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**Ornette
Coleman**

**Roomful
of Blues**

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Blindfolded**



16 Standards Trio

Why Play Standards?

Brought together out of sheer love for America's songbook, pianist Keith Jarrett, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette reinvent the wheel, musically speaking. But why?

By John Ephland

Cover photograph of Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette by Teri Bloom.



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TERI BLOOM

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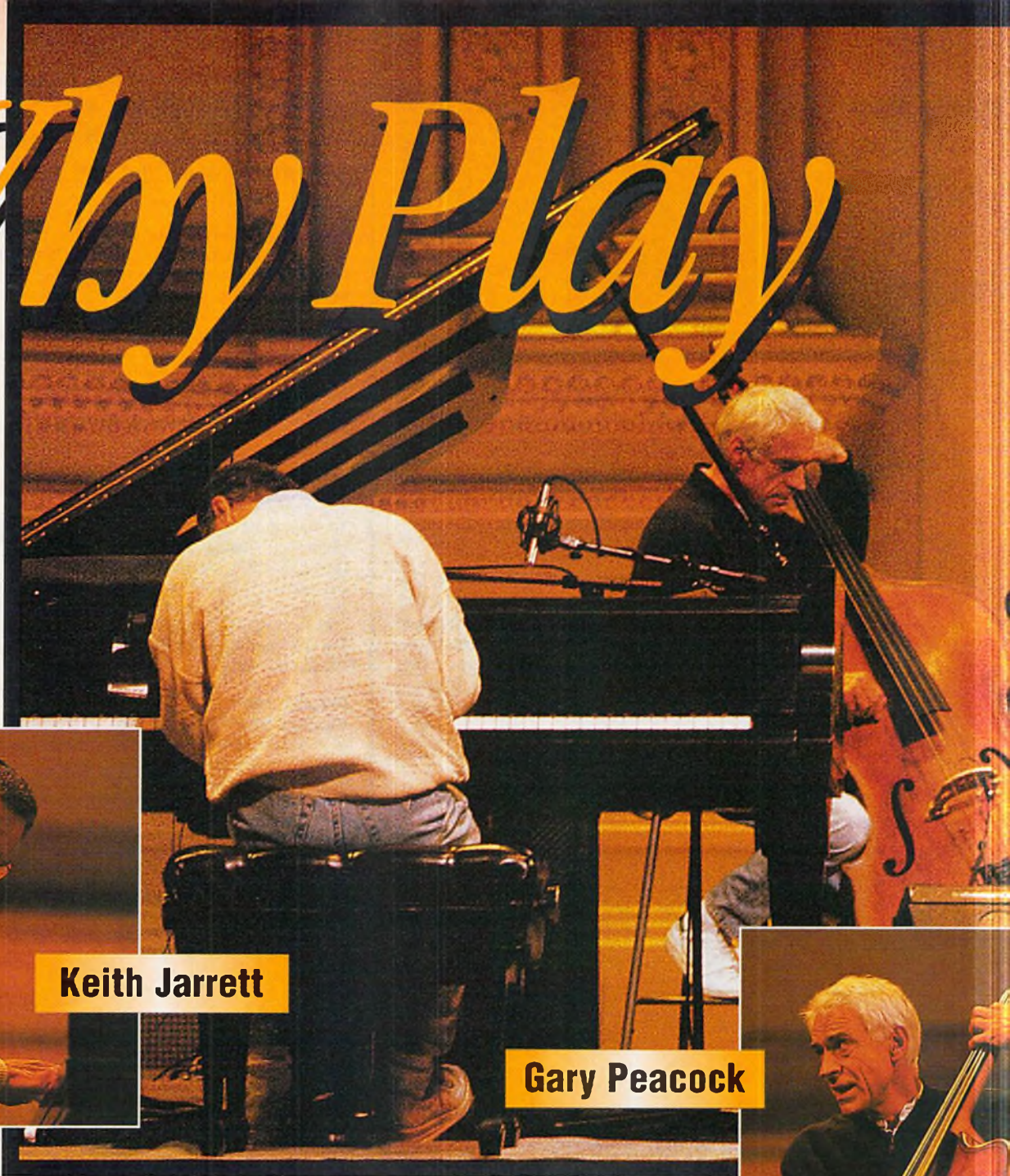
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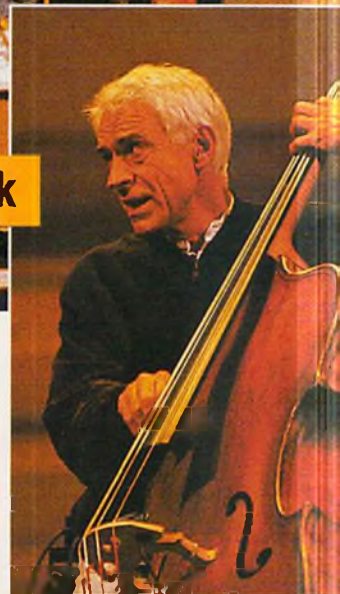
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Why Play



Keith Jarrett

Gary Peacock



It boggles the mind. Since 1983, the Standards Trio of pianist Keith Jarrett, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette have thrived not only playing just “standards” but avoiding jazz clubs like they were cesspools. In addition, last fall they completed their first U.S. tour in *eight* years. For most jazz groups, clubs—overseas and stateside—are the warp and woof of their existence. Not for these guys.

A 1983 Village Vanguard appearance served as a kind of jumping-off point immediately after the trio was formed. But for more than a decade between that first New York club gig and a 1994 engagement at the Blue Note—documented on the six-CD set *Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note: The Complete Recordings*—messrs. Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette, for the most part, made the European concert hall their venue of choice.

But the story goes back even further. Jarrett and DeJohnette originally played together in 1966 with Charles Lloyd, and again in 1970-'71 with Miles Davis. In 1978, Peacock (having played with DeJohnette in the early '70s) brought the three of them together for *Tales Of Another*, his album of original, mostly

dark and brooding music. All three were used to the piano-trio format: Jarrett had formed a band playing new music with Charlie Haden and Paul Motian, and Peacock and DeJohnette at different points performed with Bill Evans.

At the behest of Jarrett, in December 1982, DeJohnette and Peacock started talking with the pianist about a “standards” collaboration that, among other things, has resulted in two Grammy nominations, three filmed concerts (available from BMG Classics Video), 11 critically acclaimed albums and, in 1991, France’s prestigious Prix du President de la Republique from the Charles Cros Academy for the Recording of the Year for their two-CD set *Tribute*—an honor usually reserved for classical and opera productions. Most recently recorded is the Standards Trio’s *Standards In Norway*, and Jarrett and Peacock with Paul Motian on *Live At The Deer Head Inn*.



Jack DeJohnette



JOHN EPHLAND: Keith, you do have a very clean house. On a more musical note, what was the story behind the *Standards Trio's* origins?

KJ: I had an agenda; I don't usually have an agenda. The idea of doing a trio album was in my head. Jack and Gary came to mind. They had been through so many kinds of music in their lives already. They were multi-instrumentalists. I didn't know enough, though. I needed to find out if the constitution was understood, that the agenda was to dispossess ourselves of the music, to be giving, not to be taking it and saying, "This is ours." To just be

ourselves and play. It sounds simple. I think Gary told me, when he first heard we were doing standards ... "Why would we do that?"

GARY PEACOCK: I remember very clearly, telling myself, "I need a little time to think about it." Because a lot of people were still doing standards. I was still at the Cornish Institute in Seattle teaching music theory, and we were always dealing with standards. And I was thinking, "Why would anyone want to do standards? I don't want to get out there and play a standard." I really didn't. I mean, just to play a standard—what's the big deal?

KJ: Yeah, that's what Miles would say: [*imitating Davis' raspy voice*] "I did that already!" [*laughs*]

Standards?

By John Ephland

Photography by Teri Bloom

Apart from the trio, DeJohnette's next album (due out on ECM this summer) is a trio date of a different sort: The drummer is joined by keyboardist Michael Cain and reedist Steve Gorn. A followup to '94's *Oracle* (ECM) duet with guitarist Ralph Towner is expected later this year from Peacock. As for the band's nominal leader, Jarrett is coming off a year that began with top piano honors in the *DB* 1994 Readers Poll. He also turned 50 last May, released the critically acclaimed, highly successful *Handel: Suites For Keyboard* and made his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra performing Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 23* at Tanglewood in August.

The following conversation, which took place in Jarrett's lovely, quasi-rural New Jersey home, is the first time the three players have been cornered for a formal interview. Another reason to scratch your head.

KEITH JARRETT: You know this is the first time we three have all been together here. I was afraid to show these guys where I live and how I live! [*laughs all around*]

GP: And then, after a while, it was like, "If Keith is interested in doing it, it can't just be about the music; it has to be something a little bit further than that." So, I called him up and said, "Yeah, okay, I'm game for it." But part of me was saying, "If this starts to be [*gestures for lights, camera, action!*], 'Standards!'" I was prepared to say, "I think I'm gonna leave." But what happened was, as you know, we were going to do an album in a day and a half, and we did it in three hours. [Actually, three albums resulted: *Standards, Vol. 1*; *Standards, Vol. 2*; and *Changes*, a record of free improvisations.]

KJ: We had dinner the night before, and the next day we recorded. I didn't know how deep this idea actually had roots: to have a small group made up of people who don't have to think about the material at all, that can just sit at their instruments. I mean, I think one of the most beautiful things about this trio is that we can set up and leave and come back and play. Jack doesn't have to think, "Was I supposed to play brushes on that part of this?" And I don't have to think, "I wonder if Jack is happy with the voicings on this tune." We knew we were writers, and if we

“Why does everyone have to be owning their work? In jazz, it’s the *last* place you should have to have that as a rule.”

—Keith

wanted to, we could have a band that played our own music. But why does everyone have to be owning their work? In jazz, it’s the *last* place you should have to have that as a rule.

JE: *And you would think that way when playing original music?*

GP: Oh, yeah; that’s why you write it.

KJ: When you’re playing someone else’s music ... in general, the [standards] that we play were written out of context. I mean, they might’ve been written for a context, but it wasn’t a jazz context. It’s like taking an objectively nice thing and expanding on it rather than creating the thing for the context you’re in. In other words, I know, for example, that Gary can play certain things on a certain part of his bass, and maybe I even know the preferences he has. If I write music, I’d know who was playing. As I did in my quartet, I wrote for the guys. Each guy has his own statement to make, and I didn’t want to crush that statement; I would be writing for many voices at once but trying to make these things have their own outlet for each person. Charlie Haden, for example, might not have wanted to play vamps. Dewey [Redman] might not have wanted to play on chords all the time. I’d have to create a situation where everyone was mostly happy. That’s the challenge of the writer, and that’s a valid thing. But it’s not freedom.

JE: *Isn’t it ironic since it’s your own music?*

KJ: But that’s the reason. If you own anything, you’re not free. We don’t have to worry where our music is; all we have to do is have the instruments.

JE: *Jack, how does this process relate to what you’re doing?*

JACK DEJOHNETTE: I co-lead a band with Dave Holland and John Abercrombie [the Gateway Trio]. But that’s a process where we have original pieces, and explore taking those pieces, approaching them in an organic way. In my own band, it’s another thing that’s happened where you have to direct it, but you also have to keep open with that. It’s more challenging because I’m dealing with younger players. So it’s a different kind of situation, where there’s more work involved ‘cause I’m developing the players, the music and myself as well. But here [with Keith and Gary], I’m not thinking about, like Keith said earlier, “I’ve got to write this for this piece,” and so on. It’s not the same, because of the individuals and the approaches.

KJ: We’ve stood on stage at a soundcheck and Jack might mention a tune: “Did we ever play this?” And Gary might say, “Gee, I don’t think so.” That’s as much thinking as we have to do about the material, unless we don’t know the bridge or we don’t know the chord changes.

JE: *But, when the three of you play a concert, don’t you at least huddle just before you go out to agree on the first number?*

KJ: We actually don’t even do that.

JE: *What about sign language on stage?*

GP: Not really. Keith will begin to play something, and you just keep listening and listening. You don’t know whether you’re gonna start with a ballad, or a medium or uptempo number. Sometimes it’s like, “Okay, he seems to be moving in this direction.” Sometimes, it’s, “Okay, here we go; and you turn right.” So you just keep listening.

JE: *So, you communicate through your instruments.*

KJ: That’s right.

JE: *And it’s usually through the piano?*

KJ: Well, yeah. I have more at my disposal, harmonically, to make a suggestion. But also, I think one of my strengths is knowing what to play. And that might come from free improvisation alone; it may come from just knowing what the air needs around us.

JE: *Clearly, your relationship to the material is a passionate one.*

GP: Each one of these pieces is like a living organism that you can’t divorce yourself from. You listen to “Stella By Starlight,” say, and you become seduced, you become drunk, you drowned. If

you’re willing to drown, then you’re giving up all your stuff. You can’t define what it is that you’re drowning in, really. But there’s a love affair going on, there’s a drunkenness, a diving in, and rapture, an ecstasy.

JE: *It sounds like all of you and your various playing experiences have added up, have filled you up, to make this great music.*

GP: The end result may be that way, but it’s really the opposite, for me. If I’m filled up, then all I can do when I play is throw up. But if I can get to some place and be real empty, then I can be available. And the only way I know how to do that in a musical environment is to listen, is just simply to really, really listen, and keep listening, and keep listening, and keep listening. I never want to be full; I hate that, that’s like [gestures with bloated face].

JE: *Why a trio? What is it about three musicians?*

KJ: Japanese flower arranging. [laughs]

JE: *Okay, Jack, what’s your answer?*

JD: It’s just enough. It’s rewarding and challenging enough with the three of us. For me, anyway.

KJ: There’s a lot of reasons that we could come up with. I mean, if you add a horn, what’s the horn player gonna do when he’s not playing? With the trio, nothing is outlawed. There’s no time that Jack has to not play, there’s no time that Jack has to play. Gary, if he stops playing, I have the bass of the piano. I mean, there’s a way of interacting that takes all responsibility away from any direction. But if there’s another player, what would he do? That’s one reason. But Jack’s actually correct. It’s ...

GP: ... it’s enough.

KJ: Besides the fact that three is a strong number, anyway.

GP: Very strong.

KJ: It’s just so strong. Positive, negative and neutral. You know, you can come up with all kinds of things. We need all these things: We need pro, con and mediator; otherwise, everything

“Each one of these pieces is like a living organism. You listen to ‘Stella By Starlight,’ say, and you become seduced, you become drunk, you drowned. ... There’s a love affair going on.”

—Gary

falls apart. There’s a very banal way of describing why the three of us play together. It could be that I’m a coldhearted social critic, Jack’s a warmhearted optimist and Gary’s a research scientist! [laughs all around]

JD: Yeah, but somewhere, when we play, though, all that goes out the window. There’s a point where the music takes us.

JE: *Getting back to this idea of repertoire, the music you all played on Gary’s Tales Of Another and the Changes album, for example, is all original material. In the case of Changes, it’s all freely improvised. How does this music square with—excuse the pun—your “standard” approach?*

KJ: I think that’s interesting, and explains something that few people might have thought about. It’s like, when you order a meal, five courses or four courses, or something, you try to figure out what resonance the second thing might have with the first thing. I mean, you wouldn’t order Oreo cookies after the hors d’oeuvres. Well, in music, if you’re allowed to use the impulse you have at a given moment, you might be working with material and then all of a sudden your heart says, “Just play something. Let’s just play something.” Because, it’s a relief, in a way, from the process you were just involved with. I think that’s what happened there. I think we were all happy with what we did, and we had a new type of relaxation, a new type of release, having thought we played well, having felt okay about what we did. And then, we

“Sometimes I’ll play in tempo, sometimes I’ll color. Sometimes I’m waiting to find that one moment. I may lay out, listening.”

