

JAZZ & THE MIDDLE-AGED MUSICIAN

DOWN BEAT

July 1995, \$2.95 U.K. £2.50 Can. \$3.75

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Dr. John Goes BIG BAND

Ray Brown

Malachi Thompson

CLASSIC INTERVIEW:
Art Pepper

BLINDFOLD TEST:
Javon Jackson



INSIDE DOWN BEAT

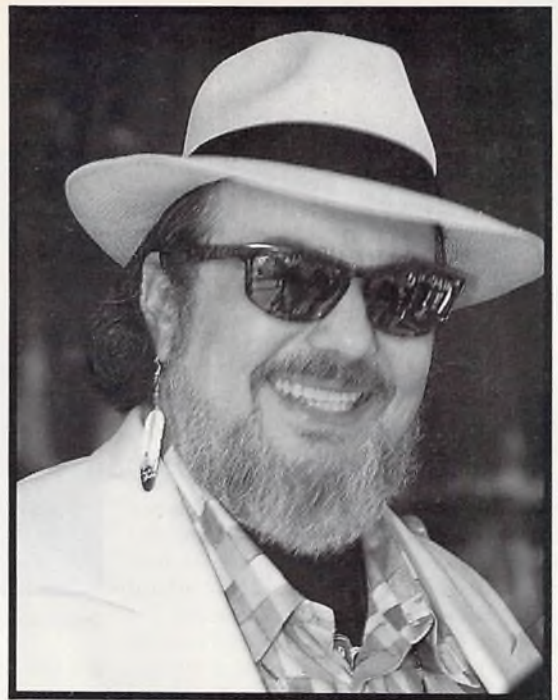
JULY 1995

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Temple Of Big Band

The hoodoo pianist makes a spiritual connection with his favorite songs and singers. Michael Bourne plays attending metaphysician.

Cover photograph of Dr. John by Syndey Byrd.



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SYNDEY BYRD

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Kurt Elling

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POSTMASTER: SEND CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO DOWN BEAT, PO BOX 906, Elmhurst, IL 60126-0906. CABLE ADDRESS: DOWN BEAT (on sale June 20, 1995) Magazine Publishers Association

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Dr. John's

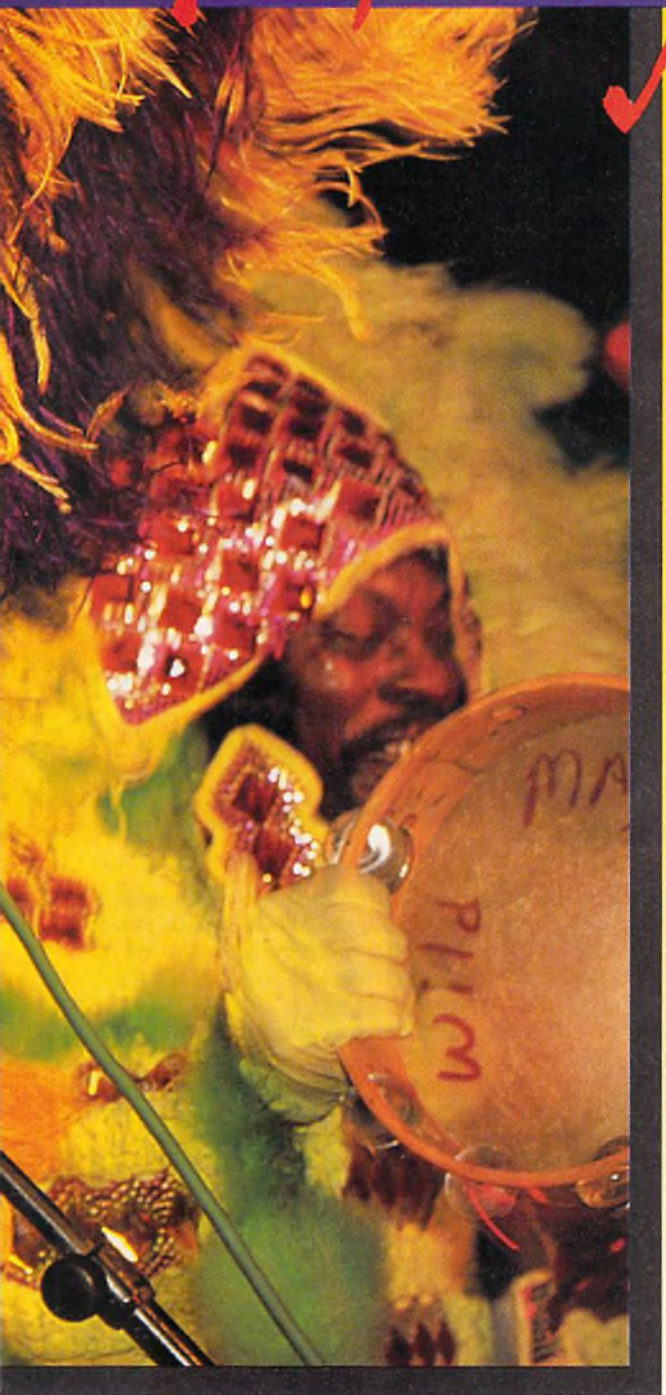
Temple



“ I love when music takes me o

of Big Band

By Michael Bourne



SYDNEY BYRD

The Doctor is in . . . the groove. When he walks or he talks or he sings, there's a *cadence* about Dr. John, as if there's a New Orleans second line dancing deep down in his soul. He sounds like a bear, growling but sweetly furry, especially when crooning them oldies so bluesfully or even when barking Popeye's chicken and other vendables for TV ads. He *looks* like a bear, cuddly but mysterious, a hoodoo teddy with his *gris-gris* stick always at hand.

Born Malcolm John Rebennack Jr. in 1941, "Dr. John" was introduced in 1968 on his first album as a leader, *Gris Gris*, with the song "I Walk On Gilded Splinters" and other music inspired by New Orleans voodoo and Mardi Gras. "Right Place, Wrong Time" and "Such A Night" in 1973 were his only top-40 hits, but he's nonetheless recorded and traveled the world.

His latest project, *Afterglow*, re-unites Mac with friend and producer Tommy LiPuma. It's a big-band album arranged mostly by John Clayton and offers some of his favorite songs by some of his favorite singers, especially jazz and blues ballads of Charles Brown, Louis Jordan, Louis Armstrong and Mac's longtime partner as a producer and a songwriter, Doc Pomus. We talked about Mac's musical life (and often laughed) on a spring afternoon in Manhattan.

MICHAEL BOURNE: *I've always wanted to know what in hell are "gilded splinters."*

DR. JOHN: It's a corruption of "gilded splendors." That's how the words got passed down in *gris-gris* terminology. It ain't English or French. Actually, *music* is our language.

MB: *Your persona as Dr. John is often very mystical. Have you been involved in actual voodoo rituals?*

DR. J: I'm a voodoo priest. I'm not active. I'm not what you'd call a religious cat. I like the music. I had a church and a shop in New Orleans maybe 20 years ago, Dr. John's Temple of Gris-Gris.

It ain't called "voodoo." That's a common denominator for what they got in Haiti and Brazil and other places. New Orleans has its own thing. It's called "*gris-gris*." It's a real mixture of American Indian stuff and African stuff with all kinds of other cultures' stuff.

MB: *Gris-gris* actually means *grey-grey*.

DR. J: It's not black. It's not white. It's somewheres in the middle. It's what life is.

MB: *You've lived in New York since the '80s. What do you miss most not living in New Orleans?*

DR. J: I go back there, and I get torn between all of the ways the

Dr. John, pianist/guitarist/vocalist/hoodoo priest, performs in full regalia at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

ut of wherever my head was."

city's changed for the worse and all of the ways the city's changed for the better. I love New Orleans. It's a deep part of my life. If I hadn't grew up there and came up with all these studio cats, I would never have become what I became. Guys passed stuff down when I grew up in New Orleans, and that was real special. All the older guys taught me and Allen Toussaint and all the young guys all that history and about how to be musicians.

We were so far behind in recording technology in New Orleans in the '50s and '60s. When the rest of the world was recording four-track and eight-track, we were still recording *one-track*.

"If you want a record to feel good, get guys all together and play. Then it's gonna feel real and it's inspiring...."

When we started making one-track to one-track overdubs, it all sounded jive because what was overdubbed was louder on the fade-out. We were way behind the times technologically, but we continued making records people liked because there was a good feeling on them records. That influenced all of my life making records. It ain't about we get one guy in the studio and we put on one track and then bring in another guy for another track. If you want a record to feel good, get guys all *together* and play. Then it's gonna feel *real* and it's inspiring. Guys play better when they're playing off of each other, when everybody vibes off of one another.

I still record like that. They hired two studios for *Afterglow*. They had the strings on one side where I was, the horns on the other side so they wouldn't get no bleeding. I was in the middle of it all. I could see the conductor. I could see Ray Brown and the drummer [Jeff Hamilton]. That's important to me, being right there.

MB: *You don't usually sing with a sound like the Basie band behind you.*

DR. J: *I loved that! John Clayton arranges so special. When I first heard his stuff, I said, "Wow, this cat really thinks about everything." I told Tommy LiPuma right off, "That guy!" John wrote stuff in all kind of different zones. He reminds me a little of Ernie Wilkins and Neal Hefti but doesn't copy stuff. He uses some of their stuff to make it all have some base. I like Alan Broadbent's writing, too. He wrote a couple tunes, but John wrote the bulk of this record.*

MB: *Wouldn't you like to have Ray Brown on the road?*

DR. J: *Ray is so funny. Ray said, "I can still play [the bass], but I just can't carry it no more!" Some of my most favorite sessions I used to cut in L.A. with Ray and Earl Palmer on drums, Charlie Collins the guitar player and Plas Johnson, just the five of us on a lot of little dates.*

MB: *When you first worked in the New Orleans studios, you played with and learned from the masters. Huey "Piano" Smith. James Booker...*

DR. J: *Lloyd Glenn. Charles Brown. One of the first guys I ever*

played on a session with was Charles Brown. I was playing guitar, and I was so intimidated because Johnny Moore was one of my heroes. And I thought that I was gonna have to play guitar like Johnny Moore did on all those records with Charles. Charles was so sweet and guided me through everything.

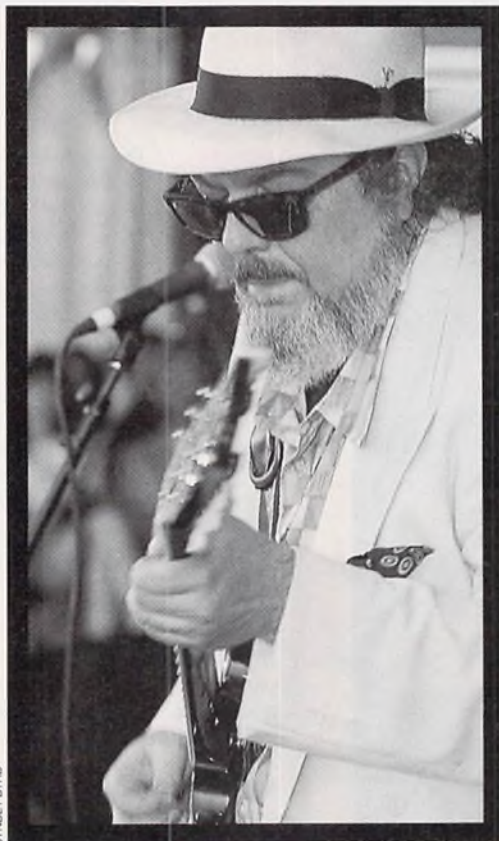
That's how I learned to play piano, basically from playing guitar with Professor Longhair and Allen Toussaint, James Booker, Huey Smith, all those guys. I'd get close to them and watch where the changes fell. That's what my guitar teachers taught me. "You watch what them piano players do!"

I learned a lot from just seeing what they did and how they approached the music. I learned from Huey Smith about playing way back in the time. If you let the rhythm section push it, you pull it and a really funky thing happens. I remember Professor Longhair playing piano like it was a percussion instrument, like it was a marimba. I used to hang out with him. I'd show him little songs I'd written. He influenced everything that I still do.

MB: *One thing about all the music from New Orleans is a real timelessness, whether it's jazz or blues or r&b or a Mardi Gras parade, and all that music comes through in you.*

DR. J: *I'm just a guy. I play what I play. I don't know what the hell it is. I try to play with good guys. I was taught that if you play with guys better than you, you learn something. And if you ain't learning, you're dying.*

...Guys play better when they're playing off of each other, when everybody vibes off of one another."



SYDNEY BYRD

MB: *I meet with a screening committee for the Grammy Awards and we wrangle about whether a singer should be nominated in the "Jazz" category or the "Traditional Pop" category. Afterglow will be a tough call because it's both and also blues. "Blue Skies" is not a blues but sounds like a blues when you sing it.*

DR. J: *We do "So Long" as a tribute to Charles Brown. I've never thought Charles Brown ever fit as straight-up blues or r&b or pop or whatever. My mother used to say her favorite blues singer was Charles Brown, but to me, when he sang "Tell Me You'll Wait For Me" [also on Afterglow], it's sophisticated pop like Nat King Cole or more jazzified than pop or blues. How can you put a jacket on it? It overlaps all of that. And music should do that.*

MB: *"Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good To You" is the oldest song on the album but sounds very fresh.*

DR. J: *I love that arrangement by John Clayton. It reminds me a little of Neal Hefti or Johnny Mandel. I blew two takes just listening to [trumpeter] Oscar Brashear play the intro. It was like sitting at home listening to my stereo. I forgot to come in. "Oh, okay, take two. Oscar, play it again." And he killed me again, and I blew it again! I love when music takes me out of wherever my head was. That's spiritually what music always should do.*

MB: *You selected many of these songs as tributes.*

DR. J: *"I Know What I've Got" is a tribute to Louis Jordan. He's one of my all-time heroes. I've always felt that Louis Jordan and*

Resurrection and Reunion Red Heart Beats Again



Dr. John in the mixing room with bandmembers and producer Tommy LiPuma (seated at the board).

Hes the last of a breed, a genuine original, truly an American icon. I really believe that," says Tommy LiPuma about his long-time friend Mac Rebennack. Afterglow is the first major production by LiPuma as the new president of GRP, the fourth Dr. John album produced by LiPuma. Actually, LiPuma first heard Mac even before Mac became known as the Doctor.

LiPuma was working for A&M in 1966 when he heard a demo single produced by Rebennack. "I think it was called 'Ju Ju Man.' I'd never heard anything like it. It was insane. I dug it. I picked it up for the label. Nothing happened with it, but that's when I first met Mac. Mac was a thin beanpole at the time."

They eventually worked together when LiPuma came to Horizon in the '70s and produced two Dr. John albums, City Lights and Tango Palace. They stayed friends after both of them settled in New York in the '80s. "I heard this record called Dr. John Plays Mac Rebennack, and he did 'The Nearness Of You.' I'd never heard him play a standard." LiPuma produced a whole album of Mac singing standards, In A Sentimental Mood, with the Grammy-winning "Makin' Whoopee" duet of Mac and Rickie Lee Jones.

Dr. John eventually signed with GRP and, soon after, Tommy became the new boss. "Life seems to intertwine," says Tommy. "I said that we've got to do another album, but this time let's do all these great songs. We grew up with the same music. We were both fans of Charles Brown, Percy Mayfield, Ray Charles, Nat Cole, Louis Jordan and big-band guys like Ernie Wilkins and Ralph Burns." Afterglow is a magnum opus for both of them.

It's also the first album on the resurrected Blue Thumb label. "One of the reasons that I've re-started Blue Thumb is that my musical interests are wide. I don't want to be in a narrow street," says LiPuma. He's also bringing back Impulse! as an active label—complete with the hallmark orange-and-black spines that look like punctuation in everyone's record collection.

Tommy LiPuma has worked all around the recording industry since the '60s as a musician and producer and executive. He's earned 18 gold and platinum records, also 30 Grammy nominations. LiPuma produced the classic Breezin' for George Benson, and they'll collaborate again at GRP (a new jazz/hip-hop release is planned for the fall). He's already signed Charles Lloyd to the new Impulse! while the Impulse! classics will be re-released. "We're going back to as many of the original tapes as we can to remaster. We're making them look like the gatefolds of the old packages. We'll also bring back the little red heart on the spine of the Blue Thumb records." And that little red heart beats again first for Dr. John. —M.B.

Cleanhead Vinson and Earl Bostic were the most underrated guys. They killed me. "I'm Confessin' That I Love You" is a tribute to Louis Armstrong. I met him twice, and he was down-home and as hip a cat as you could get. He came from my neighborhood in the Third Ward. We were baptized in the same church. I've felt connected to him ever since I was a kid listening to old Louis Armstrong 78s.

MB: Your father sold those records.

DR. J: He had this little shop and sold what they called "race" records, basically r&b and blues. And he sold hillbilly records, gospel records, pop records, but because he was right by Dillard University, the first black university in New Orleans, he sold a lot of "race" records.

MB: Doc Pomus was someone you worked with often, and you sing two songs you wrote together on the new album, "New York City Blues" and "There Must Be A Better World Somewhere."

DR. J: Doc was one of the special people in my life. This guy was a very powerful example of somebody who felt that if you really work at something hard enough and long enough, it'll pay off some kind of dividend.

