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# Miles

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1936-1995  
60<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

READERS POLL

**Chick Corea  
Blindfolded**

**Mike Mainieri**

**Mark Whitfield**



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## 16 Miles Davis

### 'What Was That Note?'

It's been 30 years since the legendary recordings of Miles Davis at the Plugged Nickel. As Davis' primary record label, Columbia, continues to exhume its vaults in an unprecedented reissue program, musicians and former collaborators take a moment (or two) to discuss, share and reminisce about the trumpeter referred to by one as "the artist of the century."

By Bob Belden and John Ephland

Cover photograph of Miles Davis by Ronald Howard.



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HERB SNITZER

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Cover photography by (from left): Mitchell Seidel (J.J. Johnson); R. Andrew Lepley (Joe Lovano); Ken Franckling (Roy Hargrove); Enid Farber (Cassandra Wilson); Ronald Heard (John Scofield); Mitchell Seidel (Charlie Haden).

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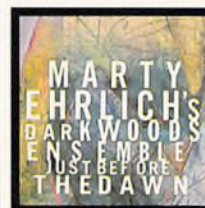
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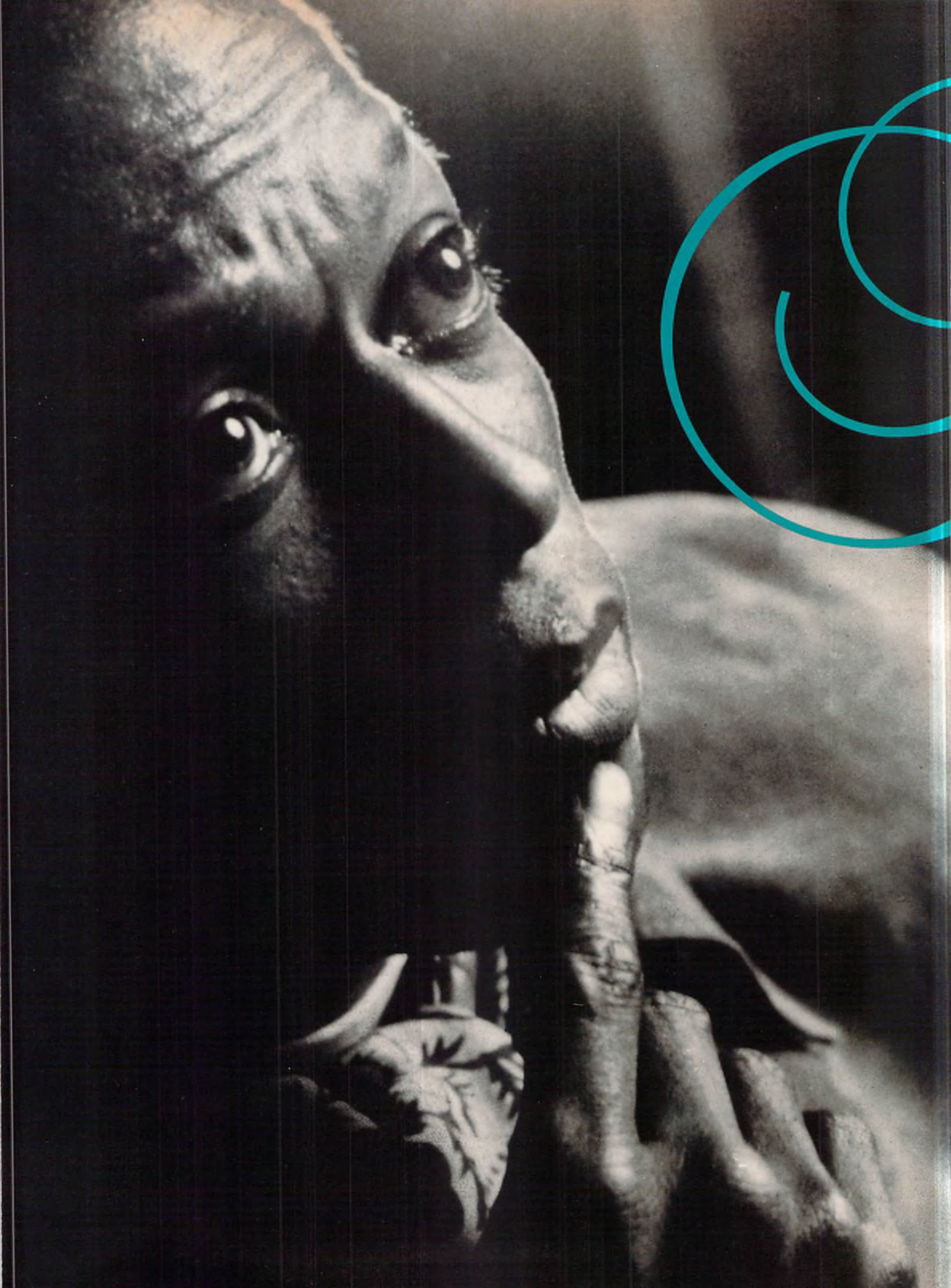


Marty Ehrlich



Ed Peterson

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# Miles...

## ‘What was that note?’

*For the record,  
former friends  
and collaborators  
celebrate the legend  
who played it one  
note at a time.*

**A** voice shouts out from the audience, “Ray Brown! Paul Chambers! Percy Heath!” as the bassist begins to solo. A heckler? Another bass player? No, it’s just a cat from the neighborhood that really digs the band, especially Ron Carter. And he’s not afraid to show it. Thirty years later that “heckling” actually “seems to indicate to me that the listening audience at that time had a great sense of jazz history. They weren’t coming in for the first time. They were coming there because they knew of the history, not only of music vis-à-vis Paul Chambers and Ray Brown, but they were familiar with Miles Davis’ personnel before I got there.”

Thirty years ago this month, this little vignette was taped and is now generally available stateside for us to hear because Columbia Records, along with Mosaic Records, has begun an ambitious program to release every note that Miles recorded for the label from 1955 until 1976. Starting with *The Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel* (released this fall) and continuing with *Miles Davis And Gil Evans: The Complete Studio Recordings* (to be released this January, see p. 18), most of the Miles Davis legacy will be restored to the highest standards in the industry.

Ron Carter’s poignant recollection of this unknown fan explains why playing in clubs was so special. “We got a lot more playing time [as a group] then,” remembers Carter. “A lot more time to develop a band library, develop a band camaraderie, to develop a band personnel, a personality with the audience, a chance to work out details in the course of an entire night. It was a great environment to play in.” But it took some time for Miles and the group to get to that magical, developmental place.

The first step in moving forward was to scout out new talent. In December of 1962, Davis and his former sideman Philly Joe Jones went to a club to hear a new drummer in town. Philly Joe raved about his playing, and that impressed Miles. It was Tony Williams. Miles also needed to find a new bass player, so again he checked out a new young bassist on the scene. “I was working with Art Farmer at the Half Note,” says Carter.

## News From The Vaults

This year, Columbia/Legacy embarked on a well-structured plan to restore and release the recorded legacy of Miles Davis. Steve Berkowitz (A&R) and Kevin Gore (Marketing and Promotion) have brought in the services of Michael Cuscuna and Charlie Lourie of Mosaic Productions.

A thorough search of the Columbia vaults was made and all relevant tapes were assembled at a Manhattan studio for review. Once tapes were reviewed and additional information logged, the mixing and editing began.

The first release from this team is the *Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel* box set. This set was gleaned from the original three-track masters and includes material that was edited from the Japan-only box set (see DB Mar. '95, p. 39).

The next box set is scheduled for January release. It is *Miles Davis And Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings*. This six-CD set will contain the original *Miles Ahead* date in stereo for the first time, completely remixed and remastered from the two and three-track tapes. *Porgy And Bess*, *Sketches Of Spain* and *Quiet Nights* have also been remixed from the original analog three-tracks and mastered for both analog and 20-bit digital formats. The box also includes the three sextet titles recorded in August of 1962 (two with Bob Dorough, released in hodge-podge fashion since being recorded). It also contains alternate takes and rehearsal sessions that include partial songs and revealing session chatter. The booklet will contain never-before-published photos from the sessions as well as the most complete discographical and personal information to date.

The gems of this set are the discovery of two completely unissued pieces (*In The Time Of The Barracudas*, recorded in Hollywood in October of 1963, and "Falling Water" from February of 1968). They are the last two known studio sessions that Miles and Gil made together. *Barracudas* features Herbie, Ron and Tony and includes such compositions as "Barracudas" and "Hotel Me Blues."

The future plans include a box set that covers the 1965-'68 quintet (with unissued alternate takes), the 1968-'69 *In A Silent Way* period (which includes an entire unissued session with Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul, John McLaughlin, Wayne Shorter and Joe Chambers), the *Bitches Brew* era (1969-'70), a Miles-Coltrane box (1955-'61), and various other CD releases (e.g., the complete 1961 live sessions with Miles' quintet and the Gil Evans Orchestra from Carnegie Hall, the *Blackhawk*, the 1963-'64 live sessions, etc.).

For the first time, every note that is of musical and historical value that Miles Davis recorded for Columbia will be restored by people who want the legacy to receive its proper due.

—Bob Belden

"[Miles] took me to a corner, and said that he was putting together a new band and wanted to know if I could leave for California next week." This band was Frank Strozier, George Coleman, Harold Mabern, Carter and Jimmy Cobb. When Davis returned to New York in May of 1963, he kept Coleman and Carter, and added Williams and Herbie Hancock to the quintet.

"We kind of sensed that this was going to be the band for a while," recalls Carter of his first rehearsal with Hancock and Williams. "And once we had the sense that this was the band for a while, rather than just another six-week tour, it became kind of more free. You could try things out, knowing that your job doesn't depend on the success or failure of what you do at that moment."

This sense of freedom would play a big part in the making of the quintet. By the time George Coleman had left and Sam Rivers joined the group in 1964, the direction was "...kind of stretching out," according to Sonny Fortune, who saw this quintet. But when Wayne Shorter joined in August of 1964, the dam finally burst wide open.

This quintet spent nine months getting familiar with each other, and the concept and attitude were dramatically affected.

The direction of any given number would suddenly shift to another sphere, and that would lead to another, and so on.

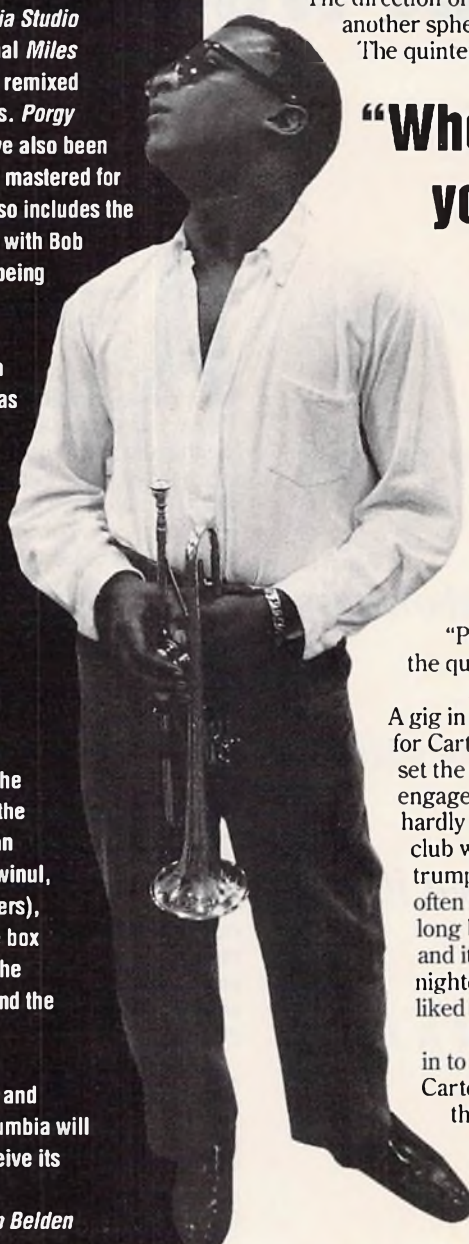
The quintet had made one live album, *Miles In Berlin*,

**"When you were playing, you could hear him listening."** —Gary Peacock

and one studio album, *E.S.P.* But by April of 1965, Miles stopped performing due to a hip ailment. The quintet became a quartet and continued to play whatever gigs they could. "When Miles didn't make a set, we became the 'Miles Davis Quartet,'" says Marshall Hawkins, the bassist who replaced Carter on live gigs in '68. (Hawkins had left Shirley Horn to go with Miles.) This quartet format is where Wayne and the rhythm section would experiment. (Williams' "Pee Wee," on Miles' *Sorcerer*, is an example of the quartet sound.)

After a long layoff, Miles began to play again. A gig in Philadelphia with Reggie Workman subbing for Carter and a week in Detroit with Gary Peacock set the stage for the quintet's December '65 engagement in Chicago. The *Plugged Nickel* was hardly the setting for a legendary recording. "The club was 20 feet wide and 100 feet long," says trumpeter Bill Byrne, who performed at the club often with Woody Herman from 1965-67. "It had a long bandstand like the Metropole in New York, and it barely held 100 people. It was in the nightclub district near Rush Street, and musicians liked the room."

On the first night, Reggie Workman was flown in to play. From the second night on (Dec. 22), Carter was back and the tapes rolled. Many herald this recording as Miles' first real venture into stream-of-consciousness playing, but as Dave Liebman points out, "It is really the end of an era, certainly regarding Miles' playing. But what's great about it is that he has



these young cats, especially Herbie and Tony... playing standards from such a different standpoint. That's why this is a remarkable record. I mean, I couldn't see them going into the studio and doing another version of 'Green Dolphin Street.'"

The catalyst for many of the band's forays into the unknown was Carter. "My concern," Carter says, "was, could I make these guys play something different and/or develop what they had developed, or begun to develop, the night before or the set before?" The first impression for some people is that the band played free. "I think that the idea of being free, as is generally defined, is a great misnomer," observes Carter.

"This band has always been my favorite for really taking chances, but still keeping the form," admits John Scofield. "But I think that it was a time in jazz when freedom and free music had influenced the young guys who were playing form."

Or, as Shorter puts it, "When we played there was a lot of chance-taking. We had arrived at that point where Herbie fully fathomed what Miles was talking about, about when to play and when not to play as an accompanist. We were all taking liberties with expressing the sequence of the harmony, spinning single-line stories. And taking all kinds of harmonic liberties worked. Herbie had fast ears. And he was right there, comping, as if he were saying with a big smile, 'I'm right underneath you. Isn't this beautiful, don't we make a great couple?' With Tony, [*Shorter imitates the cymbal sound*] ding da ding, right there."

As for Shorter, his playing on these sets has become the stuff of legend. It's often considered to be his best playing with or without Miles. "It's wonderful to listen to Wayne," says Keith Jarrett. "Some of the best playing I've ever heard of Wayne—in fact, his best playing—is on there."

"We did three sets a night, every night, and in New York, we worked until 4 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays," Carter recalls. These working conditions explain the pacing that Hancock and Williams employed throughout the Chicago gig. Concert sets would often compress a whole night's energy into 45 minutes; so when the band had a chance to lay back and develop, they took advantage of it. Miles also left the door open for the musicians to share something and to work together for a common cause and play to the best of their ability.

Says Jack DeJohnette, "He'd want you to play things that you didn't know: 'Don't play me what you know. I don't want to hear that shit.'"

Gary Peacock recalls, "When you were playing, you could hear him listening."

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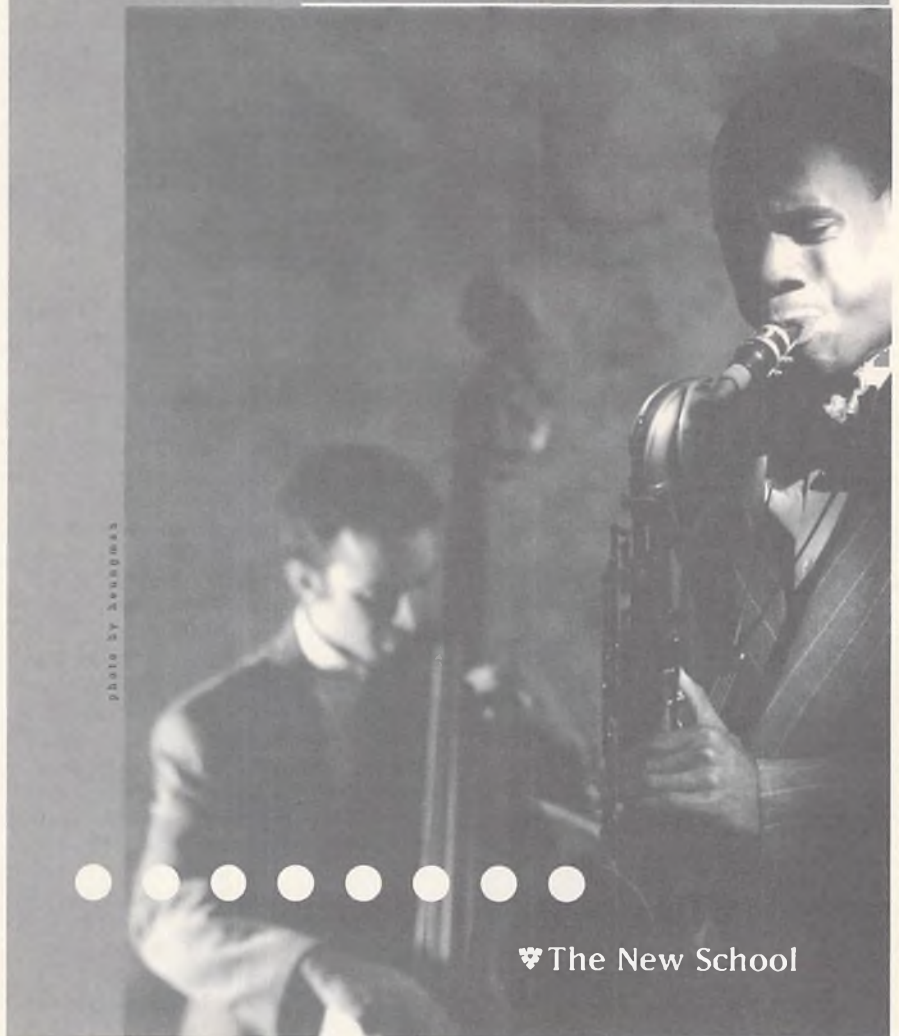
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Miles and Gil Evans

**R**unning parallel to this universe of band music was Miles' association with Gil Evans. Aside from their masterpieces *Miles Ahead* ('57), *Porgy And Bess* ('58), *Sketches Of Spain* ('60) and their triumph at Carnegie Hall ('61), the duo's recorded output dropped substantially after their bossa nova sessions, *Quiet Nights* ('62).

The two had worked together over the course of three decades. So why was their output so meager? Starting with *The Birth Of The Cool* sessions in 1948 through *Quiet Nights*, there was a musical momentum that Miles and Gil had achieved that was stunning and highly original. Beginning with *Quiet Nights* and ending with "Falling Water" in '68, the total recorded output was approximately 40 minutes' worth.

Was it because Miles was hearing differently, without an orchestra in mind? "That may have been it," says Miles' most important producer, Teo Macero. "Miles was starting to use different instruments that didn't require an orchestra. Miles and Gil didn't speak very much after the mid-'60s, but they remained good friends."

Hard to believe, Evans' tone poem "Falling Water" was the only complete performance that Miles and Gil recorded with the quintet, orchestrated also for Hawaiian guitar, mandolin, two french horns, harp, tuba, five woodwinds, tympani and marimba (with Hancock on Wurlitzer electric piano). According to Macero, who came up with the title, "Everything was falling apart. The music was very complicated, with odd time signatures. The orchestra wasn't getting it, so I went out there to conduct. Some of the best records I made were when I was standing right next to Miles!"

"In *The Time Of The Barracudas*," recorded in '63, consists of short musical cues that were intended to be used as incidental music in the stage play of the same name. Miles and Gil's last-known live collaboration was the Greek Theater

concert in Berkeley Calif., in April of '68. Unfortunately, no known recording of this concert exists, either in Columbia's vaults or from private sources.

The sound of the quintet's rhythm section did not easily translate to Evans' conceptions for Miles. However, you can hear the quintet appropriating (via Gil's uncredited assistance) the Evans approach to accompaniment throughout the quintet album *Filles de Kilimanjaro* ('68), where ensemble bass lines, pedal points and a unique sense of song form are utilized.

When all is said and done, however, what will remain of the orchestral music of Miles Davis and Gil Evans centers around the more famous collaborations, with the most significant perhaps being *Sketches Of Spain*. As with all Miles Davis recordings, there is a story. Macero's recollection was that "it took 16, 17 sessions to complete. For the first six, Miles was sick. We didn't have anything except rehearsals. That session ended at 2 in the morning with the album unfinished. I told Gil we had to wind things up. Gil asked for a half-hour to make the missing four bars [to Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez"]. He never finished the four bars, but we came up with material nonetheless. There may have been one overdub. With Miles, all you had to do was let him play."

**B**ut beyond Miles and Gil, and the Plugged Nickel, there have been other recordings, other memories. Some may remember the first time they listened to *Kind Of Blue* or *Nefertiti*, and many can recall the first time they saw Miles live at a club or a concert. Most of our opinions about him are shaped by recordings, appearances or word of mouth. But the people who were around him often had different perceptions of the man.

"I see him as a wave that kind of stayed pretty even," Sonny Fortune observes.

"Being a Gemini," remarks Horace Silver, "he could be cool, and he could be a little touchy. But he was a genius."

"When we hear that sound," Keith Jarrett says, "that sound is the closest thing to music. It's like the source without any ornaments on it. There's a bunch of notes you can choose, you can be a virtuoso of your instrument, and beat everyone at the battle of the bands—that isn't what music's about. What he gave in that instance was the letting go of so many things we think are so goddamn important, that protect us. It was vulnerable, it was powerful. You know, you're not supposed to be powerful and vulnerable at the same time. Jazz at its best is always that. Miles wasn't a drummer, but the way he played that note was more related to a deep sense of pulse than 95 percent of the drummers that've played at any one time."

"When I joined the band, I had been playing the bass for four and a half years," says Marshall Hawkins. "He had great patience and let me find myself."

"For me," says Gary Peacock, "there was an enormous silence that was made present. It was so complete, so full. I want to live there all the time. It's palpable, you can feel it, it's tactile. And he let it go; he never hung onto it. He could play the same. Why does it always sound like he played it for first time, the same thing over? The answer is because every time he played it, it was the first time he ever played it.... There was something going through his playing that transcended him, and that was more significant than he was."

Don Alias recalls that when he got the call to join the band in '69, he first thought Miles wanted him to play drums. "I showed up at the session with my drums, but Miles said he wanted me to play percussion, because, as he said, 'No one plays percussion the way that you do.' But he let me play drums on the *Bitches Brew* date, on 'Miles Runs The Voodoo Down.' I put that second-line thing on that tune."