—Jack

were just sitting there, and then we just played some stuff. But sometimes that doesn’t work. It can’t work as a formula. Some of the *Blue Note* recordings have a relationship to what you’re talking about. But often, I start with a pattern, or a flavor, that has a motif in it, somehow, either hidden in it or something I don’t even know is a motif yet. And it develops on its own from there, and never goes further than that motif, and that might be two notes, or three notes.

JE: *What about the band’s ability to gel?*

JD: It’s the hardest thing, particularly on ballads, to get that symmetry. From my point of view, as a drummer—not just as a percussionist, since we’re all playin’ percussion—just to play a ballad. Yeah, I think ballads and vamps are the hardest ...

KJ: It’s easier for a ballad to be dead, and it’s easier for a vamp to be dead than a tune that has its own kind of ...

JE: ... *built-in, lively twists and turns?*

JD: Yeah. I mean, for me, if we play a ballad, it depends sometimes on what Gary and Keith are doing and what will set me off. Sometimes I’ll play in tempo, sometimes I’ll color. But it’s never the same. Sometimes I’m waiting to find that one moment. I may lay out, listening. Gary and Keith may have this thing happening harmonically or melodically, and I’ll just wait. Maybe there’s a space. I don’t know. I’m not sitting there intellectualizing; my body

tells me how involved I am in the music. It’s more intense on that level than it is to play a real uptempo tune.

JE: *Why doesn’t the trio play small rooms?*

KJ: Unfortunately, there’s much more than the setting itself. For example, we can’t go into a club and play one night. And we’re not getting younger, and we have other things we do. Plus, you don’t want people tearing down the doors, and the socioeconomic implications of playing not enough nights for the amount of people, and the ticket prices go up—all that bunch of baloney.

JE: *Why did you choose to record your Blue Note engagement?*

JD: It was nice. The people and the management were cooperative enough to not smoke while we played. It was nice to be in New York, in the city for three nights. With the audience, you can hear it on the CDs, the intensity of the listening. We’ve played concerts in bigger venues with bigger audiences, but this was an intimate setting, you really felt this real closeness, dynamic-wise.

KJ: Also, there are grooves that we wish to be in, and almost every time we play, we’re in too big a space for us to hear whether we’re really there or not. The sound wasn’t going anywhere in that room, it was staying put, and actually too much. But what we got to hear was something we almost never hear in a larger room, at least for me. When we went into this club, there were other major restrictions, like the sound of the piano. Some things were truly not very good. But the one thing we aren’t used to hearing, we heard. And that thing has more to do with swinging, and more to do with pulse and more to do with jazz than some of the things I think we’ve done. Every time we play, we might be playing the same material, but it’s a new planet.

DB

EQUIPMENT

Keith Jarrett plays “the best piano in town,” a Steinway piano. He also has a custom-made clavichord and harpsichord. Gary Peacock plays a Samuel Allan bass made in England in 1879. “He made one bass, and somehow I ended up with it. Then he started making a bunch of bows, which I use, so he’s known more as a bow-maker.” Peacock also uses Gallien-Krueger amps, Fishman pickups, and Thomastik Spirocore strings on the G, D, and A, and an Orchestra E string.

Jack DeJohnette plays Sabian Jack DeJohnette Encore cymbals, the second

version of a set of cymbals he’s developed with the Sabian company. The ensemble includes 18-, 17-, 16-, 15-, 14- and 13-inch crash cymbals; 20-, 21- and 22-inch rides; and 14-inch hi-hats. He plays Sonor drums: 8-, 10-, 12-, 13-, 14- and 16-inch tom toms; a 14x6.5-inch snare, and either a 16x18- or 14x20-inch bass drum depending on the gig. He plays Jack DeJohnette signature series drumsticks from Vic Firth and uses the Korg Wave Drum and Korg I2 and 01W synths. DeJohnette plays Aquarian drum heads.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Keith Jarrett

AT THE DEER HEAD INN—ECM 21531 (Gary Peacock, Paul Motian)
FOUNDATIONS: THE KEITH JARRETT ANTHOLOGY—Atlantic 2-71593
PERSONAL MOUNTAINS—ECM 21382
TREASURE ISLAND—MCA/Impulse! 39106
MYSTERIES—MCA/Impulse! 33133
FORT YAWUH—MCA/Impulse! 33122
SOMEWHERE BEFORE—Atlantic 8808
EXPECTATIONS—Columbia 46866

with Standards Trio

AT THE BLUE NOTE—ECM 21575 (six CDs—see “CD Reviews” Dec. ’95)
AT THE BLUE NOTE—ECM 21577 (one CD)
STANDARDS IN NORWAY—ECM 21542
BYE BYE BLACKBIRD—ECM 21467
THE CURE—ECM 21440
TRIBUTE—ECM 21420
CHANGELESS—ECM 21392
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with Jan Garbarek

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ABOUR ZENA—ECM 21070 (Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra)
BELONGING—ECM 21050 (Palle Danielsson, Jon Christensen)
LUMINESSENCE—ECM 21049 (Strings of Sudlunk Symphony Orchestra)

with various others

RUTA AND DAITYA—ECM 21021 (Jack DeJohnette)
LIVE/EVIL—Columbia (Miles Davis; out of print)
AT FILLMORE—Columbia 30038 (Miles Davis; cassette)
FOREST FLOWER/SOUNDTRACK—Atlantic 71746 (Charles Lloyd)

classical works

HANDEL: SUITES FOR KEYBOARD—ECM 21530
SHOSTAKOVICH: 24 PRELUDES & FUGUES—ECM 21469
BACH: WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BK II—ECM 21433
BACH: GOLDBERG VARIATIONS—ECM 21395
BACH: WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BK I—ECM 21362

Gary Peacock

JUST SO HAPPENS—Postcards 1005 (Bill Frisell)

ORACLE—ECM 21490 (Ralph Towner)
TALES OF ANOTHER—ECM 21165 (Keith Jarrett, Jack DeJohnette)
PAUL BLEY WITH GARY PEACOCK—ECM 21003

with various others

TETHERED MOON—JMT 697 124 059 (Masabumi Kikuchi, Paul Motian)
IN THE EVENINGS OUT THERE—ECM 21488 (Paul Bley, Tony Oxley, John Surman)
ANNETTE—Hat Hut 6118 (Paul Bley, Franz Koglmann)
JAPAN SUITE—I.A.I. 123849 (Paul Bley, Barry Altschul)
TURNING POINT—I.A.I. 123841 (Paul Bley, John Gilmore, Paul Motian)
VIRTUOS—I.A.I. 123844 (Barry Altschul, Paul Bley)
TRIO 64—Verve 815 057 (Bill Evans)

Jack DeJohnette

EXTRA EDITION SPECIAL—Blue Note 30494
MUSIC FOR THE FIFTH WORLD—Blue Note 99089
EARTH WALK—Blue Note 96690 (Special Edition)
PARALLEL REALITIES—MCA 42313 (Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock)
THE PIANO ALBUM—Landmark 1504
ALBUM ALBUM—ECM 21280 (Special Edition)
SPECIAL EDITION—ECM 21152
NEW DIRECTIONS IN EUROPE—ECM 21157

NEW DIRECTIONS—ECM 21128
NEW RAGS—ECM (out of print)
SORCERY—Fantasy/OJC 1838
THE DEJOHNETTE COMPLEX—Fantasy/OJC 617

with Miles Davis

LIVE/EVIL—Columbia (out of print)
AT FILLMORE—Columbia 30038 (cassette)
PARAPHERNALIA—JMY 1013
DOUBLE IMAGE—Moon 10/11
WHAT I SAY VOL. 2—1016
WHAT I SAY VOL. 1—JMY 1015
LENNIES ON THE TURNPIKE—Jazz Masters 001
BLACK BEAUTY—CBS/Sony 5717
BITCHES BREW—Columbia 40577

with various others

HOME COMING—ECM 21562 (John Abercrombie, Dave Holland)
SONG X—Geffen 24096 (Pat Metheny, Ornette Coleman)
80/81—ECM 21180 (Pat Metheny)
DEER WAN—ECM 21102 (Kenny Wheeler)
GNU HIGH—ECM 21069 (Kenny Wheeler)
GATEWAY—ECM 21061 (John Abercrombie, Dave Holland)
TIMELESS—ECM 21047 (John Abercrombie)
AT THE MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL—Verve 827 844 (Bill Evans)

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The Lightning Rod

Some call him genius. Others, fraud. At 65, Ornette Coleman continues to stir controversy as he embarks on a new career phase.

By Steve Dollar

Orrate Coldman. That's how fellow musical iconoclast Captain Beefheart identified him in a 1983 interview for *Vanity Fair*, one future-blues artist deconstructing another. But the anti-social description could not be further from reality. If anything, the guiding essence of Ornette Coleman's art is congeniality—the title of a 1959 composition that was part of the amazing cluster of recordings that launched the Fort Worth native and his classic quartet at the dawn of the 1960s: a legend in the making, armed with revolutionary album titles—*The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, *Change Of The Century*, *Free Jazz*—and what some critics hootingly derided as an array of “toy” instruments.

Coleman's untempered tone and liberating notions about improvisation in group contexts—whether a jazz quartet, symphony orchestra or rock & roll band—at first marked him variously as a free-thinking rebel, a visionary genius, a

messianic crackpot and tin-eared fraud.

Not unlike many a musical innovator, from Igor Stravinsky to Charlie Parker to Bob Dylan, he's been a lightning rod for controversy even as his ideas influence whole generations of artists. But unlike many jazz artists who stretched the limits of music in the '60s and '70s, only to be rubbished as flighty avantgardists in the decades to follow, Coleman remains a place where Wynton Marsalis and John Zorn can meet, the common denominator that connects the Modern Jazz Quartet with the Splatter Trio: plaintive and lyrical and blues-steeped enough to make the most conservative canon; yet so willful in his disregard for genre trappings and critical expectations that he winds up tarred by the *New York Times* as another sorry, money-grubbing victim of Miles Davis' “fusion curse.” (Allah forbid Ornette dare to funk with the Master Musicians of Jajouka, which he did on the electric cataclysmal *Dancing In Your Head*.)

And yet, what sticks is the image of

Coleman, luminous in one of his custom-made silk suits, greeting fans after a 1990 show by his electric Prime Time at the Riverboat Hallelujah (really, just an auditorium) during the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. Standing at the base of a stairwell, he extended his hands as audience members streamed down from the balcony. It was a gesture common to a Baptist country preacher ushering his flock toward fried chicken and potato salad on the church grounds after benediction.

Odd, perhaps, that such a gentle spirit continues to set off esthetic fire alarms. But Coleman has never had a problem getting responses to the concepts that underpin his populist, poly-textural music or the elements that surround it. “In music,” he says, “you're not required to change your heart in bringing about sound; you usually express something that comes through you or comes to you. No one knows what that's going to be until they hear it.” The composer explains harmolodics, his system of improvising on

the feel of a melody rather than the chord changes, as "a philosophy that, when it comes to music, the technical part of it is that the melody is never the lead, it's the harmolodic interpretation that is the lead."

Such Moebius-like locutions offer a clue to why the saxophonist has been misunderstood, and why his life has swayed to one of the more extreme pendulums that popular culture offers those who dare to transform it. Angered at his contrary approach to honking and shouting, an angry crowd thrashed him after a 1949 Baton Rouge roadhouse gig with Silas Green's low-rent touring r&b outfit, and destroyed his tenor saxophone (Coleman has primarily played alto since, as well as violin and trumpet); yet it's the same musician who in 1994 was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant.

More good fortune for Coleman and his fans came last fall, with the release of *Tone Dialing* (see "CD Reviews" Dec. '95). Coleman's first official album in seven years, this disc, with its pulsing, everywhere-at-once Prime Time ensemble, is among his sunniest albums. A busy and sprawling ensemble, Prime Time sounds like three or four bands at once. When in full stride, Denardo Coleman's percussion and Al MacDowell's basslines shuffle with the twin guitars of Chris Rosenberg and Ken Wessel, which chime like harps or whine with bent, sustained blues phrases. Badal Roy's tabla adds another layer of rhythm, further supplemented by keyboardist Dave Bryant and acoustic bassist Bradley Jones. Coleman's keening alto rises above the mix, evoking joy and melancholy in the same breath.

Tone Dialing also marked the arrival of his Polygram-distributed Harmolodic label. The corporate hookup is a breakthrough for a musician who, at nearly 66, has flourished and then floundered through a succession of promising record deals. Plans call for releases by other artists the label intends to sign, re-releases of vintage out-of-print Coleman titles (such as 1987's *In All Languages*) and the impending debut from Coleman's New Quartet, a much-heralded return to an acoustic format: The band features son/manager Denardo on drums, semi-namesake (and son of '60s trio member Charles Moffett) Charnett Moffett on bass, and Geri Allen on piano—an addition that brings Coleman full circle, back to his 1958 sessions with pianist Paul Bley at Los Angeles' Hillcrest Club.

Coleman credits his son with putting the Harmolodic deal together. "I tried that for a long time but never got it right," he says, talking one afternoon from the Harmolodic offices, on 125th Street in Harlem. "Because I was always more interested in the person that I was relating

to than the concept. The people in the business change chairs because they're trying to climb up to a higher level themselves, and sometimes they don't have time to stay with you until you reach where they already are." That's one of Coleman's typically roundabout responses, his kinder way of telling you about

**"The one thing
about Americans
is they only
respect what
they don't know"**

unpleasant experiences on the industry merry-go-round. And his desire to transcend the marketplace.

"Like everything in Western culture, everything has to have a value more than to yourself, no matter what you do, regardless of how good you are or how bad you are, how beautiful or how ugly. You have to, if you're going to come to the stage of expression, first find the people who will allow you in their territory. To see if the value of what you do fits the image of what they're doing in relationship to wealth. Some people find that quicker than others. There's nothing wrong with that; it becomes more like a personal privilege than a free opportunity. I think that's the reason why the music in America is so limited as far as concepts of sound. America, it's a young country, and yet the ancestors that ran America came from an old country. I don't think we'll ever catch up."

Happy that Harmolodic "was something we could be consistent with," Coleman appears embarked on a new phase in his career, just as the 1992 and 1995 deaths of original quartet members Ed Blackwell and Don Cherry have given closure to an earlier era.

Tomorrow, for Coleman, is always the question, even if others are content to stick with the answers they know from routine. Introducing his "Tone Dialing" concept at the 1994 San Francisco Jazz Festival, Coleman sprung a surprise on both audience and organizers, bridging sets by his New Quartet and Prime Time with a body-piercing demonstration led by modern primitivist guru Fakir Musafar, with young disciples in tow. From some descriptions of the event, you'd think Ozzy Osbourne had marched onstage and bit a chicken's head off. Or that Coleman might have disingenuously decided to cause a stir.

But Coleman says this was just another part of an expanded experience he hoped to present, incorporating video, dance and poetry. When Fakir pierced a topless female performer's cheek with a needle, the crowd at the Masonic Auditorium began to scream, many of them rushing for the exits. It took a reading from poet Vincent Harding to calm a rattled house for the next (musical) section of the show.

"I love Fakir," says Coleman, who once mused, notoriously, about having himself castrated so he could focus more fully on making music. "I've read his manifesto: You have a body, so use it. They started doing their meditation; they were highly in touch with the reason they were doing what they were doing. The one thing about Americans is they only respect what they don't know. When I say 'don't know,' I mean they're only into their own environment. They don't have a need to go into something deep. They just enjoy what's on the surface. There's nothing wrong with that, but you can't stay like that. You have to realize that there are people who are doing things that will mean something to you. Whether it means something to you this moment; tomorrow it might mean more to you.