I did a song on a tribute to Doc ["I'm On A Roll" on *Till The Night Is Gone*] that was the very last song he wrote while he was in the hospital getting ready to pass away, and his last words to me were, "Make sure it's in that Louis Jordan bag!" That was just how he thought. Doc knew he wasn't gonna hear that song, but he gave me that last instruction.

MB: And, otherwise, you'll carry on Doc's work, looking for that better world.

DR. J: You know, there's two songs about a better world. Earl King wrote a song called "Let's Make A Better World To Live In." Doc wrote the song "There Must Be A Better World Somewhere." I'm trying to the best of my ability to live between those two songs. I'm trying every day to learn how to do my job a little better. I succeed, and sometimes I don't, but, hopefully, I'm going in the right direction. All I know is that when the gigs is cool, when the sessions is cool, that's all I could ever ask for. I'm blessed to be doing something that I love. I ain't always got it down, but I'll take some shots at it. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

"I use whatever piano they got at the gig," says Dr. John. "I get every kind of piano in different juke joints, and some are better than others. I'd prefer if they got a nice Steinway. I like those old studio Steinways because that was the piano I first started playing on in studios. I like to record with them. I use a Gibson guitar, a Gibson Birdland. It's got this small neck, and I love it because I got a bad finger and it's easier to play."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

AFTERGLOW—Blue Thumb/GRP 70002	ALL MY LIFE—Bullseye Blues 9501 (Charles Brown)
TELEVISION—MCA/GRP 4024	DRAWERS TROUBLE—Rounder 2123 (Chuck Carbo)
GOIN' BACK TO NEW ORLEANS—Warner Bros 26940	20—Columbia 44369 (Harry Connick Jr.)
IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD—Warner Bros 25889	FLYIN' HIGH—Verve 314 517 512 (Johnny Copeland)
THE BRIGHTEST SMILE IN TOWN—Clean Cuts 707	MIDNIGHT RAMBLE—Milestone 9112 (Hank Crawford)
DR. JOHN PLAYS MAC REBENNACK—Clean Cuts 705	INDIGO BLUE—Milestone 9119 (Hank Crawford)
HOLLYWOOD BE THY NAME—United Artists 552	NIGHT BEAT—Milestone 9168 (Hank Crawford)
IN THE RIGHT PLACE—Alco 7018	INDIAN BLUES—Candid 79514 (Donald Harrison)
GUMBO—Alco 7006	WARM YOUR HEART—A&M 75021 5354 (Aaron Neville)
GRIS GRIS—Alligator 3904 (out of print)	CRESCENT CITY GOLD—High Street 10324 (Allen Toussaint & Earl Palmer)
MOS SCOCIOUS—Rhino 2-71450 with various others	BLUES TRAIN—Muse 5293 (Joe Turner)
ROOM WITH A VIEW OF THE BLUES—Rounder 2059 (Johnny Adams)	MIDNIGHT LADY CALLED THE BLUES—Muse 5327 (Jimmy Witherspoon)
THE REAL ME—Rounder 2109 (Johnny Adams)	TILL THE NIGHT IS GONE A TRIBUTE TO DOC POMUS—Rhino 2-71878
ON A MARDI GRAS DAY—Great Southern 11024 (Chris Barber)	
BLUESIANA TRIANGLE—Windham Hill Jazz 125 (Art Blakey & David Newman)	
BLUESIANA II—Windham Hill Jazz 10133 (Ray Anderson & David Newman)	



Ray Brown

King

Ray Brown, probably the youngest 68-year-old you'll ever meet, takes a moment over a recent dieter's breakfast of poached eggs on one piece of toast—hold the potatoes—at a Studio City deli and recounts his latest exploits.

In late March, the man who in 1995 celebrates 50 years in the jazz mainstream spent nine days in such middle-American cities as Minneapolis, Chicago and Milwaukee, playing sold-out houses with an all-star quartet of Milt Jackson (vibes), Cedar Walton (piano), Billy Higgins (drums) and himself. Then, back home in California, the bassist known for his middle-of-the-beat time, his fluid lines and his thought-provoking solos took a couple of days off to play golf, then started rehearsals for his new trio. This band still features pianist Benny Green but has young drum whiz Gregory Hutchison in for Brown's longtime partner, Jeff Hamilton, who has left to promote his own band with pianist Larry Fuller and bassist Jesse Murphy.

Brown debuted the trio in San Diego in mid-April, bounced back to L.A. for another week of rehearsals, then played a Saturday night concert with Lalo Schifrin and the Glendale Symphony Orchestra, offering pieces from Schifrin's *Jazz Meets The Symphony* repertoire. "That was good fun," he says. After a day off, Brown hopped a plane to Vienna, where the new threesome started a European tour, winding up the third week in May in New York City. There the band worked a week at the Blue Note club and made an album with Swedish guitarist Ulf Wakenius, whom, apparently, we'll know about soon. "I played with him in Europe last summer. He can play that guitar, man," Brown says in his gravelly, energized voice.

Some of us might get out of breath just reading a schedule like this, but the boyish Brown has always thrived on this kind of activity. And with Woody Herman no longer around, Brown might be a solid candidate for the title of New Road Father. Except for

of the Road

a period of about 21 years from 1966 to 1987, when he stuck pretty much close to his L.A. homebase, Brown has been out there, his life acted out on the world's bandstands.

Arguably the finest bassist in the mainstream tradition, Brown has had a marvelous career. "I would say it's still going great, considering it ain't over yet," cracks the Pittsburgh native.

After early acclaimed engagements with Snookum Russell's band, Brown landed in New York in 1945 and immediately got a job with *the* quintet of the day: Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell and Max Roach. Then, in 1946, he joined Gillespie's big band, recorded with Powell in 1949, was a member of Jazz at the Philharmonic, was musical director for his then-wife, Ella Fitzgerald, and became part of Oscar Peterson's trio in 1951. He settled in Los Angeles 15 years later, doing studio work and playing with an all-star TV-studio band on *The Meru Griffin Show*.

In 1972, Brown formed the L.A. Four with drummer Shelly Manne (whom Jeff Hamilton replaced after Manne's death in 1984), reedman Bud Shank and guitarist Laurindo Almeida. Next came a quartet with Milt Jackson, then, in 1984, a trio with pianist Gene Harris and Hamilton. Harris left to head out on his own in 1992, and Brown hired the inventive Benny Green.

In between all the leading have been countless record dates, both under his name, as co-leader and as a sideman. His lifelong contribution to jazz was acknowledged in early 1995 when he was awarded an American Jazz Masters Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts, joining such colleagues as Gillespie, Roach, Kenny Clarke, Sonny Rollins, Hank Jones and Ahmad Jamal.

Brown performed with Jamal for the first time on his latest Telarc recording, *Some Of My Best Friends Are . . . The Piano Players*, which also spotlights pianists Peterson, Green, Dado Moroni and Geoff Keezer, along with drummer Lewis Nash. A break

in a three-record string of trio sessions, it showcases Brown as ideaman as well as bassist.

Like a record company executive, Brown started thinking about what would sell records. "If you've got four or five different artists, it would keep the listener's attention better because it's changing," he says between bites of egg. "By the time they've

and Jamal is loose and swinging on "Bag's Groove" and two others. Green employs his dazzling two-handed parallel octave routine on "Lover," while Moroni offers a multi-paced version of "Giant Steps," delivering an ear-tingling imitation of Erroll Garner at various points. Keezer's contribution is a medium-pulsed, driving "Close Your Eyes." Brown's fat bass lines and ace solos

"If you asked Dizzy questions, he'd sit down and explain it.... Bird didn't show you; you had to listen to him."

got used to this guy playing a couple of tunes, here's another guy. So, I think that's good for the record buyer."

And why piano players? "I think that for Telarc, that was the easiest thing to do," Brown says. "They've got a lot of piano players right now. They've got Oscar, they've got Ahmad, they've got George Shearing."

Brown says that there were at least 15 piano players that he liked, that he knew. The selection process for this date came down to considerations such as availability and contractual obligations.

Getting Jamal was a bit of a coup, Brown says, because this is his *first* non-leader recording. "You can't find Ahmad on a record in a jam session," says the bassist, now sipping a cup of tea.

Jamal loved the idea, according to Brown. "He just walked in, sat down and played his ass off," he says, a sparkle in his eye. "I've been knowing Ahmad since he was a kid [in Pittsburgh]. He must have been nine or 10 years old when I left to go out on the road."

The program is a compendium of modern jazz piano styles. Peterson sounds robust and crisp on two medium-tempo cruisers, with scant trace of his stroke of last year,

sweeten the pot, as does Nash's natty drum work.

Amazingly, except for Peterson's tunes, which were done in Toronto, the entire album was done the old-fashioned way: in one studio in one day. "We did it last November," Brown says. "We started at 10 o'clock in the morning and guys came in every three hours. We left there at midnight."

Some Of My Best Friends Are is the first in a series of collaborative albums Brown will do for Telarc. He's planning on doing trombonists and guitarists as well, with saxophonists up on the next recording, which is scheduled for September or October. He says a possible wish/guest list includes Stanley Turrentine, James Moody, Johnny Griffin and Sonny Rollins. "Years ago, I did an album with Sonny and Shelly Manne called *Way Out West*," he says. "It's a collectors item now. We did it almost 40 years ago," he says, seemingly shocked at the passage of time.

Now, though, Brown's attention is on his trio. He feels he made a solid choice in Hutchison, who has enlivened bands led by Joshua Redman and Roy Hargrove.

"I think that he's going to work out fine,"

Brown says. "He's got a big responsibility, a lot of arrangements, a lot of parts to play. After he gets all his stuff down and I listen to what he does, then I'll start writing the new book. Start including what he does, that's what I'll attempt to do."

In the trio context, Brown will serve as both Hutchison's boss and his teacher, giving him the benefit of years of experience. In a recent rehearsal, the bassist wanted a tune played in 2/4, but found the youngster didn't have the right feel. So he told him how Jimmy Crawford,

the great drummer with Jimmie Lunceford, played.

"As I was describing to Greg how this guy used to play, he had a little smile on his face," Brown says. "It's nice to be able to relate this to young people. It's something that he doesn't know anything about."

As so many jazz artists have stressed, the music is best passed on in a verbal manner, with one artist, usually older, informing the younger players. Brown says this is the same kind of teaching he used to get from Gillespie.



KEN FRANKLING

"If you asked Dizzy questions, he'd sit down and explain it," Brown says. "Different things like, 'What are the changes on this tune?' He'd say, 'You're playing the right note, but it's not the note I want.' And he'd go to the piano and say, 'Okay now, listen to this. This is what I want you to play,'" Brown says, his hands outstretched as if at a keyboard. "You can't buy that. People have to ask, and if they ask, then certain people are going to show them. Dizzy and Bird were exact opposites. Bird didn't show you; you had to listen to him. That wasn't his thing—it was all self-contained. If you did that for Dizzy, he'd say, 'F-sharp minor 9th with a flat 5.' They were different animals."

Many listeners may think Brown's trio today harkens back to Peterson's, particularly since the splendid Green is such a fan of Oscar's. The bassist dissents. "When you play in a band that's great, I do think you retain some things of that era," he says. "But when you get your own group and try to do your own thing,

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Cyrus Chestnut (piano)
Joris Teepe (bass)
Carl Allen (drums)



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NADALIN, 'ROUND
MIDNIGHT, JOY
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you don't want to recreate anything. I want to have my own voice, and that's whatever we do, how it comes out."

The ongoing relationship between Brown and Peterson—"We always get together once or twice a year"—goes back to 1949, when Brown used to hear the Canadian great in a small club near the train station in Toronto. That year, Norman Granz brought Peterson to New York to be a special, unadvertised guest at a Jazz at the Philharmonic show at Carnegie Hall.

"The first year, the surprise guest was Billie Holiday," Brown recalls. "I mean, the people came apart! The third or fourth year, it was Oscar. Buddy Rich and I were supposed to play with him. Buddy had just finished a long solo—he played 'til near exhaustion—and he said, 'I don't know if I can go back on.' So Norman just sent Oscar and I out. We played, and they recorded it."

A common feel for the beat is what Brown says cemented his musical relationship with the pianist. "It's something that developed over 50 years," Brown says. "You can hook up with

somebody and it works right away, but you don't know whether that's gonna last. Maybe if you played with them for the next two years it may not be great like that every night. This was something that just grew and developed over the years, and we can always use it. We might not see each other for two, three years, but if he walks up, sits down at a piano, I pick up a bass and we start playing, we hear the beat the same. It's built inside."

It was with JATP, and with Peterson, that Brown grew to love life on the road, the life

he continues to lead with Green and Hutchison. There's nothing quite like it, though not everyone understands, he says.

"I stay in a good hotel, get to order room service, I don't have to go until nine o'clock at night," he says. "What's wrong with that? That should work for everybody. All this time off, then you go to the bandstand and have fun for three hours. What can be wrong with that? And you get paid! Going to the same office every morning, seeing the same faces, getting on the same freeway—that's a pain, man!"

DB

CARMEN. ELLA. BILLIE.

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Brown uses Thomastik strings, and either a Gallien-Krueger or a Polytone Mini-Brute III amp. He uses a Barcus-Berry pickup

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By Jim Macnie

Between Legends & Lions

A Look
at Jazz
Musicians
Happily
Stuck
in the
Middle

No doubt about it: Jazz in the '90s is the esthetic province of college grads who boost club numbers and flash virtuosic chops. They're young, and often we turn to them for one of youth's hallmarks, audaciousness. But while it seems most minors are majors these days, all the gravy of the era isn't being sopped by those below the age of 25. There are also scads of grandfathers and grandmothers releasing records this year. They're old, and more likely than not, their fans are taken with the eloquence and refinement decades of work can instill in an art.

But what of those players whose work is daring *and* eloquent, polished yet brazen? The world that spins between Doc Cheatham and Amani Murray is a big world indeed, and some of our most splendid talents lie within. Ever since the "young lions" euphemism became ubiquitous in the press and advertising loot fell into place, editors have been assigning reaction pieces. *Hey what about those heroes over there in the corner? Not wrinkled, not sexy—yeah, those guys. They pissed?* Several middle-agers are hip enough to understand how the hype machine works. Some are tickled with the advanced articulation of their own abilities. Most realize that old does not mean washed-up and that young does not necessarily mean valuable.

A recent *New York Times Arts & Leisure* piece asserted that jazz is having a "mid-life crisis." So we went literal, and asked some artists who find themselves between the status of lion and legend to look both ways: back to their youth and forward to the future. Evaluation came naturally to each, and similarities were struck. All mentioned that having their fledgling days behind them is a plus. They wouldn't trade what they know now for anything.

"When they say life begins at 40, it's true," assures Bobby Watson. With the dissolution of his longstanding ensemble

Horizon, the alto saxist and bandleader is currently in the process of shifting his acoustic sound toward the electric realm; it's a move he's anticipated for a long time. "You say to yourself, 'I'm 41 years old? Then I'm doing it my way.' You don't really care about needing anyone's approval anymore. When you're young you seek the acceptance of your elders, and it can drive you crazy. Back then I thought it was important what older cats thought about me. I needed to feel like I was one of them—of the same caliber. I'd wait for them to tell me."

With two decades of experience on his side at this point, Watson now has much more certitude and aplomb regarding his moves. As he negotiates the turf, he enjoys guiding those who are still a tad self-conscious. Watson's vivacious swing with Horizon used many younger players, including pianist Edward Simon and trumpeter Terrell Stafford. As of our interview he was still deciding on the final make-up of his new band (drummer Victor Lewis will be on board), which is destined to rove the funk realm and record for Herbie Mann's Kokopelli label. Watson, who parted ways with Columbia, his label of the last four years, realizes that in this era, youth can become a precious commodity.

"I like to take a chance working with young guys, give 'em enough time to see if they can bloom. You've got to nudge 'em, just like I had to be nudged some when I got to New York. I wasn't no finished product, that's for sure. I was raw, but Art Blakey saw my potential and took me on tour."

Pianist Joanne Brackeen knows the vibe of the youth culture; she currently teaches at Berklee School of Music in Boston, but gigs frequently enough to be the busiest she's ever been. Her new *Power Talk* was recorded for a small label called Turnip Seed. From her vantage point, style shouldn't necessarily reflect the number of

**“You say to yourself,
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Then I'm doing it my
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approval anymore.”**

—Bobby Watson



**“I've come to the conclusion that jazz is a young people's
art, but it's best played by people who are older.” —Gary Bartz**

years spent on the planet, and youth may well have its drawbacks.

“The music doesn't have an age,” she explains. “If you're young and you play like you're young, you're not playing the whole music. Because the music has every age in it. If you're playing it fully it should reflect that. I've been listening to an album by one of today's quote 'major players.' Maybe he's 30, he could be 25, and there's nothing even approaching . . . well, if you want to talk about old age, he could be 90. And he's supposed to be one of the top for his age! A lot of the new stuff is really watered-down. Last semester in my class we just dealt with the young people, and picked out the good points we could find. At the end of that semester, the Berklee students said, 'Please, can we just deal with the masters?' They got tired of it.”

Born in 1938, the pianist does her best to transcend the restrictions and stereotypes of age. “Jazz is so fascinating, I hardly have time to think about the fact that I'm a woman, and I never have time to think that I'm what they call middle-aged. People get surprised when they see me, too. ‘Oh, I

thought you were much older.’ Not only are you supposed to be a certain way, but look a certain way. And largely, except for Cecil Taylor, you're supposed to play a certain way. Cecil is one of the very few people who, past the age of 35, just keeps developing as if he was 20. If I hear him one year and then come back two years later, I can really tell the difference. So for me he's a mentor, not particularly stylewise, though I like that, too, but in development.”

