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## Those Who Can Play, Teach

Gary Burton
Gerald Wilson
Rufus Reid
Jackie McLean
Bunky Green
& Others

## Wynton Marsalis

BEHIND THE SCENES

## George Duke in Overdrive

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Roland Kirk

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MAY 1995


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Catching up with the busy trumpeter/composer can be a daunting task. **DB** goes into the studio and on the road in an exclusive behind-the-scenes report.

By Carl Vigeland
Cover photograph of Wynton Marsalis by Frank Stewart.

FRANK STEWART

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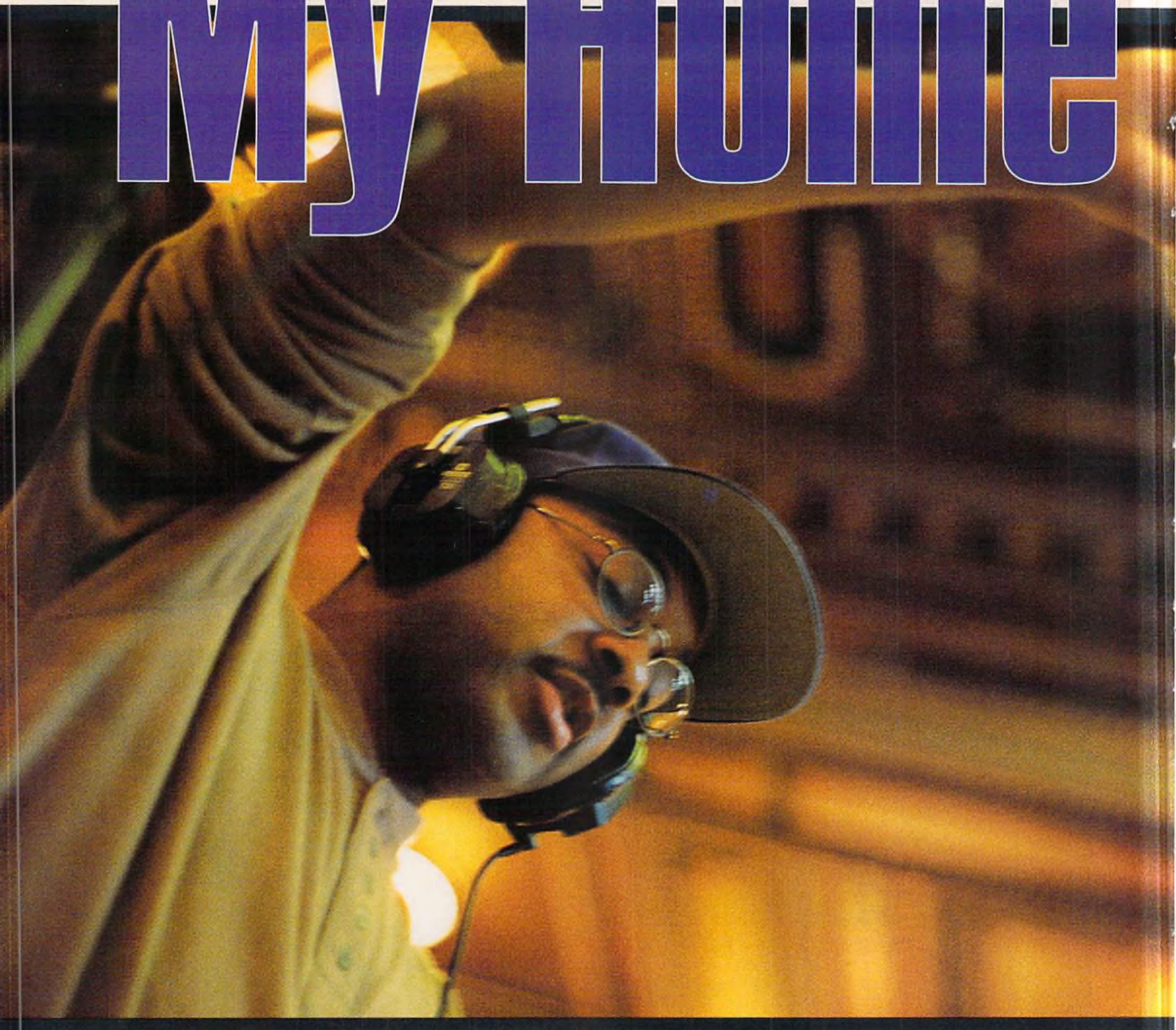
# 'My Home



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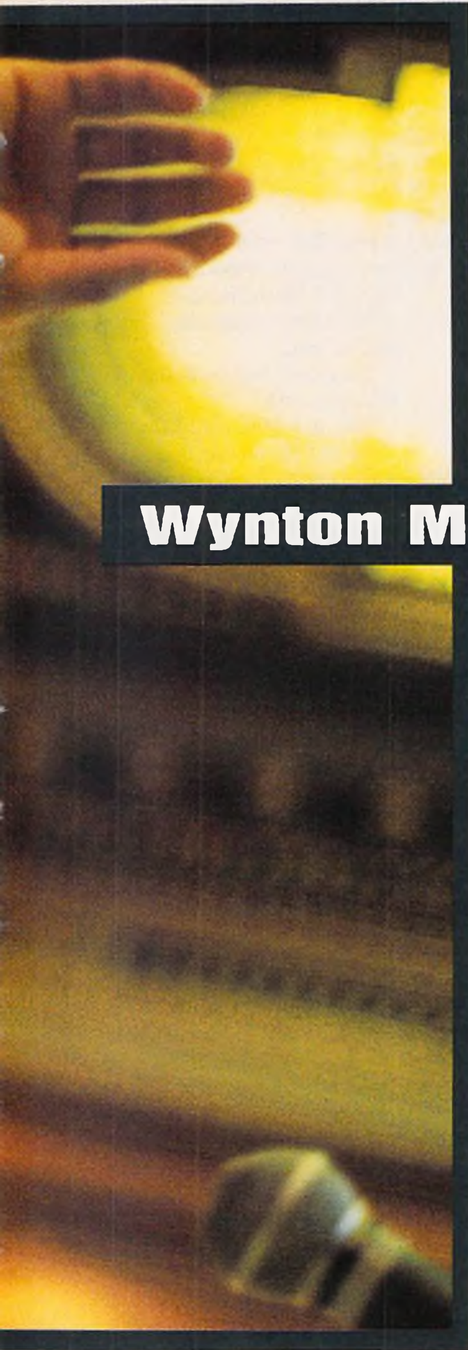
*Wynton Marsalis shrugs off controversies, retires his septet, hits the highway, then heads to the recording studio — all without missing a breath.*

**By Carl Vigeland**



Wynton Marsalis

FRANK STEWART

'Take your time." That's what Wynton Marsalis always says to the musicians on his bandstand.

At a New York City recording session for his acclaimed big-band suite, *Blood On The Fields*, he reminds vocal soloist Miles Griffith to do just that during the work's moving climax. A few weeks earlier, at his septet's final theater gig in the historic Shubert Theater in New Haven, Conn., alto saxophonist Wes "Warm Daddy" Anderson plays an extended blues solo, and from just offstage, ever so quietly, ever so slowly, you can hear Marsalis' voice almost singing, "Take your time, Wes. Take your time."

A week later, when the septet concludes its last nightclub gig at New York City's venerable Village Vanguard on a rainy Sunday night, Marsalis waits until nearly three a.m. before starting the third set, and then talks for 15 or 20 minutes before the band begins the 40-minute first movement of *Citi Movement*. The band plays encores until nearly five, and afterward Marsalis visits with some Japanese jazz fans for half an hour, patiently answering their questions about the blues.

It's almost dawn when a friend drives him back to his Midtown apartment, with its panoramic view of Manhattan and the Hudson River and portraits of Ellington, Armstrong and Blakey on the walls.

"All right," says a weary Marsalis to an overnight guest. "Let me get you a blanket and some sheets." He looks for the light switch.

"We played some music tonight," he continues, with unintended understatement. "Yes, indeed."

Then he says goodnight and disappears into his bedroom, its floor-to-ceiling shelves lined with musical scores and CDs. For a few hours the place is quiet. No phone calls, no messages from the Lincoln Center jazz staff, no musicians coming by to rap or play some ball. Nothing moves save for the small perpetual-motion pendulum on the piano next to the scores of Bach and Bartok and Ellington. A notebook of manuscript for a newly composed section of a Lincoln Center Chamber Orchestra commission lies open on the piano's music stand. It's scheduled to premier in May, a week after the premier of a new Marsalis collaboration with dance choreographer Twyla Tharp at the Metropolitan Opera House.

*Take your time.*

A few weeks have passed. Sitting at the piano, the chamber orchestra score before him, Marsalis is on the phone with another of the friends who call constantly when he is home. Many are musicians who have performed with Marsalis. Long after they leave his band they stay in touch, calling for advice about gigs or recordings, about living on the road, about life. Pianist Marcus Roberts has been calling Marsalis for more than a decade; they may talk for just a minute or, if it's late and no one interrupts, an hour.

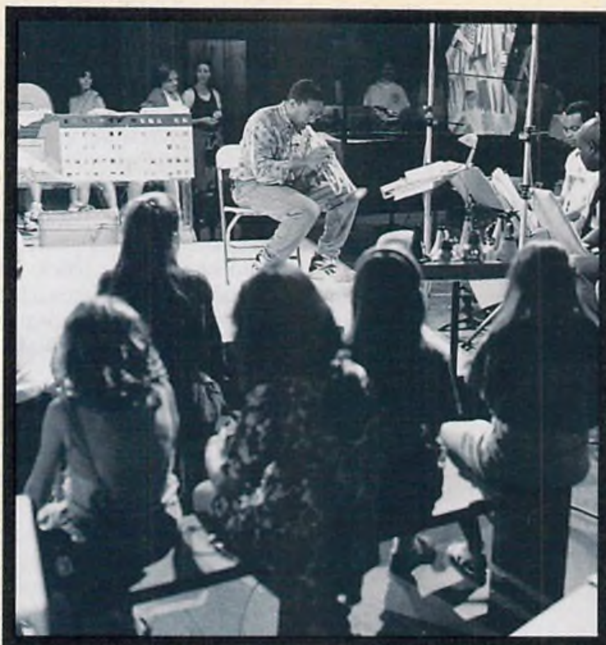
# the Road'

Whoever calls is apt to hear Marsalis share the piece he's writing. Today, he relays part of the new Lincoln Center work over the phone. "What'd you think of that?" he asks, and then plays another section and asks the same question. He wants a response. If he's writing a part for saxophone, he might call Wes Anderson and ask him right on the phone what he thinks.

"Check this out, Warm Daddy."

Once, in a West Virginia motel following a college gig, Marsalis wanted to hear how a section of his *In This House, On This Morning* sounded. So he knocked on the wall of his hotel suite. Anderson knocked in return, put some clothes on and came into Marsalis' room carrying his horn. They had a six a.m. baggage call to leave for the next stop on that tour but worked on the music until the small hours of the morning.

Marsalis wrote *In This House, On This Morning* on the road within the same year (1991-92) that he completed both *Citi Movement* and another dance commission, *Six Syncopated Movements* (the latter in collaboration with New York City Ballet Director Peter Martins). When Marsalis began writing *Citi Movement* for his septet, he was soon to turn 30; *In This House, On This Morning* (also for septet) followed a few months later. When *Six Syncopated Movements* (for small ensemble) was first performed, he was just a few months past his 31st birthday.



A taping of *Marsalis On Music*, a video to be telecast this fall

FRANK STEWART

The intense pace of that schedule continued with tours throughout Europe and overseas; two new classical recordings, including a re-recording of repertoire from Marsalis' first classical release in 1982; various video projects, including the four-part series *Marsalis On Music*, produced by Sony for telecast this fall; and the publication of a book, *Sweet Swing Blues On The Road* (W.W. Norton & Co.), with photographs by Frank Stewart.

When Marsalis announced last fall that his septet was disbanding, there was some joking about his taking early retirement. Yet after his closing Vanguard gig and before the *Blood On The Fields* recording sessions, his "retirement" took him on tour with Elvin Jones to Japan. He also approved the final edit of *Joe Cool's Blues*, a new recording on which his septet alternates takes with a trio led by his father, Ellis, on music from the Peanuts cartoon special *This Is America, Charlie Brown—The Wright Brothers At Kitty Hawk*. He reviewed several more scripts for a National Public Radio series, *Making The Music*, and began the score for a Broadway musical based on *On The Waterfront*. In between, he led a Lincoln Center tribute to Louis Armstrong, continued the very successful Lincoln Center series of youth concerts he began two years ago and planned national and international tours for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. Then, following the recording, he went on the road again with a new quartet, appearing in 29 American cities.

"My home is the road," says Marsalis. "Every day on the road is a homecoming."

It is a homecoming that inspires a wide range of emotions, all of which find a place in Marsalis' music.

"I love the vibe of the streets when we leave New York for the airport, no matter what time, no matter what season," he says. "I don't stare out the window daydreaming or feeling sad. I talk to the driver. One driver I know real well and I like to kid him, but I talk to whoever it is.

"And then we're crossing one of the bridges out of Manhattan and you look back and see the skyline and you know in a few hours you're going to be waking up and this will all be a memory, a part of all the other memories you have of all the other goodbyes, all the people and places, all over the world."

Not just goodbyes. Greetings, too.

"There was a man who worked for an airline, who said he recognized me as we were sitting down in a plane leaving from Chicago," Marsalis laughs.

"'You play saxophone, I know you,' he said.

"I nodded. And he asked me, 'Who you with?'

"'Wynton Marsalis,' I replied.

"'Yeah? He on this flight, too?'

"'He's supposed to be. But I think he's late. I think he might miss his flight.'"

The touring schedule can be hectic, but Marsalis refuses to rush through anything.

"Since I was 17 and left New Orleans for Tanglewood, Mass., on a summer day after high school, I haven't ever had a break. You know, just sitting around. I can truly say I've never spent a day that way. But performing on the road, I don't like to go too many nights in a row in different places without a night off, which we usually spend traveling and I'll do some composing. You have to stay fresh, especially when each gig is different. And every gig *is* different. We never do the same gig twice, in fact, 'perform' isn't really the right word for what we do because that gives a sense that we're going through a program we've rehearsed, tune by tune, move by move. That isn't what it's like at all."

To understand what it's like you don't literally have to go on the road with Marsalis. You can listen to the music. The road is in the music, Marsalis' sense of the road and the thousands of people he has met in 15 years on the road, people from all walks of life.

People like the boy in Monterey, Calif., who was told by a nightclub manager that he was too young to be admitted. So Marsalis went outside to talk with him, and later, the next time the band was in Monterey, he called the boy and gave him a trumpet lesson.

People like D.J. Riley.

"D.J. first came to a gig when me and Branford were playing at Berkeley," Marsalis recalls. "That was a long-ass time ago. That was more than 12 years ago.

"D.J. came backstage in his wheelchair. His body was so small. He had these little legs that just dangled there. And an enormous head, or it seemed enormous in comparison to the rest of his body.

"We started talking about music, and it was very apparent that D.J. knew what he was talking about. He knew all sorts of shit. About Coltrane. Miles. Monk. And we talked about politics and books. About the world. He was enormously intelligent, and he picked up on everything you said.