"The whole concept of 'Tone Dialing' was an idea we got together by trying to find people that do the same thing we are doing, in their own way, trying to find someone who is involved in communication or something that will give the viewer feedback to themselves," continues Coleman, who mentions a desire to book French deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida for a "Tone Dialing" presentation in Europe. "Say you go to a concert. You hear music, you say, 'That was good, I'll go do this now.' Instead of going to a concert and going home, [this] is like going to a concert and having many energies to fulfill your mental state in your own personal way."

Coleman's notions relate to art as a total concept, not something to be chiseled at and compartmentalized in the ongoing process of creating a global niche culture. For instance: DMX, a California-based cable and satellite music supplier, offers subscribers up to 120 discrete channels, covering everything from Finnish folk dance tunes to a format of Pearl Jam clones; by contrast, a really subversive college radio station, like Atlanta's WREK-FM, fills much of its airtime with seemingly random wavelengths that oscillate between, say, British improviser Evan Parker, Cape Verdian diva Cesaria Evora, dub reggae wizard Lee "Scratch" Perry; Swinging clarinet king Artie Shaw and surly punkers Bikini Kill.

There, if you want it, is the 1-800 key to "Tone Dialing." It's about inclusion, an echo of Rodney King's plea of "can we all just get along" amplified by fast-emerging

millennial technologies that make the global village a laptop-and-modem reality.

"If you go out and hear someone and say, 'Oh, that's a jazz guy, a classical guy or folk person,' and yet they are playing the same notes that you hear someone else play, for another word it's when the human race no longer needs to have a musical passport to play with someone," Coleman offers, breaking down his "Tone Dialing" credo. "The expression of music is getting better—the ability to put it in any environment—but what is going to happen is that music is no longer going to be based in a caste relationship to sound."

DB



STUART FRERKIN

Cross-Generational Inspiration

By Larry Blumenfeld

For two distinct generations of jazz musicians, Ornette Coleman has served as the enigmatic leader of a revolution. Some credit his sound, some mine his compositions,

others embrace the complex (or very simple) science of harmolodics that governs Coleman's current musical world. Talk to Coleman about music, and he's apt to refer to "information"; talk to other musicians, they hear "inspiration."

"Knowing that he hadn't used a piano in so many years was challenging, also very freeing," says Geri Allen, the pianist Coleman looked to recently. "In rehearsals, I would listen carefully. A lot of things are happening in his music very quickly." Not that Allen felt unprepared for the gig; she relied on her musical associations with two of Coleman's closest allies. "My relationships with Dewey Redman and Charlie Haden helped me to understand. The way Dewey plays especially gave me an opportunity to sense the feeling."

Redman, of course, is the horn player perhaps closest to Coleman. And when Redman calls his connection with Coleman "inspirational," he means practically, not just musically. "In '67, in New York," he recalls from his Flatbush apartment, "the only friend I had in New York was Ornette. I used to go over to his house on Prince Street, and we'd play music."

When guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer came to New York from Detroit years

later, Coleman took him in for a year, "free room and board," as Ulmer recalls, even produced his first record. For Ulmer, he gained not only a home, but an identity. "When Ornette first heard me play, he told me, 'The way you play, that's exactly how I want you to play in my band.'"

For many, if Coleman is a patron saint of free jazz, Wynton Marsalis is the youngish zealot of a more conservative generation. But there was not a hint of irony when Lincoln Center Jazz (of which Marsalis is artistic director) presented a tribute to Coleman. "Ornette reminds me of my father [Ellis]. We had almost a familial connection," says the most recognizable member of jazz's most recognizable family. "My father played with Ornette in the '50s, and he would always talk about the things Ornette told him to do—ways to phrase. He has a unique and profound way of looking at the world."

Coleman's music has always combined different instruments and musicians in fresh ways. "I don't think of someone I want to play with," Coleman says. "I think of something I want to do musically and, if I can draw the people who are interested to me, I'll do it." When Coleman set out to reinvent his Prime Time band some seven years ago, he had some clear ideas about what he was looking for.

When he decided he wanted a classical guitarist, he happened upon Chris Rosenberg. He asked the guitarist what he loved to play; Rosenberg said the Bach *Prelude*. "I told him to play it for me, and afterward, I'd play it with him harmolodically," Coleman said. "When I got through doing that, he said, 'I'm

going to join your band.' And he did."

For his new Prime Time outfit, Coleman sought out a tabla player, too. "There's something about the tabla," he said. "It's like the sound of the breath if it were rhythm." Badal Roy, the tabla player Coleman called on, had previously worked with Miles Davis and John McLaughlin. "Miles always wanted me to groove along. If I was playing in 4/4, Miles would say, 'Alright, keep that groove in four.' But Ornette would say, 'Keep on grooving, but you can do it freely. You don't have to do it in four.' Ornette demands constant change."

Such an ethic has always drawn the label "avant garde" to Coleman's label. For many a record executive, that can too easily translate to "inaccessible." Verve Group Senior Vice President Chuck Mitchell, charged with marketing Coleman's new Harmolodic label in the United States, sees a market that's finally catching up with the man. "The perception—and I stress the word 'perception'—is that Ornette's music is, has always been and continues to be radical in its conception and execution," says Mitchell. "What we find is that people who don't come to Coleman's music with preconceptions generally don't find it radical at all—particularly younger musicians and listeners who have been weaned on a lot of alternative music." The implication is that a new generation of listeners may honor its straightahead past, but it has simultaneously returned to a "free jazz" ethic, one that looks to more challenges than just changes. When asked if a straightahead performing concept is challenging anymore, Coleman doesn't even hesitate: "Never was; it was limiting."

DB

EQUIPMENT

Ornette Coleman plays a Selmer alto sax with a low A. He uses Berg Larsen and Bundy mouthpieces

with a Rico #2½ reed. Coleman also plays a Schilke trumpet and a violin of unknown origin.

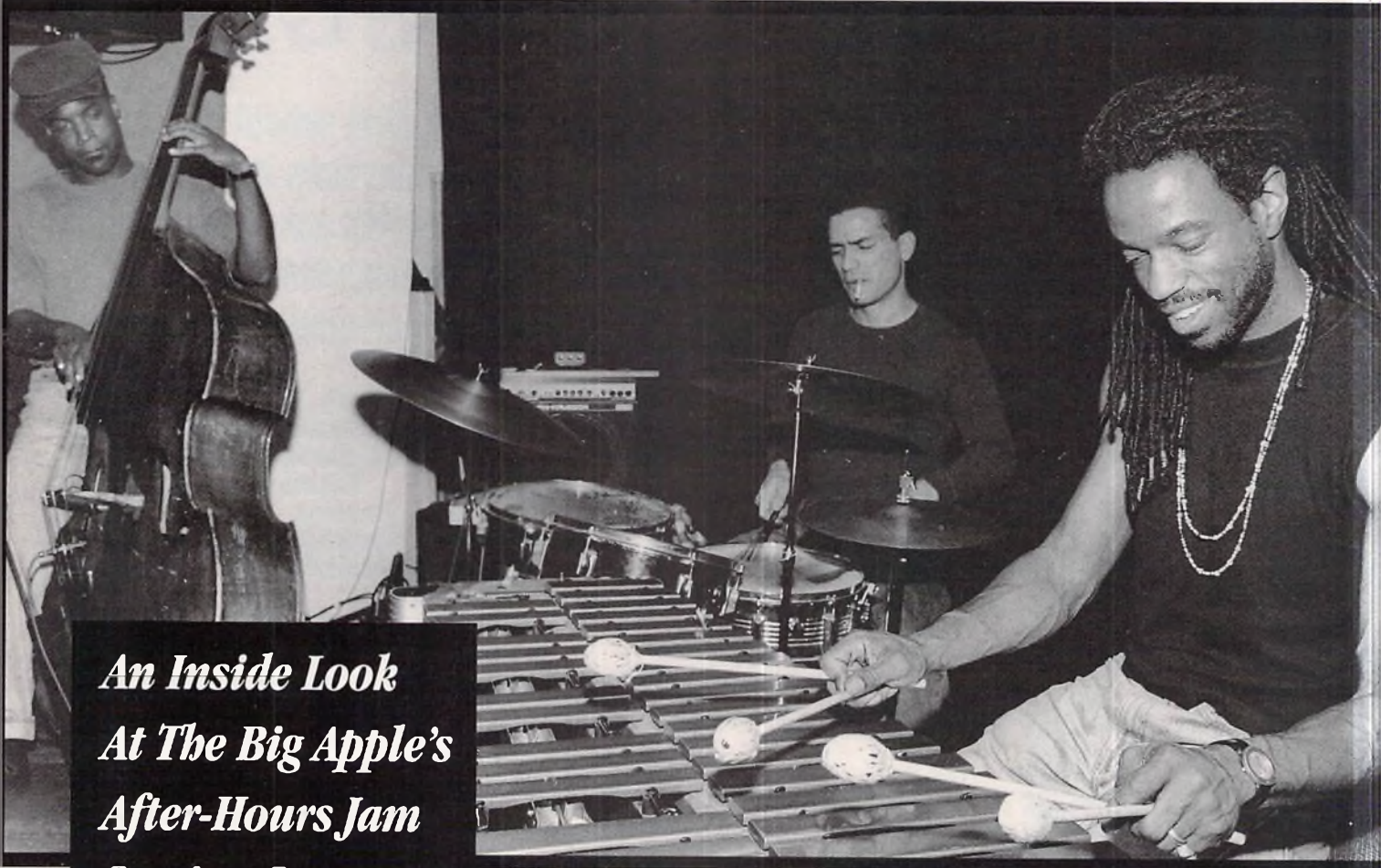
SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(For additional discographical information, see DB Aug. '87.)

TONE DIALING—Harmolodic/Verve 314 527 483
BEAUTY IS A RARE THING: THE COMPLETE ATLANTIC RECORDINGS—Atlantic 6-R2-71410
LANGUAGES—Moon/FTC 8544
BROKEN SHADOWS (quartet)—Moon/FTC 8522
NAKED LUNCH (soundtrack)—Milan 73138-35614
PRIME TIME/TIME DESIGN—Caravan Of Dreams 85002
VIRGIN BEAUTY—Portrait 44301
SONG X—Geffen 24096 (with Pat Metheny)
OF HUMAN FEELINGS—Antilles 2001
BROKEN SHADOWS—Moon 022

THE EMPTY FOXHOLE—Blue Note 28982
LOVE CALL—Blue Note 84356
NEW YORK IS NOW!—Blue Note 84287
AT THE GOLDEN CIRCLE VOLS. I & II—Blue Note 84224, 84225
ORNETTE ON TENOR—Atlantic 1394-4 (cassette)
FREE JAZZ—Atlantic 1364
THE ART OF THE IMPROVISERS—Atlantic 90978
TOWN HALL 1962—ESP 1006
CHANGE OF THE CENTURY—Atlantic 81341
THE SHAPE OF JAZZ TO COME—Atlantic 1317
TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION!—Fantasy/OJC 342
SOMETHING ELSE!!!—Fantasy/OJC 163

Late Night New York



An Inside Look At The Big Apple's After-Hours Jam Session Scene

The J.P. Trio jamming at the Knitting Factory: (l-r) Brad Jones, E.J. Rodriguez and Bill Ware

By Robert Hicks

Photos by Enid Farber

It's 4 a.m. on a Friday night along Seventh Avenue South in New York City and the well-heeled crowds are filing out of the Village Vanguard and Sweet Basil into the brisk, cold winds that announce winter. After hearing the last sets by the James Carter Quartet and the Ben Riley Quartet, these middle-aged European and Japanese tourists hail cabs to head back to the comforts of their

hotel rooms. Just around the corner at 183 West 10th St., throngs of students from the nearby New School and New York University, who can't afford the admission for regular club dates, descend the narrow steps that lead into the subterranean club smalls to witness a late-night jam session.

Here, the jam lasts until 8 a.m. Pianist Frank Hewitt and drummer Frank Gant call out the tunes for bassist Ari Roland, trumpeter Jim Rotundi and saxist Sherman Irby. The expectant faces of the younger musicians in the house show their anxiety, but their bravado shines as

they tackle a tune they haven't heard before. The young crowd cheers its approval unlike the relatively sedate applause heard at the Vanguard. Still more young musicians, emboldened by the challenges of point-blank exchanges with those they've never played with, edge near the small bandstand.

It's late-night, New York—the jazz jam-session world where musicians young and old go to meet. Veterans go to unwind after a three-set night. Young players, who make up the bulk of late-nighters, search for fresh encounters with their idols and a locale to brush shoulders with

contemporaries on the bandstand. New York City—the jam-session nerve center of the world.

The city is crawling with late-night spots. A short tour will reveal a scene fraught with hopes and dreams, where listening is just as important as jamming.

“The excitement is hearing new voices,” says pianist John Hicks, who scouts out new talent and gives tips to his students at smalls. “You can hear that the spirit of jazz is still alive at the jams. Young musicians will ask me questions about how to apply things to a gig or an alternate way of playing changes. A lot of times, it’s musicians just meeting on the bandstand for the first time, so you can get ideas about different approaches—so that everything doesn’t sound the same from one player to the next through one tune. One tune can last for 45 minutes with different people sitting in. You get an interesting variety. You can find out if a younger player is adept at hearing things for the first time.”

As the night grows old, some musicians who arrived at the beginning of the smalls jam at 2 a.m. are ready for a break, but others are just heading for the bandstand after waking at 4 a.m. As the crowd begins to thin out at 5 a.m., there are those that play on while others gather in a back kitchen to exchange telephone numbers and talk about how to give a chord a new voicing. The audience doesn’t listen in on these intimate conversations among musicians, but when the cats hit the bandstand again, the crowd roars at the newfound expression.

“I’m trying to fulfill all the needs that were once in place,” says owner Mitchell Borden. “Smalls is a restoration of those needs. I feature big bands here that give young musicians the opportunity to work on their sight reading, and there’s the improvisation in the jam sessions.”

Borden relies on word-of-mouth to attract musicians and a young audience eager to hear bebop at an inexpensive cover charge. From the jam sessions, he gleans the musicians who become the main attractions for his regular sets.

New Yorker Ari Roland, who plays with Lou Donaldson, Barry Harris and has recorded with Betty Carter, grew up just around the corner from smalls on West 11th Street. He’s been a regular at smalls from the get-go and he sees both the opportunities and the liabilities of the jam session. “The jam session is very informal,” says Roland. “It has the potential of being a really fantastic experience. The jam session really puts you on the spot. You have to produce at point blank. There’s no stopping and saying, ‘Let’s try it over again.’ There’s no chance to go over the same material.



(from top to bottom) Blue Note jam session: (l-r) Lindsay Hauser, Geoff Pfeifer and Charlie Caranicas; at the Port-Hole in Harlem: trumpeter Omar Kabir; at smalls: an unidentified trombonist with fellow trombonist Tim Perryman.



At Iridium's jam session with (l-r) Kengo Nakamura, Dennis Jeter and Brad Leali

"Part of the problem," he adds, "is because it's a jam session, you're going to get some people coming who aren't that good. That can seriously bring the level down, but that's part of the growing process of being around better players."

Over at Bradley's on 70 University Place, where the last set kicks in at 2 a.m. and lasts until closing at 4, we find the quiet, intimate romance of a traditional mainstream piano bar. While Bradley's doesn't sport an open jam session, musicians come and sit in with the regular duo or trio for the last set. Here, pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist Christian McBride pop in to support trumpeter Roy Hargrove.