At 54, Gary Bartz's evolution is hitting a masterful stride. Just a while ago, during the '80s, he was operating in the shadows, living and playing in Baltimore. Now he's acknowledged as one of the prime reed players in New York, consistently impressing listeners with a sophistication that knows jazz is most thrilling when its rugged side is audible.

“I've come to the conclusion that jazz is a young people's art, but it's best played by people who are older,” Bartz says with typical decisiveness. “A 'young person's art' because it's new all the time. You're improvising—it's fresh or you're in trouble. But by young people's art I also mean that



ALAN HANCOCK



"I got nothing to lose, because I have nothing. This is Part Two, man.... The main point is that you're still alive and you've got your experience behind you."

—Richie Cole

KEN FRANZBLING

territory he rules with his also these days is sizable. Along with his recent *Episode One Children Of Harlem* (Challenge), there's *The Red And Orange Poems*, his Atlantic debut, which also stresses his arranging talents. No mere blowing session, it's a date that displays a breadth of ripe faculties (see "CD Reviews" May '95).

"I feel strong these days," he concurs, "and I consider myself a writer as well as a player. As the years go by, you learn about chords and such. I heard Miles work on one note out of a chord for a couple of years. One note. [*In a Milesian whisper*] 'The flatted 6th is a motherfucker.' There are so many ways to use it. It takes years . . . that right there should tell you something."

Bartz now has a clearer view of how he wants his music to sound. "I hadn't been arranging for a while because I didn't have a forum. *The Red And Orange Poems* gave me a chance to do it, and I realized that I learned so much during the time that I wasn't doing it, it's like, 'Man . . .' Now, if I had the chance, I'd go and change a lot of my old stuff. I'm better at it these days."

Soloing is one thing—the youth brigade gained their initial media huzzahs by being hip blowers. But coming up with savory melodies and casting them to their best advantage while still in your early 20s is a tough assignment. Bartz backs the quest to

most of the jazz musicians died early, died young. I never thought I'd see the day that I was older than Trane, than Bird, than Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan. But I'm

glad I made it; you don't play your best until you get older."

Stopping into a Bartz gig would surely convince anyone of that. The emotional

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find valuable new talents, but reminds that many well-known artists are prime for picking.

"There are too many people we're going to lose before everyone has had a say," he laments, "and that's a disappointment. I'm happy for myself and anybody else who gets a chance to be heard, but there are so many worthy older musicians who won't get the credit . . . it's frustrating. Look, you've got Benny Golson alive without a major-label contract. That's a travesty. He's done movies, written classics, he's a consummate arranger and improviser. How can you sign a 20-year-old kid who has never sold a record or written a song when Golson's around? Granted, sometimes there are reasons that players don't have bigger profiles . . . it could be their own fault. But for the most part, this is the only big corporate structure that does not utilize their most treasured assets."

Though youthful in his own attack, the saxist has deliberated on what growing old in jazz might mean. "I've seen some older musicians who I thought I'd like to be like. Coleman Hawkins for one," he muses. "He never lost that excitement, the search. I used to study with Eric Dolphy, and Eric would go by Coleman's house all the time. Dolphy says that Hawk was always asking, 'How's that young guy John Coltrane doing?

"The music doesn't have an age. If you're young and you play like you're young, you're not playing the whole music.

Because the music has every age in it."

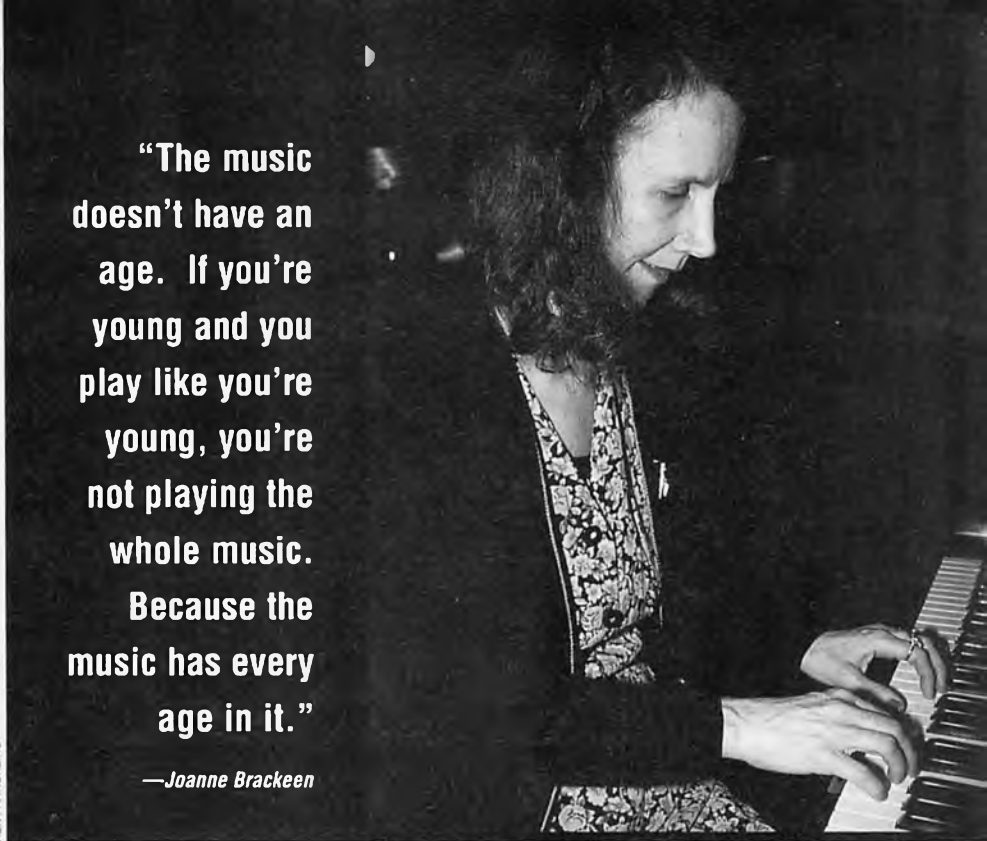
—Joanne Brackeen

KEN FRANKLING

He's going to be alright."

That exchange of info is part of what alto saxist Richie Cole stressed when we caught up with him at a Louisiana gig. "That's the

nature of jazz," he posits, "taking someone else's ideas, understanding them, developing them and including it in your own thing. We're playing with James Moody



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Standards in Norway

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STANDARDS IN NORWAY**

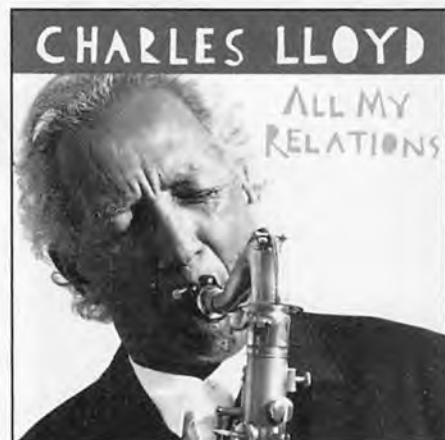
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this week, and that's what I was reminded of: trying to relate his thing to what I do. I hear him and say, 'What can I do with that?'"

Cole knows the rigors of middle-age. For him, after great success in the '80s, the last few years have been treacherous. Off the scene, he battled alcohol abuse. "I went underground," he explains. "Too many things took over. It started with [bebop/scat singer/close partner] Eddie Jefferson's death; I witnessed the whole thing, and that twisted my brain around." Along with this tragic shooting murder in 1979, divorce problems, managerial nightmares—the negativity took its toll. "I kept banging my head into walls," he sighs.

"Before that, I was working all the time, very successful. But you play the Montreux Jazz Festival for 45 minutes with 5,000 people applauding, and then you sit in an airport alone for three hours . . . it drives you crazy, a real letdown. Like, 'Now what?' You can only read so many books. On the road, there's about 23½ hours a day of nothing but cinderblock walls and *Maury Povich*. There's a lot of 'all dressed up and nowhere to go.' When things start falling apart it's like trying to hold on to a crumbling cliff. For me, success was a double-edged sword. I finally checked into rehab."

Cole's no isolated case. The travails of travel and the grind of life has gotten to many musicians. "Hey, James Moody went through the same thing I went through 30 years ago!" exclaims Cole. "He made that record, *Last Train From Overbrook*. That's a sanitarium in New Jersey. We need to all look out for each other."

Currently the saxist is at the start of what he calls ground-zero. "I got nothing to lose, because I have nothing. This is Part Two, man. The years catch up with you and you think about things. When I was 22 the thought of being 35 was out of the question. Here I am 46 looking at Moody, who's 70, and it's like, 'Hey I might be there someday.' Your perspective changes. The main point is that you're still alive and you've got your experience behind you. I want this record to be the beginning of a new phase."

Cole's latest is a big-band date that brims with a revitalized energy. *Kush* (Heads Up) interprets the book of Dizzy Gillespie's intrepid orchestras of the '40s and '50s. Cole sees it as the chance for a new push. "I'm in the middle of my career, and I've learned to accept and discard a lot of things. In my youth I learned how to master the sax. Then after Eddie's death, I started experimenting with different concepts. Some worked, some didn't. In trial and error, you put yourself on the line. I want

some content to my stuff these days."

One thing that can be done during a tour's off-hours is addressing the throng of kids who look for pointers. Someone's usually tugging at Cole's coat. "Some young guys look at me like I'm the old guy," confirms Cole. "They come up and say, 'Hey man, you're the first guy I ever heard on the sax.' I go: 'What?' Nice compliment, but I'm no legend, you know?"

Status, for these middle-agers, is all in the mind. Watson agrees with Cole. "The hardest thing for me is to get 'em to stop calling me Mr. Watson," he laughs. "'It's Bobby, okay?' They are all very respectful. 'Sorry, Mr. Watson, I can't help it, it's just that when I was in high school I listened to all your rec. . . .' 'Shut up!' Though I shouldn't laugh. When I first got to New York, it was, 'Hello, Mr. Donaldson.' And he'd say, 'C'mon, it's Lou.'"

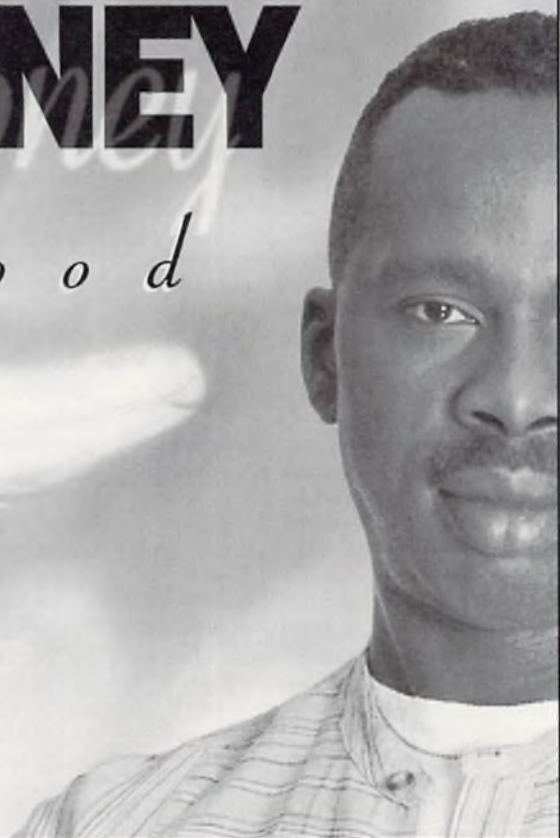
And Bartz, in his no-bullshit way, concludes by jumping to the bottom line. "The first question I ask young people is, 'Why do you want to do this?' If it's to make money, they better start looking around for something else. What keeps most musicians going is a complete love of the music. That's what definitely keeps me going; I'd do it for nothing. Umm . . . don't tell anybody that . . . especially Atlantic."

DB

KEVIN TONEY

pastel mood

IN
STORES
NOW



'Flesh Against Steel'

By John Corbett

It's a ravishing April day—crisp, breezy, sunny. From the grassy peninsula known as "the Point," which juts out a short distance into Lake Michigan from Chicago's South Side Hyde Park community, you can see the late afternoon light turn the water a brilliant Mediterranean green, offset by large tan rocks that line the shore.

This is the picturesque locale trumpeter Malachi Thompson chose to portray on his recent record *New Standards* as one of four "Chicago Soundscapes" titled "Jammin' At The Point." "This was a spot in the summertime," recalls Thompson, peering across the water and thinking back on the late '60s. "Cats would bring their drums and horns, all sorts of people would be out here, and they'd have a jam session." He points inland toward the nearby Museum of Science and Industry. "You could hear it from blocks away. It was a beautiful thing. Those were the days."

Thompson's nostalgia is probably not only for a blissful earlier era in his musical life, but for a time without the imminence of cancer. In 1989, at his relatively new home in the foothills of the Austrian Alps, Thompson was diagnosed with T-cell lymphoma, a rare form of blood disease with a grim prognosis. Through sheer personal strength and conviction, Thompson has negotiated the illness. "They call it remission, but who knows?" he says. "Once you have cancer, you always have cancer. Right now it's dormant. Everything has been manageable, and I've only had a couple of incidents in the last few years. What I'm learning is how to deal with

stress. Stress management is the key—keeping your blood pressure down, learning how to chill out and not let stuff bother you."

Of course, the music biz is hardly a stress-free zone, particularly for a trumpeter, composer, arranger and bandleader with a busy tour schedule and active recording life. And yet, since returning to Chicago in '89, Thompson seems to have used music as a tool in beating back his disease, and in turn he has galvanized his own career. There's no better evidence of this than his most recent four records—each stronger than the last—on Chicago's Delmark label.

Born in Kentucky, Thompson grew up in and around the Hyde Park area. His mother, whose influence on his musical path was decisive, was a Sunday school teacher. "I remember every Sunday after Sunday school was over I would go down to the basement, where there was this piano. I didn't know how to play, but I just played what I felt. I was experimenting," he laughs. "I got to be good at making up my own tunes. My mother began to take notice, took me to the Abraham Lincoln Center to take lessons. I wasn't ready for formalized training—I wanted to play what was in my mind's ear. This guy wanted me to play [*sings a major scale*]. I said that's cool, what about this [*makes wild noises*], Cecil Taylor-type stuff," Thompson laughs at the thought. "Needless to say, I dropped out of that piano lesson."

This early clash between creativity and

discipline turned young Malachi away from music until one fateful outing: "I was 11 years old, and my mother took me to see Count Basie at the old Regal Theatre," he smiles, closing his eyes in reverie. "That blew me away! I'd heard the records, but to hear it live! One of the trumpet players was sitting there without any music. Obviously he had learned the entire Count Basie book. That intrigued me."

Thompson's intrigue spread as he began studying trumpet. Soon, bebop caught his ear, particularly Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers—whose sound certainly reverberates in some of his current work. "Bill Hardman was just my favorite trumpet player, still is," admits Thompson. "The way he played was so open and so logical, it kind of gave me a hook. I modeled myself after him. I could sing every note of his solos, and I was learning them on my horn. That was my way of getting into the music. Someone asked Bill Hardman who he liked, and he said Clifford Brown. So it just so happened my mother had Clifford Brown in her collection. I didn't have to go anywhere—my mother had a comprehensive library of American and European music. So I got into Clifford Brown. And then Art Farmer, Miles Davis, and Dizzy and Bird, of course. But Dizzy and Bird were like the Michael Jacksons of the music—like pop-bop," he chuckles. "I thought the Jazz Messengers seemed more serious, with the longer solos."

Eventually, Thompson began jamming in many of the South Side sessions, including Troy Robinson's Jazz Workshop, where he met some of the members of the AACM



RONALD HEARD

(Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians). With the exception of his own incipient free-piano playing, Thompson wasn't yet listening to or playing free music. "I was into learning the tradition," he says. "But it seemed like the New York thing. The AACM had a whole other thing, and this is what I really dug about the AACM. They told you: 'Don't get into the New York thing. You're gonna do your thing. You're gonna write your music, produce a concert, orchestrate, have a

concept, become a bandleader, become a sideman.' It was a hell of an experience. I'm 17, 18, playing Muhal Richard Abrams' music, Henry Threadgill's music, John Stubblefield's music, Leroy Jenkins' music. It was a gas; those were great days."

At the same time he was a member of the AACM in the late '60s and early '70s, Thompson played in the ensemble of Martin Luther King's SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), the Operation Breadbasket Orchestra. "I made

a decision to concentrate on what I was doing with that more than my activities with the AACM," he remembers. "I saw what I was doing with the civil rights movement as important, and I think the guys knew that. Plus: I'm 18, I've got a steady job in a big band that takes me to New York, Philadelphia, down South, all around!"

The mid-'70s brought changes to the Chicago creative music scene, as many AACM mainstays moved away, among them Thompson. "What really forced me out of Chicago was that the work just dried up," he explains. "For a whole year, nobody called me." Once in New York—which he says was a "quantum leap" from Chicago—Thompson soon became part of the so-called Loft Scene, which had a sense of collectivism that reminded him of home. "Groups of musicians took their own initiative to organize and play their own music. There was something out of that AACM-thing that I dug about it." Along the way, Thompson forged a long-term working relationship with tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson, who died in 1993, and he played in bands with a wide range of people such as Roland Alexander, Sam Rivers, Archie Shepp and Sam Wooding.