"Miles used to stay with my family when he came to the Bay Area," says Eddie Henderson. "I went up to him one day and said, 'My parents said that you played trumpet but that you played wrong.' He just looked at me funny and shrugged it off. Well, I proceeded, out of respect, to buy one of his albums. It was *Sketches Of Spain*. After listening to it, I realized that I had made a mistake in judgment about Miles' playing, and began to learn every note he played on that record. He came back to town and dropped by, and I just rushed into the living room and confronted him. 'I just learned your solos on the *Sketches Of Spain* album...' and played, note for note



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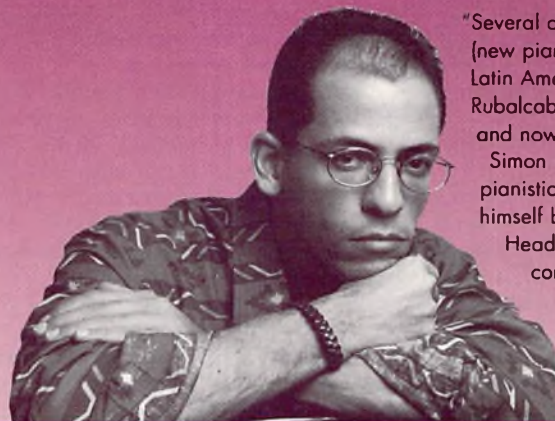


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—Fred Bouchard, *JazzTimes*



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—Thomas Conrad,  
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along with the recording, his solo. I finished, and proudly looked at him for some positive reaction. He looked at me and said, 'That's okay, but that's me,' and walked into the kitchen. It hit me at that moment, but it took years to sink in."

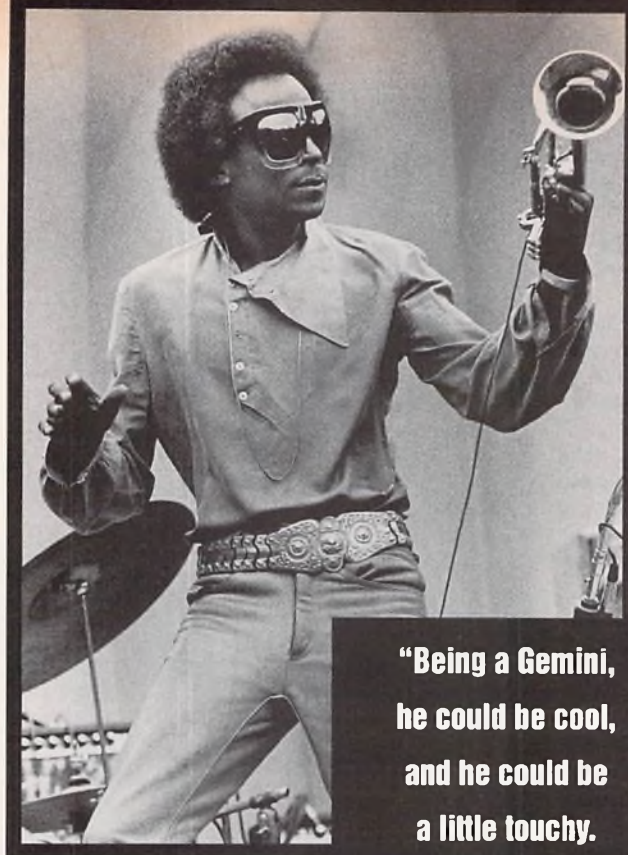
Dave Liebman recollects an event during a tour of Brazil in 1974. "It was my last gig with him... Sao Paulo, Brazil. He had been sick and we had to cancel gigs. Anyway, he got back on stage, he was pretty out of it for a day or two, I mean, in-the-hospital-type [of out]. He looked over at me and said, 'That was a close one,' and then he played his *ass* off. I mean, maybe the longest solos of my whole time with him. He was hitting hard, man, you know, high notes and everything."

"Miles was also self-critical in a way most people don't realize," Jarrett recalls. "One time, we were getting on a bus to leave for somewhere—sometimes he took buses from his apartment in New York—and I was in his apartment with him for a while. And he was in his room with all his clothes, and he was looking at this wall-to-wall closet and wall-to-wall shoes, and clothes, and stuff. And he'd come out of his room with one thing on, and then he'd go back in, and then he'd come out of his room and he'd have something else on, and he'd be hanging around. And it was time to leave, and he was still doing this thing, and finally, I guess he finally decided what he was wearing and came out, and he and I were walking together to the bus, and he says, [*Jarrett guffaws*] 'Bitches and clothes, bitches and clothes!'"

"He gave me a set of hi-hats at a session in '69," Joe Chambers remembers. "I got 'em right now. He must have thought I needed them; I had a pretty ragged set at the time. Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul, John McLaughlin and Wayne Shorter were on the date.

"He was all music, a serious musician," Chambers continues. "He was a true artist. One time I went to his house in the mid-'70s, when he was 'retired.' The first thing he said to me was that he got into the music for the love of it—it was the first thing out of his mouth before we did anything else."

Gary Bartz remembers a time, in 1971, when the band was on a plane in Europe. "Whenever we traveled, people thought we were the [Harlem] Globetrotters or the Jackson 5. On this one flight, a man in the seat in front of me kept looking back and staring at me. I mean, he just kept looking at me with this funny expression on his face. Finally, I couldn't take it



**"Being a Gemini,  
he could be cool,  
and he could be  
a little touchy.  
But he was a genius."**

—Horace Silver

anymore, so I leaned over the aisle where Miles was sitting and said to him, 'Man, this motherfucker keeps looking at me, and I'm getting sick of this crap.' And Miles says to me, 'I'll make him stop,' and stares right back at this guy till he gets his attention. Miles puckered his lips and blew the cat a kiss real feminine-like, and he never looked at us again."

"I'll tell you something funny," Jack DeJohnette laughs. "It's just one line, 'cause Miles never said much. He described my playing as a drunk falling up the stairs. It was a great compliment. Most of the time he was funny. And he could be serious; he could be a lot of things. He was many people. But I'll tell ya, man, I miss him; I wish he was around. There was so much meat in what he said."

Ron Carter recalls being impressed with how Miles was aware of everyone's part. "We were in the middle of this tune... and there was this piano solo. Miles would always get to a spot on the stage somewhere between the second eight and the end of the last eight [bar phrases], so he could always get a view of what had developed in his absence. And we were playing this chord some kind of way, it was probably a... G-9, and I played a B in the bass, and he asked me, 'What was that note?' It's hard for me to talk to him at the same time as I'm playing, because, remember, we're *on* stage. So I said, 'It's a B.' He said, 'What's it doing there?' And I said, 'Well, it's the third of the chord and it makes the ninth sound like a root.' He said, 'Oh!' And it struck me funny that he

would pick out that note out of all of Herbie's playing to be important to him—to question, 'What is that note, and what is it doing there?'

For Peacock, "There are two things that impressed me the most about Miles: One was that he liked to be approached as though he were a human being; but if you approached him like he was a star, he could really be disagreeable in the extreme. And the other thing was that, whatever promo shit might be happening off the bandstand, when he came to the music, all that was going on was music. He didn't bring any other agenda into the music with him."

What, may you ask, would the Milester think of all this hubbub? Most of his former sidemen agree that he had a disdain for the "show-biz" trappings that are a part of our culture. Are we hearing what he wanted us to hear? Maybe we should let someone who was as

close to his music as anybody, producer Teo Macero, have the last words.

"Miles trusted me," Macero recalls. "He'd walk in, play, and walk out. He even wanted to use four-letter words on his recordings! We were always experimenting from different sources. For example, I used to send his trumpet through an amplifier while he was playing into a mic and record the sound that would go through the amplifier—two or three tracks of Miles at one time. Examples include 'He Loved Him Madly,' from *Get Up With It*, 'Bitches Brew,' 'Star People.' I might include a cassette of Miles from being on the road and add it; Miles would want it in there. There were a lot of loops for that first side of *Jack Johnson*. Special echo machines, what might be called a digital delay today, were invented for Miles. I used to use the wah-wah pedal in editing sessions. Miles never came to the editing room, maybe four or five times.

"With Miles, from the start of a session you were on. I wanted to catch everything, without inhibiting the musicians. I wanted to capture Miles in his totality, to make it a collection of things to come. I wanted to record the artist of the century—all of the recorded material as part of his legacy.

"If you look back, everything was a gem."

DB

Zan Stewart contributed to this article.

# DOWN BEAT'S



1936-1995

# 60<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

# READERS POLL

# Followi the MU

by John McDonough

**W**elcome to another annual meeting of the wonderful world of (mostly) jazz in the oldest meeting hall of its kind still standing, the Down Beat Readers Poll—60 and counting this year. More about that in due course, though.

If last year was the time for that quintessential young lion Josuha Redman, this year the glory goes to an aging baby boomer and another tenor saxophonist, Joe Lovano, who not only saw Redman but raised him one to become the poll's latest triple-crown winner since Joe Henderson (another tenor!) in 1993—Album, Musician and Tenor of the year, all in one call.

The endurance of veterans is always a welcome sign of stability in any art. Among the winners in this year's 20 instrumental categories, 14 have commanded our attention for 25 years or more. Most came up in a jazz world of bebop and small groups, except for J. J. Johnson and Mulligan, whose roots go back to the last years of the big band era.

As for the Hall of Fame, a category added in the 1952 Readers Poll and christened by Louis Armstrong (with Johann Sebastian Bach placing seventh in the voting, followed by Charlie Parker), this surely must be the most controversial and sometimes quirky category of the group. All the others are designed as parts of a snapshot of an art in progress. Not who's "the best" necessarily but, as Gene Lees wrote of the 1959 poll, those "who are saying the greatest amount to the

greatest number *at this time*." A mistake in one poll can be rectified in the next. But a place in the Hall of Fame does mean "the best." It means a permanent place in the historical canon of jazz.

Of the various first-place winners in the first Down Beat Readers Poll of July 1936, none are still living and two were already dead when elected, Bix Beiderbecke and Eddie Lang. ("Interesting nevertheless," notes former editor Dan Morgenstern. "It shows how early and strongly the Bix mystique had taken hold.") Benny Carter was a strong contender and remains so today. And making the cut in the violin category was Stephane Grappelli. Sixty years later, he would not only make the cut, he would win the category. He is the only musician whose name spans the entire history of the poll.

The first year-end poll, the second poll, came in 1937. Of the first-place winners that year, two are still living and one is still active. Ella Fitzgerald outvoted Mildred Bailey nearly three to one that year; and bassist Bob Haggart, who still performs and tours, led his nearest competition by four to one. Other players who showed strength that year and are still living include Artie Shaw (clarinet), George Van Eps and Lawrence Lucie (guitar), Jonah Jones (trumpet), Red Norvo (xylophone) and Harry Goodman (bass). Also, singers Martha Tilton and Helen Ward. Lionel Hampton's name first appeared that year (third as "favorite soloist"), as it does this year.

What was the original purpose of the poll? A combination of curiosity and business, says Tom Herrick, Down Beat's first advertising manager. "Any magazine wants to know what its readers

are thinking about," Herrick recalls. "But there was another angle, and that was selling ads. Whenever, say, Gene Krupa won a poll, we could always rely on the Slingerland company to take out a page congratulating him. And big band leaders would also buy ads to thank readers. It was basic p.r. stuff."

The poll also proved good p.r. for Down Beat. "If Glenn Miller was voted band of the year," Herrick points out, "then his radio sponsor would mention Down Beat on network radio. That would build our value to our core advertisers."

The Down Beat Readers Poll was born in a time when the world had only two kinds of people—the hep and the square, and the former gazed upon the latter with a demeaning contempt. Thus, the 1936 poll featured 10 categories that invited serious attention and another seven "corn" categories added with tongue in cheek to give readers a chance to heap hepster scorn on poor souls such as Clyde McCoy, Carmen Lombardo and Rudy Vallee. Readers were invited to consider bands in separate swing categories. Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller and a few others were always legitimate contenders in both; and one, to be revealed momentarily, once won simultaneously in both. The 1937 poll introduced a record of the year category, and, even today, few would argue with the winner: "Sing Sing Sing."

Voting in 1938 began in October and the numbers were printed as votes mounted in November and December. By the time the final results were posted in January, more than 10,000 ballots had been cast, all tabulated by hand, chalk and blackboard. That was the year Shaw overthrew

# g sic

## Would You Believe?

- ◆ Billie Holiday first topped a **Down Beat** poll in 1961—two years after her death. It was for the Hall of Fame. Neither readers nor critics saw fit to name her best vocalist during her lifetime.
- ◆ Incredibly, Buck Clayton, one of the greatest of all jazz trumpet players, made his first appearance in a **Down Beat** poll in the “corn trumpet” category in 1937.
- ◆ The only Pulitzer Prize winner ever to win a **Down Beat** poll was Mel Powell, five times straight, mind you, in the mid-'40s. His 1991 Pulitzer was for “Duplicates.”
- ◆ During his prime years from 1945-'55, Dizzy Gillespie was never voted top player in the trumpet category.
- ◆ Jimmy Blanton, Lionel Hampton, Jimi Hendrix, Django Reinhardt, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk each entered the Hall of Fame without ever winning the top position in their respective instrumental categories.
- ◆ In 1977, Elvis Presley received more votes for the Hall of Fame than Teddy Wilson and Art Blakey.
- ◆ For reasons that elude history, in 1938, Earl Hines polled more votes in the corn category (178) than the one for piano (168).
- ◆ In the first **Down Beat** poll, 20 percent of the winners were black: Teddy Wilson and Pops Foster, two out of 10 categories.
- ◆ Although women have won in the vocalist, bandleader and arranger categories, none has ever topped a strictly instrumental category.

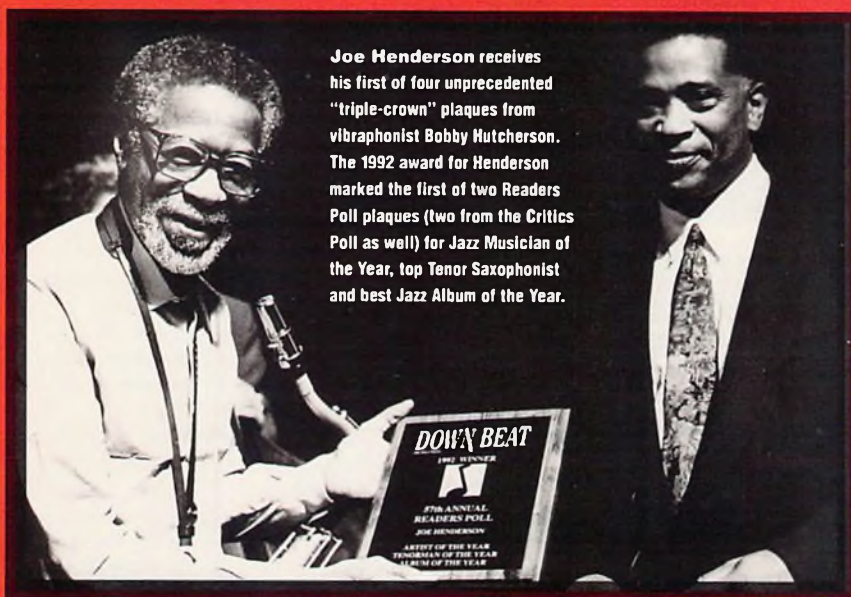
—J.M.



**Duke Ellington** celebrates his win for 1944's top Swing Band of the Year. His band displaced Benny Goodman from the year before.

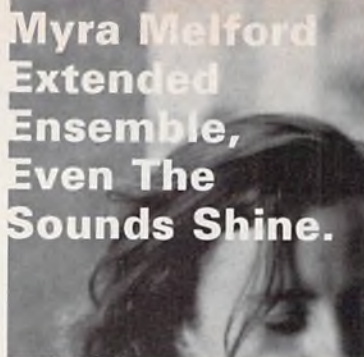


**Frank Sinatra** receives a windfall of plaques, including his award for best Male Singer of 1955. Ol' Blue Eyes won his first **Down Beat** poll in 1941 as a band singer with Tommy Dorsey and would win another 13 over the next 25 years.



**Joe Henderson** receives his first of four unprecedented “triple-crown” plaques from vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. The 1992 award for Henderson marked the first of two Readers Poll plaques (two from the Critics Poll as well) for Jazz Musician of the Year, top Tenor Saxophonist and best Jazz Album of the Year.

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Goodman as swing band of the year in the first big upset in poll history. "And when Harry James won," says Morgenstern, "he was quoted saying, 'This is ridiculous. Louis [Armstrong] should have it.' It was the first time anyone ever insisted he didn't deserve to win."

By 1940, the various cornball categories had been consolidated into a single "king of corn" award, which would be retired to Spike Jones after 10 consecutive years in 1952. Categories for "underrated band" and "underrated soloist" were added, and Woody Herman won both.

In 1942, Duke Ellington became the first black band to win the top swing band position. But when he pulled a surprise win in both the sweet and swing band categories in 1946—well, some people weren't so surprised. The poll had become a significant promotional tool for artists by then and some were willing to get competitive about it. The more its value grew, the more publicists tried to stuff the ballot box.

"Ellington's publicists were a little more aggressive than most," Herrick notes. "In order to get a ballot, you had to buy a magazine. About half of our circulation was on the newsstand, and probably 35 to 40 percent of those might be returned. The way it worked, dealers didn't have to return the whole magazine. They would just tear off the mastheads as proof they didn't sell it and then send them back to DB for credit. Then they could toss the magazines.

"We could never prove this, but we sometimes suspected that an enterprising publicist would go to a newsstand and get the unsold **Down Beats** with the mastheads torn off and send in the ballots. The Ellington thing was a little suspect, I think."

So thought the editors. When the results of the 15th-annual poll were announced in 1951, the magazine assured readers that voting "was made manipulation-proof by restricting the franchise to **Down Beat** subscribers or readers who sent in coupons to obtain their official ballots."

"I looked at all the votes," says former publisher Chuck Suber, "and developed a keen sense for the suspect ballot. There were at least three instances where people called and threatened to sue because they didn't make the poll list. When I asked how they expected to prove they should have

*What was  
the original  
purpose of  
the poll?*

**"Any magazine  
wants to know what  
its readers are  
thinking about."**

**Tom Herrick  
First DB Advertising Manager**

made the list, they said they *knew* how many votes came in because they sent them."

Charlie Parker first registered in the alto category in 1945, although Johnny Hodges dominated the instrument through the decade. It would be 1950 before Parker won. At the end of 1947, poll results were moved from January to December, where they have remained.

The benefits of winning could be counted in dollars by the early '50s. Vibist Gibbs,

who won five years in a row from 1950-'54 and still has all the plaques in his office to prove it, was a case in point. "I couldn't get a job after I left Woody Herman," he recalls. "I worked about six days in 1949. Then in 1950 I put together my own band and won the poll. I ended up working 48 weeks after that. And every year we won, we could get a higher price. One reason was **Down Beat** was more of a strictly jazz magazine then and the work was in the small clubs, whose owners read the magazine. Those poll results were gospel to them."

In August 1953, **Down Beat** complemented the Readers Poll with the first annual Critics Poll, in which a panel of 21 credentialed experts (including Nesuhi Ertegun, Leonard Feather, Ralph Gleason, Nat Hentoff, George Simon, Bob Thiele and George Wein) voted for both established and "new star" talent in each category. It was first thought that the critics, with the special access that comes to journalists, might have an integrity and perhaps an ear to the future that the readers did not. To a degree that was so, but by the '70s it was more often the critics who tilted toward tradition with the advent of fusion.

But the two polls were even more interesting in detecting occasional disconnects between critic and audience tastes. If audiences tended to err occasionally on the commercial side, the critics did so on the experimental side. "Critics listen to music in a different way from audiences," says reed player Eddie Daniels, often a Readers Poll winner but never the critics' pick. "They see their reputation as dependent on becoming an advocate for the future of the music. Audiences are probably less calculating in their responses." Oscar Peterson goes further. "Certain critics whom I will not name," he says, "don't regard any music as having value unless it was utterly removed and esoteric. [In so doing], they built false idols...." Indeed, if one looks at

# New from Oxford

the piano voting over the years, one will find a smoking gun of sorts. Year after year, the readers voted in favor of Peterson, while the critics preferred arch-outsider Cecil Taylor. A disconnect? Perhaps. But overall, critics and audience have found more harmony than atonality in their judgments.

Maynard Ferguson and Chet Baker fought it out for reader supremacy on trumpet in the early '50s until Miles Davis captured the category in 1955 and held it in an almost unbroken streak until his "retirement" in the mid-'70s. As a bow in the direction of rock & roll, an r&b category was added in the late '50s. The jazz album of the year category came back into the poll in the early '60s after an absence of more than 20 years, later joined by a pop album and reissue category.

But it was the '70s that saw the most dramatic expansion of categories in the poll's history. Three years after John Coltrane's death in 1967, so many players had picked up a soprano saxophone it graduated from miscellaneous to its own category. "That was in 1969, and I think we were late on soprano," Suber reflects. "So we moved aggressively to not be caught short in the '70s when there was so much change."

Between the time of Miles' *Bitches Brew* and the end of the decade, the poll had added percussion, rock/blues group, rock/blues musician, rock/blues album, composer, synthesizer, organ and related electric categories. By the early '70s, jazz had reached such a point of such diversity, its identity threatened to be swallowed up into pop. In 1972, in one of those meaningful distortions that sometimes occur in polling, *The Inner Mounting Flame* by the Mahavishnu Orchestra was voted best jazz and pop album simultaneously. Still more categories arrived. Soul came in the '80s. Then rap, "world beat" and "beyond" in the '90s.

Has jazz balkanized into too many categories? Perhaps. "But you can't hold the poll responsible for what's right and wrong with jazz," says Suber. "It's only the messenger of what the readers are thinking. That's its value now and its value to history." Or, says Morgenstern, "You may like or dislike what it tells you, but you can't attack it. The poll follows the music."

That's been its essential mission since 1936. And today, the 60th-annual Down Beat Readers Poll continues to chart the change, birth, growth, death and rebirth of jazz from the audience's point of view. That is its unique value as a continuing document, and one that has outlasted similar attempts by competitors who have proved less enduring. It is a unique and continuing graph of shifting tastes and sensibilities as the fingers of a thousand musicians write and, having writ, move on.

DB



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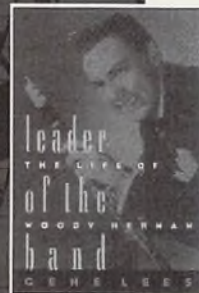


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## LEADER OF THE BAND

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*Oxford University Press*

# Hall of Fame & Trombone of the Year

## J.J. Johnson

470

### Hall Of Fame

- 158 J.J. Johnson
- 146 Don Pullen
- 88 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 85 Wayne Shorter
- 76 Milt Jackson
- 71 Horace Silver
- 71 McCoy Tyner
- 62 Carmen McRae
- 60 Stuff Smith
- 45 Arthur Taylor

### Trombone

- 312 J.J. Johnson
- 188 Steve Turre
- 173 Ray Anderson
- 125 Robin Eubanks
- 121 Curtis Fuller
- 85 Frank Lacy
- 43 Bill Watrous
- 42 George Lewis



JEAN MARC LUBRAND

By Ira Gitler

Considering that from the mid-'50s he was the most annual of poll-winning instrumentalists, even during the time in the '70s when he was not active as a player but occupied with writing for films and television, it is surprising that it took this long for J.J. Johnson to be voted into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Although the 1994 poll, in which he garnered 102 votes as runner-up to Dave Brubeck, served as a kind of indicator, the award nevertheless left the taciturn trombonist/composer/arranger/bandleader "flattered, honored and overwhelmed, and all of that good stuff."