"He lives now in Los Angeles, where he's been going to graduate school. He gets real sick sometimes; he had pneumonia one year, but he always recovers and gets around again. Travels all over. Home to New Jersey. And he turns up where we're playing in

California. He comes to all our California gigs. 'Reach for the stars,' D.J. says. 'That's the only thing you can do.'" But sometimes you're trying to avoid stones.

Generally considered the most prominent player in jazz, Marsalis has long been a lightening rod for criticism. Early in his career, he was accused of being aloof. In recent years, he has come under fire for his role as artistic director of the four-year-old Jazz at Lincoln Center, a year-round program that Marsalis founded and played a crucial role in building, beginning in 1987 with his involvement in the institution's summer jazz series. In particular, critics have targeted his hiring practices, his choices of commission grants and his use of Lincoln Center as a podium for his views on jazz.

Marsalis doesn't hesitate to take issue with his critics. Last summer, he engaged in a face-to-face public debate with author James Lincoln Collier over interpretations of Duke Ellington's music and accusations of cronyism at Lincoln Center. And he's been quoted extensively in the New York press defending his actions and viewpoints. But in general, Marsalis remains philosophical about the controversies surrounding him.

"It's a little like being on the bandstand," he says. "You don't have to like everything the other musicians play. It's the fact that they're playing that counts."

The analogy broadens to Marsalis' sense of American democracy, which he frequently cites to explain jazz at the countless workshops and lectures he presents wherever he tours. To Marsalis, the foundation of both jazz and democracy is dialogue, learning to negotiate your own agenda within the group's. "Jazz is like a good conversation," he says. "You have to listen to what others have to say if you're going to make an intelligent contribution."

The late light has darkened to dusk, the streets outside fill with cars carrying people home. For the past week Marsalis' band has been in the same New York City building every day and every night, first to rehearse and then to record a single piece of music: *Blood On The Fields*, a long work of 20 sections scored for big band and three vocal soloists. The piece encapsulates an entire history of music for big band; it gives form and meaning to an entire epoch of a people. Slavery is the specific subject of *Blood On The Fields*, but man's enduring desire for freedom is its universal theme. In text and music, *Blood On The Fields* tells a profoundly affecting and compelling story.

As the second-to-last day of the lengthy recording session comes to a close, soloist Miles Griffith stands behind a partition in the center of the auditorium of New York's downtown Masonic Hall. He is about to sing three lines, entitled "Calling The Indians Out," on which the entire work turns. The text is also by Marsalis.

*Oh! Anybody, Hear this Plaintive Song*
*Oh! Who wants to help their brother dance this dance*
*Oh! I sing with soul, Heal this wounded land.*

"Wake people up, Miles," says Marsalis, conducting the piece from the center of the 15-piece band. The casualness of his dress—a Georgia State University sweatshirt and a purple baseball cap—belies the vigor and difficulty of these sessions. During breaks he sings an old Earth, Wind & Fire hit in duet with vocal soloist Cassandra Wilson or spars verbally, on microphone, with one of the other musicians about the use of body oils and colognes. But with a sudden shift of tone and concentration, he becomes dead serious, exhorting the band during one take to remember that the particular section of the piece they were playing then "has got to have power—we're in church during the time of slavery."

Now, Marsalis faces the horns, and the partition blocking off Miles Griffith stands behind them.

"This is the most important part of the piece," Marsalis says. "This is where the piece goes from the most general to the most specific, where it moves from tragic to optimistic." Marsalis sings the part. Then he asks Miles to do it again.

"Good," Marsalis says afterwards, then turns to bassist Reginald Veal. "That was some bad shit you were playing there, Veal."

Marsalis asks for one more take. Before it begins, he speaks again to Miles through the microphone.

"Take your time, Miles," Marsalis reminds him.

The room, with its ornamental columns and colorfully painted woodwork, fills with the sound of Miles' deep voice, its timbre evoking the emotion of the music. As he did when the piece was performed live at Lincoln Center and broadcast nationally, Griffith raises his arms as he sings, as if giving a benediction.

Silence follows the final note.

The spell is broken by the speaking voice of Marsalis' long-time Sony producer, Steve Epstein.

"Wynton," Steve says. "I need you on the phone." He wants Wynton to pick up the internal phone by the music stand so they can speak privately about the take. He detected a few high notes from the band that he fears were not up to pitch.

"I don't care," Marsalis can be heard saying. "I don't give a fuck."

A different, embarrassed kind of silence follows. Long ago, Epstein learned not to be bothered personally by disagreement in the studio. In fact, he knows this kind of exchange is healthy. "It happens all the time," he says over the loudspeaker.

Relieved, everyone breaks into laughter.

"And that was a great take," adds Epstein.

"Seven o'clock," Marsalis announces, meaning the time he wants everyone back. "Thanks a lot."

When the musicians return, they stay only a short while before someone mentions it's trumpeter Marcus Printup's birthday. The entire band plays improvisations on "Happy Birthday" for 10 minutes, and then Marsalis dismisses everyone but Veal, drummer Herlin Riley and Michael Ward. He wants to work with them on the violin riffs Ward plays after Griffith's stirring solo.

Many of the lights are off. Dinner has been served long ago, but the dregs of some morning snacks remain on a tray.

Finally, Marsalis turns to Ward and asks him to play. They stand close together, with Veal and Riley behind them. Never hurrying but constantly urging, Marsalis coaxes Ward into the feeling he wants here. After several stops and starts, Marsalis is silent. He closes his eyes, touched by the haunting sound of Ward's violin. Ward and the other musicians continue to play, uninterrupted, and Wynton's body begins to move with the rhythm and spirit of the music. He begins to dance. **DB**

*Carl Vigeland and Wynton Marsalis are co-authors of the book* Jazz In The Bittersweet Blues of Life, *to be published next year by W.W. Norton & Co. To research the book, Vigeland went on the road with the Marsalis septet for a year.*

## EQUIPMENT

Marsalis plays a custom-made Raja trumpet by David Monette. It includes an integral mouthpiece that makes the trumpet a single structure.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*CITI MOVEMENT*—Columbia 2-53324
*IN THIS HOUSE, ON THIS MORNING*—Columbia 2-73220
*BLUE INTERLUDE*—Columbia 48729
*SOUL GESTURES IN SOUTHERN BLUE (Vol. I, Thick In The South; Vol. II, Uptown Ruler; Vol. III, Levee Low Moan)*—Columbia 47975-7
*STANDARD TIME VOLUME 2, INTIMACY CALLING*—Columbia 47346
*TUNE IN TOMORROW*—Columbia 47044
*STANDARD TIME VOLUME 3, THE RESOLUTION OF ROMANCE*—Columbia 46143

with various others

*JOE COOL'S BLUES*—Columbia 66880 (Ellis Marsalis)
*TANGENCE*—Verve 314 526 588 (J.J. Johnson)
*LUSH LIFE*—Verve 314 511 779 (Joe Henderson)
*YOU WON'T FORGET ME*—Verve 847 482 (Shirley Horn)
*LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA PORTRAITS BY ELLINGTON*—Columbia 53145
*MEMORIES OF LOUIS*—Red Baron 48629 (Teresa Brewer)
*PONTIUS PILATE'S DECISION*—RCA/Novus 63134 (Delfeayo Marsalis)
*THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN*—Columbia 46990 (Branford Marsalis)
*I HEARD YOU TWICE THE FIRST TIME*—Columbia 46083 (Branford Marsalis)
*AS SERENITY APPROACHES*—RCA/Novus 63130 (Marcus Roberts)
*DEEP IN THE SHED*—RCA/Novus 3078 (Marcus Roberts)
*THE PROPER ANGLE*—CTI 79476 (Charles Fambrough)

# Those Who Can, TEA

**Jackie McLean,**
***University of Hartford/Artists Collective***

ALAN NAHIGIAN

*"He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches."*
—George Bernard Shaw

Does anyone doubt the musical abilities of Charlie Haden, who teaches at the California Institute of the Arts? Or James Newton, a tenured professor at the University of California-Irvine? Or of the musicians—from Manny Albam through Bobby Watson—who make up the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music? Or Joanne Brackeen at Berklee? Or Kenny Barron at Rutgers? Or Cecil McBee, Bob Moses, Paul Bley and Ran Blake at the New England Conservatory? Or drummer Billy Hart at Western Michigan University? Or Henry Butler at Eastern Illinois University? Or the host of recording artists—Clark Terry, Maynard Ferguson, Ed Shaughnessy and the entire Count Basie Orchestra—who combine concerts with clinics at campuses around the country?

"When some of these programs started, they weren't that good," says frequent clinician/drummer Louie Bellson. "But in the past few years, colleges have gotten better and better from having [working jazz musicians] coming in and doing all this wonderful work."

Today, jazz is firmly rooted in the groves of academe, with nearly 100 degree-granting programs offered at colleges and universities. While most of these schools host an occasional visit by jazz musicians as clinicians or artists-in-residence, a handful boast active musicians on their faculties. And a few schools in the Northeast have built their jazz programs around a core of recording artists.

This phenomenon began in earnest only in the early '70s, and saxophonist Bunky Green was one who got in on the ground floor. After half-a-dozen releases on the Chess subsidiaries Cadet and Argo—and airplay for "Testifyin' Time" in 1965—Green was invited to teach in universities and junior colleges in the Chicago area. Then, the reaction of musicians was,

"You're gonna lose your soul, your ability to play is going to suffer," remembers Green, now director of jazz studies at the University of North Florida. He also recalls the objections of one faculty member, who said that "bringing jazz into the university is like bringing a camel into a palace."

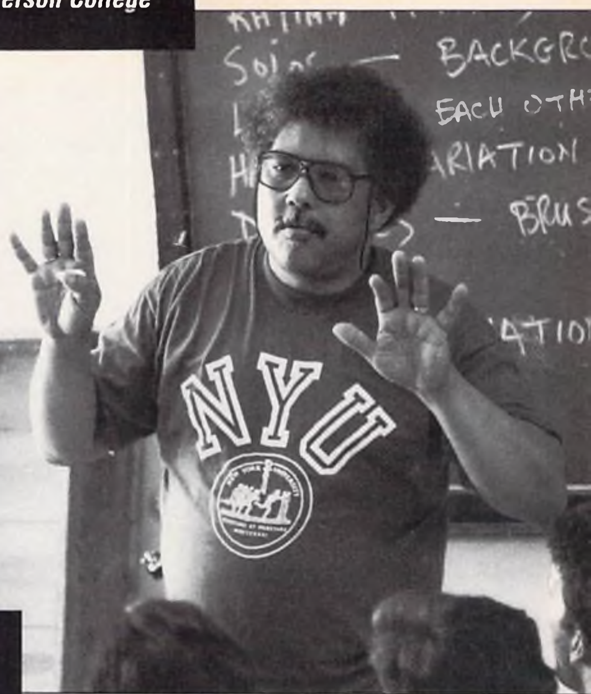
Gary Burton's clinics for Musser Mallet Instruments during the mid-'60s eventually led to an invitation in the early '70s for a two-year residency at the University of Illinois in Champaign. While the idea intrigued him, the thought of being so far removed from the East Coast seemed an insurmountable obstacle. His alma mater, Berklee College, was a better match with his performing career.

"My ambition had been to leave Boston as soon as possible for New York City. It was scary to be moving back to Boston, and the first year or so I had a few second thoughts. The school experience went well, but I wondered to myself if my label [Atlantic Records] would take me less

**Rufus Reid,**
***William Paterson College***

CH

**By Dave Helland**




JOAO FREIRE

**"The great thing about education is that it allows you to go further faster.... The standards are so much higher today.... because of what the opportunity to study has brought to the past two generations."**

**Gary Burton,** ***Berklee College of Music***

seriously," explains Burton, now Berklee's dean of curriculum. "And I was panicked that people would think of me as someone who used to play but now just teaches. I killed myself working the first few years, mostly to make sure nobody would jump to the conclusion I had dropped out of the scene."

The civil rights movement and the demand for the inclusion of African-American studies led to Jackie McLean's invitation to teach at the University of Hartford (Conn.) as well as the establishment of the Artists Collective (a community-arts program on Hartford's rough-and-tumble North End) with his wife, Dollie. "Black students caused my job to come to pass," explains McLean, head of the African-American Music Department of the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford. "When I came I was just the addition of something trendy—that was the direction some schools were going in."

"Something trendy" has evolved from a weekly workshop to a degree-granting program whose students have included the Harper Brothers and saxophonists Antoine Roney and Abraham Burton. Trombonist Steve Davis (who was in the last edition of the Jazz Messengers) and pianist Alan Palmer are graduates who also play in McLean's band as well as teach in his program. Faculty members Ray Williams (trumpet) and Randy Johnstone (guitar) also play in McLean's band.

What some might call incest, McLean would call "synergy." By having his band members teaching at both the university and at the Artists Collective, students at both places have the chance to see how a working band operates from rehearsals to concerts. "My students enjoy the fact that most of the guys that teach them are in my band—one of the few bands left today from my period."

The first academic jazz programs began just after World War II. In 1945, Lawrence Berk founded the Berklee College of Music with a faculty composed of Boston jazz musicians. The next year, Eugene Hall began the dance-band program at North Texas State (now the University of North Texas) in Denton, which from its beginning was devoted to jazz improvisation, composing and arranging. In the '50s, as jazz declined as a popular music, a few tentative steps were taken to bring the jazz world and the education establishment together. Instrument manufacturers realized that clinics conducted by the musicians who endorsed their products were effective marketing tools. Stan Kenton got involved with summer jazz camps. Jazz became an acceptable topic for doctoral dissertations and was first discussed at the annual meeting of the Music Educators National Conference in 1956. Jazz musicians were invited to colleges to give concerts instead of merely play for dances.

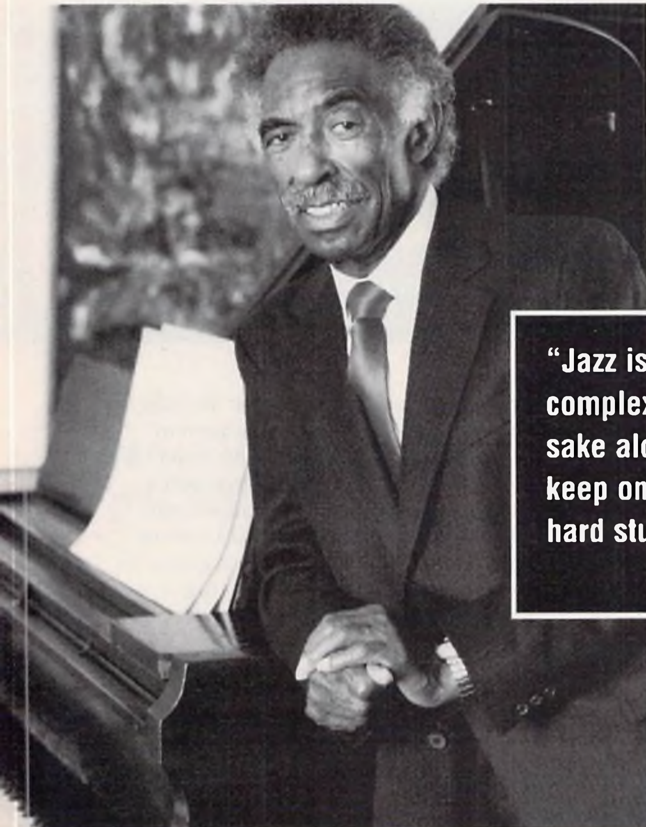
Yet by 1960, when, for instance, Gary Burton and Roscoe Mitchell were graduating high school, they had the same choice of degree programs in jazz that had been available a decade earlier: Berklee and North Texas State. Burton went to Berklee and Mitchell attended a community college where the students organized a weekly jam session. During the decade, while opportunities for jazz musicians as clinicians or artists-in-residence grew—as well as such community-based programs as Jazzmobile in New York City and the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians' school in Chicago—it wasn't till the late '60s that the phenomenon of recording artists joining faculties began, and till the '80s that it really took off. Now, most every institution of higher learning has some sort of jazz component in their music program.