"That's the difference between cats of my generation and cats of Wynton Marsalis' generation, I think," the 46-year-old Thompson opines. "When I came up there was a way that you got into the music, started out in r&b—what Lester [Bowie] would call an entry-level gig; then get your chops together and you can go into a jazz big band. As you're going through that process, you're really learning the ins and outs from working with the older cats. That's what I always dug, listening to their stories. It adds to your experience as a musician playing all these different styles. The younger cats could open their eyes to all the possibilities: it's not just the '60s or the '70s; you have 100 years of history to draw on.

"I'm always experimenting, but because I'm experimenting doesn't mean that I can't do anything traditional," he continues. "'Cause I played with those traditional cats. I played the music of Sam Wooding, and I'm sitting next to Taft Jordan, the Taft Jordan, who played with one of the original Duke Ellington orchestras. So that's how I really learned about the plunger, just sitting asking him stupid questions. He's showing me stuff, like: 'Look, boy, do it like this.' When I got it he would always say: 'Yeah, that's it!' 'Cause it was about making the section, and it was all in love, you know. You see, through that experience I can actually draw upon the experience of the 1920s, like osmosis. So even though I came up in the '60s—Trane, Wayne Shorter, Freddie

Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Dolphy, and then the whole spectrum of AACM cats, that was my bread and butter—you dig? But I began later to understand the importance of the history.”

While in New York, Thompson developed his ideas about mixing old and new styles, especially working in groups with master-pasticher Lester Bowie. In fact, Thompson was a member of a five-trumpet ensemble that's been all but expunged from recent memory. The New York Hot Trumpet Repertory Group, whose members included Thompson, Bowie, Olu Dara, Stanton Davis and—surprise!—Wynton Marsalis. “We had worked out a concept, and it was some bad stuff, man,” insists Thompson. “We could have fun and there wasn't too much of an ego thing. We would create a theme and stretch out on it.” To suggest the “outness” of the group's playing, Thompson says it was “not as structured as the World Saxophone Quartet.”

Thompson says he later heard that Columbia Records demanded that Wynton stop playing in the group. “We understood what was happening,” says Thompson, sympathetically, “because that was corporate America, and the deal they were

offering Wynton was fantastic, you know? The band actually stayed together for another year after he left, then evolved into Brass Fantasy.” But Thompson is also emphatic that Marsalis wasn't the neo-con hero among vanguard charlatans, either in

and Austria before his bittersweet homecoming to the Windy City. Now he concentrates his energies on two groups, the Freebop Band, which has been in existence since the late '70s, and Africa Brass, his own take on the pan-traditional











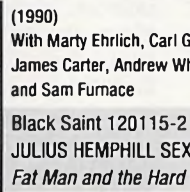

“I've developed this concept for playing the trumpet that I call 'flesh against steel.' You know in your heart of hearts that this steel is not going to yield, but you have to bend with the steel, and that makes you into steel.”

thought or in deed: “Man, I blew Wynton away! Put him in the context with these four other trumpet players, and it wasn't a star thing. He wasn't the star; it was five good trumpet players. And at any moment I might get blown away by someone. We were trying to create a certain energy, and there was a lot of spontaneity. It was great.”

After burning out on New York in 1983, Thompson stopped in Washington, D.C.,

brass band à la Brass Fantasy. “Freebop now is pretty conservative,” says Thompson, perhaps alluding to the fact that on *New Standards* there's more bop than free. “At one time the Freebop Band was a quartet. That band was a more adventurous, more daring, multi-directional group. Then the music in general shifted to the right, going back to the '50s and '60s. That music was done better then, so the

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 <p>(1980) Henry Threadgill, Olu Dara, Butch Morris, George Lewis, Anthony Davis, Wilbur Morris and Steve McCall</p>	 <p>(1986) With Henry Threadgill, Cassandra Wilson, Fred Hopkins and Pheeroan akLaff</p>	 <p>(1989) With Anthony Braxton conducting & performing with the Northwest Creative Orchestra</p>	 <p>(1990) With Michael Ray, John Gilmore, Buster Smith and others</p>
<p>Black Saint 120045-2 DAVID MURRAY OCTET: <i>Ming</i></p>	<p>Black Saint 120099-2 NEW AIR: <i>Air Show Number 1</i></p>	<p>Black Saint 120137-2 ANTHONY BRAXTON: <i>Eugene (1989)</i></p>	<p>Black Saint 120121-2 SUN RA ARKESTRA: <i>Mayan Temples</i></p>
 <p>(1990) With Joe Brandon, Jack Walrath, John Purcell, Dave Fuczyński, Thurman Baker, Patience Higgins and others</p>	 <p>(1990) With Marty Ehrlich, Carl Grubbs, James Carter, Andrew White and Sam Furnace</p>	 <p>(1990) With Marty Ehrlich, Carl Grubbs, James Carter, Andrew White and Sam Furnace</p>	 <p>Let your mind hear BLACK SAINT what your ears have been missing</p>
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paradox is, how do you do that music and make it sound fresh? That was the challenge for the Freebop Band—we do these tunes from the '60s. So, for example: on 'Pinocchio,' Miles played it with a medium groove; we played it really up-tempo. Eventually, the cats laid out, and it was the drummer and the soloist, which kind of went from a structure to free and back into the form again. That's freebop. Freebop is just being able to draw from different aspects of the music and culture itself. But you must have the musical training and wherewithal to express it, because it's a multi-dimensional concept."

As for Africa Brass, which allows him to display his considerable abilities as an arranger, Thompson simply gushes: "That's like my dream come true. Takes me back to the day when I first heard the Basie band, standing in front of all these trumpets. We're able to expand what I'm doing with Freebop, but now the theme of the Africa Brass is like the brass bands of old New Orleans, referring back to Buddy Bolden, Joe Oliver, marching bands like the Excelsiors. We're not trying to become a repertory company; what we want to do is capture that energy, put it in an updated form, play some of those tunes in a free style. The difference between our brass band and a New Orleans brass band is that

we have that avant-garde edge that we can go anywhere anytime, in terms of creating sounds, using different idioms like African music or samba. On this new record, *Buddy Bolden's Rag*, we go everywhere, we go around the world with the music."

Along with these groups, Thompson also works with Triad, which he refers to as his "experimental performance-art group." "Where Africa Brass can be bombastic, Triad is hypnotic," suggests the trumpeter, who often chooses to utilize indigenous African horns, like the conch shell, the sekulu and a steer's horn. "It gets me out of my Western sense of harmony, putting down the valves, working with another type of embouchure." Another important facet of Thompson's world is the Sutherland Community Arts Initiative, a cross-disciplinary group of concerned artistic citizens seeking to reanimate the South Side scene. As a rallying rail, they've centered on the old Sutherland Hotel, a key point in the topography of jazz in Chicago and a short block from the house that Thompson grew up in. The group's aim is to provide a young kid with the same sort of cultural opportunity Thompson had when he saw Basie.

At the heart of Thompson's music is a sort of brass existentialism, borne of the necessities of sickness and spirit. "I've

developed this concept for playing the trumpet that I call 'flesh against steel.' You know in your heart of hearts that this steel is not going to yield, but you have to bend with the steel, and that makes you into steel. The way I like to play is hard, fast. As you get older your body adjusts so that you can play the same way, but with less energy." He points at his stomach. "It has to come from down here." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Malachi Thompson plays a Franz Hackl trumpet, Toni Maier model, and has a Calicchio that he uses less frequently these days. His mouthpiece is a Schilke 15B. He uses a conch shell, steer horn and sekulu—the latter a Zairean transverse trumpet.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BUDDY BOLDEN'S RAG—Delmark 481
NEW STANDARDS—Delmark 473
LIFT EVERY VOICE—Delmark 463
THE JAZZ LIFE—Delmark 453
SPIRIT—Delmark 442
THE SEVENTH SON—RA 102
 with Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy
TWILIGHT DREAMS—Venture 90650
AVANT POP—ECM 21326
I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU—ECM 21296
 with various others
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Starting From Scratch

After a long winter, Pat Martino has come out to play. Sidelined and isolated for much of the last 15 years by cycles of illness and recovery, the guitarist has committed himself to resuming a career that once dazzled audiences as well as his peers. "So many things are happening," says Martino with a little wonderment. "Now the doors are open, all the major problems are out of the way. I'm excited musically, I don't know what's coming next."

The Maker (Evidence 22121) and *Interchange* (Muse 5529), both recorded in 1994, signal a return to recording activity while manifesting different aspects of Martino's persona. *Interchange's* furious bop and blues may reflect the difficulty the 50-year-old Martino encountered in re-igniting his career as a guitarist after a seven-year absence, while *The Maker*, recorded six months later, is thoughtful and atmospheric. Martino sees *The Maker* as more of an ensemble project, an evolution of his compositional skills, aspiring to "writing like Billy Strayhorn with beautiful melodies and incredible changes." Another Muse CD entitled *Nightwings* awaits release, and Martino is suddenly hungry for more, insisting, "I wish I was recording right now."

Martino will be honored in his hometown this summer by Philadelphia's Mellon PSFS Jazz Festival. He accepts the recognition as "a formidable compliment," noting, "Philadelphia's been so extremely strong in the jazz idiom through the decades." To Martino, the festival represents the 1995 equivalent of barely remembered Philly jazz clubs like Pep's and the Showboat, where the teenaged Martino could hear John Coltrane or the Montgomery brothers, eventually taking the stage to play with big bands. While still a teen, Martino built a name for himself, refining his skills on the chitlin circuit with organists like Brother Jack McDuff and Don Patterson.

Albums like *East!* (Prestige, 1964) and *Consciousness* (Muse, 1974) cemented Martino's reputation through the '60s and '70s as a self-taught prodigy with a lethal combination of speed and fluency. While battling severe headaches, misdiagnoses and inappropriate treatments, he recorded *Starbright* and *Joyous Lake* (both out of print) for Warner Bros. in the mid-'70s before emergency brain surgery stopped Martino's career short.

Surgery saved the guitarist's life, but



Pat Martino

robbed him of much of his memory, as well as his will to play the guitar. Martino credits a Macintosh computer, in part, for helping to revive his creativity, remembering, "It got me back into the manuscript and the pencil, the staves on the blank page, and I wrote 516 studies of Japanese scales, Hungarian, Chinese and Byzantine scales. I got deeply involved with different cultures of music." He was gradually reintroduced to the guitar through his own recordings. He recalls while living with his parents, "My father always had a guitar out in the house. Every Saturday morning he would play his favorite records, which were records I made, so I always heard this music playing. It became subliminal. I don't know where it came from—the need to come back, maybe from my father's dreams, or those of friends, or their expectations."

His tantalizing late-'80s comeback was aborted by continuing aftershocks of poor health and personal loss. Martino then turned away from jazz guitar altogether. He privately explored his interests in technology and in 20th-century composers (e.g., George Crumb and George Rochberg), using guitar-triggered synthesizers to record an ethereal, elegiac (unreleased) concerto for guitar as orchestra. Once again, Martino had to leave a "mystical fog" to recover the desire to play. He credits pianist James Ridl, now part

of Martino's working group, with encouraging his return to activity.

Today, the guitarist looks forward to the work, particularly those moments when performance allows genuine interaction with his audience, and he is eager to book engagements. Martino muses, "I found out through experience that, if the performance was immaculate, the most important thing that took place at the end of the performance was contact with the audience. It made a difference, it opened eternal—capital 'E'—emotions with those who were present."

His optimism and idealism are tempered by economic realities. "To be a jazz musician," says Martino, "is to be a homeless individual. There is no pension or social security. A jazz musician doesn't retire." Having overcome years of adversity, he finds value in simple, day-to-day human interactions. "That, to me, is what causes music," he observes, "what causes the song. I often wonder, in master classes or clinics, how to express this to individuals who have been taught to study the guitar as a mechanism, or jazz as a mechanism, that the basis for its existence is life itself and not music." Martino views his life today as a sequence of precarious, spontaneous, often chance-directed events, propelled by creativity, and supported by moments of fulfillment. "It's jazz to the max," he says with a smile.

—Jon Andrews

Lounge-Sharp Chops

You can't listen to pianist Jon Weber—who recently released his first CD, *Jazz Wagon* (IMI 394)—without thinking of Dave McKenna. And you can't talk to him without wondering whether Dick Hyman's vast store of musical bric-a-brac has somehow transmigrated into his head.



Jon Weber

Tall and solid, Weber, 34, wears his hair pulled back in a stubby pony tail and spouts a stream of factual minutia at the drop of a tune title ("Happy Birthday": "written by Patti and Mildred Hill in 1892 and originally called 'Good Morning To You' . . ."). For the last six years, he has been playing solo Sunday through Thursday night in the classy seventh-floor lounge of Chicago's Four Seasons Hotel. He wants to get into more recording. Indeed, for a player of his talent, lounge piano might seem a variation on that bane of the *Reality Bites* generation, namely, underemployment. Look at it another way, though, and he's sitting on a gig that some musicians might even consider playing "Feelings" to get (a song Weber claims not to know).

Weber offers several good reasons why every pianist should aspire to work as a lounge pianist:

It sharpens the chops. "It's great practice, the greatest possible training. I don't own a piano. Here I get a chance to play six hours a day. It makes you very good."

You can experiment. "In a bar you can try out things, like playing tunes in different

tempos and keys. When musicians walk in, I play better, more selectively. I try playing in B and F-sharp more often. A lot of jazz tunes are in F and B-flat. If you play in an unexpected key, you catch their ear and show off a little without attracting undue attention. I never get tired of [Scott] Joplin's 'The Entertainer.' The challenge is keeping it fresh. Play it boogie-woogie. Play it stride. Play it bop. The management is great. I get a blank check."

You learn repertoire. "Dick Hyman's book *Piano Pro* lists a couple hundred songs every professional musician should know. If a musician doesn't know them, he's in big trouble. People like to play 'stump the piano player.' Playing bar piano is the best way to learn music. Tonight someone asked me to play Mozart's 'Magic Flute.' Once someone asked for a punk thing by a group called Slave—that stumped me."

You get to meet bigshots. "Four years ago at a table behind me sat Jamie Lee Curtis, Teri Garr and Bob Sagat. After three hours Jamie came up and shook my hand. Another time a well-dressed man came up and said he liked my playing. I asked if he was a musician. 'Yes,' he said, 'Ramsey Lewis.' Sammy Cahn came in once and asked for [his] 'Tender Trap.' Another time Rod Stewart sat down and sang five songs with me.

You'd never guess what they were: 'Sentimental Over You,' 'Easter Parade,' 'Satin Doll,' 'You Can't Take That Away From Me' and 'I'll Be Seeing You.' He knows the good songs."

You become a people-watcher. "I could write a book about body language. Just because they're not watching you, they think you're not watching them. I love to study people being themselves."

You get loyal fans. "I have regulars who come in all the time. People feel they acquire a certain status when they can call the pianist by his first name. You get to know their favorite songs. I'll do a different version every time."

A couple of hours later the room has filled up a bit. Weber sits at the piano, legs crossed, chatting with customers ("Do you know who dubbed Lauren Bacall's singing voice in *To Have And Have Not?* . . . Andy Williams."), all the while tossing off little keyboard gems. "If I Had You" comes out, first dressed as Teddy Wilson, then Tatum, Hines, Waller and Johnson, each an affectionate but on-the-money caricature of the original. It's the kind of magic you learn only in a lounge. —John McDonough



Antonio Hart

Refuge From Rancor

Antonio Hart senses a prevailing negative atmosphere on today's jazz scene. And it disturbs him. "The scarcity of performance venues and recording contracts is responsible for an increasing split in the jazz community," says the Baltimore native and Berklee graduate. "This situation has created a lot of envy, jealousy and backbiting among musicians."

Hart finds refuge from the rancor and chaos in his own ensemble, which not only keeps him out of harm's way but is a source of endless musical inspiration. "All of us are drug-free and struggling to improve ourselves," notes the alto saxophonist, who got his start playing with young-lion trumpeter Roy Hargrove for three years.

This quality of good vibes in the band—a straightahead unit that includes trumpeter Darren Barrett, pianist Carlos McKinney, Tassili Bond on bass and Nasheef Waits on drums—reaches beyond the music, Hart insists. "We have a positive feeling in the band, much like that feeling that radiated from the groups led by John Coltrane. We feed off this energy musically and in our personal relationships." A solid sampling of this esprit de corps and camaraderie can be heard on the group's latest release, *It's All Good* (Novus 631-83).

Getting his cohorts to write more for the band and to perfect his own singular voice on the alto sax are immediate goals for Hart. "Of course, the main thing is finding enough gigs to keep the band together," he relates. "And that is quite a challenge."

Part of the answer to that dilemma was on the way as the band prepared for a two-week sojourn to Paris this spring for a concert date at the Hotel Meridian. And, as the song goes, a week in Paris is sure to ease the bite of it. —Herb Boyd

Grace Under Pressure

The work calls for a common musical vocabulary, a store of shared phrases and unspoken cues. It also calls for grace under pressure and the ability to react instantly to last-minute program changes at rehearsal, or even on stage.

"In the best-case scenario," says trumpeter Darrell Leonard, one half of the Los Angeles-based Texacali Horns, "everybody will have gotten the same tapes of the songs, and everybody will be prepared. More often, half the people won't know the songs, the keys will be different and you may get hit with songs that weren't on the list or that you may not even have heard before. You can either fight it, or just do it."

