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DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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SINATRA & JAZZ



16 Frank Sinatra

The Jazz Singer

If Sinatra has been anything, he's been a jazz singer, an inspiration to not only other singers but instrumentalists as well, in particular, jazz instrumentalists. In the December of his years, noted author/Sinatra biographer Will Friedwald takes a musical look at The Voice at 80.

Cover photograph of Frank Sinatra by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve; inset photo by Herman Leonard.

**16** Frank Sinatra

WILLIAM P. GOTTLIEB

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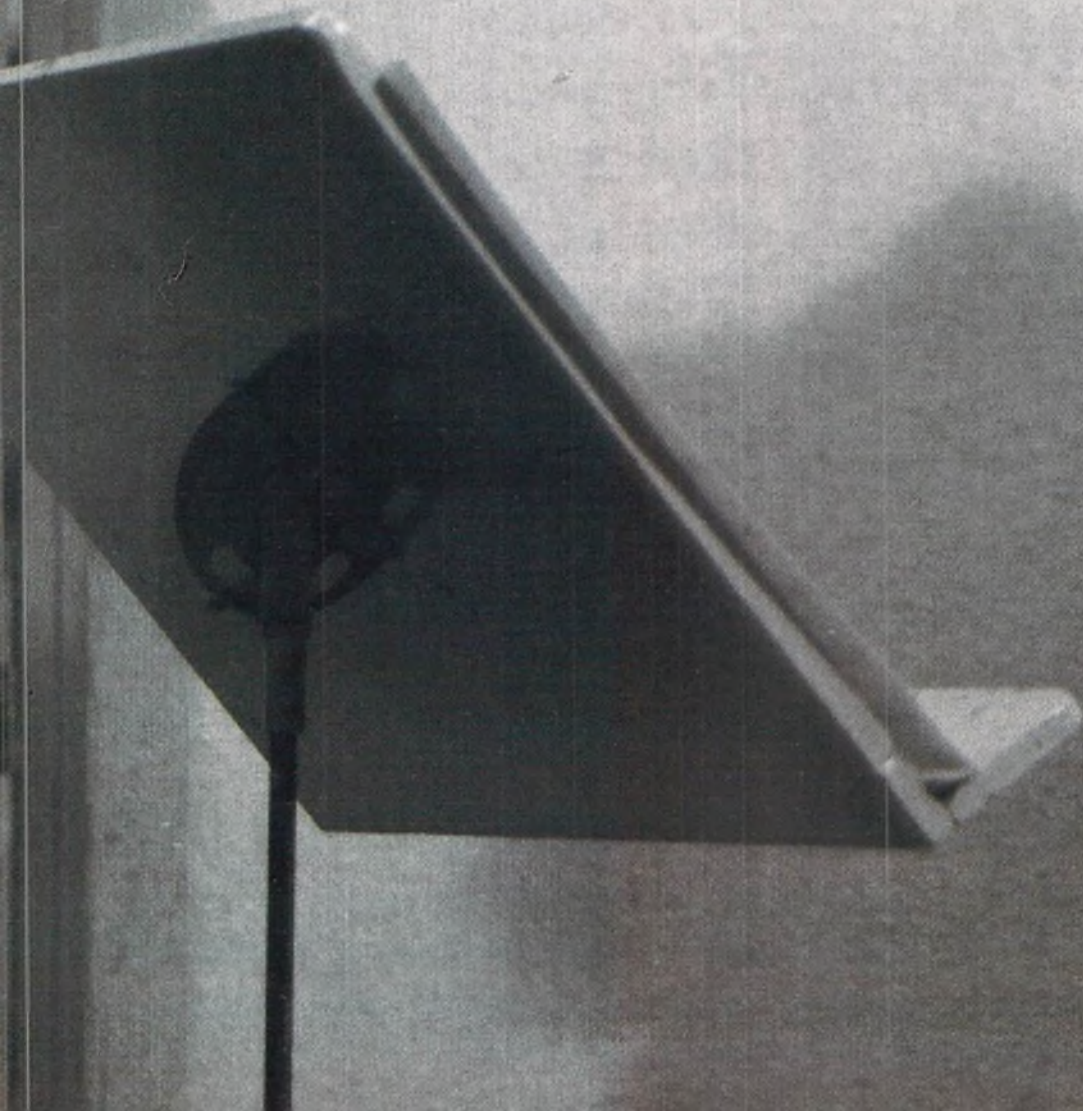
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SINATRA

The Jazz Singer





By Will Friedwald

ONE NIGHT IN SEPTEMBER 1956, LESTER YOUNG WAS PLAYING BIRDLAND IN NEW YORK, AND, IN BETWEEN SETS, HAPPENED TO DRIFT INTO THE COLONY RECORD SHOP. Making his way to the LP section, Pres recognized the clerk, longtime fan Bob Sherrick, and asked him, "Let me hear something by my man, Frank." Sherrick took out a copy of *In The Wee Small Hours*, Sinatra's then-most recent ballad album, and Young told him to pick out any tune from it.

Sherrick put on "When Your Lover Has Gone," and noted Young's reaction. "He was very quiet, in his porkpie hat, with a reflective look on his face," Sherrick says. "I could see that he was totally immersed in what he was listening to. He didn't exactly cry, but his eyes were, like, a little watery." When the song was over, Sherrick asked Young if he wanted to hear something else, but clearly that sole tune was as much as Pres could handle. Young stood up, and as he ambled toward the door, Sherrick could hear him muttering, primarily to himself, "Man! I gotta make that tune in the next set!"

Which goes to show the high regard with which jazz musicians have held Frank Sinatra. They've been paying tribute to him since long before it became fashionable, now that the Chairman of the Board has turned 80. Multiple discs have been released from all three of the labels Sinatra recorded for as a soloist—including a mammoth 20-disc package from Reprise, a four-disc boxed set from Columbia, the new *Sinatra 80th: Live In Concert* on Capitol and several Capitol reissues—along with nearly 10 new books in both America and the U.K. There have also been innumerable broadcast tributes, most spectacularly a rock-star laden ABC TV special, a 10-hour syndicated radio documentary by guru Sid Mark and an 80-hour marathon on New York's WQEW AM. Sinatra fans, who currently see no opportunity to catch him in a live performance any time soon, can even get a MasterCard credit card bearing Sinatra's image.

In a recent *Time* magazine article, Jay Cocks postulated that Sinatra's greatest secret has always been his craft. Perhaps an even more closely guarded point is that Frank Sinatra has always been, fundamentally, a jazz musician. In researching the book *Sinatra! The Song Is You* (Scribner), I asked the great swing arranger Billy May if he considered Sinatra a jazz singer. May, who has worked with Sinatra since the mid-'40s and conducted over half a dozen classic albums for him, began his answer by calling for a definition. "If your definition of a jazz singer is someone who can approach a song like an instrumentalist and get [the melody] across,

but still have a feeling of improvisation, a freshness to it, and do it a little bit differently every time, then I would agree that Frank is."

Zoot Sims, one of Lester Young's greatest disciples, once introduced Sinatra (a man who has never needed an introduction) simply as "a great musician." Billie Holiday, one of Pres' closest musical allies and a major influence on Sinatra, paid him the compliment of including many Sinatra signature songs on her final albums, revealing that the master had learned a trick or two from her pupil. No singer or musician knows better what to do with a song than Sinatra; nobody fathoms either the musical or the dramatic possibilities anywhere near as profoundly.

No one would be surprised that Sinatra's swing-era colleagues, such as May, Red Norvo and Benny Goodman, would be so impressed with the singer's achievements. But what many people may not realize is the extent to which so many contemporary players, who reached musical maturity long after Sinatra's heyday, cite him as one of the key influences in modern music. To instrumentalists as well as singers, Sinatra casts a shadow every bit as colossal as Miles Davis, who himself grew up under the spell of The Voice.

Getting To The Essence

Saxophonist Bob Berg, best known for his work with Davis, describes himself as a typical young (postmodern) musician who listened to Sinatra in his youth ("because I grew up in an Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn") but spent most of his early career eschewing such "conventionally" melodic music. "We were all into much wilder things for a while," says Berg. "But then, in the early '80s, I heard the record with Jobim [*Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim*]. A light went off in my head: 'What have I been missing?'"

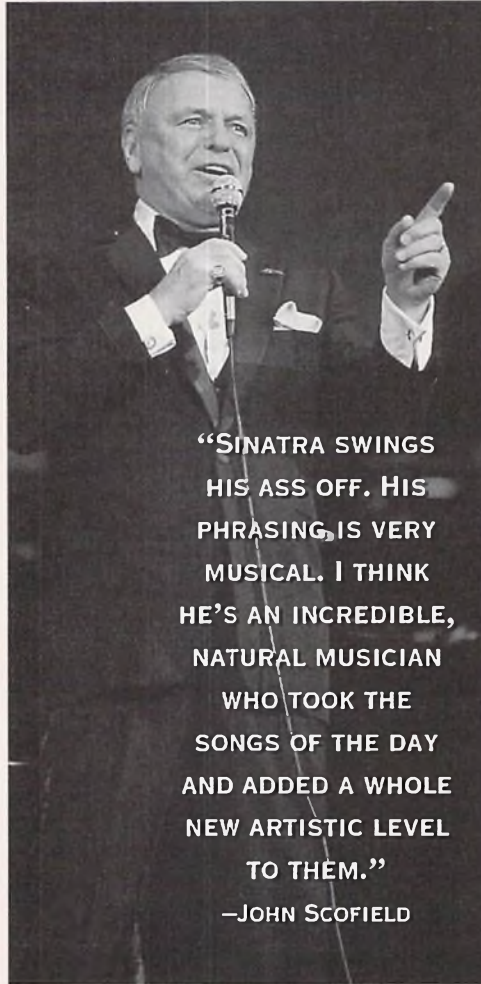
Ken Peplowski, another contemporary saxophonist who, like Berg, is "wild about Frank," raises a relevant point. "Sinatra always talks about how much he learned from Tommy Dorsey, his breath control and phrasing and how to put forward a melody," he says. "Today, it's almost come full circle since a lot of instrumentalists are learning from him and Nat King Cole and the great singers."

Peplowski, whose 10 Concord Jazz CDs are peppered with his thoughtful, original interpretations of Sinatra-associated songs (particularly the latest, which takes its title from "It's A Lonesome Old Town" on *Only The Lonely*), explains that "a lot of beginning singers want to improvise and scat sing, and in effect imitate instruments. To me, that's ironic, because all we [players] are trying to do is put forward the same amount of emotion in a song that a good singer does, but without using the words. The best compliment I could possibly receive would be for somebody to come up afterwards and say that they could feel what the song was about. As Lester Young always used to say, a soloist should think of the lyrics and the whole picture, and there's nobody you could learn from better than

Frank Sinatra.

"Sinatra is really head and shoulders above any other singer, because he's recorded such a broad range of music, and has been influenced by and then himself influenced so many styles. He's outlasted just about everybody, too—the amount of years that he's recorded and sung is truly amazing. And with the possible exception of the last couple of years, he's sung great. Even with the instrument—his voice—going, he took all his other reserves and sang with even more emotion and depth.

He's really telling a story up there, and that's also the best thing you can hope for if you're improvising. You try to have a beginning, middle and end, and you try to give a little part of yourself. I really tried to learn that from him."



"SINATRA SWINGS HIS ASS OFF. HIS PHRASING, IS VERY MUSICAL. I THINK HE'S AN INCREDIBLE, NATURAL MUSICIAN WHO TOOK THE SONGS OF THE DAY AND ADDED A WHOLE NEW ARTISTIC LEVEL TO THEM."

—JOHN SCOFIELD

PAUL MATTHEI PHOTO RESERVE

Romance And Rhythm

Not surprisingly, it's Sinatra's prodigious talent as a rhythmic virtuoso that most musicians respond to. Clearly, some Sinatra albums have more of a jazz feel than others, particularly the three with Basie and five with Billy May (including one with May conducting the Duke Ellington Orchestra). But there's a jazz foundation to *everything* he does, particularly his ballads (even with such string-strewn backgrounds as those of Gordon Jenkins). Never content to remain within the parameters established by his predecessors, Sinatra took what was useful to him from such musical father figures as Dorsey, Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong and contemporaries Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, but went beyond them in terms of establishing his own rhythmic identity.

"Sinatra swings his ass off," says John Scofield, one of the leading guitar players on the scene today. "His phrasing is very musical. I think he's an incredible, natural musician who took the songs of the day and added a whole new artistic level to them."

According to bassist Dave Finck, best known for his work accompanying singers such as the great Mary Cleere Haran, "Musicians used to joke around and call it 'the mafia feel' or 'the tough guy beat.'" To Finck, "Sinatra creates a great sensation of powerful quarter notes," where most recent jazz is based on eighth notes. At times, as in the Jimmie Lunceford-influenced rhythmic feel of the classic Sinatra-Riddle albums, the quarter-note approach "can result in a feeling of two."

However, Finck expounds, while this rhythmic feel has little in common with contemporary approaches such as that of Keith Jarrett's Standards Trio, it's actually quite close to the swing tradition of Count Basie. "It has to do with a feeling of weight on each beat. Frank can sing right on the beat without ever sounding stiff, even when he does 'Sweet Caroline.' It's a terrible song, but he gives it a really strong quarter-note, on-the-beat feeling. It worked really well with Count Basie. [Guitarist] Freddie Greene, who was the core of the rhythm section, always played the straight quarter notes, and Frank placed them in the same way as Freddie."

A few years ago, there was a critical movement afoot,

RECOMMENDED



Count Basie with Sinatra

SINATRA

Jazz CDs

FRANK OREGIO COLLECTION

Here is a chronological sampling of Sinatra's best jazz on CD:

The Early Years (with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey): *Harry James And His Orchestra Featuring Frank Sinatra* (Legacy/Columbia 66377) and *Tommy Dorsey-Frank Sinatra: The Song Is You* (five discs, RCA 07863 66353) contain all of Sinatra's performances from his big-band apprenticeship period, 1939–1942. Also check out the Sinatra-Dorsey sampler disc *I'll Be Seeing You* (RCA 66427).

The Columbia Years: Although the '40s were Sinatra's least conventionally jazzy period, at least 10 percent of his prodigious output for Columbia Records could be considered uptempo rhythm tunes. While the label hasn't done a Sinatra jazz compilation since the 1958 LP *Love Is A Kick*, they recently announced the forthcoming release of a single-volume set of hot highlights. Tentatively titled (after his first original LP) *Swing And Dance With Frank Sinatra*, the set will concentrate on the great, swinging arrangements of the under-appreciated George Siravo.

Songs For Swingin' Lovers (Capitol 46570): If you choose to own only one Sinatra CD, let this be it. With the aid of Nelson Riddle, the onetime crooner (of the '40s) reinvents himself as a heavy-duty swinger (during the '50s) and at the same time extends the big-band tradition with new rhythms, new instrumentation and new energy. Containing the triumphant "I've Got You Under My Skin," this is the album that married rhythm to romance and inspired a million imitations—not the least of which was the entire career of Bobby Darin. Also recommended: *Songs For Young Lovers/Swing Easy* (Capitol 48470), *A Swingin' Affair* (Capitol 94518) and *Sinatra's Swingin' Session!!!* (Capitol 46573), all with Nelson Riddle.

Come Dance With Me (Capitol 48468): The Sinatra-Billy May brand of swing is at once more raucous and more whimsical than the Riddle variety, as evidenced by the four classic albums of their collaboration, which also include *Come Fly With Me* (Capitol 48469), *Come Swing With Me* (Capitol 94520) and *Sinatra Swings* (Reprise 1002). *Come Dance* remains a superlative collection of, as the cover announces, "vocals that dance."

Sinatra And Sextet: Live In Paris (Reprise 45487): Sinatra's most intense foray into the field of small-group jazz was a series of international concerts given on behalf of children's charities in the spring of 1962. Although the Paris date issued on Reprise is far from the most spirited performance of the tour, this is a looser and more characteristically jazzy Sinatra than had thus far been captured in the studio.

The Basie Collaborations: Where the Riddle and May sessions encompass an element of capriciousness, the long-awaited teamings with jazz's pre-eminent orchestra find the Chairman knuckling down with an unfrivolous, streamlined straightahead swing that brings him close to the blues tradition of Jimmy Rushing and Joe Williams. *Sinatra-Basie* (Reprise 1008), arranged by Neil Hefti, brings Sinatra into Basie's territory, albeit with a program of primarily Capitol-era remakes, while *It Might As Well Be Swing* (Reprise 1012), arranged by Quincy Jones and Billy Byers, renders the Basie band more suitably Sinatran by annexing a string section. *Sinatra At The Sands* (Reprise 1019), also conducted and arranged by Quincy Jones, proves that the pairing's electricity is even more explosive when fired by a live Vegas audience.

Strangers In The Night (Reprise 1017): Don't let the title track fool you—apart from that discoteque-directed ditty, this is one of the most substantial sets of Sinatra swing ever. Adding a funky organ to the mix, Sinatra and Nelson Riddle, in their climactic collaboration, concoct such tours de force of straightahead jazz as "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World," "You're Driving Me Crazy" and the masculine, metaphysical "Summer Wind."