But this remains a phenomenon, not a trend. The bulk of schools with jazz recording artists on faculty are clustered near where the bulk of jazz musicians live—New York City or Los Angeles, close to studios, clubs and labels. Besides geography, questions of tenure and the need for flexibility in an active musician's schedule can also be bars to hiring musicians.

"You can't teach jazz, can you?" is how the question is generally posed to Burton. "People get confused with what is talent and what is musical information. A typical classical musician studies how music works, how harmony works, what the grammar of this music is in order to play better. You study your instrument with a master player. You study these same things as a jazz musician, but instead of using as an example a piece by Beethoven, you use a piece by Monk or Ellington. You're still learning musical information, which helps you be a more knowledgeable, proficient player."

Similarly, the degree program built by bassist Rufus Reid at William Paterson

College is practical in nature with one track devoted to performance and the other to management. The head of the music school in the early '70s, when Reid joined, was Dr. Martin Krivin, who "had visions of a jazz program being taught by visible practitioners of the music so students had a direct link to the marketplace," explains Reid about what is now a degree-granting program. Recent and current faculty members include pianists Norman Simmons and Harold Mabern, trombonist Steve Turre, saxophonist Joe Lovano, bassists Todd Coolman and Michael Moore, and vibraphonist Dave Samuels. Guitarist Kenny Burrell is currently serving as interim director of the college's jazz studies program while Reid is on sabbatical. Graduates include drummers Carl Allen and Bill Stewart, saxophonists Eric Alexander and Bill Evans and pianist Travis Shook.



"The concept of the school is to develop the individual," says Reid. "If they can get themselves equipped to really play, then, if [bandleaders] like the way they play, they might also like the way they compose or arrange. We prepare them to get their foot in the door."

But not all jazz musicians who teach are so career-minded. In Charlie Haden's course at Cal Arts and in clinics around the country, he stresses "discovery. They expect me to talk about licks and scales and changes, and I talk about the spiritual stuff. Some [students] are really taken by it because they've never had people talk about the spiritual part of improvisation."

Similarly, Roscoe Mitchell, who has taught at Cal Arts and the University of Wisconsin, tells students "to find what in their own selves makes them want to pursue music—I encourage them to pursue those feelings. I tell them they should learn their instruments, but the way I look at it, an instrument will play a lot of different types of music. Explore those to help you find what you're hearing, what you want to do."

And some jazz musicians don't teach performance at all. Gerald Wilson, whose career spans work with the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra in the '30s to Kid Frost's rap cover of "Viva Tirado," teaches "the biggest jazz history course in the world" to 500-plus students at UCLA.

> **"Jazz is a serious music, very complex. Not for complexity's sake alone, but the music must keep on with that tradition of hard study."**
>
> **Gerald Wilson, *UCLA***

"Jazz history is always in a state of evolution and revolution—it has been ever since I've been in it," says Wilson. "To break that down, there would be no bop if not for swing, no swing if not for New Orleans style, no New Orleans style without ragtime."

While his course encompasses the avant garde and fusion, Wilson does draw some lines. "Jazz is very serious music, very complex. Not for complexity's sake alone, but the music must keep on with that tradition of hard study, hard working on your instrument. Jazz musicians know when you're playing pop."

Jackie McLean's program includes a significant history component as well. "I really feel that in order for my students to be excellent performers, they have to listen to a lot of early music to learn what is new and what isn't," explains McLean. "I try to give students as close to what my experience was as a young musician. For them to listen to the recordings I listened to, to study the music that I studied."

The jazz musician gets more out of all this than the obvious security of a steady paycheck and the opportunity to pick and choose offers to perform. But it starts as a chance to stay on the scene yet still enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. As a former president of the International Association of Jazz Educators, Bunky Green is often approached by players looking to build up a resume of clinics and artist-in-residence appointments. "They tell me: 'Here I am, 45, 50 years old, and I haven't even got a retirement plan. I wasn't lucky enough to hit.' How long can you run back and forth to Europe? There aren't enough gigs in this country to really support you in a comfortable lifestyle so you're not constantly shuffling," says Green. "Don't forget that jazz is a street music. It's very important to deal with life experience in this music, and that's what [jazz musicians] bring to the classroom."

But there are less tangible benefits. "For me, it reinforces me as a musician," says Rufus Reid. "Some students are very, very together, and if a teacher is self-conscious about anything, these students will wipe them away. You have to be very, very confident of what you are doing to take these precocious students and inspire them. If you don't, the students will run over you."

For Burton, there is an even less tangible benefit. "Art is something people are often passionate about. This leads to sweeping generalizations. One thing teaching has done for me is to remind me to be very open-minded."

"We're building audiences—that's good for all of us as musicians. Everybody is not going to make it, but those students who have been exposed to jazz aren't going to desert its audience," Green says. The program he heads at UNF is traditional in nature, good preparation for teaching or work on cruise ships. "Many just want to play; others have gone on to New York City." Over the course of Green's career, his most notable students have been saxophonist Steve Coleman and trumpeter Oscar Brashear.

"The great thing about education is that it allows you to go further faster," adds Burton. "What has changed most over the past 20 or 30 years is that the standards are so much higher today. What was expected of young musicians trying to start a career in '63 when I moved to New York City was pretty light compared to what's expected of young musicians now launching a career. That's pretty much because of what the opportunity to study has brought to the past two generations."

Or Bob Belden and Reggie Workman at the New School's jazz program? Or reed master/composer Yusef Lateef on the faculty at both UMass and Amherst? Or Anthony Braxton at Wesleyan? Or saxophonist Jimmy Heath at Queens College? Or Ellis Marsalis at the University of New Orleans? Or pianist Laszlo Gardony at Berklee? The subject needs a new epigram. How about:

*"Let such teach others who themselves excel."*
—Alexander Pope **DB**

# Radio Formats Be Damned!

## By Pat Cole

George Duke is constantly in overdrive. When he isn't writing music for himself, he's writing for someone else. When he isn't writing music, he's thinking about music. When he tries not to think about music on the weekends, a tune will pop into his head, and lo and behold, he's thinking about music again. When he finishes an album, then he's rehearsing. When he's not rehearsing, he takes phone calls from his wife or buddies like Stanley Clarke, Ndugu Chancler and Everette Harp. After rehearsing for a tour, he's on the road. When he's not doing any of the above, then he's executive producing. Even when he's sleeping, he dreams about music.

On a Wednesday evening in Hollywood, Duke carves out an hour to talk about . . . music. After a busy day preparing for his upcoming U.S. tour, he pulls up to the gate of a recording studio in his powder-blue Mercedes with a cellular-phone antenna poking through the roof of the trunk. Seconds later, the gate opens, and he drives in. He exits the ride with his halogen smile and gentle spirit, wearing a graphite gray workout suit and matching cross-trainer shoes. His musical task at the moment: overseeing a mixing session of a recording he's executive producing.

In the studio, Duke is in his element. He listens to the vocals, he hones in on the rhythm, he focuses on the bass. The speakers pump out a raspy vocal while a saxophone wails in the background. "She sounds good," he says to the engineer. "Love that Gerald Albright on the sax!" After the engineer adjusts the bass level, Duke retreats to a nearby lounge to chat. Everything is under control.

"It's really tough," he says about his schedule in a serene lounge away from the noise of the studio. He makes a cup of espresso and a capuccino without hardly looking. "I try not to do things just for the buck. I'm not saying I never have, but that keeps me interested and keeps me going."

These days, Duke keeps going and going and going. And it has paid off grandly. After a quarter-century as a working musician, the virtuoso keyboard player finds himself in the prime of his career. He is a formidable double-threat as a producer and performer. Every week, he gets a call from artists ranging from vocalists to saxophone players to produce tracks for their albums. As a performer, he continues to grow and shine. On his 1992 release *Snapshot*, he revealed the depth of his talent with an album that included everything from r&b ballads to contemporary jazz to odd-metered fusion, an album that hit #1 on *Billboard*'s Contemporary Jazz chart.

For an encore, Duke released *Illusions* earlier this year, which picks up where *Snapshot* left off. Duke spreads his wings with instrumentals, ballads, vocals. "Both of these albums are a step in a different direction than what I've been doing in the past," he says. "I've been trying to play more acoustic piano than I did in the past. I really want it to be spontaneous. I don't want to produce my solos. If I make a mistake, I made a mistake. I wanted it to be an immediate thing."

*Illusions* could almost be called *Snapshot II*. Duke used much of the same personnel as he did on the '92 release. There's Ndugu Chancler and Dennis Chambers on drums, vocalists Rachelle Ferrell and Phil Perry, saxophonist Everette Harp and bassist Byron Miller. The song "Love Is So Cold" from *Illusions* could pass as a cousin for "No Rhyme, No Reason," which became an r&b hit on *Snapshot*. (Also on hand for *Illusions* were Stanley Clarke, singer Dianne Reeves, drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, saxist Kirk Whalum and bassist Ray Brown.)

"I was very honest musically on *Illusions*," Duke says. "I don't think about certain radio formats. Even the song 'No Rhyme, No Reason' was not intended to be a single. And the record company said that it was the fastest-rising single on the charts at the time it was released, and I couldn't believe it."

Still, Duke admits that some of the recordings he's made over the years have left him feeling uneasy. "With the records I was producing, I was thinking, I can't play that chord because it's going to lead people into thinking that this is a jazz record, or it's too far-out for people to understand. Especially during the 1980s. It became a period when that was the thing. Some of this stuff I did was LA-de-LA-de-DA. I just didn't close my eyes and let it out as I did when I was young. If the records I'm making now don't happen, I can truly say it was my fault."

Don't bet the house on Duke to misfire in the studio, however. Through his prolific output as a producer, he has etched his imprint on the vast landscape of r&b and jazz. Since he scored a #1 hit in "Sukiyaki" with the 1970s group A Taste of Honey, a long line of stars have asked him to craft tunes for them: Deniece Williams, Jeffrey

ERIC ANTONIOU

Osborne, Smokey Robinson, Phil Perry, Dianne Reeves, the Pointer Sisters and Miles Davis.

"My production work has taken over my solo work," he admits with some reservation. "The producing takes up about 75 percent of my time. I wish it were closer to half and half, and I think it's narrowing. It used to be 90 percent producing, 10 percent performing. As time goes by, I hope I can do more playing."

He can hope, but there are so many artists knocking on his door asking for his magic touch. Yet while many call on his talent and will pay top dollar for his time, the chosen ones are few. "I have to feel that there has to be a seed of greatness there," he says bluntly. "I mean, a real seed of greatness." One of those fortunate artists Duke chose to take under his wing was vocalist Rachelle Ferrell. In 1990, Duke heard one of her demo tapes, and he was sold immediately. So impressed by her performance, he called Blue Note Records President Bruce Lundvall, and Duke insisted that he produce her debut record. Duke was in for a surprise about the tape.

"She's singlehandedly one of the most incredible vocalists to come around in the last 10 years," he says. "I told Bruce that I love this girl when I heard her tape. But I told him that I wanted the male vocalist I heard on the tape because he can sing, too. Bruce said, 'What guy?' I said, 'You know, the guy singing the duet.' And he said, 'It's not a guy, it's Rachelle.' I said, 'Are you out of your mind?!' Bruce said she sang both parts because she couldn't find anyone to do the male vocal part. She's quite a musician, she's got incredible range. She can play great piano, she can sing jazz and she can sing r&b—she has great potential."

Once in the studio, Ferrell said Duke brought out the best in her. "The minute I sat down with him, I knew that he was the cat," says Ferrell. "He was just very warm and real and honest and just reeked of integrity. His strengths in the studio are at the point where the vocals are to be laid. He keeps a very individualistic approach to each piece of music. He's totally immersed in the music and is aware of the broad range of music available to him."

Ferrell also said that Duke defended her choice of music on her self-titled release when the record label pushed for more commercial tunes. "They essentially wanted me to be a pop queen," she said. "They figured they had someone with some talent that they could manipulate into that role, and George went to bat. He felt I was a musician in my own right, I had some things to say and he felt that it needed to be documented just the way that I wanted to express it."

In the end, Duke helped break the singer to the adult-contemporary world. Ferrell's album, which was meticulously recorded and produced by her and Duke over a two-

year period, was released in 1992 and is still on the charts. Her song "Welcome To My World" became a favorite on adult-contemporary radio. All told, the album achieved gold-record status and continues to sell.

"That's what I love about producing," Duke says. "It's like the artist is my baby. That Rachelle was an artist and that this project was a major thing, I feel like her father. I really do; I feel like I'm her proud father."

Seven years ago, Everette Harp was another young, hard-blowing saxophonist from Houston looking to break into contemporary jazz. Then Duke heard him play during an audition for an Anita Baker tour. Duke put Harp in his band, then called 101 North. In 1991, Harp released his first album, which Duke produced. It became one of Capitol Records best-selling contemporary jazz albums that year. Harp made his European debut at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland that year with Duke at his side.

"The man has an incredible ear," says Harp. "A lot of people have a tendency to make records too perfect. But George believes in the moment. If there's really something special in the moment, even if there's a mistake by anyone else's standard, he'll say, 'Man, that's something.' I would overproduce everything and try to make everything perfect. And his strength in the studio is making the person who feels uncomfortable feel most comfortable. He tells you, 'You're the cat, you know what to do.' He builds you up to get what he needs from you."

A great producer's career begins with a solid foundation, which Duke has used to delve into different musical styles. The San Rafael, Calif., native listened to Miles Davis and Duke Ellington as a child and studied trombone and composition at the San Francisco Conversatory of Music. He also studied classical music, and informally studied gospel music at the Baptist church he attended.

After graduation from music school, he spent time in jazz and teaching. Then he joined Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention. He toured with Zappa for a year. At the end of 1970, he got the offer he couldn't refuse: a chance to play with Julian "Cannonball" Adderley. By 1973, Duke rejoined Zappa's group. Naturally, the jazz critics came down hard on his association with the eclectic Zappa. "Leonard Feather, God rest his soul, just quit writing about me," Duke recalls with a smile. "He just chalked it up as a loss for jazz. I understand his feelings. But an artist has to be allowed to do what he wants to do."

The Zappa years proved to be some of the most important for Duke's growth. He learned what makes rock and avant-garde

**"Leonard Feather, God rest his soul, just quit writing about me. He chalked it up as a loss for jazz.... But an artist has to be allowed to do what he wants to do."**

music tick, and Zappa introduced him to the virtues of the synthesizer. Duke also learned the fundamentals of recording and engineering. Zappa's death from prostate cancer last year was painful for Duke. "The one thing I regret is that I didn't get a chance to talk to him before he died," he says.

Duke continued to hone his skills with a trio filled out by violinist Jean-Luc Ponty and drummer Billy Cobham. In 1976, he became a solo artist and began his successful collaboration with bassist Stanley Clarke. But the rigors of the road and a desire to branch out musically prompted Duke to consider a career as a producer. That move paid off and opened a new galaxy of musical opportunities.