Being pros, the Texacali Horns just do it. Their work includes at least three nights a week in the house band at B.B. King's, frequent performances at House of Blues and regular blues and r&b recording sessions.

The recording work, like the live gigs, often requires creating and playing horn arrangements on the spot. "We can do that because we know the same music and share a repertoire of ideas," says tenor saxist Joe Sublett, who, like Leonard, has years of experience playing the soul, blues and r&b circuits. "As a section, we know where the other's going on a given chord change."

Sublett, 41, grew up in Texas and moved to California in 1986. Leonard, 52, is an Iowa native and an L.A. resident since 1969. "We took the name Texacali Horns on our first session together in L.A.," Sublett says, referring to the 1989 Stevie Ray Vaughan album *In Step*. That album won a Grammy. So did *Feels Like Rain*, the Buddy Guy album they helped cut in 1993. In 1994, they recorded with Percy Sledge, and this year they played on Little Feat's *Ain't Had Enough Fun*.

Leonard does most of the chart writing for the section on a Macintosh with a Mosaic program. "I write charts according to the set list I'm given," he says. "Then at the soundcheck, or on stage, they change the songs. It's like getting ready to jump, and having them pull the trampoline away. You jump anyway."

Experience helps you learn to transcribe things pretty quickly, Leonard says. "At first, it takes five days to do the charts for a set. Yesterday, I did eight charts. It's basically a Memphis vocabulary for me and Joe. It's music you should just know."

Agreement on music you should just know is what makes the Texacali Horns such an effective section, says Sublett, whose big, raunchy sax sound and style



Texacali Horns: Joe Sublett and Darrell Leonard

betrays no trace of jazz influence. "I was always a bluesman, not a jazz man. My models were Texas tenor players, like King Curtis and Clifford Scott. I loved guys who had a big tone."

"As much as I enjoy big-band work with

complex harmonies, what I get hired to do is play blues and r&b," says Leonard.

"There's an old saying: Don't get too good at something, or people will make you keep doin' it forever. If you're lucky."

—David Barry

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The Return of Art Pepper

By Jack Tynan

In the following "Classic Interview," reprinted from our April 14, 1960 issue, we find West Coast alto saxophonist Art Pepper in the midst of a shortlived comeback, one of many in a career plagued by drug abuse and jail sentences.

Pepper's strongest and final comeback began in 1977 and lasted until his death in 1982, a time during which he concentrated heavily on the bebop idiom. Live performances from this period were captured on two recently released CD packages: the boxed set Art Pepper: The Complete Village Vanguard Sessions (Fantasy 9-4417) and Tokyo Debut (Galaxy 4201).

For Art Pepper the long, lean years are over.

Fast reestablishing himself as one of the most important altoists in modern jazz, busy in Hollywood with Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars five nights a week and Sunday afternoons, the 35-year-old musician today has put his troubled times well behind him and is now seeking greater expressiveness as an artist.

So busy is Pepper, in fact, that it is hard to believe that only a year ago, he was selling accordions—along with lessons on the instrument—to make a living. He had no work to speak of, and had become a stranger in the recording studios where his name had been linked with the foremost experimenters a scant five years previous. To those musicians with whom he occasionally came in contact, he seemed a ghost of his old self. He appeared to have lost all interest in jazz and the playing of it.

"It's true I was pretty disinterested in music at that time," Pepper admits today. "But I began to put down the *music* rather than the circumstances."

In Art's case, the "circumstances" stretch a long way back. They cover his youth in Gardena, Calif.; his early days of sitting in with jazz greats when Los Angeles' Central Avenue and Main Street were swinging



with all-night sessions; his first big break with the Benny Carter band when, as a 17-year-old, he sat alongside the late trumpeter Freddie Webster and trombonist J. J. Johnson; the great days with the Stan Kenton orchestra, and the oblivion that followed.

Withal, the deadly "circumstances" found their mark. Pepper became more depressed at the lack of recording calls, and at the repeated attempts to launch his own group in a town of clubowners ready to buy music for clowns. And so he withdrew from music, retreating into a personal shell that was made a little less lonely by his wife, Diane.

This, then, was the Art Pepper of a year

ago—a lonely, isolated man; to his friends, it was a depressing business indeed to see so gifted and promising a performer reduced to selling accordions.

What was it that snapped Art Pepper back? What started him on the road back to performance?

"One day," Pepper says, "I decided I just had to play."

The problem was: where?

He heard of a job with a rock & roll band in a San Fernando Valley club. With mixed emotions, he showed for the first night's work.

Art Pepper playing rock & roll?

Purist jazz fans may shudder at the thought. But it is a reality of the music business that jazzmen's lives are not from storybooks. Pepper had realized that you cannot put yearning and aspiration between two slices of bread—hence the job selling accordions. But playing his horn was the thing he knew best, and whether it was rock & roll or businessman's bounce didn't seem to matter at the time.

Curiously, the rock & roll job sparked the qualitative change in Pepper's attitude toward music that is today being fulfilled with the Lighthouse All-Stars and in his

own mind.

"This was a really *authentic* rock & roll band," said Pepper. "Most of the guys were from Shreveport, La., and they didn't fool around with the music. I began to dig music again from working with them. Because they really *felt* it. The music *swung*."

And it was a start.

In mid-1959, Pepper got a call to play an engagement at a club called The Cellar in Vancouver, B. C. He took the job. And the experience proved so emotionally satisfying that he firmly decided to "get back to playing jazz seriously."

For a time he worked around Los Angeles with the big Latin band of René Bloch. "This was great for me. For one thing, Rene's band is a good one, and swings like mad. Then, the Latin thing gassed me. I had such a ball playing montunas and all the other rhythms not usually heard in jazz."

Then came another break.

Bud Shank, who once sat by Pepper's side in the Stan Kenton sax section, put in a bid for him to join his revamped quartet. Needless to say, Art didn't hesitate. After some months working with the quartet weekends at the Drift Inn in Malibu and as the off-night group at Hermosa's Lighthouse, Pepper joined Rumsey's All-Stars as full-time sideman. Now he was really on his way.

Recently, Pepper's horns have been heard on many albums emanating from Hollywood studios. Apart from his new LP on the Contemporary label (*Art Pepper Plus Eleven*), he is featured on any albums with which arranger Marty Paich is connected. This is no accident. Through the years, Marty and Art have somehow gravitated toward each other.

"The truth is," Art confessed, "Marty is the only leader in town who has called me for record dates, and who still does whenever he records. Even if he has an arrangement, say, on a vocal album with all strings, he'll even write in an alto part for me to blow on."

The "new" Pepper is reaching some positive conclusions about the state of jazz today. "It's like jazz is finally reaching a point where it's really becoming a *music*. It's acquiring a form such as classical music has. Jazz is being extended and now it gives you a chance to play away from strict chord changes."

At the Lighthouse these days, "it's like a workshop again," in the words of leader Rumsey. "Between sets," Rumsey said, "the guys are writing original material so the band can run down the tunes the following night." For Rumsey, this is a boon indeed, for in recent years it had become fashionable among the hippies to brush off the Lighthouse as a joint for squares where nothing fresh happens. Indeed, in some quarters, it was not unusual to hear the café referred to as "the mausoleum of West Coast jazz."

Now, all this has changed, thanks to the new blood, the fresh jazz viewpoints infused into the playing of the All-Stars. In addition to Rumsey and Pepper, the present complement consists of tenor/oboiist Bob Cooper, trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Vince Guaraldi and drummer Nick Martinis.

Working at the Lighthouse with musicians such as Guaraldi and Martinis, said Pepper, gives him the feeling of wanting to blow. "I feel like a kid again," he said. "It's a crazy feeling."

DB

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	Very Good	★★★★
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	Fair	★★
	Poor	★



Myra Melford Extended Ensemble Even The Sounds Shine hat ART 6161

★★★★★

Melford is earning wide recognition as a pianist who breaks nobly stated, evocatively "pure" themes into stormy and harmonically complex improvisations—all the while maintaining impeccable control. Typically, her dissonant clusters explode with the natural force of thunderclouds, and she spins very speedy, distinctly articulated and often very quiet single-note figures to the edge of a blur.

But she knows about restraint as well as release. Here, employing a composer's perspective and interest in structural variety, Melford guides an impassioned yet self-controlled, spontaneous if also studiously expert Extended Ensemble through the depths and details of a challenging, lyrical, fully gratifying release. Building on the rapport she's achieved over five previous albums and tours with bassist Lindsey Horner and drummer Reggie Nicholson, she orchestrates high-minded ideas in which penetrating trumpeter Dave Douglas and warmly fluid, supple reedist Marty Ehrlich find and follow their own inspirations without breaking her intended tone or moods.

Each bandmember contributes individually to long tracks whose ranginess recalls certain AACM narrative strategies; together, they become an ensemble abrim with coherent thought and feeling. Melford's material is frequently dark but never less than appealing; she won't avoid or deny conflict, and what seems bittersweet she and her band address with empathy based on tenderness, accomplishment, humor and hope. An air of commitment to real-life and esthetic struggle infuses *Even The Sounds Shine*; whether de- and re-constructing riff band conventions (on the title tune), confronting intimations of mortality (on the 25-minute "La Mezquita Suite"), celebrating the drama of flamenco ("That The Peace") or radically revising her work-in-progress "Frank Lloyd Wright Goes West To Rest," Melford honors the serious sides of her endeavor.

Unabashed, upbeat victory doesn't arrive in this hour-plus program until "Evening Might Still," the final (and one live-in-concert) cut. But Douglas' gleaming, steely determination, Ehrlich's persuasive play (especially on low clarinets), Horner's

plasticity, Nicholson's ever-swinging rumble and brush-sensitive top-patterns, and Myra's own daringly exposed solos and graceful comping bespeak an overview that ensures all the music is a triumph. —Howard Mandel

Even The Sounds Shine—*Even The Sounds Shine*; *La Mezquita Suite (Duet, Waltz, If Not Love)*; *That The Peace*; *Part II Frank Lloyd Wright Goes West To Rest*; *Evening Might Still*. (70:38)

Personnel—Melford, composer, piano; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Marty Ehrlich, alto saxophone, clarinets; Lindsey Horner, bass; Reggie Nicholson, drums.



Duke Ellington The Far East Suite— Special Mix Bluebird 66551

★★★★★

Everybody loves this Ellington/Strayhorn album. Just look at the ratings in the Hot Box on p. 45. Dan Morgenstern gave it 5 stars in his *DB* review back in 1967, the year it also won a Grammy. In '68, *DB*'s critics voted it Record of the Year. And now we have this "Special Mix" version, complete with four alternate takes previously unreleased.

But that's not all. According to reissue producer Orrin Keepnews, there "was something less than perfect" about the original LP release from December '66. Questions of tone and levels of distortion resulted in the need to remix the material to "provide a cleaner, clearer, and more accurate reproduction of what had been set down on tape." (Oddly enough, Keepnews fails to mention in his notes that *The Far East Suite* had already been reissued on CD sans the bonus tracks in '88, with great sound then.)

The Far East Suite, stemming from their *Impressions Of The Far East*, is about as appealing as Duke and Billy get. Repeated listenings almost give the impression of an instrumental pop album. Apart from the original closer—the minor-blues, Ellington piano "concerto" "Ad Lib On Nippon" (the only number that really refers to somewhere east of places like Tehran, Bombay and Baghdad)—and the Paul Gonsalves feature "Mount Harissa," everything clocks in at five minutes or under. In addition, memorable themes sandwich great, if brief, solos from Ellington mainstays like Johnny Hodges, Gonsalves and Jimmy Hamilton. The result of two tours, this music could easily

carry a movie about love, intrigue and adventure set in the Middle/Near East.

Exotic, slithery lines and Eastern modes blend with Ellington's typical flair for brass against reeds against piano, with strong rhythms that literally rock and roll ("Tourist Point Of View," "Blue Pepper"), drive straightahead ("Amad") and caress ("Isfahan," "Agra"). Hodges' breathy, gorgeous alto on the ballad "Isfahan" (both takes) is disarming, otherworldly, a classic from the Ellington/Strayhorn canon. And while the alternate takes lack the brilliance of those already released, they are still to be celebrated.

Blathering on about Ellington and "real jazz" in the notes to this release is beside the point. Ellington, Strayhorn & co. have, with *The Far East Suite*, created a synthesis, a world larger than the smaller, parochial one others would pin them down in. Their greatness lies in their success at going beyond musical limits to create their own music. As Duke himself said, "There are only two kinds of music—good and bad." This is good music, indeed. —John Ephland

The Far East Suite-Special Mix—*Tourist Point Of View*; *Bluebird Of Delhi (Mynah)*; *Isfahan*; *Depk*; *Mount Harissa*; *Blue Pepper (Far East Of The Blues)*; *Agra*; *Amad*; *Ad Lib On Nippon*; *Tourist Point Of View (alternate take)*; *Bluebird Of Delhi (alternate take)*; *Isfahan (alternate take)*; *Amad (alternate take)*. (61:18)

Personnel—Ellington, piano; Cootie Williams, William "Cat" Anderson, trumpet; Mercer Ellington, Herbie Jones, trumpet, flugelhorn; Lawrence Brown, Buster Cooper, Chuck Connors, trombone; Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Johnny Hodges, alto saxophone; Russell Procope, alto saxophone, clarinet; Paul Gonsalves, tenor saxophone; Harry Carney, baritone saxophone; John Lamb, bass; Rufus Jones, drums.



Charles Lloyd All My Relations ECM 1557 527 344

★★★★★

All *My Relations* is Lloyd's second record with this remarkably fluid and unified band. Made up entirely of originals (as were his other three ECM outings), it contains at once a certain softness and clear sense of definition. Though Lloyd's tenor playing calls for Coltrane comparisons—he has a like sense of urgency without rush, cascades of tones and a similar tonguing-and-fingering style—his group's rhythmic concept is wholly different from any of Trane's bands. And though Lloyd's voice is direct and substan-

tive, he's a democratic leader. Pianist Bobo Stenson, in particular, shares much of the solo space; for example, Lloyd lays out on "Evanstide, Where Lotus Bloom" until the cut is almost half through. Stenson is impressive throughout—full of blues and flowing ideas, never garish or trite. He and bassist Anders Jormin move together seamlessly, and this is one of the very best settings for Billy Hart, who deftly alternates between clear timekeeping and more fluxing energies.

The record's longest track, the 15-minute "Cape To Cairo Suite," which is noted as an homage to Nelson Mandela, places open, un-metered modal sections at either end of a lovely, bright ballad; Jormin takes an unaccompanied solo at the outset, in which he uses Haden-like pedal-point to good effect. "Thelonious Theonlyus" is a great tune, with marvelous piano/tenor interplay; though, unfortunately, the out head is slightly marred by an audible edit.

Lloyd's playing bears traces of more r&b-juiced grooves on the long drum/horn duo that opens the swinging title cut, while the impressionistic, Indian-tinged lines on "Hymne To The Mother" start with Stenson inside the piano, hammering on struts and strings while Hart steadily beats a small gong. In passing moments on "Piercing The Veil," harmonic clouds darken and dissonances accumulate, just as suddenly condensing into Lloyd's commanding tone. —John Corbett

All My Relations—*Piercing The Veil*; *Little Peace*; *Thelonious Theonlyus*; *Cape To Cairo Suite*; *Evanstide*; *Where Lotus Bloom*; *All My Relations*; *Hymne To The Mother*; *Milarepa*. (70:12)

Personnel—Lloyd, tenor saxophone, flute (2), Chinese oboe (8); Bobo Stenson, piano; Anders Jormin, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



New Orleans Collective

Evidence 22105

★★★★½

Although all the tunes played by this fine cooperative bear the composer credit of Nicholas Payton, Peter Martin or (mostly) Wes Anderson, most are built on familiar and traditional harmonic frames. "Rhonda Mile" is a line of "Indiana," for example, while "He Was A Good Man" is full of the spirit, if not quite the letter, of "Black And Tan Fantasy," itself an urbane impression once removed of a New Orleans funeral dirge

by Ellington.

I mention Ellington by way of pointing out that today's "neoclassicists" are not the first to immerse themselves in jazz's past with honorable results—even when there wasn't much past to go immersing in: "Black And Tan" was recorded in 1927. Payton, Anderson and the others are all musicians of the first rank. They offer enough evidence of the range and resources they command to let us know they are no slouches. Payton's intonation and attack on the fast "Rhonda Mile" are as flawless as any his contemporaries could make it. Similarly for Anderson, whose versatility is familiar to many via his work with Wynton Marsalis.

Such mastery provides license to play the impressionist, which is what they do on the last three pieces. Brian Blade breaks open the press rolls, and Payton and Anderson shed their command of standard intonation. If they make it all look very easy negotiating difficult contemporary lines with nonchalant precision, they give the impression that they are playing the essentially simple material of jazz's antiquity to the limits of their abilities, which is what the material requires.

Early jazz was not born to virtuosity. It was a crazy quilt of clams, slurps, smears, accidents and impurities, all institutionalized at Preservation Hall. For schooled musicians to manage such idioms today is to play Pygmalion in reverse. It is a demand of technique that often succumbs to ridicule. But Payton and Anderson bring enough conviction and respect to the material so that it never sounds condescending. They change voices as convincingly as Meryl Streep changes accents, and have some fun while they're at it.

—John McDonough

The New Orleans Collective—*Rhonda Mile*; *Profile Of A Beautiful Woman*; *Country Crescent*; *Go Slow For Mo*; *Newt*; *New Orleans Revival*; *Four Or Five Times*; *He Was A Good Man*; *Oh Yes He Was*. (58:27)

Personnel—Nicholas Payton, trumpet; Wessell Anderson, alto and soprano saxophones; Peter Martin, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Brian Blade, drums.