Hargrove, a regular late-nighter at smalls and Bradley's when he's in town, continues to gain the kind of knowledge so essential to a recording such as his recent *Parker's Mood*, working through the demands of playing without a drummer. "It's challenging to play like that because you have to hear the drums in your head," says Hargrove. "One of the other players might take the role of the drum rhythmically."

As for bebop saxist Lou Donaldson, who occasionally drops in for jam sessions at smalls and at Augie's Pub on Broadway near Birdland, "Late-night jams are where I try to keep up with what's happening." After taking in the Southern cuisine at Birdland, the uppercrust Westsiders and students from Columbia U. crowd into the small bar area at Augie's to hear the pianoless house trio spiral through standards before the fireplace. It's cozy, but loud, Cecil Payne and Eddie Henderson joining saxist Eric Alexander as they pass the hat.

"There's a lot you can find out about a young musician, according to the songs they play and the way he does it,"

Donaldson adds. "You can see if a guy's really done his homework. If a guy knows his changes on the tunes and can kick it out right there, it's a lot different from a rehearsal. Everything in a concert is prearranged. You need to see if they can be spontaneous."

Veterans like Donaldson look for a player's knowledge about jazz history. It was here that Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell and Max Roach jammed at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, while the Village Vanguard, still heralding new talent in its 60th year, helped stir the '70s loft scene and musician-run clubs with all-night jam sessions at Studio Rivbea, Ali's Alley and the Tin Palace. In the early '80s, avant-garde musicians from America and Europe gathered at Sweet Basil to forge new ideas. And the likes of John Zorn and Bill Frisell congregated in the late '80s at the Knitting Factory.

The '80s and '90s saw bebop resurface in New York's clubs. Record companies jumped to sign the young new talent. The new faces included musicians already living in New York as well as those arriving here from across the country. Many young and old musicians alike attended jam sessions to capture some of the spirit of the '40s and '50s or simply to get their music heard when regular venue dates did not arise.

Around the summer of 1994, New York saw its largest wave of new musicians in some 20 years. Trumpeter/vocalist Dennis Jeter, now assistant to Wynton Marsalis at Lincoln Center, ran the late-night jam sessions at Iridium from mid-'94 through early '95. Here, beneath the angular sculpture inside its modern restaurant, lay a cavernous, darkly lit room that attracted Marsalis after he cut loose with his Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra just across the street. Young

musicians such as trumpeter Russell Gunn and Sherman Irby who attended the late jams caught the ear of Marsalis and ended up in the LCJO. For others, like Memphis-born pianist James Hurt, the exciting interchange of the jams at Iridium provided the beginnings of a solid group identity.

"I have a chance to experiment and try out new compositions at the jam," says Hurt, who has since recorded with Gunn and saxist Jay Collins and now plays in the Antonio Hart Quartet. "I can find musicians who play in a straightahead or fusion style at the jam sessions. I can pick musicians I want to work with, and on stage at the jam session we can develop a group sound. The jam is conducive to development only if the energy is focused and channeled properly. Otherwise, things can turn without warning."

Moving on up to Harlem, alto saxist Brad Leali (who performs in the Count Basie Orchestra) and trumpeter Omar Kabir are playing at Well's on Seventh Avenue, where bebop and blues jams are heard on Saturday at 1 a.m. For alto saxist Arthur Blythe, the jams in Harlem are a place to go close to home. "I go for the self-gratification to play with some new cats," says Blythe. "I keep active that way. If I'm not working, I'll go to the jam sessions just to observe. When I was young, it was an integral part of my education. It was a meeting place."

Back down to the Improvisers Collective in the East Village, we have to press the buzzer at Ed Montgomery's dance studios at 28 Avenue A before trudging up the colorful stairwell that leads to the dance floor where pianist Yuko Fujiyama, tenor saxist Assif Tsahar, trombonist Masahiko Kono and drummer Susie Ibarra join bassist William Parker for informal jam sessions. For 1996, the plan is to do concerts each month for three or four consecutive nights with one jam session either at Context or at a new space as an alternative to clubs. Here's where an East Village crowd accustomed to eclectic lineups at the Knitting Factory can lounge in plastic chairs on the rafters and home in on the avant-styled music without the distractions of a bar.

Fujiyama's quartet has caught the ear of pianists Marilyn Crispell and Cecil Taylor during her quartet gigs in the Knitting Factory's downstairs 100-seat Alterknit Theater. The adjacent tap bar swells with chatter and young people bopping to the grooves of acid-jazz and the experimental forays of young downtown improvisers who experiment every night at 11. Knitting Factory's regulars are sitting in with a late-night crew of Steve Bernstein's Sex Mob, J.P. Trio or Josh Roseman's Chemical Wedding, featuring Don Byron, as patrons jostle for position to peer at the

band tightly grouped within an alcove at the end of the bar.

"It's not an open jam session," says owner Michael Dorf, who moved the Knit from East Houston Street to 74 Leonard Street in Tribeca in late '94. "But I wanted a forum for musicians to be able to stretch out and feel very comfortable in our late-night hang. We want to create an environment where people can experiment and develop their stuff."

Meanwhile, the late-night jam is just about to start after the last set at the Blue Note on West 3rd Street near Avenue of the Americas. With its big-name headliners Herbie Hancock and Lionel Hampton, its expensive cover charges, the best sound system in town and cramped seating that makes you love your neighbor for the night, the Blue Note opens its doors for a traditional jam session, with many invited guests, every Friday and Saturday night from 1 until 4 a.m. for a small \$5 cover and no minimum. The Blue Note features a permanent "late night" house band, the Charlie Caranicas/Bob Parsons Quintet, featuring Geoff Pfeifer, Lindsay Hauser and Tim Horner, playing mainstream standards with musicians Lafayette Harris, Adam Nussbaum, Greg Hutchinson and Jay

Collins invited up on stage to join in on the called tunes.

"Within the last year, we changed our late-night jam session to just Friday and Saturday. We used to do it every night," says Blue Note booking director Ryan Paternite. "We want to give an opportunity to younger musicians to have a place to come and play. It pays dividends for us down the road. We don't do a late show on Friday and Saturday anymore because we like the idea of the relaxed environment of the jam session. A lot of people stay around from the last shows on Friday and Saturday, but it's also a great opportunity for people who can't afford to come to our regular shows to just come and pay five dollars and sit until four in the morning and listen if they want to."

Just down the street from the Blue Note, Visiones' late-night party is kicking in at 1 a.m. every Thursday. Wandering over to the Fort at Sidewalk Cafe, located at 94 Avenue A, patrons are sipping Red Stripe beer as they try mushroom omelettes during late-night jam sessions on Tuesdays and Sundays from 11 o'clock on, featuring some of the East Village's finest young jazz musicians. Arturo's, a pizza joint in Greenwich Village, brims with the aroma of sausages and

pepperoni, but with its vintage piano, the jam bustles on Tuesdays through Thursdays for late jam sessions that start around 11. As we wind our way down to Houston and La Guardia Place near N.Y.U., we snuggle into the narrow bar and chairs for jams every Monday through Thursday at Charles Carlini's Zinc Bar. Brooklynites head to the Deane Street Music Cafe at the edge of Crown Heights, where trumpeters, saxists and bassists vie for position on the small bandstand on Mondays at 10 to cure their all-night jam fever. And those yearning for the age of dixieland and swing head back into Manhattan every Sunday and Monday for open jam sessions with the Don Torillo Trio at Arthur's Tavern, the last of the '40s- and '50s-style piano bars.

Back on the street, it's daylight again. James Hurt and a few up-and-comers can be seen leaving smalls. "When I come out into the sunlight, I get a mad rush of energy," Hurt says. "I'll go to a diner, and the conversation can get pretty comic. We're wound up pretty tight—we'll talk about Shakespeare's sonnets, quantum physics, anything but music."

That's until the sun sets and the Naked City bears its irresistible body of musical taunts once again. **DB**



**The Times of London*



In his first release since the highly acclaimed Blue Note recordings, Tommy Smith delivers an elegant album that successfully mixes gritty post bop excursions and semi-classical meditative pieces. Inspired by the poetry of Norman McCaig, Smith combines Nordic, Latin, and Scottish folk influences into a compelling, dynamic, and highly enjoyable breakthrough album.



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The Jump-Blues

Roomful Of Blues, America's Last 'Territory' Band,

By Michael Point

Territory bands—the blues-based, horn-powered groups that roared out of the Midwest in the '30s and '40s, energizing the nation's jazz and blues scenes—have been consigned to history by most fans. At least fans who haven't heard Roomful of Blues.

Rhode Island's bold and brassy blues unit perpetuates the territory band heritage in fine style, blasting out true-to-the-tradition jump-blues with contemporary energy and sophistication. The nine-piece outfit, which swings with a vengeance no matter what material it attacks, is more than familiar with the music's seminal sources. "We're very aware of the tradition of this music and who originally played it," Roomful alto/tenor saxist Rich Lataille says.

The territory band heritage is one of the most significant in the development of modern jazz. The enduring musical contributions of the Kansas City-based bands of Bennie Moten, Andy Kirk, Jay McShann and, of course, Count Basie (Roomful's major inspiration) are well chronicled. Leaders like Milton Larkin,

Alphonso Trent and Lloyd Hunter, to name only three, regularly entertained packed dance floors in the Southwest while also providing advanced on-the-job musical training. It was in the territory band of Henry "Buster" Smith that Charlie Parker first gained his musical wings; and it was in Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's blues big band that John Coltrane learned to play tenor. As these touring territory bands proliferated, they spread the joyful sound to almost every corner of the country.

Now there's only one: Roomful Of Blues, America's coast-to-coast territory band. With the success of its most recent CD, *Turn It On! Turn It Up!* (Bullseye Blues), the band is clearly on a career roll. Backed by a blues rarity, a high-tech CD-ROM cleverly titled *ROM-ful Of Blues*, the CD has already been the band's most widely played album. And Roomful spent December in the studio recording a sequel that they hope turns out just as solid.

There's a certain sort of surrealistic geographic logic to a band from Rhode Island being the keeper of the flame for a music style that bounced out of the Midwest before landing in California where transplanted Texans polished

and perfected it. Roomful's ascendance stresses the universal nature of the music and its enduring appeal, but most of all it proves that if you aim the beat at the feet you're off on the right foot.

"A lot of the original reason for this music was a reaction to bebop, something that chased the dancers off the dance floors," baritone saxist Doug James claims. "The only time we let people get off the dance floor at our shows is when they're too tired to keep up with the music."

Roomful's success at preserving the jump-blues tradition is based in the excitement of its live shows and the band's willingness, if not actual obsession, to perform it as often as possible in as many locales as it can reach. Quite simply, the group travels the length and breadth of its territory on an almost non-stop basis, taking jump-blues directly to the fans with a touring schedule that puts the itinerary of a campaigning politician to shame.

The band members, which Lataille jokes "have been held prisoner in a bus for two decades," are proud of their hard-won reputation as road warriors and are highly amused by the claims of fledgling touring acts.

"We hear about some bands who are



Roomful of Blues includes Carl Querfurth (left), Bob Enos, Rich Lataille, Doug James, John Rossi (obscured), Sugar Ray Norcia, Ken "Doc" Grace, Chris Vachon and Matt McCabe (not pictured).

But he's justifiably troubled that listeners and critics view him as some sort of hard-core Chicago blues proponent. "I've certainly got nothing against Chicago blues, but if there's anyone who's my role model, it would be someone like Jimmy Rushing," Norcia says. "I love everything he did because he had such a masterful way of singing with the horns, not against them. Then there's Joe Williams, of course, and Bobby 'Blue' Bland. Those are the guys I really admire, not just all the great harp players."

Norcia, first as a fan and now as a member, has been a witness to the entire Roomful history. "I saw them weekly at the Knickerbocker Cafe [Westerly, R.I.] for almost 20 years, so I've been a part of the Roomful experiences since they were just playing local clubs," he says.

Roomful moved out of the clubs and into the national spotlight in the early '80s, primarily on the strength of the band's dance-happy, in-your-face live show, a distinct contrast to the screaming guitars that were the prevalent blues expression of the time. The band's higher profile gained the attention and admiration of the music's creators, such as Basie, a fervent fan who repeatedly gave the band his official blessing by extolling its excellence and authenticity. The national success also provided the opportunity for Roomful to play alongside its influences as the band recorded with Vinson and Big Joe Turner, scoring back-to-back Grammy nominations.

Roomful, which also cut a fine-and-funky Grammy-winning album with eccentric New Orleans guitar great Earl King (*Glazed*), has lent its musical muscle to other artists' recording projects. The hard-blowing horn section (which also includes trumpeter Bob Enos and trombonist/producer Carl Querfurth) has been in particular demand, working with Canadian bluesman Colin James and veteran vocalist/rocker Pat Benetar. But the band is most content jumping the blues under its own name. "We're too busy touring to do many long-term projects," Rossi says.

The band's sound has remained amazingly consistent through the passage of time and personnel. Roomful's jump-blues signature gives all the musicians a common starting point, but what happens after that is often a surprise to all. "We're always open to change," Rossi proclaims. "In fact, we're changing all the time, but we all have the same musical destination, even if there are admittedly different ideas on how to get there. Sometimes those ideas wind up on the side of the road, like our busses, but most of the time they wind up in our live sets or

Highway

Keeps Rollin', Rollin', Rollin'

supposedly hard-working because they've been on the road for a few months in a row," Lataille wryly observes. "We've been touring with a big band in a small bus for a quarter of a century, so we're pretty hard to impress, unless someone wants to talk about garages they've been towed to or how to rebuild an engine."

Roomful's much-maligned tour bus, a mutant airport shuttle that required some athletic physical agility to answer nature's call (since it had no bathroom), was left beside the road in the desert near Yuma, Ariz., last year. It isn't missed. "I don't know if we get respect when we pull up at a club now, but at least we don't get laughed at," Lataille says of the band's "new" bus, a 1983 model with a quarter million miles on it.

Roomful of Blues has worn out a fleet of busses since 1967, when it was officially founded by guitarist Duke Robillard, pianist Al Copley and drummer Fran Christina. The band, however, didn't hit its stride until 1971, when saxists Greg Piccolo and Lataille, soon joined by Doug James, came on board. Their participation, as well as the time-tested Roomful musical configuration, was a

direct result of exposure to one of the formative figures of jazzed-up jump-blues. "Duke saw Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson at the Ann Arbor Blues Festival, and it really turned his head around," drummer John Rossi recalls. "You know he was impressed if a guitarist was willing to share the spotlight with a horn section."

Rossi took over the driver's seat of Roomful a quarter of a century ago when original drummer Christina departed. Christina eventually wound up with the group's de facto alumni association, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, the Texas band where Robillard, Preston Hubbard and Kid Bangham also found employment after their Roomful stints.

Rossi, who claims he was a "rock & roll drummer put out of work by the Beatles," was an r&b fan who idolized the power and glory of the original jump-blues timekeepers. "I couldn't believe it when I walked into rehearsal for the first time," Rossi says. "It was my dream band playing all the material I had always loved."

Sugar Ray Norcia, the band's vocalist and frontman for the past five years, considers Big Walter Horton his harmonica mentor and has nothing but praise for the Windy City blues legends.

on our records."