"Absolutely, I'm a businessman," he says without any hesitation. "But still, I'm in a position where you never know where your next dollar is going to come from. Anything I book this year could fall through. Anything can happen. But I have a lot of faith. I pray a lot. I feel I have to be comprehensive and put all my eggs in different baskets. So whatever I play, whether it's rock or funk or jazz or Latin, or producer or whatever, I try to spread stuff out in terms of making an income."

This fall, Duke plans to expand his repertoire even further when he releases his first orchestral album, *Muir Woods Suite*, recorded at the 1993 Montreux Jazz Festival. It features Stanley Clarke on bass and Chester Thompson on drums along with a full orchestra.

"This is something I always wanted to do because I have a classical background," he says. "But I didn't want to go and play Brahms or Chopin or something like that. I wanted to do something new and really put my hand into the orchestrating. Quincy Jones told me once you get your feet wet you can never stop. And he was right."

At the end of his career, Duke wants to be the consummate performer and producer. He hopes that he can have more time to write music for himself. "I just want to be remembered as a fairly decent musician with a sense of humor," he says with an infectious laugh. "I'm not an incredible player. I think I'm a decent, a good player, but I do have a point of view on a piano. I know that I don't sound like a lot of piano players out there. So I do have a musical point of view. And I don't try to take myself too seriously. We're not here long enough to do that." **DB**

## EQUIPMENT

George Duke uses a variety of keyboards and equipment in the studio and on the road. They include a Synclavier (co-owned by Duke), Kurzweil K2000 sampler, Kurzweil PC88 controller, Studio Electronics SE1 and Korg Wave SR synths, Digital Music MXS MIDI patcher, E-mu Vintage Keys, Roland D550 and Korg MIR synth modules, Samson MPC2242 wireless mic, Peavey Valvex mixer and Peavey MIDIMasterII, a Stewart PA1800 amp and Meyer UM1C speakers.

Duke also uses a Yamaha KX1 strap-on keyboard, Yamaha PRO MX 01 mixer, Gambatte MIDI wireless system, Bosendorfer seven-foot grand and a Baldwin seven-foot grand.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*ILLUSIONS*—Warner Bros. 45755
*SNAPSHOT*—Warner Bros. 45026
*NIGHT AFTER NIGHT*—Elektra 960778
*GEORGE DUKE*—Elektra 3573
*THIEF IN THE NIGHT*—Elektra 9 60398
*RENDEZVOUS*—Epic 39262
*GUARDIAN OF THE LIGHT*—Epic 25-3P-440
*DREAM ON*—Epic 37532
*A BRAZILIAN LOVE AFFAIR*—Columbia/Legacy 53032
*REACH FOR IT*—Columbia 47042
*FROM ME TO YOU*—Epic 34469
*LIVE ON TOUR: BILLY COBHAM/GEORGE DUKE BAND*—Atlantic 18194 (out of print)
*THREE ORIGINALS*—Verve 2-314-519 198

with Stanley Clarke
*THE CLARKE/DUKE PROJECT III*—Epic 46012
*THE CLARKE/DUKE PROJECT I*—Epic 36918
*IF THIS BASS COULD ONLY TALK*—Portrait 40923

with Cannonball Adderley
(all currently out of print)
*LOVERS*—Fantasy 9505
*PHENIX*—Fantasy 79004
*SOUL ZODIAC*—Capitol 11025
*THE BLACK MESSIAH*—Capitol 846

with Anita Baker
*GIVING YOU THE BEST THAT I GOT*—Elektra 60827

with Herb Ellis and Ray Brown
*AFTER YOU'VE GONE*—Concord Jazz 6006
*SOFT SHOE*—Concord Jazz 6003

with Miles Davis
*LIVE AT MONTREUX*—Warner Bros. 45221
*AMANDLA*—Warner Bros. 25873
*TUTU*—Warner Bros. 25490

with Michael Jackson
*OFF THE WALL*—Epic 40600

with Jean-Luc Ponty
*KING KONG* (with Frank Zappa)—Pacific Jazz 89539
*THE ELECTRIC CONNECTION*—One Way 17413
*THE JEAN-LUC PONTY EXPERIENCE WITH THE GEORGE DUKE TRIO*—One Way 17372

with Frank Zappa
*STUDIO TAN*—Rykodisc 10526
*BONGO FURY*—Rykodisc 10522
*ONE SIZE FITS ALL*—Rykodisc 10521
*THE GRAND WAZOO*—Rykodisc 10517

# Roland Kirk:
## Telling It Like It Is

By Bill McLarney

*When Roland Kirk (later "Rahsaan" Roland Kirk) first burst on the jazz scene in 1960, he became the subject of controversy. Most musicians and critics eventually came to accept his odd instruments and his playing two or three horns simultaneously, but he still defied categorization throughout his career.*

*Kirk's first recording in 1956 placed him in the "soul" bag, but some of his later efforts brought him acclaim by adherents of the jazz avant garde. Until his death in 1977, he recorded everything from rock & roll hits to bop tunes to classical pieces. Since then, much of his work has been reissued, most notably in the anthologies* Does Your House Have Lions: The Rahsaan Roland Kirk Anthology *(Rhino 2-71406) and* The Complete Mercury Recordings *(Mercury 10-846630).*

*In the following "Classic Interview" with Kirk, reprinted from our* **May 18, 1967** *issue, a conversation on musical styles quickly turned into a freewheeling discussion of the ills of jazz and the music business.*

VERYL OAKLAND

**BILL McLARNEY:** *Do you think the current crop of avant-garde or "new thing" players has contributed anything really new to jazz, and if so, what?*

**ROLAND KIRK:** All I've heard is a new approach. Take Illinois Jacquet—the way he extended the range of the tenor. That was new. I've always accepted Illinois Jacquet. How can you put people like that down and still go along with what's happening today? You should accept the fact that people have done these things. Of course, these things are new to some young people and critics who never took time to listen to them. Fortunately, I took the time. The only new thing I've heard is harmonics. But even that. . . . Listen! [Lester Young's recording of "Afternoon Of A Basie-ite" was on the turntable.] Lester does something like that. Hear? He takes a C and plays it in two different positions to get sounds from that one note. I call it "squeeze saxophone."

**BM:** *At a session the other night, some saxophone players were startled by your breath control, the way you could play without taking a breath, and were questioning you about it. Do you consider that a new technique?*

**RK:** It's been done before but not the way I'm doing it. It can extend a saxophonist. He has the freedom to play beyond the barline. I've heard people write this way, but I never heard them play this way, because they had to take a breath. I came upon this by listening to all the sax players from Don Byas on down and up. Take Johnny Griffin. He's so fast. I thought, "If he were a piano player, he wouldn't have to take a breath—he'd just go on and on." If he was really conscious of this breath thing, he could play more.

**BM:** *Is playing two or three horns at once new in jazz?*

**RK:** There might be some guy in the woods somewhere who we never heard of who did it before me. I do know I'm the first to bring it to the public. I'd get more credit for it, but it's too simple. It's like the man

who invented chewing gum. He was really into something. But it's so simple nobody wants to say it's something. They just overlook it. But I think that it will last through all kinds of music and will be recognized some day as a real contribution. I just hope that when the era comes that people are playing two and three horns, they'll point back at me.

**BM:** *How do you feel about the "freedom" school of jazz?*

**RK:** I sat in with one of those groups in New York, and it was the first time I've ever been ashamed of being a musician. I felt like pulling my coat up over my head so no one would take my picture when I came off the stand.

People talk about freedom, but the blues is still one of the freest things you can play. If you know the changes, you can take them anywhere you want to go. I don't say all of them, but I know a lot of them can't play a melody for you. I'll sit in with people, and we'll play "freedom," and then I'll say, "Well, let's play a tune," and they can't even get through the tune. And it's worse in New York than anywhere. I've seen guys who don't even know the scale, who wouldn't make it in some small town in the Midwest, come to New York, get on a record and be an overnight success. New York is a very gullible place.

**BM:** *As a nonmusician, I can't separate the guys who bought the horn yesterday from the experienced players when they play "free." How do you evaluate them? How do you tell the good players from the bad?*

**RK:** Nobody can give you an answer. I can let my two-year-old son play the piano, and that's free. When I pass out the whistles at the club, that's freedom. [When Kirk plays "Here Comes The Whistle Man" at clubs he passes out wooden whistles to the customers and invites them to participate.] But if I ask the people are they musicians, they say, "No." They can't really play the whistles. But if freedom is your standard, then it's valid. They're doing what they feel.

**BM:** *Do you think the attitude of many young musicians, not necessarily just the freedom players, is not what it should be with respect to older forms?*

**RK:** There's not enough respect for the older players, and it's getting worse. I call older musicians I've respected "Sir," and people think I want a favor from them. And I try to give older musicians credit. A lot of young guys feel if you give someone credit, you're being phony. Take Roy Haynes. Most all of the young drummers have copied him, but they don't want to acknowledge his name. That's what hurts, when you go out and pay your dues, and nobody wants to accept you.

**BM:** *Are some young musicians deficient in listening?*

**RK:** Yes. One night I went down to Eddie Condon's, and after the set somebody came over and said, "Say, aren't you Roland Kirk?" I told him I was, and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Stealing." Most of the young musicians don't think they can hear anything down there. But I think that's the beauty of being in New York. I mean that's why I moved to New York—to be near *all* the music. I didn't go to be put in a box. Musicians and listeners tend to categorize themselves. One set of guys listen to one kind of thing. People come to my house, and they think they're going to see nothing but new jazz records. But they see classical music, Indian music, Japanese music, polkas, ragtime music, all kinds of music, and they're surprised. I like all kinds of music.

**BM:** *Do you deliberately try to communicate with your audience or do you just hope they'll get the point?*

**RK:** I think it's wrong not to try to reach out to your audience. I've been on the bill with big-name groups that people want to come out and spend their money to see, and the leader didn't even announce the names of the guys in the group. I'd hear people at a table saying, "I wonder if that's so-and-so on bass," and I'd tell them, "Yes, it is." I feel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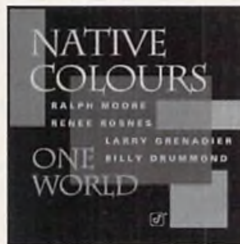


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that when people spend their money to come out, we owe them at least this much. A musician who puts this down is wrong.

**BM:** *You have certain tunes, either pop tunes like "Walk On By" or originals like "Whistle Man," that are sure crowd-pleasers. Do you feel that playing these tunes helps bring the people into your music?*

**RK:** Definitely. If you play two numbers in the set to get the house, no matter what you play the rest of the set, that house will be with you.

**BM:** *What do you want the audience to get out of your music?*

**RK:** I would hope you'd get some kind of laugh out of my music, some kind of joy. I think music should bring happiness—and sadness, too. Anybody who thinks it should be strictly an intellectual thing—I guess that's the way he was brought up. But when you're working in a club, those people don't come out to be no intellectual, unless they're told that's what it is in front. But I don't think you should tell a customer that, that he's got to come in the club and be cool. That ruins the whole thing. The customer should come in to feel how he wants to feel. If he gets too loud, I think the bandleader should be strong enough to make him laugh his way out of it or to make him feel so bad he won't talk any more.

**BM:** *Do you prefer clubs or concerts?*

**RK:** We need both. People should relax in concerts as well as clubs. They should feel they're at your house and you're entertaining them. Trouble is, you can't get as loose at a concert. I might feel different about it 10 years from now. I'm not old enough yet to play one set and feel that's sufficient.

**BM:** *Do you have any particular complaints about clubs or any part of the business side of jazz?*

**RK:** For one thing, everybody thinks he knows what the musician should do. People should give the musician some credit for what he's doing with his art instead of dictating to him. And clubowners shouldn't complain if a guy goes over five minutes on a set. He's giving the people more music, and he's being true to his art.

Then there're prices. I feel embarrassed when I'm sitting next to someone's table and hear their bill is $20 and they've stayed one set. I don't charge the owner that much that he should set the prices like that.

And people don't want to give jazz any credit. Look at Las Vegas. They say they don't like jazz there, yet they have hardcore jazz out there—Basie, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich. But they don't call it jazz. Then when some jazz group doesn't draw, they say, "Jazz doesn't draw." Let anything bad happen and they say, "Jazz." People in other kinds of music are coming in late, smoking pot and falling off the bandstand. But when it's a jazz musician, they want to make it an example. . . . You know, any kind of write-up that's got anything to do with dope—if there's a musician involved, they say he's a jazz musician when he might not be.

**BM:** *Where do you think the future of jazz lies? Musically, I mean.*

**RK:** I wouldn't be willing to speak for anybody else, but for me I think I'd like to get into electronic music more. Electronics is all around, but the average musician doesn't observe it. Like, take the telephone. When I was in Columbus, Ohio, if I wanted to know what key I was in, I could pick up the phone and the dial tone would be B-flat.

Edgar Varese has been doing these things since the '30s, but it hasn't been adopted too much in jazz. I met Varese in the Village, and he told me that Charlie Parker wanted to study with him. They really wanted to exchange ideas. But by the time they were supposed to get together, Bird had died or he couldn't find him or something.

**BM:** *Besides exploring electronic music, what are your plans?*

**RK:** I just want to play. I'd like to think I could work opposite Sinatra, B. B. King, the Beatles or a polka band, and people would dig it. **DB**


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GRP 9806

★★★½

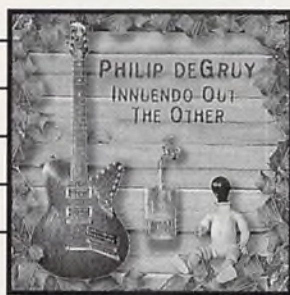
Taylor's upbeat, tuneful compositions and arrangements imply something beyond what we hear: the *Homage* suite salutes jazz masters, while the *Step Into My Dream* suite is music written for dancers. (The two concluding pieces, "It Happens All The Time" and "One For Fun," can be heard as a double encore to either "show.")

The first suite is Taylor's tribute to some of the mentors from his youth: violinists Eddie South and Stuff Smith, bassists Slam Stewart and Oscar Pettiford, drummers Sid Catlett and Jo Jones, and pianist Art Tatum. Using the Turtle Island String Quartet, Taylor shapes the various pieces to highlight the timbral and textural nuances that were a key influence from the work of those violinists and bassists referred to above. Consequently, a woody, classical feel runs through these compositions, with a structure that's hard to miss. But the swing, blues tonalities and Taylor's piano solos make it more than jazzy chamber music. In fact, Taylor's writing for the Quartet/Trio makes for the strongest music on the album, music that shows off more of Taylor's sophisticated daring. "Part I" alternates the Quartet with Taylor's bright piano, using an easy swing waltz for glue. "Part II," the longest piece on the album at just over 12 minutes, changes mood, structure and drives home the "homage" theme best, using strong violin, piano and viola solos with (and without) string choruses to communicate feelings of romance, longing and a kind of muted delight. Dancers might feel right at home.

The greater portion of *Homage* actually belongs to the *Step Into My Dream* suite. A fair amount of orchestrating can also be heard here, only now it's just the Billy Taylor Trio, featuring bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Steve Johns (with percussonist James Saporito on selected cuts). The music was written for the David Parsons Dance Company. Having seen the Parsons/Taylor premiere of this work last year, it's a real treat to hear the music again and try to visualize the modern dance that accompanied/helped create it. (The "Dream," incidentally, refers to a walk Taylor took across 125th Street in Harlem that "evoked images of the past, present and the future.")