Unlike the flamboyant and/or volatile personalities of the other giants to emerge

in the '40s, Johnson was always modest, generally softspoken and reserved. When he finally agreed to sit down for an article that eventually appeared in the May 11, 1961, issue of *DB*, he said, "On the premise that I am not especially witty, except on rare occasions, not particularly brainy, except on even rarer occasions, and have no particular beefs or gripes, and don't want to put anyone down, I had certain misgivings about doing the story."

I first heard him on 52nd Street in March of 1946. Dizzy Gillespie had returned from California and opened at the Spotlite with Leo Parker's baritone sax in place of Charlie Parker's alto. One night, Johnson, a gray felt beanie hanging from the bell of his trombone, sat in for a

couple of sets. The music called bebop was very new at the time, and to hear someone manipulating a slide through the intricate twists and turns of the music—then thought to be the exclusive province of Bird, Dizzy and Bud Powell—was as startling as it was exciting.

A few weeks later, when my friends and I were strolling down "The Street" one evening, we noticed a sign outside a club that read "J.J. Johnson Quartet featuring Bud Powell." We immediately went in and stayed all night in the relatively empty place, completely captivated by the ideas and swing of the two main protagonists. In June of that year, Johnson cut his first recordings as a leader, again with Powell and Cecil Payne's alto sax (he had not yet

taken up the baritone), thus making it a quintet. The first coupling to be issued from the four sides made on that date—"Coppin' The Bop" and "Jay Jay"—was soon in the hands of every young trombonist in the country and quite a few musicians of other instrumental persuasions.

I carried it off to my freshman year of college that fall. When I chanced to play it for some sidemen from the Raymond Scott band who had just played a dance at the university, they refused to believe that Johnson was not playing a valve trombone. It wasn't just his dexterity that was beginning to gather a legion of admirers in his wake, but the total package in which the formidable technique was a means rather than just an end.

James Louis Johnson (the J.J. comes from his first and last names; sometimes it became Jay Jay) was born in Indianapolis, Ind., on Jan. 22, 1924. He began on piano at 11 and cultivated an interest in jazz by listening to the recordings of Basie, Lunceford and Ellington. He was persuaded to take up the trombone by his peers because none of these other young musicians were playing the instrument.

The year after graduating from high school, 1942, J.J. left town with the Snookum Russell band, which included trumpeter Fats Navarro, who, while only four months older, exerted an influence on him. Johnson was well aware of all the major trombone stylists but has cited Fred Beckett, who played with Harlan Leonard's band out of Kansas City and later with Lionel Hampton, as someone whose "tremendous facilities for linear improvisation... made a very lasting impression on me."

However, it was saxophonists and trumpeters who were his major inspirations, first Lester Young and Roy Eldridge, and then Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.

It was still in 1942 that the Russell band hit some tough times and J.J. found himself back home again in Indianapolis. Benny Carter was in town with his orchestra en route from New York to California and needed a trombonist. A reluctant Johnson auditioned and was hired. He has called his three years with Carter as "one continuous education in music."

He began to be heard on record with Carter, the first Jazz at the Philharmonic concert (where he sounded more like J.C. Higginbotham than the J.J. Johnson he would soon become) and Basie, whose band he joined in 1945. After establishing himself in New York, he toured from 1947-49 with the small band of Illinois Jacquet. He then spent time with Woody Herman and Dizzy Gillespie and toured the Far East with Oscar Pettiford's combo for the USO.

In the early '50s, discouraged by conditions in the music business, Johnson took a job as a blueprint inspector with the Sperry Gyroscope Company. Then, in 1954, a two-trombone date with Kai Winding for Savoy Records led to the formation of Jay & Kai, one of the many successful groups in a decade when high-level combo jazz reached its greatest popularity with America's young audiences. When the two 'bone men went their separate ways, J.J. began to emerge as a leader of his own quintets and sextets. It was in this context that he began to really develop his composing and arranging talents, which were then translated into orchestral concepts for pieces such as *El Camino Real*, *Sketch For Trombone And Orchestra*, *Perceptions* (for Dizzy Gillespie) and *Poem For Brass*.

In 1970 he moved from New Jersey to California, and by '75 was concentrating almost exclusively on film and television scoring. It was a happy day for jazz fans when Johnson, in 1984, signalled his return to active playing with a tour of the European festival circuit and became increasingly active as a playing bandleader. When, in 1988, he moved back to Indianapolis it did not diminish his resurgence. In this modern age you only need be somewhat proximitous to a major airport and you are in business.

His association with Polygram, first on Antilles and then Verve, has produced albums representative of his quintet and includes an ambitious orchestral collaboration with Robert Farnon.

A typical engagement this year at the Blue Note brought out many of New York's prominent musicians with more than a fair sprinkling of trombonists in their number. Trombone great Al Grey, a master in his own right who came to spend some dressing-room time with J.J., as well as to listen, said, "There is no doubt that he is the greatest ad lib jazz trombonist in history. His mastery of the alternates, the ability to make the same note in the 7th position without having to jump back up to the first position, gave him the incredible flexibility and fluidity that has influenced every trombonist to come up after him."

Johnson's life is active but less hurried. He is able to come off the road for longer periods to recharge the batteries, reflect and perhaps conceive a new piece at his own pace. He cancelled his concert at Lincoln Center, originally slated for November, but expects to tour in Japan "sometime after the first of the year" with his current group: Dan Faulk, tenor saxophone; Renee Rosnes, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; and Bruce Cox, drums.

We are fortunate to have a giant such as J.J. Johnson among us, at the height of his powers and still deeply dedicated to his music.

DB

## 1 Hall Of Fame, 2 Ways To Get In

Legends in jazz, blues & beyond can be elected into the Down Beat Hall of Fame by way of the annual Readers Poll (published each December) or Critics Poll (each August). It all started in 1952 with the Readers; the Critics got into the game later, in 1961. With this month's addition of J.J. Johnson, there are currently 84 DB Hall-of-Famers, listed below in chronological order of their induction. —ed.

### Readers Poll

1952 Louis Armstrong

1953 Glenn Miller

1954 Stan Kenton

1955 Charlie Parker

1956 Duke Ellington

1957 Benny Goodman

1958 Count Basie

1959 Lester Young

1960 Dizzy Gillespie

1961 Billie Holiday

1962 Miles Davis

1963 Thelonious Monk

1964 Eric Dolphy

1965 John Coltrane

1966 Bud Powell

1967 Billy Strayhorn

1968 Wes Montgomery

1969 Ornette Coleman

1970 Jimi Hendrix

1971 Charles Mingus

1972 Gene Krupa

1973 Sonny Rollins

1974 Buddy Rich

1975 Cannonball Adderley

1976 Woody Herman

1977 Paul Desmond

1978 Joe Venuti

1979 Ella Fitzgerald

1980 Dexter Gordon

1981 Art Blakey

1982 Art Pepper

1983 Stephane Grappelli

1984 Oscar Peterson

1985 Sarah Vaughan

1986 Stan Getz

1987 Lionel Hampton

1988 Jaco Pastorius

1988 Woody Shaw

1990 Red Rodney

1991 Lee Morgan

1992 Maynard Ferguson

1993 Gerry Mulligan

1994 Dave Brubeck

1995 J.J. Johnson

### Critics Poll

Coleman Hawkins

Bix Beiderbecke

Jelly Roll Morton

Art Tatum

Earl Hines

Charlie Christian

Bessie Smith

Sidney Bechet &

Fats Waller

Pee Wee Russell &

Jack Teagarden

Johnny Hodges

Roy Eldridge &

Django Reinhardt

Clifford Brown

Fletcher Henderson

Ben Webster

Cecil Taylor

King Oliver

Benny Carter

Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Lennie Tristano

Max Roach

Bill Evans

Fats Navarro

Albert Ayler

Sun Ra

Zoot Sims

Gil Evans

Johnny Dodds,

Thad Jones &

Teddy Wilson

Kenny Clarke

Chet Baker

Mary Lou Williams

John Carter

James P. Johnson

Edward Blackwell

Frank Zappa

Julius Hemphill



R. ANDREW LEPLEY

# Jazz Musician, Jazz Album & Tenor Sax of the Year

# 1209 Joe Lovano

## Jazz Musician

- 410 **Joe Lovano**
- 357 James Carter
- 138 Charlie Haden
- 138 Joe Henderson
- 86 David Murray
- 85 Wynton Marsalis
- 45 Joshua Redman

## Jazz Album

- 381 **Rush Hour, Joe Lovano & Gunther Schuller** (Blue Note)
- 238 **Double Rainbow, Joe Henderson** (Verve)
- 128 **Mood Swing, Joshua Redman** (Warner Bros.)
- 124 **JC On The Set, James Carter** (DIW/ Columbia)
- 89 **Going Back Home, Ginger Baker** (Atlantic)
- 83 **Dancing To A Different Drummer, Chico Hamilton** (Soul Note)
- 83 **Gettin' To It, Christian McBride** (Verve)

## Tenor Saxophone

- 418 **Joe Lovano**
- 302 Joe Henderson
- 265 Sonny Rollins
- 253 James Carter
- 249 Joshua Redman
- 241 David Murray
- 119 Wayne Shorter
- 117 Michael Brecker
- 111 Branford Marsalis

**H**ow can you account for reedman Joe Lovano's remarkable hat-trick in the 1995 Down Beat Readers Poll, winning *Jazz Album of the Year*, *Jazz Musician of the Year* and the top spot for Tenor Saxophone? I'll venture this: Apart from his status as a mainstream tenor hero, he appeals to a variety of audiences as an independent thinker willing to experiment and uneasy with pigeonholes. "I never wanted to get caught up in a certain style," he says, sipping espresso after an in-store appearance with bassist Anthony Cox at Chicago's Jazz Record Mart. "I've studied all the styles of jazz. The attitude is really important: to keep an open mind and openness for the world of music."

Indeed, Lovano has proven comfortable in a remarkable number of settings, whether it's playing standards with a tenor trio, playing in organ groups, working in Ornette Coleman's territory with Edward Blackwell, or even dropping in to play free improvised music with British innovator Evan Parker as he did last June at Parker's 50th birthday party. Even playing in a trio with Cox and drummer Tony Reedus at Chicago's Jazz Showcase, Lovano is courageous enough to take some chances on freer material, something he says often perks up listeners' ears. "I have a lot of relationships with a lot of musicians," he explains. "I've experienced different kinds of ways to improvise. Jazz is a music of personal expression and experience. A lot of people focus on one stylistic area. But for me, jazz is a beautiful music of expression, and it should really be *your life*, and what you've experienced should come out of your horn."

Consider the breadth of his

accomplishments over the last couple of seasons. Alongside the trio with drummer Paul Motian and guitarist Bill Frisell, a new project with Mike Mainieri and his Universal Language ensemble, there's *Rush Hour*, the highly inventive collaboration with Gunther Schuller that earned Album of the Year in both the Critics and Readers Polls (see "CD Reviews" May '95).

On a more straightahead front, Lovano is excited about recent work with guitarist Jim Hall, including an impending trip to Japan with Grand Slam, a supergroup with Hall, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Lewis Nash. "Jim Hall grew up in Cleveland, knows my father, knows my uncle Carl, knew my grandmother! And he's a really expansive musician, too. He's very contemporary and influenced people like Frisell. The greatest improvisers, for me, were very free players. Coleman Hawkins was probably one of the first really free improvisers, and he's one of the fathers of jazz. He was a complete free player and a real inspiration to me."

As for his ongoing success in the polls, Lovano is suitably humble. "I'm just happy to know that people are there listening. And just to be mentioned in a poll with Sonny Rollins and Joe Henderson," he shakes his head, "that's such an honor. I've learned how to play listening to them." But he also feels the edge age has given him. "If I was 22, 23 years old and had a chance to do some projects, I would have made records that sounded like my favorite records," he admits. "But playing with bands over the years gave me a lot of ideas—Woody Herman, Mel Lewis, Carla Bley, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. Now it has developed into *my* music."  
 —John Corbett





KEI FRANCIS/US

# Trumpeter of the Year **323** **Roy Hargrove**

- 302 Wynton Marsalis**
- 260 Lester Bowie**
- 259 Tom Harrell**
- 145 Wallace Roney**
- 126 Clark Terry**
- 116 Art Farmer**
- 116 Arturo Sandoval**
- 84 Nicholas Payton**

**R**oy Hargrove is on the rise, ousting perennial kingpin Wynton Marsalis as Trumpeter of the Year in the 1995 Readers Poll.

For the younger Hargrove, who turned 26 on Oct. 16, the rise hasn't been as meteoric as Marsalis', but it's been just as rewarding critically as it has been on the popularity front. Recognized as a sophisticated trumpeter by the critics from the get-go, Hargrove now enjoys increasing popularity among DB readers in part because of his level of maturity as a player (even if the same can't be said of his dealings off the bandstand and with the press). His understanding of ballads and the emotive quality of each note, and his embrace of thematic elements readily accessible to the public on this year's *Family* (Verve) and *Parker's Mood* (Verve) helped catapult him to a banner year in 1995.

To communicate clearly with a high level of emotion and sensitivity is a goal Hargrove strives for whether he is approaching the subtleties of a ballad or maneuvering through the intricate patterns of an uptempo burner.

"It's very different playing an uptempo song and playing a ballad," says Hargrove. "I believe any kind of song that you play you should try to put as much

feeling and emotion into it as possible. Playing a ballad requires a lot of maturity. I enjoy playing ballads, especially when it comes to tunes with really nice lyrics. I listen to quite a few singers like Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Shirley Horn. These are people I like to listen to in terms of the conception of ballads. It helps me to know the lyrics of a song that I'm playing, because then I can really understand what the tune is about."

That kind of insight has won Hargrove increasing recognition from DB critics as well. While Marsalis reigned again in this year's Critics Poll with 147 votes to Hargrove's 79, Roy placed second for the first time, moving up considerably from his place in the 1994 poll. Part of the reappraisal of Hargrove's talents by critics arises from his willingness this past year to take some chances in his quintet writing.

"I've been experimenting a lot, writing tunes without tempo, in a very rubato style," says Hargrove. "When you have a good working ensemble, the cats are really familiar with your phrasing. It's good to have some tunes that they have to really use their ears to follow where it's going and listen to the melody. I like to make the resolution of a chord sound a little different than traditional."

The duel between Hargrove and Marsalis has not been a combative one, though. There's not the one-upmanship or overblowing forays on a competitive stage to see who can hit the highest notes or tear the house down with stunning solos.

Hargrove, in fact, owes a lot to Marsalis for his success, and he invited the trumpeter along with tenor saxist/flutist David "Fathead" Newman, another early mentor, and other guests to join

him for *Family*, his tribute to his relatives and musical colleagues. Hargrove's association with Marsalis even goes back to his days in Mart, Texas, when Marsalis discovered the young trumpeter during a seminar he gave at Hargrove's high school. Hargrove's first big break came when at age 17 he sat in with Marsalis at Fort Worth's Caravan of Dreams Arts Center.

As a leader of his quintet, Hargrove makes his annual visit to New York's Village Vanguard, where he introduced new members Karriem Riggins on drums and Reuben Rogers on bass alongside his regulars Stephen Scott on piano and Ron Blake on tenor and soprano saxes. After the quintet's September gig with guest Larry Willis at Baltimore's Left Bank Jazz Society, they headed to Japan, Chicago and Washington, D.C., before departing for Brazil in October.

Nights at Bradley's in New York, performing in duo and trio (without a drummer) with the likes of John Hicks, Walter Booker and Ray Drummond helped prepare Hargrove for his *Parker's Mood* with bassist Christian McBride and pianist Scott. For Hargrove, the project took him back to his Texas roots.

Hargrove's made his mark not only as a leader; apart from his work with Marsalis in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and with Slide Hampton's JazzMasters, Hargrove has recorded in 1995 with Johnny Griffin on *Chicago, New York, Paris* (Verve), Abbey Lincoln on *Turtle Dreams* (Gitanes/Verve), Shirley Horn on the tune "The Meaning Of The Blues" from her forthcoming CD, Dianne Reeves on *Quiet After The Storm* (Blue Note), with Christian McBride on *Gettin' To It* (Verve) and Jimmy Smith on *Damn!* (Verve).  
 —Robert Hicks



## Drummer of the Year Elvin Jones

KEVIN FRANKLIN/LENG

- 269 Max Roach
- 153 Roy Haynes
- 149 Jack DeJohnette
- 127 Marvin "Smitty" Smith
- 122 Billy Higgins
- 118 Tony Williams
- 56 Chico Hamilton
- 45 Victor Lewis
- 43 Louie Bellson

It's been 16 years since Elvin Jones won a **Down Beat** poll. This year, to make the story more dramatic, the 68-

year-old Jones walked off with Drum awards from both the readers and critics. Thanks to a revitalized recording career, guest appearances on recordings with Javon Jackson, John McLaughlin and Steve Grossman, as well as a healthy amount of reissues, Jones is again in the jazz public's eye. Elvin's renewed recording activity as leader on the enja label includes *Youngblood* (1992), featuring Jackson and Joshua Redman; *Going Home* (1993), with Ravi Coltrane; and *When I Was At Asomountain* (1993), with Takehisa Tanaka. And on 1994's *It Don't Mean A Thing*, Elvin plays some free-spirited granite grooves that transcend time.

If Jones wasn't as visible a presence in this country during the 1980s, it's more a statement about American record companies than anything else (fortunately the Japanese and Germans were rolling the tapes during that time). But American

companies are getting into the act now with some timeless reissues. GRP has undertaken an Impulse! reissue campaign that has seen the resurfacing of albums featuring Elvin like John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, *Transistion*, *Ascension*, *Ballads*, *Dear John C.*; Sonny Rollins' *East Broadway Rundown*; McCoy Tyner's debut album, *Inception*; and *Heavy Sounds* by Elvin and longtime bass favorite Richard Davis. Extraordinary Blue Note dates featuring Jones have been remastered on CD, like Freddie Hubbard's *Ready For Freddie*, Larry Young's *Unity* and Ornette Coleman/Dewey Redman's *New York Is Now!* Evidence reissues like *Very Rare* with Art Pepper and *Love And Peace* with McCoy Tyner and Pharoah Sanders are Japanese recordings that fill in some of the gaps in the history of the Jazz Machine. And recordings continue to surface like Elvin's *A Love Supreme Live In Concert* (Black Label) and Miles Davis' *Blue Moods* (Debut Records).

Jackson, who titled his 1993 debut album *Me And Mr. Jones* (Criss Cross), speaks of E.J. with reverence. "The way he plays is so definitive, there's so much feeling and emotion. Elvin is very intuitive, but he's also a very studied musician. And everytime he hits the stage it's very, very serious." —Robin Tolleson

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BY ANDREW LEFLEY

## Female Singer of the Year Cassandra Wilson

- 199 Betty Carter
- 148 Abbey Lincoln
- 138 Shirley Horn
- 125 Judi Silvano
- 122 Ella Fitzgerald
- 111 Dee Dee Bridgewater
- 88 Sheila Jordan

It is a rare accomplishment for a musician to be a popular choice, critically acclaimed and commercially successful, but this musical trifecta seems to be within reach for vocalist Cassandra Wilson. Wilson, whose *Blue*

Poll (Aug. '95).

"Getting recognition from the readers means a great deal to me," says Wilson. "It means that they are digging what I'm doing, and this recognition is also good for the music. And getting a nod from the critics is equally important, because they understand the history of the music and your place in it."

She is not exactly sure why she is such a consistent favorite for our readers. "Maybe they just like my fat, chunky sound," she laughs. "But, more seriously, I hope it's because they are hearing something fresh and that they approve of my attempt to extend the path of the music, to expand the vocabulary; that's

*Light 'Til Dawn* (Blue Note) garnered exceptional reviews and has sold more than 250,000 copies internationally, is once again the top Female Singer of the Readers Poll. She also came in second in this year's Critics

what jazz is all about."

And what Wilson is all about is partly seen in her musical diversity, her penchant to pluck her selections from a variety of genres and styles. "The music is all open," she continues, "and we should tap into all of it. You can leave me out of all discussions and arguments about what jazz is. I'm too busy for the discourse at the moment."

Wilson willingly expresses how she feels about other singers, especially Aminata Moseka (Abbey Lincoln) and Betty Carter, who, until last year, was the reigning diva of the Readers Poll.

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for Betty," she says. "We have some interesting vibes between us, but she has my admiration, which I find difficult to convey at times. There is a distance between us and that may stem from our lack of communication. Aminata, on the other hand, is much closer to me. One of the things that hampers relations among singers is the ego; we've got to transcend this problem."

Hurdling this obstacle should be of little consequence for a vocalist who has made it to this rarefied plateau and who possesses such unlimited potential.