Guitarist Chris Vachon signed on with Roomful in 1990, a couple of years before bassist Ken "Doc" Grace and keyboardist Matt McCabe came on board to complete the current band configuration. Vachon wrote the title track to *Turn It On! Turn It Up!*, but his most personalized moments come on the power-trio blues instrumental "Slam Jam," a tune that radiates youthful energy with more than a passing nod to Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. It's not quintessential jump-blues by any stretch of the imagination, but Roomful makes it work, especially in a live setting.

"These guys can play every type of blues that's been invented, so it's great when they want to do one of your songs," Vachon relates. "I've never been around so much musical talent in one band, so it would have been easy to be intimidated to the point that I just plugged in my guitar and did what I was told. But they actually asked me to come up with things as soon as I joined the band."

While other long-running musical units are frequently resistant to the creative input of junior members, Roomful actively seeks out new ideas. "Each new member makes a contribution or he's gone, so the music never stands still," Rossi flatly states. "This isn't some kind of archival project;

it's a living, growing band. I wouldn't still be in it if it wasn't."

From Rossi's seat behind the drumkit, the potential of the band appears to be unlimited. He sees Roomful's longevity as something that stretches out into the future like yet another highway

disappearing beyond the horizon. Roomful could last 100 years," Rossi says. "We know firsthand that the audience is out there and still growing because we see it in person almost every night. There's just no reason for the band to die as long as the music is so alive." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Baritone saxist Doug James plays a Beuscher 400 with a Guy Hawkins #10 mouthpiece and La Voz medium reeds. Tenor/alto saxist Rich Lataille plays a Selmer Mark VI alto with a Beechler hard-rubber mouthpiece and Rico Royal #3 reeds. He uses a Selmer Mark VI tenor with an Otto Link metal #8 mouthpiece and Rico Royal #3½ reeds. Trombonist Carl Querfurth plays a 1978 King 3B with a Jimmy Dell graphite slide, a 6½ Bach mouthpiece and a #6 plunger. Trumpeter Bob Enos plays a 1926 Conn 22B silver with a Toddle mouthpiece and a #6 plunger.

Guitarist Chris Vachon plays a Fender '57 reissue and a Fender '62 reissue with Lindy Fralin pickups and DR strings, gauges .012-.050. He uses

a Rivera Knucklehead 100-watt amp with a 12" Sidewinder Celestion speaker. Bassist Ken Grace plays a Chandler PJ bass with a rosewood neck and a Fender P '57 reissue with a maple neck. He uses Fender flat-wound medium strings and a Hartke 3500 bass amp.

Drummer John Rossi plays a Drew Gold Plaque custom kit with Sabian cymbals, Tama accessories, Remo drum heads and Vic Firth Corpmaster MS1N vinyl-tip drumsticks.

Vocalist/harpist Ray Norcia plays a Hohner Marine Band harmonica through an Astatic Bullet microphone. He sings through a Shure SM58.

Keyboardist Matt McCabe plays a Korg SGD-1 sampled grand piano.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DANCE ALL NIGHT—Bullseye Blues 9555

LIVE AT LUPO'S HEATBREAK HOTEL—

Varrick 024

DRESSED UP TO GET MESSED UP—

Varrick 018

HOT LITTLE MAMA—Varrick 021

LET'S HAVE A PARTY—Antilles 7071

ROOMFUL OF BLUES—Island 9474

TURN IT ON! TURN IT UP!—Bullseye Blues 9566

with various others

EDDIE "CLEANHEAD" VINSON & ROOMFUL OF BLUES—Muse 5282

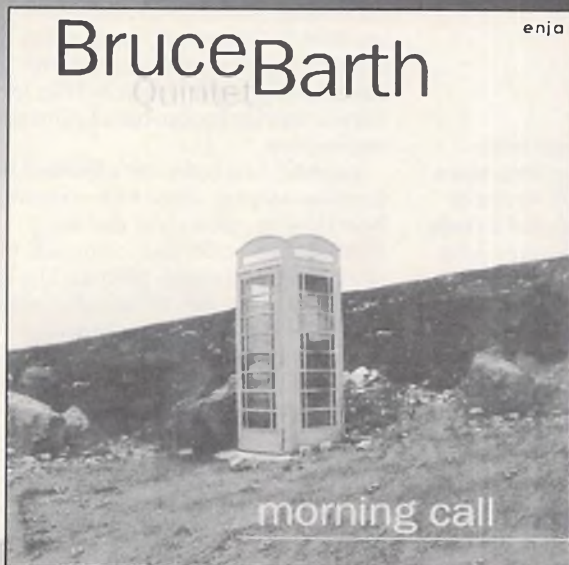
BLUES TRAIN—Muse 5293 (Big Joe Turner)

GLAZED—Black Top 1035 (Earl King)

The Roomful horn section often, with drummer John Rossi, has appeared on numerous other recordings, including Pat Benatar's *True Love* (Chrysalis 21805) and Colin James *And The Little Big Band* (Virgin 39190).

Bruce Barth

enja



Bruce Barth, piano

w. Scott Wendholt, trumpet

Steve Wilson, alto & soprano saxes

Larry Grenadier, bass

Leon Parker, drums

Bruce Barth Morning Call

Bruce Barth's debut album, *In Focus* (EJA 8020), was named one of the top 10 albums of this year by *The New York Times*

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enja

Latin Lovers Go Dutch

Close your eyes at a Nueva Manteca performance and you hear a red-hot Latin-jazz octet wailing complex, jazzy horn lines over crackling Afro-Cuban rhythms. Open them and you see six fair-haired northern European boys who look like they just stepped out of a Vermeer painting, plus one Puerto Rican bassist and a greying Dutch master—pianist and bandleader Jan Laurenz Hartong. "It's the same situation as hearing a Korean violinist playing a Beethoven concerto," says Hartong. "It's already accepted in the jazz world. In the whole world-music development, a lot of people are digging all kinds of cultures."

It's true enough that jazzers come in all colors, but blue-eyed salsa is still a novelty, and Nueva Manteca's spicy brand of hollandaise sauce is utterly unique, adding classical, Dutch Antillean and even Arabic flavors to the basic Latin-jazz brew. The group has recorded five albums to date, including *Porgy & Bess* (Lucho), a Latin-jazz treatment of the Gershwin opera. Now Nueva Manteca is preparing to release *Let's Face The Music And Dance* (Blue Note), marking the first major-label signing of a European Latin-jazz band.

Dedicated to the late Vernon Boggs, a New York professor who championed Scandinavian salsa, *Let's Face The Music* is an album of reconfigured standards, including Duke Ellington's "Caravan," Miles Davis' "All Blues" and an Irving Berlin medley. "We're on the track that Miles and Sonny Rollins and Paul Bley were into," says Hartong, "deepening out the standards' possibilities. Great standards have an incredible potential for musical development, and they provide a challenge for an arranger, especially when you try to synthesize the musical world of Latin America and the jazz world."

Hartong, 54, started playing dixieland piano at 12, progressed to bebop and was working professionally at 15. Along with Joachim Kühn and Jan Hammer, he won a medal in a 1966 international jazz competition judged by Cannonball and Nat Adlerley. The next year he was in Paris, playing in a club owned by Bud Powell's wife, Buttercup. "It was actually called La Boheme," says Hartong, "but among the jazz musicians it was known as Buttercup's Chicken Shack. She used to sing the blues at midnight, and she always wanted me to accompany her."

A Latin music fan from childhood, Hartong formed a 10-piece salsa band in Rotterdam in 1983. After visiting Cuba in 1984 and '87, he switched to Latin jazz and changed the group's name from Manteca



Nueva Manteca

to Nueva Manteca, enlisting New York timbales wizard Nicky Marrero for a three-year hitch. The group appeared at festivals in Holland, England and Curaçao, and hosted guest artists Giovanni Hidalgo, Juancito Torres, Orestes Vilato, Armando Peraza and Bobby Sanabria as part of a state-sponsored project called Nueva Manteca Meets the Legends. In 1995 Nueva Manteca toured North America, performing in Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, New York and Washington, D.C. Hartong is already looking forward to

the band's next album, a recording of an original religious work incorporating both Gregorian and Santeria chants that was premiered in October at Amsterdam's famed Concertgebouw hall. "When you play Latin jazz for many years," he says, "you do some reflective thinking about the parameters. But I find there are very few bands in our field that really try to deepen the various possibilities. I really dig that—deepening out stuff—and then when you reach the end of the line, you get to the other stuff." —Larry Birnbaum

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Cleaner Licks, No Tricks

Dave Bergeron, from the heart of New England, may be jazz's own Thoreau. Inner-directed, introspective and articulate, you've heard him. Check out Johnny Griffin's *Dance Of Passion*, Michel Camilo's *One More Once*, Gerry Mulligan's *Re-birth Of The Cool* or *Miles & Quincy Live At Montreux*, and he's there—the trombonist, the backbone of the ensemble sound.



Dave Bergeron

"For a long time I never felt comfortable making a record myself," explains Bergeron, who spent eight years and 11 records with Blood, Sweat & Tears and currently works with the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. "It was me and this unwieldy trombone that I wanted to wrap around a post most of the time.

"Can you imagine having this music run around in your head, your soul, your heart, for 30 or 40 years, and not be able to play it? It's been terrible at times; that's why I [also] play the tuba, the euphonium: because I found some movement possible on them. Now I've superseded them—with my own instrument—and I'm flying, I'm off the ground! Now it's time to make a record." *Berge Burns ... Slide Flies* (Mapleshade, see "CD Reviews" Dec. '95)—with BS&T cohort Larry Willis on piano, Kenwood Dennard on drums and Steve Novosel on bass—debuts a number of originals by Bergeron, several Willis tunes and one standard, a straightahead "There Is No Greater Love."

Bergeron, 53, credits his recent breakthrough to a special valve he invented for his mouthpiece, which he calls the Bergeron Rapid Articulating Valve Option, or BRAVO. Briefly, BRAVO is a

stem that travels in a rectangular slot cut perpendicular to and through the throat of Bergeron's mouthpiece, a Bach 6.5 AL. In the stem are two holes, separated by a solid section. As the stem is depressed, it moves through the solid section, momentarily closing off the air stream.

"It doesn't change the basic integrity of the slide trombone at all," he says. "It's far clearer and cleaner than any double-tonguing technique. It puts a beautiful, clean point on the beginning of notes, no matter how fast they're played. It takes time to get it together, but it's well worth it."

Bergeron is emphatic about it not being a gimmick or shortcut. "My only

impulse has been to further the music, to play what I've been hearing for all these years." And there's more music ahead. He's due back in the Mapleshade studios early this year, this time with his tuba. Meanwhile, Verve has scheduled a CD release of Howard Johnson's *Gravity*, a tuba sextet plus rhythm section, featuring Johnson and Bergeron as soloists, due out in February.

"I'm very confident now, in a peaceful way," Bergeron says, reflecting on his recent achievements. "It's not ego now. It's like, man, I know that I can do this, and I know who I am, and I am getting better all the time." —Ron Overton

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CD REVIEWS

FEBRUARY 1996

KEY

Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor

★★★★★
★★★★
★★★
★★
★



Bob Brookmeyer New Quartet

Paris Suite
Challenge 70026

★★★

There is a hushed, almost spiritual seriousness of purpose through many of these eight meditations that seems to ask us to listen with closed eyes and furrowed brow in a Yogi position. My natural tilt toward the spiritual, of course, is tongue in cheek and the arched eyebrow.

But overall, there is a winning quality about this well-crafted group rooted in its thoughtful formality and tensile ensemble strength. Brookmeyer says this is the first time the four performed together.

So how do they manage to read each other's minds with such clairvoyance on several tracks? Drummer Dre Pallemmaerts, particularly, often seems to know exactly what direction the next note is coming from. "Erik Satie," for instance, is a series of stoic, midtempo scales in half notes to which Brookmeyer, Riccardo Del Fra and Pallemmaerts insert rhythmic mischief in two-bar doses. Here, the solid interplay is most inviting. It even swings. Pallemmaerts generates a relaxed cadence as his rim shots dance elegantly around the pulse and manage to sound ringingly alive. "Gospel Song" is another fine example of attentive drumming.

The essential personality of the group's music is set at the beginning by pianist Kris Goessens. His work is a mixture of European modernism and a studied, rather intellectualized strain of contemporary jazz, although I would be reluctant to invoke any specific names as reference points. Some might label him "new age." He is currently a match for Brookmeyer, whose own formality has put him into a no-man's land between jazz and classical for some years. He is the principal composer here, and his lines are attractively congenial without being especially memorable or meaty. Frankly, though, the slower the material gets, the more boring it often becomes. And a lot of it is, shall we say, contemplative. "Chanson" wanders on longer than any piece at such a tempo has a right to, and to less effect.

—John McDonough

Paris Suite—Amanda; Elle-Que; Chanson; Arp; Erik Satie; Airport Song; Gospel Song; Chaconne. (66:14)
Personnel—Brookmeyer, valve trombone; Kris Goessens, piano; Riccardo Del Fra, bass; Dre Pallemmaerts, drums.



Muhal Richard Abrams

One Line, Two Views
New World 80469

★★★★½

Since catalyzing the Chicago new-jazz scene 35 years ago, Muhal Richard Abrams has amassed one of the most important and enjoyable discographies in contemporary music. *One Line, Two Views* should place among the strongest of his ensemble works, alongside *Mama And Daddy*, *Blues Forever* and *Blu, Blu, Blu* (all Black Saint). It's less shaggy than some of Abrams' other big-group offerings, featuring a cast of smooth extemporizers, gorgeous compositions and very active arranging.

Abrams devises unlikely instrumental combinations that always seem to work. Take the bass-and-two-bass-clarinet section early in "Hydepth"—the piece goes on to feature the

deep reeds of Marty Ehrlich and Patience Higgins, weaving them into the fabric of his superb ensemble charts. Compositions like this one and "Textures 95" accrete slowly, developing in an unhurried manner; they don't drag or plod the way some slow-moving pieces do elsewhere, but mutate gradually in a decisive manner. The disc's only short track (four minutes long) is "Tribute To Julius Hemphill And Don Pullen," a jubilant remembrance of two great black musicians that builds up to an appropriately celebratory velocity. Listening to the oblique melodic conception and unrepentive logic of compositions like this reminds one how powerful an influence Abrams' writing was on younger members of the AACM collective like Henry Threadgill and Anthony Braxton.

The title track begins with more weird instrumentation: a harp/accordion duet slips into a stunning violin/flute encounter before Eddie Allen's trumpet solo somehow gracefully explores the flatulent register. Allen is also spotlighted on "The Prism 3"—he blows a little shot of "Tequila" over Reggie Nicholson's buoyant Latin beat. Muhal's piano is heard to advantage on this track—contrary motion, dissonant blocks—and he bubbles insistently beneath the slower horn lines on the rhythmically intricate "11 Over 4." The last cut, "Ensemble Song," is an early AACM-style open improvisation, a live collage of percussion, rainstick, (judiciously used) synth and spoken word, the text of which revolves around a statement on the "universal law of rhythm." At the end of the track, Abrams returns to his touchstone, inserting a grandiose blues-piano break; the irrepressible Allen joins and they ride the idiom out together. It's a magical end to this full-bodied work.

—John Corbett

One Line, Two Views—*Textures 95; The Prism 3; Hydepth; Tribute To Julius Hemphill And Don Pullen; One Line, Two Views; 11 Over 4; Ensemble Song.* (76:48 minutes)

Personnel—Abrams, piano, synthesizer, percussion.