The Jobim Collaborations: Exemplifying the softer, but equally jazzy side of Sinatra swing, the bossa nova proved no less a medium for rhythmic sensuality for him than it did for Stan Getz. So far, only *The Complete Reprise Collection* (a colossal 20-CD suitcase, see page 58) contains all 20 Sinatra-Jobim tracks, but you can get most of them on *Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim* (Reprise 1021), arranged by Claus Ogerman, and *Sinatra & Company* (Reprise 1033), arranged by Eumir Deodato.

Francis A. & Edward K. (Reprise 1024): While not the unconditional triumph that the three Basie collaborations (and many live co-appearances) are, this once-in-a-lifetime meeting with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra is an under-appreciated gem. Sinatra is loose and swinging on "Follow Me" and soulfully reverent on "I Like The Sunrise." Arranger/conductor Billy May does a superb job of capturing the Ellington sound throughout.

L.A. Is My Lady (Japanese Qwest/Warner Bros. 3604): Although the title track represents a failed attempt to sell Sinatra to Michael Jackson's audience, the balance of this 1984 album finds Sinatra in a dynamite, strictly jazz vein with an all-star crew of arrangers (Frank Foster, Sam Nestico, Torrie Zito) and soloists (George Benson, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry) under the aegis of producer/conductor Quincy Jones. Mysteriously never issued on CD in the United States, all but one of the cuts (the original vocal take of "Mack The Knife") appear on *The Complete Reprise Collection*.

—W.F.



Sinatra with Ella Fitzgerald

partially inspired by some misinterpreted remarks by Sinatra himself, to categorize the singer as a classically derived vocalist. While there might be some passing similarities between the tonal qualities of Sinatra's '40s voice and the *bel canto* school, it should be obvious that rhythmically, Sinatra owes far less to Lauritz (as in Melchior, the crossover opera star) than to Louis (as in Armstrong). As the singer once put it, "Louis Armstrong had a great deal to do with it."

Finck feels that the Popsian influence is most apparent in both musicians' use of "big, fat quarter notes." On Sinatra's "Have You Met Miss Jones," Finck says, "Every note is on the beat, and yet it doesn't feel stiff. It's the same way with Louis, when he places every note on the beat." Usually swing numbers are associated with jazz rather than ballads, but Sinatra is more likely to linger behind the beat, in a jazzy fashion, on a ballad, for dramatic effect. In Sinatra's music, rhythm and emotion are, in effect, the same thing.

Peplowski adds that by the early '60s, "As drummers loosened up, Sinatra started implying beats rather than stating every single one. He got a lot sparser, too, as you can hear on later live versions of some of the 1950s Capitol things, such as [the 1966 Basie-backed] 'Come Fly With Me.' He leaves a lot of space, and he has a unique way of sometimes leaving out whole sections of lyrics, or perhaps punctuating them with just one word, and you know exactly what he means." The second chorus of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Right Myself A Letter" also exemplifies this technique, with Sinatra outlining entire lyric lines with just a mere syllable.

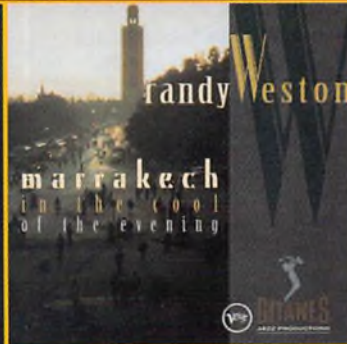
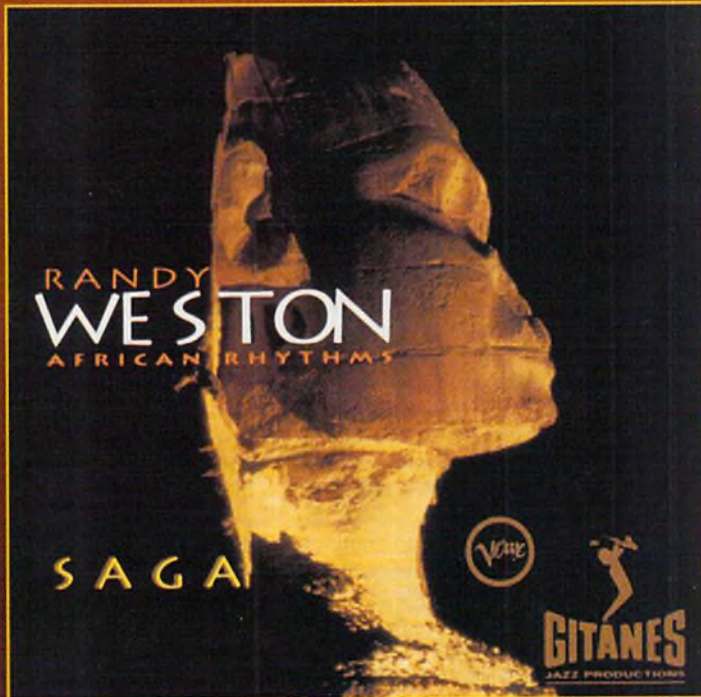
Finck makes the comparison to Sinatra's and Basie's favorite trumpeter, Harry Edison. "Sweets" normally thinks in terms of quarter notes right on the beat, and even when he doesn't hit them all, the listener can still feel them all. "When Frank sings around the time, you still feel it," says Finck. "You always know where it is, which is one of the elements of a good jazz musician."

Peplowski continues, "That's exactly why jazz musicians love him and [certain over-sanctimonious] cabaret singers hate him: Because he can leave out great big chunks of a song and, because he's got such great time, everything else is implied anyway. You, as a listener, fill in the gaps. It's no different from what Thelonious Monk would do."

Miles, Frankly

One contemporary of Monk's would certainly agree. Miles Davis wrote in his autobiography, "I learned a lot from the way Frank [and] Nat King Cole ... phrased. These people are motherfuckers in the way they shape a musical line or sentence or phrase with their voice."

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RANDY WESTON
JAZZ NOTES, AFRICAN RHYTHMS, ANCIENT LEGACIES MODERN MUSIC

Finck expounds: "I remember talking to some guys I knew who played with Miles. They swore to me that there are a couple of Miles Davis records where he plays the songs exactly the way that Frank recorded them." Davis' solos on such tunes as "I Thought About You," "It Never Entered My Mind" and "My Funny Valentine" from the mid-'50s are thoroughly Frankish throughout, particularly on certain passages. Finck continues, "For eight bars every note would be exactly where Frank placed them. For me, that would be the most flattering thing, to have Miles Davis copy you!"

Davis' 1954 performance of "It Never Entered My Mind" reveals, in a very vivid fashion, the extent to which Davis had learned from Sinatra. Although the singer had recorded this number in 1947, Davis' interpretation anticipates the deeper, darker feelings and raw emotional edge he brought to the Rodgers & Hart classic when he rerecorded it a year after Davis for the classic *Wee Small Hours* album.

Monty Alexander first met Sinatra and his longtime sidekick, Jilly Rizzo, around 1961, only a few months after the pianist emigrated from his native Jamaica. In 1964, Alexander began playing at Jilly's, the 52nd Street nightspot that served as Sinatra's unofficial New York headquarters in the '60s. Alexander remembers the place as more of a show-business scene than a jazz club. But after he started bringing in bassists and drummers on the level of Bob Cranshaw, Al Harewood, Tony Williams and Ron Carter, pretty soon the jazz elite, among them Dizzy Gillespie and Milt Jackson, started showing up as well.

"All of a sudden, Miles—and this was still in his Italian suit days—started coming to Jilly's," says Alexander. "That was a place where most people had no interest in hip things, and

here he was, the hippest of the hip, coming in there. On one night, Miles came in and it was very crowded, because Sinatra was there. All of a sudden, the two of them were having a conversation. The place was as busy as ever with all these show people who wanted to be around Sinatra, but there he was with Miles at the piano bar, deep in conference. I wondered what these two people were talking about! I knew that Frank had hired Duke Ellington to write one of his movie scores [*Assault On A Queen*, 1966], and I thought maybe now he was going to ask Miles to do a score for him. They were putting their heads together for maybe 25 minutes, my whole set. Oh yes, Miles dug Frank."

The Frank School

Most Sinatra followers say that it doesn't matter whether or not you call him a jazz singer. The fact is, Sinatra was heavily influenced by jazz, and he influenced jazz in return (just look at how many times he won top singer in both **DB** polls). Maybe today's young jazz musicians should follow the example set by the likes of Pres, Berg, Alexander, Peplowski and Miles.

It's the Frank school, and it has everything to do with interpretation. "There are so many great young musicians coming out of the colleges," Alexander concludes. "They all play so great, but I would love to give a course for them, which would be taking them aside for the next three months and playing Frank Sinatra and Nat Cole records for them. They would hear songs, they would hear lyrics, they would hear tunes, all the good, rich stuff. It would broaden everybody's repertoire and just spread good taste all around." **DB**

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Goin' to Kansas City

And
Robert
Altman
Takes
You
There!

By Michael Bourne

'Bean" is swinging some serious saxophone. And just to his left, just off the bandstand, a lovely lady *shimmies*. Her eyes roll up. Her head shakes with a smile. Her shoulders teeter-totter to the swish of the sock cymbals. She might be with someone else in the joint before daylight comes, but for now, Bean looks just *fine*.

Bean smiles, nods to the crowd's applause and, as another saxophonist stands, turns away. He's done playing for the moment, interested much more in sparking the lovely lady. They chat, chuckle, touch hands—only now he hears it. Bean looks back across all the heads bobbing on the bandstand, his eyes

narrowing, his *eyebrows* arching, acknowledging a gauntlet. "Pres" is *blowing!*

Bean looks, listens and pulls off his jacket—but buttons his vest as if girding his loins—and the battle is joined. Bean and Pres lock horns, tenor to tenor, chorus to chorus, hotter and hotter until, almost bell to bell, they're at the center stage and screaming!

Craig Handy is "Bean"—Coleman Hawkins. Joshua Redman is "Pres"—Lester Young. They've recreated on screen a legendary cutting contest when the tenor titans battled in 1930s Kansas City. "Craig Handy could be a movie star," says Robert Altman, director of the movie *Kansas City*. "Craig does that look when Joshua starts soloing. Craig does that look at him like, 'Who is this bird?' And then he takes his coat off. And people get it, even people who don't know what a cutting contest is. Visually in the film it's over five minutes long, and that's unheard of. It breaks the film right in the middle. I don't know how it'll be with the general public, but at most of the screenings we've had, at the end of that thing we've had outbreaks of applause."

Altman is best-known for *M*A*S*H* and recent movies like *The Player* and *Ready To Wear* but especially for *Nashville*— "And I didn't know doodly-squat about country music when I did that film," he says. Altman knows much more about jazz. He was born in Kansas City in 1925, grew up around the gangsters and musicians of the '30s and calls his new movie "a jazz memory."



At left: James Carter (r) with Gina Belafonte; far

Kansas City, to be released this spring, tells a story of gangsters, politicians and two women caught in a dramatic crossfire, counterpointed by the excitement of a non-stop jazz jam, all happening over 36 hours around an often-violent election in 1934. Handy, Redman and other musicians of the '90s play characters inspired by the great musicians of the '30s. Geri Allen plays Mary Lou Williams. Cyrus Chestnut plays Count Basie. James Carter plays a very "Brute"-ish Ben Webster with an aggressive swagger in his playing and his acting. Victor Lewis is indefatigable, the only player on all the tunes, swinging with a smile like Jo Jones. And as everyone realized while filming the jazz scenes live last spring in Kansas City, the movie became much more a *musical*. Altman also edited together 12 jazz classics recreated for the movie as an hourlong music video to be broadcast this year on PBS and also released on tape. Verve, meanwhile, is releasing the soundtrack—and whether on



PHOTO BY ELLI FREED

right: Craig Handy in a cutting contest at the Hey Hey Club; bottom: James Zolar (l), Joshua Redman and Jesse Davis.

CD, video or dramatically on the big screen, *Kansas City* is the jazz event of the year, maybe even of the decade.

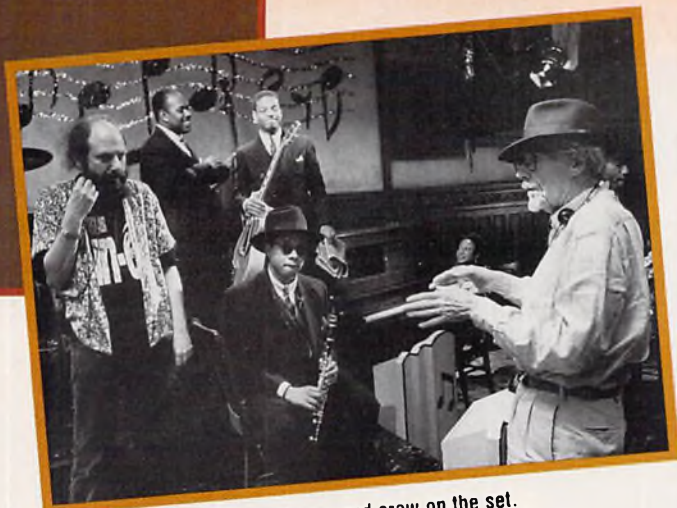
"I think the music will outlive the movie," says Altman. He remembers the music in the '30s, when Kansas City was wide open and musicians like Bennie Moten, Count Basie and Jay McShann virtually defined "swing" with the same no-holds-barred rough-and-tumble that Kansas City thrived upon. "To me, the movie is a romanticism. It's memories I have of the period. I was nine years old in 1934, but when I was about 14 I started going to those clubs. I saw Jay McShann and god-knows-who there. It was quite different then. We were white kids—and, really, Kansas City was a southern town—but we were welcomed there. There was no trepidation. Any time I was with a couple of buddies, we'd go to the clubs and we'd sit there and talk to those guys and listen to the music. I loved all the humor of the songs, the double-entendre stuff they did.

And some of those guys probably played at our high school dances. They did that. They came through and worked those territories. I can't remember a lot of names from when I was 15 or 16, like Lester Young or Coleman Hawkins, but I have no doubt that I heard them."

"Who is the King of the Righteous Riff?" heralds a poster for a *Battle of Jazz* with *Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins* at the Hey Hey Club in the movie. Upstairs, jazz happens. Downstairs, gambling happens. And murder. Actor/singer Harry Belafonte plays the club's operator, a gambler and killer known as Seldom Seen. Historically, the joint was called the Hey Hay Club and looked like a western barn—but Seldom Seen was real, says Altman. "He used to carry his money around in a cigar box"—as does the character in the movie. "He was in prison for murder about three times. He died in his 90s of natural causes. My father was kind of an amateur gambler and kind of

hung out with some of those characters, the Democrats, the Italians."

Kansas City survived the Depression even though and even *because* the city became a virtual fiefdom of crime and corruption. Tom Pendergast bossed a very powerful political machine and often worked hand-in-hand with gangsters like Adam Richetti and Charlie Carollo. "I remember Tom Pendergast," says Altman. "I went to parties at his house. My father rubbed shoulders with all of those people. My dad and I went duck hunting with Charlie Carollo's brother Frank. I was selling *Liberty* magazines after school and I used to go to the house of Adam Richetti and his lady. I remember she used to give me a quarter, which was a big deal, for a nickel magazine. And then in 1933 the Union Station Massacre took place. Richetti, Pretty Boy Floyd, they tried to free Machine Gun Kelly when the Feds were transferring him from a train to a plane, but they killed him, and G-men



Robert Altman directs musicians and crew on the set.

were killed. I remember most of the killings there."

Pendergast, Carollo and other historic characters appear in *Kansas City*—and so does violence. When a small-time hoodlum named Johnny (Dermot Mulroney) robs a gambler headed for the Hey Hey Club, he's soon caught and delivered to Seldom Seen for payback. Johnny's wife Blondie (Jennifer Jason

Leigh) abducts Carolyn (Miranda Richardson), the wife of a prominent politician (Michael Murphy), and demands Johnny's safe return as a ransom. And while the two women meander around Kansas City, (Blondie talking tough like Jean Harlow, Carolyn whacked on laudanum), Charlie Parker's mother, Addie, offers a hide-

out. "His mother was a cleaning woman at Western Union and had her own pretty nice house," says Altman. Charlie Parker himself is a 14-year-old enraptured by the music at the Hey Hey Club. "He carried a busted old saxophone around in a gunny sack. It isn't factual. It's romanticized."

Whether fiction or fact on the screen, jazz happened 'round the clock in Kansas City—as one particular participant in the movie *knows*. Claude

"Fiddler" Williams, at 87 a living legend of Kansas City jazz, was *there* in 1931, usually playing guitar with the likes of Count Basie—and, generations later, was a very historical extra in the scenes at the Hey Hey Club. "I was right in the middle of it," Fiddler remembers. "I came up with Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy in 1928. There were at least five or six clubs between Paseo and Woodland. I played on 12th and Vine. I made them *all*."

