozone's "Bento Box" and Jobim's "O Grande Amor" reveal what is "totally different" about duets. Here are two minds melding at high speed, Burton's pristine linearities and resonant four-mallet chords wrapped in Ozone's glistening spirals. Heady stuff.

*Face To Face* encompasses standards and bossa novas and blues and tangos and stride send-ups and the most telepathic of collaborative tone poems. Ozone (about whom there was a buzz on the street 10 years ago) is back. Burton, who never left, comes from deep within himself and achieves some of his best work on record.

—Tom Conrad

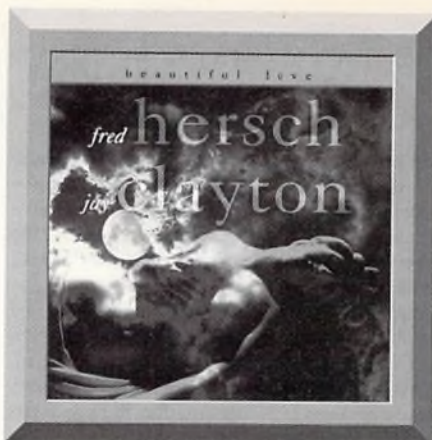
**Face To Face**—*Kato's Revenge; Monk's Dream; For Heaven's Sake; Bento Box; O Grande Amor; Laura's Dream; Opus Half; My Romance; Times Like These; Eiderdown.* (72:25)  
**Personnel**—Burton, vibraphone; Ozone, piano.

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Howard Mandel	John Ephland
DICK HYMAN <i>From The Age Of Swing</i>		★★★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★★
MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD <i>Friday Afternoon In The Universe</i>		*	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
GONZALO RUBALCABA <i>Diz</i>		★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE <i>Gettin' To It</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★



# CD REVIEWS



**JAY CLAYTON & FRED HERSCH**  
**BEAUTIFUL LOVE**  
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Beautiful Love is a poignant duo date in which the exceptional talents of singer Jay Clayton and pianist Fred Hersch virtually redefine the genre.

In a program of standards drawn from what Alec Wilder has simply and eloquently called "The American Popular Song," the twosome's ardent interplay is emotionally compelling and musically sublime.

Chuck Berg



**BILLY PIERCE**  
**RIO**  
**(BALLADS & BOSSA NOVAS)**  
 SUNNYSIDE SSC1065D

Listen to the details here - the way Israel's samba beat moves the others along, the exemplary support Lightsey offers during DeBriano's bass solo - for an indication of why Pierce is so happy with the way this unit came together. As the present session makes obvious, Pierce has arrived at a place where both his facility and his personality are undeniable...these tracks demonstrate, he can play music associated with Wayne Shorter and Dewey Redman without suggesting either - or anyone else, for that matter, except himself.

What results is the most imaginative program in recent memory. No one can complain that these tunes have been heard too often - with the exception of Iris, you won't find them in The Real Book, although Pierce and company make the case that all are worthy of standard status.

Bob Blumenthal

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**8 Bold Souls**

**Ant Farm**  
 Arabesque Jazz 0114

★★★★

**Edward Wilkerson Jr.**

**Light On The Path**  
 sound aspects 050

★★★½

Saxophonist/composer Ed Wilkerson Jr. may be the most visible representative of the AACM's second generation. Despite critical praise, he has yet to achieve the recognition of icons like Henry Threadgill or the Art Ensemble of Chicago, who, along with AACM philosophy, impact his creative output. Wilkerson tends to avoid the spotlight, preferring to promote long-standing ensembles like 8 Bold Souls as vehicles for his compositions.

*Ant Farm*, like Wilkerson's other 8 Bold Souls projects, strongly emphasizes the collective. Baritone sax, cello and tuba help to emphasize the lower registers, giving this octet its distinctive sound. (This bottom-heavy lineup can occasionally lead to muddy recorded sound.) Individual Bold Souls may not be well-known beyond Chicago, but Wilkerson has a knack for emphasizing their strengths in his episodic arrangements. "Ant Farm" introduces solitary cello from Naomi Millender, then Isaiah Jackson's swinging trombone work shadowed by Aaron Dodd's energetic tuba, finally evolving into a driving Art Ensemble homage with Robert Griffin's trumpet solo evoking Lester Bowie.

In keeping with his egalitarian conception of the Bold Souls, Wilkerson solos on only two tracks. His Ayler-esque vibrato on "Half Life" and his negotiation of the Afro-Cuban rhythms and percussion on "Corner Of Walk And Don't Walk" are among *Ant Farm's* highlights. Even though Wilkerson stands out among the soloists, he wants you to listen to 8 Bold Souls for the writing and ensemble performances.

If you want to hear Wilkerson play more often, *Light On The Path* is a good option. Recorded in 1992, this CD features Wilkerson's tenor sax in an atypical (for him) quartet setting. In contrast to his charts for 8 Bold Souls, Wilkerson employs simpler structures here, with plenty of room for individual solos. "Layaway" opens the set with a racing, Art Ensemble-influenced structure, topped by Wilkerson's brooding tenor and Rod

McGaha's muted trumpet. By comparison, the low-key "Box Canyon" is open-ended and slow to develop, with the unison of tenor and muted trumpet suggesting a stretched-out Miles Davis tune. The title track begins with a solitary horn smoothly developing into a bright, upbeat feature for McGaha. The trumpeter achieves a nice tone, particularly with the mute, but seems unaccustomed to the extended time available to him in this session. Despite strong, aggressive drumming from Reggie Nicholson, *Light On The Path* is inconsistent, reinforcing the perception that Wilkerson works best with familiar ensembles like 8 Bold Souls or the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble. —Jon Andrews

*Ant Farm*—Hall Life; A Little Encouragement; Ant Farm; The Corner Of Walk And Don't Walk; Furthest From My Mind; The Big Dig. (62:41)

*Personnel*—Wilkerson, tenor and alto saxophones, clarinet, alto clarinet, voice; Mwata Bowden, baritone and tenor saxophones, clarinet, bass clarinet, voice; Robert Griffin, trumpet, piccolo trumpet, voice; Isaiah Jackson, trombone, timbales, voice; Aaron Dodd, tuba, voice; Naomi Millender, cello, voice; Harrison Bankhead, bass, voice; Dushun Mosley, drums, congas, voice.

*Light On The Path*—Layaway; Nommo's Bag; Box Canyon; Light On The Path; The Twelfth Dialect. (63:30)

*Personnel*—Wilkerson, tenor and alto saxophones, clarinet; Rod McGaha, trumpet; Harrison Bankhead, bass; Reggie Nicholson, drums.