THE HOT BOX

| CDs | CRITICS | John McDonough | John Corbett | Howard Mandel | John Ephland |
|--|---------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| BOB BROOKMEYER <i>Paris Suite</i> | | ★★★ | ★★★ | ★★★★½ | ★★★½ |
| MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS <i>One Line, Two Views</i> | | ★★★½ | ★★★★½ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★½ |
| JOHN COLTRANE <i>Stellar Regions</i> | | ★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★½ | ★★★★★ |
| CORNELIUS CLAUDIO KREUSCH <i>Black Mud Sound</i> | | ★★ | ★½ | ★★½ | ★★½ |

voice; Mark Feldman, violin, percussion, voice; Tony Cedras, accordion, percussion, voice; Marty Ehrlich, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, percussion, voice; Patience Higgins, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, percussion, voice; Anne LeBaron, harp, percussion, voice; Eddie Allen, trumpet, percussion, voice; Lindsey Horner, bass, percussion, voice; Bryan Carroll, vibes, percussion, voice; Reggie Nicholson, drums, percussion, voice.



John Coltrane

Stellar Regions

Impulse! 169

★★★★★

Stellar Regions, recorded on Feb. 15, 1967, can be heard as a concision of late-period Coltrane. For those familiar with Coltrane's recordings, many may be surprised to hear a format that included 11 songs, none over nine minutes in length, most closer to four or five, 10 of which are previously unreleased.

The mix favors the two principals, Coltrane and drummer Rashied Ali. Apart from Ali's bass drum, heard slightly left of center, horn and drums ring out from discrete left and right channels, respectively, pianist Alice and bassist Jimmy Garrison essentially huddled in the center. Three alternates are included, with "Offering" being the only Coltrane composition here previously released (from *Expression*). Finally, according to the notes, except for "Offering," all titles have been assigned by Mrs. Coltrane.

While this music is almost 30 years old, it still sounds incredibly fresh. The crystallization of Coltrane's post-'64 sound—which alternated hymnlike expressions with rougher, more jagged blowing as well as more vibrato and high-register playing—is all over *Stellar Regions*. Most of the album comes off like a (relatively) restrained saxophone recital with drums (a week later, the Coltrane/Ali recording *Interstellar Space* was made). Melodies are typically brief, unadorned as the saxophonist jumps off to explore new terrain in a manner similar to that found on '65's *Sun Ship* with Garrison, McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones. Forms are used—e.g., repeated phrases, repetitions, multiple (and fractured) thematic statements—to shape the otherwise free playing over the shorter numbers. Ali's lighter touch (compared to Jones') recalls Roy Haynes as he twitches over his snare and bass tom with bass-drum accents and busy hi-hat, rarely using his other cymbals, all the while tracking Coltrane's every move. "Configuration" is a good example of Coltrane's clipped, heavily

rhythmic movements in tandem with the drummer's pan-rhythmic punctuations. The level of interplay, deft and telepathic, is stunning. There is heat, but it never boils over. "Stellar Regions" (both versions) is more tuneful, songlike, recalling the lovely anthem "After The Rain" minus the melodic investigations heard here. ("Stellar Regions" was recorded as "Venus" on *Interstellar Space*.)

The four-to-the-bar feel of more traditional, "swinging" jazz could be heard as a kind of narcotic to some, a rhythmic dead end. Coltrane, for one, replaced it with more accented, counterpointal playing (think of Scott LaFaro with Bill Evans). Indeed, Garrison's work here offers another significant voice in the continual dialogue between musicians, his playing against the grain complementing rather than cluttering

the mix. Mrs. Coltrane's playing, when heard beyond her colors and comping, is strong. Both takes of the somewhat boppish "Tranesonic" feature her between the saxophonist's fiery alto (not tenor as listed) statements.

Stellar Regions, released through Mrs. Coltrane with help from son/saxophonist Ravi and recorded five months before John's death, offers no signs of decline from Coltrane. At 40, the man clearly went out with a bang, or two.

—John Ephland

Stellar Regions—*Seraphic Light; Sun Star; Stellar Regions; Iris; Offering; Configuration; Jimmy's Mode; Tranesonic; Stellar Regions (alt. take); Sun Star (alt. take); Tranesonic (alt. take)*. (60:56)

Personnel—Coltrane, tenor and alto (8, 11) saxophones; Alice Coltrane, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Rashied Ali, drums.

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Cornelius Claudio Kreusch

Black Mud Sound
enja 9087

★★★★½

Backbeat-kick, shuffle and swing to launch raucous long solos have been more dependably available lately from hot-wired jazz-funk bands—Medeski, Martin and Wood, say, or Charlie Hunter's combos—than all-acoustic quartets beyond Murray's and McCoy's. But at age 27, on his fourth album (second for enja), pianist/composer/improviser Cornelius Claudio Kreusch digs into what jazzers call *da funk* and infuses modern modalism with fresh vigor, spine and spunk—make that *da groove*.

Munich-born, classically trained, winner of international jazz prizes, a Berklee grad and masters candidate at Manhattan School of Music, he tapped multifarious Kenny Garrett to join his trio with ace Cox and stroke-perfect Smitty after a European tour. Saxist Garrett's voice (mostly on alto) certainly stands out, and the ensemble throbs with collaborative synergy. But it's Kreusch—writer, leader, rhythm-organizer—showcased but not *show-off* soloist, who sets the bright pace. *Black Mud's* immediate appeal is founded on broad, colorful melody strokes, keyboard-based and section-driven syncopation, references to archetype songs. On "So!" Garrett quotes "Caravan," on "Way-Out" nods to "People Make The World Go Round" and toward the end of "Nubian Queen" sighs low (on soprano) with "It Ain't Necessarily So." "What?" returns the group to synchronized up-strut, and Hakmoun's vocals on "Mopti" give a fair impression of Don Cherry.

Midwestern-based Cox gets an all-too-rare chance to stretch out—and earns more—on "Deep Talk," while Smitty attends to all dimensions of drumming, all the time. Sometimes Garrett's soul riffs result in squawks and squalls, but he's pursuing far-out extensions, fleeting ideas, inchoate feelings—if he dares outrun himself (as on the free-bop "Upfront?"), bless him for trying.

What best bespeaks the rhythm section's quality is its firmness, poise, nuance and uncluttered support at near-repose as well as full pitch. As a pianist Kreusch has the hand-span

and muscle to hammer out percussive storms at daunting tempi, the independence to turn oblique runs upside-down or inside-out—and the self-assurance to use technique for clarity and accumulated, insidious effect rather than overwhelming display. He's probably listened to Tyner, Byard, Hancock and Pullen; he seems more in the line of Crispell, Melford and D.D. Jackson than among bop-would-be lions. His projection and presentation, engaging energies and strong pulse leave a positive impression, which one hopes will be born out by further development and success.

—Howard Mandel

Black Mud Sound—*So!*; *Way-Out*; *Nubian Queen*; *What? Mopti*; *Deep Talk*; *Upfront (And Rest)*; *Jungle/Black*; *So-Far*. (68-18)

Personnel—Kreusch, piano, composer; Kenny Garrett, saxophones; Anthony Cox, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums; Hassan Hakmoun, vocals, sintar (5).



Jim Hall
Dialogues
Telarc 83369

★★★★

In the 40 years since first testing the parameters of the soul with the Chico Hamilton Quintet, Jim Hall has been solidifying his reputation as a master of the guitar, and his new album gives ample evidence of why he's held in high regard by the jazz public, critics and fellow musicians.

Hall's playing on 10 numbers achieves a high-water mark of musical poetry. His single-note passages—lean, trim, graceful and hushed—are of a piece with his strumming of unusual chords. He is a fount of rhythms and harmony. The idea behind this session, however, is not to throw the spotlight just on Hall's lyricism, musicianship and incisive curiosity but to have him engage five musician-friends or acquaintances in intelligent, openhearted conversation, all the while supported by an unobtrusive bassist and drummer.

Bill Frisell is up to the challenge, bringing focus and sublime wit to his celestial tones when communing with his former instructor and occasional nightclub-gig cohort on the abstract "Frisell Frazzle" and the inviting "Simple Things" (both Hall compositions, like everything except the standard "Skylark"). Despite two distinctive personalities at work, their interaction is as seamless as silk. Joe Lovano, making his initial musical meeting with Hall, brings typical imagination and emotional commitment to a harmonically tricky ballad titled "Bon Ami" and a cheerful song the guitarist wrote specially for him, "Calypso Joe," which glides on the same tropical

breeze as the classic Sonny Rollins-Hall collaboration "St. Thomas."

Down a few levels from the rarefied artistic heights of Hall's encounters with Frisell and Lovano, yet still pleasurable, are his collaborations with Tom Harrell, Gil Goldstein and Mike Stern. Harrell's economy of line and extreme thoughtfulness would seem to be a perfect match for Hall's playing on "Dream Steps" and "Skylark"; however, each fares better in separate solo spots than they do coupling or counterposing ideas. (For earlier samples of Hall-and-Harrell legerdemain, seek out the guitarist's late-'80s *These Roots* album.) Accordion player Goldstein, a former pianist in Hall's quartet, uses the language of melodrama to somewhat dissipate the complex feelings expressed by the guitarist during "Snowbound" and the "free" title track. Finally, two dialogues with guitarist Mike Stern—"Stern Stuff" and "Uncle Ed"—are lively, articulate and a bit slick.

—Frank-John Hadley

Dialogues—*Frisell Frazzle*; *Simple Things*; *Calypso Joe*; *Bon Ami*; *Dream Steps*; *Snowbound*; *Stern Stuff*; *Dialogue*; *Uncle Ed*; *Skylark*. (55-06)

Personnel—Hall, Bill Frisell (1, 2), Mike Stern (7, 9), guitars; Gil Goldstein, accordion (6, 8), bass accordion (6); Tom Harrell, flugelhorn (5, 10); Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone (3, 4, 10); Scott Colley, bass; Andy Watson, drums.



Marc Copland Quintet
Stompin' With Savoy
Savoy Jazz 75853

★★★★

It was not until Marc Copland and his quintet were several tunes into their stomping that they gained my undivided attention. Sure, there were previous moments that made me take notice—Bob Berg's *Tranish* sweep on "Equinox," Randy Brecker's Milesian hints on "I Loves You Porgy" and Copland's beautiful dalliances on "Easy To Love"—but the whole band leaped into my lap on Gillespie's classic "Woody'n You."

Most arresting were the spirited romps of Berg and Brecker as they alternately tore into the tune, first fencing with each other and then using the cushion of Copland's chords to spring higher into a gathering harmonic density. From this moment on, with bassist James Genus and drummer Dennis Chambers finding different ways to reply to Copland's ever-increasing acceleration, the band burned to the finish, making its debut on Savoy something to treasure.

At the center of this trove is Copland's lyrical treatment of "Blue In Green." One would

think that its composers (Miles Davis and Bill Evans) had explored nearly every melodic turn possible in the tune, but Copland finds a rainbow of undiscovered colors, and the varying shades of blue he conjures are of particular brilliance. To this lush romanticism, he applies just enough rhythmic tension to remind you of his basic bebop roots.

If Copland hasn't done a solo CD, the efforts here suggest a studio date. Meanwhile, the pianist, known for his ability to comp and vamp till the cows come home, is hardly out of his element feeding the frenzy to a more-than-qualified quintet.

—Herb Boyd

Stompin' With Savoy—*Equinox; I Got Rhythm; I Loves You Porgy; Footprints; Easy To Love; Lover Man; Woody'n You; Blue In Green; One Finger Snap; All Blues.* (63:15)

Personnel—Copland, piano; Bob Berg, tenor saxophone; Randy Brecker, trumpet; James Genus, bass; Dennis Chambers, drums.



Quincy Jones

Q's Jook Joint

Qwest/Warner Bros. 45875

★★★★½

Pure Delight

Razor & Tie 2088

★★★★½

Quincy Jones stares out from the cover of *Q's Jook Joint* like a somber Vito Corleone ready to snarl at rival mob bosses. It's inappropriate, this stone face, because our classiest show-biz VIP—50 years in the thick of African-American music—has bestowed on us an entertaining pop album that abounds with joyous feeling. With two of his savvy kids, Kidada and QDIII, making sure he employs talented up-and-coming pop vocalists like Tamia and Brandy, Jones the wiz producer asks us to stop by his imaginary "jook" and get down with lavish, slick pop-r&b remakes of his all-time favorite songs, including Benny Golson's "Killer Joe" (Queen Latifah raps, Herbie Hancock ravishes an electronic keyboard, etc.) and hits by the pop-funk act Jones brought to the world's attention in 1980, namely, the Brothers Johnson.

As there are several dozen singers and musicians (many superstars among them) contributing to the album, Jones runs the risk of an unwieldy mess. Yet everyone finds his or her place, stomping the grooves, sweetening

the harmonies, swinging hard or just coolin' out. Hell, even the unimaginable team of Toots Thielemans and Barry "Sex Symbol" White get it on with an after-hours seduction.

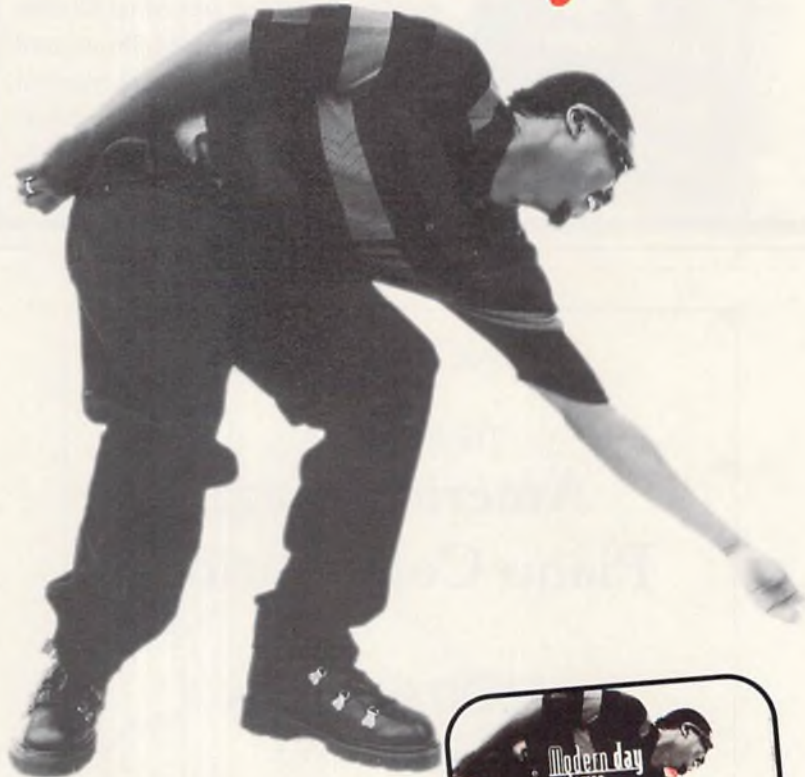
The warm little grin Jones sports in the old photo found on the back cover of a freshly assembled collection devoted to a substantial chunk of his jazz past is in keeping with the album's full title, *Pure Delight: The Essence Of Quincy Jones And His Orchestra (1953-1964)*. Twenty tracks off 11 Jones LPs collectively herald the melodic and harmonic richness of his big band jazz, which at the time won favor with discerning jazz buffs as well as more conventional music fans whose musical tastes usually got no more adventurous than Paul Anka. Young Quincy is plenty sharp, knowing how to

combine or take apart the instruments and sections for maximum excitement, utilize riffing for believable drama, employ degrees or changes of loudness to reflect emotional shifts in the songs. (He wrote a fraction of the material, the rest is split between jazz and pop sources.) Jones enlisted many fine players for his 12 bands here; among those sparkling as soloists are Clark Terry, Phil Woods and guitarist Les Spann.