The revue-style program runs the gamut of jazz, from blues to stride to swing, light funk to ballads. There's even a tempered "free" piece ("Hope And Hostility") and a smooth jazz rap, "On This Lean, Mean Street," with Taylor reciting! While Taylor & co. perform the material very well, and Taylor's writing can be effective ("Step Into My Dream" and "Kim's Song" have memorable themes), overall, the music lacks a strong imprint, and needs those dancers to realize itself. *—John Ephland*

**Homage**—*Homage: Part I, Part II, Part III; Step Into My Dream: Step Into My Dream, Billy And Dave, On This Lean, Mean Street, Barbados Beauty, Kim's Song, Hope And Hostility, Uncle Bob, Two Shades Of Blue, Dave And Billy, Back To My Dream; It Happens All The Time; One For Fun.*
***Personnel***—*Taylor, piano; Chip Jackson, bass; Steve Johns, drums; Turtle Island String Quartet (1,4); Jim Saporito, percussion.*




## Philip deGruy

### Innuendo Out The Other

NYC 6013

★★★★

This unusual outing sent me reaching for records not by Lenny Breau and Chet Atkins—deGruy's stated departure points, whose influence is certainly audible in his approach—but by earlier generations of guitar hotshots, such as Roy Smeck, George Van Eps, Carl Kress and Dick McDonough. Before guitar was a widely accepted tool for jazz expression, these freakish fretsmen used a combination of technical wizardry and vaudevillian zaniness to captivate listeners. That same combination is what makes deGruy more than a merely dazzling player, which he undoubtably is.

First, there's the instrument: called the "guitarp," it augments a (hardly) standard seven-string guitar (an innovation introduced in 1939 by Van Eps, who commissioned Epiphone to make him one) with an additional 10 harp strings. DeGruy's loose-nutted sense of humor leads him to string together unthinkable runs of quotations on this monster machine; listen for snatches of Neil Young and the theme to *M*A*S*H* in the middle of his live crossfade between A. C. Jobim's "Wave" and "When The Saints Go Marchin' In." And his choice of basic material is far beyond the pale of Joe Pass—he covers Coltrane's "Naima" and Bill Evans' "My Bells," showtunes like "If I Only Had A Brain" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me," pop numbers like "My Girl" and "Blackbird," and Claude Debussy's "Claire De Lune." All these are treated to the same finger-picked stream-of-consciousness free-flow, with the added strings serving coloristic and heightened emotional ends.

Though deGruy often leans toward more impressionistic harmonic territory—brushing the harp strings in a swift stroke—he's apt to toss in a bluesy lick (check his own, short title tune and his zoned-out "Blues For Rod Serling") or run a bass line underneath high arpeggios and linear runs in a stunning way. While the humor on *Innuendo Out The Other* never slips over the line into simple silliness, it comes perilously close in a couple of places. But deGruy's musicianship seems to be at the service of a quick and inventive enough mind to keep it from turning into a curiosity or novelty item. *—John Corbett*

**Innuendo Out The Other**—*Innuendo Out The Other; My Girl; If I Only Had A Brain; Naima; They Can't Take That Away From Me; Dear Sur; Wave/When The Saints Go Marchin' In; When You Wish Upon A Star; Wooly Bully; Lazy Bird/Blackbird; My Bells; Blues For Rod Serling; Freight Train/See You In My Dreams; Claire De Lune; Out Of The (Music) Box And Into The (John) Cage. (51:15)*
***Personnel***—*deGruy, guitarp.*

## Joe Henderson

### Double Rainbow

Verve 314 527

★★★★

Joe Henderson scales Mount Jobim in this timely tribute to the late composer, continuing his string of winners for Verve. The album features groupings from duos to quintets and dodges most of the Jobim signature pieces that everybody knows. Unless you're a Jobim wonk, you should find the music fresh and stimulating without being especially overworked.

Henderson has a few signatures himself that seem designed more to mark time that make music: the trills, for instance, and the little scales that race up and down before he moves to the real business. But he matches the graceful bossa-nova rhythm patterns with an equal grace of attack and timbre.

The CD also occasions a reunion with Herbie Hancock, who becomes a strong foil and helps stand the second half of the album in contrast to the first. The initial five cuts with the rhythm team of Assumpcao, Braga and Neves (who duets with Henderson on a gossamer "Once I Loved") bubble with the subtle spirit of Jobim's Brazil. Just short of the halfway mark, Hancock, DeJohnette and McBride move in. By the end of "Triste" the transition is one and we are in another more

straight-on jazz sensibility, somewhat tougher, though sometimes softer. The meatiest playing is on the duos with Hancock and McBride.

Though this is a fine CD, I don't regard Henderson as "one of the greatest tenors in history." But he's one of the few of the post-bop lost generation who navigated the '60s and '70s without being drawn into too much of its esoterica. His value and success today probably derive from both the scarcity of such players and the fact that he managed to preserve a balanced voice in an era of extremism. —*John McDonough*

**Double Rainbow**—*Felicidade; Dreamer; Boto; Ligia; Once I Loved; Triste; Photograph; Portrait In Black And White; No More Blues; Happy Madness; Passarim; Modinha. (63:00)*
**Personnel**—*Henderson, tenor saxophone; Elaine Elias (1-4), Herbie Hancock (6-11), piano; Oscar Castro Neves (1,2,5,6), guitar, percussion; Nico Assumpcao (1-4), Christian McBride (6-12), bass; Paulo Braga (1-4,6), Jack DeJohnette (6,7,9,11), drums.*

# John Coltrane

## Live In Seattle

Impulse! 2-146

★★★★

Here's Coltrane's classic quartet having a difficult night shortly before its dissolution, with additional personnel urging on the saxophone prophet in his mission. Though Garrison is consistently fine, Tyner is intermittently sluggish and Jones may be frustrated with the band's extra baggage. Sanders hasn't yet found himself but probes restlentlessly and earns some insight; Garrett, more effective a spirit than a reed player, bleats and squawks through his solo on "Cosmos" but contributes with good effect to the horn-trio opening on "Evolution."

This is an ensemble that starts at the brink, then rushes over it: "Cosmos" is a 10-minute catharsis, "Evolution" more than three times that long. Yet when Trane steps forth to air his commanding, implacable tone, excess is forgiven. He states "Out Of This World" with effortless authority and answers Tyner's middling solo with a beautifully eerie, fluid soprano episode. The pianist then re-organizes his chordal accompaniment into great waves; Jones and Garrison plumb ever deeper currents, and Trane skims the surface like a bird, like a harsh breeze turning into a storm, finally like an ocean god hurling full force against the sea cliffs.

The basic quartet feeds off the demands of such elemental energies on "Cosmos" and "Evolution," too. Jones' flat-out pounding, Tyner's necessary abstraction of harmony, Garrison's firmness and Trane's self-challenge (when he's unable to summon *three* roaring independent voices, Pharoah blows in and the two lift off in most impassioned duet) are their own rewards. Trane follows volcanic climax with gorgeous thematic reprise, summoning the sonic Eden that inspired a generation to make love to his late-period music. It takes three minutes before the fury of "Out Of This World" subsides.

"Body And Soul," like the incomplete but wholly satisfying "Afro-Blue" here, is previously unissued. These tracks, 55 minutes in length, make this package worthy even if you own the two-record *Live In Seattle*. "Body And Soul" demonstrates Trane's profound debt to and extension of Coleman Hawkins' vertical studies; "Afro-Blue" is a straight-out, driving rendition from the band's regular book. Garrison's solo "Tapestry" and his long "Afro-Blue" passage are noteworthy, as is David Wild's annotation (though my log

# THE HOT BOX

| CDs ▼ / CRITICS ▶ | John McDonough | John Corbett | Howard Mandel | John Ephland |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Billy Taylor** *Homage* | ★★★1/2 | ★★★ | ★★1/2 | ★★★1/2 |
| **Philip deGruy** *Innuendo Out The Other* | ★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★1/2 | ★★★1/2 |
| **Joe Henderson** *Double Rainbow* | ★★★★ | ★★★1/2 | ★★★★ | ★★★★ |
| **John Coltrane** *Live In Seattle* | ★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★1/2 |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doesn't always match his). Imagine how the Seattle club resounded after these Trane sets —and to think they recorded *Om* the next day!

*—Howard Mandel*

**Live In Seattle**—*Cosmos; Out Of This World; Body And Soul; Tapestry In Sound; Evolution; Afro Blue. (62:01/70:25)*
**Personnel**—*Coltrane, tenor, soprano saxophones; Pharoah Sanders, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Donald Rafael Garrett, bass clarinet, bass; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.*

## Charles McPherson

**First Flight Out**
Arabesque 0113

★★★★½

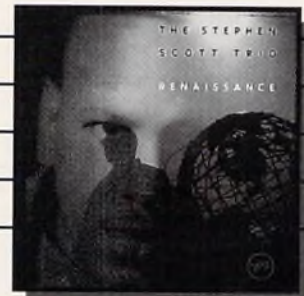
Alto saxophonist Charles McPherson's comparison to his avatar Charlie Parker has been both a blessing and a curse. During the early years of his career his intimacy with Bird's style, his absorption of tone and execution, helped to lift him above a herd of imitators. Later, this same mastery of Bird would be a troublesome burden, often obscuring his synthesis and what was clearly McPherson's own emerging new voice.

If there is still some lingering doubt about McPherson's making his own mark, fix your ears on "Portrait," "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" or the three increasingly grand choruses of his solo on "Deep Night." The two former tunes were written by Charlie Mingus. McPherson's productive tenure with the maestro is reflected as he gathers and projects the essence of the bassist's distinctive compositions.

To be sure, there are traces of the past, but all the Bird clichés have been dispatched or converted from dross to gold, and what you get is a fully evolved McPherson. His liquid phrasing darts playfully in and around Tom Harrell's solo on "Well You Needn't," and his opening eruption on "Blues For Chuck" is further indication of how deftly he has incorporated his mentors into his performances and compositions.

McPherson is backed by a superb rhythm section—pianist Michael Weiss, Peter Washington on bass, drummer Victor Lewis—and their combined presence is never more persuasive than on the leader's "Lynns Grins." *—Herb Boyd*

**First Flight Out**—*Lynns Grins; Lizabeth; Blues For Chuck; Nostalgia In Times Square; Well You Needn't; 7th Dimension; Goodbye Pork Pie Hat; Deep Night; Portrait; Karen; My Funny Valentine; First Flight Out. (68:56)*
**Personnel**—*McPherson, alto saxophone; Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Michael Weiss, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.*

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**Renaissance**
Verve 314 523 863

★★★½

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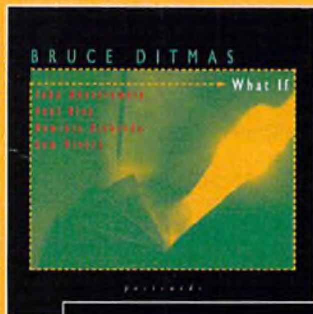

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date as a leader, eliminates big-name sidemen, recording the pianist's working trio with bassist Michael Bowie and drummer Clarence Penn. The program consists of a suite of ingeniously reworked standards and Scott's own *The Renaissance Suite*, topped with an "encore" of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage." Scott acknowledges the influence of Ahmad Jamal, and this version of "Poinciana" is upbeat, agile and inventive. Standards like "Solitude" and "Just Friends" offer ideal vehicles for Scott's re-engineering as he tinkers, substitutes parts, changes speeds and rebuilds these songs. The pianist clearly enjoys ornate, complex arrangements, and can't resist the temptation to add layers of texture and embellish these melodies at length.

The four-movement *Renaissance Suite* is ambitious, but ultimately falls short. The suite celebrates the renewal of jazz (as Scott views it) through the rediscovery of veteran talent and the infusion of vital new blood. "Harlem Renaissance" begins with an engaging melody. Scott's emphatic left hand drives the chordal "While In Transition" and "The Revolution," generating a sense of urgency and tension. (He's so strong rhythmically that a solo-piano session seems inevitable.) Much here is breathless and busy, crammed with action, but lacking resolution. Scott alleviates the gravity and intensity of *The Renaissance Suite* by letting loose with his fluid, joyful version of "Maiden Voyage." —*Jon Andrews*

**Renaissance**—*Poinciana; Solitude; Tenderly; For Heaven's Sake; Spring Is Here; Just Friends; The Renaissance Suite—1st Movement: The Harlem Renaissance, 2nd Movement: While In Transition, 3rd Movement: The Revolution, 4th Movement: With The Least Bit Of Hope; Maiden Voyage. (60:25)*
***Personnel****—Scott, piano; Michael Bowie, bass; Clarence Penn (1-10), Karriem Riggins (11), drums.*

## Kevin Eubanks
### Spiritalk 2, Revelations
Blue Note 30132

★★½

From the first track, "Faith," the ensemble concept draws you in. The bright whirring hummingbird of Kevin Eubanks' guitar is deep in the mix beside brother Robin's dark, blustering trombone. The flute of Kent Jordan floats and twitters over the top and around the simmering edges, seasoning rather than a main ingredient. All the while, Dave Holland and Marvin "Smitty" Smith furiously beat and churn this stew. When Kevin gets going so fast that the guitar notes become One, you remember the only other band that ever reached this trance-inducing hum: the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

*Spiritalk 2* titillates. Eubanks' acoustic instrument has a seductively lustrous warmth, and there are no faster guitar gunslingers on the street. (Hear him smoke the intro to "Revelations.") But he also composed all the music here, and like many musicians with roots in fusion who try to go straight and get serious, he often betrays himself with the too-sweet obvious prettiness of his ideas, and his addiction to contrived melodrama. Also, in his quest for rhythmic intensity, Eubanks puts talented drummer "Smitty" Smith to tasteless misuse. Smith hits one level of hammering hysteria and stays there, curiously detached from the music, an annoying peripheral distraction. The total absence of dynamic contrast negates the intended excitement.

Finally, Eubanks' attempt to wrap his pleasant, superficial music in the cloak of spirituality is both puzzling and presumptuous. What spirits, one wonders, does he believe are speaking through his amiable little ditties? Songs like "Whispers Of Life" and "Being" can not bear the weight of their implicit claims to profundity. —*Thomas Conrad*

**Spiritalk 2, Revelations**—*Faith; Like The Wind; Whispers Of Life; Revelations; Earth; Sun; Moon; Being; Passing. (50:20)*
***Personnel****—Eubanks, guitar; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Kent Jordan, alto flute; Dave Holland, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums; Gerald Moore, guitar (3,4); Gene Jackson, drums (7,8).*

## Graham Haynes
### The Griots Footsteps
Antilles 314 523 262

★★★½

Recorded in Paris, home to many criss-crossing cultures, Graham Haynes' *The Griots Footsteps* is an intriguing pile-up of African and Arabic electric musics, North Indian classical music, funk and jazz.

Where it succeeds, the multi-layered record is beguiling, enchanting and unlike anything else of its kind. Haynes, who produced the album, is a superb cornet player: his sometimes squat, sometimes lush sound and fragmented phrasing recall Don Cherry. Indeed, Cherry's self-titled 1976 A&M record is this project's direct forebearer; other clear influences include the "fourth world" investigations of Jon Hassell and Brian Eno, Ornette Coleman's Prime Time and Miles Davis' more out electric bands. On the wonderful "R.H."

dedicated to drummer Roy Haynes (Graham's dad), a two-man handclap rhythm, gulping bass, supercool jets of organ sound and airy cymbals propel a jerky horn chart and excellent solos from Haynes and British saxist Steve Williamson.