**Terje Rypdal**  
**If Mountains Could Sing**  
 ECM 78118-21554

★★★★

Rypdal's 15th for ECM neatly integrates his varied interests in pensive chamber compositions, catchy pop structures and outre soundscapes bursting with spikey guitar shrapnel. It's hard to imagine covering this many bases on a single project (and inconceivable for any American label).

But the Norwegian guitarist/composer has always been a fiercely uncompromising artist who has taken full advantage of the freedom afforded him by his German record company. Naturally, there is virtually nothing on *If Mountains Could Sing* to appease American radio programmers, with the possible exception of the lyrical "Dancing Without Reindeers" or the rock-tinged opener "The Return Of Per Ulv," which sounds like a holdover from Rypdal's Chasers period of the mid-'80s.

Bombastic numbers like "But On The Other



Hand" and "Private Eye" hit as heavy as vintage King Crimson while the ethereal title track floats as delicately as an Erik Satie piano piece. The brooding "Lonesome Guitar" and "Foran Pelsen," a great showcase for Rypdal's longtime bassist Kjellemyr, both make dramatic use of space, a longstanding ECM trademark. These airy pieces are butted right up against denser, caustic offerings like "One For The Roadrunner" and "It's In The Air," which might have more appeal for the grunge set than chamber-music or jazz fans. He uses strings as a dissonant foil/wash behind his own solos, which lend a Stravinsky-esque quality to the proceedings.

Rypdal's own guitar signature, a kind of singing-stinging tone that has influenced players such as John Abercrombie and Bill Frisell, comes across with eloquence and emotion on the sublime "Blue Angel." —Bill Milkowski

**If Mountains Could Sing**—*The Return Of Per Ulv; It's In The Air; But On The Other Hand; If Mountains Could Sing; Private Eye; Foran Pelsen; Dancing Without Reindeers; One For The Roadrunner; Blue Angel; Genie; Lonesome Guitar.* (48:00 minutes)

**Personnel**—Rypdal, electric guitars; Bjorn Kjellemyr, basses; Audun Kleive, drums; Terje Tonnesen, violin; Lars Anders Tomter, viola; Oystein Birkeland, violincello; Christian Eggen, conductor.



**George Gruntz**  
**Beyond Another Wall:**  
**Live In China**  
 TCB 94102

★★★★

George Gruntz is among a handful of arranger/bandleaders who are sustaining the endangered species of large-format jazz. His Concert Jazz Band, a multinational collective with world-class soloists, has been intermittently touring and recording for over 20 years. Gruntz questions inherited assumptions about orchestral form. His charts are quirky, cacophonous collages that embody his eclectic musical interests and madcap wit. The single most important virtue of CJB is how its unfettered spirit of adventure sets those world-class soloists free.

Which brings us to *Live In China*. CJB played seven concerts in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in November of 1992, and they constituted the first official tour of the Peoples Republic by a jazz ensemble. You might reasonably wonder whether a band so idiosyncratic is the best choice to break ground in a society that has had almost no

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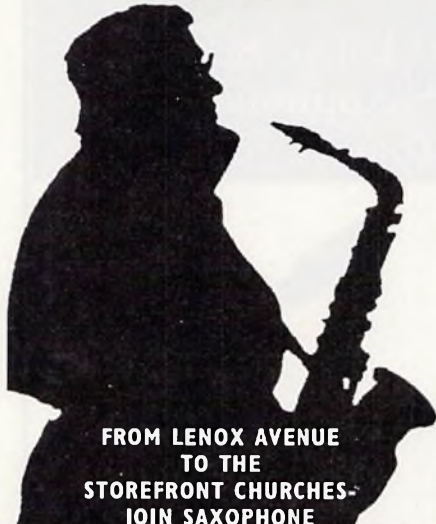
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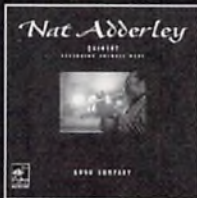
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FACE THE CHALLENGE IN MUSIC

## CD REVIEWS

prior exposure to jazz. Have no fear. The warp-speed trumpet improvisations by Jack Walrath ("All Day, All Night") and Lew Soloff ("Literary Lizard") defy cultural barriers. Ray Anderson's dissonant, start-stop "Anabel At Two"—which includes Chris Hunter's liberated, rasping alto saxophone and the composer's spooky, moaning trombone—is welcomed with cries of delight. Gruntz's own spread-armed, thundering, clinking piano intro to "Guiseppi" is interrupted with bursts of applause.

Then there are Billy Branch and Carl Weathersby, purveyors of Chicago blues. Gruntz brought them to China for insurance. Their down-and-dirty offerings (on vocals, harp and guitar) are not truly integrated into the band's arrangements; they are spliced somewhat arbitrarily into three numbers. But the universality of their message rings true in Shanghai like it does on the South Side.

This album preserves moments in time that are historically as well as musically significant. Unfortunately, the audio quality is so marginal (it was recorded live-to-two-track DAT) that it provides the sonic equivalent of a home video, rather than the professional documentary film which these occasions deserved.

—Tom Conrad

**Beyond Another Wall: Live In China**—*Literary Lizard; All Day, All Night; Guiseppi; Anabel At Two; Carl; Billy; Farewell To China.* (78:56)

**Personnel**—Lew Soloff, John D'Earth, Tim Hagans, Jack Walrath, trumpet; Ray Anderson, Art Baron, Dave Taylor, trombone; Dave Barger, trombone, euphonium; Chris Hunter, Sal Giogianni, Bob Malach, Larry Schneider, saxophones; Howard Johnson, baritone saxophone, tuba; George Gruntz, piano; Mike Richmond, bass; Danny Gottlieb, drums; Billy Branch, harp, vocals; Carl Weathersby, guitar, vocals.

Allen's ballad performances are more tough than tender: her dark "In The Morning," which features Carter, and the standard "Old Folks," in which the pianist spins wiry variations. Her Monk ("Introspection"/"Thelonious") draws on Bud Powell as well as the composer.

Altogether, Allen is a busy pianist, not tied to any particular influences. She has chops to burn, including strong, independent hands and the stamina to keep up with any tempo. She is certainly not intimidated by historical (and still vital) figures such as Carter and Williams, but neither does she transcend them on this album.