—Frank-John Hadley

Q's Jook Joint—*Jook Joint Intro; Let The Good Times Roll; Cool Joe; Mean Joe (Killer Joe); You Put A Move On My Heart; Rock With You; Moody's Mood For Love; Stomp; Jook Joint Reprise; Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me; Is It Love That We're Missin'; Heaven's Girl; Stuff Like That; Slow Jams; At The End Of The Day (Grace); Jook Joint Outro.* (69:51)

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Selected personnel—Jones, producer, arranger (2, 5–12, 14); Bono (2), Ray Charles (2, 8, 12), Queen Latifah (3), Nancy Wilson (3), Tamia (4, 15), Brandy (5, 12), Heavy D (5), Brian McKnight (6), Rachele Ferrell (6), Take 6 (6), the cast of "Stomp"/The Yes/No Productions (7), Funkmaster Flex (8), Phil Collins (9), Gloria Estelan (10), Warren Wiebe (10), R. Kelly (11), Ron Isley (11), Naomi Campbell (11), Charlie Wilson (11, 12), Chaka Khan (12), Nick Ashford (12), Valerie Simpson (12), SWV (13), Babyface (13), Portrait (13), Barry White (13, 14, 15), vocals; Stevie Wonder, vocals, harmonica (2); Toots Thielemans, harmonica (14, 15); Hubert Laws, flute (3); Herbie Hancock, keyboards (3, 7); Pete Christlieb (2), Joshua Redman (3, 9), James Moody (6), Brandon Fields

(11), Kirk Whalum (12), saxophones; Grant Geissman (2), "Wah-Wah" Watson (5, 9, 12), guitars; Neil Stubenhaus bass; John Robinson, drums; Jerry Hey, Gary Grant, Snooky Young, trumpet; George Reichenbach, George Bohanon, trombone; Erik Hanson, Ian Underwood, synth programming.

Pure Delight: The Essence Of Quincy Jones And His Orchestra—Moanin'; Jones Bones; I Remember Clifford; Lester Leaps In; The Gypsy; Tickle Toe; Chant Of The Weed; G'wan Train; The Midnight Sun Will Never Set; Strike Up The Band; Africana; Air Mail Special; Dreamsville; Meet Benny Bailey; Theme From The Pawnbroker; Boogie Bossa Nova; A Sunday Kind Of Love; Comin' Home Baby; Dear Old Stockholm; I Had A Ball. (73:03)

Selected personnel—Jones, produced, conductor, arranger (1, 2, 8–19); Benny Bailey (1, 9–12, 17, 19), Art Farmer (2, 4, 7), Joe Newman (3, 5, 6, 8, 14, 20), Lee Morgan (4, 7), Freddie Hubbard (1, 12, 15, 20), Dizzy Gillespie (20), trumpet; Clark Terry, trumpet or flugelhorn (3, 5, 6, 9–11, 13, 16–19); Budd Johnson (1, 4, 7, 9, 12, 17), Zoot Sims (3, 5, 6), Roland Kirk (13, 20), tenor saxophone; Phil Woods (4, 5, 7–12, 14, 16, 19, 20), alto saxophone; Jimmy Cleveland (2–7, 9, 17), Curtis Fuller (1, 8, 10–12, 14, 19), J.J. Johnson (15, 20), trombone; Patti Bown, piano (1, 3–12, 14, 17, 19); Kenny Burrell, guitar (3, 5, 6, 15); Les Spann, guitar, flute (1, 4, 7–9, 12, 14, 17); Gary Burton (13), Milt Jackson (20), vibes; Milt Hinton, bass (3, 5, 6, 13); Alan Dawson (2), Sam Woodyard (3, 5, 6), Art Blakey (20), drums; Michael Olatunji, percussion, vocals (10, 11, 19).

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**In From The Storm:
The Music Of Jimi Hendrix**
RCA Victor 09026-68233

★★★

Christy Doran/ Freddy Studer/ Phil Minton/ Django Bates/ Amin Ali

**Play The Music
Of Jimi Hendrix**
Intuition 2134

★★★

The music of Jimi Hendrix has posed a problem for much of the jazz world. Sure, some say Jimi was to the electric guitar what Trane was the tenor saxophone or Monk to the piano. But how many piano trios include "Purple Haze" in their repertoire? For years, it looked like Gil Evans' inspired arrangements

on *Play The Music Of Jimi Hendrix* might be the exception that proved the rule to Jimi's music, especially as the jazz world coalesced around various Wes Montgomery acolytes while virtually ignoring James Blood Ulmer. Instead, a rather morbid occasion, the 25th anniversary of Jimi's death, has become the touchstone for new jazz evaluations of his music such as these.

The star-studded *In From The Storm* is dripping with good intentions but all too often sounds like a typically overwrought all-star session.

The recording is the brainchild of Hendrix producer Eddie Kramer. It gathers 25 luminaries to perform 12 of Jimi's songs. Unfortunately, the approach is often a game of piling diverse and disparate styles atop the songs until the tunes scream uncle. The most successful songs are also the least dense. Harmonical Toots Thielemans, plus strings and woodwinds from the London Metropolitan Orchestra, do a fine "Little Wing." Bootsy Collins and Bernie Worrell power a funky, hip-hopish updating of "Purple Haze." Sting and John McLaughlin do an affecting take of "The Wind Cries Mary," and Carlos Santana, Tony Williams, Sass Jordan and Stanley Clarke bring a loose-limbed, jam-session feel to "Spanish Castle Magic." Elsewhere, the sonic overload diminishes the music, though the guitar playing and singing are consistently strong throughout.

Play The Music Of Jimi Hendrix is also a mix of strong positives and powerful negatives. The upside is Christy Doran's guitar playing, which reflects Jimi's influence without mimicking it,

and some of the arrangements, which intelligently expand the songs. The downer in Phil Minton's pretentious, anguished vocals, which seem like they have more to do with a parody of Yoko Ono than anything by Hendrix, and some of the soloing has an art-school tinniness to it.

Although both recordings are mixed bags, they represent important steps in recognizing Hendrix's genius. The rock world has reduced his legacy to a bombastic cliché. These efforts could help point jazz not only toward a vital repertory, but a much-needed new attitude toward pop music.

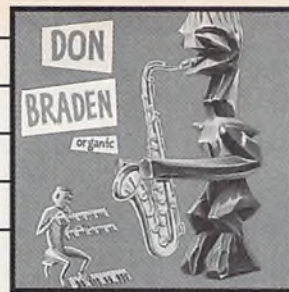
—Martin Johnson

In From The Storm—*And The Gods Made Love; Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland); Rainy Day, Dream Away; The Wind Cries Mary; Spanish Castle Magic; Little Wing; In From The Storm; Drifting; Bold As Love; Burning Of The Midnight Lamp; Purple Haze; One Rainy Wish.* (51:34 minutes)

Personnel—Carlos Santana, John McLaughlin, Robben Ford, Stevie Vai, Steve Lukather, Dominic Miller, Hiram Bullock, D.D., Brian May, Michael Hill, Eric Schenkman, guitars; Taj Mahal, Sass Jordan, Corey Glover, Doug Pennick, Buddy Miles, Brian May, Sting, Paul Rodgers, the DeWitt Johnson Gospel Choir, vocals; Sting, Bootsy Collins, Stanley Clarke, Billy Cox, Bob Daisley, Noel Redding, Neil Murray, basses; Tony Williams, Richie Garcia, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Abbruzzese, Tony Beard, Dennis Chambers, Cozy Powell, drums, percussion.; Toots Thielemans, harmonica; Everette Harp, tenor saxophone; Mike Finnegan, organ; London Metropolitan Orchestra.

Play The Music Of Jimi Hendrix—*Foxy Lady; Manic Depression; Up From The Skies; Purple Haze; Hey Joe; 3rd Stone From The Sun; If 6 Was 9; I Don't Live Today; Are You Experienced.* (65:00)

Personnel—Christy Doran, guitar; Fredy Studer, drums, percussion; Phil Minton, vocals; Django Bates, keyboards, tenor horn; Amin Ali, bass.



Don Braden

Organic
Epicure 66873

★★★★

Even though this is his fifth album as a leader, Don Braden's Epicure debut marks his arrival as a major tenor saxophone talent. An ex-Wynton team member and a graduate of the Betty Carter conservatory of jazz, Braden blossoms under the watchful, discerning eye of veteran producer Joel Dorn, who had the clarity of vision to convince the 32-year-old to try his hand at swinging full steam into a tenor sax/Hammond organ groove. Even though the date harkens back to the B-3 romps of the '60s, Braden and his all-star crew deliver a fresh and engaging set largely due to their fun-and-frolic approach to the tunes. Hey, the title of the recording is

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CD REVIEWS

even a pun.

Surprisingly, *Organic* opens with a guitar/tenor sax duo rendering of "Moonglow." It oozes with the blues as Braden sways through the melody with his thick, smoky lines while guitarist Russell Malone gently comps. It's the only tune on the album where there's not a B-3 in sight. But like a delicious hors d'oeuvre that prepares you for the main course, the strategy works. After "Moonglow," organ aces Larry Goldings and Jack McDuff arrive and the festivities really begin.

The musicianship is excellent throughout. In addition to Braden's stout and soulful tenor saxophone blowing, trumpeter/flugelhorn player Tom Harrell stars on several cuts, including a couple vibrant Braden originals, "Brighter Days" and "Plain Ol' Blues." There's strong chemistry at work in the interplay between Braden and Harrell. The same holds true for the leader's double-tenor excursions with David "Fathead" Newman on the funky, African-tinged "Cousin Esau" and Leon Parker's big-swinging tune "Belief." Malone is superb, especially when he stings bluesy licks into the funky shuffle "Twister."

—Dan Ouellette

Organic—*Moonglow*: Saving All My Love For You; *Walkin' The Dog*; *Brighter Days*; *Cousin Esau*; *Twister*; *Belief*; *It Might As Well Be Spring*; *Organic*; *Plain Ol' Blues*. (62:08)

Personnel—*Braden*, David "Fathead" Newman (5, 7), tenor saxophone; Jack McDuff (3, 5, 7, 8), Larry Goldings (2, 4, 6, 9, 10), Hammond B-3 organ; Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn (4, 6, 10); Russell Malone, guitar; Cecil Brooks III (2, 4, 6, 9, 10), Winard Harper (3, 5, 7), drums; Leon Parker, percussion (7).



Bill Frisell Kermit Driscoll Joey Baron

Live
Gramavision 79504

★★★★

Bill Frisell Victor Bruce Godsey Brian Ales

American Blood/Safety In Numbers Intuition 2064

★★½

Bill Frisell's studio recordings are often a search for context, as though some setting, e.g., cover tunes, horn sections or Buster Keaton films, is needed to present the guitarist effectively. *Live*, recorded in Spain in 1991, simply turns the trio loose for a winning, wide-ranging set covering the extremes of Frisell's music, from ethereal tone poems to buzzing grunge/surf hybrids.

"Throughout" and "Hello Nellie" express Frisell's dualism, with bucolic longing on the surface, and menacing undercurrents of dissonance just below. The set list surveys Frisellian themes spanning his career up to that point, and previews covers of Sonny Rollins' "No Moe" and John Hiatt's "Have A Little Faith" just before studio versions were recorded. Over the years, Frisell has re-recorded many of these tunes, and they instantly sound familiar, however strange. (Occasionally, you get a sense of *deja vu*, and ask, "Didn't they play that already?")

As the co-billing suggests, producer Hans Wendl recorded the trio members as equals, allowing you to hear the contributions of drummer Joey Baron and bassist Kermit Driscoll with clarity and realism. Baron is satisfyingly loud, rambunctious and unpredictable. Driscoll benefits most from the space vacated by departed cellist Hank Roberts. The versatile bassist takes on additional responsibilities, adding color or simulating rhythm guitar, as on "Strange Meeting." Frisell stretches out, too, reiterating themes with a protean collection of voicings. His use of delay conjures the sound of multiple guitarists at work. *Live* is both a good introduction and an opportunity to hear the trio's interaction without the prism of the recording studio.

Frisell takes risks with the ambitious, ultimately disappointing collaborations of *American Blood/Safety In Numbers*. Brian Ales sampled and reconstituted Frisell's taped guitar solo to assemble rhythm beds for "Safety In Numbers." In real-time, Frisell gamely struggles to play something interesting on top of these beds. The novelty passes quickly, as Ales' constructions are mechanical and grating. "American Blood" finds Frisell sounding brittle and edgy while accompanying the morbid poetry of Victor Bruce Godsey, as spoken or sung (sort of) by its author. After the second or third poem/song about death, one looks for the remote control.

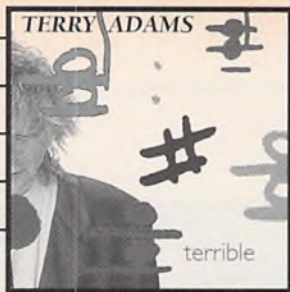
—Jon Andrews

Live—*Throughout*: Rag; *Crumb/No Moe*; *Have A Little Faith In Me*; *Pip*; *Squeak/Goodbye*; *Hello Nellie*; *Strange Meeting*; *Hangdog*; *Child At Heart*; *Again*; *When We Go*. (71:33)

Personnel—Frisell, guitar; Driscoll, bass; Baron, drums.

American Blood/Safety In Numbers—*Rovers*; *Busy Busy*; *On The Range*; *The Skulk*; *Safety In Numbers*; *The Sun Sets Red In Cairo*; *Winds Of Distraction*; *The Dawn Of Man*; *Truth And Consequences*; *Us And Whose Army*; *So Thin*; *Circle*; *Chase*; *This Is Only America*; *Trance*; *It's Time*; *Death Dance*; *End Of The World*; *Gone*; *Just Like A Train*; *A Silver Existence*; *Children's Song*; *Highways*; *Restoration*. (69:10)

Personnel—Frisell, guitars, ukelele, banjo; Godsey, vocals; Ales, sampling and electronics.



Terry Adams

Terrible
New World/Counter
Currents 80473

★★★★

This is Terry Adams' instrumental debut as a leader, but he's got decades of experience as the glue cementing that legendary omni-pop band NRBQ. Not only has he been the 'Q's chief mad scientist committed to experimenting with unpredictable hybrids of music, but he's also responsible for turning the band's fans on to jazz. The group covered Sun Ra's "Rocket No. 9" early in its history and contributed to the 1984 Hal Willner tribute to Thelonious Monk, *That's The Way I Feel Now*, with a rousing take on "Little Rootie Tootie." Adams also formed another band to deliver an equally strong rendition of "In Walked Bud" from the same album. Over the years Adams has been involved in several side projects, including gigs with Carla Bley and Annie Ross in addition to enlisting several of the Sun Ra horns to tour with the 'Q.

So, with such impressive jazz credentials, Adams takes the logical next step with *Terrible*, a remarkable set of originals that rarely run too far afield of the jazz zone. About the closest you get to a rollicking NRBQ number is "These Blues," the r&b swinger with a full horn section and Adams making his only delightfully ragged vocal appearance. (Members from NRBQ join Adams throughout.)

Adams is no great keyboard technician. He doodles and dashes in lieu of blowing. But he is one of those rare pianists who combines unbridled energy, a love for melody and a penchant for off-kilter humor to create a spirited music that's a pure treat to listen to. Adams sprinkles piano stardust throughout his tribute to Sun Ra, "Le Sony'r," pecks wonderful wrong-notes on "Hilda" and sprints through the whimsical "Toodlehead" with puffy-sounding Japanese organ lines.

Adams' stellar guests, including Roswell Rudd, Marshall Allen and Jim Hoke, get lots of room to shine.