Fiddler still lives in Kansas City—and he especially remembers the tenor battles of Hawkins, Young and Herschel Evans, the first tenor star of Basie's band, played by David Murray in the movie. "Herschel and Lester Murray would get Coleman in the middle. Herschel tried to get Coleman's tone, but Lester said, 'Just play! Just blow!' Just the three of them, they would have the damndest contests—and Lester was playing more horn than any of the other saxophone players."

"I didn't have time to sit down and transcribe Lester Young solos note for note," says Joshua Redman. "What I've tried to do is tap into the *spirit* of the music. We're supposed to capture the

Belafonte's Jazz Beginnings

"Listen to that music," says Seldom Seen. Down in the basement, he's playing cat-and-mouse with the punk he's considering killing. Up in the joint, a piano is jumping. "That's Bill Basie. That's part of the reason you're not dead yet!"

"I researched him," says Harry Belafonte, playing the legendary gangster Seldom Seen, cigar box always at hand, money and dope in the cigar box, in Robert Altman's *Kansas City*. "He was a killer, scum of the earth, but it's important to the piece that people see who he was and what he meant to that environment. Kansas City was run by gangsters, and it was a hot spot for music."

Belafonte hasn't starred in a movie in 20 years, but he's come back in two new movies, the recent *White Man's Burden* and now *Kansas City*. Belafonte is nonetheless traveling the world working for UNICEF and singing his hit folk songs, including, as always, the classic "Banana Boat" with his resounding "Day-O! Day-O-O-O!"

What's often forgotten is that Belafonte began as a jazz singer. "The

first time I ever sang professionally was in '48-'49 at the Royal Roost. *Down Beat* reviewed me and was very supportive. I was in acting school at the New School for Social Research [in New York City]. My classmates were Rod Steiger, Walter Matthau, Tony Curtis, Bea Arthur,

life. Lester Young was a fixture at the Royal Roost."

Monte Kay, the club's promoter, became friends with him and heard him sing in one of the school's shows. When money for the school's expenses ran out, Kay offered Belafonte a gig as the club's intermission singer.

"Al Haig was the pianist asked to play for me. My opening tune was 'Pennies From Heaven' in E-flat, but when I got up there to sing, Tommy Potter walked up with his bass, Max Roach was on the drums and *Bird* came up! They decided to kick me off for my debut! That was a remarkable moment for me."

Belafonte first recorded for the Roost's own label, joined by Brew Moore, Howard McGhee, Machito's band and other jazz greats. And he was especially pleased to be back

in the jazz world for *Kansas City*. "It's not only fun getting back for the nostalgia of it all, but to be with some of the greatest jazz musicians today, emulating their predecessors, playing their history with such integrity and reverence. There's not a thing about this music I don't remember and don't revere. All of it, it's *home*."

—M.B.



Harry Belafonte as "Seldom Seen"

Marlon Brando. And at the end of the night, after we'd gotten through a production, I'd go to the Royal Roost. I'd pay 50 cents to get in, 50 cents for a beer. I could stand at the bar all night and listen to everybody. And, slowly but surely, I got to meet them. Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, all these people were in my

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spirit of an age of which we weren't a part, and that's the great challenge. When we first got here, everyone was so concerned about sounding like their characters that the music lacked a certain energy. And we realized, yes, we have to keep in mind the people we're emulating, but we have to feel free to let our *own* spirits out. We're playing musicians who are long gone, but the music is alive right now."

Joshua couldn't cut one unique characteristic of Lester's playing. "They asked me to play sideways, and I tried and I got tendinitis. That was really one of my first steps in realizing that I cannot *be* this man. I've got to try and get the sweetness, the melodicism and the floating quality of his playing, but I've got to play the way I play."

"I thought that if we're going to be historically accurate, if we *concentrate* on that, it'll end up dull," says the movie's musical director, Hal Willner. "I remember when I first heard the Bennie Moten stuff when I was about 19. I heard the way Basie was playing piano. It was like Terry Adams, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jelly Roll Morton's 'Fingerbreaker'—completely wild. If you hear the Moten band play 'Lafayette' or 'Prince Of Wales,' there's as much energy as any punk rock I've ever heard. We wanted to get the feeling of that, the flavor of that, but not imitate it."

Willner gathered the band from across the jazz spectrum, from Lincoln Center to the Knitting Factory and all scenes in between. "Jazz has become so segregated, it's like there's eight jazz worlds going around. I wanted to put Joshua Redman and David Murray on the same stage. I thought we'd get some real *stuff*. It may be hard. It may be tense. Their techniques are different. Some people like to have all the sheet music. Some people like to be totally free. I thought the end result would be worth whatever else happens. It's hard, but they're really pulling it off. There's *magic* when it all starts and they really get back in that time."

Willner was the musical director of the modern-jazz soundtrack to Altman's *Short Cuts*. Frank Barhydt worked with Altman on the screenplay of *Short Cuts* and again on *Kansas City*. They'd initially written a teleplay eight years ago about the two women but not with the peripheral characters or the music. Eventually, after the teleplay got kicked around but went unproduced, along came the production company CIBY 2000 with financing for whatever project Altman wanted to do. "I said I wanted to do this story but I wanted the music in it."

Though he's rarely used jazz situations or soundtracks, stylistically Altman's movies often have qualities like jazz, with the interplay of characters and incidents as if themes and variations arranged for a big band. Altman also improvises with actors



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as virtuoso soloists—or, in *Kansas City*, with virtuoso soloists as actors. "I think the structure of the whole film is jazz. If you look at the actual story, it's a short story of these women traveling around together and it's not about the plot. It's all these scenes, what they talk about, where they go, who they run into. All these things were like jazz riffs to me."

Jazz itself steals the movie. Jennifer Jason Leigh and Miranda Richardson are very compelling, but so are the musicians—and not only in the cutting

contests. Redman battles Handy on Fletcher Henderson's "Yeah Man" and also battles a very contentious James Carter on Bennie Moten's "Prince Of Whales"—but, especially on the video, *all* the music comes across the screen *dramatically*.

"That's what happened on a Monday night, the musicians' night off. That's when they'd get together and jam," says Altman. And indeed they *jam*. "You can print all the charts of this film on eight pages. I didn't want tight arrangements.

We wanted these guys up there *blowing* at each other." Steve Bernstein and Craig Handy contributed on-the-spot sketches of '30s classics from the handbooks of Moten and Basie, Ellington and Henderson. Mary Lou Williams is remembered with a loving tribute from Geri Allen on "Lullaby Of The Leaves." Kevin Mahogany sings the blues as a bartender, as Joe Turner once did, though both vocals were Jimmy Rushing favorites: "I Left My Baby" in the movie, "Harvard Blues" on the video. Butch Morris conducted rehearsals so that musicians who'd never played together could.

Others in the band besides the aforementioned included Olu Dara on cornet, James Zollar and Nicholas Payton on trumpets, Clark Gayton and Curtis Fowlkes on trombones, Jesse Davis and David "Fathead" Newman on alto saxes, clarinetist Don Byron, Russell Malone and Mark Whitfield alternating guitar, and Christian McBride and Ron Carter alternating bass.

And, again, though they were given names of the great musicians of that epoch, all were encouraged musically to be themselves—so don't expect an antiquarian note-for-note facsimile of Kansas City swing. "I did not want to make it imitative," says Altman. "Unless people really know their jazz, they're not gonna know who these musicians are supposed to be. I wanted them to play the music as best *they* could. There's probably stuff in there that wasn't done in 1934, but I'm not doing a documentary. I'm doing an entertainment."

Entertaining it is—and whether or not it's always "retro"-*correct*, *Kansas City* swings. "It was pretty tough the first day," says Altman. "They were a little shy of each other, a little stiff, but when they saw the first film, they *got* it and they started having fun. I said, 'What are you doing sitting in a row? Go sit at the bar with a girl, and take your horn!' We threw the music stands around as if they weren't organized. We actually hid mics in them. We also had a very good room, and the sound is excellent. There's a high school band recorded live at the Union Station, but everything else is from that club and was done live."

Altman's film returns to the Hey Hey Club (designed complete with period posters by son Stephen Altman) throughout the movie. Some scenes are segued by moments of the music. Some scenes happen *during* the music. Blondie is hauled out by goons as the band is swinging—and, in character, she's laughing. There's no dialogue from the movie in the video, only Seldom Seen and other characters in the background—and none of the musicians have actual speaking parts. They're there to *play*.

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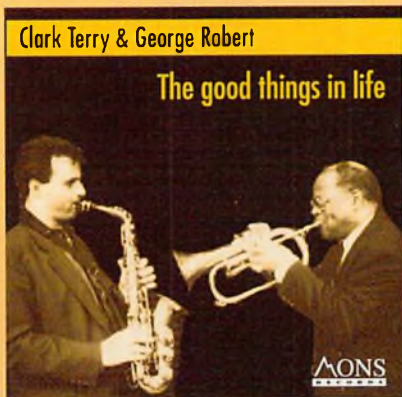
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"C'mon, Papa Jo! Stomp it!" someone shouts to Victor Lewis at the drums, and "Tickletoe" kicks off the video. Carter and Redman have an early exchange, Byron's clarinet cuts through both of them and Geri Allen romps. "Fathead" Newman as "Buster" Smith plays the lead of "Indiana," but right away Zollar and Payton enter burning. Payton, meant to be "Hot Lips" Page, often rivals the battling tenors as a dynamic presence in the band. "Moten Swing" features Jesse Davis on the head, James Carter soloing. Joshua Redman plays "Solitude" with a haunting grace.

"Blues In The Dark" is certain to amplify presumptions about Carter and Redman as musical combatants nowadays. Carter honks heartily and Redman answers with that much more grease, the band egging them on. Carter even "laughing" a riff during Redman's solo. "Harvard Blues" is another highlight. Mark Whitfield picks licks at the bar as Mahogany's bartender shouts the blues using the sexy foot of Belafonte's daughter Gina as a metronome and then a microphone. Olu Dara in another scene plays his cornet into a lady's cleavage. That the musicians interact with the extras, especially the ladies, makes the characters and the music all the more alive.

Craig Handy also shouts a chorus of blues, but as the band breaks at the climax, out of the sudden silence Curtis Fowlkes bursts into a solo even *more* climactic. Geri Allen romps again on the head of "Prince Of Wales," and Redman's "Lester" leaps in. Carter, at that moment across the room, hitting on Gina Belafonte himself, hollers back. Both tenors go at it like locomotives rushing each other head-on, the band swinging so hard that the whole train flies off the tracks.

"Cherokee" spotlights a fiery Payton before solos all around from Newman, Zollar, Handy, Fowlkes, Davis, Carter, Whitfield and Allen. Allen plays "Lullaby Of The Leaves" with Clark Gayton and Jesse Davis, then, at the piano across the bandstand, Cyrus Chestnut enters with "Basie"-ish panache. Chestnut and Allen don't "battle" at all but *dance* four-handed as the saxophones *dance* into the crowd. David Murray is featured only on an easily swinging—if often saxophonically "out"—"Queer Notions." Russell Malone also solos. Malone and Whitfield, each in his turn, anchor the groove with the finesse of a Freddie Greene. And then come the fireworks of "Yeah Man."

"Body And Soul" ends the video beautifully with Christian McBride and Ron Carter playing together, but Altman ends the movie with a double-bass "Solitude." "We did both endings, but I like 'Solitude' better," says Altman. "It's one of the first pieces of music I remember hearing as a kid. I remember the

housekeeper we had in Kansas City, a woman called Glendora Majors. I was probably nine or 10, and she sat me down and she said, 'Now, you listen to this. This is Duke Ellington.' I remember very clearly sitting there, listening to it."

Robert Altman comes truly full circle in *Kansas City*, personally and especially musically. "I was just knocked out by the music—and it got me in trouble. I went way over my budget, and then I got sick from all the smoke. I had to shut down for three days. The insurance company came

in, and I got in a lot of financial trouble, but I said, 'Fuck it! I'm gonna do this if it's the last picture I make!' To me, the picture is a success, and if it never makes a goddamned dime, I don't care. It's there and I love it. It's the first picture I've made that I've made prints off the first negative, just for myself. Many of my films I don't have or I've lost. I think this is my best piece of work. It's different. It's rounded. The whole structure of the movie is a theme that everybody just blows on. It's *jazz* is what it is!"

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Wallace Roney

His Own Man

By Zan Stewart

Wallace Roney continues to be surrounded by the aura of Miles Davis. The 35-year-old Roney—whose last *DB* feature (March '94) discussed his connections to Miles—still plays in a melodically striking style that's deeply informed by the man he's always acknowledged as his idol. (It was through a collaborative performance with Davis at the Montreux Jazz Festival in July 1991 that Roney was suddenly thrust into the jazz limelight.) And his trumpet chair in the Miles Davis Tribute Band only adds to the references.

And Roney delivers tunes, a fresh batch of which can be heard on his new self-titled Warner Bros. release that bear marks of compositions written by Miles, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock for the late trumpeter's ace 1963-'67 quintet.

Roney is aware of all this. His response to possible detractors is typically Davisean: *So what?*

"Is that such a bad thing, his aura around me?" Roney asks. "It's *not* a bad thing. You know, you want to be yourself, and I play things that I know are

mine, that are different than Miles. People say that I'm the 'next Miles,' whatever that means. I can't be the next Miles Davis, I'm not trying to be. But to be the 'next Miles,' if that means his stature in music, what he presented, being a leader, if I can somehow get myself to that level, take music to a new place or something, yeah, I have no problem with that."

With the release of *Wallace Roney*, an adventurous, often harshly elegant quintet recording, arguments will no doubt ensue over whether the Philadelphia native has offered a revitalized look at Davis' vigorous, complex approach, or taken yet another step into clonedom. One view—mine—averts that the recording reveals Roney to have achieved considerable success in his struggle to step out as a legitimate leader in the world of contemporary acoustic jazz. Or "progressive artistic jazz," to use his own label.

Wallace Roney, completed in one day (last March 3) at New York's Power Station, was produced by Roney (executive-produced by longtime Miles producer Teo Macero with Matt Pierson) and features brother/tenor saxophonist Antoine Roney along with Carlos McKinney on piano, bassist Clarence Seay and drummer Eric Allen. If you listen closely, the trumpeter says, the album demonstrates where he's like Miles, and where he's his own man. "There's a full palette of what I'm about," he says. "Now, if all of it has Miles' influence, I wouldn't deny that, either. The influence is the way you are, your individuality is shaped by your influence."

From a strictly stylistic point of view, Roney—who is a bravura trumpeter capable of powerful lead work as well as intricate line play—says that what basically differentiates him from Miles is his sound, and the length of his improvised lines.

"Although I'm coming from his conception, I'm playing longer lines," says Roney from his home near Greenwich Village, where he lives with his wife, pianist Geri Allen (who also has her own home in New Jersey). "Miles was more minimal. I try to use space, drama too. I loved the way he let the music breathe. So I might use some space, let the music breathe, let the rhythm section finish my phrase. But my lines tend to be longer, and more in contour, like Clifford [Brown]. Clifford might play three bars of uninterrupted eighth notes, where Miles, in the same space, might play four eighth notes, and I might play ..." and here Roney sings a long, convoluted line that has aspects of both Davis and Brown.

Where Roney works hand in hand with

Davis is in his use of advanced harmony, a conception of which Davis was a major instigator. "When Miles and Wayne [Shorter] and Herbie [Hancock] were together, that was the band, Miles said, that made the most progress," Roney says in a soft, friendly voice. "They broke a lot of ground, broke rules, innovated. Now, when I play that way, I'm accepting the rules that have been broken, playing from Miles' advanced harmony."

Asked for an overview of these harmonic innovations, Roney gave one. "In the time up until the late '50s, or even early '60s, people were playing almost all II-V-I-oriented harmony, and if you had an altered chord, you played the altered note, or a scale that included the altered note.

"Now people like Miles, Lee Konitz, Bird, Dizzy, they were always finding these different notes in chords. So Miles was finding these pretty altered notes, then Ornette came along and freed everybody up by ignoring chords altogether. Then somehow Miles, Bill Evans, Wayne, Coltrane, Herbie came to a point where they said, 'You can do more to, say, a C minor major-seven chord than play C, E flat, G, B natural. You can build a new tonality based off the altered notes. It's in the way you connect it to the next chord. So if you have a C minor major-seven chord, you can make that into an E flat augmented [E flat, G, B natural], and then, by flattening the third to G flat, you can make a B chord. And it's still C minor. Then when the C minor goes to F7, you can do the same thing, make that an F sharp 7. And you can continue indefinitely like that. It gives you a whole new palette, a whole new sound. And that B major still works over the rhythm section playing C minor. Then you hear the beauty, the starkness of what I'm doing. And there's a bunch of different harmonies, but I don't want to talk about all of them because I don't want everybody to know what I'm doing," he concludes, laughing.