—Owen Corde

**Twenty One**—*RTG; If I Should Lose You; Drummer's Song; Introspection/Theonious; A Beautiful Friendship; In The Morning (For Sister Leola); Tea For Two; Lullaby Of The Leaves; Feed The Fire; Old Folks; A Place Of Power; In The Middle.* (54:18)

**Personnel**—Allen, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Tony Williams, drums.



## James Carter

### The Real Quietstorm

Atlantic Jazz 82742

★★★★½

### Jurassic Classics

DIW-886

★★★★½

## Craig Taborn

### Craig Taborn Trio

DIW-618

★★★★

**B**uzz surrounds saxophonist James Carter, now a major-label commodity. **DB** recently (Nov. '94) hailed his "all-embracing musical vision and volcanic tone," and Carter's debut *J.C. On The Set* (DIW/Columbia) justified that praise. Carter's glowing Atlantic debut, *The Real Quietstorm*, closely follows his DIW follow-up, *Jurassic Classics*. Both CDs show off Carter's tone, unpredictable phrasing and versatility with great results.

*The Real Quietstorm* emphasizes ballads, both familiar and obscure. These torch songs and sympathetic originals are ideally suited for the yearning, moonstruck tone Carter achieves on a remarkable range of woodwinds. (What, no so-



## Geri Allen

### Twenty One

Blue Note 30028

★★★

**T**his all-star session has lots of vigor, although it's less distinctive than her previous two Blue Notes. In the vigor department there's "RTG," a bright, rhythmic Allen original; "Tea For Two," a triumphant uptempo romp; Allen's "Feed The Fire," with an introductory chord cycle like a computer game; "In The Middle," an Allen boogie; and others. The trio's pump-like beat gives the performances an automatic-pilot quality—here it appears that a certain part of the pianist's identity has been sacrificed.



pranino sax?) Carter revisits Sun Ra's songbook to unearth "You Never Told Me That You Care," and interprets Jackie McLean's ghostly "Ballad For Doll" with bass flute, getting a lovely bass solo from Dave Holland. Carter's own "The Intimacy Of My Woman's Beautiful Eyes" initially sustains the romantic atmosphere before the saxophonist lets loose on alto with a rush of energy and enthusiasm. Don Byas' upbeat "1944 Stomp" and Carter's rowdy "Deep Throat Blues" (for bass clarinet) keep the proceedings from getting too mushy.

Carter and regular pianist Craig Taborn alternate their customary rhythm section of Tani Tabbal and Jaribu Shahid with the duo of Holland and Leon Parker. By its nature, *The Real Quietstorm* affords little room for the raucous, high-energy facets of Carter's playing.

A different balance emerges with *Jurassic Classics*. Neither a "contractual-obligation" release nor a compulsory "standards" exercise, *Jurassic Classics* challenges Carter to make tunes like Clifford Brown's "Sandu" and Monk's "Ask Me Now" his own. To Carter, players like Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, Ben Webster and David Murray represent points on the same curve. (Carter and Murray share this historical approach.) Purists might consider his version of Ellington's "Take The 'A' Train" a harsh, rude assault on an old friend, but Carter's honks, squawks and calculated roughness inject new energy and surprise into the piece. Coltrane's "Equinox" gets an explosive reading on tenor and soprano saxes, and Carter's take on "Epistrophy" (with a complex, thorny solo from pianist Taborn) demonstrates Carter's grasp of Monk's "ugly beauty." If *Jurassic Classics* isn't quite as personal or eccentric as Carter's debut, it's just as passionate and unpredictable.

After completing *Jurassic Classics*, Taborn appropriated unused studio time to record *Craig Taborn Trio* with bandmates Shahid and Tabbal. The pianist has been overlooked alongside Carter, but this tight, urgent music should open some eyes and ears. Taborn has the same omnivorous esthetic as Carter, assimilating contemporary piano styles as diverse as Keith Jarrett and Cecil Taylor. On "David The Goliath" and "Man Of Action," Taborn establishes an aggressive attack and ringing tone. His writing is just as wide-ranging, including the dark, ruminative "The Temple" for solo piano and the turbulent, Taylor-esque "Over The Water." —Jon Andrews

**The Real Quietstorm**—*Round Midnight; You Never Told Me That You Care; The Intimacy Of My Woman's Beautiful Eyes; 1944 Stomp; Ballad For Doll; The Stevedore's Serenade; Born To Be Blue; Deep Throat Blues; Eventide.*  
**Personnel**—Carter, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, bass clarinet, bass flute; Taborn, piano (1-8); Dave Holland (2,3,7,8), Jaribu Shahid (4,5,6,9), bass; Leon Parker (2,3,7,8), Tani Tabbal (4,5,6), drums.

**Jurassic Classics**—*Take The "A" Train; Out Of Nowhere; Epistrophy; Ask Me Now; Equinox; Sandu; Oleo (57:26 minutes)*  
**Personnel**—Carter, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones; Taborn, piano; Shahid, bass; Tabbal, drums, percussion.

**Craig Taborn Trio**—*David The Goliath; Compassion; Scar; A Man Of Action; Shiri; Over The Water; The Temple; Bass Blues; The Soul Of Grace; Uproot. (55:51)*  
**Personnel**—Taborn, piano; Shahid, bass; Tabbal, drums, percussion.



**Toots Thielemans**  
**East Coast West Coast**  
 Private Music 82120

★★★★

**Hendrik Meurkens**  
**Slidin'**  
 Concord Jazz 4628

★★★½

**W**ith apologies to undervalued virtuosi Charles Leighton and Don Les, perennial **Down Beat** poll winner Toots Thielemans is the finest jazz harmonica player of our time, bar none. Still going strong in his seventh decade, he draws varying textures of lyricism from the sound of his 10-holed chromatic instrument, essaying bebop runs with an expert magician's easeful confidence. Hendrik Meurkens, a German of Dutch extraction now with a fourth album out on Concord Jazz, is that rare young mouth organist (he's 37) who possesses the superior skill and insight needed to someday take over from Thielemans.

*East Coast West Coast* is different from any previous Toots Thielemans album. Private Music top man Ron Goldstein convinced his Belgium-born friend to reexamine several bebop anthems that Thielemans had encountered as a young man on the heady 52nd Street scene of the late 1940s. The harmonica master was also encouraged to lend his sublime expressivity to classic tunes identified with Dave Brubeck, Bill Evans, Coltrane, Miles and Thad Jones. Not unexpectedly, Thielemans plays well, his glissandi and tremolos charming as always, though on the tracks recorded in the East Coast/New York studio he seems a mite inhibited by the young lions playing with him. His concentration of thought seems off and his strength of purpose subtly shaken by the likes of John Scofield, Joshua Redman and Mike Mainieri.