—Herb Boyd

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# DOWN BEAT'S

# 1936-1995 60<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL READERS POLL

476

Jazz Acoustic Group  
Charlie Haden/Quartet West



# ...continued

## Jazz Acoustic Group

- 476** Charlie Haden/  
Quartet West
- 345 Wynton Marsalis  
138 Keith Jarrett  
132 Joe Lovano  
125 Phil Woods  
124 Modern Jazz Quartet  
91 Art Ensemble of Chicago  
91 Roy Hargrove  
88 Joshua Redman

- 130 Carla Bley  
130 Benny Carter  
122 Toshiko Akiyoshi  
118 Anthony Braxton  
75 Maria Schneider  
73 Gunther Schuller  
40 Wayne Shorter

## Jazz Electric Group

- 284** John Scofield
- 282 Pat Metheny  
168 Ornette Coleman &  
Prime Time  
128 Bill Frisell  
123 Yellowjackets  
86 Steve Coleman &  
Five Elements  
85 Chico Hamilton  
84 Chick Corea  
79 Henry Threadgill's  
Very Very Circus  
76 Joe Lovano

## Arranger

- 281** Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 254 Carla Bley  
143 Gunther Schuller  
142 Maria Schneider  
122 Joe Lovano  
120 Benny Carter  
110 Frank Foster  
55 Henry Threadgill  
37 Michael Urbaniak



**341**  
Soprano Sax  
Steve Lacy



**261**  
Composer  
Henry Threadgill

## Soprano Saxophone

- 341** Steve Lacy
- 306 Wayne Shorter  
269 Branford Marsalis  
78 David Liebman  
77 Jane Ira Bloom  
74 Eric Person  
72 James Carter  
69 Jane Bunnett  
65 Bob Wilber

## Jazz Big Band

- 508** McCoy Tyner
- 460 Count Basie Orchestra  
215 Akiyoshi/Tabackin  
146 Charlie Haden's Liberation  
Music Orchestra  
81 Maria Schneider  
78 Mingus Big Band  
71 David Murray  
70 Lincoln Center  
Jazz Orchestra  
67 GRP All-Stars

## Alto Saxophone

- 205** Phil Woods
- 195 Kenny Garrett  
168 Ornette Coleman  
143 Jackie McLean  
123 Bobby Watson  
119 Frank Morgan  
98 Antonio Hart  
97 Joe Lovano  
96 Gary Bartz  
85 Vincent Herring

## Composer

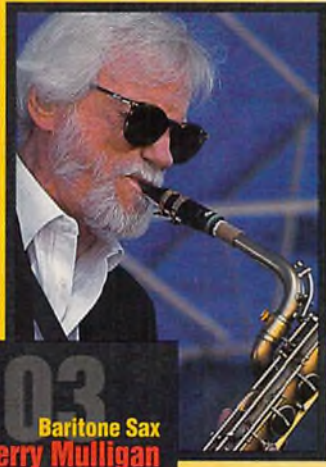
- 261** Henry Threadgill
- 250 Randy Weston  
231 Joe Lovano



**508**  
Jazz Big Band  
McCoy Tyner

# DOWN BEAT'S

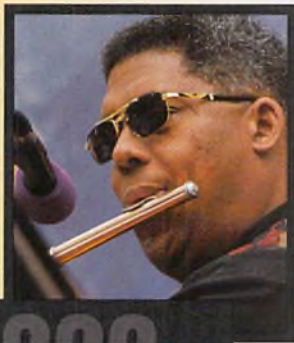
1936 - 1995  
**60<sup>th</sup>**  
 ANNUAL  
**READERS POLL**



**203**  
 Baritone Sax  
**Gerry Mulligan**



**393**  
 Clarinet  
**Don Byron**



**222**  
 Flute  
**James Newton**

## Baritone Saxophone

- 203 Gerry Mulligan**  
 187 James Carter  
 173 Hamiet Bluiett  
 165 Nick Brignola  
 93 John Surman  
 92 Ronnie Cuber  
 85 Cecil Payne

## Clarinet

- 393 Don Byron**  
 337 Eddie Daniels  
 138 Buddy DeFranco  
 65 Ken Peplowski  
 41 Alvin Batiste  
 40 Phil Woods  
 37 Paquito D'Rivera

## Flute

- 222 James Newton**  
 161 Lew Tabackin  
 144 James Moody  
 97 Hubert Laws  
 88 Kent Jordon  
 88 Dave Valentin  
 60 Frank Wess  
 44 Henry Threadgill  
 43 Herbie Mann  
 42 Don Byron

## Synthesizer

- 212 Herbie Hancock**  
 202 Joe Zawinul  
 141 Lyle Mays  
 135 Chick Corea  
 92 Wayne Horvitz

## Acoustic Piano

- 261 Tommy Flanagan**  
 256 Kenny Barron  
 250 McCoy Tyner  
 240 Keith Jarrett  
 134 Cyrus Chestnut  
 130 Oscar Peterson  
 129 Cecil Taylor  
 126 Hank Jones  
 77 Gonzalo Rubalcaba  
 74 Chick Corea

## Organ

- 319 Jimmy Smith**  
 298 Joey DeFrancesco  
 146 Don Pullen  
 94 Amina Claudine Myers  
 41 Larry Goldings  
 36 John Medeski  
 30 Jimmy McGriff  
 30 Dan Wall

## Acoustic Guitar

- 291 John McLaughlin**  
 172 Jim Hall  
 144 Kenny Burrell  
 125 Kevin Eubanks  
 116 Joe Pass  
 112 Ralph Towner

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- 382 Charlie Haden**  
 193 Christian McBride  
 179 Ray Brown  
 152 Ron Carter  
 147 Dave Holland  
 43 Buster Williams  
 30 Kenny Davis  
 30 Gary Peacock

## Electric Guitar

- 389 John Scofield**  
 176 Bill Frisell  
 167 Pat Metheny  
 64 Kenny Burrell  
 63 Jim Hall  
 63 Mark Whitfield  
 33 George Benson  
 32 Herb Ellis  
 31 John McLaughlin

## Electric Bass

- 230 Steve Swallow**  
 146 Marcus Miller  
 142 John Patitucci  
 132 Stanley Clarke  
 63 Bob Cranshaw  
 55 Ray Brown  
 42 Christian McBride

## Percussion

- 384 Airtio Moriera**  
 269 Tito Puente  
 268 Trilok Gurtu  
 146 Famoudou Don Moya

- 133 Nana Vasconcelos  
 53 Don Alias  
 45 Jerry Gonzalez  
 27 Kahil El'Zabar

## Vibes

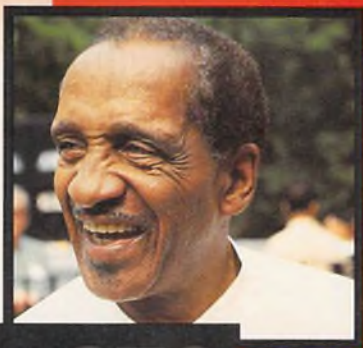
- 370 Milt Jackson**  
 284 Gary Burton  
 270 Bobby Hutcherson  
 137 Steve Nelson  
 60 Roy Ayers  
 53 Lionel Hampton  
 49 Mike Mainieri  
 36 Jay Hoggard  
 34 Terry Gibbs

## Violin

- 235 Stephane Grappelli**  
 154 Billy Bang  
 149 Jean-Luc Ponty  
 99 John Blake  
 67 Mark Feldman  
 55 Michael Urbaniak  
 51 Leroy Jenkins  
 14 Claude Williams

## Misc. Instrument

- 336 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)**  
 170 David Murray (bass clarinet)  
 149 Steve Turre (shells)  
 46 Bela Fleck (banjo)  
 44 Howard Johnson (tuba)  
 30 Don Byron (bass clarinet)



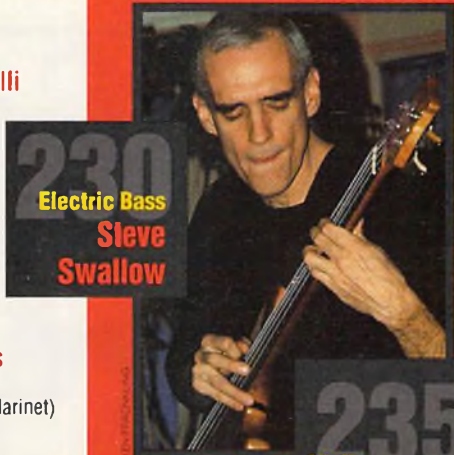
**Vibes**  
**370**  
**Milt Jackson**



**384**  
**Percussion**  
**Airtio Moriera**



**319**  
**Organ**  
**Jimmy Smith**



**230**  
**Electric Bass**  
**Steve Swallow**



**235**  
**Violin**  
**Stephane Grappelli**

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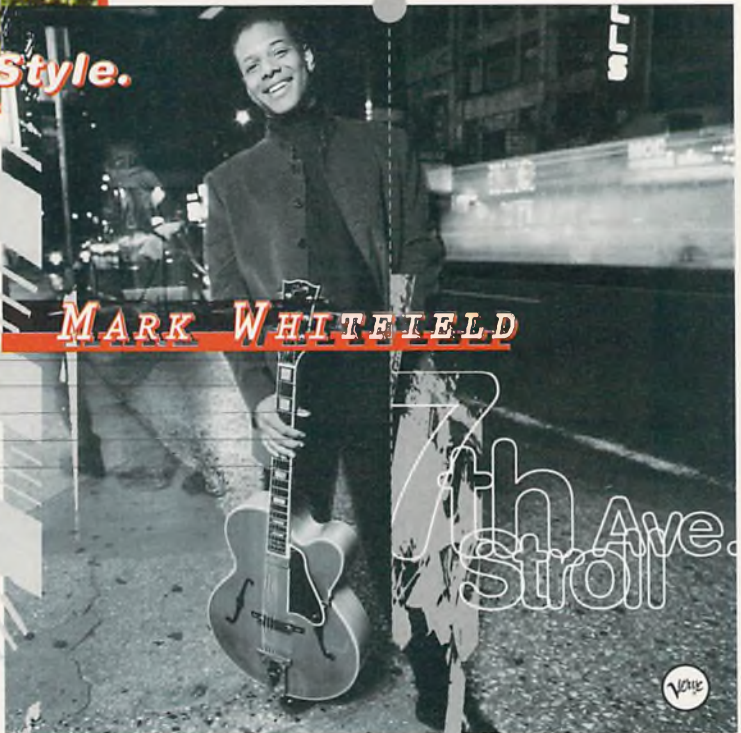
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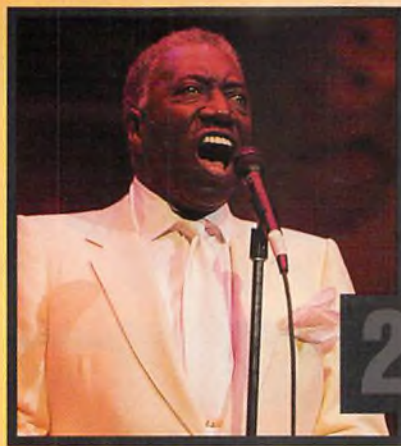


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**DOWN BEAT'S**  
1936-1995  
**60<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL**  
**READERS POLL**



SPARKY BYRD

**227** Male Singer  
**Joe Williams**

**Male Singer**

- 227 Joe Williams
- 171 Kevin Mahogany
- 155 Tony Bennett
- 150 Mel Tormé
- 134 Bobby McFerrin
- 81 Jimmy Scott
- 70 Mark Murphy
- 67 Jon Hendricks
- 34 Ray Charles
- 22 Michael Franks

**Vocal Group**

- 237 Take 6
- 180 Manhattan Transfer
- 152 New York Voices
- 140 Hendricks Family
- 134 Jackie & Roy
- 94 Zap Mama
- 83 Sweet Honey in the Rock



**255** Blues/Soul/R&B Album  
**Buddy Guy**



DAVID HOYTH

**237** Vocal Group  
**Take 6**

**Blues/Soul/R&B Album**

- 255 *Slippin' In*, Buddy Guy (Silvertone)
- 232 *From The Cradle*, Eric Clapton (Duck)
- 121 *These Blues*, Charles Brown (Verve)
- 112 *Ain't Enough Coming In*, Otis Rush (Mercury)
- 72 *Chill Out*, John Lee Hooker (Pointblank)
- 41 *Heart To Heart*, Diane Schuur/B.B. King (GRP)

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**Blues/Soul/R&B Musician**

- 377 **Buddy Guy**
- 261 B.B. King
- 123 Eric Clapton
- 91 Charles Brown
- 76 Al Green
- 76 John Lee Hooker
- 75 Otis Rush
- 73 Stevie Wonder

**Blues/Soul/R&B Group**

- 278 **B. B. King**
- 147 Buddy Guy
- 95 Robert Cray
- 95 Otis Rush
- 93 Neville Brothers
- 92 Boyz II Men

**Beyond Album**

- 133 **Palmas, Eddie Palmieri (Elektra/Nonesuch)**
- 121 *The Trance Of Seven Colors*, Maleem Mahmoud Ghania & Pharoah Sanders (Axiom)
- 117 *HIStory*, Michael Jackson (Epic)
- 113 *Turbulent Indigo*, Joni Mitchell (Reprise)
- 73 *Buckshot LeFonque*, Buckshot LeFonque (Columbia)

- 72 *Live At The BBC*, The Beatles (Capitol)
- 70 *Sleeps With Angels*, Neil Young (Reprise)

**Beyond Musician**

- 237 **Dr. John**
- 231 Eddie Palmieri
- 122 Joni Mitchell
- 120 Michael Jackson
- 119 Milton Nascimento
- 98 Joe Lovano
- 98 Sting
- 62 Jerry Garcia

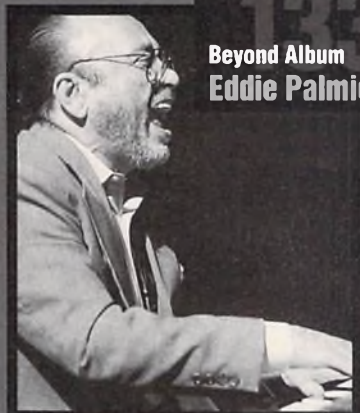
**Beyond Group**

- 140 **Jerry Gonzalez Fort Apache**
- 131 Neville Brothers
- 93 Kronos Quartet
- 78 Joe Lovano
- 64 King Crimson
- 51 Morphine

**278**  
Blues/Soul/R&B Group  
**B. B. King**



**377**  
Blues/Soul/R&B Musician  
**Buddy Guy**



**133**  
Beyond Album  
**Eddie Palmieri**

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# Mike Mainieri's

# Big

## IDEA



By Larry Birnbaum

**Y**ou might call Mike Mainieri an overachiever. Maybe he's spread himself too thin, mastered too many styles, accomplished too much for his own good. After all, he played with Billie Holiday, Wes Montgomery and Dizzy Gillespie, helped pioneer jazz-rock fusion, led the band Steps Ahead to worldwide

fame and performed, composed, produced and arranged for pop albums by everyone from Paul Smith to Aerosmith. But with the rise of neo-bop, his reputation has suffered, at least in the United States. "I'm not going to get help from the critics," he says, "because I'm one of the cats who 'sold out' in the '70s. You know, 'He's a just a session player; he's not really a serious musician.' But

most of my contemporaries know that I'm one of the foremost jazz vibraphonists in the country, and I'll say that without any hesitation. So how do you get yourself out there when you're 57 years old and you're not a legend?"

For Mainieri, the solution has been to form his own label, NYC Records, which now boasts a roster of 20 albums, including *An American Diary*, featuring improvised takes on the works of American classical composers—Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber, William Grant Still, even Frank Zappa—performed by Mainieri with Joe Lovano on saxophones, and former Stepsers Eddie Gomez and Peter Erskine on bass and drums. "When I first played the Copland sonata on piano," Mainieri explains, "I said this could be like Monk sitting down and starting a piece. So why not take it a step further, as if after Copland sat down and wrote this line, somebody like Monk or Bud Powell sat down right next to him and started improvising on the top of the piano? And that was the spark, the inception of the whole album."

"*An American Diary* is certainly a challenging concept," says Gomez. "I don't think there are too many musicians who could play that music given the challenge of actually playing the pieces and then being free and creative and spiritual enough to make it work in a so-called jazz context. I think it's dangerous to try and put two languages together, but we were able to pull it off. Mike gathered the music and arranged it and put it together in such a way that there was room for us to make it happen. It was quite a vision."

"It's much looser than Steps was," adds Erskine. "It's got a much different tone. Lots of things can happen when Lovano's playing, in terms of the music going sideways. The other differences between this and Steps is that the only harmonic instrument is the vibes. We don't have another keyboard or a guitar, so it's much more open."

Another NYC release, *Vibe*, displays Mainieri in the funky, electric context of Steps Ahead, which in its latest incarnation includes Rachel Z on keyboards, Donny McCaslin on saxophones, James Genus on bass and Clarence Penn—better known as a stalwart of the Betty Carter and Cyrus Chestnut bands—on drums. "I have to commend Clarence," said Mainieri, "because a lot of young black musicians take a chance playing with me, in terms of losing their credibility in the clique. But the strange thing is that a lot of these musicians grew up listening to the groups like mine. They know all the tunes, and they love playing the music. That is what they listen to when they're on the road."

"Here in the States, it's easier for critics to dismiss a band saying, 'Okay, there's an electric bass—it's fusion.' Whereas 90 percent of our work is in Europe and the Far East, and they're much more open to how well you play and whether the music is interesting. It's not labeled. I mean, I was only on the stage opposite Miles and Trane and all these people, and once you've heard the originals, it's really difficult to get excited about the hot new tenor saxophone player of the year. I understand that the young people need their contemporary heroes, but the idea that this is some kind of new music or carrying on a certain tradition is debatable, as far as I'm concerned."

took us on the road with him, and we did all of his radio and TV shows and some of his concerts. And meanwhile I took classical lessons on timpani, drums and vibraphone, preparing for my entrance to Julliard. But I never made it to Julliard; I wound up going to the University of Buddy Rich instead."

He was all of 17 when he joined Rich's band in 1956. As he tells it: "Buddy hadn't played in a year or so, and there was this big comeback night at the Village Gate. This friend of mine said, 'Maybe I can talk him into letting you sit in,' so my father took me downtown with my vibes, and I'm waiting in the wings. Finally on the third set, Buddy said, 'We've got this kid in the

**"Here in the States,  
it's easier for critics to dismiss a band saying,  
'Okay, there's an electric bass—it's fusion.'  
Whereas 90 percent of our work is in Europe  
and the Far East, they're much more  
open....[I]t's not labeled."**

**M**ainieri's musical odyssey began in the Bronx, where he was born into an Italian Jewish family that traces its lineage to a Renaissance portrait painter who changed his name from Mordecai ben Elijah to Angelo D'Elia. "My grandfather was into opera, and he played some french horn," Mainieri recounts. "My father was a tap dancer in vaudeville and a jazz buff, and my uncles were jazz fans, so they were constantly dragging me down to Broadway to catch all the big bands. My step-grandfather was a jazz guitarist, and he had records by the Tal Farlow-Red Norvo-Charlie Mingus trio and all the Benny Goodman records, where I heard Lionel Hampton. Hampton was the first vibraphonist I heard, but my mother was listening to Marjorie Hyams, who had her own radio show back in the '40s. But I heard Hampton live, and I was impressed by the fact that he tap-danced. So as a 10-year-old I said that's what I want to play."

At 12 Mainieri was studying with Lem Leach, who taught him the unorthodox four-mallet technique he still uses today. "My first lesson was like 'Tea For Two,'" he says, "and within two years I had a trio with a bass player and a young lady playing guitar. We won this Paul Whiteman talent contest, and Whiteman

audience who says he can play the vibes, but it looks like he's got his father's suit on.' I got on stage and he counted off this unbelievably fast tempo to rattle me, and I played about 40 choruses. And after the audience gave me a standing ovation, he got up at the microphone and said, 'Well, I guess I've got to hire this kid.' A week later I was working with him at Birdland. Then he fired the band, kept me, and I became like the surrogate band leader. He said, 'You hire who you want and write the arrangements. I don't give a shit.'"

Mainieri's five-year tenure with Rich's combo culminated in a disastrous State Department-sponsored tour of Asia in 1962. "We were backing up a bunch vaudeville-type acts," he says, "and at the end of the show, the band would play five tunes for this audience of 450,000 Afghans in the middle of the desert who were mostly interested in the guy who made the animals out of balloons. We went to Iran, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and after about eight weeks, Buddy had had it. He was used to four-star hotels and we were sleeping in dumps. He said to me, 'Mike, we're going back, you and I. We're getting out of here tomorrow. We'll leave the band, go back to New York and start another band.' I said, 'Buddy, we can't leave the guys here,' because I had hired these guys. He said, 'You're right,' and the next day he was gone. And I played

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drums for the rest of the tour, billed as Buddy Rich. What did they know in Laos?"

Back home Mainieri made up with Rich and, after a year, toured with him one last time. "My experience with Buddy was positive, not negative," he says. "He practically adopted me, and I had a great time with him. We had a lot of things in common. We both came from show-business families; we were both tap-dancers, we both had our tempers and our temperaments, and we both had this love for each other. My starting salary with Buddy was like \$98 a week, and you lived in these little rooming houses and shared rooms with other guys. You cooked together; you lived together; you drove all night and you didn't complain, because you had a gig, and you were happy. You didn't expect much, because you were playing jazz."

But with a family to support, Mainieri settled in New York and spent the remainder of the '60s doing commercial studio work, meanwhile plugging into a band led by flutist Jeremy Steig. "It wasn't called Jeremy & the Satyrs then," says Mainieri, "but they were starting to work with this blues singer by the name of Adrian Guillery, and that's when the band started forming this hybrid. I was trying to redefine and rediscover myself musically, and the idea that this improvisational music could be opened up to a lot more people was very intriguing. The public thinks that Miles Davis had the first fusion band, but it was happening much earlier than that, and I think Jeremy's band was the first one. I had an amplified vibraphone, and Warren Bernhardt was playing electric clavinet. Hal Gaylor was playing bass with us for a while, and then Eddie Gomez. We had an upright bass, so it wasn't totally electric, but it was slamming."

Later in the decade, Mainieri formed a loosely knit rehearsal ensemble called White Elephant. "Around 11 o'clock at night, when all of the session musicians would wind down," he says, "I had the opportunity to use a large studio called A&R. So I said I'll start inviting some cats, and we'll just get together and play. It started with Donald McDonald, Warren Bernhardt, Tony Levin, Sam Brown and Joe Beck. Steve Gadd came into the picture a little later, and we'd just go there and jam. The Brecker Brothers started showing up, and horn players like Ronnie Cuber, and everybody was coming there just to hang out and have a good time. I started writing more arrangements, and we were doing some rock tunes, and it became sort of a tribal experience."

"We recorded a lot of this stuff, and we wound up actually taking this band out on the road for about five or six gigs. The first gig was at the Village Gate, and there were 25 people in the band."

"But out of that White Elephant band came Dreams and another little quartet called L'Image that I had put together for about three years, and Steps came right out of L'Image. I did a Mike Mainieri Quintet album for Warner Bros. with Marcus Miller, Omar Hakim, Bob Mintzer and Warren Bernhardt, but that was my electric band, and I decided I wanted to do some acoustic stuff. So I got Steve Gadd and Eddie Gomez together and asked Mike Brecker if he wanted to do it, and he was up for it."

"We wrote a few tunes, and we would play every six weeks or so at the Breckers' club, Seventh Avenue South. I had all these Japanese people coming down, and they said, 'You've got an album.' But I was signed to Warner Bros. with the Mike Mainieri Quartet—I was

## EQUIPMENT

Mike Mainieri plays a custom-made Yamaha vibraphone. "It's three-and-a-half octaves," he says. "Dave Samuels and I were both interested in an instrument that has an extended bottom. Deegan had actually built me a four-octave instrument about 10 years ago, but there were some structural and tuning problems. So we proposed the idea to Yamaha, and they built three with four octaves, but they weren't happy with them, so they finally decided on this three-and-a-half octave model. It's mammoth, but harmonically it just opens up your head in a completely different way."

Mainieri runs his vibraphone through a K&K MIDI system. "It's a left-brain/right-brain kind of system," he says. "The left side will amplify just the instrument itself, using little pickups under the bars, and then the other half of the brain will trigger synthesizers and stuff like that. So I use overhead microphones to get the acoustic sound, and I use part of the brain of the MIDI system just to amplify the bars." Mainieri plays with Vic Firth mallets and uses a Roland JC 120 Jazz Chorus amplifier as a stage monitor.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

AN AMERICAN DIARY—NYC 6015

WANDERLUST—NYC 6002

LOVE PLAY—Artista/Novus (out of print)

INSIGHT—Solid State (out of print)

BLUES ON THE OTHER SIDE—Argo (out of print)  
with Steps Ahead

VIBE—NYC 6012

YIN YANG—NYC 6001

LIVE IN TOKYO 1986—NYC 6006

MAGNETIC—Elektra/Musician 60168

with Steps

PARADOX—Nippon/Columbia YF-7044

STEP BY STEP—Nippon/Columbia YB-7010-11

with various others

ALONE—NYC 6018 (George Garzone)

COME TOGETHER: GUITAR TRIBUTE TO THE BEATLES  
VOL. 1—NYC 6004 (various artists)

EAST COAST WEST COAST—Private Music 01005-

82120-2 (Toots Thielemans)

BUDDY RICH AND HIS BUDDIES—Mercury (out of print)

still touring with my electric band—so I had to give the acoustic band a name, and we came up with the name Steps.”

Steps, with Don Grolnick on keyboards, recorded three albums for Nippon Columbia, the last with Peter Erskine in place of Gadd. Eliane Elias replaced Grolnick, and the band recorded three more albums with Elektra as Steps Ahead. The band became more electric, undergoing further personnel changes until it broke up after a 1986 tour of Japan. Taking a business partner, Mainieri built his own New York studio, intending to start a recording company with a live album from the Japanese tour and a new recording of a Norwegian saxophonist named Bendik.