Roney received his tutorial in this new way of looking at harmony from the man himself. "Miles sat with me in his hotel room in Montreux and explained it to me just like a college professor," he says. "He said, 'This is what I do.' The other times we talked, he told me jokes, or told me stories about Dizzy or Fats Navarro. And he never talked with any critics about it. Maybe he felt it would have blown some minds, so he would say things like, 'Well, we're just playing chromatically.' So many people just dismissed it, instead of appreciating the intricacies of what they were doing. If you could understand that he was not just picking random notes, that

Wayne wasn't just picking stuff out of the blue, that they were as scientific as they were emotional, then you could really appreciate the beauty of what they were doing."

Another element that one finds in Davis' '60s band that is further explored by Roney and his partners is what he calls "metric modulation," or the "shifting of one rhythm within the whole form.

"Say, if a tune is in meter of four, we might shift to five, go with five against the four, or accent the five," he says. "That's just one of the things we might do. We might fit five notes or five beats over four beats, and that will be the new time, the new quarter note. Or we might just make the time eighth notes, like $\frac{5}{8}$, make every five eighth notes the new quarter note."

Though there's plenty of music on *Wallace Roney* that could be called "pretty," even "beautiful," both in a traditional sense of the words, the album also contains a good deal of tough and challenging sounds. Roney's asked if the average listener can get with this kind of forward-looking stuff, and he says, "probably so," but you have to form a partnership with the artist.

"It's a lot more challenging—certainly to play it. I had to do a lot of work to get to this level," he begins. "But I think it's pretty melodic, in my own way. That's the thing about music and being an artist. I have to be true to my art to give the listener my best. I don't ever want to play down to the listener. But also, I'm asking the listener to give me a chance and to try to hear what I'm saying. I'm asking them to push the limits of what they're used to hearing, I'm asking them to try and understand me, find what I'm trying to say in there. I'm not quote-unquote mainstream. But, then again, the people that liked Louis Armstrong thought what Charlie Parker

"What I play is not dissonant to me—it's exotic notes.

It has an exotic beauty, exotic as my wife."



was doing was very dissonant.

"I'm not saying my music made the leap from Louis to Bird, but I do feel that my music is continuing that train of thought. I'm trying to push the limits of how much dissonance can be accepted as beauty. What I play is not dissonant to me—it's exotic notes. It has an exotic beauty, exotic as my wife. She's got those exotic eyes. It's my tone that's going to make the beauty in those notes I play work. And if you can hear the beauty in my tone, then you can hear the expressiveness in those exotic notes."

Roney was asked what he defines as beauty in sound and without hesitation ran off this list: "What Louis Armstrong played; Charlie Parker, beauty personified; Miles; Bill Evans; Elvin Jones; Art Blakey; Stravinsky; Messiaen; African drumming; Hungarian music. There's beauty everywhere. Sometimes you got to open yourself up."

Bolstered by his multi-album deal with Warners, which originally produced 1994's *Mistérios*, an album of mostly Brazilian material with string charts by Gil Goldstein, Roney has been able to keep his quintet active. In 1995, he worked the Village Vanguard in New York, Scullers in Boston, the Jazz Showcase in Chicago and a host of summer festivals in France, Italy,

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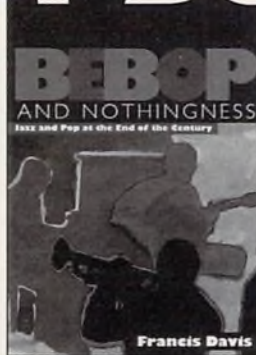
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Portugal and other continental climes. "We worked almost all year, not every week, but at least every month," says Roney.

Last year, he also made several guest appearances: one in Japan with Chick Corea, in a quintet with Josh Redman; another with Sonny Rollins last November at the Beacon Theatre in New York (see p. 61); and another in Brazil, where he was spotlighted alongside his new sidekick Shorter. "Wayne played this ballad that was so beautiful, I was intimidated," Roney says. "He's the greatest to me."

Well, next to Allen, whom he married on May 12, 1995, but whom he's known since 1975. Then, she was at Howard University and Roney was finishing up at the Duke Ellington School of the Performing Arts, also in Washington, D.C. Their friendship was fast, and musically furious.

"You want the honest truth? My whole development as an artist really had its roots with Geri, starting way back in '75," he says. "We used to practice together, take the hardest tunes, like 'Countdown,' and try to learn them. If we missed the chord changes, we'd go work them out, then come back again. ... Later, she went to the University of Pittsburgh, I went with Art Blakey, then we got together back in New York. I've always considered her like

my musical companion. And I always thought she was number one as a pianist. I recommended her to Miles in 1987, when Joey DeFrancesco left. I thought she could give him something."

These days, the two live together—though Allen sometimes takes off to her own digs in Jersey. "When she does, I miss her," Roney says with sincerity. And they often play together. Carlos McKinney is Roney's regular pianist, but when Allen is

available, the chair is hers.

"She has her own band, her own career, her own name," says Roney of his wife, the 1996 recipient of the distinguished Danish Jazzpar Prize, which will be awarded in Copenhagen in March. "But she also knows all my music. She was there when I wrote the songs. So it's like, if you have Mulgrew [Miller] in your band and Herbie wants to sit in, you know it will just add to the music." **DB**

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Jackie McLean

Harvest Time

By Ira Gitler

Jackie McLean still cuts to the guts. At a recent weeklong gig at New York's Village Vanguard, his alto sax sent the standing-room-only crowd into a fervor.

At 63, McLean sounds as strong as ever. His playing, while sometimes criticized for its tendency toward sharp intonation, has that familiar raw edge that stirs strong, often untapped emotions. His impact is still mighty and visceral. But you'd only know it for sure if you've seen him play live in the last few years.

In spite of recent CD reissues on the Mosaic, Blue Note and Steeplechase labels, McLean hasn't released a studio album of his own since 1992's *Rhythm Of The Earth*, a one-shot deal on Birdology. So why does an artist of McLean's stature, apparently at the top of his form, have no recording contract? He answers bluntly, but with imagery.

"The record-company producers are not looking at the full crop," McLean says, sitting in his Midtown hotel room while in New York for the December Vanguard engagement. "They're just looking over the lower 40. There are some new flowers growing there and definitely should be gathered. There are wonderful young musicians out there. So numerous. Certainly they should be recorded. At the same time, many guys from my years don't have a record contract. The producers are not using the resources out here. There are so many wonderful musicians at so many age levels."

Without the weight of a major label and its attendant publicity machine behind



*“The record
company
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not looking at
the full crop....
Many guys
from my
years don’t
have a record
contract.”*

him—sending out publicity releases and setting up interviews—how has Jackie survived? “Thank god I have my wife, Dolly,” he answers quickly. “Dolly is a very bright and energetic person. The people who have an interest in my recordings and what I have done with my music over the years get in touch with Dolly, and she arranges for me to have a little bit of that. Maybe not as much as those who have a record company’s PR

department behind them, but Dolly’s management of my career has been a big plus for me. I’ve survived through her efforts.”

McLean also survived by becoming a teacher in the late 1960s at the University of Hartford’s Hartt School of Music. “Actually,” he explains, “I was part-time at Hartt and part-time at the university. Then two part-time jobs became one. The university said, ‘Okay, Jackie, you can go over to Hartt and do full-time.’ I became head of the department in 1972.

“When I got to the university, my first assignment was cleaning up the drug problem that was there in the early ’70s. Working with the dean of students, I used

pupils Raymond Williams, trumpet; Alan Palmer, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; and Eric McPherson, drums. Additionally, they are all teachers in McLean’s program. He also calls upon Burton and Roney to come in and present special classes. “Over the years I’ve taken the young musicians that have an interest in the history of the music and in teaching, and I’ve trained them.”

Although he has given the chairmanship of the department to another of his former students, Peter Woodard, McLean remains active as creative director and founder-in-residence. He has found time to take on special assignments, such as the two weeks he



Jackie McLean reunites with Sonny Rollins (right) for a concert last fall at New York’s Beacon Theatre.

the music and my personal experience and I cleaned that up inside of a year. That school has not had a problem like that since.”

Jackie calls that period “the Valley of Doom,” a time when jazz was nearly smothered by rock and when rock culture brought drug use even closer to the general public. “Between 1969, right after Trane died—he died in ’67—and 1978, there was nothing,” he says, relating it to his program. “I had one great saxophone in my program, and that was Antoine Roney. The rest of the guys wanted to play guitar.”

Things changed in the ’80s with Wynton and Branford Marsalis’ apprenticeship in the Art Blakey band along with a new generation of musicians. McLean’s program has produced alto saxophonist Abraham Burton, who emerged in Arthur Taylor’s Wailers, and Steve Davis, who was the trombonist in Blakey’s last group. Now Davis is Jackie’s trombonist and the rest of the group is staffed by former

spent with seven internationally diverse students in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance program at New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. McLean is also on the board of directors, along with Albert Murray, Max Roach, Gunther Schuller and Richard Davis, of the planned Jazz Museum in Kansas City. “It will be right next to the black baseball players’ museum,” says Jackie. “I am going to be curator of the Charlie Parker section.”

McLean visited Kansas City and played Parker’s white plastic alto, which the mayor bought for the museum at an auction in 1994. “I got to play it, and it was magic. It was a scary moment for me,” Jackie explains, “because I tried to play it years ago. Bird was working in New York at the Apollo Bar on 125th Street, and I went back in the kitchen between sets to talk to him. The horn was laying there, and he asked me if I wanted to try it. His reed was so hard that I couldn’t get a peep out of that horn.”



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Although McLean's relationships with the Monk Institute and the Kansas City Jazz Museum are important to him, another project takes precedence: the Artist Collective, a multi-arts cultural program in which Jackie and Dolly have been the driving force. "It has been in an old, public school building in the black and Hispanic community on the north end of Hartford for more than 20 years," outlines Jackie. "We needed eight million dollars for a new center. Dolly has been fundraising since 1984. Thanks to Bill Cosby allowing us to use his image and giving us his support, it looks like we'll be able to break ground in the spring. We'll be moving to a better spot in the same community where we can service more people."

A night McLean calls "very special" took place at the Beacon Theater last fall (see page 61). Jackie had looked forward to being reunited with Sonny Rollins, in whose band he had played when both were teenagers in Harlem's Sugar Hill neighborhood. "Sonny asked me to come and play. I had been waiting in line anyway, and he had been calling these other people out to play" in a series of concerts with guest stars that the tenor colossus has presented in New York. "I had spoken to him on the phone several years ago and said, 'Hey, man, when are you going to invite me? It's nice that you had Grover Washington and Branford Marsalis, but come on and get me. I'm right here.'"

Many agreed that McLean's featured segment and his collaboration with Rollins were among the concert's highpoints. It was an emotional evening for Jackie. He puts it in perspective: "Anybody who listens to my playing knows that Sonny Rollins is a big influence, even though there's very little space in our ages. We're just a year and a half, two years apart, but Sonny was playing longer than me. When I got my saxophone at the age of 14, Sonny was already playing since he was nine. So that means he was playing six, seven years by then. He was a star in our neighborhood."

"When Sonny walked over from Stitt Junior High School, when I used to see him coming out of Stitt with his books and his horn, I was in awe of this guy who could play so much saxophone. And he played alto at the time with a *tenor* reed on it. And he played alto sounding very much like Coleman Hawkins. Sonny's one of my idols, and I don't want to embarrass him and make him think he's much older than me, because he isn't."

Indeed, a lot of Rollins rubbed off on McLean, and more than just his playing style. McLean practices every day. "I got that from Sonny," he says. "He 'goes to work' every day. And Dexter Gordon

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Ron Champion, professional jazz trumpeter from the south Florida area responded: "I had been looking or something like this for years. Mike Longo's course has exceeded my expectations a hundred times over! I haven't put it down since I got it a month ago!"

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[another of Jackie's shapers] used to say to me, '365 hours a year is sufficient to keep that horn tuned up in your hands.' If I can get an hour a day, even when I'm working, I feel a difference and I feel I've made an effort to play better. I figure if I just leave the horn in the case and say, 'Well, that's all right, I'm playing tonight and I played last night,' that's not enough.

"It keeps you at the top of your form. Your embouchure. And also if you've run into some walls the night before, like I did last night. I turned some corners, and a brick wall was there and 'splat!' I hit the wall. And I said, 'Boy, I have to go back and look at this tomorrow.' Sometimes it's just that I haven't played that particular tune in a long time, and I forget the change or something like that."

This story of Jackie McLean—at the top of his form, without a record deal—has a happy ending. During the interview, McLean revealed that he was talking to a record company but was not at liberty to mention the name. At press time, he confirmed that he just signed a four-album deal with Toshiba-EMI, which means that his recordings will be released on Blue Note in the United States. First, he'll be a sideman with pianist Junko Onishi. Then his own four will come out, starting with his sextet and then a ballads-only date with strings arranged by Benny Golson. Down the road, there could be a long-discussed Bird tribute by McLean and his good friend Phil Woods.

"I can't just be content to play what I played in the '50s or what I played in the '60s—and I do play some of that. But I'm looking to the future all the time and find what I can play that will be different and still keep the tradition of the music there. And I think it's going to be in the rhythm concepts," opines Jackie.

It's reassuring to know we'll be looking and listening right along with him. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Jackie McLean plays a Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone "treated and cared for by Emilio Lyons" (DB's "Sax Doctor" and woodwind repairman at Rayburn Musical Instruments in Boston).

McLean's setup includes a Berg Larsen hard-rubber mouthpiece "treated by Phil Barone" and hard-strength Bari brand plastic reeds by "my man Wolfe Taninbaum."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RHYTHM OF THE EARTH—Antilles 314 517075
THE JACKIE MAC ATTACK—Verve 314 519 270
LIVE AT MONTMARTRE—SteepleChase 1001
THE COMPLETE BLUE NOTE 1964-66 JACKIE MCLEAN SESSIONS—Mosaic 4-150
LET FREEDOM RING—Blue Note 46527
NEW SOIL—Blue Note 84013
LIGHTS OUT!—Fantasy/OJC 426
THE SOURCE: LIVE AT JAZZHUS MONTMARTRE 1973—SteepleChase 31020 (with Dexter Gordon)
THE MEETING—SteepleChase 31006 (Dexter Gordon)
ALTO MADNESS—Fantasy/OJC 1733 (with John Jenkins)
DIG—Prestige (Miles Davis; out of print)
DESTINATION...OUT!—Blue Note 32087

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The New School

Reggie Workman

Keep Moving!

By Larry Birnbaum

Reggie Workman could easily afford to rest on his laurels, content to replicate the sound of his youth and capitalize on his past associations with many of the greatest names in modern jazz—John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Wayne Shorter, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra, just to name a few. But at 58, the owlish bassist remains a scrappy outsider, struggling to preserve the present-tense spirit of his mentors rather than the letter of their music. “If John Coltrane were with us today, he would be happy with people doing fresh, new things,” he says. “You have to learn your grammar and your rudiments, but then you’ve got to move on.”

Workman emerged from more than a decade of semi-obscurity with the release of his critically acclaimed 1994 album *Summit Conference*, featuring Sam Rivers, Julian Priester and Andrew Hill, all of whom share his long experience playing both hard-bop and free-jazz. Open-ended and expressionistic yet highly polished and formalized, the music seemed to validate the abstract explorations of the '60s and '70s as an integral part of the jazz heritage. “Part of my statement was just to show that these people have not stopped growing,” says Workman. “We’re all steeped in tradition, and the raw, open music of the '60s is a part of that tradition. Yet, I do not want to be so steeped in the tradition that we don’t grow.”

Workman’s latest album, *Cerebral Caverns*, is even more venturesome (see “CD Reviews” Jan. '96). It combines Priester’s trombone and Rivers’ saxophones and flute with Geri Allen’s piano, Elizabeth Panzer’s harp, Tapan

Madak’s tablas and Gerry Hemingway’s electronic drum pads to create an eclectic and far-reaching yet singleminded and deeply rooted synthesis of contemporary classical, jazz and world-music elements.

The music on the album is all Workman’s, but only “Half My Soul” is fully composed and arranged. “My original plan was to have more written music,” he says, “but there were a lot of problems with scheduling. Everyone couldn’t make all the rehearsals, so we had two drummers and we had some things that would include one part of the group and not another. We just decided, well, this is what we have, so this is what we’ll do with it. We’ll sculpt this sound and make it work. And everything we did turned out to be something really fresh.

“The problem is that you work hard on a project, and then it’s so long before you can come together and perform it that you have to start from scratch to get it back. I remember the days when we used to work clubs for months on end. The music had time to grow, but now that doesn’t happen. The few people who are working every night are playing the same thing over and over again. They’re playing the classicism from yesterday. And the people who are doing something fresh, something that really needs the time to shape, don’t get the work. The clubs don’t hire them.” (Workman still plays club dates, mostly as a sideman, including a recent gig with alto saxophonist Sonny Simmons at Manhattan’s Iridium.)