Synthesizers color much of the record, from the bright "Flip Stories," which rides on a great bass-and-traps groove and cheery keyboards, to the title cut, which features deep solos on synth (shades of psychedelia or art-rock in the swoops and wah-wahs) and guitar.

The disc's weak link is also its longest track; at almost 27-minutes, "Enlightenment" is an attempt at an Indian/jazz fusion. The combination was tried as long ago as the mid-'60s, by Joe Harriott's Anglo-Indian Double Quintet; it's an obvious match, since the heart of both musics is improvisation. Despite fine tenor work by Williamson, an unaccompanied sitar section and flurries of talking drum and bass that egg the proceedings on, Haynes' over-long alternation of keyboard noodles and cornet lines doesn't help the tune to live up to its ambitious title. —*John Corbett*

**The Griots Footsteps**—*Gothic; R.H. (For Roy Haynes); Enlightenment; Flip Stories; Psychic Plane; The Griots Footsteps. (59:38)*

**Personnel**—*Haynes, cornet, keyboards; Steve Williamson, tenor and soprano saxophones; Chieck Tidiane-Seck, Don-Dieu Divin, Luis Manresa, keyboards; Laroussi-Ali Djamel, guitar; Brigitte Menon, sitar (3); Lyra Menon, tampura (3); Vincent Othieno, Noel Ekwabi, bass; Jorge Amorim, Daniel Moreno, Chief Udoh Essiet, percussion; Brice Wassy, drums, vocals (4).*

## Gary Bartz

### Episode One Children Of Harlem
Challenge 70001

★★★★

### The Red And Orange Poems
Atlantic Jazz 82720

★★★½

Gary Bartz continues his remarkable return from a decade of obscurity. Not long ago, Bartz seemed like a relic of the 1970s, about as likely to make a comeback as, say, John Travolta. In 1995, Bartz sounds more thoughtful and sentimental than the volcanic saxophonist who played with Miles Davis 25 years ago.

*Episode One Children Of Harlem* is a nostalgic journey through Harlem with a quartet of musicians who lived there. Bartz indulges an affection for vintage radio, with two graceful versions of "Theme From Amos N' Andy" as well as for old movie musicals. His soprano sax recalls John Coltrane as he weaves serpentine lines through "If This Isn't Love." "Tico Tico," an old Carmen Miranda vehicle, gets a playful send-up in the style of Sonny Rollins. Larry Willis knows the sounds of Spanish Harlem as pianist for the Fort Apache Band. He also contributes the earnest, hopeful "Children Of Harlem" and the up-tempo "Heavy Blue." Bartz and Willis complement each other well, particularly on "Heavy Blue," where Bartz offers his most impassioned alto work, and on the ballad "Crazy She Calls Me," where Willis stretches out.

As its title implies, *The Red And Orange Poems* emphasizes the sensitive, lyrical facets of Bartz's work. This is a more atmospheric, "produced" session. "But Not For Me" is a highlight and summation, as Bartz grafts the Gershwin melody onto changes from Coltrane's "Giant Steps." Like the leader, trumpeter Eddie Henderson has too rarely been heard from in recent years. He's underused here, though his muted trumpet is particularly effective on "Nusia's Poem" and "Relentless." John Clark's french horn combines with trumpet to create some interesting textures, and

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Mulgrew Miller and Dave Holland offer strong support, but the fluid alto sax is always the focal point. Throughout, you hear elegant, well-crafted mood music, but with less kinetic energy than you'd expect from Gary Bartz. —*Jon Andrews*

**Episode One Children Of Harlem**—*Amos N' Andy Theme One & Spoken Intro; Tap Dancer; If This Isn't Love; Tico Tico; Ezekiel Saw The Wheel; Children Of Harlem; Crazy She Calls Me; Heavy Blue; Ruby Begonia & Amos N' Andy Theme Two. (65:42)*
***Personnel**—Bartz, alto, soprano saxophones; Larry Willis, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Ben Riley, drums.*

**The Red And Orange Poems**—*By Myself; Nusia's Poem; I'm Gonna Laugh You Right Out Of My Life; J Seas; Relentless; Along The Twelve Tone Row; Soulmate; But Not For Me. (58:40)*
***Personnel**—Bartz, alto saxophone; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Eddie Henderson, trumpet, flugelhorn; John Clark, french horn; Dave Holland, bass; Greg Bandy, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion (2,7).*

## Leon Parker
### Above & Below
Epicure 66144

★★★★½

When Leon Parker beats his chest, it has nothing at all to do with boasting—though the young percussionist has every right to do so. This rapid thumping up and down his anatomy is Parker's "Body Movement," parts of which open and close his debut recording. Even when Parker is slapping his body around, his rhythmic ingenuity and creativity are evident. Picture the speedy flutter of hummingbird wings and you have some idea of his swift hands.

Yes, his speed is impressive, but so is his touch and versatility. On Monk's "Bemsha Swing" Parker demonstrates his awesome facility, shifting astonishingly from a powerful backbeat to a coruscating ride on the cymbals. That intuitive grasp of knowing where tempo and texture converge, his knack of "playing in the moment," is a special Parker attribute.

Another attribute he possesses is casting. He surrounds himself with musicians who are alert to his musical tendencies. And while pianist Jacky Terrasson, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and flutist Lisa Parker have played with him long enough to assist in taking a beat apart and reassembling it, saxophonists David Sanchez, Joshua Redman and Mark Turner are quick reads/reeds and more than reliable additions. Rounding out the diversity of *Above & Below* are the scat attacks of vocalist Jay McGovern and the passionate drums of Natalie

Cushman and Adam Cruz.

Jacky Terrasson recently released his debut CD, ably abetted by Parker and Okegwo. Now Parker is on board, but the ante—the musical product—has been increased considerably.

*—Herb Boyd*

**Above & Below**—*Body Movement I; Bemsha Swing; You Don't Know What Love Is; All My Life; Above & Below; Celebration; Caravan; Epistrophy; B.B.B.B.; Evy; It's Only A Paper Moon; Body Movement II. (46:52)*
**Personnel**—*Parker, drums, percussion, vocals; Jacky Terrasson, piano (2,4,11); Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Joshua Redman (11), David Sanchez, soprano (3), tenor (7) saxophones; Mark Turner (4,8), tenor saxophone; Lisa Parker, flutes (6,9,10); Adam Cruz, Natalie Cushman (10), percussion; Jay McGovern, vocals (4,9).*

## Joe Lovano/ Gunther Schuller

### Rush Hour

Blue Note 29269

★★★★½

This is a ravishing record, compelling from end to end. It's full of absolutely beautiful tenor playing—Lovano proves to be a superb stylist beyond his familiar postbop environs. And Schuller's arrangements are exquisite; they draw power from the expansive timbral and harmonic palette of a chamber orchestra—four cuts with strings, four heavier on horns. Shining new light on familiar compositions by Monk, Ellington and Strayhorn, as well as standards "Angel Eyes" and "The Love I Long For," Schuller never uses strings or woodwinds to merely pad or stuff the tunes.

Classical music has a reputation among jazz fans for being stilted, but a good chamber ensemble should be a supple beast, capable of expressing great nuance and flexibility. Schuller, who conducts the various groups, knows this, and he avoids staidness by not sucking life from the soloist, but by treating the ensemble as a sentient being. Thus, Lovano doesn't float above a painted backdrop, but moves fluidly in and out of the limelight, magically disappearing into Schuller's charts, then reemerging to sing proudly. On the multi-tracked "Topsy Turvy" and "Wildcat" Lovano superimposes his horn work over himself playing drums; "Topsy Turvy" and "Juniper's Garden" are duets with his wife, soprano vocalist Judi Silvano, who also sings Schuller's harrowing, boppish lines on the disc's most structurally and harmonically adventurous composition, "Headin'


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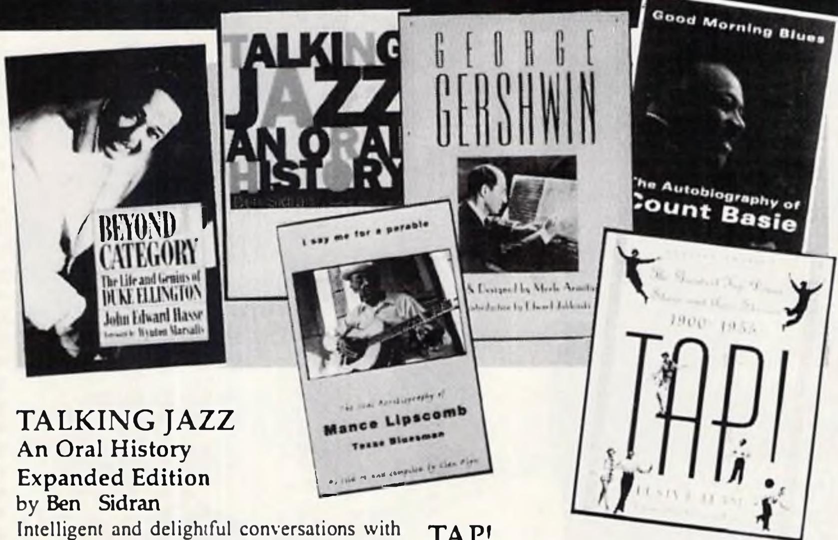


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Out, Movin' In." (The only vocal bit I'm not so hot on is the short tandem voice and flute part on "Prelude To A Kiss"—too saccharine.)

"Rush Hour On 23rd Street" contains some of the most intriguing arranging on *Rush Hour*, with a strong solo by trumpeter Jack Walrath and a fascinating canon for three tenor saxes and english horn. "Kathelin Gray" (misspelled on the record as "Kathline," and mis-attributed to Ornette Coleman—it was co-written by Coleman and Pat Metheny) is treated to a gorgeous soprano reading by Lovano, accompanied by pizzicato strings (cello, harp, guitar, bass) and drums. The disc's closer is a stunning unaccompanied tenor take on Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge."

Picking up on the third-stream line of thought Schuller articulated in the '60s, *Rush Hour* conjoins elements of jazz and pre-war classical music up to Schönberg. (There's no hint of post-serialism here, though it's interesting to imagine how something like Gyorgy Ligeti's micropolyphony might figure into the equation.) This record shows, without question, that a union of European and African-American traditions need not be forced or pre-fabricated, but that it can move with grace and speak from the gut. —*John Corbett*

**Rush Hour**—*Prelude To A Kiss; Peggy's Blue Skylight; Wildcat; Angel Eyes; Rush Hour On 23rd Street; Crepuscule With Nellie; Lament For M; Topsy Turvy; The Love I Long For; Juniper's Garden; Kathline [sic] Gray; Headin' Out, Movin' In; Chelsea Bridge. (64:38)*
**Personnel**—*Lovano, tenor sax, soprano saxophones (8,10,11), bass clarinet (8), drums (3,8); Judi Silvano, soprano voice (1,5,8,10,12); Ed Schuller, Mark Helias, bass; George Schuller, drums; Richard Oatts, flute (1,2); Robert Botti, english horn (2,5,6); Jack Walrath, trumpet; John Clark, Julie Landsman, french horn; James Pugh, trombone; David Taylor, bass trombone, tuba; Michael Rabinowitz, bassoon, bass clarinet; Charles Russo, clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor and alto saxophones; James Chirillo, electric guitar, acoustic guitar (11); Gloria Agostini, harp; Mark Belair, percussion, vibes; large string section (1,4,7,9).*

## Michael Shrieve
### Fascination
CMP 67

★★★½

The onetime Santana drummer covers several aspects of his multi-faceted career on this jam-oriented session with fellow Seattle residents Bill Frisell and Wayne Horvitz. The star of the show is Frisell, whose marvelous versatility is highlighted on tracks ranging from funk to punk to freebop to countrified ballads. Shrieve basically defines the playing field then turns Bill loose. And

Horvitz's unobtrusive organ is the glue that holds it all together.

They come out slamming with "Sam The Man," a funky Meters-styled vehicle that Frisell really digs into with bent-string urgency. The skronkier side of Bill's playing comes across on "Circus! Circus!," a kind of twisted Big Top theme, and on the intense grindcore number "One Nation, Invisible," which should sound familiar to fans of John Zorn's Naked City. Frisell can shronk and scream with the sickest of them, but the other side of the coin in his vast repertoire is the kind of haunting, melodic chordal work he demonstrates on "Tell Me Everything" and a cover of Chris Whitley's bittersweet ballad, "Living With The Law." Bill reserves his most economical, soulful playing for the laidback title track.

The trio's unique chemistry is highlighted on the wide-open freebop romp "The Glass Tent," with Shrieve's brisk ride-cymbal work locking in tightly to Horvitz's left-hand walking bass lines on organ. Frisell unleashes on this supple, swinging groove with blasts of dissonance in between dramatic chunks of space that allow Wayne's right-hand organ statements to cut through with authority. And the three gradually build to a frenetic peak on the nine-minute two-chord vamp "The Great Ambassador," which features Frisell wailing like a cross between Carlos Santana and Adrian Belew.

Shrieve indulges himself in a bit of a drummer's showcase on "Jig Saw" and he recalls his own ambient music experiments with Klaus Schulze on the swirling "Soundings In Fathoms," with Frisell's guitar loops and Horvitz's organ drones helping to set the proper meditative mood. *Fascination* is daring, definitely different and a must for Frisell freaks. —*Bill Milkowski*

**Fascination**—*Sam The Man; Tell Me Everything; Circus! Circus!; The Glass Tent; Fascination; One Nation, Invisible; The Great Ambassador; Living With The Law; Jig Saw; Soundings In Fathoms. (53:20)*
**Personnel**—*Shrieve, drums; Bill Frisell, guitar; Wayne Horvitz, keyboards.*

# James Spaulding

## Blues Nexus

Muse 5467

★★★★

This is just the latest in a string of excellent records for Muse by James Spaulding. Right out of the gate, his searing alto on Hank Mobley's "Hipsippy Blues" lets you know this will


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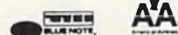

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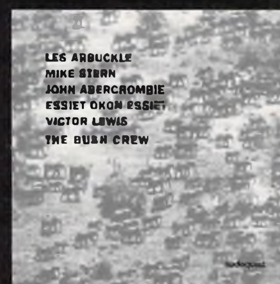

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Alto saxist/composer David Binney (joined here by a brilliant octet) is best known as one of the prime movers of the groundbreaking group Lost Tribe. Look for this remarkable release to be one of the biggest surprises of the year!

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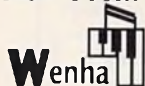


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If you're not fond of jazz flute à la Herbie Mann, you might be pleasantly surprised by Spaulding. Where others may give over to the ethereality of the instrument, Spaulding makes it earthy, at times even gritty. Pianist Ronnie Mathews' "John Charles" (the disc's only original number) is a bouncy flute feature with Hayes kicking it hard on brushes, while on Hargrove's "Public Eye" Hayes and Drummond push the up-tempo tune with devilish drive. On the Paul Chambers/Kenny Burrell composition "Chamber Mates," Spaulding's piccolo and Ray Drummond's monster bass make strange, but totally suitable, bedfellows; "Rue Prevail" gets low down with bass flute, while retaining the sneak and slink of Art Farmer's tune. Nothing unusual from Spaulding on *Blues Nexus*, which is to say it cooks like Julia Child.