Herbie Hancock

Dis Is Da Drum

Mercury 314 522 681

★★★★½

On the surface, Herbie Hancock's long-delayed *Dis Is Da Drum* is ear candy, full of insinuating hooks, seductive dance rhythms and immaculate production. You may hear it all summer. But there's more depth to this jazz/funk/hip-hop confection than is immediately apparent. *Dis Is Da Drum* sums up Hancock's crossover career, drawing together, with remarkable cohesion, *Head Hunters*-era r&b fusion, the electro-pop of *Future Shock*, the African influences that have informed him since *Mwandishi* and the funky acoustic piano of his well-sampled '60s Blue Note records. Combine the return of percussionist and co-producer Bill Summers, saxophonist Bennie Maupin and guitarist Wah Wah Watson with Hancock's choice of clavinet, electric piano and Mini-Moog, among other relics, and the connection to the '70s becomes clear.

The African connections are much more intriguing. A general rule emerges for Hancock's non-traditional projects: the more African (e.g., *Sextant*, *Village Life*), the better. By joining West African instruments with synth bass and drum loops, Hancock suggests deep linkages between ancient African rhythms and contemporary hip-

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Howard Mandel	John Ephland
MYRA Melford		★★½	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★
<i>Even The Sounds Shine</i>					
DUKE ELLINGTON		★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★★
<i>The Far East Suite-Special Mix</i>					
CHARLES LLOYD		★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½
<i>All My Relations</i>					
VARIOUS ARTISTS		★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★★
<i>New Orleans Collective</i>					

hop. Credit co-producers Summers and Will "Roc" Griffin for their skillful blending of shekere, bata and djembe with synthetic drum loops, achieving a warmer, more human dimension than the robo-drums of Hancock's "Rockit" period of the mid-'80s. The ritual frenzy of the title track, along with "Mojuba" and "Juju" best illustrate the concept.

Dis Is Da Drum also embraces Milesian fusion (with Wallace Roney reprising his role as Davis), one rap vocal (without gangstas) and a certain quantity of amiable vamping. Overall, Hancock's

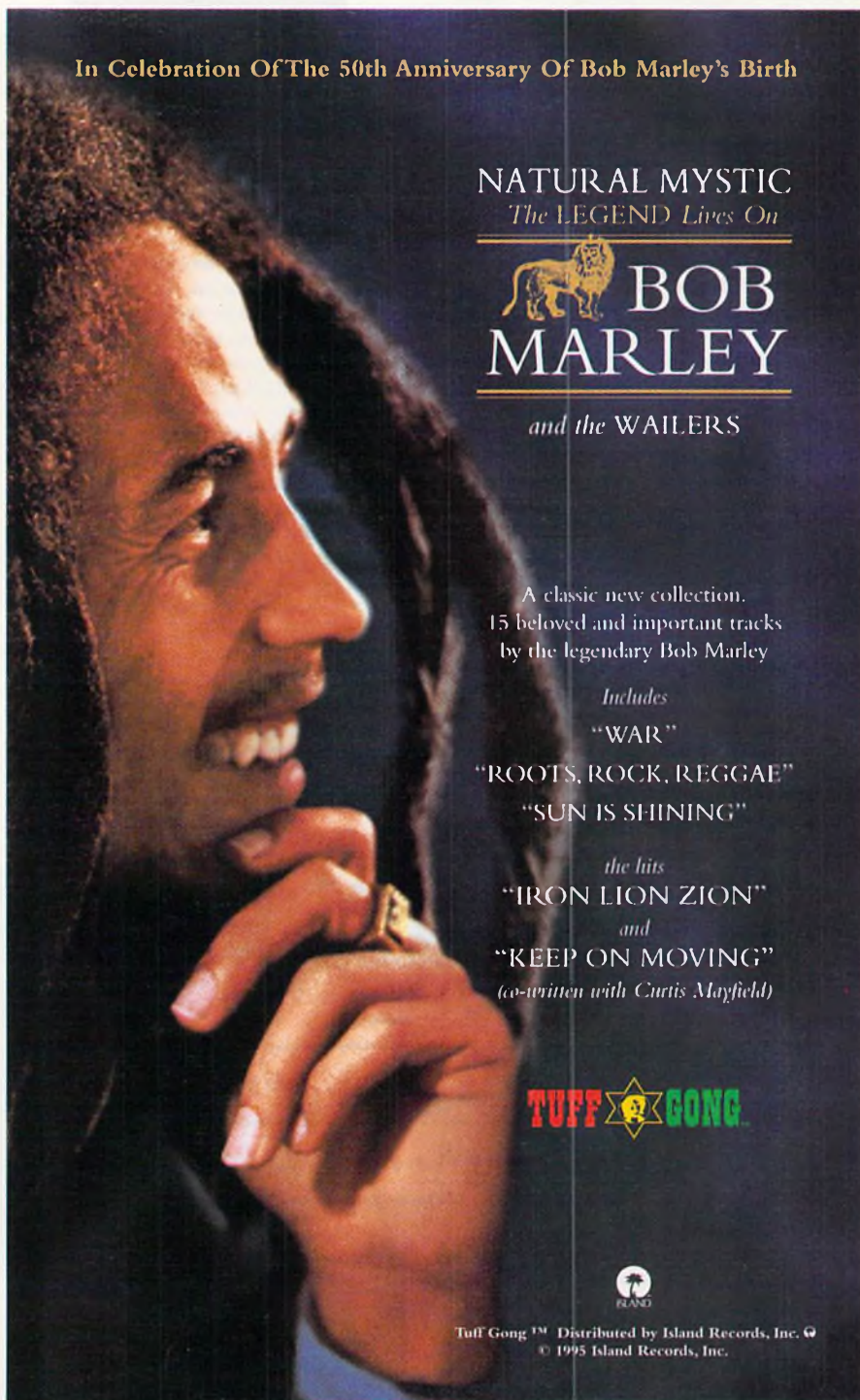
grand synthesis works best when the sounds are at once timeless and state-of-the-art.

—Jon Andrews

Dis Is Da Drum—*Call It '95; Dis Is Da Drum; Shooz; The Melody (On The Deuce By 44); Mojuba; Butterfly; Juju; Hump; Come And See Me; Rubber Soul; Bo Ba Be Da.* (55:10)


Personnel—Hancock, acoustic and electric pianos, clavinet, Mini-Moog, synth bass, synthesizers; Wallace Roney, trumpet (1,8,10,11); Bennie Maupin, tenor saxophone (1,8,10,11); Hubert Laws, flute (6); Wah Wah Watson (1,2,8-11); Darrell "Bob Dog" Robertson (1,2,4,5,8,10,11), guitar; Armand Sebal Leco (8,10); Jay Shanklin (8); Frank

Thibeaux (1), bass guitar; Ken Strong (1,2,6,7,9-11); Will Kennedy (1,7,8); Guy Eckstine (5), drums; Will "Roc" Griffin, keyboards, sequencing, sampling, programming, drum loops, rap; Darrell Smith, Mars Lasar (1,6,7,10,11), keyboards, sequencing, sampling, programming; Bill Summers, Airtio Moreira (3), Niaya Asiedu (1), Nengue Hernandez (7), Munyungo Jackson (5), Skip Bunny (5), Brady Speller (11), percussion; Lazaro Gallaraga, lead vocal, percussion (2,7); Francis Awe, vocal (5); Chil Factor, rap (4); The Real Richie Rich, d.j. (4); numerous background vocalists.



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Kenny Garrett

Triology

Warner Bros. 45731

★★★★★

Not yet 35, Garrett has achieved the young lions' dream—a compelling, contemporary, uniquely personal style that sounds original and expressive without overstepping the bounds of hard-bop. On his second Warner Bros. album, he finds extraordinary freedom within strict, self-imposed limits of form and format, at once mining and undermining the tradition of Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane.

There's nowhere to hide in a saxophone trio, especially since drummer Brian Blade and alternating bassists Charnett Moffett and Kyoshi Kitagawa play supporting, rather than co-starring, roles. Both bassists maintain an even pulse, mostly walking in straight eighth notes, while Blade sizzles on cymbals and drops bombs everywhere. Garrett lays his alto or soprano sax squarely on the beat, blowing eely bop or modal lines in a firm, bright, nearly vibrato-less tone that never fades at the end of a phrase. What distinguishes his improvisations is not innovation but sheer inventiveness, a spectacular sense of musical logic that enables him to hit the right, not-quite-expected note even at the most blistering tempos.

Garrett stamps his stylistic signature so forcefully into the material that often only the heads differentiate one tune from another. Audaciously, he appropriates Wynton Marsalis' "Delfeayo's Dilemma," sliding through the changes like a canoeist running the rapids. He casts Coltrane's "Giant Steps" in his own rebopping image and caps the ballad "A Time For Love" with a Rollins-style unaccompanied coda. He dissects a pair of Cole Porter standards, slicing "Night And Day" into slippery sheets of sound and tearing "What Is This Thing Called Love?" to sleekly contoured shreds.

Whether he's wailing the blues on his own "Wayne's Thang" or strolling through a ballad like

Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way," he keeps his emotional distance, but his energy never flags, and his lively imagination transforms what might otherwise be glib facility into riveting intensity.

—Larry Birnbaum

Trilogy—Delleayo's *Diemima*; *Night And Day*; *Giant Steps*; *A Time For Love*; *Wayne's Thang*; *Pressing The Issue*; *Koranne Said*; *Oriental Towaway Zone*; *In Your Own Sweet Way*; *What Is This Thing Called Love?* (57:26)

Personnel—Garrett, *alto and soprano saxophones*; *Char-nett Moffett* (2, 4, 7), *Kiyoshi Kitagawa* (1, 3, 5, 6, 8-10), *bass*; *Brian Blade*, *drums*.



Friesen/Terry/Shank

Three To Get Ready

ITM 970084

★★★½

Zeitlin & Friesen

Concord Jazz 4639

★★★★

David Friesen Trio

1.2.3

Burnside 0017-2

★★★

Three *To Get Ready* is the third album in what will be a four-part Friesen series on the German ITM label. Like virtually every Friesen project, the instrumentation is cut to the bone. But this trio is not interested in chamber jazz. It celebrates contrapuntal surprises and collective revelations. Terry and Shank are part of jazz history but they are also fully engaged improvisers who discover current truths in real time. Terry's muted trumpet penetrates the dusk of "My Funny Valentine" like a laser, and Shank's alto saxophone is a startling human cry on "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise." The best moments are interactive, as with the call-and-response activity on "Have You Met Miss Jones."

Friesen is precisely the bass player to serve as a whole rhythm section. He usually plays a 200-year-old acoustic instrument, but here he uses the amplified Hماغ bass from Austria. It has a raspier edge, and it allows him to go even faster. For this trio he does it all, laying down chords, scattering accents and powering the rhythmic ride—and he is maniacal. Friesen can burn you

out. For all of his "chops of doom," he lacks the power of seduction that the great poets of the bass possess. Scott LeFaro can weave spells. Red Mitchell can break your heart with a song's simple melody. Charlie Haden can put three notes in the air and make them hang there forever. But Friesen often plays too much, filling every crack in the music with his plucked and strummed obsessions.

Concord has now expanded the concept of solo-piano recordings from Maybeck Recital Hall in Berkeley to a new "Duo Series," of which the Denny Zeitlin/David Friesen album is *Volume Eight*. These two are well equipped for the intimate scrutiny of the Maybeck setting. Their 10-year relationship enables them to follow one another into vast harmonic labyrinths without losing contact, and Zeitlin's pianistic intelligence brings out the best in Friesen. On Ivan Lins' classic of modern melodicism "The Island," Zeitlin paints the backdrop in pastels so that the bass can lead. Again, Friesen is all over his instrument, his right hand patting its shoulder like a drum, one finger of his left throbbing a single note while all the others pluck. He activates fields of dark energy, and when Zeitlin takes the song back, the piano washes over Friesen's pulsing midnight like a moonlit tide. "Old Folks" is treated with exquisite gentleness by Zeitlin, and Friesen takes his deepest solo of these three recordings. And like all of Concord's Maybeck albums, this one is sonically superb.

1.2.3 was recorded by Burnside, a small label named after a large thoroughfare in Portland, Ore. The piano-trio instrumentation is conventional, but Friesen's dominance of the ensemble and its solo space is not. Neither is pianist Randy Porter's approach to standards like "Come Rain Or Come Shine" and "How Deep Is The Ocean." The melodies are fragmented so intriguingly that it is a rush when they finally emerge. Porter is a promising young player who thinks outside the box, but he has not yet earned the comparisons to Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett made in the liner notes. And he is not well-served by the brittle sound quality of this digital studio recording.

—Thomas Conrad

Three To Get Ready—*Should I*; *Softly As In A Morning Sunrise*; *Squeeze Me*; *No Greater Love*; *My Funny Valentine*; *Have You Met Miss Jones*; *I Hear A Rhapsody*; *Payin' Them Berlin Dues Blues*. (65:53)

Personnel—David Friesen, *Hماغ bass*; Clark Terry, *trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals* (3, 8); Bud Shank, *alto saxophone*.

Denny Zeitlin/David Friesen—*All Of You*; *Echo Of A Kiss*; *The Night Has A Thousand Eyes*; *Old Folks*; *Oleo*; *Turn-around*; *The Island*; *Signs & Wonders*. (63:11)

Personnel—Zeitlin, *piano*; Friesen, *acoustic bass*.

1.2.3—*Dark Sky*; *My Funny Valentine*; *Come Rain Or Come Shine*; *Sarabande*; *How Deep Is The Ocean*; *Untitled*; *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*; *Song For Clara*; *Only Trust Your Heart*; *Going Forth*. (58:08)

Personnel—Friesen, *acoustic bass*; Randy Porter, *piano*; Alan Jones, *drums*.



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Various Artists

Tribute To Lee Morgan

NYC 60162

★★★★½

What immediately grabs you about *Tribute To Lee Morgan* is the presence of pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins, two musicians who performed with Morgan and are well-acquainted with his compositions. This familiarity breeds content, and the two veterans provide a lusty harmonic and rhythmic leadership that moves the ensemble through a variety of splendid emotions. Walton and Higgins are at their creative best on the opening number "The Lion And The Wolff," with the pianist's bouncy ostinato in perfect concordance with the drummer's clever and timely accents.

Against this vibrant cushion Joe Lovano's tenor sax is heard to good advantage. There is a controlled urgency in his solo that does not minimize his tasteful eruptions. Grover Washington, Jr. offers a similar torchy approach during his excursion on "The Sidewinder." Washington is often put down for his poppish limitations, but throughout this date he demonstrates he can rise to the level of his notable constituents. And with Eddie Hen-

erson throwing flames all over the place, everybody's feet are held to the fire. —Herb Boyd

Tribute To Lee Morgan—*The Lion And The Wolff; The Sidewinder; Ceora; Speedball; You Don't Know What Love Is; Kozo's Waltz; Yama; Ca-Lee-So; Search For The New Land.* (59:33)

Personnel—Eddie Henderson, trumpet; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Grover Washington, Jr., soprano saxophone (2,3); Cedar Walton, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.



Cyrus Chestnut

The Dark Before The Dawn

Atlantic 82719

★★★★½

Recorded just a little more than a year after Cyrus Chestnut's previous Atlantic release, *Revelation*, this effort finds Chestnut pursuing a very similar path. As on *Revelation*, most of the tunes are Chestnut originals, though he borrows from such icons as John Coltrane for his inspiration. Take "Steps With Trane," for example. No simple retread of "Giant Steps," it's a vibrant, energetic foray into modal jazz fortified by the ever-swinging time of bassist Steve Kirby

and drummer Clarence Penn.

Chestnut owes something to McCoy Tyner, but his unusual background, which includes classical training and gospel experience, gives him a distinctive sound no matter what material he applies it to. Starting a jazz tune with a keyboard invention by J.S. Bach might sound like a formula for cuteness, but not the way Chestnut weaves it together with the gospel treatment on "Baroque Impressions." The sources are so familiar to Chestnut that the combination sounds natural.

Amazing time, with not a hint of strain, defines this trio. Harmonically, Kirby is as attuned to counterpoint as Chestnut is, and Penn's sophisticated playing contributes color along with unerring swing. So even though a solo such as the hymn-like "It Is Well (With My Soul)" reminds the listener that Chestnut can hold up well on his own, the extraordinary communication between these three players makes a listener glad to hear them together. —Elaine Guregian

The Dark Before The Dawn—*Sentimentalia; Steps With Trane; The Mirrored Window; Baroque Impressions; A Rare Gem; Call Me Later; Wright's Rolls And Butter; It Is Well (With My Soul); Katin'; Lovers' Paradise; My Funny Valentine; The Dark Before The Dawn.* (57:22)

Personnel—Chestnut, piano; Steve Kirby, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.