But the partnership quickly dissolved, and Mainieri sold the two albums to Vera Brandes' Intuition label in Germany. "I had been signed by Vera," he says, "but she had no distribution in America, so she said to me, 'Michael, why don't you start your own label, and I'll distribute it in Germany?'"

"So Vera distributed my label, and I went to a convention and found somebody to distribute it here. A friend in Japan licensed it there, and it sort of snowballed.

"I was absolutely flat broke in '92 when I started the label. I just figured, I have an audience in Germany and Japan that appreciates my music, and let me reach them. Let me build sort of a groundswell, and also give something back, because I've had such a wonderful career, and I wanted to help some younger people. So it's worked very nicely. We're still alive after three years, and this gives me a chance to go out and play. Times change, but I'm happy to be around and still participate."

"Mike is unusual," says Eddie Gomez, "because his brain is divided. I mean, he's become more this business person with NYC. It's a real juggling act, but he's such a good musician that he's gotten away with it. I think he's one of the great vibes players; and, in a way, I wish he was doing that more, because there aren't that many guys out there that do that and are as good as he is. You just forget that that isn't his focus all the time."

"Michael is the best producer I've ever worked with at a session," says Peter Erskine. "And he refutes that notion about vibes players. I had just come to New York to work with Steps when [bassist] Buell Neidlinger called me up. He said, 'So how's that vibes player of yours?' I said, 'You mean Mike?' And he said, 'You know the problem with these vibes players, don't you? They go up and down, and up and down.' So Michael doesn't just go up and down. What more can you say about a vibes player?"

DB

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<b>CHICAGO, IL,</b> Feb. 3 (Sat.), Northwestern University, Regenstein Hall (Music), 1965 S. Campus Dr., Entrance A
<b>CINCINNATI, OH,</b> Feb. 4 (Sun.) University of Cincinnati Coll.-Conservatory of Music
<b>BOSTON, MA,</b> Feb. 9 (Fri.), Berklee College of Music, 1140 Boylston Street
<b>NEW YORK CITY, NY,</b> Feb. 10 (Sat.), Carnegie Hall, Del Terzo Studio, 8th Flr., 154 W. 57th Street
<b>FAIRFAX, VA,</b> Feb. 11 (Sun.), George Mason University, Dept. of Music, Performing Arts Building
<b>LAWRENCE, KS,</b> Feb. 15 (Thurs.), University of Kansas, School of Fine Arts, 452 Murphy
<b>GREELEY, CO,</b> Feb. 16 (Fri.), University of Northern Colorado, School of Music
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# Mark Whitfield Uncutted

By Scott Aiges

**"I've accepted the responsibility of trying to tailor the music so that mainstream jazz audiences will be able to be exposed to it."**

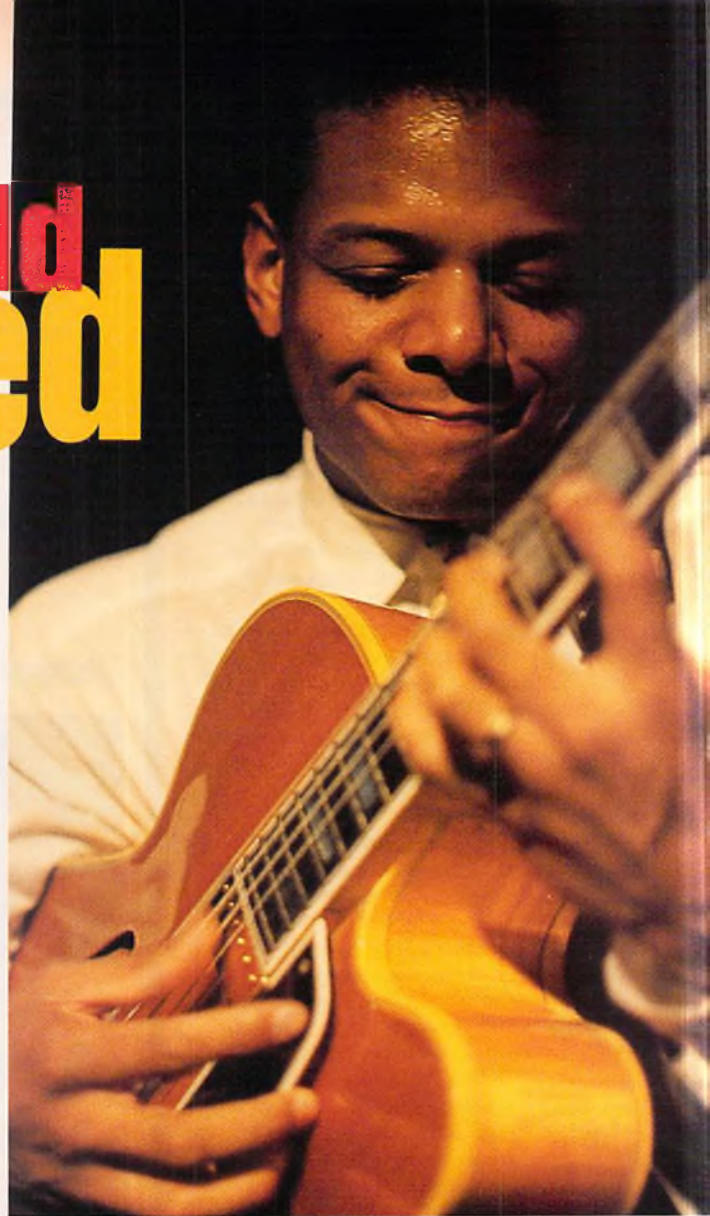
**T**onight, Mark Whitfield is confounding everyone's expectations but his own. The year is 1993, and all the visions for his future set out by parents, peers and critics are getting a big, happy kiss-off.

For one thing, he is on a stage playing music—something his parents hoped never to see happen. They never even let the young guitarist see the inside of a jazz club while he was growing up in Long Island, N.Y. But here he is, in a club. Not a jazz club, though. And some might wonder why this widely hailed young lion is performing at Tipitina's, the New Orleans night spot that is usually the domain of blues and rock bands, instead of the city's premier modern jazz room, Snug Harbor.

Then there's the music he's playing. Critics and executives at his (then) record company, Warner Bros., surely would be surprised that Whitfield isn't playing the instrumental pop/r&b sound of his self-titled third album. Instead, he's playing straight-ahead jazz—and smokin'. But the new jazz conservatives among whom Whitfield came of age would be shocked to see him and his band onstage wearing not suits, but T-shirts and shorts.

Also, his gig tonight is far from New York, the spawning ground for the young lions movement of which Whitfield has been one of the most visible members. Physically and spiritually, he's closer to where the music was born—and loving it.

At this early stage in his career, everyone else seems to have an idea of what Whitfield should be doing. The young lions see him as the next Wes Montgomery, the marketing people as the next George



Benson. But to glimpse Whitfield backstage between sets is to realize that no one controls his fate but his muse. Friends and family swirl around him in the graffiti-splattered dressing room, but Whitfield sits, oblivious, with his unplugged guitar, jamming just as hard as he did onstage. He can't put it down, can't stop playing. Years later, he would sum it up this way: "I've been engulfed by the music."

So it's surprising to hear Whitfield admit that he has, in fact, made compromises in order to live up to others' expectations.

"I've accepted the responsibility of trying to tailor the music so that mainstream jazz audiences will be able to be exposed to it," he says. It's the fall of 1995, and Whitfield has just greeted a visitor at his modest house in suburban Baton Rouge, La.

"I know that there are certain compromises, speaking for myself, that I know I've made to get a record label to be involved in the promotion of the music," he says. This brings to mind the 1993 Warner Bros. album *Mark Whitfield*. After

his straightahead solo debut, *The Marksman*, and its follow-up, *Patrice*, yielded justified praise but disappointing sales, Whitfield gave in to corporate pressure and indulged the side of him that worships his mentor, George Benson.

But when it came to making a decidedly commercial album with heavy Benson overtones, Whitfield says, "I did it for all the wrong reasons. I did it figuring it was going to save my recording contract. I hit the panic button when I shouldn't have. But what that experience taught me was, I have to always make music that I believe in. And if music is skillful and heartfelt, then sooner or later that will get across to the listener."

He speaks like a man with newfound resolve. Certainly that comes in part from his relationship with Verve, a label that wants Whitfield to stick to his straightahead guns. But even there, Whitfield accepts the reality of having to conform to the expectations of radio programmers by not getting as far-out as he might like. When his musicianship advances sufficiently, however, he plans to "take the handcuffs off" and record some of the Coltrane-influenced harmonic adventures he has begun to explore. But on his first two albums for Verve, last year's *True Blue* and the new *7th Ave. Stroll* (a 5-star album—see "CD Reviews" Nov. '95), he stays comfortably within the jazz mainstream—blues, ballads and bop.

**A**bout the only expectation Whitfield doesn't confound is the new image of young jazzmen being morally and physically pure. Yet the source of his purity may surprise: He is a born-again Christian.

Growing up, Whitfield was an advanced student—he and Joshua Redman could lead a new movement of scholastic overachievers. That's not to say he was a complete angel. He hung out in the parks of Lindenhurst, Long Island, listening to the proto-rap of the Sugar Hill Gang. And when his family moved to Seattle in the early '80s, Whitfield rebelled and insisted on pursuing music instead of going to Georgetown University, where he was offered a six-year pre-med scholarship. When he got to Berklee on scholarship at age 16, his parents accompanied him to his new dorm room to find his two roommates smoking pot. His parents assumed it was the first time he'd seen it. It wasn't. Going to high school in Seattle, Whitfield played everything from funk to punk rock, or says he did. It's hard to believe until he pulls out his customized Fender Stratocaster with a black leather strap adorned with s&m-style metal studs.

At Berklee, he met his future wife, Jodie, a vocalist who was already on her way to devout Christianity. Whitfield, who had tasted the high life during a six-month

stint in Las Vegas with a show band, resolved to "stop committing sin." Now the Whitfield home in Baton Rouge is the site of a Sunday Bible study group that includes pianist Peter Martin (who works with Joshua Redman) and Whitfield's brother-in-law, drummer Troy Davis (who works with Terence Blanchard).

"I'm all the way with the Bible like I'm all the way with the guitar," Whitfield says. Still, there's nothing even remotely overt about his piety. He's never preachy, and he also does not curse. "I was taught to know the difference between having serious convictions and being fanatical," he says.

After he landed a record deal, Whitfield moved to Baton Rouge so that Jodie and their two young sons could be closer to her family while he traveled. Whitfield seems quite comfortable in his peaceful, middle-class neighborhood of manicured lawns, his bandmates living nearby. It's as far removed from the fast lane as possible.

But as his new album makes clear, Whitfield misses New York. Every tune on *7th Ave. Stroll* conjures a different image from his days in the big city. But Whitfield isn't just nostalgic for the place. To him, the scene in which he came of age is long gone.

"One of the things that was great about the scene for me as a young up-and-coming musician, there was always so much contact with guys that I considered to be great," he says. "A lot of that doesn't happen anymore. You have a lot of fine young musicians, but there doesn't seem to be as much interaction between the two generations."

Perhaps ironically, Whitfield found renewed inspiration once he left New York. The New Orleans/Baton Rouge area has become a mecca for students, thanks to such educators as Ellis Marsalis and Alvin Batiste. Whitfield's newfound association with Batiste, a master clarinetist whose interests range from

ragtime to modal funk to avant-garde opera, was a major inspiration.

"To me, the music is unlimited in its truest form," he says. In New York, where self-conscious young players all listen to the same records and imitate the same giants, Whitfield found that "some of those ideals were being pushed aside. When I divorced myself from that setting, I became open to learning how to experiment again."

**I**t's past midnight on a Tuesday in the fall of 1995, and Whitfield is beaming. He's onstage in a jazz club—Snug Harbor—looking very much at home, with all four members of his band wearing T-shirts and jeans. Whitfield's father is in the house. Like the others in his son's life, he has accepted Mark's chosen path.

Playing as much to his bandmates as to the small crowd in the intimate room, Whitfield has clearly developed into a leader, deep in the groove. His tone is fat. His fingers are liquid. Whitfield's eyes are closed, but still he smiles radiantly at his hands as they spill soulful blues into the night. When he looks at his colleagues, it's with a gaze of profound love.

Late in the set, he burns up a hard-bop piece. Though he doesn't go for squeals or slurs, he leapfrogs over intervals and gets as "out" and noisy as he can with an unadulterated guitar tone. Unaccompanied, he plays a speeding solo that is angular and demanding, both physically and harmonically. He sings along with his playing in a gravel-toned groan.

Just as Whitfield slows the piece into a snail's whisper and falls into a gently brooding ballad, drummer Donald Edwards jabs at his cymbals with brushes—racing and percolating with a tension that is totally at odds with the serene melody. Whitfield doesn't even look up. This is how he likes it. The music is risky. The handcuffs are off. **DB**

#### EQUIPMENT

Though he owns several guitars, including an archtop acoustic with oval soundhole made in 1991 by Louisiana luthier Salvadore Giardina, Mark Whitfield's main ax is a custom-made Gibson L5. He plugs straight into a Mesa Boogie 100-watt Mark III (which he customized by separating the power unit from the speaker cabinet so

that neither piece exceeds the 100-pound weight limit for free baggage check on airplanes). He uses no effects boxes or outboard gear.

Whitfield uses D'Addario XL strings in custom-packaged heavy gauges (high to low: 14, 18, 26, 36, 46, 56). His picks are Fender tortoise-shell light-mediums.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*7th AVE. STROLL*—Verve 314 529 223  
*TRUE BLUE*—Verve 314 523 591  
*MARK WHITFIELD*—Warner Bros. 45210  
*PATRICE*—Warner Bros. 26659  
*THE MARKSMAN*—Warner Bros. 26321  
 with various others  
*COME TOGETHER: GUITAR TRIBUTE TO THE BEATLES*—NYC 6004 (various)  
*DAMN*—Verve 314 527 631 (Jimmy Smith)

*TESTIMONIA*—Atlantic 82755 (Carl Allen)  
*FROM THIS MOMENT*—Verve 314 527 073 (Nicholas Payton)  
*BROWN SUGAR*—EMI 32629 (D'Angelo)  
*PETER MARTIN TRIO AND MARK WHITFIELD*—Paddle Wheel (Japan only)  
*JAZZ*—RCA 60548 (Cleo Laine)  
*BLUE AND SENTIMENTAL*—RCA 61419 (Cleo Laine)

## Thirty Years In The Making

**C**hico O'Farrill works at home quite a bit, and in his New York apartment there are two separate offices with two separate personalities. "One is the crazy room," laughs the 74-year-old musician. "That's the media studio where we do all the commercials. The other is the sane room; that's where the acoustic piano is kept."

The former has proven crucial in the quest for monetary sustenance, the place O'Farrill and son Chico Jr. rake in the dough by concocting jingles for both Spanish and Anglo markets. But it's the latter that has generated and sustained the Havana native's rep as our finest living arranger of Afro-Cuban charts for big band.

It's a distinction born close to five decades ago, when O'Farrill began drafting large-ensemble pieces for orchestras led by Machito, Mario Bauza and Dizzy Gillespie. It's also a status of which the jazz world has recently been reminded. The first album to be released under O'Farrill's own name in almost 30 years is currently in the racks; it contains enough expression and fire to reignite the buzz that surrounded the composer during his salad days. With its sensational reveries and coercive melancholy, *Pure Emotion* (Milestone—see "CD Reviews" Nov. '95) could be called *Pure Eloquence*.

"Maybe it's because I have an orderly mind," offers O'Farrill, regarding his 22-member ensemble's confluence of precision and passion. "And I don't mean 'orderly' in the stiff way." Indeed, a big band disc with equivalent playfulness has yet to show up this year. "My bands tend to sound good," he reports, "but not because I'm tough on them, like, say Benny Goodman used to be. I'm not rude."

The maestro is ultra familiar with Goodman's m.o. In the '40s, the king of swing was part of the crew who dialed up O'Farrill once word got out regarding his arranging skills. Stan Kenton also signed a paycheck or two. "That's always the story of how styles are established," he chuckles. "Someone hears something and then says, 'Who is that guy? Who is that guy?'"

He's the guy who united kinetic rhythms and rousing melodies for Machito's orchestra. When O'Farrill hit New York in 1947, he was hired by the



Chico O'Farrill

percussionist/bandleader to pen a few pieces. "Some people accused us of fooling with the purity of Cuban music," recalls O'Farrill, "but jazz had the complexities that I loved. I wanted to hear them together." It was when sketching pieces for Machito's band that O'Farrill had his breakthrough. "Those guys were advanced... specialists actually. They fit wonderfully with the kind of stuff I gave them. You can have the best bottom in the world, but if you put the wrong top part on it, you've got a fight on your hands." Check the percussionist's take of Chico's "Gone City" to hear how bop began to breathe deep and fully exhale. On a more elaborate level, O'Farrill's early masterpiece, *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*, cannily integrated many tops and several bottoms. Harmonic sophistication creating a codependency with rhythm. "It was with Machito that I really learned how to blend everything together," he assures.

Though a fan of modern Afro-Cuban groups, O'Farrill says that in general the current sound is a bit too clean. Comparatively, Machito's brood tended to sound rougher. "They were famous for their instinct," he reminds, "not for their technical efficiency." When he hooked up with Gillespie, he found a voice that incorporated both elements. O'Farrill went about designing some intrepid moves for the virtuoso. *The Manteca Suite* exploded Gillespie's own tune, and a deluge of thematic variations made it simultaneously familiar and exotic. It still sounds extraordinarily vibrant today. Dizzy may have given the style a sense of daring, but O'Farrill gave it a longevity.

On *Pure Emotion*, the fanfares come and go. O'Farrill's motifs are as varied as his poise is unimpeachable. The voicings on "Perdido" give it a pleasantly swollen demeanor. During the rambunctious and extended *Variations On A Well-Known Theme*, the sections are masterfully linked. The base tune is that famous ode to a cockroach, "La Cucaracha." Chico wrote the chart years ago, when he lived in Mexico. It's been played in environs as far-flung as Helsinki. Though he reworks his older tunes "all the time," one song from someone else's book also made the cut for *Pure Emotion*: "Get Me To The Church On Time." The idea to record it came in a flash.

"Todd Barkan, our producer, said, 'You want to do that?'" and I said, 'Yeah, sure,'" he recalls. "I love melody; they have to be distinctive. Introductions and transitions are important, sure. But they're nothing without a tune." Catchy themes are the essence of his jingle work, a realm where you have 30 seconds to make a point. "Close your eyes and it's gone," he declares.

O'Farrill's entering an active phase. A Lincoln Center retrospective of his oeuvre will also house a newly commissioned piece for soloist Wynton Marsalis. "To be honest, it's only a sketch at this point," he said around Labor Day. "But I hear it being very fast, very loud, very furious... and with a bit of Chinese flavor."

Another cultural tradition to be incorporated into the Afro-Cuban diaspora? "Well," he allows, "don't look for it to be too authentic. We'll call it American Chinese." —Jim Macnie

# Spunk And Silver

**D**ee Dee Bridgewater's first exposure to Horace Silver's music came when, at 15, she heard his "Song For My Father" on a restaurant jukebox. It was love at first sound and a portent of things to come

for the now Paris-based jazz vocalist, who recently released a sparkling album of the pianist's tunes, *Love And Peace: A Tribute To Horace Silver* (Verve 314 527 470). Her third Verve recording not only features Silver's freshly penned lyrics to such gems as "Doodlin'" and "St. Vitus Dance," but also the venerable hard-bop artist himself tinkling the keys on "Song For My Father" and "Nica's Dream."

Bridgewater—a combination of class, exuberance and cool—recently talked about her musical love affair with Silver,

whom she met in 1970 when her first husband, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, joined Silver's band. "I would ask him, Horace, can I please sit in? And he was always short with me. 'No.' In those days he was quite dogmatic about his sound."

After gigs with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and Max Roach, Bridgewater branched off into Broadway musicals, including a 1976 Tony Award-winning performance in *The Wiz*. In the past 10 years since the Flint, Mich.-bred singer/actress relocated to France, she has appeared in such musicals as *Lady Day* (a tribute to Billie Holiday) and *Cabaret*. Meanwhile, she was garnering a reputation as the preeminent jazz diva in Europe. That didn't go unnoticed by Silver. It was her 1990 Verve debut, *In Montreux*,

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Dee Dee Bridgewater

that featured a medley of his tunes and showed him that Bridgewater had come of age.

But it wasn't until after her 1993 Grammy-nominated *Keeping Tradition* album that the two talked about the current project. "I've always had a song or two of his in my repertoire," Bridgewater says. "While I was singing 'Love Vibrations' at a concert in January 1994, I got the idea for my next album." She called Silver the next day, and he wholeheartedly gave his approval. "Then I mentioned that I wanted to write the lyrics to some of his instrumental tunes. And just like a father to his daughter, he said, 'Dee Dee, I can't let you do that. I'll write them.'"

By the summer of 1994, Bridgewater and her band were road-testing the tunes at such venues as the Montreal Jazz Festival in preparation for the recording, which, like her last album, she self-produced. Released earlier this year in France, the funky jazz-flavored *Love And Peace* has become a hot European commodity, even crossing onto the pop charts. Bridgewater is excited. "It's part of my personal crusade to expose younger audiences to jazz. It's an even bigger thrill to do it with the music of one of the great jazz composers." —Dan Ouellette





Ivo Perelman

## A New Kind Of Samba

A sudden flurry of renewed interest in Brazilian music has hit jazz, with tributes to A.C. Jobim and covers of João Gilberto cropping up all over. "The term 'Brazilian' has become a marketing tool, and some labels are using it to sell records," offers explosive saxophonist Ivo Perelman. Born in São Paulo, Brazil, the 34-year-old settled in New York five years ago, after studying at Berklee in Boston and the Dick Grove School of Music in Los Angeles. His two new records, *Man Of The Forest*, released on Gunther Schuller's GM label, and *Soccer Land*, on Perelman's own Ibeji Records, offer another kind of Brazilian jazz, mixing traditional percussion music from his homeland with his expressionist tenor playing.

"I'm really excited about these rhythms from Brazil," exclaims Perelman, referring to his use of samba, congada, maracatu and other typically Brazilian beats. "They tend to trick you, and you might think they're the same rhythm until you really play with them and learn them—then you feel there is a huge difference among them. That's because Brazil is so big. There were different Africans from different regions of Africa who landed in different places and assimilated their cultures with the Portuguese and Indians who were there."

*Man Of The Forest* features improvisations on folk-inspired motifs by Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, thoughtfully arranged for pianist Joanne Brackeen, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Billy Hart and augmented by a small brigade of percussionists

comprising Cyro Baptista, Nana Vasconcelos, Duduka da Fonseca and Guilherme Franco. *Soccer Land*, on the contrary, is an intense, stripped-down duet with powerhouse drummer José Eduardo Nazario. "I try to phase my improvisations according to the shape of the rhythms. They kind of dictate a way of playing once you know them because they have such a strong sense of gravity within the form."

Perelman's sound draws comparisons

with Albert Ayler and fellow-South American, Leandro "Gato" Barbieri. But his true hero was Coltrane; and Trane's mark is evident in the insistent logic of his improvisations, often derived from elementary melodic material. "When I'm playing these very simple melodies—very simple, major or minor, two, four or eight bars—it gives me a canvas with nothing on it so that I can start painting my pictures. I'm free to express myself."