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Workman grew up in a musical hotbed, where jazz and r&b mingled with little distinction. “When you put a

quarter in the jukebox,” he says, “you might get Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker right next to Wynonie Harris or Buddy Johnson. It was all happening.” At eight he started studying piano. “I would take the trolley car and go downtown to Gimbel’s department store for my lesson. Then I started studying privately with one woman, Mabel Fitchet. She really impressed me as a teacher, and she really encouraged me in the music.”

He signed up for music classes in junior high, but instead of the bass he requested, he was handed a euphonium and tuba. “That got me into breathing,” he says, “and I stayed with it until high school, when they got a bass. Of course, I still had to stay with the marching band, because they needed a tuba player. But most of the work that I did with music was outside of school. We would have rhythm & blues bands, so I had to wear shawl collars and tuxedos and cumberbunds and tell jokes and sing and kick my feet up and dance around like everybody else.

“I started playing jazz around Philadelphia in '55 and '56. Odean Pope, Hassan Ibn Ali, Eddie Campbell and I had a group together, and McCoy Tyner, Eddie Campbell and myself had a trio that backed people like John Coltrane, Benny Golson and Jackie McLean. I would also be the house bass player for some club, and I would work one week with Phineas Newborn, and then Aretha Franklin, and then Nina Simone, and the next week might be Yusef Lateef. Lee Morgan might be working at a club up the street, and we’d be working there together, or we’d go and make a job at some corner tavern. There was always music all over.”

Workman began making frequent trips



ALAN HARRIGAN

to New York, where he settled permanently in 1957. Soon he was gigging regularly with Gigi Gryce, Red Garland and Roy Haynes. In 1960 he replaced Steve Davis in John Coltrane's recently formed band, and the following year he recorded on Trane's landmark *Africa/Brass* album, literally sharing the bass with Paul Chambers. "I had just bought my Prescott bass from Charlie Haden, and Paul was admiring it," he says. "So it's very difficult to hear who's who, because he picked up my bass and played it for a couple of the tracks."

After leaving Coltrane at the end of 1961, Workman played with James Moody, Art Blakey and Tommy Flanagan. In 1964 he formed the Rhythm Section with Albert "Tootie" Heath and Cedar Walton, backing various artists in a months-long engagement at the Five Spot. Then he

joined Yusef Lateef's band, and for the next two years he toured with Herbie Mann. Around the same time, he collaborated with Sun Ra and the Jazz Composers Guild, which also included Roswell Rudd, Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor. "Sun and I did a lot of work together," says Workman, "and we became pretty close friends."

Workman's very prolific recording credits during that period include dates with Shepp, Thad Jones, Duke Jordan, Grant Green, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Booker Ervin, Booker Little, Alice Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders and Sonny Stitt (take a deep breath). From 1968-'78 he was a member of Max Roach's group, meanwhile playing briefly with Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. Later he worked with Mal Waldron, Abbey Lincoln, Cecil Taylor, Rashied Ali, Butch

Morris and David Murray. He formed Trio Transition with Freddie Waits and Mulgrew Miller and Trio 3 with Oliver Lake and Andrew Cyrille. Among his recent collaborators have been Jeanne Lee, Don Byron, Jason Hwang, Gerry Hemingway and Marilyn Crispell.

Workman also became involved in music education, conducting seminars and workshops around the country. He taught at Long Island University and at the New Muse Community Museum of Brooklyn, and since 1987 he's been affiliated with Manhattan's New School, where he's currently a professor and curriculum coordinator for the Jazz and Contemporary Music program. His latest project is a tribute to John Coltrane, which is scheduled to be premiered this year. "It's going to be kicked off in Philadelphia and happening in four to six states, including John's home state of North Carolina," says Workman.

But if Workman is mindful of the past, he has no intention of dwelling in it. "I remember when we had the Collective Black Artists group," he says. "We were doing tributes to different people, and we approached Thelonious Monk. And Monk said to me, 'Workman, I've done that.' And while he was telling me that, he was dancing around me and throwing jabs and hooks at my face, all in jest but so as to say, 'How dare you ask me something like that!' I felt like two cents. But I really don't want to do the same thing that I've spent a lot of time already doing. I listened to all those guys, especially John and Max and all of them who say, man, keep moving. No matter what happens, keep growing. Grow from where you were yesterday." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Reggie Workman plays Prescott (USA) and Ferdinand (Germany) acoustic basses. His strings are Thomastik solo gauge.

He uses Richard Barbera and Stephen Schertler pickups, and Gallien-Krueger and Polytone Mini-Brute amps.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

CEREBRAL CAVERNS—Postcards 1010
SUMMIT CONFERENCE—Postcards 1003
IMAGES—Music & Arts 634
ALTERED SPACES—Leo 183
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OLÉ—Atlantic 1373 (John Coltrane)
KARMA—Impulse! 153 (Pharoah Sanders)
BALLADS FOR TRANE—Denon 8570 (Archie Shepp)
HUB-TONES—Blue Note 84115 (Freddie Hubbard)
NIGHT DREAMER—Blue Note 84173 (Wayne Shorter)

A Celebration Of Diversity

For drummer Gerry Hemingway, survival as a creative musician in the market-driven '90s requires flexibility, along with ingenuity. "One has to learn to adapt, and adapt quickly, and to make situations work," observes Hemingway. "That's part of the art of creating." He may be most familiar for his long tenure with the Anthony Braxton Quartet, which displayed his improvisational skills as well as his ability to respond to other players within complex settings. Hemingway has actively pursued parallel career paths as composer, solo performer and bandleader since leaving New Haven for New York in 1979. His wide-ranging, multicultural interests pull him in many directions.

Solo performance has always been an important vehicle for Hemingway. Two solo performance discs—one featuring acoustic percussion, one electro-acoustic—are intended for release this spring. The electro-acoustic CD features "Aivilik Rays," inspired by Hemingway's ongoing interest in "the Arctic as a landscape, a place of imagination, the last frontier." The piece uses sampled and processed natural sounds to create an evocative sound environment. Hemingway balances his love of performance with the satisfaction of realizing his compositions. Two recent works—"Rebounds," for big band including African musicians (dedicated to Dizzy Gillespie), and "Terrains," for solo percussionist with orchestra—convey the breadth of Hemingway's creative vision.

Continuing associations with pianist Marilyn Crispell, trombonist Ray Anderson, bassists Mark Dresser and Reggie Workman, among others, shape Hemingway's output and discography. Despite the demise of the Braxton Quartet, Crispell and Dresser are favorite collaborators in duets and ensembles. A reunion of BassDrumBone with Anderson and bassist Mark Helias is anticipated for '96, along with a European tour by Hemingway's longstanding quintet (including Dresser) in the fall.

Since its inception in 1985, the quintet has offered a continuing workshop for Hemingway's jazz compositions, documented by several, progressively stronger CDs, culminating in *The Marmalade King* (hat ART) and *Slamadam* (Random Acoustics) (see "CD Reviews" Nov. '95). The current



Gerry Hemingway

configuration allows Hemingway the luxury of a unit dedicated to playing his compositions night after night. This continuity is important because, as Hemingway says, "the music grows organically in relation to its players."

Hemingway roadtests his compositions for quintet with numerous public performances (never quite the same) before entering the studio. Whether onstage or in the studio, he must balance the contradictory impulses to be a "tyrant" as a composer and a "benevolent dictator" as a bandleader. He encourages the participation and ideas of his group, but zealously controls the process. "Part of the excitement of 'jazz music' is the integration of spontaneous improvisation with the clarity and crystalline architectures of composition," muses Hemingway, "and then finding a way in which they meet so that you can't tell where one begins and the other ends." As exemplified by *The Marmalade King*, Hemingway's complex, episodic works do just that, challenging the audience on multiple levels without sacrificing listenability. He intends to continue with the quintet; though, with three European members, North American appearances are extremely rare. Hemingway contemplates an American quartet to give his work greater exposure at home.

The drummer's fascination with

sampling technology dates back to 1974, when he encountered experimental "tape music" and "musique concrete" of composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen. Rather than sample instruments or musicians, Hemingway captures and manipulates "found" sounds. The sounds enter his "vocabulary" for purposes of composition and improvisation. "My purpose in electronics is to extend what I'm doing with the drums. In a solo, the electronics create more possibilities, opening up my range of expression that much farther," he explains. He's particularly pleased with the distinctive, often eerie textures and resonances his electronics add to Workman's recent *Cerebral Caverns*.

The demands and challenges he faces become steeper when increasing conservatism among record labels, concert promoters and radio programmers restricts the audience's access to innovative music. "I'm frustrated by the availability of the music; listeners now have to be sleuths to be able to run down a record," says Hemingway. Having a deep appreciation of Ellington, Mingus and Blakey, he is troubled by the ongoing discussion of "what is jazz" and its exclusionary direction. He argues, "We need to stop trying to pull apart different elements of jazz, and instead, celebrate its diversity."
—Jon Andrews



Howard Wiley

Blustery Businessman

Much has been written about the twentysomething crew of musicians heralded as the new keepers of the jazz flame. Well, make way for a representative from the next generation: Meet San Francisco Bay Area-based Howard Wiley, who, at 16, blows more blustery soul from his tenor, alto and soprano saxophones and knows more about the music and its tradition than most cats twice his age.

The grandson of Sam Wiley, who was once a reed player in Count Basie's band, Howard comes off at first as shy, soft-spoken and slow to smile. But get him going about his heroes, and he talks a blue streak. "My word! My first main man on sax was Charlie Parker, the Yardbird. Then it was Cannonball [Adderley]. Then I went back and heard Sonny Stitt. Who else? Kenny Garrett. Donald Harrison. Trane, of course. Coleman Hawkins. Oh, the list goes on."

Wiley's packed a lot of jazz into his life in a short amount of time, considering that he began piano lessons at age three and picked up the alto sax at age 11—just five years ago. He says he's schooled himself primarily by listening to the music. "I have to so I can stay on top of it all," he says, earphones from a portable cassette player resting around his neck. "You have to know the roots. Duke. Count Basie. Clark Terry. You have to know them all. Diz, founder of bebop and Afro-Cuban jazz fusion. Miles, founder of cool jazz and electric fusion: *Bitches Brew*, yeah. But my favorite Miles band was his group in '64 with my main man Tony Williams."

Wiley's performed in the Grammy All-American High School Jazz Band the

past two years and has won several awards, including a 1994 Certificate for outstanding achievement from the Stanford Jazz Workshop, a 1995 Berklee College of Music scholarship and a 1995 DB Student Music Award. As if that's not enough, Wiley performs in the San Francisco State University Jazz Band and continues to lead his own trio (a group he describes as having one foot in the past and one in the future), which has performed at Yoshi's and the San Francisco Jazz Festival. Plus, he's recorded a CD, *Businessman*, which he recently released on his own label, Sax Records (P.O. Box 549, Rodeo, CA

94572). In addition to packing a sax wallop on such swinging originals as "The Bait Is Good" and "Minor Modes," Wiley launches into assured renderings of Monk's "Ask Me Now" and Coltrane's "Giant Steps" as well as a distinctive arrangement of "Summertime."

Wiley's quick to cite as his main mentors his father and grandfather. Dad has helped him sharpen his sensibilities as both a musician and a businessman. Granddad gives critiques of his trio and takes him to clubs to catch touring acts. Wiley, who's bound for college next year, says, "I've gotten the support from home, and I'm running with it." —Dan Ouellette

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	Very Good	★★★★
	Good	★★★
	Fair	★★
	Poor	★



Tethered Moon

Play Kurt Weill
jMT 697 124 059

★★★★

To say that the music on *Play Kurt Weill* is understated would be an understatement. Impressionistic, dreamy, moody, full of reflective, intense quietude, the playing never lapses into mere pastiche or something toothless. This is *Tethered Moon's* second album, notable primarily because of Japanese keyboardist Masabumi Kikuchi, who joins long-time colleagues Peacock and Motian. And while Kikuchi's resume boasts some 40 recordings with, among other, Miles Davis, Elvin Jones and Sonny Rollins, his playing here suggests a completely different sonic universe.

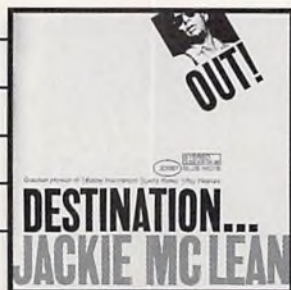
Part of the fun of *Play Kurt Weill* is listening to the distilled passion *Tethered Moon* brings to the famed 1920s German composer's music. Their somewhat veiled, bent approach to familiar themes is reminiscent of such trailblazers as Sun Ra ("Stars Fell On Alabama"), Archie Shepp ("The Girl From Ipanema") and Cecil Taylor ("This Nearly Was Mine," "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To"). Kikuchi's playing might suggest Keith Jarrett one moment (and not just for his occasional squealing), Paul Bley the next. When used, the tempos most often are halting at best, Motian and Peacock dialoguing as if in a trance, old friends playing hide and seek through thickets provided by Kikuchi.

Weill's wistful tunefulness rises at times as sun through the clouds. "Barbara Song" is given a delicate, almost hymnlike reading by Kikuchi, coming as it does after a more obtuse, forceful "Alabama Song." "Moritat," featuring Peacock, could be considered the cooker of the batch as it works its way from somber eddies into and out of some playful, splintered swinging. The truly sweet "My Ship" remains a favorite, the trio's rendition the most straightforward of the program.

Most of *Play Kurt Weill* plays like songs within songs, the group's jazz impressions sometimes running the risk of running together. It would be interesting to know how much (if any) arranging went into these performances. What we know of Weill's melodies only occasionally peeps out, the rest of the time *Tethered Moon* (like good jazz musi-

cians) shaving and adding as they see fit. *Play Kurt Weill* rewards as a game played very well, a game played gracefully, with much listening and sharing, and with the beautiful sounds of a piano, bass and drums. —John Ephland

Play Kurt Weill—Alabama Song; Barbara Song; Moritat; September Song; It Never Was You; Trouble Man; Speak Low; Bilbao Song; My Ship. (50:16)
Personnel—Masabumi Kikuchi, piano; Gary Peacock, acoustic bass; Paul Motian, drums.



Jackie McLean

Destination ... Out!
Blue Note 7243 8 32087 2

★★★★½

One of the most befuddling periods in jazz for listeners with an interest in keeping their stylistic categories neat and clean is the rash of adventurous records released by various Blue Note artists in the first half of the 1960s. On Grachan Moncur III's *Evolution* and *Some Other Stuff*, all of Andrew Hill's records from that time and various sessions led by Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter and Freddie Hubbard (figures more regularly thought of as straightahead post-boppers) took elements of free-jazz, blues, modernist classical music and hard-bop and wove them into fresh new forms, presaging the creative music explosion of the AACM and JCOA by several crucial years.

Jackie McLean was the most productive member of this little-acknowledged movement. Starting with 1959's *New Soil*, he made eight Blue Note records before *Destination ... Out!* in 1963. These ranged from straighter dates, like *Swing, Swang, Swingin'*, to ones that sought out new compositional turf, like *Let Freedom Ring* and *One Step Beyond*. The titles tell the story of emerging goals: With his new-found partner, trombonist Moncur, McLean began to explore unorthodox structures—unusually long vamps and repetitions, dead space, unconventional mixtures of tonalities or rhythms—all within the context of a music that maintained a strong link to the mainstream.

Blue Note has reissued *Destination ... Out!* exactly as it originally appeared (no extra cuts or new notes) as part of its ongoing Connoisseur Series. Three of its four tunes were

penned by Moncur: the sectional, brooding modality of "Love And Hate," stop-start time changes of "Esoteric" and more traditional blues of "Riff Raff." The intricately scored head to McLean's "Kahlil The Prophet" pours directly into a devastating Haynes/Ridley groove (no aversion to swing!), with swift alto and hearty bone over Hutcherson's changes. While Ornette Coleman was a huge influence on McLean at this time, Jackie Mac didn't share Ornette's aim of breaking down functional harmony for good, and this left him open to move back and forth between different harmonic approaches.

There's no shortage of musical ideas in either the soloing or the writing on *Destination ... Out!* It's a record that goes there and back.

—John Corbett

Destination ... Out!—Love And Hate; Esoteric; Kahlil The Prophet; Riff Raff. (35:10)

Personnel—McLean, alto saxophone; Grachan Moncur III, trombone; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes; Larry Ridley, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.



Stan Getz

Blue Skies
Concord Jazz 4676

★★★★

Blue Skies rounds up the last of the unreleased material Stan Getz recorded for Concord during the '80s. It is the work of a settled artist who has said his piece and experienced most of the fire and excitement his music could elicit in him. Maybe that's why most of the playing here is slow and lyrical; the kind of music a musician can lay back in and fuss over when a note or chord strikes his fancy without feeling an aggressive tempo nipping at his heels, although he briefly double-times here and there (e.g., "Blue Skies").

So the listener complies, lays back and doesn't look for Roman candles. When Getz's sound meets the notes of "Spring Is Here" or "Easy Living," listeners will feel comfortable in the company of warm and old friends. Getz doesn't sleepwalk through the material or betray ennui, mind you. But neither does he raise any eyebrows. He is elegantly predictable in his maturity. His phrasing is familiar but no less welcome for it. You expect his notes to have clarity with identity, and he delivers the goods. The little

break halfway through "Easy Living" floats down like a feather and writes Getz's signature boldly across the air. In short, a master player at ease.