**Wynton Marsalis/
Ellis Marsalis**

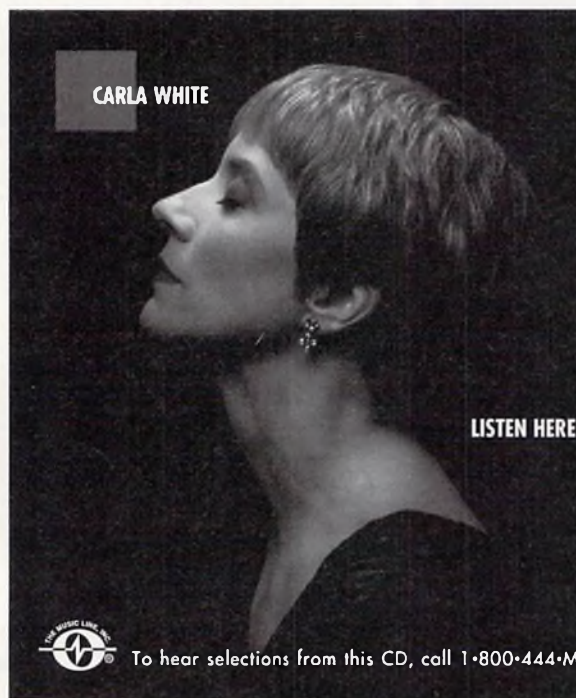
Joe Cool's Blues

Columbia 66880

★★★

"When I was a boy, the only time you would hear jazz on television was when Charlie Brown came to town," reminisces Wynton Marsalis in the liner notes to this disc of TV tunes associated with Peanuts, that wholesome, persevering all-American cartoon hero. The original Charlie Brown music, penned by Vince Guaraldi in the '60s, is ably covered here by the Marsalis patriarch and his trio; and new material written by Wynton for a more recent Peanuts television special, *The Wright Brothers At Kitty Hawk*, is performed by his septet. (Unlike previous Marsalis family albums where father and sons performed together, here there isn't any collaborative interaction, except when the elder Marsalis invites sons Branford and Delfeayo to support "Little Birdie.")

Not surprisingly, this is straightahead fare,



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with the requisite swing and blues ingredients. About as untidy as the proceedings get is in the gritty trombone talk of Wycliffe Gordon on "On Peanut's Playground" (does it represent the dust-bowl appearance of Pigpen?). And the only real departure from the mainstream zone comes on the delightful "Wright Brothers Rag."

Wynton's compositions are the showcase tunes, which stand firmly on their own apart from the cartoon strip. "Little Red-Haired Girl" works as a sweetly romantic number. "Snoopy & Woodstock" sways with a lightheartedness. "Buggy Ride" zips with childlike exuberance and "Joe Cool's Blues (Snoopy's Return)" coolly develops with Benjamin Wolfe's walking bass, Eric Reed's smooth piano groove and the leader's muted-trumpet lines.

While there's no new "Linus & Lucy" (the most well-known of Guaraldi's tunes and the only one of his melodies Wynton's band plays here), this is nonetheless a fine collection that could well expose a new generation of cartoon-loving pre-teens to jazz.

—Dan Ouellette

Joe Cool's Blues—*Linus & Lucy; Buggy Ride; Peppermint Patty; On Peanut's Playground; Oh, Good Grief; Wright Brothers Rag; Charlie Brown; Little Red-Haired Girl; Pebble Beach; Snoopy & Woodstock; Little Birdie; Why, Charlie Brown; Joe Cool's Blues (Snoopy's Return).*

Personnel—Wynton Marsalis Septet (1-2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12-13): Marsalis, trumpet; Wessell Anderson, alto, soprano saxophones; Victor Goines, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Eric Reed, piano; Benjamin Wolfe, bass; Herlin Riley, drums; Ellis Marsalis Trio (3, 5, 7, 9, 11): Marsalis, piano, Reginald Veal, bass; Martin Butler, drums; Germaine Bazzle, vocals (11); Chuck Findley, trumpet (11); Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone (11); Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone (11); Tom Peterson, baritone saxophone (11); Victor "Red" Atkins, horn arrangements (11).



David Sanborn

Pearls

Elektra 61759-2

★★★½

The precedents for this one are obvious—*Charlie Parker With Strings* and Hank Crawford's *More Soul*. Both were commercial ventures featuring a distinctive alto star upfront dealing with popular melodies of the day and backed by lush arrangements. Bird, of course, took more rhythmic liberties, effortlessly breathing new life into old chestnuts like "Summertime," "Out Of Nowhere" and "Temptation" with his uncanny bebop facility. Crawford played it more straightforward, not straying too far from the melodies on pieces like "Misty" and "Angel Eyes."

Sanborn follows this more deliberate course on *Pearls*, a genuinely easy-listening affair with his signature alto rasp and passionate gospel inflections prominent in the mix.

Johnny Mandel's middle-of-the-road arrangements for 60-piece orchestra are pleasant if schmaltzy; hipper than Montovani or Muzak yet still palatable to the largest common denominator. And Sanborn plays it somewhat close to the vest, blowing melodies like a sultry big-band singer wooing a Valentine's Day audience.

Clearly, Sanborn's romantic streak comes across throughout this Tommy LiPuma/Johnny

Mandel-produced project. His lovestruck version of "Try A Little Tenderness" owes more to Bing Crosby's gently crooned rendition than Otis Redding's raunchier take on that '30s tune. And his covers of "Willow Weep For Me," "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" and "Come Rain Or Come Shine" smolder with sensuality. Special guest Jimmy Scott delivers an emotionally wrenching vocal performance on "For All We Know," relying on sheer drama wherever his pipes fail him. And Sanborn turns in a particularly inspired performance behind Oleta Adams' vocals on the James Bond theme "Nobody Does It Better," perhaps his

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—Bill Milkowski

Pearls—*Willow Weep For Me; Try A Little Tenderness; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Pearls; For All We Know; Come Rain Or Come Shine; This Masquerade; Everything Must Change; Superstar; Nobody Does It Better.* (51:08)

Personnel—Sanborn, alto saxophone; Christian McBride, bass (1-8); Mark Egan (9), Marcus Miller (10), electric bass; Steve Gadd, drums; Don Grolnick (1.4-9), Kenny Barron (2,3), Oleta Adams (10), keyboards; Don Alias, percussion; Jimmy Scott (5), Oleta Adams (10), vocal; 60-piece orchestra.



Kurt Elling
Close Your Eyes
Blue Note 30645

★★★★

While several young divas such as Cassandra Wilson, Patricia Barber and Ann Dyer are adventurously exploring the world of jazz vocalese with their fresh-sounding, forward-looking songs, there's been a dearth of pioneering male jazz singers willing to go beyond the rearview mirror approach of recycling vocal chops. With this promising debut, 27-year-old Kurt Elling arrives on the scene to help fill that void with an exceptional collection of tunes informed by the Mel Tormé/Jon Hendricks jazz vocalist tradition and propelled by assured risk-taking.

For his ballad singing alone, Elling deserves to be hailed as a rising-star vocal talent. Dissolving it into a rich graininess at the right emotive moments, he wraps his full-bodied baritone around such gorgeous melodies as "Wait Till You See Her" and "Ballad Of The Sad Young Men." His lyrical rendering of one of his own compositions, "Never Say Goodbye," is a highlight of this straightahead fare.

But this album soars when Elling and his top-notch support team of fellow Chicagoans pianist Laurence Hobgood, bassist Eric Hochberg and drummer Paul Wertico launch into pockets of freewheeling festivity on the upbeat and offbeat numbers. Elling leaps into vocal acrobatics on Wayne Shorter's "Dolores," balancing on a high-wire while the band swoops and dips around him; and he fires a volley of fast scats on the rambunctious "Eye Of The Hurricane," supported by a delightful jazz whorl of Hobgood's scintillating piano lines and bracing sax blasts by Edward Peterson. The poetically inclined Elling also offers a couple of whimsical spoken-word pieces,

"Married Blues" and "Now Is The Time That The Gods Came Walking Out," where the band gets ample opportunity to crash and splash into invigorating out-playing.

In addition, Elling advances the idiom when he spins free-form improv lyrics in lieu of scatting a solo on the rhythmically rippling "Never Never Land," which serves as yet another tune heralding this significant new voice.

—Dan Ouellette

Close Your Eyes—*Close Your Eyes; Dolores; Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; Salome; Married Blues; Storyteller Experiencing Total Confusion; Never Say Goodbye; Those Clouds Are Heavy You Dig; Wait Till You See Her; Eye Of The Hurricane; Now Is The Time That The Gods Came Walking Out; Never Never Land; Remember Veronica.* (63:08)

Personnel—Elling, vocals; Laurence Hobgood, piano, synthesizer; Eric Hochberg, acoustic bass (1,2,4,5,11-13); Rob Amster, acoustic bass (6,8), electric bass (7,12); Paul Wertico, drums; Von Freeman (4), Edward Peterson (6,10), tenor saxophone; Dave Ounderdonk, acoustic and electric guitars (7).



**Peter Brotzmann/
Hamid Drake Duo**

The Dried Rat-Dog
Okkadisk 12004

★★★★

Will Hamid Drake be the next great drummer to graduate from Chicago to the world stage? The liners to this immensely satisfying—if unfortunately titled—duet between Drake and reedman/splatter technician Peter Brotzmann tell of the versatility it takes for a local talent to survive in the Windy City. Yet Drake's assortment of drums as well as his familiarity with an equally mixed bag of rhythms suggest that he should get outta town a lot more. In the postbop Chicago tradition of Fumoudou Don Moye and the dearly departed Steve McCall (not to mention honorary Chicagoan Philip Wilson), Drake sidesteps the entire "to-swing-or-not-to-swing" debate by letting his extra-jazz chops (the notes say he also plays reggae and blues gigs) inform his jazz.

This somewhat groovy functionalism is precisely what Brotzmann needed. Much of the album is a rush of burred invention, with the tenorman spitting his trademark hellfire atop a mix of tight rolls, skanking tom-tom and cymbals ("Dark Wings Carry Off The Sky"). But when Drake goes to his various hand-drums, he draws Brotzmann into passages that would be meditative even if the reedman weren't playing the

tarogato (a Hungarian soprano) or some other patently Eastern-sounding instrument.

As for the boss-mann's tenor, it sounds as lucidly traditional on "Trees Have Roots In The Earth" as Fred Anderson's did on Okka's archival smash from last year, *Vintage Duets, Chicago, 1-11-80*, with Steve McCall.

—K. Leander Williams

The Dried Rat-Dog—*The Dried Rat-Dog; It's An Angel On The Door; Open Into The Unknown; Trees Have Roots In The Earth; The Uninvited Entertainer; Dark Wings Carry Off The Sky.* (63:26)

Personnel—Brotzmann, alto and tenor saxophones, e-flat clarinet, tarogato; Drake, drums, tablas, frame drum.



Vinny Golia
Large Ensemble

Commemoration

Nine Winds 0150/0160

★★★½

Los Angeles-based composer Vinny Golia doesn't back down from a massive challenge. Consider Golia's own personal instrumental armada; he's mastered everything and anything that's blown, from piccolo to bass sax. Or this enormous group, with 22 members. Or his piece called "One Moment Of Truth," a 21-part suite from which 11 sections were excerpted to make *Commemoration*. At a time when resources make economical small-group free music seem most feasible, Golia sets his sights on colossal compositions.

Dedicated to John Carter, the late, great composer and reedman, longtime friend and partner of Golia, and original member of the Large Ensemble, the two-CD *Commemoration* is ambitious not only in scale, but in musical aspirations. It consists primarily of long, structured compositional sections laced with accompanied and unaccompanied solos and group improvisation. As in his smaller groups, Golia utilizes the full timbral range, and with this ensemble he has quite a paintbox to draw from. The slowly developing opening moments and gradual transition into "Change Of Direction" already include tubular bells and flashy gongs, before a chugging rhythm and dense polyphonic charts assume control. Direction is indeed soon changed as everyone in the ensemble drops out for a sudden hand-percussion solo from Brad Dutz, eventually accompanied by more horn parts and an incisive violin solo by Harry Scorzo.

On an outing like this, the primary concern is coordinating the individual sound with the group sound; it should both capitalize on the communal and allow for the personal improvised statement. Golia strikes a good balance between ensemble and soloist, letting strong voices come to the surface; alto saxophonist Kim Richmond, for instance, solos alone on "Forest" and trombonist Michael Vlatkovich blows hard on "Interlude One." On "Mahlow," jagged textures are beautifully contrasted with Bill Roper's adventures in tuba-land. Sometimes, however, Golia's orchestrations turn slightly muddy and lose focus—this isn't helped by the fact that the sound of the live recording is itself not so sharp. But on pieces like the sparkling "Tumulus Or Griffin," with Wayne Peet's cool organ nesting beneath sheets of horn, whirlwind drums and Golia's swirling soprano, the composition's huge gesture of remembrance hits the mark.

—John Corbett

Commemoration—*Swift Are The Wings Of Love; Change Of Direction; Forest; Mahlow; In A Manner Of Speaking; Lies Of Deception; Menhir; For Of Something; Tumulus Or Griffin; Interlude One; Goleom.* (62:40/56:34)

Personnel—Mark Underwood, John Fumo, Marissa Benedict (8-10), Rob Blakeslee (1-7,11), trumpet, flugelhorn; Mike Vlatkovich, Bruce Fowler, George McMullen, trombone; Phil Teele, bass trombone; William Roper, tuba; Vinny Golia, Steve Fowler, Bill Plake, David Ocker, Emily Hey (1-7,11), Kim Richmond (8-10), woodwinds; David Johnson, chimes, timpani, vibraphone, marimba; Brad Dutz, marimba, timpani, bells, percussion; Wayne Peet, keyboards, piano;

Harry Scorzo (8-10), Jef Gauthier (1-7,11), violin; Greg Adamson and Matt Cooker (8-10), Jonathan Golove and Dion Sorell (1-7,11), cello; Ken Filiano, Joel Hamilton, bass; Alex Cline, drums, percussion.



David Sanchez

Sketches Of Dreams

Columbia 67021

★★★½

Reversing the emphasis of his solo debut, saxist Sanchez stresses his Latin roots over his mainstream credentials on his second

Columbia release. His playing, once closely modeled after John Coltrane's, no longer betrays its derivation. But like so many of his peers, Sanchez never strays far from the hard-bop canon, and his sweet, full-bodied sound, though fluent and attractive, can hardly be called original. He achieves an equally smooth, tight blend with two variously combined sets of rhythm players, but it remains for the ace percussion team of Jerry Gonzalez and Milton Cardona to supply some creative sizzle. Without them, this is just another young-lion session.

Sanchez is most effective on uptempo tunes like his own "Africa Y Las Americas" and "Mal Social," where crackling congas light an Afro-Cuban flame under sharp-angled straightahead stylings. On the former, his soprano rides the rhythms in tandem with Roy Hargrove's trumpet; on the latter, his tenor bursts into post-modal squalls while neatly avoiding Trane's footsteps. "Bomba Blues," "The Extension" and "Little Melonae" throb to tricky bomba beats, reflecting Sanchez's Puerto Rican background; the musicians gamely spar and jab with the drummers. But except for pianist Danilo Perez, the musicians show little Latin flair beyond the ability to stay in time.

Still, the rhythms, even on the languid bolero "Tu Y mi Cancion," spark a synergy that gives most of the album an exciting, contemporary feel. When the percussion drops out, on Sanchez's groping "Sketches Of Dreams" and a pair of

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CD REVIEWS

Rodgers and Hart ballads, the tension dissipates, the music turns earnest and studious, and the players just sound like competent craftsmen.

—Larry Birnbaum

Sketches Of Dreams—Africa Y Las Americas; Bomba Blues; Falling In Love With Love; The Extension; Tu Y Mi Cancion; Mal Social; Sketches Of Dreams; It's Easy To Remember; Little Melonae. (59:43)

Personnel—Sanchez, tenor (2-8), soprano (1,9) saxophones; Roy Hargrove, trumpet (1,2,7); Danilo Perez (1,2,4,7,8); David Kikoski (3,5,6,9), piano; John Benitez (1,2); Larry Grenadier (3-9), acoustic bass; Adam Cruz, drums (1,4-6,9); Leon Parker, drums (2,3,7,8); clave (1,6); Jerry Gonzalez, Milton Cardona, various percussion (1,2,5,6,9).



Steve Duke

Monk By 2

Columbia 66975

★★½

Can't imagine a single reason you'd want to drag one of the most gleeful melodicists of the 20th century from the playground into the library, but alto saxist Duke and his pianist/partner Joseph Pinzaronne employ an overly earnest sense of abstraction on this date. In the liner notes, this pair of academics describe their take on 'Thelonious as "a cross between something we could consider new music and something we could consider jazz."

Monk's tunes are surely rich enough to brace such a conflation, but these conversations are intermittently dreary due to their amorphous nature. Compared to similarly opened-ended reed/piano duets, say the thrust Steve Lacy and Mal Waldron once put into "Friday The 13th" or the fun Gil Evans and Lee Konitz had stretching Mingus' "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Silk Blue," these ventures seem dry. There's a natural rapport between the players, and each has a sizable knowledge of the pieces. But it's only when an obvious compression occurs, as it does on "Well You Needn't," that a stimulating sense of tension blossoms. Avoiding the implications—some might say demands—of rhythm is a risky tack. Too much rumination runs the risk of being heard as stasis.

—Jim Macnie

Monk By 2—Little Rootie Tootie; Monk's Mood; Brilliant Corners; Epistrophy; Misterioso; Well You Needn't; In Walked Bud; 52nd Street Theme/Blue Monk. (41:24)

Personnel—Steve Duke, alto sax; Joseph Pinzaronne, piano.