—Dan Ouellette

Terrible—dog: *Le Sony'r*; *Out The Windo*; *Yes, Yes, Yes*; *Say When*; *Toodlehead*; *Little One*; *I Feel Lucky*; *These Blues*; *Hilda*; *Distant Instant*; *Thinking Of You*. (53:39)

Personnel—Adams, piano, harmonica, Japanese organ, kalimba-clavier, vocal; Jim Hoke, soprano and alto saxophones, flute; Marshall Allen, Noel Scott, alto saxophone, flute; Roswell Rudd, Tyrone Hill, Donn Adams, trombones; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Jim Gordon, harmonica; Johnny Spampinato, John Sebastian, guitars; Joey Spampinato, bass guitar; Greg Cohen, Pete Toigo, bass; Tom Ardolino, Bobby Previte, drums.

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Singing Daredevils

by Jim Macnie

Whether interpreting "Ruby My Dear," "Hit The Road To Dreamland," "Never Will I Marry" or "Dazed And Confused," the discs below are united by a resolute aspiration toward creativity. Even more encouraging is the idea that each treads a slightly different ground than its colleague.

Dominique Eade: My Resistance Is Low (Accurate 3925; 55:58: ★★★★★) Resourcefulness is at the heart of this, the singer's second outing as boss. But its blended with such a sharp ear for detail and setting that in our house we listen to it like a pop record. The Brooklyn-based Eade is both an academic and a daredevil, which is why the "whap" referenced in the Van Heusen/Cahn advisory "Fender Trap" resonates across the disc: Each track makes an emotional dent. It helps that she has assembled a limber crew in pianist Bruce Barth, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash, which performs as though the spirit of play was its deity of choice. The power of the singer's pen creates some of the most sublime moments here. Conjuring the sights and smells of a post-Thanksgiving stroll under the stars, "Late Autumn Evening" is as evocative as it needs to be.

Denise Jannah: I Was Born In Love With You (Blue Note 72438 2 33390; 69:12: ★★★★★) Jannah's voice is fine—rich, certain and teeming with a candor undiminished by the artifice of record-making. That is, the first thing you notice about her domestic debut is that she lives these tunes, convincing us of their value by treating them as the only important topics around. Communication is her forte. But the major-label debut by this singer is made even more special by the arrangements of the ever-versatile Bob Belden and the crafting savvy of essayist/critic Gary Giddins, who produced the date. "A Sailboat In The Moonlight," where Lynn Seaton's bass and Javon Jackson's tenor splash along buoyantly, seems no less stark than the big-band swagger of "I Didn't Know About You." "Bye Bye Blackbird," which bounces along with an almost R. Crumb cartoonishness, doesn't diminish the ache of a meditative soliloquy like "Where Are The Words" (a duet with pianist Cyrus Chestnut). The album's pinnacle is Jannah's polyrhythmic take on "Night In Tunisia," which suggests that the rumpus room is a great place to keep the record collection.

Mary LaRose: Cutting The Chord (Ledhead 101; 52:11: ★★★½) Though a bit arch in its modernism, this Brooklyn also-



Denise Jannah: undiminished candor

ran's choice of tunes is as cool as it is unique. I've never heard anyone sing Ornette's "Broken Shadows" or Mingus' "Self Portrait In Three Colors," but arranger/saxist Jeff Lederer turns them into vocal vehicles natural enough for me to believe that others might give 'em a shot someday. Oddly, perhaps refreshingly, LaRose doesn't dominate the proceedings. Scat sections are equal to those of lyric interpretation. That's just fine because her improvising is a tad more colorful than her narrative skills. There's no mistaking the swing that bobs up and down in the instrumental froth, yet by the time the group gets to Led Zeppelin's saga of bewilderment, "Dazed And Confused," its attraction to chaos has been explained in full. The fray is usually snazzy, however: Lederer's charts have logic on their side. Which doesn't mean impulses aren't revered. When violinist Mark Feldman goes momentarily barnyard on "Teenie's Blues," he's not only harking to his days as Loretta Lynn's fiddler, but maybe alluding to the song's *Blues And The Abstract Truth* neighbor, "Hoedown." (Ledhead Records: 718-832-3010)

Jeanette Lindstrom Quintet: Another Country (Caprice 21480; 68:10: ★★★) Lindstrom's disc has a sense of boldness that comes wrapped in swaths of ambience. This atmosphere is central, where the sigh of the leader's voice (and there are lots of them) or the flutter of saxist Orjan Hulthen's soprano can be the meat of an eight-minute deliberation on loneliness. Though she turns to Frank Loesser, Robert Creeley, Langston Hughes and Hal David for words of wisdom, she also conducts her own tales. The lamentful wife of "White Lady In The Window" thinks about "the love she knew and nothing comes to mind." The track's use of space might tickle Joni Mitchell fans, especially if they also dig Norma Winstone. Inventive arrangements are part of the record's charm. **DB**

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CD REVIEWS

BEYOND

Really Funky

by Larry Birnbaum

Call it acid-jazz or hip-bop, but today's funky dance-floor jazz (or jazzy dance-floor funk) owes as much to '70s jazz-funk as the "young lion" movement does to '50s hard-bop. Take out the rapping, scratching and sampling, and you can hardly tell the new groove from the old one. Like other revivals, this one has spawned reissues and sparked comeback careers, imparting a sense of history, if not respectability, to what is still a marginalized and slightly disreputable genre.

Various Artists: *Move To the Groove! The Best Of 1970s Jazz-Funk* (Verve 314 525 797; 74:03/74:55: ★★½) These two CDs bring it all back home: endless vamps, static chords, loads of slap-happy bass and thudding drums that won't quit no matter how much you wish they would. Funksters like Kool & the Gang and the Ohio Players find a narrow patch of common ground with jazzers like Ahmad Jamal and Roy Ayers, and proceed to work it to death. But between barren stretches of repetitious clichés (the title of Bennie Maupin's "Water Torture" sums it up) are gems like Chick Corea's sparkling "Fickle Funk" and Randy Weston's "In Memory Of," which raises funk to the level of Ellingtonian majesty.

Various Artists: *The Best Of Acid Jazz* (Instinct 317; 53:06: ★★) Reprising album tracks from the past five years, this compilation showcases artists from the U.S., England, Austria, Japan and Brazil, nearly all performing in the same faceless international style. Obscure groups like Chanan, Gota, Exodus Quartet and Marden Hill are so steeped in '70s sounds that it's *déjà vu* all over again, minus the energy and virtuosity of the originals. In this context of dreamy keyboards, chicken-scratching guitars and mildly tootling saxophones or flutes, only the samba-tinged Portuguese vocals of the Reminiscence Quartet on "Onde Anda O Meu Amor" make a discernable difference. Even the reformed JB Horns, the album's only brand-name outfit, barely stand out on "Evening In New York."

Various Artists: *UP&down Club Sessions, Vol. 1* (Prawn Song/Mammoth 0103; 58:54: ★★) Seven young San Francisco bands are featured here, recorded live at the UP&down Club or in the studio. Although most play funky jazz, they also venture into straightahead territory, improvising with spirit and stretching the boundaries of what is ordinarily an inflexible idiom. The Charlie Hunter Trio plays both hard-charging funk



Bringing it all back home: Chick Corea

and searching post-bop, while the Josh Jones Jazz Ensemble blends funk with Latin jazz. There's also mainstream jazz by the Kenny Brooks Trio, psychedelic jazz by the Will Bernard Trio and jazz-rap by Alphabet Soup and the Eddie Marshall Hip Hop Jazz Band, whose vocalist, Andre Marshall, scores on "New Flavor" with literate lines like, "I'm gonna kick more rhymes than Edgar Allan Poe."

Various Artists: *The Groove Active Collection* (Om 001; 47:05 [audio only]: ★★½) Beginning with a 24-minute CD-ROM track, this collection presents mostly hard-core hip-hop (though not gansta rap) using live or sampled jazz, or at least jazzy, backing. With instruments largely relegated to impersonally riffing support roles, the words carry more weight than the music; yet even where the lyrics are fraught with racially charged messages, the meaning is overshadowed by the verbal gymnastics. Celebrities like A Tribe Called Quest and the Brand New Heavies are no more impressive than unknowns like Blackalicious and Chop Shop, and the album's most striking cuts are its two instrumentals, DJ Shadow's eerily ambient "DJ Shadow's Theme" and the Sharpshooters' tart, breezy "Sweet Talkin'."

Liquid Soul: *Liquid Soul* (Soul What 0000; 61:13: ★★½) Combining manic energy with polished technique and split-second precision, this Chicago septet sweeps the mold and mildew out of jazz-funk and breathes it back to glorious life. It's not that the group does anything radically innovative; they just kick butt, blowing hot and heavy on skin-tight ensemble passages and wailing every solo for all it's worth. Alternating original compositions with classics like John Coltrane's "Equinox," Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" and Miles Davis' "Freddie The Freeloader," Liquid Soul makes it all funky. Beautifully recorded live at the Elbo Room and in the studio, the album makes a powerful case for the viability of jazz as contemporary dance music. **DB**

BLINDFOLD TEST

FEBRUARY 1996

Henry Kaiser

by Dan Ouellette

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

Widely recognized as an innovative and adventurous guitar improviser, Henry Kaiser has appeared on more than 100 different albums. A restless collaborator, Kaiser, 43, has performed with dozens of extraordinary artists in the jazz, rock, folk, experimental/improv and world-music genres.

A *World Out Of Time, Volume 2* (Shanachie), the second CD compilation of Malagasy music he and multi-instrumentalist David Lindley recorded in Madagascar in 1991, was nominated for a Grammy in 1993, and was followed up by their *Norway: Sweet Sunny North* (Shanachie). Kaiser recently completed a duet CD with guitarist Derek Bailey titled *Wireforks* (Shanachie—see "CD Reviews" Oct. '95), an album of Grateful Dead covers and *Visions Of The Vortex* by Second Sight (one of many groups Kaiser performs with) that features Dead members.

Kaiser, an active member of the San Francisco Bay Area's music community, took his first Blindfold Test at his home in Oakland.

Sonny Sharrock & Nicky Skopelitis

"In The Flesh" (from *Faith Moves*, CMP, 1991) Sharrock, Skopelitis, guitars.

I imagine that's Nicky and Sonny. I have to give this a mixed star rating. Sonny is one of my biggest heroes, and I'd give 5 stars to any note he played because he put so much heart into it. But that's a 3-star CD, and this particular piece is a 2-star track. There are just too many rock clichés, and Sonny doesn't really get to strut his stuff. Sonny was one of those people—like B.B. King, Albert Collins, Jerry Garcia, Carlos Santana or Jimi Hendrix. One note, and you know it's him.

Frank Zappa

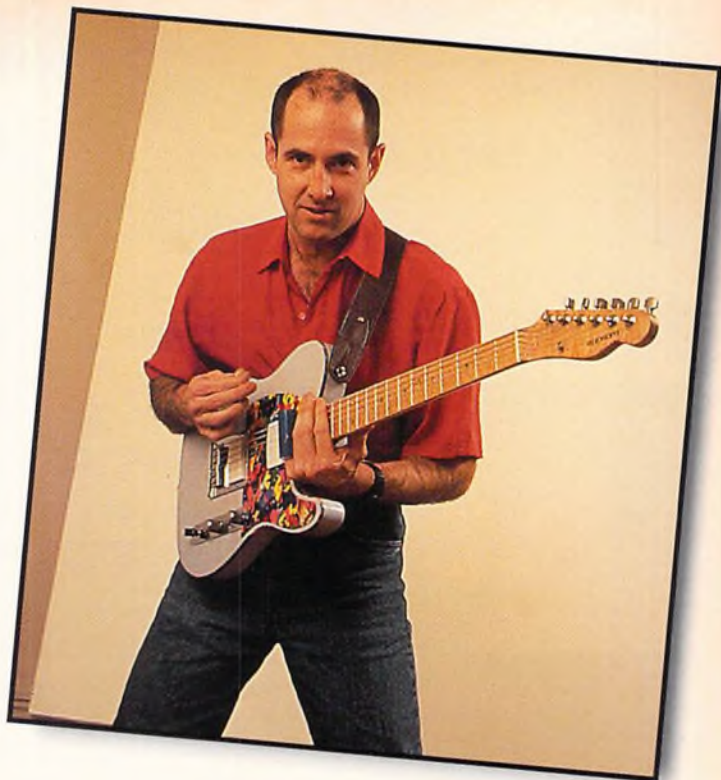
"Heavy Duty Judy" (from *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar*, Rykodisc, 1980) Zappa, lead guitar; Steve Vai, Ray White, Ike Willis, rhythm guitars; Tommy Mars, Bob Harris, keyboards; Arthur Barrow, bass; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums.

That's obvious. 4 stars for Mr. Zappa. It's good guitar improvising from the two-CD guitar set, but it's not his best. If you had played "Pink Napkins" or one of the *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* pieces, I would have given a 5-star rating. He's such a unique player. As much an influence as he was on music in general, it's surprising that he hasn't been as influential on other guitar players. Even though you can hear the influence of Johnny "Guitar" Watson and Greek bouzouki players in his hand movements and ornamentations, his style was so personal and expressive that it's difficult to imitate. My favorite thing about Zappa was his guitar playing. He really testified with his guitar.

Bill Frisell

"Is It Sweet?" (from *This Land*, Elektra Nonesuch, 1993) Frisell, guitar; Don Byron, clarinet, bass clarinet; Billy Drewes, alto saxophone; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Kermit Driscoll, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

What a great track! That's Frisell, and it's the first track from *This Land*. It gets 5 stars because it's my favorite piece. Everyone involved on this track plays with lots of expressiveness. I knew it was Bill at the first note. His playing is made up of a lot of different American ingredients. When he plays a solo, it usually tells a story. We need more guitarists who are as original as Bill Frisell.



John McLaughlin

"Song For Helen" (from *Time Remembered—John McLaughlin Plays Bill Evans*, Verve, 1993) McLaughlin, Aigheeta Quartet, acoustic guitars.

It's John McLaughlin doing Bill Evans, and it gets 5 stars. John McLaughlin has gone so many places with the guitar before anybody else, and he's been to so many places guitarists have yet to go. He's a master, and here he is playing the music of one of his masters. And he plays it with such love, depth and feeling. A person would have to have something wrong with their soul to not be moved by this track. But why does he use all that digital reverb?

Ali Farka Toure

"Kenouna" (from *The River*, Mango, 1990) Toure, guitars, vocals; Amadou Cisse, percussion; Seane Keane, fiddle; Kevin Connell, bodhran.

5 stars for Ali Farka Toure. But I prefer his African records to his English-produced records. I believe this is a track with an English fiddler rather than an African fiddler. Speaking as a world-music producer, the English fiddler is not very well integrated into the piece and is trying to do what an African fiddler might have done. That's the problem with this track, but because Ali Farka Toure is so great, he raises it up to a 5. He's interesting because he turned to Western blues to influence his music. Most Western listeners don't know this, but he's connected to a large Malian music scene. People should try to track down other Malian music not so readily available.

Charlie Hunter

"Mule" (from *Charlie Hunter Trio, Prawn Song/Mammoth*, 1993) Hunter, 7-string guitar.

That's Charlie Hunter without his trio. I don't know its title, but it's track nine on his first CD. He's the kind of guitarist the word phenomenal applies to. He's developed a style that's uniquely his own, within which he can make a strong musical statement. This track gets 4¾ stars. His 7-string guitar is set up with bass and guitar strings, so he can innovatively play both parts at the same time. He's a funky original whose music is really special. It communicates to people. He has an exciting future ahead of him.

DB