—John McDonough

Blue Skies—*Spring Is Here; Antigny; Easy Living; There We Go; Blue Skies; How Long Has This Been Going On?* (43:22)

Personnel—Getz, tenor saxophone; Jim McNeely, piano; Marc Johnson, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



Bheki Mseleku

Star Seeding

Verve 314 529 142

★★★½

Hear and hail Bheki Mseleku for the genuine warmth, personal statement and musical devotion he expresses in songs and flowing yet exploratory piano improvisations. Perfectly supported on his fourth release from French Polygram by Haden and Higgins, a superbly empathic and subtly emphatic duo, Mseleku establishes himself as a pivotal player but one intent on—absorbed by and in—all points of the trio, not just its helm.

South Africa-born and now London-based, self-taught with a nimble technique apparently uneffected by the childhood accident that mangled some of his fingers, Mseleku's developed an original repertoire partaking of Tranish modes and moods; Monkish (but highly individualized) melodic twists and offhand dissonances; Tynerish stride and percussive chordal attacks, ostinatos, blues, sambas, ballads, funk grooves and chamber music rubato.

From the expansive folk-pop entertainment "Thula Mtswana" (featuring several distinct vocal parts besides a few measures of flash guitar and some tenor gracenotes), Mseleku returns to the ivories for "Divine Mother," wherein he modulates from dark reverie to airy waltz and back; Haden descends to the root of his bass and Higgins gets ultra-sensitive on cymbals. Then his ambitions, interests in multiple dimensions and desire to provide program variety get the better of him. He's been persuaded to record half these tunes with tenor sax.

On the bossa "The Gods," Mseleku blows the big horn with both Getz-like authority and unintentional lapses into low-register breathiness. On "Mister Allard" (second "quartet") he plays with such sophistication as to suggest Joe Henderson, but he's again shaky as an amateur hornman trying to catch "L.A. Soul Train Blues" (while he rocks solid on piano). When he does catch the hook with his horn, Mseleku wrings out its juice.

Alone at the ivories on "Echoes" he is convincingly dour as a classical virtuoso suffering *Sturm und Drang*. His title track (quartet #3) boasts a cyclical aspect reminiscent of Herbie Nichols and "Sun Race" (quartet #4) is more neo-Braziliana, pleasant if obviously derivative.

While it's no affectation for him to "co-lead" a blowing "ensemble" by overdubbing full solos and shorter passages upon his already rich keyboards—he's mastered that feat of arranging with gratifying naturalness—he might be better served by having a dedicated reedist in his group. His greatest challenge and promise of satisfaction certainly lie with the keys, where he typically steals the thunder from himself.

—Howard Mandel

Star Seeding—*Ballad For The Saints; Melancholy In Cologne; Thula Mtswana; The Age Of The Divine Mother; The Love Of The Gods; Mister Allard; L.A. Soul Train Blues; Echoes Of The Truth; Star Seeding; The Sun Race Arise.* (71:43)

Personnel—Mseleku, piano, tenor saxophone, guitar, vocals; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.



Charnett Moffett

Planet Home

Evidence 22122

★★★

Charnett Moffett plays his array of basses—upright acoustic, fretless electric, electric piccolo bass—in the 3-F school of jazz:

funk, free and fusion. On his fifth recording as a leader and his first on Evidence, Moffett offers solo numbers and trio tunes featuring volcanic drummer Victor Lewis and keyboardist Geoff Keezer, who co-mingles piano support with synthesizer flavorings.

While Moffett is one of the most exciting sidemen in the business, especially in his rousing contributions to Ornette Coleman's musical adventures, here he turns in an uneven set that feels at times unanchored and drifting out to sea.

Or, in the case of the rather bland fusion title tune, adrift in space. As Moffett even admits in the liner notes, "I'm just trying to find a balance with all these instruments, these tools that I'm playing to express myself at this time. And sometimes it takes a while before you find a clear path or direction for what it is you want to say."

Moffett is a visceral bassist. He's at his best when he's sweating and playing from his gut. Prime examples: his solo excursions, including the riveting upright piece "Aura," which opens the album, and his gripping assault on the set finale, "Star Spangled Banner," which, with its psychedelized piccolo lines, makes it the perfect companion piece to Hendrix's rendition of the national anthem. Moffett's take is so charged, reps from sports arenas will never approach him for a gig. His strongest and most compelling tune is "Free Your Mind," an edgy outing on his upright powered by tango-inflected bowing and fueled further with soulful and speedy pizzicato runs.

Though they surge in stretches with bass urgency, such tunes as "Peace Within The Struggle" and "Parade" come off sounding like dated and lackluster fusion exercises. Others, like "Brothers & Sisters," "The Jam" and "Last Run," avoid the same trap thanks to the dazzling interplay between Keezer and Moffett. Overall, this is a gallant effort, but not topnotch.

—Dan Ouellette

Planet Home—*Aura; Brothers & Sisters; Planet Home; Peace Within The Struggle; The Jam; Free Your Mind; Parade; Touch Tone; Last Run; Star Spangled Banner.* (62:52)

Personnel—Moffett, acoustic upright bass, fretless bass guitar, electric piccolo bass; Geoff Keezer, piano, synthesizer; Victor Lewis, drums.

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Howard Mandel	John Ephland
TETHERED MOON <i>Play Kurt Weill</i>		★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
JACKIE MCLEAN <i>Destination ... Out!</i>		★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
STAN GETZ <i>Blue Skies</i>		★★★★	★★½	★★★★	★★★½
BHEKI MSELEKU <i>Star Seeding</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★½	★★★½



McCoy Tyner
Prelude And Sonata
 Milestone 9244

★★★★½

A new release by pianist McCoy Tyner, like a celestial sighting, is always a bright moment loaded with great expectations. And these expectations take on a heightened intensity when the date includes young musicians such as saxophonists Joshua Redman, Antonio Hart, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith—each epitomizing the very best on their respective instruments. They do not disappoint.

Chopin's "Prelude In E Minor Op. 28, No. 4" has a samba lilt and more than a hint of Jobim's "How Insensitive." This harmonic and melodic blend works magnificently and establishes a mood that is increasingly tender and romantic. Hart's alto sax is featured on "Loss Of Love," and while the immortal Johnny Hodges is evoked, that characteristic vibrato here is edgier and more vigorous. Tyner offers a lean, controlled solo, deftly foreshadowing the diverse mixture of sonorities that pervade the CD.

Tyner's "Contemplation" is perhaps the date's defining moment. Hart and Redman are at first joined at the chords and then Redman severs the link with a slight tip of the horn to Joe Henderson before placing his own claim on the tune's protean contours. Hart's lyrical passage sets the stage for Tyner's heavy modalities. At the close, Hart and Redman are once more united, and only the best ears can separate the tonal twins.

A fulsome Tyner, a savvy Redman and a most resonant McBride emerge on "For All We Know," and Redman takes yet another look back over his shoulder, this time conjuring the likes of Ben Webster and Lockjaw Davis. On "I Will Wait For You" McBride melds his flawless attack with Smitty's clever, understated tempo—and the result is as sunny as it is bouncy. "Soul Eyes" finds Hart in a lovely, singing mood, and he lingers on the melody, making it all the more haunting and profound.

"Smile," "Good Morning Heartache" and Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 8 In C Minor" are, true to the sonata form, like three contrasting movements. A quick, lively motif seques to a blues theme and concludes with a segment somewhere between the two previous efforts.

Most arresting among these elements are Tyner's scintillating eddies of sound.

—Herb Boyd

Prelude And Sonata—*Prelude In E Minor Op. 28, No. 4; Loss Of Love; Contemplation; For All We Know; I Will Wait For You; Soul Eyes; Smile; Good Morning Heartache; Piano Sonata No. 8 In C Minor.* (63:46)

Personnel—Tyner, piano; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 4); Antonio Hart, alto saxophone; Christian McBride, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.



Cachao
Master Sessions Volume II
 Crescent Moon/Epic 67319

★★★★½

Bebo Valdés
Bebo Rides Again
 Messidor 15834

★★★½

My heaviest, which is to say, my most informative and most pleasurable, musical experience this year was being swept away at a New York club gig by Cachao. It's probably overly romantic to stress the spirit of the players as the main source of delight, so let's just get to the bottom line: the level of inventive musicianship at the show, and on *Master Sessions Volume II*, the final half of the Cuban bassist's landmark October '93 L.A. recordings, is magnificent. Its predecessor, *Master Sessions Volume I*, was never far from the disc machine when it arrived last year; and to an Afro-Cuban jazz rube like myself, its mini-history lesson was a joy. The 77-year-old bassist is not only an expert at rhythmic prestidigitation—in a split second, it's hello danzon, goodbye bolero—but an elder deft at squeezing the best out of his associates. *Master Sessions Volume II*, produced by film star Andy Garcia, depicts a somewhat unusual jazz persona: an ancient bandleader who sounds just as vital as ever.

The level of precision that accompanies the band's improvising, and overall ensemble unity, is striking. There are plenty of hip solos here. On "Sigue A Paquito Si Puedes" alto saxist D'Rivera floats and flies, soaring one moment, swooping the next. But what's just as attractive is the band's backup, combining chants, strings and a battery of percussion. Fervent without being overly frenetic, they

make their polyrhythms subject only to logic.

The grooves created are always loaded with intriguing tidbits, which is why the orchestra's swirl seems so rich. Check what happens instrumentally in tandem to Rolando Laseries' bellowed testimony on "El Guapachoso." Likewise, the turns of "Africa Suite" allow for Yoruba prayers to mingle with flourishes of "Over The Rainbow." The coherence is seamless. Finesse is the most crucial element of *The Master Sessions* (both volumes), the first widely available, modern-market discs of the master's work.

Also quite striking is bandleader Bebo Valdés' first record in 34 years. The pianist/composer left his Havana home in 1960, after building a substantial rep. Like Cachao, he's had a major hand in establishing the jam session as a respected forum for Cuban creativity. D'Rivera facilitated *Rides Again*, and the 76-year-old pianist wrote and arranged eight new pieces for his comeback disc. They aren't as complex as Cachao's vehicles, but only slightly less stirring. In Valdés' tunes, the blues and jazz dialects of America take prominence. A three-man percussion team also drives the group, and their web of sound is integral to the music's zest; but even a mambo like "Pa' Goza" becomes a streamlined blowing vehicle; the cadence rarely changes.

Producer D'Rivera has ways to hold interest, however. "La Comparsa" is a playful track with just the leader's piano, Carlos Morales' guitar and Patato Valdés' bongos doing the work. Like "Veinte Años," a bittersweet duet between Valdés and trombonist Juan-Pablo Torres, it breaks up the full-ensemble pieces, allowing the record to shift gears.

When veterans can be this inspiring, jazz sounds like the most eloquent music around. And when cultural treasures are this attainable, edification is guaranteed. If this is mainstreaming, give me more.

—Jim Macnie

Master Sessions Volume II—*Los Tres Golpes/The Three Beats; Bemba 'e Cuchara/Spoon Lips; El Progreso/The Progress; El Guapachoso/The Brave One; Descarga A/Jam Session A; Cunde Echa Un Pie/Cunde Takes Off; Romántica Mujer/Romantic Woman; Sigue A Paquito Si Puedes/Follow Paquito If You Can; El Timbalero Travieso/The Mischievous Timbalero; Africa Suite: Elegua (Intro); Africa Viva; Juana La Coja/Jane The Lame; Elegua Con Cachao (Coda).* (74:23)

Personnel—Israel Lopez "Cachao," conductor, bass, cow bell (2); lead vocals, piano (6); Francisco Agubella, lya bata drum (13); chorus, (10, 13); Justo Almario, tenor sax (2, 5–7, 9, 12); Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros, trumpet (2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12); Ilugelhorn (5); Rafael "Felo" Barrio, bombo (2); guiro (3–6, 8, 9, 11, 12); maracas (7); chorus (2–6, 8, 9, 12); Jimmy Bosch, trombone (2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12); Paulhino Da Costa, caxixi (9); Paquito D'Rivera, clarinet (1); alto sax (2, 5–9); Richie Flores, congas (2–6, 8, 9, 11, 12); Lazaro Galarraga, lead vocal (6, 7, 10, 13); Andy Garcia, congas (2); bongos (11); chorus (2–6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13); Felicidad Gongora, chorus (10, 13); Nelson Gonzalez, tres guitar (2, 4–7, 9, 12); chorus (2–6, 8, 9, 12); Humberto "Nenge" Hernandez Agogo, bell (2); clave (5, 7); bata drum (13); cowbell (4); bongos (4–6, 9, 12); chorus (10, 13); Rolando Laseries, lead vocal (4); chorus (2, 3, 12); Juanito Marquez, acoustic guitar (4, 5, 7, 9, 12); Carlos Montiel (2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12); Cecilia Noel (10, 13); Daniel Palacio (2–6, 8, 9, 12); Nelson Regueira Marquez (2–5, 9, 10, 12); Richard Regueira Marquez (2–5, 9, 10, 12, 13); chorus: Tony Rosa, achere (13); chorus (10, 13); Bill Summers, bata drum (13); chorus (10, 13); Nestor Torres, flute (3, 7–9, 11); Alfredo Valdés, piano (2–9, 11, 12); Orestes Vilato, timbales (9); Russ Cantor, concert master; Murray Adler, Bette Byers, Marilyn Graham, Ezra Kliger, Jorge Moraga, Harry Scorzo, Dan Weinstein, violin; Jan Kelly, David Shamban, cello.

Bebo Rides Again—Al Dizzy Gillespie; Anda; Pa' Goza; Felicia; La Comparsa; A La Marcheré; Pan Con Timba; Veinte Años; Pierre Jamballah; To Mario Bauza; Oleajee. (52:36)

Personnel—Valdés, grand piano; Paquito D'Rivera, alto sax, clarinet; Diego Urcola, trumpet, flugelhorn; Juan-Pablo Torres, trombone; Carlos Emilio Morales, electric guitar; Joe Santiago, bass; Carlos "Patato" Valdés, Gabriel Machado, bongó, congas; Gerardo Rosales, güiro, maracas, congas; Amidito, Valdés, timbales.



Wayne Krantz

2 Drink Minimum
enja 90432

★★★★

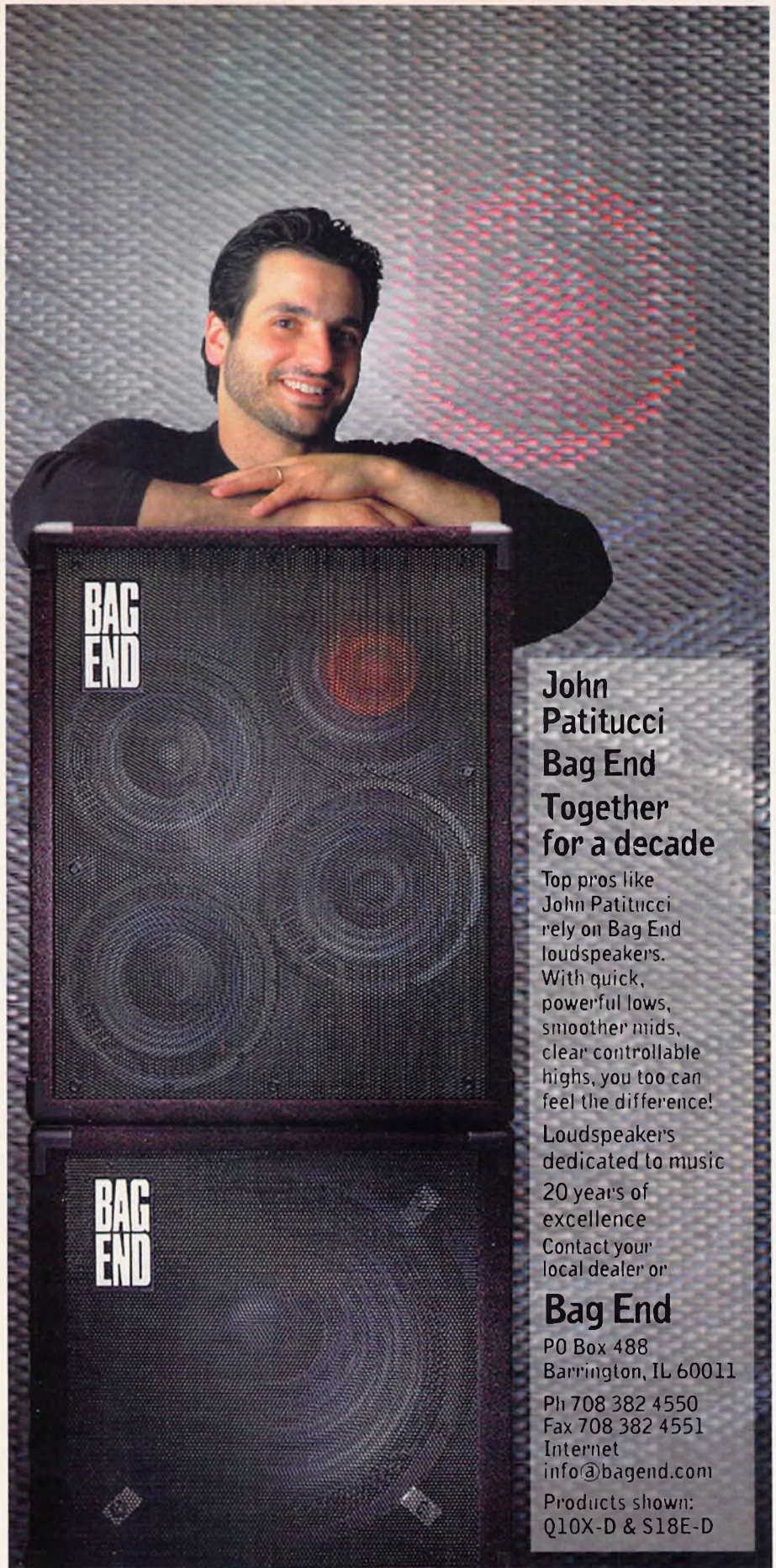
When jazz-rock guitarist Wayne Krantz and his tight power trio mates bassist Lincoln Goines and drummer Zach Danziger blast off into the turbo-charged opening piece, "Whippersnapper," you get the distinct feeling you better hold on to your hat. With Krantz surging forward with juicy, organ-like lines and the rhythm team cooking at a simmering temp, this live outing recorded at the 55 Bar in New York City has "blowing date" written all over it. But rather than over-power again, Krantz backs off a tad on the next number, "Dove Gloria," opting for a lighter guitar touch. While he keeps the spirit of the set propulsive and aggressive the rest of the way, he also expands the range of his expression with fluid and lyrical guitar subtleties. It's a smart move that pays off on this solidly entertaining collection of original compositions.