On the West Coast/Los Angeles half of the album, the results are more rewarding, despite the presence of violinist Jerry Goodman, who comes off as a bargain-basement Stephane Grappelli on "Take Five" and "Waltz For Debby." Thielemans' wise version of "Spring Can Really Hang You Up," which has seasoned players Alan Broadbent and Charlie Haden in attendance, and his repolishing of "Ornithology," with Broadbent, Haden, Ernie Watts and Peter Erskine alongside, exude considerable warmth.

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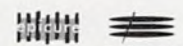
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**CD REVIEWS**

Capably backed by talented players, Meurkens has impressive control of his unruly, stubborn tin instrument and projects decorous exuberance and agitated gentleness on originals and classics from Kenny Barron, Oliver Nelson and contributors to the Great American Songbook. Like Toots, he has a natural inclination for seeking out beauty, for breathing harmony of color into themes and extemporizations. Unlike Toots, he isn't fully conversant with the harmonica's stunning melancholic properties and has yet to construct his own distinctive vocabulary of single notes, octaves and chords. All the same, Meurkens is making the effort and *Slidin'* merits our attention.

—Frank-John Hadley

**East Coast West Coast**—Naima; In Walked Bud; Dear Old Stockholm; Groovin' High; Con Alma; In Your Own Sweet Way; Giant Steps; Waltz For Debby; A Child Is Born; Take Five; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; Ornithology; Blue In Green. (55:09)

**Personnel**—Thielemans, harmonica; Joshua Redman (1,4), Ernie Watts (12), tenor saxophone; Terence Blanchard, trumpet (2,4,7); Lyle Mays (1-4), Bruce Barth (7), Alan Broadbent (8,11,12), Herbie Hancock (9), Michael Lang (13), piano; John Scofield (1,5,7), Robben Ford (8,10), guitar; Mike Mainieri, vibes (5,6); Jerry Goodman, violin (8,10); Christian McBride (1-5,7), Charlie Haden (8,10-12), Dave Carpenter (13), bass; Troy Davis (1-5,7), Peter Erskine (8,10-13), drums.

**Slidin'**—Come Rain Or Come Shine; Have You Met Miss Jones?; Slidin'; The Cottage; Bolero Para Paquito; All Of You; Stolen Moments; Fortuna; Tribute; Voyage; Once Was; The Talking Trout. (66:34)

**Personnel**—Meurkens, harmonica; Dado Moroni (1-5,10), Mark Soskin (6-9,11,12), piano; Peter Bernstein, guitar; David Finck (1-5,8,10), Harvie Swartz (6,7,9,11,12), bass; Tim Horner, drums.



**Lalo Schifrin**  
**More Jazz Meets the Symphony**  
 Atlantic Jazz 82653

★★★

Given the demand for orchestral performances of popular songs, it was inevitable that classic jazz themes would get the "pops" treatment. *More Jazz Meets The Symphony* centers on Lalo Schifrin's extended suites of tunes associated with Miles Davis and Louis Armstrong, arranged for sextet alongside the full London Philharmonic.

Much of the project's jazz credibility comes from world-class soloists like Ray Brown, Paquito D'Rivera and Jon Faddis, each, like Schifrin, a longtime associate of Dizzy Gillespie. Brown's

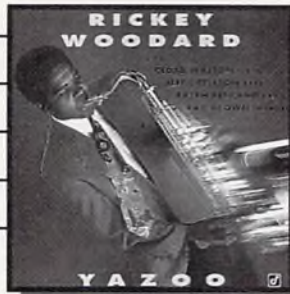


bass is prominently featured throughout, and his excellence elevates the whole session. He and drummer Grady Tate return from Schiffrin's *Jazz Meets The Symphony* ('93). Faddis assumes the challenging roles of Davis and Armstrong, but has only limited space in Schiffrin's impatient arrangements. "Sketches Of Miles" and "Portrait Of Louis Armstrong" each span eight compositions in about 13 minutes, veering perilously close to show-tune medleys. "Sketches Of Miles" recalls Gil Evans' orchestrations, and tantalizes with snippets of "So What" and "Concerto de Aranjuez," but there's little time to develop either themes or soloists' ideas.

Shorter tracks emphasize the sextet with more satisfying results. At the piano, Schiffrin demonstrates a strong facility for blues and bebop. His "Chano" features an elegant horn arrangement and an energetic alto solo from D'Rivera. *More Jazz Meets The Symphony* offers an enticing introduction to Davis and Armstrong, but, for a confirmed jazz audience, it's too often a tease.

—Jon Andrews

**More Jazz Meets the Symphony**—*Sketches Of Miles; Down Here On The Ground; Chano; Begin The Beguine; Django; Old Friends; Madrigal; Portrait Of Louis Armstrong.* (61:51)  
**Personnel**—Schiffrin, piano, conductor; Jon Faddis, trumpet, flugelhorn; James Morrison, trumpet, trombone; Paquito D'Rivera, alto saxophone, clarinet; Ray Brown, bass; Grady Tate, drums; The London Philharmonic.



## Rickey Woodard

Yazoo  
 Concord Jazz 4629

★★★

Unlike the young lions of the East Coast, this California-based journeyman takes a right-of-center approach to hard-bop on *Yazoo*, stressing its blues and swing roots and ignoring its modal cutting edge. Sly quotes and obscure references are conspicuous by their absence, as Woodard, a Nashville native who apprenticed with Ray Charles, Horace Silver, the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra and the Sweet Baby Blues Band, plows artlessly straightahead, refreshingly free

from academic mannerisms. Though half the tunes are originals, the content is wholly derivative, but Woodard's old-school exuberance makes it seem less like he's revisiting the music than experiencing it for the first time.

Woodard sounds stiff playing alto sax on his own "Icicle" and Tadd Dameron's "Tadd's Delight," negotiating twisting bebop lines at awkward right angles. He's more comfortable on tenor, moaning the blues with big-toned authority on Silver-style compositions like "14th & Jefferson" and "Yazoo City Blues." But he really shines on ballads like "Portrait Of Jennie" and "September In The Rain," achieving a timeless sense of world-weariness that younger players can't touch.

Trumpeter Ray Brown is Woodard's perfect foil, soloing with smearsy panache or melding with the saxophonist to create Messenger-ish harmonies. But guest pianist Cedar Walton, playing with an understated elegance that complements Woodard without overshadowing the leader, is the glue that holds this set together, and it's Walton's composition, "Holy Land," that highlights the session.