—John Corbett

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# Cut Straight To The Jazz

**W**hen trumpeter Terell Stafford joined Bobby Watson's group Horizon some five years ago, he arrived just in time to record their acclaimed Columbia debut, *Present Tense*. His association with the saxophonist—some 10 years Stafford's senior—was a formative one, and it

taught Stafford, now 28, some valuable lessons about living in the moment. "Bobby taught me to relax," Stafford says over the phone from his office at Pennsylvania's Cheyney University (where he now teaches). "The best things in life," Bobby told him, "are the things that come to you naturally." Stafford laughs when he recalls their



**Terell Stafford**

initial hookup. "I was in graduate school at Rutgers. Each weekend, I would catch a train to Washington, D.C., to play in a jam session. One weekend, I was playing at a little club called Tacoma Station. I was sitting at a table, studying for my upcoming finals when, all of a sudden, I heard an alto; it had a huge sound. I thought, 'Who is this?' It looked like Bobby Watson, but I thought, 'No, it can't be, not here.' Sure enough, it was Bobby, who was in town to play with McCoy Tyner." The two played together, exchanged phone numbers and, when trumpeter Melton Mustapha left the group, Stafford was Watson's first-call replacement.

Maybe it's liberating advice like Watson's that led Stafford to name his own solo debut *Time To Let Go* (Candid 79702). The nine tunes assembled do bear an organic flow that speak more of a musical moment than any carefully planned agenda. Stafford is quick to credit this feel to the fine assemblage of talent on the album: former Horizon-mates Victor Lewis on drums and Edward Simon on piano, as well as three of the most distinctive voices among Stafford's contemporaries, tenorist Tim Warfield, alto and soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson and vibist Steve Nelson. Still, on originals like the title track or even covers of well-known compositions like "Send In The Clowns," it is Stafford's sound and vision that emerge; in these, we hear and see elements of a background spanning jazz, classical and show tunes.

Stafford's time at Rutgers was spent earning a masters in classical trumpet. And Stafford played in a steady stream of musicals at the start of his career. "I didn't really take jazz seriously until 1988," he reveals. "I had done a lot of show work—*A Chorus Line*, that sort of thing. And I thought that's where my professional future was headed. My background, up to that point, had really been in classical music."

If you question where his heart lies these days, just ask him about European Music History, the class he currently teaches at Cheyney. "We're covering everything from Gregorian chant to jazz. I try to hurry up through all the other stuff, and cut to the jazz."

—Larry Blumenfeld

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## Ornette Coleman & Prime Time

**Tone Dialing**  
Harmolodic 0383

★★★

Finally, the long-awaited, much-anticipated debut on Ornette Coleman's own imprint of Verve, Harmolodic Records. While *Tone Dialing* has moments of real wonder and beauty that extend the research Coleman's been doing with his electric band Prime Time since the late '70s, it is not the milestone some had hoped for.

The good news is that Ornette himself sounds great. His joyous, abrasive/sing-song alto soars high over the burble of son Denardo's drums and electronic percussion and the dense weave of polyphonic out-pop that Denardo has skillfully produced. Prime Time's funky groove is still a bit oblique and angular—quirky dancing fodder—but since their last album, 1988's uneven *Virgin Beauty*, it's grown more straightforward, more groovy. The same principle pertains: layers of different rhythmic and harmonic fields build a charged backdrop for Coleman's forward, freewheeling alto. He once called for the band not to play in the background, an egalitarianism that was one of free-jazz's main advances. Indeed, on the first few Prime Time records, *Body Meta*, *Dancing In Your Head* and *Of Human Feelings*, he swam as one of the school; but now he's clearly the main melodic instrument, not just one of the gang.

Ornette's best choice on *Tone Dialing* was to use Bradley Jones' excellent upright bass along with Al MacDowell's slippery electric, providing a nice contrast of surface textures. Check the acoustic bass intro to "When Will I See You Again." His worst decision was to do a "harmolodic version" of a Bach prelude, which he overheard Rosenberg playing. (We're lucky he wasn't doodling on "Stairway To Heaven.") "Search For Life" is a turgid, self-conscious, social-consciousness rap, on which Avenda Kadijah advises: "Whatever you believe, don't deceive, hurt or harm/if you live in a city or on a farm...." "Sound Is Everywhere" incorporates heavy hip-hop beats and sound effects samples (presumably Denardo's handiwork), while the lighthearted Island feel of "Guadalupe" features the unpleasant glitz of

Keith Emerson-style keyboards courtesy of Bryant. Bryant's tasteless intro to "Kathelin Gray" is also noteworthy, though his organ sound on the super "OAC" is more palatable. On "Street Blues" the two guitars are effective, laying crystalline blue riffs beneath sexy sax. But Rosenberg and Wessel are no Bern Nix and Charles Ellerbee, and on "La Capella" the guitar intro sounds dangerously like the Doobie Brothers. On a more positive note, Badal Roy's tablas have at last found a comfortable place in the mix, reminiscent of Adrian Sherwood's use of them in African Head Charge and Dub Syndicate.

There's a lot here: 16 tracks, some well worth a listen. But for Prime Time to be really prime, Coleman should replace the guitar and keyboard section, which unfortunately mucks up much of *Tone Dialing*. —John Corbett

**Tone Dialing**—*Street Blues*; *Search For Life*; *Guadalupe*; *Bach Prelude*; *Sound Is Everywhere*; *Miguel's Fortune*; *La Capella*; *OAC*; *If I Knew As Much About You (As You Know About Me)*; *When Will I See You Again*; *Kathelin Gray*; *Badal*; *Tone Dialing*; *Family Reunion*; *Local Instinct*; *Ying Yang*. (66.03)

**Personnel**—Coleman, alto saxophone, trumpet, violin; Chris Rosenberg, Ken Wessel, guitars; Denardo Coleman, drums; Dave Bryant, keyboards; Badal Roy, tablas, percussion; Al MacDowell, electric bass; Bradley Jones, acoustic bass; Avenda Kadijah, vocals (2).



## Joshua Redman

**Spirit Of The Moment**  
Warner Bros. 45923

★★★★

Rather than lay on layers of production steroids or revolutionize the jazz canon, Joshua Redman has opted to proceed with modesty and simplicity, using his regular working quartet on four standards and 10 originals for *Spirit Of The Moment*. Producer Matt Pierson not only caught the group in one of jazz's most intimate habitats, the Village Vanguard; engineer James Farber managed it with simple two-track analog tape.

Redman plays with a blinding sense of command—and calculation. His phrases have shape, assurance and attitude, and he plays them like a musician smart enough to understand their intended effect down to the last bent pitch. His set-ups often rely on bold con-

trasts that seem to come straight from the pulpit—or, in the case of his homage to '40s tenor on "Remember," from Lionel Hampton and Illinois Jacquet. On pieces like "Jig-A-Jug" and "Wait No Longer," he toys with an old-fashioned vamp or an odd time signature long enough to bait us with a bit of tension, then release it by hurling into a burly 4/4 groove. He interpolates teasing, sometimes jarring, two-bar breaks into "Just In Time" as well as a long cappella sequence on "St. Thomas." He loves to establish a campy staccato premise ("Count Me Out"), then, like the big bad wolf, blow it away. Contrasts and more contrasts.

There's a relaxed, indigenous character of a club set—a long club set. The two and a half hours is certainly generous, but perhaps a bit slack. Hearing a long drum solo, even a good one ("Herbs And Roots") by Brian Blade, is like hearing a tap dancer. Maybe one CD would have been enough. —John McDonough

**Spirit Of The Moment**—*Jig-A-Jug*; *My One And Only Love*; *Count Me Out*; *Second Snow*; *Remember*; *Dialogue*; *St. Thomas*; *Herbs And Roots*; *Wait No Longer*; *Neverend*; *Just In Time*; *Mt. Zion*; *Slapstick*; *Lyric*. (72.35/75.09)

**Personnel**—Redman, tenor and soprano saxophones; Peter Martin, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Brian Blade, drums.



## Buster Williams

**Something More**  
In + Out 7004

★★★

By the looks of it, *Something More* suggests something different. Recorded in 1989, Buster Williams' seventh album as a leader spotlights the now-you-see-them, now-you-don't draw of Herbie & Wayne, along with drum vet Al Foster and Japanese trumpeter Shunzo Ohno. There isn't a slacker in sight.

A bittersweet melancholy runs through three Williams ballads: "Air Dancing," a poignant, lilting waltz; the title track and especially "Christina," where the wistful melody molds Shorter's soprano, recalling the reedist's haunting rendition of Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" (from Hancock's soundtrack to 1986's *Round Midnight*). Hancock's synth work, despite its relative restraint, seems unnecessary and comes close to marring the

gentle flow of everything mellow, the icky bed he makes for Williams' feature on "Sophisticated Lady" being the most obvious example. The funk's in place on the bassist's generic "Fortune Cookie," a piece that allows Shorter some room to blow on tenor and gives us our first real listen to Ohno, whose clean lines and rhythmic inclination to lay back and use a little space between the notes is refreshing. Their horns drive Buster's "Decepticon" as well, one of two straightahead tunes here (the closer, "I Didn't Know," being the other).

Williams' own sound, deep and woody, is the obvious glue to this date, with solos of varying lengths heard here and there ("Decepticon"'s uptempo pulse provides the best showcase). Even on "Sophisticated Lady," where Williams plays just the melody on overdubbed piccolo bass, that nice resonance remains.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this recording is the 53-year-old bass great's ability to get Hancock and Shorter to play new music in a relatively unfettered setting; that is, minus the adornments both have come to include as latter-day saints of jazz's outre. Unfortunately, Shorter sounds out of shape, while Hancock barely breaks a sweat. A nice, unremarkable outing, *Something More* somehow, somewhere asks for something more. With all this talent, it ends up a disappointment.

—John Ephland

**Something More**—*Air Dancing*; *Christina*; *Fortune Dance*; *Something More*; *Decepticon*; *Sophisticated Lady*; *I Didn't Know What Time It Was*. (58:58)

**Personnel**—Williams, bass, piccolo bass (1, 6); Herbie Hancock, piano, keyboards (1, 2, 4, 6); Wayne Shorter, tenor (3, 5) and soprano (1, 2, 4, 7) saxophones; Shunzo Ohno, trumpet (1, 3, 5); Al Foster, drums (1–5, 7).



## Wayne Shorter

### High Life

Verve 314-529-224

★★★★

Shorter's soprano and very selectively deployed other saxes on *High Life* suggest skeins of "s" words: sinuous, sensuous, insidious, sexy, sophisticated, sleek, even sublime. He's sovereign of tone so assured and phrases so snakey as to spin circles around most performing composers—though there are

few who've experienced what he has (Blakey to Davis to Nascimento to Weather Report and beyond), who share his interests and can stake claims to his league with credibility.

Here, Shorter saunters, sambas and sometimes soars with syncopated support by a solid ensemble of smart near-stars, sparsely supplanted by orchestral brass, reeds and strings. Considered with his three Columbia albums of the '80s, his much earlier, loose-structured Blue Note LPs (*Super Nova*, *Odyssey Of Iska* and his breakthrough *Native Dancer*), *High Life* is another stride, if not giant step, in a master moodmaker's long, successful career.

Yet another "s" word—synthetic, as in man-made, synthetic as opposed to organic—comes to mind as one sinks into the plushness of this CD. Rachel Z's keyboards and "sound design," Marcus Miller's pristine production and prodigious bass skills, Will Calhoun's flawless time-keeping, Airtio et. al's percussive colorations and Shorter's own gorgeous underscoring (which supplies intriguing depths to "At The Fair," "Pandora Awakened," the title track—well, *everywhere*) are so seamless as to almost render questions of spontaneity or interactivity moot.

Almost, not quite, *High Life* brims with sonic textures and volumes, but no other personal voice ever stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Shorter's (including guitarist David Gilmore). And, at times, Shorter himself squeals, straining to separate from what he's wrought: a *High Life* so hermetically sealed its creator struggles in a self-designed straightjacket.

At his best—at the start of "Carlotta," where shadows shift on desert sands—Shorter slinks over, slides past and shimmy through his electro-symphonic sketches, slyly hiding and seeking themes. Shorter has secreted surprises and genuine *substance* in the substrata and to get to them on must suffer through superficial stylization and stiff structures. Presumably, musicians subscribing to such sounds—all man-made—aren't soulless machines or cynical sellouts, but are sincerely showing

something of their sensibilities.

Shorter is so much more than a soloist, spinning alone in space—may he be saved from solipsism! Music, like food, is more sumptuous and satisfying when songs serve as a sort of social occasion.

—Howard Mandel

**High Life**—*Children Of The Night*; *At The Fair*; *Maya*; *On The Milky Way Express*; *Pandora Awakened*; *Virgo Rising*; *High Life*; *Midnight In Carlotta's Hair*; *Black Swan* (*In Memory Of Susan Portlynn Romeo*). (54:44)

**Personnel**—Shorter, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones; Marcus Miller, bass guitar, bass clarinet, rhythm programming, producer; Rachel Z, piano, synthesizers, sound design, sequencing; Lenny Castro, percussion; David Gilmore, guitar; Will Calhoun, Terri Lyne Carrington, drums; Munyungo Jackson, Kevin Ricard, percussion (8); orchestra of violin, viola, cello, flute, oboe, french horn, english horn, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, trumpet, trombone.



## Dave Brubeck

### Young, Lions & Old Tigers

Telarc 83349

★★★★

Once upon a time, DB critics got worked up over whether or not Dave Brubeck was a valid jazz man. Ira Gitler, for one,

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS ▶	John McDonough	John Corbett	Howard Mandel	John Ephland
ORNETTE COLEMAN <i>Tone Dialing</i>		★★1/2	★★★	★★★★★	★★★1/2
JOSHUA REDMAN <i>Spirit Of The Moment</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★1/2	★★★★
BUSTER WILLIAMS <i>Something More</i>		★★★1/2	★1/2	★★1/2	★★★
WAYNE SHORTER <i>High Life</i>		★★1/2	★	★★★★	★★★

thought not. Don DeMicheal, on the other hand, believed the classically trained pianist *could* swing. Some 35 years later, the controversy has been muted with the passage of time, and most everyone in jazz accepts the 75-year-old as a special player and composer.

As its title implies, Brubeck's latest recording has more in store for the listener than the silver-haired Connecticut resident seated at the piano. The idea behind the album is having him perform with seniors he's known for ages and with unfamiliar faces in the flower of youth. Brubeck has even written songs for most of his talented guest soloists, using the rhythmic flow of their names as a compositional guide. It's a successful venture, though somewhat maddening because none of his new or old friends, save Gerry Mulligan, gets to grace more than a single number.

Ah, those Young Lions. Roy Hargrove, on the piece named for him, uses his trumpet to conjure blues-streaked pathos, arousing feelings of tenderness or melancholy in the written line as well as flashing a refined creativity during his improvisation. Christian McBride and Brubeck both swing on the "Pink Panther"-stealthily "Here Comes McBride." Joe Lovano takes a furtive little tango to places composer Brubeck never imagined, and fellow tenor marvel Joshua Redman brackets buoyant conceits of the musical imagination with wistful readings of the melody on—what else?—"Joshua

Redman." The little-known flugelhorn player Ronnie Buttacavoli trundles along in a reflective mood on his homonymous feature, and the tenor-playing Brecker brother skates with typical assurance and drive through a waltz.

The encounters with several Old Tigers give pleasure, too. Jon Hendricks sings "How High The Moon" with an almost breathless expressiveness that duet partner Brubeck approximates through a delicate and considered approach of his own. Gerry Mulligan fills his choruses with gracefully rolling phrases on the new Brubeck song "Gerry-Go-Round" and on a baritone and piano rendition of the chestnut "Together." James Moody cuts quite a figure blowing tenor and "yodeling" on "Moody," and non-swinging pianist George Shearing is also on hand to join Brubeck for a loving glance at "In Your Own Sweet Way." And that's elder statesman Brubeck by himself going "Deep In A Dream."—*Frank-John Hadley*

**Young Lions & Old Tigers**—Roy Hargrove, *How High The Moon*; Michael Brecker, *Waltz*; Here Comes McBride; Joe Lovano, *Tango*; In Your Own Sweet Way; Joshua Redman, *Together*; Moody, *Gerry-Go-Round*; Ronnie Buttacavoli; *Deep In A Dream*. (63:27)

**Personnel**—Brubeck, piano; Roy Hargrove, trumpet (1); Jon Hendricks, vocal (2); Michael Brecker (3); Joe Lovano (5); Joshua Redman (7), tenor saxophone; James Moody, tenor saxophone and vocal (9); Gerry Mulligan, baritone saxophone (8,10); Ronnie Buttacavoli, flugelhorn (11); Jack Six, acoustic bass; Chris Brubeck, electric bass (9-11); Randy Jones, drums.



## Gateway Homecoming ECM 21562

★★★★

**W**hen the threesome of John Abercrombie, Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette first recorded as Gateway in 1975, they helped bring a bit of power-trio muscle to the characteristically pristine austerity of Manfred Eicher's productions. They also established an alternative to the usual leader-and-subordinates relationship in jazz by giving each instrument equal standing within the music. They recorded twice during the Ford Administration then went off to a multitude of other activities:

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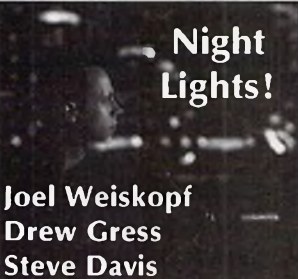
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Abercrombie led a variety of groups; Holland, one of the premier sidemen, led an innovative quartet; and DeJohnette's Special Edition provided a showcase for many an up-and-coming jazz rebel.

Two decades later the trio have reunited and picked up where they left off. *Homecoming* has the shimmer and glow of an all-star recording where the players respond to each other both sympathetically and sarcastically. Their rapport extends to all tracks, but is best on Holland's four pieces, each of which is a reminder that the bassist is an underappreciated composer. Abercrombie's reserved precision often gives way to tough, chrome-like chords. Holland keeps steady time, but he's not above sly alterations in the beat. Although "Oneness," DeJohnette's piano track, is a let-down (it has a forced, pretentious feel to it), his drumming provides solid propulsion and vivid color to the ensemble.

*Homecoming* offers an insightful portrait; and with a second effort already in the can, it offers a promising preview of things to come.

—Martin Johnson

**Homecoming**—*Homecoming; Waltz New; Modern Times; Calypso Falto; Short Cut; How's Never; In Your Arms; 7th D; Oneness.* (73:19)

**Personnel**—John Abercrombie, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums, piano (9).

fierce, brazen trumpet dynamo who blows walls down, who nonchalantly blasts sky-high notes. No, he's much more demure, understated, finding ways to make music in spite of severe damage to his lip that makes it very difficult for him to extend notes, to utter crisp shouts, to deliver clean, flowing lines.

Yet, in numerous moments here, Hubbard pulls those distinctive aspects off, as on "All Blues," where his notes ring long and sure, or on "One Of A Kind," where he is agile and inventive. Sometimes the performances are mixed: on "D Minor Mint," fuzzy linear statements lead to sparkling upper-register cries, all brought off succinctly; on the rigorous "Off Minor," the trumpeter's double-times smear into a gooey mess.

Of the supporting cast, altoist Herring is the standout, his tone bold, his lines muscular and impressive. Trombonist Eubanks and baritonist Smulyan also have their spots, while Jackson and Scott overly mimic their idols: Joe Henderson and McCoy Tyner/Herbie Hancock, respectively. Ironically, even in his worst moments, the leader's sound remains personal and identifiable.

—Zan Stewart

**MMTC (Monk, Miles, Trane & Cannon)**—*One Of A Kind; Naima; Spirit Of Trane; The Song My Lady Sings; Off Minor; All Blues; D Minor Mint; One For Cannon.* (55:07)  
**Personnel**—Hubbard, trumpet, flugelhorn; Vincent Herring, alto saxophone; Javon Jackson, tenor saxophone; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Stephen Scott, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Carl Allen, drums.



### Freddie Hubbard

MMTC (Monk, Miles, Trane & Cannon)

MusicMasters 01612-65132

★★★

Hubbard has, as is well known now, been going through physical and personal problems that have sharply hampered his playing. This new octet album, his first in about two years, is an honest, unflinching, even poignant document of his present circumstances.

Perhaps surprisingly, there's a lot of solid music from the leader in this recording—where first-rate writing by Bob Belden, Bob Mintzer, David Weiss (of the pop group Was Not Was) and Pete Yellin bolster the proceedings. To be sure, the Freddie here is not the



### Ed Petersen

The Haint  
Delmark 474

★★★★

In the five years that have passed between Chicago tenor man (now New Orleans resident) Petersen's debut album for Delmark and this follow-up, a lot of things have changed. For one, the label has acquired the services of engineer Paul Serrano, bringing a new warmth and immediacy to its recorded sound. For another, Petersen has been traveling in faster company, playing here with a crack Windy City ensemble that includes pianist Willie Pickens, trumpeter Billy

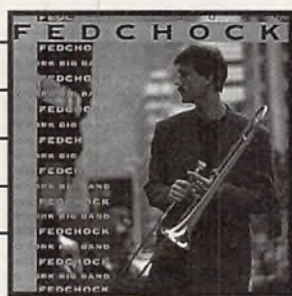
Brimfield and drummer Robert Shy. For a third, the saxophonist has honed his already formidable technique to a masterly pitch of intensity, capable of articulating an authentic, personal vision within the jazz tradition. On this session he meshes so closely with his comrades that the music seems like a collective product, with a strong leader on an equal footing with his gifted sidemen.

It's not easy to make a chestnut like Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop" sound fresh, but Peterson and crew pull it off, tearing through the tortuous changes with ferocious abandon and split-second precision. The band shows similar authority on respectful dissections of Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" and Monk's "Green Chimneys," and treats the ballads "You Don't Know" and "When I Fall In Love" with heartfelt tenderness and restraint. Brimfield's slow-grinding title track and Peterson's hard-charging "Larry Smith" offer contrasting approaches to the blues, both played with deep-dyed Chicago soul. And on Peterson's bold venture into free-jazz, "Walking In The Sky," the musicians seem as comfortable outside the changes as within them.

Petersen's muscular, slightly grainy tenor finds its perfect foil in Brimfield's brash, skittering trumpet; but Dr. Odies Williams III, playing trumpet on three tracks, shows amazing finesse for a full-time physician. The vastly underrated Pickens performs brilliantly in every style and tempo, while Shy and bassist Brian Sandstrom generate irresistible momentum, easily outswinging New York players with much bigger reputations. —Larry Birnbaum

**The Haint**—Bebop; Jitterbug Waltz; Green Chimneys; You Don't Know What Love Is; Walking In The Sky; The Haint; Larry Smith; When I Fall In Love. (59:04)

**Personnel**—Peterson, tenor saxophone; Dr. Odies Williams III (1, 2, 7), Billy Brimfield, trumpet; Willie Pickens, piano; Brian Sandstrom, bass; Robert Shy, drums.



## John Fedchock

New York Big Band

Reservoir 138

★★★★½

**F**rom the ageless "Limehouse Blues" to the more contemporary "Flintstoned," a ram-bunctious parody of the "Flintstones

Theme," John Fedchock's New York Big Band commands your attention and holds it. This band of peerless pros takes advantage of Fedchock's exciting arrangements.