Krantz, who worked with Carla Bley in the late '80s and more recently has turned heads gigging with Leni Stern, has obviously been informed by arena rockers. Check out his scorching licks on the lickety-split "AFKaP" and the tasty, abruptly ending "Lynxpaw." Yet, Krantz doesn't fall into the trap of so many other guitarists in the jazz-rock subgenre by wheeling out a barrage of speed and power clichés. Instead, his seasoned approach of integrating hard-driving burns with relatively delicate passages keeps the album from slipping into predictable territory. Prime example: "Dream Called Love," which opens quietly (too bad you have to endure the club conversations in the background) before Krantz turns up the volume and navigates through several pace changes.

—Dan Ouellette

2 Drink Minimum—Whippersnapper; Dove Gloria; Shirts Off; Dream Called Love; AFKaP; Isabelle; Alliance/Secrets; Lynxpaw. (52:45)

Personnel—Krantz, guitar; Lincoln Goines, bass; Zach Danziger, drums.



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Big John Patton

Blue Planet Man

Evidence 22127

★★★½

Minor Swing

DIW 896

★★★★

Anyone who digs those hard-edged John Patton Hammond B-3 masterworks that Blue Note put out in the '60s will find new music to cheer for here. I'd heard reports of Patton's spotty performances in recent years, but there's nothing here but solid-state groove—and plenty of it.

Packaged with a hauntingly accurate '60s vinyl feel—thick cardboard gatefold, vintage Francis Wolff photos—*Minor Swing* is the more studiously traditional organ-jazz outing of the two. Cherry and Wollesen provide the perfect swingful support, and most of the material is drawn from Patton's Blue Note book—"Along Came John" from the record of the same name, "The Way I Feel" and "The Rock" from *The Way I Feel*, "Lite Hit" from *Accent On The Blues*, and "Minor Swing" from *That Certain Feeling*. But these compositions stand the test of time. John Zorn had already proved that by playing some of them with News From Lulu. He's always been a huge fan of the organist, and on these records he has a chance to demonstrate the depth of his admiration firsthand.

Blue Planet Man recalls some of Patton's later groups that used congas and more arranged horn charts, like the recently unearthed session *Boogaloo* (in Blue Note's "Rare Groove" series). The mid-tempo ballad "Claudette" sports some nice tenor from Chavez, and Saxton takes a thoughtful soprano break on "Popeye."

Patton's organ style is intact: not as over-the-top as some B-3ers, he's happy to sit on a cool change and he's extremely deliberate in his solos (check his inventive spot on Archie Shepp's "U-Jaama"). On both records, Zorn does most of the completely bonkers work. Zornophobes take note: he squawks and screams in places—delightfully so on "The Way I Feel," where a circular breath is punctuated by vocal blurts in blues-time—but that's not at all

out of place in this r&b honk-related context. (For historical reference, listen to the late-Trane tenor sound of Harold Alexander on Patton's newly reissued '68 record *Understanding*—no barred-holes there.) And when Zorn puts bluesy pedal to the metal on "The Rock," look out!

—John Corbett

Blue Planet Man—Congo Chant; Funky Mama; Claudette; Chip; Popeye; What's Your Name?; U-Jaama; Bama. (53:23)

Personnel—Patton, organ; John Zorn, alto saxophone; Pete Chavez, tenor saxophone; Bill Saxton, tenor and soprano saxophones; Ed Cherry, electric guitar; Eddie Gladden, drums; Lawrence Killian, congas; Rorie Nichols, vocals (6).

Minor Swing—The Way I Feel; Tyrone; Minor Swing; The Rock; Along Came John; Lite Hit; B Men Thel. (53:32 minutes)

Personnel—Patton, organ; John Zorn, alto saxophone; Ed Cherry, guitar; Kenny Wollesen, drums.



James Moody

Moody's Party: Live At The Blue Note

Telarc Jazz 83382

★★★★

James Moody is 70? Hard to believe it from this recording, made during a week's performances this spring at the famed New York jazz club as he entered his eighth decade.

Always an elfish sort, Moody plays here with considerable youthful vitality, eliciting a vibrant, glowing sound from his alto, a broader and more plaintive tone from the tenor, and issuing plenty of interesting, modern-minded statements. It probably doesn't hurt that he has a young vet rhythm team in Miller, Coolman and Carrington, who drive him scintillatingly.

The program is composed of standards: Parker's classic blues "Mood," Sitt's tear-'em-up "Triangle," Gillespie's "Bebop" and "Groovin'," plus two ballads and "Benny's." But Moody avoids a stereotypical approach as he regularly mixes melodic, bebop-bent statements with those of a more adventurous harmonic nature in his solos on "Triangle," "Mood" and "Bebop," lending a contemporary air to his improvisations. On "Polka Dots," Moody does stay with a more song-like manner, while on "Might As Well," he trades phrases with Washington, offering edgy, propulsive ideas.

Other guests include Sandoval, who brightens "Groovin'," and the highly talented Potter, whose spirited, twisting-then-turning lines add

fuel to an already blazing fire on "Bebop." Miller is an ideal complement to Moody's expressiveness, as he both accompanies and solos with élan, employing a light-then-dark touch, undulating line play, chordal splashes, reiteration and more in a voice that grows ever more personal.

The album's only real drawback is that Moody, a jazz flutist of the highest order, neglects to play that slim, reedless woodwind on which he sounds so wonderful.

—Zan Stewart

Moody's Party: Live At The Blue Note—A Birthday Tribute By Bill Cosby; Groovin' High; It Might As Well Be Spring; Parker's Mood; The Eternal Triangle; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; Benny's From Heaven; Bebop. (65:00 minutes)

Personnel—Moody, alto and tenor saxophones, vocal (4, 7); Bill Cosby, emcee (1); Roy Ayers, vibes (1); Chris Potter, tenor saxophone (1, 9); Arturo Sandoval, trumpet (2); Grover Washington Jr., soprano saxophone (3); Mulgrew Miller, piano; Todd Coolman, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums.



Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio

Constellations

hat ART 6173

★★★★

Dave Douglas

In Our Lifetime

New World / CounterCurrents

80471

★★★★

New & Used

Consensus

Knitting Factory Works 163

★★★½

Suddenly, Dave Douglas seems to be everywhere. Aside from these projects, the trumpeter is featured in John Zorn's Masada. Apart from his distinctive, brassy tone and expressive phrasing (imagine Clifford Brown by way of Lester Bowie), Douglas enthusiastically pursues eclectic musical interests.

Unlike Wynton Marsalis, who separates his ventures into the worlds of "jazz" and "classical" music, Douglas reveres Booker Little's music alongside that of Anton Webern and Robert Schumann.

Constellations acknowledges Douglas' interest in Eastern European song forms, but also makes Schumann's "Vanitatus Vanitatum (mit Humor)" swing, and allows room for a propulsive treatment of Herbie Nichols' "The Gig." Drummer Jim Black (of Human Feel and Tim Berne's Bloodcount) more than compensates for the absence of a bass, and guitarist Brad Schoepf ranges from classical musings to Frisellian mayhem. Above the dance of guitar and drums, Douglas' phrasing is often spare and introspective, and his voice links the episodic compositions. With Latin bravado and a sardonic edge, the politically aware "Unhooking The Safety Net" and "Maquiladora" would be a good fit for Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra.

In Our Lifetime aims to rescue the music of trumpeter Booker Little from decades of neglect and bring it into the '90s. Composed of pieces written (or inspired) by Little, the CD emphasizes Douglas' skills as composer and arranger while working with a sextet or septet. The title track features Chris Speed (also of Human Feel and Bloodcount) working through the tumbling melody on tenor, backed by a sighing, Ellingtonian chorus of horns. Uri Caine's sparkling piano work breaks through the blue moods created in Little's "Strength And Sanity," and Douglas' horn soars and glides through the urgent momentum of

Little's "Forward Flight," successfully evoking the under-appreciated trumpeter without mimicry. Douglas makes a good argument for rediscovery of Booker Little in the age of reissues.

New & Used gets its distinctive sound from the unusual frontline of Douglas' trumpet alongside Mark Feldman's violin and Andy Laster's tenor sax. Adding Douglas' tart sound to the purity of Feldman's tone creates an interesting, bittersweet combination through these open-textured compositions. Two Douglas pieces, the pretty, melancholy, "Petals" and the extended suite "Counter-cultures," are among the highlights of *Consensus*.
—Jon Andrews

Constellations—*Constellations; Unhooking The Safety Net; Hope Ring True; Taking Sides; The Gig; Scriabin; Les Croquants; Maquiladora; Vanitatus Vanitatum.* (58:58 minutes)

Personnel—Douglas, trumpet; Brad Schoepf, guitar; Jim Black, drums.

In Our Lifetime—*In Our Lifetime; Three Little Monsters; Forward Flight; The Persistence Of Memory; Out In The Cold; Strength And Sanity; Four Miniatures After Booker Little; Sappho/At Dawn/Shred/Rapid Ear Movement; Moods In Free Time; Bridges.* (71:51)

Personnel—Douglas, trumpet; Chris Speed, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Josh Roseman, trombone; Uri Caine, piano; James Genus, bass; Joey Baron, drums; Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet (1).

Consensus—*Melchior Kimmel; Petals; Alignment; American Gladiators; Bomar; Stentor; Straw Hat; Counter-cultures (I-III).* (70:55)

Personnel—Douglas, trumpet; Kermit Driscoll, bass; Mark Feldman, violin; Andy Laster, saxophones; Tom Rainey, drums.



Edward Vesala

Sound & Fury
Nordic Gallery
ECM 1541

★★★★

Finland doesn't seem like a hospitable climate for a jazz ensemble in any sense. Percussionist/bandleader Edward Vesala and Sound & Fury persevere in the far North, and their somewhat isolated environment provides inspiration as well as focus. *Nordic Gallery* finds Vesala's core group of several years working through his colorful, highly individualistic compositions. With Vesala and group, there's a determination and cussedness suggestive of a Nordic Hal Russell.

Nordic Gallery presents a collection of views

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CD REVIEWS

including folk themes, tango, rock rhythms and glacial soundscapes. "Bird In The High Room" and "The Quay Of Meditative Future" are among the drummer's most interesting, ambitious compositions. "Bird," definitely not a Charlie Parker reference, is constructed over Vesala's tribal pulse on drums adding distant chanting and insistent, wintry blasts from the horns, with Matti Riikonen's trumpet out front. Vesala plays only cymbals and tamboura on "Quay," which uses harp and guitar under the horns to create an impression of timeless stillness. This icy beauty makes the piece Vesala's version of Miles' "In A Silent Way."

"Bluego" and "Hadendas" come from points far south of Helsinki. As Riikonen's trumpet and Jorma Tapio's alto converse with accordion and organ, "Hadendas" sounds like something Ennio Morricone might have concocted for a spaghetti western. "Bluego," with Petra Ikketa on accordion, is an endearing, eccentric tango. The leader's drumming styles are equally diverse, tailored to each composition.

—Jon Andrews

Nordic Gallery—*Bird In The High Room; Fulllandia; The Quay Of Meditative Future; Hadendas; Unexpected Guest; Bluego; Lavender Lass Blossom; Streaming Below The Times; One-Two-Three Or Four-Five-Six; A Significant Look Of Birch Grove; On The Shady Side Of Forty; Flavor Lust.* (69:00)

Personnel—Vesala, drums, percussion, bass, tamboura, angklung; Jorma Tapio, alto saxophone, bass and alto clarinets, bass flute; Jouni Kannisto, tenor saxophone, flute; Pepa Paivinen, tenor, soprano, baritone and bass saxophones, flute, alto flute, piccolo; Matti Riikonen, trumpet; Iro Haarla, harp, piano, keyboards, accordion, koto; Jiri Sumen, guitar; Petri Ikkela, accordion; Pekka Sarmanto, bass; Kari Linsted, cello; Tapani Rinne, clarinet.



Fred Karlin

Jazz Goes To Hollywood, The '60s

Varese Sarabande 5639

★★★

Composer Fred Karlin, who wrote "Come Saturday Morning" for *Sterile Cookoo*, has assembled a first-class small group for a little jazz-lite on some familiar and a few uncommon movie themes written by composers with a foot or two in jazz. It comes from Varese Sarabande, a label devoted almost entirely to film soundtracks, and within its modest goals succeeds nicely.

Bill Watrous, who was a perennial **DB** poll winner in the '70s and '80s, emerges from a lengthy low profile with his buttery sound and silken attack in excellent repair, especially on David Amram's "Splendor In The Grass." Roger Kellaway, a pianist of frequently serious aspirations, offers a down-to-earth simplicity and swing. And Karlin, a trumpeter of no large jazz repute, plays with warmth and command, even making something as familiar as "Charade" worth hearing.

Aside from "Charade" and "Come Saturday Morning," which became big hits, and "The Odd Couple," which migrated to TV and was repeated weekly, much of the material now stands apart from any movie identity. Andre Previn's "A Second Chance" (originally sung by Jackie Cain) was interred with the failed *Two For The See Saw*, and "Advise And Consent" is hardly remembered for the swinging cameo heard here by Jerry Fielding. As for "Emily," it had the most credible jazz pedigree from the start and became an immediate jazz standard. The performance here takes nearly a minute working through needless cadenzas before getting to the point. —John McDonough

Jazz Goes To Hollywood, The '60s—*The Odd Couple; A Second Chance; Come Saturday Morning; Emily; Bullitt; Alice's Theme; Advise And Consent; Splendor In The Grass; Charade; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life; Happy Feet.* (70:24)

Personnel—Karlin, trumpet; Bill Watrous, trombone; Bob Kindred, saxophone; Roger Kellaway, piano; Bob Magnusson, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums.



Tim Hagans

Audible Architecture

Blue Note 31808

★★★

In his 1994 **DB** interview, trumpeter Tim Hagans said something about audiences that seems to have influenced the music on *Audible Architecture*. "Jazz has this thing about being understood," the trumpeter complained, accurately citing one of the classic misconceptions about the idiom. By way of solution, he thought it was plausible for people to "[listen] to jazz with pop ears," a sentiment that probably explains the new release's unabashed eclecticism.

Yet eclecticism in itself isn't the problem with *Audible Architecture*; Hagans' desire to reach beyond the jazz community is. The trumpeter seems more willing to give all those pop ears a nudge instead of simply playing good, straightforward jazz and trusting his record

company to find interesting ways to market it. Isolate the trumpet parts off *Architecture's* mix of early pop melodies and contemporary pop rhythms, and you'll hear a stirring conception that is not quite like anyone else's, a combination of pixie-ish whimsy ("I Hear A Rhapsody") and piercing bravado ("Jasmine In Three," "Audible Architecture"). Unfortunately, it's marred by what you might call "jazzman funk and r&b," the kind of slack underpinnings I'm sure even Hagans doesn't dance to ("George Bands," "Shorts," "Family Flowers").