—Larry Birnbaum

**Yazoo**—*Icicle; Fried Bananas; Abell; Turbulence; Portrait Of Jennie; Holy Land; 14th & Jefferson; Tadd's Delight; September In The Rain; Yazoo City Blues.* (60:54)  
**Personnel**—Woodard, tenor and alto saxophones; Ray Brown, trumpet; Cedar Walton, piano; Jeff Littleton, bass; Ralph Penland, drums.

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**Jimmy Rowles**

**Lilac Time**  
Kokopelli 1297

★★★

**Stan Getz/  
Jimmie Rowles**

**The Peacocks**  
Columbia 59275

★★★½

**L**ilac Time is wee-small-hours music fit to turn any room into a dark piano bar where the management couldn't care less if you smoke.

Rowles' roots in Teddy Wilson have long since loosened and spread out into a wry and personal style with an emphasis on the open-ended intrigues of harmony, which, in his hands sometimes have a way of avoiding closure, leaving one with a sense of unfinished business in the air. He toys with chords like my little boy Brandt plays with Legos: assembling the pieces into interesting, occasionally inscrutable shapes, often a little surprised himself at the results. But the light touch and essential mainstream sensibility remain intact throughout. The touch is so light, in fact, the music has the kind of shy, see-through quality that slips quietly through a room so unannounced you might think it would prefer only to be left alone.

Rowles' singing voice, which is heard on most of the titles, is similarly stealthy—a gruff, seductive whisper, half music, half conversation.

As with all the best saloon pianists, the Rowles repertoire is unexpected and transfiguring. Count Basie's brassy 1937 swing sonata "Time Out" is all here certainly. But with all the brass gone, it seems to be masquerading as a bouncy ballad. And Rowles rarely plays a set without rescuing something from obscurity. Here it's Harold Arlen's "Music Music Everywhere." The pianist's own trio of tunes and lyrics are sensual and wise.

Such low-key music is not for everyone. Producer Herbie Mann is clearly a member of the club, and other members will surely enjoy the Jimmy Rowles he has given us here.

Another member of the club clearly was Stan Getz, who used his prestige at Columbia in the '70s to produce the very un-Columbia album *The Peacocks*. Revisiting this 1977 collection now is a more pleasant surprise than I had anticipated. Rowles—whose first name is spelled with an "ie" for some reason—is on all tracks and plays either solo or host to Getz, along with Buster Williams, Elvin Jones or Hendricks & company in various combinations. "Chess Players" with Hendricks is an anomaly and disrupts the mood and focus of the overall album. And "Rose Marie," with its funky-lite rhythm, is out of character for Rowles. But the other 11 tracks work very well, and none better than the Getz-Rowles turn on Ellington's 1939 "Serenade To Sweden," the album's rescue track.

—John McDonough

**Lilac Time**—*Music Music Everywhere*; *Lullaby Of The Leaves*; *Theme From Arrest & Trial*; *Accent On Youth*; *A Night In Tunisia*; *Mauri*; *I'm Old Fashioned*; *Morning Lovely*; *Medley: Chloe, Maids Of Cadiz, Summer Night*; *I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone*; *Time Out*; *After School*; *Maurice*; *Bellast*; *Jeannine*; *I Dream Of Lilac Time*. (65:33)  
**Personnel**—Rowles, piano, vocals; Eric von Essen, bass.

**The Peacocks**—*I'll Never Be The Same*; *Lester Left Town*; *Body And Soul*; *What Am I Here For?*; *Serenade To Sweden*; *The Chess Players*; *The Peacocks*; *My Buddy*; *The Hour Of Parting*; *Rose Marie*; *This Is All I Ask*; *Skylark*; *Mosaic*; *Would You Like To Take A Walk*. (57:50)  
**Personnel**—Stan Getz, tenor saxophone; Rowles, piano, vocals; Buster Williams, bass; Elvin Jones, drums; Jon Hendricks, Judy Hendricks, Michelle Hendricks, Beverly Getz, vocals (6).



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## Misha Mengelberg Trio

### Who's Bridge

Avant 038

★★★★★

There is simply nothing not to recommend about this record. You need swing? If Jones and Baron don't get you tapping yer toes, you better see a heart specialist. You like tunes? Mengelberg's a writer whose charts can sit comfortably alongside the work of his fave pianist/composers Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols. Gotta have hot solos? No problem: ideas flow freely, creatively, often bluesily from the fingers of the Dutch piano maestro. You want a little adventure, something unusual? Mengelberg is also one of the original free improvisers, equipped

with a leveling wit, surreal sense of humor and distinctly conceptual bent.

Mengelberg's playing is ripe with thinking, full of funny little moves, odd shapes, an endearingly Monk-like clumsiness; these are all put in the service of a wicked subversive streak. When he uses elbows and forearms to pummel clusters, for instance, he does so not to gather momentum but to break up the seeming inevitability of a solo, to intrude on it, to rethink it. There's a nutty number at the core of almost every track here. "Rollo II" starts things with a jumble of notes, casually worming its way into a silky theme. Mengelberg's hippity-hopping hands lend credence to "Romantic Jump Of Hares"'s title, while a soulful tune follows with the box of candies. The unaccompanied piano solo "Peer's Counting Song" is a twist on "Crepuscule With Nellie," with a few tongue-in-cheek classical overtones. Listen to Baron lay down an outrageously cool Latin groove with minimal means on "A Bit Nervous" before Mengelberg begins to warp the tune with some sort of piano palsy.

*Who's Bridge* was fabulously recorded (produced by Mengelberg and John Zorn) and comes gorgeously packaged, too. —John Corbett

**Who's Bridge**—*Rollo II; A Bit Nervous; Rumbone; Romantic Jump of Hares; Gare Guillemans; Crocodile Tear; Rollo III; Peer's Counting Song; Elevator III; Who's Bridge; Almost, Almost.* (59:49)

**Personnel**—Mengelberg, piano; Brad Jones, bass; Joey Baron, drums.



## Kronos Quartet

### Night Prayers

Elektra Nonesuch 79346-2

★★★ 1/2

In the darkness, a lone voice cries out to the night sky. That simple, powerful image organizes *Night Prayers*, an uneven program of works written or arranged for the Kronos Quartet by composers from former Soviet republics. Kronos has championed work by unsung composers from around the globe, most successfully with *Pieces Of Africa*. That brilliant, if improbable, study of African composers combined regional musicians with the instruments of European classical music. *Night Prayers* applies the same approach to contemporary compositions from