*—John Corbett*

**Blues Nexus**—*Hipsippy Blues; Gerkin For Perkin; John Charles; Rue Prevail; Gypsy Blue; Vaun-Ex; Soul Station; Chamber Mates; Bleeker Street Blues; Public Eye. (56:38)*
**Personnel**—*Spaulding, alto saxophone (1,2,6,7,9,10), flute (3,5,10), bass flute (4), piccolo (8); Dan Faulk, tenor saxophone (1,2,4-6), soprano saxophone (10); Don Sickler, flugelhorn (4); Ronnie Mathews, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.*

## Laszlo Gardony

### Breakout

Avenue Jazz 71829

★★★★

After two probing, highly interactive trio sessions (*The Secret* and *The Legend Of Tsumi*, both on Antilles) and one provocative solo outing (*Changing Standards*, Sunnyside), pianist Laszlo Gardony has settled into a more listener-friendly bag with *Breakout*. Not that this is happy jazz by a long shot. Gardony's own sense of harmonic daring and Mick Goodrick's unclichéd guitar work go against the grain of standard WAVE-type programming. And yet, there are several tunes here that may have great appeal

outside the strict boundaries of jazz, notably upbeat fare like "Forty Eight Days," "Just Do It" and the surging "Seven Against Four" (Laszlo's answer to Vince Guaraldi's infectious "Linus And Lucy").

Foregoing the conventional traps set in favor of two percussionists was a particularly refreshing notion (something also done quite effectively by Don Pullen with his African-Brazilian Connection). Percussionists George Jinda (from Special EFX) and Satoshi Takeishi keep the undercurrent churning unobtrusively on motific numbers like "Mockingbird" and "Continuum" while their playing is suitably sparse and coloristic on the dark ballad "Reflection (For Duke)," a great vehicle for Goodrick's lyrical approach to soloing over changes. A distinct Keith Jarrett influence can also be heard in Gardony's passionate improvisations on this brooding piece. And his obvious love of Monk comes across on the quirky "You Can't Be Serious."

Laszlo's recasting of "St. Louis Blues" against a world-beat groove is clever and affecting but his most soulful moments come on more meditative fare like the delicate "Lotus." He also flaunts an impressive bop facility on the turbulent title track, the session's lone swinger. Chops aside, the Hungarian pianist strikes a nice balance between being genuinely expressive and readily accessible on *Breakout*. And Goodrick's brilliant solos only elevate the proceedings. —*Bill Milkowski*

**Breakout**—*Judges Grudges; Mockingbird; Seven Against Four; Reflection (For Duke); Forty Eight Days; St. Louis Blues; Lotus; You Can't Be Serious; Just Do It; Continuum; Breakout. (63:13)*
***Personnel***—*Gardony, piano; Mick Goodrick, guitar; George Jinda, Satoshi Takeishi, percussion; Stomu Takeishi, bass.*

# Billy Pierce
## Rio (Ballads & Bossa Novas)
Sunnyside 1065

★★½

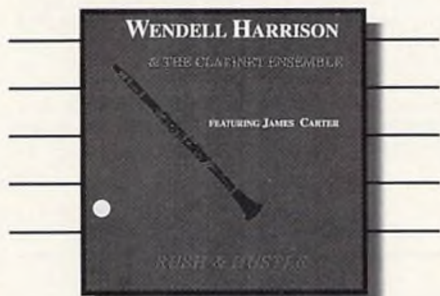
This Boston-based ex-Messenger's fourth solo outing is a languid, late-'60s-style exercise in acerbic romanticism, long on historical verisimilitude and technical finesse but lacking the sense of creative urgency and self-discovery that made the original model so compelling. Rather than the broad stylistic palette that younger lions favor, Pierce paints himself into a narrow groove somewhere between John Coltrane and Wayne Shorter, taking pains to avoid sounding too much like either. His similarly adept but directionless rhythm trio hangs attentively on every note, resulting in a smooth, self-conscious session that's too edgy to be mellow and too mellow to be edgy.

The mood is unremittingly morose, all dark corners and blue shadows. Pierce plunges headlong into the gloom with three brooding Shorter tunes in succession, followed by Keith Jarrett's angst-ridden "The Survivor's Suite." His full-bodied tenor sax yearns and sighs eloquently over Kirk Lightsey's somber, slightly dissonant piano, with Santi Debriano's buoyant bass and Yoron Israel's crisp drums providing firm but gentle support. Lightening up a bit on the Mancini-Mercer standard "Moment To Moment," Pierce sounds positively bittersweet, his distinctively non-nasal soprano-sax tone suggesting the potential for success in a more commercial mode. But melancholia sets in again on two tenor tracks by Shorter and Jarrett, and even on soprano Pierce doesn't breathe much energy into world-weary Brazilian compositions by Edú Lobo and Ivan Lins.

The ensemble meshes closely, with the musicians listening as well as they play, but without a catalyzing spark of soul, the overall effect is one of four sidemen in search of a leader.

—*Larry Birnbaum*

**Rio (Ballads & Bossa Novas)**—*Rio; Dear Sir; Sweet Pea; The Survivor's Suite; Moment To Moment; Vapallia; Pra Dizer Adeus; Iris; Saindo De Mim. (66:26)*
***Personnel***—*Pierce, tenor, soprano saxophones; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Santi Debriano, bass; Yoron Israel, drums.*




# Wendell Harrison & The Clarinet Ensemble
## Rush & Hustle
WenHa 230

★★★★½

If your record collection is anything like mine, you are a little thin in clarinet ensembles. But that's only the first reason to seek out *Rush & Hustle*. This album is a true sleeper, full of revelations and delights.

The project very much belongs to Detroit multi-reedist/composer/educator Wendell Harrison. He produced it, wrote and arranged all but one of the songs, and released it on his own WenHa label. He organized his Clarinet Ensemble in 1989 with the avowed purpose of showcasing an instrument (actually an instrumental family) that has become an endangered species in jazz. But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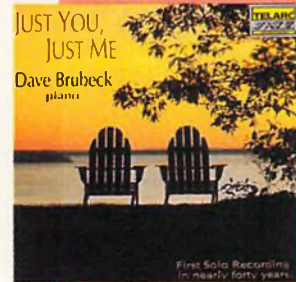


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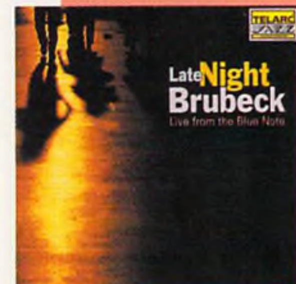


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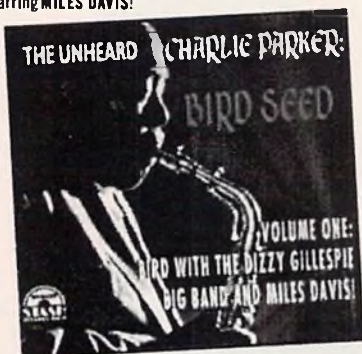

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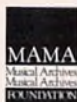


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the ambiance here is neither academic nor historical. Harrison's band, built from some of Detroit's most accomplished musicians and educators, takes infectious pleasure in itself.

With all the varieties of clarinets plus an extended rhythm section, Harrison commands an arsenal of amazingly diverse colors and timbres and textures. His charts are elaborately crafted, yet grow organically. A piece like "The Hooptie" proceeds through countless evolutions in its seven minutes, the lilting theme separating into opposing riffs among clarinets in four registers, laced together by the piano of Harold McKinney. Sometimes it almost stops to reconfigure that shifting, airy, piercing choir. Then it slides onward, one complex voice again, tracing fresh threads of melody. Performances like "Pamela's Holiday" provide exhilarations unlike any you're likely to hear in modern jazz, as the kaleidoscope of the ensemble collapses and allows an individual instrument to emerge—Harrison's own mercurial B-flat or James Carter's volcanic double-B-flat contra bass.

Carter's presence is a major reason why this recording keeps you on the edge of your chair. The contra bass is a frightening force in his hands, looming like an earthquake. Yet on such songs as "Urban Lullaby," Carter makes his huge bear dance.

*Rush & Hustle* is something new under the sun. If you can't find it, try Rebirth Inc., 81 Chandler, Detroit, MI 48202. *—Thomas Conrad*

**Rush & Hustle**—*Rush & Hustle; My Shining Hour; The Hooptie; Pamela's Holiday; Gonna Take You Out; Urban Lullaby; Saga Of A Carrot. (40:39)*
***Personnel***—*Harrison, B-flat clarinet, tenor saxophone, clave; James Carter, double-B-flat contra bass clarinet; Ernie Rogers, contra bass E-flat clarinet; Harold Orr, bass clarinet; Greg Koltyck, Paul Onachuck, Ken Hobenstreet, B-flat clarinet; Harold McKinney, Pamela Wise, piano; Marion Hayden, bass; Alex Brooks, Enix Buchanan, drums; Jerry Gonzales, timbales; Mahindi Masai, congas, various percussion.*

# Mike Mainieri
## An American Diary
NYC 6015

★★★★

# Steps Ahead
## Vibe
NYC 6012

★★★

Two new NYC releases showcase the talents of mallet percussionist Mike Mainieri. *An American Diary* is a somewhat off-the-wall exploration of classics by the vibist and some esteemed colleagues—the targets are American composers Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber, Roger Sessions, Charles Ives, William Grant Still, Aaron Copland and Frank Zappa.

Saxman Joe Lovano drives Zappa's "King Kong" hard, blowing the keys off, then shows a fragile side on the lovely "In The Gloaming." Peter Erskine plays with great confidence and wit on Copland's "Piano Sonata (Vivace)," a piece that gets fiesty and "out," and the drummer's "Song Of My People" is a snaky funk piece with hints of New Orleans street dance. Mainieri's comping is excellent, and his soloing clear and dynamic—the vibes cut through this band well. Bernstein's "Somewhere" succeeds on the basis of excellent arranging, but "Motherless Child" fails to enchant as they simply blow over the changes. Mainieri's "Town Meeting" is another charming slice of Americana, with everyone playing beautifully, listening and interacting in just the proper doses.

Mainieri is also mover, shaker and co-producer on Steps Ahead's *Vibe*, shaping the music instrumentally and composing most of the material. It's pretty much a new band with saxman Donny McCaslin, drummer Clarence Penn, trumpeter Tim Hagans and co-producer/synthman Adam Holzman, who injects some enticing soundscapes, as on the ambient-jazz of "Waxing & Waning." There's good life in the project, with the rookies alongside Steps veterans Victor Bailey and Rachel Z. "Vibe" is a cool, hip-hop fusion that contains a lot of Holzman's keyboard candy, but the sequenced parts may have held the momentum back just a bit. The live players seem to want to surge a little, but can't. "Buzz" has a similar groove with more of a real-time feel, and "Staircase" is honest, straightforward funk. The band shows good chops and discipline on the rhythmic workout "Penn Station," with the drummer given the "go" sign.

But a few tracks lack direction, like the ponderous "Miles Away" and "Green Dolphin Street," which, despite a thundering James Genus bass line, doesn't ever decide which musical road to take. Sometimes fusion can be confusin'.

*—Robin Tolleson*

**An American Diary**—*Somewhere; King Kong; Piano Sonata (Vivace); Piano Sonata No. 1; Town Meeting; Overture To The School For Scandal; Hudson River Valley; Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child; Song Of My People; In The Gloaming; Out Of The Cage.*
***Personnel***—*Mainieri, vibraphone (1-8,11), concert marimba (4,9), bass marimba (4,12), piano (10), chimes (5,12), gong, MIDI-vibes (12); Joe Lovano, tenor (1,3,7,8,10-12) and soprano saxophones (2,6,9,12), alto clarinet (4,5,12); Eddie Gomez, acoustic bass; Peter Erskine, drums, percussion (5,11,12).*

**Vibe**—*Buzz; From Light To Light; Penn Station; Vibe; Green Dolphin Street; Miles Away; Staircase; Rendezvous; Crunch; Waxing & Waning; Miles Away—Reprise (The Gentle Giant). (61:23)*
***Personnel***—*Mainieri, vibraphone (1-10), piano (11); Donny McCaslin, tenor and soprano saxophones; Clarence Penn, drums; Michael Cain, piano (1,3,4,6,7,9,10); Rachel Z, keyboards (2,5,8,10); Victor Bailey (1,3,4,6,7), James Genus (2,5,8,11), Reggie Washington (9,10), bass; Tim Hagans, trumpet (1,2); Aaron Helck, alto saxophone (1); Adam Holzman, keyboards, programming (2-4,7,10).*

# Don Braden

## After Dark

Criss Cross 1081

★★★★

## Landing Zone

Landmark 1539-2

★★★

With understated elegance and an abundance of technical proficiency, 30-year-old Braden has made his move into the top ranks of today's sax players. His third Criss Cross album as a leader not only features his big-toned, assured tenor work but also highlights his exceptional composing and arranging skills with a fine septet.

Braden establishes his chops credentials on swinging, breakneck originals like the jagged opener "After Dark" and the burning "R.E.M.," both of which also highlight sparkling trumpet work from Scott Wendholt and plenty of interactive sizzle between Carl Allen and Christian McBride, who by now have become one of the premier rhythm tandems in jazz. Braden and Wendholt chase each other through a spirited, uptempo reworking of "You And The Night And The Music," and the tenor player uses soulful restraint on his ballad "Night," a meditative piece reminiscent of Trane's "Naima."

Braden's relaxed reading of "Stars Fell On Alabama" sounds like his homage to Lester Young, while he reserves his most provocative playing for a loose drums/bass/tenor rendition of "Monk's Dream," which also features some remarkably melodic playing by both Allen and McBride. The bandleader/arranger achieves a particularly lush effect with the expanded ensemble on "Creepin'," exploring the full range of harmonic possibilities on that Stevie Wonder ballad. And he lets everyone have a taste on the closing blues "The Hang."

The Landmark debut, his first Stateside release as a leader, showcases Braden's robust horn in a quartet setting. While Braden's fluid tenor work is no less authoritative on originals like "Nightline," "Hillside" and the title track, as well as a particularly lovely reading of "Body And Soul," he takes fewer risks than he did on *After Dark*. The band seems to be going through the motions on straightforward renditions of Stevie Wonder's "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" and Harold Arlen's "Come Rain Or Come Shine." And the two token stabs at an acid-jazz groove ("The Break" reprised as "Amsterdam Jam") seem half-hearted. Only on a loose, uptempo version of "Have You Met Miss Jones" do the sparks really fly here. —*Bill Milkowski*

**After Dark**—*After Dark; Night; You And The Night And The Music; Creepin'; R.E.M.; Stars Fell On Alabama; Monk's Dream; Dawn; The Hang. (65:28)*
***Personnel***—*Braden, tenor saxophone, flute; Scott Wendholt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone; Noah Bless, trombone; Darrell Grant, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Carl Allen, drums.*

**Landing Zone**—*Landing Zone; You Are The Sunshine Of My Life; Nightline; Body And Soul; The Break; Hillside; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Have You Met Miss Jones; A Blue Spree; Amsterdam Jam; Quadralog. (65:30)*
***Personnel***—*Braden, tenor saxophone; Kevin Hays, piano; Joris Teepe, bass; Cecil Brooks III, drums.*

# Yannick Rieu

## Sweet Geom

Victo 030

★★★★

Tenor saxophonist Rieu combines gentility and delicacy with firmness and surety. He's honed these qualities working in the relative isolation of the Montreal jazz scene, with pianists Jean Beaudet and Paul Bley, drummer Michel Ratté and his own trios. This nice-sounding recording was made live just a little east of his home city, in Victoriaville, at the Festival de Musique Actuelle in May 1994.