"Limehouse Blues" is a breathtaking jaunt reminiscent of a Woody Herman sprint, which is not surprising since trombonist Fedchock came of age in the Herd. The tune opens in a Hermanesque mode with an extensive solo from pianist Joel Weiskopf, followed by the reed section's emphatic melodic statement that is answered by a chorus of brassy shouts. This drama is but a prelude to the fierce dialogue:

the exchange of fours between baritone saxist Scott Robinson and tenor man Rich Perry, an exchange filled with a challenging assortment of honks and grunts.

Fedchock generously allocates the solos: trumpeter Tim Hagans sculpts like a Giacometti on Wayne Shorter's classic "Nefertiti," the lines so delicate and enticing that we wait for Akhenaten, her consort, to step forth from his eternal sleep; Mark Vinci offers an emotionally rich confession on "My Foolish Heart" and Fedchock is smooth and haunting on Monk's "Ruby, My Dear."

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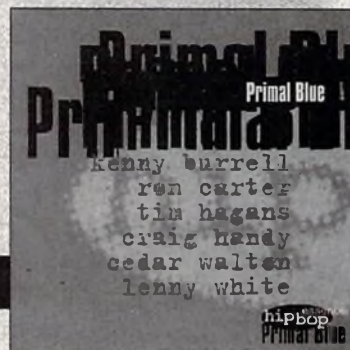
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# CD REVIEWS

The band reaches full blast on Ellington's "Caravan," and once again Fedchok is in front, invoking the great composer Juan Tizol and then bending the familiar phrases to his own sweet inventions. It is a dashing display of virtuosity and would be the date's *piece de resistance* were it not for Rick Margitza, who follows the leader with his own glorious exposition. —Herb Boyd

**New York Big Band**—*Limehouse Blues: The Grove City Groover; La Parguera; Ruby, My Dear; Blues Du Jour; Caravan; Nefertiti; Louie's Cheese Party; Nightshades; My Foolish Heart; Flintstoned "Flintstones Theme."* (74:50)  
**Personnel**—Fedchok, trombone, arranger; Mark Vinci,

alto saxophone; Jon Gordon, alto and soprano saxophones; Rich Perry, Rick Margitza, tenor saxophone; Scott Robinson, baritone saxophone; Tony Kadleck, Greg Gisbert, Barry Ries, Tim Hagans, trumpet, flugelhorn; Keith O'Quinn, Clark Gayton, George Flynn, trombone; Joel Weiskopf, piano; Lynn Seaton, bass, Dave Ratajczak, drums; Jerry Gonzalez, percussion (3, 6, 8).

"Kool," bending and stinging his acoustic six-string on the lyrical "Old Soul" and paying homage to Santana with rock-charged improvisations on the funky, Latin-tinged "Carlos." For the "Bigtop" finale, Scofield switches on his organ-like FX and charges full steam into a massive rhythm fest that sounds like a B-3 summit. —Dan Ouellette

**Groove Elation**—*Lazy; Peculiar; Let The Cat Out; Kool; Old Soul; Groove Elation; Carlos; Soft Shoe; Let It Shine; Bigtop.* (60:05)

**Personnel**—Scofield, electric and acoustic guitars; Larry Goldings, organ, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums; Don Alias, percussion; Howard Johnson, tuba, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; Steve Turre, trombone; Billy Drewes, tenor saxophone, flute; Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn.



## John Scofield

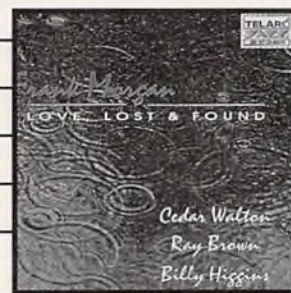
**Groove Elation**  
 Blue Note 32801

★★★★

With a title like *Groove Elation*, you wonder why, when this CD starts spinning, you get Slow Mo' Sco instead of the beat-happy launch you're expecting. If this were still the I.P. age, you'd swear the turntable was on the fritz or someone had accidentally flicked the speed down a notch to 16 rpm. But the unlikely lead-off tune, appropriately named "Lazy," is a humid-blues prelude to the rapturous groove to come. The pulse is there, but it's oozing and dripping out. The rhythm team of bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Idris Muhammad move in a crawl mode, organist Larry Goldings sounds like he's in an underwater state of suspended animation, the all-star guest horn section slides through the torpid zone and the guitar hero himself stings crisp but languid lines on an acoustic.

On the very next track, the whimsical "Peculiar," Scofield's nonet gets the wake-up call to sprint into soul-jazz action with Howard Johnson's fat tuba bass lines and Muhammad's upbeat rhythmic kick leading the way. For the rest of the jaunt—ranging from big swinging numbers like "Let It Shine" and "Let The Cat Out" to such cookers as the title tune (sans horns) and "Bigtop"—it's as if Sco and company are issuing a challenge to listen without dancing.

While Ho Jo, Steve Turre, Billy Drewes and Randy Brecker stick to harmonizing on the heads and blowing fills, what makes their contributions so compelling is the variety of timbre they bring to the set. They leave the soloing to Goldings (who burbles out thick, juicy slabs of keyboard meat) and, of course, the leader, who once again shines in the spotlight. Scofield's all over the guitar map, brandishing a steely axe on the wake-the-neighborhood romp



## Frank Morgan

**Love, Lost & Found**  
 Telarc 83374

★★★★½

Frank Morgan's *Easy Living* was one of the delights of 1985. After that release signaled his return to the recording studio and civilized society, the saxophonist has gone on to cut a number of other memorable albums. The newest, *Love, Lost & Found*, finds him sculpting the air with even greater strength of purpose and personal directness.

Looking back to Los Angeles of the mid-'50s, Morgan invests his old favorite "The Nearness Of You" with a wisdom and freshness of spirit unavailable to him as strung-out young disciple of Bird. His undying love for the late alto giant and the bebop idiom informs his current appraisals of 10 more standards. None of Morgan's earlier interpretations, though, rival these new ones for the relaxation evident in his phrasing or for the light, translucent Benny Carter-like beauty of his tone. "Skylark," a tune he recalls Bird telling him was valuable, evidences his superior way with melody, and "All The Things You Are" dazzles for his conspicuous display of naked emotion. His every breath at the session tells of a man who uses a blend of pride and blues feeling to restore love, mend broken dreams and forge ahead in life. The threadbare spots detected at times in the top range of his playing only accentuate the emo-

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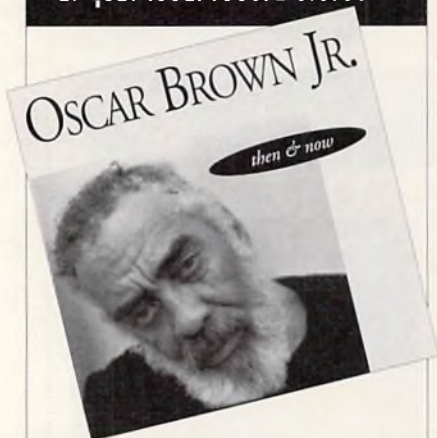
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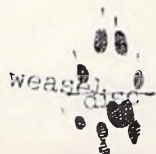
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tional clearness he's acquired. 'Nuff said.

The supporting band—none other than Cedar Walton, Ray Brown and Billy Higgins—is superlative. They shadow the date leader's every phrase with poise and discriminating curiosity. Their ensemble playing is at once meticulously designed and quietly passionate. The specialness of *Love, Lost & Found* does not lessen any when Walton spells Morgan as soloist or Brown steps forward to engage the alto player in a private conversation.

—Frank John Hadley

**Love, Lost & Found**—*The Nearness Of You; Last Night When We Were Young; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Skylark; Once I Loved; I Can't Get Started With You; It's Only A Paper Moon; My One And Only Love; Someday My Prince Will Come; All The Things You Are; Don't Blame Me.* (63.30)

**Personnel**—Morgan, alto saxophone; Cedar Walton, piano; Ray Brown, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.



## Dave Bergeron Quartet with Larry Willis

**Barge Burns...  
...Slide Flies**  
Mapleshade 02832

★★★★

In the mid-'70s, when trombonist Dave Bergeron and pianist Larry Willis were mainstays of the soul group Blood, Sweat & Tears, they expressed skills that seemed to reach beyond the genre. Those inclinations are fully realized on this reunion jazz date, and right away Bergeron presents his formidable chops on the opening tune, attacking "Gussie Blues" with a delightful, punchy assertiveness.

Then, with the gusto subdued, Bergeron is sweet and lovely on "Holly's Song," investing the tender ballad with the full range of tonal colors. Willis coaxes the rhythm section gently in and around the trombone's gilded notes, providing additional mood and nuance. "B.R.A.V.O" and "Evanrude," two more Bergeron originals, spin by without notice, but Willis' "Children Of Harlem" is an expressive, sonata-like composition with enough juice for the entire quartet, and each has his moment

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before they resume cobbling a most dramatic performance. Bassist Steve Novosel and drummer Kenwood Dennard, with feathery brush strokes, establish a bright, optimistic scene that becomes even more playful when Bargeron and Willis add their images of young girls double-dutch jump roping and boys chasing each other in a game of tag. But when Dennard's drums suddenly rumble, the conflict enters and Bargeron's quick stabbing sound signals chaos, agitation; Willis tightens the chords and we have all the tension of an urban setting about to explode. However, things simmer down and there is a return to the calm of the opening motif.

This is worth the price of admission. Although Bargeron's kazooish final note on "There Is No Greater Love" commands at least a small gratuity. —Herb Boyd

**Barge Burns...Slide Flies**—Gussie Blues; Holly's Song; B.R.A.V.O.; Evanrude; Children Of Harlem; Mexicali Pose; There Is No Greater Love; Blue Autumn. (57:46)  
**Personnel**—Bargeron, trombone; Larry Willis, piano; Steve Novosel, bass; Kenwood Dennard, drums.



## Chick Corea Quartet

Time Warp  
 Stretch 1115

★★

In preparation for his first acoustic quartet recording in more than a decade, Chick Corea took his group on the road doing

pieces by Monk, Duke and Trane as well as other jazz standards. They should have stopped there, and gone into the studio. Instead, Corea sat down and wrote *Time Warp*, an extended work in 11 parts. The compositions are, for the most part, quite flimsy and their inspiration is positively dopey: the work is based on a story of a father whose struggle to name his son enables him to travel through time to a medieval battleground. The focal point of the CD becomes whether the energetic band can make anything out of the material.

Overall, it's a gallant but losing effort. Corea's playing is generally free of the garish romanticism and showmanship that tends to make even a flamboyant young turk like Jacky Terrasson seem austere by comparison. Instead, the spotlight belongs to saxophonist Bob Berg, whose rambunctious tenor and soprano work are the highlight. Drummer Gary Novak plays with lots of energy, but his contributions are muffled by a production that seems aimed at a saccharine, happy-jazz sound. It appears as if Corea has brought the prerogatives of a fusion recording to an acoustic setting. It's a bad fit. —Martin Johnson

**Time Warp**—One World Over (Prologue); Time Warp; The Wish; Tenor Cadenza; Terrain; Arndok's Grave; Bass Intro To Discovery; Discovery; Piano Intro To New Life; New Life; One World Over. (57:30)

**Personnel**—Corea, piano; Bob Berg, tenor and soprano saxophones; John Palitucci, acoustic bass; Gary Novak, drums.

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## Sonny Fortune

A Better Understanding  
 Blue Note 32799

★★★★

Fortune returned to recording prominence with last year's bracing, all-Monk *Four In One*, which he considered his first recording of "traditionally oriented jazz." *A Better Understanding* is composed entirely of originals, including some retrieved from the attic and refurbished, having been recorded previously for Fortune's long-unavailable LPs on A&M, Atlantic and Strata-East. Fortune again works with an ensemble of familiar, compatible players, including Kenny Barron and Billy Hart, and the result is a varied program of

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mature, sophisticated jazz, often introspective but not lacking in bite.

Much of this CD's appeal comes from the straightforward lyricism of tunes like the graceful "Mind Games," the blowing vehicle "It Ain't What It Was" as well as the easy-sounding expressiveness of Fortune's playing. Alternating alto sax with soprano or with alto flute, he's always fluent and direct. "Awakening" reaches back to Fortune's mid-'70s, post-Miles Davis sound, with the leader's alto flute floating over Afro-Latin grooves furthered along by Jerry Gonzalez and Steve Berrios. The two percussionists return to fuel the polyrhythms of "Long Before Our Mothers Cried," an older piece that has evolved into a celebratory vehicle for Barron and Fortune's soprano horn. Barron is a preferred duet partner, and their encounter on the softly elegiac "Never Again Is Such A Long Time," with Fortune on alto flute, is one of the album's highlights.

—Jon Andrews

**A Better Understanding**—*Mind Games; Laying It Down; Awakening; A Swing Touch; Never Again Is Such A Long Time; It Ain't What It Was; It's A Bird; Tribute To A Holiday; Long Before Our Mother Cried.* (57:18)

**Personnel**—Fortune, alto and soprano saxophones, flute, alto flute; Jerry Gonzalez, trumpet, flugelhorn, congas (3, 7, 9); Robin Eubanks, trombone (3, 7, 9); Kenny Barron, piano; Wayne Dockery, bass; Ronnie Burrage (1, 9); Billy Hart (2-4, 6-8); drums; Steve Berrios, percussion (3, 9).



## Jerry Hahn

**Time Changes**  
enja 9007

★★★½

## Joe Beck

**Finger Painting**  
Wavetone 8634

★★★

Two guitarists, both with established track records as sidemen and both out of circulation for a spell, reemerge from the shadows with impressive new recordings. And while neither disc is an overwhelming success, both Jerry Hahn and Joe Beck testify they're

still in fine contemporary jazz guitar shape. Although tone-wise, Hahn (a soft, blues-thickened tone spiked with well-placed stings) and Beck (a smooth shade of fusion) are on different planets, they exhibit many similarities in their comebacks. Both enlist steady rhythm teams and inspired frontliners, both deliver catchy originals and worthy renditions of standards, and both display a love of the blues. As for adventurous playing, Hahn gets the edge over Beck who only rarely travels into choppy waters.

On *Time Changes*, his first album as a leader in over 20 years, Hahn bolts into a lively jaunt

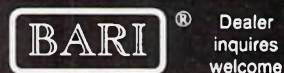
through the angular title tune, highlighted by shifting tempos and cascading guitar improvs. From there, the vet, who logged time in the '60s and early '70s with John Handy and Gary Burton, offers a varied set of blues-soaked swingers (Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments"), hushed ballads (including his own mellifluous "Chelsea Rose") and bop-charged cookers (two self-composed frolics, "The Moment" and "Hannah Bear"). Hahn's strongest guitar showcases occur on "Blues For Allyson," where he bends his strings to follow the swaying contours of the melody, and on Eric

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Dolphy's "245," which he reinvents by alternating chordal and single-note runs. Guest soprano saxophonist David Liebman also stars with soaring gusto on "Hannah Bear." The session ebbs twice on uneventful readings of Denny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now" and Hahn's "Oregon."

Beck scores points on *Finger Painting* with his indelible melodies and grooved guitar licks. Aided by top-notch bassist Mark Egan and drummer Danny Gottlieb, the leader launches into the upbeat "Blues Doctor," which features tenor saxophonist Bill Evans.

Beck, who guested throughout the '70s and '80s with several artists, including Miles Davis, Gil Evans and David Sanborn, uncorks a stream of catchy tunes, the most noteworthy being the blues-infused "The Kramer" and the sexy, touch-of-funk "Red Eye." However, by the time he takes on the energetic yet disappointing title tune (too safely entrenched in the fusion zone when its title begs for a colorful splash), the album begins to lose steam. While Beck turns in his best playing on that old warhorse "Summertime," Evans outshines him

on "Texas Ann," while the solo-guitar finale, "Tail Lights," sounds more like a sketch than a triumphant exit. —Dan Ouellette

**Time Changes**—*Time Changes*; 245; *The Method*; *Quiet Now*; *Blues For Allyson*; *Oregon*; *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*; *Hannah Bear*; *Stolen Moments*; *Chelsea Rose*. (50:51)  
**Personnel**—Hahn, guitar; Steve La Spina, bass; Jeff Hirshfield, drums; David Liebman, soprano sax (1, 8); Phil Markowitz (3, 5, 6, 9), Art Lande (10), piano.

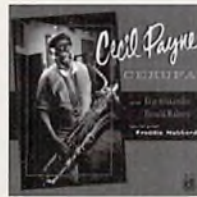
**Finger Painting**—*Blues Doctor*; *Jacqueline*; *The Kramer*; *The Answer*; *Red Eye*; *What Would I Do Without You*; *Finger Painting*; *Summertime*; *Texas Ann*; *Tail Lights*. (48:26)

**Personnel**—Beck, guitar; Bill Evans, tenor and soprano saxophones; Mark Egan, basses; Danny Gottlieb, drums.

## Delmark '95 & Beyond

1995 was one of Delmark's most successful, important, and busiest years in jazz. CDs by Eric Alexander (*Up, Over & Out*; 476), Cecil Payne (*Cerupa*; 478) and The Ritual Trio featuring Billy Bang (*Big Cliff*; 477) have reached new heights in popularity and are still going strong. '95 also saw the return of Roscoe Mitchell to Delmark (*Hey Donald*; 475) who has also just finished a solo project, and early next year will see the re-issue of his first album, *Sound*. Looking to early '96 we'll have three other AACM re-issues, newly recorded projects by NRG Ensemble, Ari Brown, Zane Massey, Jodie Christian, and other Apollo Series releases. Thanks to all jazz fans who supported Delmark and the critics that participated in *Down Beat's* poll who voted Delmark in the top ten for *Jazz Label of the Year* two years running.

Happy Holidays!



Delmark Records, 4121 North Rockwell, Chicago, IL 60618.



## Steven Kowalczyk

### Moods And Grooves

Atlantic 82817

★★

Saloon singers remain an endangered breed. With his debut, *Moods And Grooves*, Kowalczyk bids for the audience that once embraced Harry Connick as the next Sinatra. Connick wasn't; Kowalczyk isn't. This collection of original tunes (except for "Polka Dots") has a sameness to it that is aggravated by Kowalczyk's limited vocal range.

When Kowalczyk tries to deal with darker subjects like old age ("Old") and vampirism ("Vampire"), he hasn't the emotional range to pull it off. Glossy production and support from the likes of pianist Alan Broadbent can't remedy the hip affectations of "Mean Alligator" and "Mr. Personality." With several lineups of top session players at work in strictly supportive roles, it's evident that much time and care went into *Moods And Grooves*, though with disappointing results. —Jon Andrews

**Moods And Grooves**—*Buttercup*; *Don't Ask Me Why*; *I Fall In Love*; *Old*; *Who Do You Do*; *Mean Alligator*; *The Love We Never Had*; *Grow Another Garden*; *Vampire*; *How Will I Ever Find My Way*; *Polka Dots And Moonbeams*; *Mr. Personality*. (52:26)

**Personnel**—Kowalczyk, vocals; Alan Broadbent (2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12), Greg Wells (1, 5, 8, 10, 11), piano; Shane Keister, piano, organ, synthesizer (1, 4-9, 11, 12); John Patitucci (3, 7), Lee Sklar (1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12), Chuck Del Monaco (8, 10, 11), bass; Carlos Vega (1-3, 6, 7, 9, 12), Ray Brinker (5, 8, 10, 11), drums; Joe Porcaro (1-3, 6, 7, 9, 12), Emil

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Richards (5, 8, 10, 11), percussion, vibraphone; Grant Geissman (3, 7, 10, 11), Dean Parks (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12), guitar; Nino Tempo, saxophone (1-3, 6, 7, 9, 12); Lee Thornburg, trumpet (8, 10, 11); Kate McGarry, backing vocals (1, 4); Aaron Heick, Jim Heinz, Herb Besson, Chris Botti, Danny Wolensky, horns (3, 9, 12).



## Hamiet Bluiett

**Young Warrior, Old Warrior**  
Mapleshade 02932

★★★

**T**he music on baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett's *Young Warrior, Old Warrior* gets at what may be jazz's biggest strength as

well as its eeriest conundrum. The album puts together musicians from ages 20 to 70, and though this makes for satisfying listening in several places, when it doesn't work it's because the age ranges also translate into equally broad—and sometimes irreconcilable—stylistic ones.

The most flagrant disparity comes from inside the rhythm section. Where pianist Larry Willis adds a soothing harmonic glow to the quick changes of Bluiett, trumpeter Jack Walrath, outstanding young tenor discovery Mark Shim and bass and drum veterans Keter Betts and Jimmy Cobb lock into a tight swing that sometimes hampers the soloists. (The baritonist struggles mightily to break free on "Sir Phyllis Blues" and "Head Start," but can't.)

At one point during the baritone/drum duet, "Jimmy And Me," Cobb even keeps up by quoting liberally from the tight snare and tomtom attack employed by the late Ed Blackwell. By tune's end, you get the feeling that even though the jazz continuum stretches from hot to cool, inside to outside, and acoustic to electric, it's the rare jazzman who can cross from one to another.

—K. Leander Williams

*Young Warrior, Old Warrior*—*Blue 'N Boogie; Precious Moments For Right Now; Sir Phyllis Blues; Thinking About It; Jimmy And Me; Bari-ed Treasure; Head Start; Blues In F And G.* (52:41)

*Personnel*—Bluiett, baritone saxophone; Jack Walrath, trumpet; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Larry Willis, piano; Keter Betts, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.



## Leon Lee Dorsey

**The Watcher**  
Landmark 1540

★★★★

**F**or his debut recording as a leader, bassist Leon Lee Dorsey not only fully demonstrates his amazing prowess as an accompanist, but showcases his skills as a composer. Seven of the 11 compositions are his, and none more captivating than the title tune. Like their efforts throughout the date, alto and soprano saxophonist Vincent Herring and tenor saxist Don Braden are a lethal combination on this opening number, letting their fury hang all the way out. The piece bristles, and Dorsey nestles

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his concise and quick picking deftly between pianist Lafayette Harris Jr.'s splashing chords and drummer Cecil Brook's hurtling pace.

Despite the swift burn of "The Watcher," most of Dorsey's originals have a contemplative, almost devotional edge to them. Moreover, there are several oblique nods to Wayne Shorter on "Miles" and to Charlie Mingus' episodic forms on "River Of The Fire." And that Dorsey is not ashamed of being a romantic is beautifully etched on "I Am With You Always," although the hymnal mood may suggest the chapel as much as it does a love song.

It is not until "Misty" that Dorsey discloses how he can take an old standard and make it speak anew, make it buzz with fresh authority. Except for a vocal-like treatment here and there, the melody is given a conventional reading. That is, conventional by Dorsey's requirements, which means a luscious mix of jazz and classical overtones. His timing is impeccable, and this is complemented by a strong, throbbing attention to the tune's well-known harmonic structure.

The jazz community is familiar with Dorsey's ability to fill in the background with all the basics of the bass, but he shows, too, that when he steps up front he wields a mighty fine pen.

—Herb Boyd

**The Watcher**—*The Watcher; Miles; In Remembrance Of Him; I Am With You Always; New Testament; River Of The*

*Fire; Centre Avenue Shuffle; Cheek To Cheek; Caravan; Misty; United.* (58:13)

**Personnel**—Dorsey, bass; Vincent Herring, alto and soprano saxophones; Don Braden, tenor saxophone; Lafayette Harris Jr., piano; Cecil Brooks III, Jimmy Madison (10), drums.