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Tigran Tahmizyan's folk tune-based "A Cool Wind Is Blowing" surrounds the soulful duduk (woodwind) playing of Armenian Djivan Gasparian with heat and turbulence from Kronos in a moving performance, full of feeling and much too short. Azeri composer Franghiz Ali-Zadeh contributes the dynamic "Mugam Sayagi," which successfully incorporates sweeping romantic gestures and dance steps of her folk tradition into an affecting, cohesive whole. Kronos performs "Mugam Sayagi" with the passionate energy it deserves, with Joan Jeanrenaud's cello in a prominent role. Russian Sofia Gubaidulina's hypertense "Quartet No. 4" doesn't fit in this collection. Kronos obtains interesting, mandolin-like effects using rubber balls on strings, but Gubaidulina works on a level of abstraction far removed from the influences of regional folk music. "Kongerei," performed with the trendy Throat Singers of Tuva, is incongruous and mercifully short. Georgian Giya Kancheli's "Night Prayers" repeatedly disrupts an atmosphere of eerie stillness with troubling dreams and nocturnal angst, but the piece eventually drags despite a compelling performance by Kronos.

The Quartet sustains a dreamy, disquieting mood across this beautifully recorded CD, good for late-night listening, though insomniacs might opt for cookies and milk. —Jon Andrews

**Night Prayers**—Kongerei; Lacrymosa; Mugam Sayagi; Quartet No. 4; A Cool Wind Is Blowing; K'vakarat; Night Prayers. (78:55)

**Personnel**—David Harrington, violin; John Sherba, violin; Hank Dutt, viola; Joan Jeanrenaud, cello; Dawn Upshaw, soprano voice (2); Djivan Gasparian, duduk (5); Mikhail Alexandrovich, cantor (6); Throat Singers of Tuva, various vocals (1).



**Anderson/Bennink/  
Doran**

**Azurety**  
hat ART 6155

★★★★

**Ray Anderson  
Alligatory Band  
Don't Mow Your Lawn**  
enja 8070

★★★½

**C**all it a left brain/right brain schism. How else could Ray Anderson record two such wildly dissimilar CDs within about a month? *Azurety*, a trio session with drummer Han Bennink and guitarist Christy Doran, indulges Anderson's taste for abstraction, taking the trombonist as far outside as he's been since his days with Anthony Braxton. *Don't Mow Your Lawn*, recorded with Anderson's Alligatory Band, is down-to-earth—an impulsive, raucous party record.

With *Azurety*, Anderson joins an oddly configured power trio, with Doran's turbulent electric-guitar work delivering much of the power. Bennink fuels the nasty, unrelenting groove underlying the guitarist's "Open House," with Doran and Anderson alternating increasingly frenzied solos. Doran is a strong presence, immediately commanding attention. He favors delay devices, feedback and Hendrix, and he cranks the amps up to 11. Doran's "Heights" and "B & D," a duet with Bennink, quickly escalate into firestorms with Doran raging on an array of effects. In contrast,

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Anderson's "Azurety" is sunny and mellow. Doran's accompaniment is laidback and atmospheric, matching the composer's sleepy, drawling trombone on this vaguely Ellingtonian, vaguely tropical tune. Anderson and Bennink occupy higher profiles on "March Of The Hipsters" and Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me." On the former, the drummer's march quickly accelerates to a frenzy, and Anderson's tuba serves as a center of gravity, grounding the trio's more extreme flights.

Bennink is better appreciated in a more spacious environment, and his duet with Anderson on "Just Squeeze Me" is a highlight. This CD doesn't communicate Anderson's or Bennink's sense of humor. One suspects that a live performance would be very different. "The Waters Dixon Line" gets off to a very promising start with Anderson's tuba suggesting Mingus as much as the blues greats, eventually giving way to another Doran guitar apocalypse. For better or worse, the guitarist's squalls tend to shape the trio's sound, and *Azurety's* appeal will ultimately depend on one's tolerance for his pyrotechnics.

*Don't Mow Your Lawn* aims for the feet, not the head. The Alligatory Band plays a Cajun-spiced jambalaya of jazz, Latin, funk and r&b with Anderson's vocals prominent on half the tracks. With Mark Helias producing, the CD can be heard as a hybrid of Anderson's old Slickaphonics group (which included Helias) and the trombonist's work on the underrated *Bluesiana II* project. "Don't Mow Your Lawn" boasts a catchy riff, a proudly

silly lyric and strong solos from Anderson and trumpeter Lew Soloff, but I preferred the large-scale version on Anderson's *Big Band Record* (Gramavision), recorded a few months earlier in a very busy year.

Anderson and Soloff (who's also featured on *Big Band Record*) complement each other very well, particularly in their exchanges on "Alligatory Pecalillo" and the infectious, aptly named "Diddlebop." Soloff plays with Louis Armstrong in mind, capturing the New Orleans sound for "Disguise The Limit." "Airwaves" sounds at once melancholy and tropical, getting much of its color from Frank Colón's timbales and congas. Its theme recalls Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" as it would sound on the beach. Anderson plays well throughout, with predictably fine range and flexibility, but his campy vocals are a taste I still haven't acquired. —Jon Andrews

**Azurety**—Open House; Azurety; B & D; March Of The Hipsters; Heights; Just Squeeze Me; ABD; The Waters Dixon Line (55:36)

**Personnel**—Ray Anderson, trombone, tuba; Han Bennink, drums; Christy Doran, acoustic and electric guitars.

**Don't Mow Your Lawn**—Don't Mow Your Lawn; Diddlebop; Damaged But Good; Alligatory Pecalillo; What'cha Gonna Do With That; Airwaves; Blow Your Own Horn; Disguise The Limit. (60:11)

**Personnel**—Anderson, trombone, lead vocals (1,3,5,7); Lew Soloff, trumpet; Jerome Harris, guitar, backing vocals; Gregory Jones, bass, backing vocals; Tommy Campbell, drums; Frank Colón, percussion.



## Barrett Deems

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Delmark 472

★★★★

You probably know Barrett Deems as drummer with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars edition of the '50s at the height of its commercial and artistic resurgence. Deems globetrotted with Armstrong on *Ambassador Satch*, filmed *High Society* and was on the classic *Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy* Columbia sessions. Now 81 and still playing with a big, muscle-loosening blast, he has (with the sagacious help of Jane Johnson, his alto saxist and wife) spent much of the last decade showing that a career in small-group drumming is every bit as negotiable behind

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Deems remains both a master and a creature of his time—a master whose beat, accents and fills are always on the money. And a creature whose grammar, vocabulary and sound are deeply connected to the age of Catlett, Krupa and Rich, which, if one were to nominate a golden age of the drum, seems as good as any and better than most. His rim shots have a ringing musical crack about them that gives clarity and focus to his ideas. And his hi-hats sizzle with an old-fashioned, high-tork drive.