Rieu lays his cards on the table in a daring way by featuring Sonny Rollins' "Freedom Suite." The invited comparison is certainly relevant—the Canadian's terse linearity and granite tone distinctly recall the collosal U.S. saxophonist's late-'50s trio masterworks. Rieu's breathy, scalar solo intro to "Following" segues seamlessly into the tune, doubled on bass, while the sharp stops and warm interplay on "Something" support the tenorist's moving melodic statement.

A strong composer, Rieu knows how to write memorable lines with lots of inherent possibilities; those are a priceless commodity for any trio. The 26-minute title suite allows the saxist to shift into higher gear; he lets loose some thrilling, fluttery trills in the midst of the charged solo on "Carré," the suite's first movement; on "Triangle," the second movement, a long drum/tenor saxophone duo provokes Rieu's most aggressive blowing; the final portion, "Cercle," ironically, is the most angular of the bunch, with funky drumwork from Léger.

For this trio, adventure and discovery occur at a microcosmic level. There are no major revelations here; it's a conventional rhythm section

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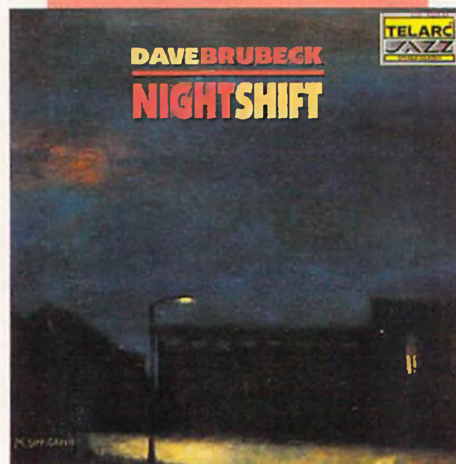


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arrangement, with Alarie's enjoyable bass plenty high in the mix and Léger's rather spare, well-considered drumming always on the lookout for open temporal opportunities. *Sweet Geom* bears the mark of quality Canadian craftsmanship.

—*John Corbett*

**Sweet Geom**—*Following; Freedom Suite; Something; Sweet Geom. (59:49)*
***Personnel***—*Rieu, tenor saxophone; Frédérik Alarie, bass; Paul Léger, drums.*

# Errol Parker Tentet

## Remembering Billy Strayhorn

Sahara 1016

★★★★

It's been said that Parker, the Algerian-born percussionist - turned - pianist - turned - trap-drummer, is a school of one. Since 1982 he's led his Tentet in New York, performing and recording his own compositions with a changing cast that's included such up-and-coming players as Wallace Roney, Robin Eubanks, Donald Harrison and Vincent Herring. Though his music is rooted squarely in the post-bop tradition, Parker's sound is as distinctive in its own quirky way as Mingus' or even Sun Ra's. Yet despite critical acclaim, he's been relegated to the sidelines, a musical odd man out.

Perhaps it's Parker's ego that stands in his way. This album, for example, contains no Strayhorn material; instead the title refers to the two opening tunes—both by Parker—which Strayhorn reportedly admired. The first, "Rehearsal," is similar to Miles Davis' "All Blues," a likeness soprano saxist Doug Harris underscores with a direct quotation. The second, "Cancellation," is similarly conventional—like most of Parker's pieces, a simple blowing vehicle. What makes his style unique are the ensemble textures, ragged and raucous, with two or more instruments often soloing simultaneously as in traditional New Orleans jazz.

Trumpeters Kenny Sheffield and Michael Thomas lock horns with trombonist Tyrone Jefferson and saxophonists Harris, David Lee Jones, Bill Saxton, Patience Higgins and Jimmy Cozier, pushing the changes almost to the point of cacophony. Cary De Nigris' guitar adds spiky electricity, but it's Parker's chattering drums—instantly recognizable because of the substitution of conga for snare—that drive the session, imparting such a strong personal stamp that the two non-originals, "Autumn In New York" and "Straight, No Chaser,"

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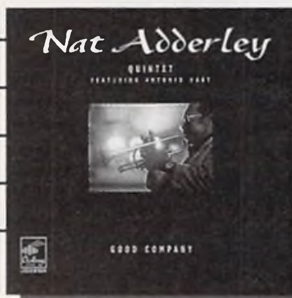
sound like items from Parker's own songbook.

*—Larry Birnbaum*

**Remembering Billy Strayhorn**—*Rehearsal; Cancellation; Graffiti; Autumn In New York; Reggae; Magic Carpet; 24 Bars; Straight, No Chaser. (59:40)*
**Personnel**—*Parker, drums; Kenny Sheffield, Michael Thomas, trumpet; Doug Harris, soprano saxophone; David Lee Jones, alto saxophone; Bill Saxton, tenor saxophone; Tyrone Jefferson, trombone; Patience Higgins (1,2,4), Jimmy Cozier (3,5-8), baritone saxophone; Cary De Nigris, guitar; Reggie Washington, bass.*




## Nat Adderley

### Good Company

Challenge 70009

★★★★

Hard-bop meets post-bop (or neo-bop?) as Nat Adderley is joined by Antonio Hart in this spirited across-the-generations session. The format follows along the lines of Adderley's 1991 *Talkin' About You* (Landmark), where Vincent Herring sat in.

"Rwanda," a fresh Adderley original, gives the album a commanding opening with Rob Bargad's slow, one-note bass vamp overlaid with a plaintive, impressionistic theme played by Adderley and Hart. The leader solos sparingly, building a brooding tension, while Hart spares nothing as he fires out notes like a Gattling gun.

All the principals get their own pieces. Bargad has his own "Rob's New Tune" to himself for more than eight minutes but keeps the pace inventive and swinging. His piano enlivens much of this session. "My Romance" is supposed to be a showcase for Adderley's muted lyricism, but comes off more somber than romantic at a tempo that seems almost dead in the water. It leaves the listener leaning forward with impatience and wishing they'd all just get on with it. "Corcovado" belongs to Hart. Bargad's "War Zone" and the Adderley staple "Unit Seven" yield powerful (if somewhat predictable) playing from all hands, especially Hart, who gets his best shots at straight-on swing playing.

Adderley's open trumpet is incisive and concise. And, of course, the working group is rare air indeed with veterans Walter Booker and Jimmy Cobb in place.

*—John McDonough*

**Good Company**—*Rwanda; Sermonette; Corcovado; Rob's New Tune; My Romance; Unit Seven; You Don't Know What Love Is; War Zone. (55:51)*
**Personnel**—*Adderley, trumpet; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone; Rob Bargad, piano; Walter Booker, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.*

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JAZZ

# Flea Market Prizes

*by Larry Birnbaum*

Fears that jazz's vinyl heritage would vanish in the digital revolution have proved unfounded. Today, even old budget-line LPs are grist for the CD reissue mill. Poorly documented, patched together out of obscure studio dates, live sessions and radio airchecks, these bargain-bin items were and still are a good gamble, preserving early small-label sides by a since-risen star, for example, or a high-intensity, low-fidelity jam session.

Case in point: the eight-CD Drive Archives jazz series (the label also offers companion folk, blues and soul series), a grabbag of swing and bop albums by household names whose artistry generally transcends the vicissitudes of recorded circumstance.

**Charlie Parker: *Carvin' The Bird* (Drive Archive 41020; 41:15: ★★★★½)** Here's a hash of studio and radio takes from 1946-49 with several combos, most notably the quintet with Miles Davis and Max Roach. Even with lesser accompaniment, Bird's saxophone is electrifying, and on a brilliant but muddy-sounding version of "Koko" he makes bebop seem avant garde all over again.

**Dizzy Gillespie: *Groovin' High* (41018; 39:10: ★★½)** *Groovin' High* is dominated by campy orchestra charts (recorded in Paris in 1952-53, with Diz's awesome trumpet battling heroically against disastrous string arrangements like "Sweet And Lovely," "The Man I Love" and "The Very Thought Of You." The album also includes a magnificent duet with saxist Don Byas on "Blue And Sentimental" and three historic tracks from Gillespie's second-ever studio session with Parker in 1945.

**Louis Armstrong: *Swing That Music* (41025; 43:36: ★★★★)** *Swing That Music* is another hodgepodge, with two priceless 1938 radio cuts with Fats Waller, some 1947 studio sides and a 1949 television session with members of his own All-Stars and Eddie Condon's band. Although the sound is often miserable, Armstrong himself is in top form, oozing Crescent City nostalgia when he sings "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans."

**Duke Ellington: *Sir Duke* (41019; 37:20: ★★★½)** *Sir Duke* is all from late 1946, when his band was just past its prime. Under Billy Strayhorn's influence, arrangements like "Overture To A Jam Session" are burdened with classical pretensions, and most of the excitement is generated by such legendary soloists as Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Jimmy Hamilton and Cat Anderson, who battles four other trumpeters on "Blue Skies."

**Woody Herman: *Blowin' Up A Storm* (41022; 45:20: ★★★)** Herman's long-lived big band bridged dixieland, swing and bebop, and here he tries all these styles and more. Recorded in 1958 with three different ensembles (none his regular Herd), the album runs unevenly from a progressive update of his first hit, "Woodchopper's Ball," to a brash Herman vocal on Louis Jordan's "Caldonia" to a red-hot mambo featuring Tito Puente and Ray Barretto, "Carioca."

Charles Mingus: slightly futuristic

**Charles Mingus: *Intrusions* (41023; 41:58: ★★★★½)** Mingus' sextet, with Thad Jones and Teo Macero, bridges Ellington and Sun Ra on an obscure gem from 1954 that still sounds slightly futuristic. Long, open-ended arrangements leave plenty of room for edgy, boppish improvisation, but it's the ensemble passages, especially on Mingus' masterly "Minor Intrusions," that really dazzle, slipping eerily from brooding swing to spacy dissonance.

**Sarah Vaughan: *Time After Time* (41021; 35:17: ★★★)** *Time After Time* focuses more narrowly on her early career, from 1944-47, where her peerlessly pure voice serves primarily as a pop instrument. On "Tenderly," the song's original recording, she juxtaposes pop and jazz singing, but the swing feel on the latter is mild, indeed. There's also a sanctimonious pair of gospel numbers, but most of the repertoire is middle-of-the-road, with bland accompaniment to match.

**Billie Holiday: *As Time Goes By* (41024; 40:31: ★★★★★)** This collection includes live, studio and radio performances from 1937-51, with accompanists ranging from Duke Ellington to Stan Getz. The earliest recordings, from a rare aircheck with Count Basie's orchestra, are a revelation, with the band riffing right on Billie's wavelength. But even with indifferent backing, Holiday is heart-wrenchingly superb on familiar fare like "My Man" and unusual material like the title track. DB

# Joe Williams

## by Dave Helland

*The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to identify the musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information about the recordings is given to the artist prior to the test.*

RON HEARD

A big band singer of the one and only school, Joe Williams is equally adept at embracing romantic ballads and swinging the blues. After stints in dance bands led by Lionel Hampton, Coleman Hawkins, Jimmy Noone and Andy Kirk, he joined Mr. Basie's band in 1954 and recorded *Count Basie Swings Joe Williams Sings* (Verve), featuring the NARAS Hall of Fame recording of "Everyday I Have The Blues."

Williams describes the interplay in jazz as conversation. "When I go to schools, I tell them first thing, 'If you can't hear everybody else in this orchestra, you are playing too loud.' You must hear everybody in the orchestra," he explains, "otherwise *you* are too loud. When they understand that, we make some music."

The latest additions to Williams' CD discography are a collection of spirituals, *Feel The Spirit* (Telarc), and the imaginatively titled *Joe Williams And The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra* (Blue Note), from 1966.

### Kevin Mahogany

"Save That Time" *(from* Double Rainbow, *enja, 1993) Mahogany, vocals.*

4 stars. You seldom get that kind of sound, that kind of sympathetic support happening on a performance like you have there. The saxophone doesn't get in the way of the singer, the piano accompaniment is wonderful. The space, the bass notes, the choice of progressions, everything is really beautiful.

### April Aloisio

"Centerpiece" *(from* Brazilian Heart, *Southport, 1994) Aloisio, vocals.*

Great idea, and I like it except for one place. The kids today that want to scat, they don't listen to solo instrumentalists enough. And those that really want to, check out Jackie [Cain] and Roy [Kral], who do it with more elan than anybody. 2 stars.

DH: *Are the best scat singers those who started out as instrumentalists?*

I wouldn't say that necessarily, just that all people who play instruments can scat well. That's because instrumentalists know progressions, know chords, know songs and they have a marvelous sense of rhythm as well so they can do syncopated phrases. Kids in schools who want to learn to scat proficiently should listen to one or two soloists. And by all means, Jackie and Roy, and Mark Murphy, too.

### Billy Strayhorn

"Lush Life" *(from* Lush Life, *Red Baron, 1964) Strayhorn, vocals and piano.*

Oh, god [*laughs*]. Billy Strayhorn singing his own composition and enjoying life as only he could. First-class. He was never a singer but could play like nobody else in the world, and he could write. 4 stars for the playing and 2½ for singing. He's cute as a bug, just laughing at himself, but the song, like Ellington said: the perfect marriage of melody and harmony with a universal point.

### Van Morrison

"Moondance" *(from* Moondance, *Warner Bros., 1970) Morrison, vocals.*

The choice of material from this recording is excellent. They're going to be all right whoever they are because they've got the right idea of what they want to do. But there wasn't enough space. Young people on the scene have to learn to lay it in instead of pushin' it in. Just let it fall. They'll gain that experience, too, as they go along.

DH: *Can you imagine yourself singing a Frank Foster arrangement of this song in front of the Basie band?*

It's a great vehicle for big band. The first time I heard it, Grady Tate was singing it with an all-star band in Germany. I give it 2½ for the song. Their performance is pushing too hard, and there is so much more to that particular kind of music where you're using what we call a Charleston beat in the background.

### Carmen Bradford

"Rough Ridin'" *(from* Finally Yours, *Amazing, 1992) Bradford, vocals.*

It was well-arranged, and what it was, that's a real jazz tune. [*scats*] It's Carmen Bradford. An easy 3 stars.

### Charles Brown

"I Got It Bad" *(from* These Blues, *Verve, 1994) Brown, vocals, piano.*

5 stars. Charles Brown. He reminds me so much of Earl Hines. He plays so beautifully that type of playing. He doesn't need a drum or a bass, anything. It's full-bodied, full-flavored and with enough syncopation to satisfy your soul. They can play that 40 years from now and it will have that same full, wonderful effect. That kind of sound gets on people; both vocal and piano. The singing is a very distinctive sound, one you can't get. Nobody has done that kind of thing but him.

### Carmen McRae

"Suppertime" *(from* Here To Stay, *Decca, 1955) McRae, vocals; Mundell Lowe, guitar.*

5 stars. Yeah, phew! That's the consummate artist, Carmen McRae. My wife and I used to go see her at a club in Las Vegas, and my wife would say to her, "You should pass out fur coats to people who come in here. You're giving us all goose bumps." She did it to me again right there. That's 5 stars—it doesn't get any better than that. **DB**