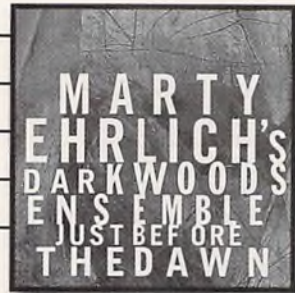
individual soloist. Ehrlich's method requires a little patience, as his structures coalesce and form gradually. As his liner notes predict, "These sounds will find a center or the center will change."

There's mystery and a little chaos in the rustling percussion and twitching cello, suggesting night sounds. On "Underground/Overground," Vincent Chancey's french horn and Ehrlich's bass clarinet converse freely, replaced by flutes and cello before Chancey states the Mingus-like theme. The overall effect of "Underground/Overground" and "Dance No. 1" recalls the early morning motive of Dave Holland's "Conference Of The Birds." As twilight gives way to morning, the melodies and rhythms emerge strong and clear.

There's always a certain tension between Ehrlich's European influences (composition for cello and french horn) and African influences (improvisation for drums and flutes). Ehrlich's tribute to Julius Hemphill, "Spirit Of JAH," is distinctively African, as wood flutes dance over the rhythms of Mark Helias' bass and Don Alias' hand drums. "Thickets" is more European, with the strings accentuating Ehrlich's tight cyclical patterns on clarinet. "Flight," with menacing strings and angry, whining clarinet from Ehrlich, evokes Jimmy Giuffre, circa 1961.

*Just Before The Dawn* satisfies on several levels, and rewards careful listening.

—Jon Andrews



**Marty Ehrlich's  
Dark Woods  
Ensemble**

**Just Before The Dawn**  
New World/  
CounterCurrents 80474


★★★★½

**T**hese dark woods are both literal and figurative. The distinctive lineup emphasizes a "woody" sound with cello and bass violin alongside Ehrlich's wood flutes and clarinets. The listener focuses more on Ehrlich's writing and on the ensemble's interplay than on any

**Just Before The Dawn**—*Spirit Of JAH; Thickets; Mudpie Anthem; Dance No. 1; Flight; The Folksinger; Side By Side; Underground/Overground; Elahu.* (60:09)

**Personnel**—Ehrlich, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, flute, wood flutes; Vincent Chancey, french horn; Erik Friedlander, cello; Mark Helias, bass; Don Alias, percussion.

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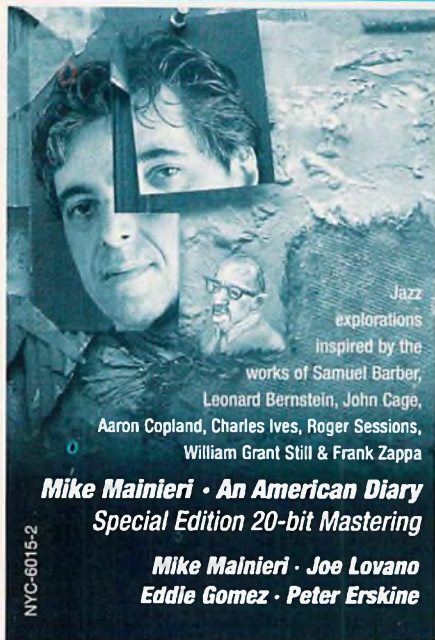
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## CD REVIEWS



### Edward Simon

**Edward Simon**  
Kokopelli 1305

★★★

**B**est known for his tenure in Bobby Watson's recently disbanded group Horizon, this Venezuelan-born pianist continues to plot his own introspective course on his second solo album. The first, *Beauty Within*, was a spare trio session, but here he's added Mark Turner's moody tenor sax and the Latin percussion of Milton Cardona and Cafe. The congas are used sparsely, however, and with Larry Grenadier's acoustic bass replacing Anthony Jackson's electric model and Adam

Cruz's lean, crisp drums in place of Horacio Hernandez's fat, busy ones, the textures are hardly any fuller. Simon's pensive piano, contributing to an overall feeling that suggests Bill Evans in a Latin groove or Chick Corea on downers.

Propelled by Cardona's congas, Simon's composition "Colego" is the album's most percussive track, yet its falling legato lines express the same minor-key wistfulness as the darkly brooding interpretations of the South American standards "Alma Llanera" and "Caballa Viejo." Simon works up a maddling head of steam on "Slippin' & Slidin'" and engages Turner in a playful semi-abstract duet on "Stop Looking To Find," but takes another somber turn on "Magic Between Us" before closing on a relatively sunny note with "Teen's Romance."

While the music offers nothing really new stylistically, it's nevertheless completely contemporary, virtually cliché-free and animated by a spirit of investigation, if not exploration. The musicians listen as well as they play, creating a bond of mutual sensitivity. And if Simon's sound is filled with nostalgia, it's not for bebop or blues.

—Larry Birnbaum

**Edward Simon**—*Colego*: Alma Llanera (Part 1); Alma Llanera (Part 2); Caballo Viejo; Slippin' & Slidin'; Stop Looking To Find (It Finds You); Magic Between Us; Teen's Romance. (61:08)

**Personnel**—Simon, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Milton Cardona, Cafe (8), percussion.

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## CD REVIEWS

# JAZZ

## Transcendent Swing

by Thomas Conrad

**Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note: The Complete Recordings** (ECM 1575-80; 69:37/76:32/70:47/75:58/62:34/68:21: ★★★★★) This box of six CDs contains pianist Keith Jarrett, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette's entire sold-out engagement at the Blue Note in Greenwich Village in June 1994: three nights; two sets per night; one CD per set. It comes in the year of Jarrett's 50th birthday, and it preserves the first appearance at a jazz club by the "Standards Trio" since 1983. Very rarely has so much transcendent piano trio music from a moment in time been gathered in one place.

Jarrett has described these songs as part of our "tribal language," and has spoken also of "spiritual involvement in something that is not our own... something beautiful that is not ours." He has often been accused of arrogance, but there is humility in such a quest. Through hesitant chords and extended single-note meditations (on the fourth CD, the second set of the second night), he eventually comes upon the theme to "How Deep Is The Ocean." The fact that it is "not his own"—that it is all of ours—is what makes its discovery so moving.

There are over seven hours of music here, with 37 different pieces of which only three are repeated. Five are Jarrett originals. The rest come from Kern and the Gershwins and Mercer and Carmichael and Monk and Mancini, et. al. Jarrett's trio has now achieved a level of intuitive interaction with few precedents in the history of jazz. The Bill Evans Trio comes to mind, but Evans never kept three people together for 12 years. This group swings (the cumulative momentum of pieces like "Autumn Leaves" and "In Your Own Sweet Way" sweeps up everything in its path), yet Peacock and DeJohnette have evolved far beyond "keeping time." Peacock's fluid upper-register counterpoint and commentary is like an exalted whirring, and the silvery insistence of DeJohnette's cymbals levitates this music so that Jarrett sounds suspended in air.

There are overwhelming marathon medleys, like the 20 minutes of "You Don't Know What Love Is," which becomes Jarrett's own "Muezzin" and rides like a caravan. But it is the revelatory ballads that break through. On "How Long Has This Been Going On," Jarrett lightly touches Gershwin and then wanders away to derive personal poetry and then returns to the theme at the end like a frame for his thoughts. "When I Fall In Love" is a secular hymn. In the right hands, "Everything Happens To Me" is an inspirational foundation for improvised introspection. (Art Pepper summed up his life with it.) Jarrett's whispered rendering prepares for



Shockingly intimate trio jazz: Jarrett

the hush that descends around Peacock's solo. Peacock's deep searching to understand what has happened to him makes you sit very still in your chair. What a trio.

For many years, most ECM albums have been engineered by the great Jan Erik Kongshaug. He usually works in Rainbow Studio in Oslo, where his sonic signature is a balance of precision and warmth in which each instrument seems to glow. All the previous live recordings of the Standards Trio have been set in European concert halls, where some of the detail within the ensemble is forgone but where Kongshaug gets the ambient cues to convey the grandeur of a large space. *At The Blue Note* is Kongshaug's first live recording of the trio in a small acoustic environment, and it is one of his finest achievements. Our relationship to the three instruments is shockingly intimate. We hear DeJohnette's every touch on the cymbals and the piano's timbral complexities wash over us.

Jarrett has said of this collection, "What this trio does is deeper than what is shown in a single release.... What we investigate is the music-making process." The scope and variety and profundity of these seven hours take us into that process like few other jazz recordings. Jarrett's primary gift as an improviser is the ability to involve the listener in the creative act as it unfolds (hence the unprecedented popularity of his spontaneous solo piano albums). We think and discover and feel with him; it requires our own imaginative effort to follow the branch logic of "On Green Dolphin Street," or the journey which arrives at the poignance of "For Heaven's Sake." (Every time you think you have found your high moment in this collection, you replace it—and then you replace it again.)

For those who can not make the investment in *The Complete Recordings*, ECM is releasing a single CD of the first set of the second night. I do not envy the person whose job it was to choose which five sets to eliminate.

DB



BEYOND

Worlds In Collision

by Jon Andrews

Purists beware: beyond the traditional recordings of ethnic musics, collaborations between musicians of different cultures continue to thrive in this popular sub-genre. These CDs test the adage that music is the universal language.

**Rabih Abou-Khalil: *The Sultan's Picnic*** (enja 8078; 52:40: ★★★★★) This native of Lebanon plays the oud, an ancestor of the lute, but allies himself with sympathetic jazz musicians, including bassist Steve Swallow, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and saxophonist Charlie Mariano. For *The Sultan's Picnic*, Howard Levy is added on harmonica, and the ex-Flecktone evokes the sound of the traditional nay flute as well as blues harmonica. Alternately exuberant and pensive, Abou-Khalil's unique hybrid successfully spans the worlds of traditional Arabic music and jazz.

**The Splendid Master Gnawa Musicians Of Morocco Featuring Randy Weston** (Antilles/Verve 314 521 587; 71:03: ★★★½) Long a champion of the Gnawa, Weston produced this unprecedented 1992 meeting of nine Gnawa masters (including Maleem Mahmoud Ghania, who later recorded with Pharoah Sanders). The Maleems take turns, singing and performing on the guimbri (also related to the lute), backed by steel castanets, handclaps and group vocals. Without understanding a word, you hear connections to the blues tradition. Unfortunately, Weston plays only briefly, acting as a musical interpreter on "Chalabati."

**U. Srinivas & Michael Brook: *Dream*** (Real World CAROL 2352; 43:59: ★★★★★) Upalappu Srinivas gained notoriety by introducing the five-string mandolin to South Indian raga. While recording Srinivas' fine traditional session *Rama Sreerama* (also Real World), producer Michael Brook assembled *Dream* by recording Srinivas' electric mandolin in jam sessions (including Nana Vasconelos) and with prepared rhythm tracks, adding the blurry textures of Brook's "infinite guitar." Given its patchwork origin, *Dream* is remarkably coherent, evocative material which transcends genre altogether.

**Baka Beyond: *The Meeting Pool*** (Hannibal/Rykodisc 1388; 51:16: ★★★½) Guitarist Martin Craddick lived for a time among the Baka people of Cameroon, returning with a satchel full of tapes and inspiration for the African fusion of Baka Beyond. The distinctive yodels and water-splash percussion of the Baka have influenced James Newton and Jon Hassell. *The Meeting Pool* goes further beyond Baka than previously, as the Baka are infrequently heard, but persist



Randy Weston: champion of the Gnawa

in the ethereal melodies and energetic rhythms created by Craddick and colleagues from Senegal and France.

**Gamelan Pacifica: *Trance Gong*** (What Next? 0016; 60:35: ★★★★★½) Jarrad Powell's Gamelan Pacifica develops contemporary compositions for ancient mallet instruments, influenced by the traditional themes and rhythms. Pristine and accomplished, *Trance Gong* captures the beauty, fragility and meditative aspects of instrumental gamelan music. "The Small Of My Back" offers flowing melodies, intricate rhythms and exquisite suling flute (subject to electronic processing). Powell's arrangement of John Cage's "In A Landscape" for aluminum gamelan shimmers and glows.

**Various Artists: *Planet Soup*** (Ellipsis Arts... 3450; 61:13/63:53/68:00: ★★★½) These three CDs are crammed with cross-cultural adventures. A Tuvan throatsinger duets with a California blues musician. Zairean vocalist Ray Lema encounters a Bulgarian choir. Arabic-influenced German group Dissidenten essays a danceable cover of "A Love Supreme." (*Nothing* is sacred.) The artists are largely obscure, with Astor Piazzolla, Pierre Dorge and Varttina among the familiar names. Invaluable track notes help you sort it all out. An ideal (and economical) way to browse dozens of new artists and emerging forms.

**Hector Zazou: *Songs From The Cold Seas*** (Columbia 67068; 50:37: ★★★★★) The French composer/keyboard player assembles traditional songs from Newfoundland, the Hebrides, Siberia, etc., and casts vocalists to participate in brooding, atmospheric arrangements for electric and pedal-steel guitars, textural electronics and drum programs. Several singers have pop/folk connections, like Bjork, Suzanne Vega, Jane Siberry and the Finnish quartet Varttina. Despite shifting personnel, Zazou achieves a consistent, often striking mood suited to his icy subject matter. **DB**

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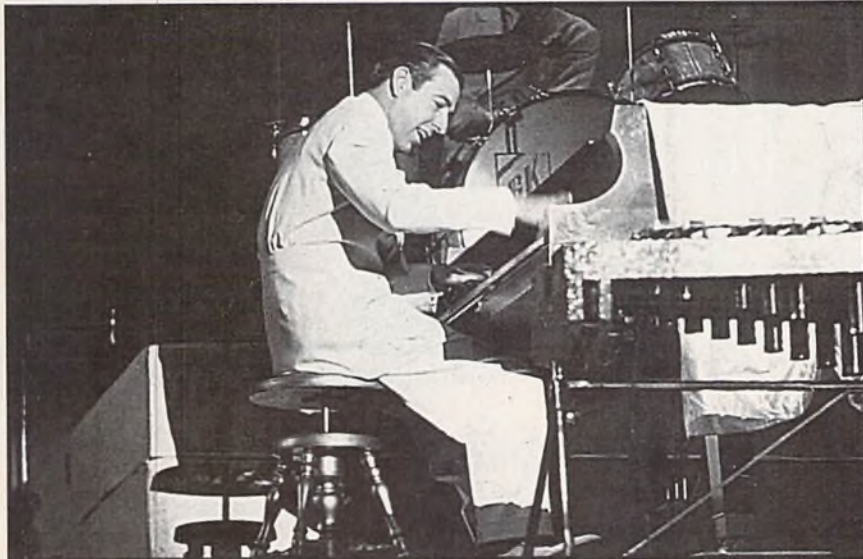
REISSUES

Corner On The Classics (I)

by John Corbett

Quite a few small labels are now busy collecting, compiling and reissuing traditional jazz: ASV, Topaz, Best Of Jazz, Jazz Archives, Jazz Hour. Over the course of five short years, France's Classics label has released over 300 titles of chronologically ordered cuts selected from the work of spe-

they're rich, Earl Hines-esque sprees, two featuring a trio with Gene Krupa's popping snare. "She's Funny That Way" is a duet with Bud Freeman on tenor. The nine tracks with a band are less interesting than those with Stacy's piano in the foreground. Chicago-born, Austin High Gang-affiliated Sullivan is rhythmically controlled, a serious harmonic study. But the most fascinating tracks find the white pianist leading his Cafe Society Orchestra (with guitarist Freddie Green, clarinetist Edmond Hall and vocalist Joe Turner), one of the earliest racially integrated bands.



Jess Stacy, 1939: zingy, rich, Earl Hines-esque sprees

cific artists. The series, which is generally available stateside, avoids including superfluous alternate takes or multiple versions, and discs are well (but not lavishly) notated with all pertinent info. And where some reissue specialists prefer to stick to big names and easy sells, Classics has made a point in its huge catalog of attending to some of the lesser-knowns and fringier fellows.

**Jess Stacy: 1935-1939 (Classics 795; 68:11: ★★★★★); Garland Wilson: 1931-1938 (Classics 808; 78:50: ★★★); Joe Sullivan: 1933-1941 (Classics 821; 71:05: ★★★★★)** These three releases spotlight piano. Wilson shoots for technical razzle-dazzle with high-register flash and schmaltzy voicings; he's better on slow blues, like the entrancing celeste solo "Blue Morning." In 1932, Wilson went to Paris to accompany singer Nina Mae McKinney (who graces two cuts), where he lived for many years. Two enjoyable romps with French violinist Michel Warlop round things out. The Stacy sides, which include a number of great solos (many written by him), were recorded over the same years he was pianist with Benny Goodman. Less superficially zingy,

**Willie Bryant and his Orchestra: 1935-1936 (Classics 768; 67:24: ★★★★★)** Originally a soft-shoe dancer, Willie Bryant directed and sometimes sang in this excellent Harlem big band from the mid-'30s on. His slightly sappy vocals can be heard on "It's Over Because We're Through," while Cozy Cole's woodblocks and dynamite swing propel "A Viper's Moan" through Mack Horton's growling trombone spot. Benny Carter (on trumpet) and Ben Webster both solo on "The Shiek," and other notables in the band at times include Teddy Wilson and Taft Jordan.

**Freddy Johnson and his Orchestra: 1933-1939 (Classics 829; 72:17: ★★★★★½)** After Sam Wooding's Orchestra disbanded in Europe in 1931, pianist Johnson formed his own group (with fellow ex-Wooding trumpeter Arthur Briggs) in Paris. Working in Europe until the Nazis interred him in 1940, with various ensembles of ex-pats and local musicians, his groups played hot New Orleans-style jazz and backed singers, including Marlene Dietrich on "Wo Ist Der Mann?" Bodacious rhythms and flaming brass spreading the jazz bug from Harlem (N.Y.) to Haarlem (Holland). **DB**

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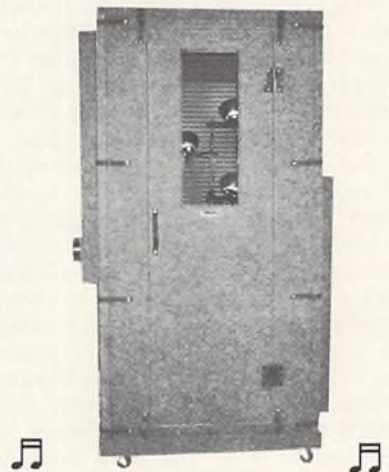
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# BLINDFOLD TEST

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## Chick Corea

by Chris Rubin

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to identify the musicians who performed on selected recordings. No information about the recordings is given to the artist prior to the test.

**P**ianist and composer Chick Corea sat down years ago with the late Leonard Feather for a Blindfold Test, and he takes time out from a busy schedule for a repeat performance. Corea continues to perform around the world, both solo and with various combinations of musicians, many of whom have played with him for years.

Best known for Return to Forever, his volcanic fusion band with Stanley Clarke and Al Di Meola, Corea has played with just about everyone. In recent years, he has continued to tour and record with his Elektric and Akoustic bands, and has put out many superb recordings of solo piano. His latest, *Time Warp* (Stretch—see p. 62), is an acoustic quartet album that features saxophonist Bob Berg, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Gary Novak.

Corea was tested at Mad Hatter, his Silverlake, Calif., recording studio.

### Gary Burton & Makoto Ozone

"Opus Hall" (from *Face To Face*, GRP, 1995) Burton, vibes; Ozone, piano.

That's vibes in there. Wow. First vibes and piano I've heard since me and Gary early on. The music's old, but the recording sounds contemporary. What a good groove! That's a style of piano I wish I could play: stride bass, walking bass. You know they had to make a groove without a drummer. Geez, is that Gary Burton? Only Gary plays phrases like that. Is that Gary and Makoto? That's just by process of elimination. Makoto's playing great. I'm gonna ask them to do this piece in Tokyo—we're doing a show together. Wow! Go ahead, Makoto! This was written by Benny Goodman. Just terrific. Really well done. I never heard Makoto stride like that. Gary's just a magic musician.

### Joey Calderazzo

"First Impressions" (from *To Know One*, Blue Note, 1993) Calderazzo, piano; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Dave Holland, bass.

Am I out of touch? I don't recognize anything! Sounds nice, though. He's singing now, the voice sounds like Keith Jarrett. Very nice, I like the composition a lot and the touch. One comment about the recording: it's obviously a studio where the drummer had the piano and bass cranked in his monitor, gave it an unnatural feeling. Then the piano player started bearing down. It made me uncomfortable in the middle of the track.

CR: *It's Joey Calderazzo.*

Oh, yeah? Joey? And that's Jack and Dave? Sure didn't sound like Jack and Dave. I don't know where I'm at. No matter how much of a personality you have, a good musician adapts and can do things differently. It's not important to be immediately recognizable. I know Jack and Dave's playing intimately. I love Joey's playing.

### Geri Allen Trio

"Introspection/Monk" (from *Twenty One*, Blue Note, 1994) Allen, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

Monk! Monk songs. This is very interesting to me. I recognize the Monk, but I forget the name. My single thought through the whole piece is, isn't it interesting how you can take such



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different approaches to Monk and it lives. The drummer obviously had everything very loud in his headphones—he's hitting hard, but the piano and bass aren't playing that hard. Sounded like a rock & roll mix.

That's Geri Allen playing? I enjoyed it, she's good. I just saw her play in Copenhagen. That was Tony Williams? [laughs] He's one of my favorites, and I would never have recognized him!

### Jacky Terrasson

"Bye Bye Blackbird" (from *Jacky Terrasson*, Blue Note, 1995) Terrasson, piano; Ugona Okegwo, bass; Leon Parker, drums.

Boy, you got me there. Nice bass player. They couldn't afford a drummer on this one, huh? Is that a drummer? Oh, he was late for the gig. There he goes. I can see him running up to the bandstand. Oh, here they go. Kind of interesting, speeding the tempo up. Another speed, getting up to warp speed now, back down again. Was that "Bye Bye Blackbird"? I didn't recognize it until just now. They just fade it out. The bass player held it together.

Was that Jacky? I didn't recognize his playing. The drummer was using a Paiste cymbal, had that flat ride sound. Nice piano playing, I like Jacky's playing.

### Duke Ellington

"Caravan" (from *Duke Ellington/The 1952 Seattle Concert On RCA/Bluebird*) Ellington, piano; Ray Nance, violin, trumpet; Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor saxophone.

Duke! No way I wouldn't have known who this was. The original stuff! It sounds like the background parts are improvised—they probably were, a lot of them. I wouldn't have known that's Duke's band. Sounds like a live recording. Nice piano intro. A clarinet tone with no vibrato, beautiful sound. Wow. Yeah. Ray Nance? Sounds like there's just one mic with everything going into it. What a great groove. I gotta get this record! What a beautiful trombone sound. Everybody's playing so easy and swinging so hard. Ooh! That's totally incredible. Top of the stars list. One musical thing, so lacking in so much I hear, whoever adjusts the arrangements: that was so perfect, it had everything in it, completely perfect from beginning to end. You only heard Duke at the beginning and the end, but it was perfect. Duke has always been a leading figure for me in that he kept his band going and never stopped creating. He was always incredibly rich musically.

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