It's exactly what this flock of bright, solid and,

in some cases, well-tested contemporary swing charts need to get them up on their feet. The band eschews nostalgia and takes the Buddy Rich band as its principle model. Deems, in fact, is fearless in inviting direct comparisons, as well might be. Observe the band's championship run through the famous Rich version of "Love For Sale," which Deems uses as a stretch-out piece and from which the CD's title unexpectedly springs. Yet, the reeds still sing on "It Don't Mean A Thing" in a way that would brighten the day for arranger Benny Carter. And trombonist Craig Kaucher has crafted a couple of original pieces that play to everyone's strengths, especially on the tune "Road Runner."

This is a big band performance of the first rank with fine solo work from Morrison, Corpolongo, Winograd, Goode, McLaughlin and Thamm. And Deems holds it all together with great style and punch.  
—John McDonough



## Michael Carvin

Each One Teach One

Muse 5485

★★★★

**C**arvin is better known today as the teacher of drummers like Ralph Peterson, Michael Shrieve and Eric McPherson than as a musician in his own right. Here, he leads a hard-bop session that sounds as though it could have been cut when he arrived in New York 25 years ago, long before the fusty air of revivalism began to set in. The mixture of veterans with more youthful players lends the whole ensemble an air of maturity.

Carvin's crackling beat lights a fire under "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top," with Antoine

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**Personnel—Deems, drums; Charles Parrish, Michael McLaughlin, Brad Goode, Peter Ellman, John Bailey, trumpets; Audrey Morrison, Loren Bianford, Scott Roberts, Craig Kaucher, trombone; Rich Cropolongo, Jane Johnson, Mike Levin, Tim McNamara, saxophones, flutes; Barry Winograd, baritone saxophone; Duane Thamm, vibraphone; Rob Curtis, guitar; Peewee McKindra, bass.**

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Roney and Claudio Roditi evoking memories of Wayne Shorter and Freddie Hubbard. Pianist Carlton Holmes and bassist David Williams, Carvin's regular bandmates, shine on the modal ballad "Waltz For Gina," but the drummer's strangely choppy, chugging rhythms mar Roditi's "Nails" and Shorter's "One By One." Roditi wails on his own "Recife's Blues," with Carvin packing plenty of punch, and smolders on "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes."

But Houston Person, who co-produced the album with Carvin, steals the show with a guest tenor sax appearance on "I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You," doing the kind of robust, slow burn they just can't teach kids in school.

—Larry Birnbaum

**Each One Teach One**—*The Surrey With The Fringe On Top/ Eternal Triangle; Waltz For Gina; Nails; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Recife's Blues; I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You; One By One.* (46:39)

**Personnel**—Carvin, drums; Antoine Roney, Houston Person (6), tenor sax; Claudio Roditi, trumpet; Carlton Holmes, piano; David Williams, bass.

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## Jimmy Weinstein

**Nostalgia**  
Accurate 5009

★★★★

**W**ho ever heard of playing Ornette Coleman tunes alongside evergreens like "I'll Be Seeing You" and "Laura"? Drummer Jimmy Weinstein makes this mix work, exploring melodic potentials of older tunes while demonstrating a convincing grasp of the harmolodic approach through Ornette's "Happy House." Chris Cheek's expressive tenor saxophone is prominent in the group, displaying a smooth, facile sound and a world-weary quality, a little reminiscent of Joe Lovano, or of Paul Desmond's alto. Versatile guitarist Elie Massias' textures and effects recall stylists as diverse as Bern Nix, John Abercrombie, and Bill Frisell.

A restless, inventive drummer, Weinstein adds accents and color with brushes on "I'll Be Seeing You," and maintains tension and pulse throughout. Moody and evocative, *Nostalgia* is a strong, consistent first outing for Weinstein's group.

—Jon Andrews

**Nostalgia**—*Happy House; I'll Be Seeing You; 26-34; Nostalgia; Evanston; Malita; Weaver Of Dreams; Laura; Happy House (Reprise).* (51:49)

**Personnel**—Weinstein, drums; Chris Cheek, tenor saxophone; Elie Massias, guitar; Masa Kamaguchi, bass.

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JAZZ



Master Team Player

by Howard Mandel

**P**ointed and elusive, sardonic and lyrical, pianist Paul Bley is less a mass of self-contradictions than a master of modernist purposes. What lurks within his witty, flinty touch is a knack for morphing—the better to accompany, react with, or provoke colleagues. Since the Montreal-born, long-U.S. resident Bley's '50s debut with Mingus and Blakey, he's worked with more first-rate, wide-ranging original musical minds than anyone but Miles: hiring (and surreptitiously recording) Ornette Coleman's quartet as sidemen, posing coolly with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow, advancing diffident-yet-deep ideas via tunes by ex-wife Carla, Annette Peacock, discoveries, and peer collaborators galore. To my knowledge, he's never been caught at a disadvantage.

*Romance In The Big City* (Leo 104; 58:13: ★★★★★) is Bley's second album with reedist Keshavan Maslak, a Detroit native of Ukranian descent who leads a band at the Florida restaurant he owns with his wife. Recorded four months after a freely improvised effort that was their first time ever playing together (though they'd known each other since '75), these 13 tracks, from a minute to seven in length, also seem impromptu (seven are co-"composed," one credited to Bley, the rest Maslak as "Kenny Millions"). They're unfailingly appealing, warm, and conversational.

Maslak used to be a notorious howler—he's now calm and purveys extended techniques (principally false, high-register blowing) with precision on alto and tenor saxes and clarinet. Bley, whose piano is nicely represented, cushions Maslak with lush but *never* cloying chords and uninsistent counterpoint from his distinctly thoughtful perspective. Neither player is compelled to push—so lovely silences as well as unshowy, spontaneously unaccompanied passages permeate the music.

*Double Time* (Justin Time 58-2; 46:43: ★★★½) showcases Toronto-based flutist/soprano saxist Jane Bunnett, who's unshakably confident and probing. She launches truly double-timed phrases and generally challenges her tendency toward glibness; Bley matches her handily without getting in the way or merely echoing her. He compliments the lines she proposes but goes where he will—invariably into the least expected realms of linear, rhythmic, and harmonic investigation. Most of the 11 titles are credited to both players and unfold as improvises—themes discovered rather than pre-figured (there's also an unusual cover of "Music Matador" by Prince Lasha and Sonny Simmons). Bunnett and Bley have good rapport, but aren't as easily unselfconscious as Bley with Maslak.