TRADITION - TECHNOLOGY - PERFECTION - SOUND - PRESENCE - CREATIVITY

JAZZ

Independent & Fresh

by Howard Mandel

Sure, most self-produced, connoisseur label albums are non-commercial. But musicians may enjoy more freedom to do as they'd like. Besides, some are just breaking in, using their debuts as calling cards. Happily, these doomed-to-be-rare CDs are all worth seeking out; fresh sounds from unlikely corners abound.

David Murray/JazzBaltica Ensemble (Gowi 05; 72:00: ★★★★★) Live at the Kiel Opera in 1992, this disc presents *Extended Fragments*, the prodigious tenorist's Jazzpar compositions, featuring tubaist Howard Johnson and 13 Cold World improvisers (trumpeter Tomasz Stanko, Russian reedist Vladimir Chekasin, pianist Simon Nabatov, guitarist Andreas Williers among them). Suite-length, its episodes and features are related by juxtaposition and compositional processes more than thematic development. Adventurous, spontaneous, engaging; JazzBaltica, like Murray, has drive, dignity and depth.

Dennis Gonzalez: Welcome To Us (Gowi 10; 53:10: ★★★½) "Us" happens to be Tex-MexAmerimprov trumpeter Dennis Gonzalez's Band of Nordic Wizards: Sidsel Endresen giving moody, icy voice to his texts; Bugge Wesseltoft making space with piano and synth; Nil Petter Molvaer on B-flat trumpet; bassist/tablaist Terje Gewelt, and drummer/percussionist Pal Thowsen all capably collaborative. Long, resonant lines, spellbinding if static, derivative yet dramatic.

Bertrand Gallaz Bare Bone Power Trio: Talk To You In A Minute (Plainisphere 1267-86; 47:40: ★★★★★) By the apparently Swiss Gallaz Bare Bone Power Trio, this album sports some original, nuevo-Decoding Society crunch. The leader's a fast, strong, twisted rock-and-Hendrix-inspired guitarist, and bassist Thierry Simonot and drummer Hervé Provini stick right with him. Three tracks from *Talk To You In A Minute* feature Ronald Shannon Jackson himself!

Clarion Fracture Zone: Zones On Parade (Polygram Jazz/Rufus 001; 67:45: ★★★★★) Here's a hilarious, diverse and affecting album by a Prime Time-Zappa-and-beyond quintet, with terrifically skilled reedists Sandy Evans and Tony Gorman and witty-out keyboardist Alister Spence. Louis Burdett is a kick-butt drummer (drummer Tony Buck stomps along on the opener), Steve Elphick the bassist/*TUBAIST!* The band swings tight as the old Micros; there's heterophony, sentiment and humor akin to the Passengers', charts à la Willem Breuker. But these stars of New South Wales, Australia's famed downtown scene, have



Drive, dignity, depth: David Murray

something of their own. (Search also for *Blue Shift* on ABC Records in rara-avis bins worldwide.)

Carl Grubbs & Friends: Inner Harbor Suite (CG2; 58:00: ★★★½) Recorded live at the Baltimore Museum of Art (in '94), *Inner Harbor Suite* represents the Ayler-Trane-Ra continuum as it thrives in an educated cultural community setting. Alto-sax/composer Grubbs enlists tenorist Bob Gray and singer Maja Rios to co-front rhythm organized around pianist Elmer Gibson. Real warmth and solid rhythmic values; be sure to check out the horns' tribute to the late Julius Hemphill.

Torque-Tet: Walk In Space (Cosmosis 1002-2; 58:00: ★★★½) This set is loose, muscular, blustery Chicago-born freebop, just right for a comradesly walk through the neighborhoods. Trombonist Steve Berry, guitarist Todd Colburn (writer of all but one tune), bassist James Kirk and drummer Afifi are captured live at Chicago's Hot House, constructing a dark, panoramic sonic field. In AEC-influenced pastyism, they poke by instinct everywhere: for instance, the 14-minute "Box Launch" extolls warped-country flatpicking.

Jae Sinnett: House And Sinnett (Positive 78020; 57:00: ★★★★★) This album introduces drummer/composer/jazz-radio pro Sinnett, in top company with pianist Cyrus Chestnut, saxist Steve Wilson and bassist Clarence Seay. An emphasis is on sleek, sophisticated, New York '90s-style repertoire, offered with a feeling. He's a lively, not overly loud drummer, and the band shines.

Creative Forces Trio: No One Loves The Music Anymore (Vid 07; 67:25: ★★★★★) This trio is comprised of earnest, promising, sensitive and two-fisted (when called for) pian-

ist/composer David Parker, drummer Gary Sykes and bassist Eric Markowitz. They realize six originals (taking off from Miles and Monk) and "Chelsea Bridge." Syke's liner poem vows "Can't sell out! . . . Won't sell out!" Save these St. Louis youth from disillusion!

James Carney: Fables From The Aqueduct (Jacaranda 71001; 68:40: ★★★★★) Featuring pianist/composer Carney's artfully detailed little-big-band arrangements, this date is full of confident and compelling rhythmic momentum, cool 'n' up-to-date (all-acoustic) voicings, textural variety and material control. Welcome his hip L.A.-based crew: Ravi Coltrane's familiar, but saxists Peter Epstein, Chuck Manning and Scott Mayo, brassman Ralph Alessi, bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz and drummer Dan Marris are new to me.

Harvey Wainapel: At Home/On The Road (JazzMission 101; 65:20: ★★★½) The modest, manly and able saxist Wainapel blows clean, swinging, current interpretations of hits by Duke Pearson, Sam Rivers, Woody Shaw and Wayne Shorter, besides originals, on soprano, alto and tenor with two piano-drum combos, both anchored by drummer Mike Clark. His results are consistent, recorded at a homebase Bay Area studio and Maastricht, Holland's Sattycon club. (Raved about by Joe Lovano and Jimmy Heath.)

Frank Amsallem/Tim Ries Quartet: Regards (Freelance 020; 61:10: ★★★★★) A deep and distinct pianist-and-reedist team (both compose), the quartet is rounded out by bassist Scott Colley and drummer Bill Stewart. Overall, they're graceful, tasteful, sleek and somber playing through well-tempered arrangements and freer, united modal explorations. The four channel their energy, love their ballads and plumb acoustic luxury. **DB**

B E Y O N D

Comprovisation II

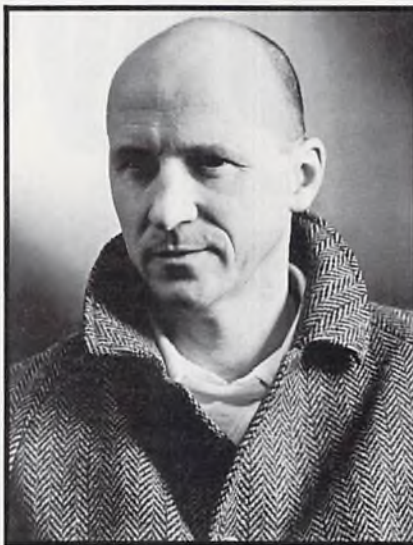
by Jon Andrews

When American esthetics of jazz and improvisation collide with European notation and instrumentation, some fascinating hybrids emerge. As noted earlier, these hybrids most often thrive on the other side of the Atlantic.

European Music Orchestra: Guest (Soul Note 121299-2; 57:40: ★★★★★) With trumpeter Kenny Wheeler as a featured soloist, Claudio Fasoli's primarily Italian big band is clearly informed by ECM-style Eurojazz. Wheeler sets the tone for EMO's welcome "Guest" with two characteristically graceful tunes, "The Sweet Yakity Waltz" and "W.W.," both of which combine call-and-response structures with wistful melodies. Fasoli's well-named ballad "Lyrical Touch" continues in the same vein with a strong, moody tenor solo from Fasoli. Unsung Manfred Schoof contributes challenging scores with a punch that recalls his history with the Globe Unity Orchestra as well as his tenure with ECM/JAPO.

Jon Balke's Magnetic North Orchestra: Further (ECM 78118-21517-2; 42:54: ★★★★★) Pianist Balke deploys a string section alongside horns to form a distinctly Nordic 11-piece ensemble. Balke frequently subordinates his ruminative piano work to emphasize the group sound. He's assembled a book of hummable themes for MNO, including the gently swaying "Horizontal Song" and Middle Eastern "Taraf." Balke combines horns and strings effectively on "Shaded Place" and "Changing Song," creating layers and shadings in contrast to the starkness of much Scandinavian jazz. The strings add texture to the upbeat, Weather Report-inspired "Moving Carpet," which features Tore Brunborg's soprano sax and Marilyn Mazur's percussion.

John Surman: The Brass Project (ECM 78118-21478-2; 62:04: ★★★★★) Surman seems an unlikely candidate to front a brass ensemble. He's most often recorded his haunting bass clarinet or soprano and baritone saxophones solo, or with multi-tracked accompaniment. *The Brass Project* documents Surman's rarely recorded, long-term collaboration with composer/conductor **John Warren**. "The Returning Exile" and "Tantrum Clangley" are standouts, with Surman soaring on bass clarinet and soprano, and dueling with trombonists Malcolm Griffiths and Richard Edwards. Warren makes effective use of his bass trombones to add punch to the arrangements. Warren's impressionistic "Silent Lake," featuring Surman on piano and alto clarinet, is pretty, if uneventful. Some aimless tracks and dry, echo-ridden production hamper *The Brass Project*. Although a featured soloist, Surman seems a little constrained by his surroundings. He can be heard at



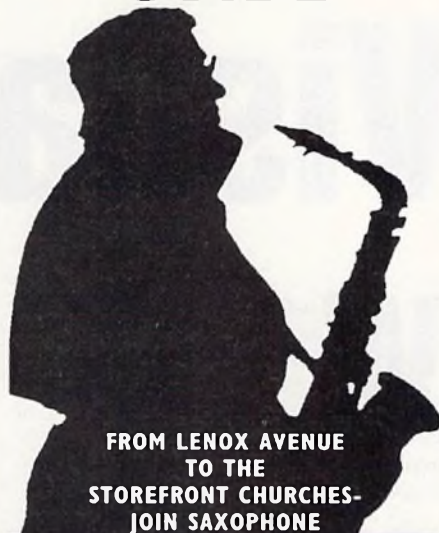
Gavin Bryars: expanding, reconfiguring

his morose, mystical best on his new quartet CD, *Stranger Than Fiction* (ECM).

Gavin Bryars: Vita Nova (ECM New Series 78118-21533-2; 56:37: ★★★★★½) Influenced by the likes of Bill Evans and Lennie Tristano, British composer Bryars integrates classical and jazz instrumentation, often featuring the compelling countertenor voice of the Hilliard Ensemble's David Jacobs. "Four Elements," for large chamber ensemble, is the impressive centerpiece of this album, a flowing four-part dance piece that adopts some techniques associated with Steve Reich, including the use of Glen Martin's bass clarinet over marimba, and a piano pulse. "Sub Rosa," dedicated to Bill Frisell (who later collaborated with Bryars), expands, reconfigures, and renovates familiar themes from the guitarist's composition "Throughout" from his *In Line* album (1982). Bryars adds a recurring piano figure, while clarinet and recorder play Frisell's guitar melodies in an eerie, slowed-down reverie.

Relâche: Outcome Inevitable (O.O. Discs 17; 68:38: ★★★★★½) The veteran Relâche ensemble will be most familiar to American "new music" audiences, but *Outcome Inevitable* should intrigue jazz listeners as well. Fred Weihan Ho's sprawling epic "Contradiction, Please! The Revenge Of Charlie Chan" demands attention. "Contradiction, Please!" can be heard as a soundtrack for an imaginary Quentin Tarantino remake of detective movies, embracing jazz, "film noir" movie music and Chinese themes on equal terms. Relâche's woodwinds, particularly Ken Ulansey's saxophones, complement Ho's strident baritone sax well. Relâche's versatility enables the octet to capture the tension and contemplation of Robert Ashley's "Outcome Inevitable" and the arctic stillness of Eleanor Hovda's "Borealis Music" with equal success. **DB**

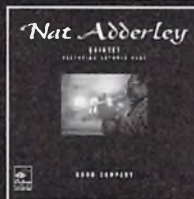
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FACE THE CHALLENGE IN MUSIC

BLINDFOLD TEST

JULY 1995

Javon Jackson

by Larry Birnbaum

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.

At age 30, Javon Jackson has emerged as one of the leading tenor saxophonists of his generation, an open-minded traditionalist who combines solid bop chops with an ear for exploration. His deep, rich tone reflects the influence of Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon and Joe Henderson, but the force of his own personality, apparent even on his early recordings, has grown stronger with every new release. "Each record is a further extension of what you're living," he says. "You have to have the willingness to step out on the edge and maybe get burned a little bit."

Born in Carthage, Mo., raised in Denver, Colo., Jackson was discovered by Branford Marsalis, who steered him to the Berklee College of Music. Jackson spent four years in the final edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, then joined the Harper Brothers before signing on with Freddie Hubbard, where he remains a member. He's also worked with Ron Carter, Charlie Haden, McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, who backed him on *Me And Mr. Jones* (Criss Cross), Jackson's 1992 debut as a leader. Signed to Blue Note, he recorded the Betty Carter-produced *When The Time Is Right* in 1993 and recently followed up with *For One Who Knows*.

This was his first Blindfold Test.

Joe Henderson

"Blues In F (In'n Out)" (from *The Standard Joe, Red, 1991*) Henderson, tenor saxophone; Rufus Reid, bass; Al Foster, drums.

This is Joe Henderson playing "In'n Out." I can't give enough stars to Joe. I love him for his patience, his approach to the saxophone, his rhythmic aspect, and above all, he swings so hard. It's just so close to me. I really love his phrasing and his whole grasp of the music. The drummer reminds me of Al Foster; I think it's Al Foster. I have to hear the bass some more. A wild guess—maybe Rufus Reid. This is great. 5 stars. A hundred-fifty stars, whatever.

Johnny Griffin

"63rd Street Theme" (from *The Cat, Antilles, 1991*) Griffin, tenor saxophone; Michael Weiss, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

This is Johnny Griffin, a master of the saxophone. I don't know the composition, but anything he does is going to be at the highest possible level. I used to listen to him, because he's got such a great, big tone, and his dexterity on the instrument is flawless. The drummer is Kenny Washington. The sound of the bass reminds me of Dennis Irwin, because Dennis has a great tone, and obviously he's been playing with Johnny. I can't tell who the pianist is. Johnny Griffin is one of the few tenor masters we still have on the planet, along with Sonny Rollins, from that era of Charlie Parker and Bud Powell forward. 5 stars.

Gary Thomas

"It's You Or No One" (from *Till We Have Faces, JMT, 1992*) tenor saxophone; Ed Howard, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums.

The drummer reminds me of Mr. DeJohnette, but Jack has more power. The bass player has a kind of Dave Holland feeling, but I don't know. That's Gary Thomas on tenor. That's my man. He can play. He's got a great tone, and you can hear the influence of Billy Harper on him. He's got a strong sound, and he's working on his own thing. You hear a different beginning, too. It's a good



beginning to have someone else start. Could that be "Smitty"? No? Then I don't know who the drummer is. It's adventuresome; it's creative; it's inspiring. I give it 4 stars.

Teddy Edwards

"A Little Later" (from *Good Gravy!, Contemporary, 1991/rec. 1962*) Edwards, tenor saxophone; Phineas Newborn Jr., piano; Leroy Vinnegar, bass; Mill Turner, drums.

Is this David Newman? He's got a beautiful, soulful sound, but I can't make it out. Good player. It's a nice groove, nice feeling. The tenor player reminds me of Fathead Newman or Yusef Lateef.

I.B.: *Think West Coast.*

Was that Teddy Edwards? That's my man, too. He's a bluesy, soulful player. He's another master that we still have around with us. It's a nice track. I'd give it 4 or 5 stars.

Sonny Rollins

"You Are My Lucky Star" (from *On The Outside, BMG/Bluebird, 1991/rec. 1963*) Rollins, tenor saxophone; Don Cherry, trumpet; Henry Grimes, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

A thousand stars. Sonny and Don Cherry. There's certain instrumentalists that we should know in two seconds, especially somebody as colossal as Sonny, whose influence has been so great. He's right next to John Coltrane. This is a great record, too. This is Billy Higgins on drums, and I believe the bassist is Henry Grimes. This stuff is fabulous, man. The first time I met Sonny, I told him right to his face, "You are my hero." I got to spend some time with him recently. He had a rehearsal, and I got to go to the rehearsal and just sit there and watch him. It was the first time I've really had a connection with Sonny, and that day still looms large in my mind. He's my man, Sonny Rollins. I love him so much. Obviously 5 stars. There's no amount of stars enough for this guy.

Albert Ayler

"Rollins' Tune" (from *The First Recordings, GNP Crescendo, 1973/rec. 1962*) Ayler, tenor saxophone; Torbjörn Hultcrantz, bass; Sune Spånberg, drums.

Is this Von Freeman? It's good. It's soulful. Great tone. But I can't make it out. It reminds me somewhat of Von sometimes, and of cats like Rahsaan [Roland Kirk] and people like that. But some of this reminds me of "Newk" [Sonny Rollins], of his free approach to things. Now that's an Albert Ayler kind of thing. Was it Albert Ayler? I've got some of his records. Albert Ayler was a very great tenor player. I mean, he definitely could get some different things out. I would give him 4 or 5 stars. Albert Ayler was one of those guys on the edge. I think that's a song called "Movin' Out" that Sonny recorded with Kenny Dorham. That's Sonny Rollins' influence all the way.

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