*In The Evenings Out There* (ECM 78118-21488-2; 56:17: ★★½) finds Bley, bassist Gary Peacock, drummer Tony Oxley and John Surman (on bari sax and bass clarinet) in various combos. Recorded the same month (session?) as Surman's same-cast *Adventure Playground* from '91, there's an aura of somber reflection that's briefly broken by the pianist and bassist on "Fair Share," but most of the improvises are disappointingly remote. It's no one's fault they don't connect. All are skilled, incisive players—their solos are arresting. Bley and Surman's most of all.

*Synth Thesis* (Postcards 1001; 47:22: ★★★★★) sets Bley alone in presumably real-time to improvise at a piano and unidentified electronic keyboards, a format he initiated in the '70s. Again, he abjures bombast and excess for creative timbral selectivity and rhythmic spaciousness; his independent hands produce dramatically evocative contrasts. Having been abused for years by glitzy fusioners, the synths sound utterly fresh in this context. Bley's winsome voicings—with artfully designed resonance, percussive attacks, and ghostly trails—highlight his unique sense of harmony and line.

DB



# BLINDFOLD TEST

APRIL 1995

## Jamey Haddad

by Larry Birnbaum

**D**rummer and percussionist Jamey Haddad leads something of a double life, swinging on traps behind jazz players like Dave Liebman and Joe Lovano or laying down third-world syncopations on African, Indian, Brazilian and Middle Eastern instruments with groups like Oregon and the Paul Winter Consort. His performing and recording credits include recent dates with pianists Gil Goldstein and Allen Farnham, organist Lonnie Smith, guitarist Bruce Dunlap and vocalists Carly Simon and Harry Connick Jr., as well as featured roles in a "World Drums" extravaganza in Canada with percussionists from over 30 countries and a gala presentation of Moroccan trance music at Expo '92 in Spain.

Born in Cleveland in 1952, Haddad picked up Lebanese percussion from his family, then switched to rock and funk drumming. After graduating from Berklee College of Music, he moved to New York to play jazz, but a 1980 meeting with Ramnad Raghavan, the original percussionist with John McLaughlin's Shakti, launched him on an enduring love affair with Indian drumming that culminated in a Fullbright fellowship to study with master musicians in Madras. Today, he teaches a course at Berklee on third-world music and its influence on the West. Together with drummer Frank Giorgini, he also developed the Hadgini drum, a twin-bulbed ceramic instrument fitted with electric pickups and suitable for various international styles.

This was Haddad's first Blindfold Test.

### Trilok Gurtu

"Tillana" (from *Crazy Saints*, CMP, 1993) Gurtu, drums, tabla, voice, dol, percussion; Louis Sclavis, bass clarinet, clarinet; Ernst Reijseger, cello; Daniel Goyone, piano.

It has to be Trilok, because there's no other tabla player I know of who understands the conception of jazz so well. He's done a lot to promote his country's musical esthetic and concept of time into a Western thing. I don't know anyone else who's made those inroads.

I'd give it 4 stars. There's a certain kind of intensity that happens when you play a drum set that's broken up the way he plays it. He's invented a whole style of being able to play without a bass drum, so the independence is brought to another level, but it almost forces him to play more linearly, much more so than most drum-set players.

### Paul Motian

"Women From Padua" (from *Motian In Tokyo*, JMT, 1991) Motian, drums; Bill Frisell, guitar; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone.

If that's not Paul Motian, it's someone who's making a career out of trying to sound like him. I would guess it's the trio with Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell, although I've not heard this music. Paul Motian has made the art of drumming into something much more than I had come to know it before I heard Paul. The meaning of texture and the necessity to play only things that propel the music and make it meaningful are just ever-present. This was really nice, really poignant. 5 stars.

### Glen Velez

"Blue Castle" (from *Assyrian Rose*, CMP, 1989) Velez, percussion; Layne Redmond, percussion; Steve Gorn, flutes; John Clark, french horn; Howard Levy, harmonica, piano.

That can only be Glen Velez. He's my playing partner in a couple of situations, and although frame drums have gotten popular, nobody



has the sound and articulation and execution that this guy has. I think Randy Crafton is also playing on this, and Steve Gorn is playing bamboo flute. I played with Steve two nights ago. If it's not Randy, it's Layne Redmond. It's sometimes hard to tell the secondary parts. It's Howard Levy playing harmonica and piano, and John Clark playing french horn. Again, Glen has really mined the concept of times inside of times. If it's in 7, it's got the inner 7s and the wider 7s, and it really animates his playing field of time. 5 stars.

### John Scofield

"Camp Out" (from *What We Do*, Blue Note, 1993) Scofield, guitar; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Dennis Irwin, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

This is John Scofield's quartet with Joe Lovano and Dennis Irwin and Billy Stewart on drums. It must be new. This is a weird band. I've played opposite them with Dave Liebman. I think Billy Stewart is a fantastic drummer. I don't know any young drummer who has charged up younger drummers like him. It's hard for older players to give it up to someone who comes along and plays as well as Bill does; but I know that some of my best students say they'd rather flip burgers than play jazz, and it isn't till they get hip to Billy Stewart that somehow the link between where they're at and a way to participate in more contemporary music becomes evident. He plays funky enough, with a tight enough sound, that he brings a lot of elements together. It's a combination of things—early Tony [Williams], before his fusion years, and Roy Haynes, at any period. 5 stars.

### Dr. S. Balachander

"Manasaa Etulortune" (from *The Immortal Sounds Of The Veena*, Oriental) Balachander, veena; S. V. Raja Rao or Karaikudi R. Mani, mridangam; R. Harishankar, kanjira.

That music is my passion. That's South Indian karnatic music. I think it's a veena, mridangam, and kanjira. It must be an older recording, because the sound of those instruments has more impact than that, but the playing was masterful. There's no music that is as rhythmically sophisticated in a classical form as South Indian music, for me. You played some Glen Velez earlier, and for Glen and me, that was truly the catalyst for hand drumming, finger technique, and the concept of the whole cross-grid of times and metric modulation. They're the champs; so 5 stars. It's easy to get lost in that world, if you really love it, because we almost have no counterpart in our culture to this music.

Raja Rao is a friend, and Harishankar. I know them from South India. The mridangam player, Karaikudi Mani, was my teacher. **DB**