Then, there's "You Don't Know What Love Is." The gorgeous duet has the trumpeter employing his Harmon mute in poetic Milesian stance while bassist Larry Grenadier circles him with gracious, full-bodied steps. Both men slur the melodic line, and as the bassist tips lightly through a solo that lasts half a chorus, it's not too difficult to imagine even first-time listeners tapping into the feeling—even if they don't know what jazz is. —K. Leander Williams

Audible Architecture—*I Hear A Rhapsody; Jasmine In Three; Audible Architecture; Garage Bands; You Don't Know What Love Is; Shorts; Blues In My Neighborhood; Drum Row; Family Flowers; Whatever's Next.* (66:38 minutes)

Personnel—Hagans, trumpet; Bob Belden, tenor saxophone (4, 6, 7, 9); Larry Grenadier, bass; Billy Kilson, drums.



Michael Franks

Abandoned Garden

Warner Bros. 9 45998

★★★

Okay, so what if vocalist Michael Franks has a terminal case of the mellows? Or that he's a master of infiltrating the pop zone with wisps of jazz. Or that he's got a gorgeous voice that's so smooth and seductive it melts with buttery sweetness over all the supporting instrumentation. Or that he's a lovestruck romantic/idealist who's written not one but two tunes on his latest album with the word paradise in the title. Sure, it all adds up to lots of reasons why this CD should get tossed into the discard pile. Yet, just like some of his other alluring pop-jazz outings, *Abandoned Garden* is a genuine keeper, a guilty pleasure. Somehow Franks, a song stylist more than a jazz vocalist, once again gets his way, singing his indelible melodies that before you know it are under your skin, into your veins and etched into your soul.

On *Abandoned Garden*, a tribute of sorts to the late Antonio Carlos Jobim, Franks gets plenty of help from an all-star supporting cast of jazz musicians, including the Yellowjackets, both Brecker

brothers, Eliane Elias, Joshua Redman, Gil Goldstein, Art Farmer, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow and David Sanborn. Michael Brecker navigates his way through the tender "A Fool's Errand" with soulful tenor saxophone lines, Elias soars with piano beauty on the refreshing "Cinema," Redman offers sinuous soprano saxophone musings on "Eighteen Aprils" and Farmer blows longing trumpet phrases on "In The Yellow House," a Franks-Brian Mitchell vocal duet from the musical *Noa Noa*, about the life of artist Paul Gauguin.

The most touching pieces of this pop-jazz batch are Franks' lyrical remembrance of hanging with Jobim, the samba-infused "Like Water, Like Wind," and the melodious goodbye to Jobim, "Abandoned Garden."

—Dan Ouellette

Abandoned Garden—*This Must Be Paradise; Like Water, Like Wind; A Fool's Errand; Hourglass; Cinema; Eighteen Aprils; Somehow Our Love Survives; Without Your Love; In The Yellow House; Bird Of Paradise; Abandoned Garden.* (57:17)

Personnel—Various artists, including Franks, Brian Mitchell (9), vocals; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (3, 5); Andy Snitzer (7), David Sanborn (10), alto saxophone; Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone (6); Art Farmer, trumpet (9); Randy Brecker, flugelhorn (3); Keith O'Quinn, trombone (3); Bob Mintzer, flutes (1-3, 7); Chuck Loeb (1, 2, 7, 9, 11), Jeff Mironov (4, 6, 8, 9, 11), John Leventhal (8), guitar; Russell Ferrante (1, 2, 7), Eliane Elias (3, 5), Gil Goldstein (4, 6, 10, 11), Bob James (8), Carla Bley (9), piano; Jimmy Haslip (1, 2, 7), Christian McBride (3, 5), Marc Johnson (4, 6, 10, 11), Mark Egan (8), Steve Swallow (9), bass; Chris Parker (1, 2, 7), Lewis Nash (3, 5), Peter Erskine (4, 6, 8-11), drums; Don Alias (3-6, 8, 10, 11), Manolo Badrena (1, 2, 7), Bashiri Johnson (4, 6), percussion.



Eric Alexander

Up, Over & Out
Delmark 476

★★★★

Eric Alexander is a comer. Runner-up to Joshua Redman in the 1991 Monk Saxophone Competition, Alexander has gradually carved a career for himself, making two albums for Delmark, appearing on others led by organist Melvin Rhyne and trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, and working with the likes of the late Art Taylor.

It's clear why musicians chose him. Just 25 when these sessions were recorded in August 1993, Alexander reveals himself to be a skilled and motivated modern mainstreamer who plays with a high level of improvisational competency that occasionally rises to brilliance.

Should we ever expect more from someone his age? Exhibiting a big, round sound that has a personal ring to it, Alexander fits well with veterans Mabern and Ore (known for his work with Monk) and fellow youngster Farnsworth, another one to keep your eye on.

The leader sounds best at medium and slow tempos—the taken-too-fast "Bewitched" comes off frantic and jangled, and "Flying Fish," with its mix of Latin and straightahead moods, goes on too long, and Alexander runs out of fresh insights. But when he's right, as on the ballads "Nearness" and "Clifford"—where he blends zinging double-times with laid-back remarks—and on the vigorously swinging title track and "Eronel," Alexander impresses with his mature tone, his rock-solid rhythmic stance, his bag of fluid ideas: some patterns but mostly clean, singing melodic passages. He makes you want to hear his renditions more than twice.

Mabern is a trusty craftsman who accompanies the leader deftly, save on the all-but-out-of-control "Bewitched," and then solos with warmth and originality, showing a modern, Tyner-like influence at times. Ore has a fat, firm sound and improvises with clarity, while Farnsworth bubbles under it all, pushing, prodding.

Given time, Alexander may become a major voice on his instrument. —Zan Stewart

Up, Over & Out—*Up, Over & Out; The Nearness Of You; Eronel; Bewitched (Bothered & Bewildered); Flying Fish; Blues For Mabe; I Remember Clifford; Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues Are.* (73:04)

Personnel—Alexander, tenor saxophone; Harold Mabern, piano; John Ore, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

improvisation

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DMP Big Band

Carved In Stone

DMP 512

★★½

Nostalgia for the bop period has led to a plethora of reissue projects. It sometimes feels like the entire recorded jazz canon from 1945 to 1960 has been dusted off and remastered and beautifully repackaged on compact disc—and the world is a better place for it.

Nostalgia for the preceding era of big band swing has taken a different form: re-recordings of golden oldies by Glenn Miller, Tommy

Dorsey, et. al. Here, the primary purpose is to recreate this once-popular music with the benefits of modern recording technology. The concept is perhaps understandable in the cases of bandleaders like Miller and Dorsey, who never got a chance to record in the stereo era. It is more dubious in the cases of Ellington, Basie, Herman and Kenton, who lived long enough to record their own relatively "hi-fi" versions of the pieces on *Carved In Stone*.

DMP is an audiophile jazz label that records exclusively in the 20-bit digital domain. This process provides exceptional musical integrity and low-level detail when resolved to the 16-bit compact disc format. Like many audiophile labels, DMP's stable of artists consists mostly of lesser-known players. But the DMP Big Band contains at least one major voice in trumpeter Lew Soloff, as well as emerging young talents like pianist Geoff Keezer and saxophonist Steve Wilson.

This orchestra's readings of 12 evergreens by the six bandleaders named above are flawlessly executed, and the audio quality of the recording is immaculate. The entire ensemble is in sonic balance. There are no artificial close-ups, yet there is texture and differentiation within the brasses and reeds. When the full band hits it, as on "Four Brothers," the dynamics are powerful without the collapse of depth or the harshness found in most analog records of orchestral jazz. Lew Soloff is featured often and Lew Soloff can do whatever he wants; he sounds good before breakfast. (Hear him growl a nod to Rex Stewart and then take "'A' Train" heavenward to the ionosphere and scream it like an angel.)

So should I not stop complaining? Would not *Carved In Stone* serve as an excellent introduction to the swing era for 30-something hi-fi buffs? Is this album not innocent fun? Yes, to all of the above. But *hors d'oeuvres* never satisfy like meals, reproductions never stir the viscera like originals, and Tang is never mistaken for orange juice.

—Thomas Conrad

Carved In Stone—Take The "A" Train; Satin Doll; Song Of The Volga Boatman; Cute; Shiny Stockings; Li'l Darlin'; Intermision Riff; Malaguena; Opus One; Four Brothers; Early Autumn; April In Paris. (48:16)

Personnel—Dave Glasser, Patience Higgins, Ted Nash, Gary Smulyan, Steve Wilson, Scott Robinson, saxophones, flutes, clarinets; Lew Soloff, Bob Millikan, Rich Kelly, Tony Kadleck, Larry Lunetta, trumpet, flugelhorn; Luis Bonilla, Keith O'Quinn, Jim Pugh, Dave Taylor, Larry Farrell, trombones; James Chirillo, guitar; Geoff Keezer, piano; Lynn Seaton, bass; John Riley, drums.



Eddie Henderson

Inspiration

Milestone 9240

★★★½

Bill Barron

Higher Ground

Joken 102

★★★½

We haven't heard much from Dr. Henderson in recent years. *Inspiration* is his first date as a leader for a U.S. label since the '70s, and it's straightahead and surprisingly traditional in its focus. We're a long way from the trumpeter "Mganga" who came to prominence with Herbie Hancock's 1970-73 group, and later dabbled in funk-jazz fusion.

Henderson displays wonderful tone and articulation on both trumpet and flugelhorn, as he surveys his musical influences, interpreting compositions written by or associated with Hancock, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and others. It's almost impossible to place a personal stamp on "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" or "On Green Dolphin Street." The trumpeter makes his strongest statements with less frequently covered compositions, such as Joe Henderson's "Jinriksha," or Hancock's "Olioloqui Valley," where Grover Washington Jr.'s soprano sax seems to push Henderson to another level. On this date, Henderson rarely shows the sharp, brassy edge often associated with his trumpet. He prefers softer, rounder tones, which blend well with Joe Locke's vibes.

Henderson joins Bill Barron for several tracks on *Higher Ground*, the saxophonist's last date before his death in 1989, released on brother Kenny Barron's Joken label. Barron was firmly rooted in bop, but, by casting his lot with Cecil Taylor and Charles Mingus early on, made it clear that he wanted to expand the limits of the bop tradition. On compositions like "Time Space Motion" and "More Blues," he impresses as a marathon improviser on tenor, overflowing with melodic variations. Barron departs from his usual reliance on original material by including four standards. As an interpreter of "Alone Together" and "I Thought About You," his approach is quite different, immediately evoking Dexter Gordon's deep, mellifluous voice. As always, Kenny Barron is at the piano providing solid support. Henderson joins Barron to negotiate complex themes in tight formation, but the trumpeter's solos on

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this date are uneven. *Higher Ground* is a good addition to Barron's neglected catalog.

—Jon Andrews

Inspiration—*Surrey With Fringe On Top; I Remember Clifford; Jinriksha; Ollolou Valley; When You Wish Upon A Star; Phantoms; On Green Dolphin Street; If One Could Only See; Little B's Poem; Peresina.* (71:33)

Personnel—Henderson, trumpet, flugelhorn; Grover Washington Jr., soprano saxophone (2, 4); Kevin Hays, piano; Joe Locke, vibes; Ed Howard, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

Higher Ground—*Caravan; I Thought About You; More Blues; We'll Be Together Again; Emanation; Alone Together; Interpretation; Time Space Motion.* (51:10)

Personnel—Barron, tenor saxophone; Eddie Henderson, trumpet (1, 3, 5, 7, 8); Kenny Barron, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Ben Riley, drums.



Roscoe Mitchell

Hey Donald
Delmark 475

★★★½

Players with their fingers in many different pies often opt to keep those interests separate. On *Hey Donald*, Roscoe Mitchell attempts to bridge the mainstream end of this spectrum with some of his more venturesome sound experimentation. The disc kicks off with "Walking In The Moonlight," a straightforward tenor blues written by his dad, Roscoe Mitchell Sr., and also played by the Art Ensemble of Chicago on *The Third Decade* (ECM). Jodie Christian takes a slick piano solo, as he's wont to—he sounds much more at home in this boppy context than he ever did (does?) as a member of Mitchell's Note Factory.

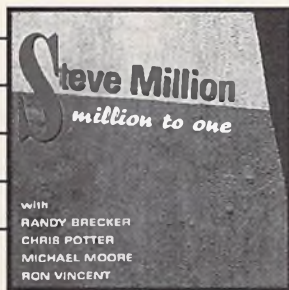
Sixty-year-old drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, too, sounds fine on this cut, as he does on other swingers like the flute tune "Jeremy" and the solid title track. But he's completely out of his element playing percussion on "Dragons"—with Mitchell blowing furious soprano swirls—or unsuccessfully attempting to generate free-jazz energy beside Christian's pedal-heavy pummel on "The Band Room." On "See You At The Fair," he offers up some pulsed rhythms under Mitchell's endless cycle of circular-breathed patterns, with a strange, incongruous, but not uninteresting effect.

The most rewarding tracks on *Hey Donald*, though, are the four duets with Malachi Favors: "The El," "Keep On Keeping On," "Englewood High School" and "Song For Rwanda." The two have played together for years, as members of the AEC and in countless other settings, and their connection holds.

Favors' great earthy bass connects perfectly with Mitchell's dry, acidic horn in these deep-space tracks. "Song For Rwanda," in particular, is a beautiful, sad, free ballad. —John Corbett

Hey Donald—*Walking In The Moonlight; Dragons; Jeremy; The El; Hey Donald; Keep On Keeping On; The Band Room; Englewood High School; Zero; Song For Rwanda; 58th Street; See You At The Fair.* (57:14)

Personnel—Mitchell, alto, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Jodie Christian, piano; Malachi Favors, bass; Albert "Tootie" Heath, drums, percussion.



Steve Million

Million To One
Palmetto 2014

★★★★

The first time through, Steve Million's debut recording seems oddly self-effacing. True, he produced it, arranged it and composed six of the 10 tunes. But it isn't until track six, Monk's "Boo Boo's Birthday," that he gives himself the first solo. In the dominant presence of Randy Brecker and Chris Potter, you almost don't notice Million's thoughtful, understated piano.

By the third listening, the polished unity of Million's project begins to reveal itself. He prepared for this album through many years in the jazz trenches of Kansas City and Chicago.

The tunes are varied (the light Latin feel of "Eisenbleu," the extended structure of "Mood Point," the polite ¾ funk of "Blue Lizard"), but they share a basis in formal coherence and smooth, rounded contours. For all his subtlety as a soloist, Million the leader is strong enough to impose the tone and texture of his music upon Brecker and Potter. On "Missing Page," Brecker's flugelhorn flows directly out of Million's intention, its sighs and flutters circling around questions with lost answers. The complex song form "Mood Point" provides a cerebral premise for Potter's tenor solo. From a few core ideas he derives logical subsets and indirect corollaries. One of the pleasures of *Million To One* is that it is devoid of wasted notes. The statements of Brecker and Potter begin deep inside every song and make lucid, intelligent, concise improvements upon each. (Potter displays growth on every recording. Listen to how he treats time on "Duckbutler," defying the pressure to hurry.)

The engineer for this date, A.T. Michael MacDonald, uses a fully restored 1959 Ampex 351 vacuum-tube tape recorder with vintage microphones. The warmth and naturalness of the audio quality (especially sweet on Ron

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CD REVIEWS

Vincent's cymbals) make a major contribution to the feeling of wholeness that distinguishes *Million To One*. —Thomas Conrad

Million To One—Eisenbleu: *Blue Lizard*; *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*; *No Pork #44*; *Missing Page*; *Boo Boo's Birthday*; *Mood Point*; *When The Sun Comes Out*; *Duckbutter*; *Shadow Woman*. (64:27)

Personnel—*Million*, piano: Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn; Chris Potter, tenor and soprano saxophones; Michael Moore, bass; Ron Vincent, drums.



Fourplay

Elixir

Warner Bros. 9 45922

★★

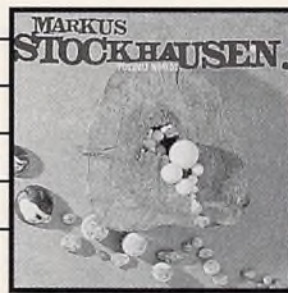
By definition, an elixir is a sweetened, aromatic solution of alcohol and water containing—or used as a vehicle for—medicinal substances. It's most often associated with being a cure-all. How convenient a word it is, then, for describing Fourplay's latest jazz-lite offering. Think of the quartet's music as pop-sweetened jazz, watered-down jazz, an illusory panacea for the blues, a quick-fix remedy for the day-in, day-out grind. Laid-back, glittery, polite and tidy. There's even a romantic Phil Collins tune, "Why Can't It Wait Till Morning," that features the pop superstar crooning and Bob James and Lee Ritenour dreamily accompanying him. There's not an ounce of jazz in sight, but that's okay because it'll probably become a hit single or appear on a film soundtrack.

About as discourteous as Fourplay gets here is on the funky "Play Lady Play" and when bassist Nathan East scats momentarily on "East 2 West." Otherwise, the quartet members rain down a gentle, gleaming sheen that makes their pieces perfect background music. Bright spots? A few, including James' piano fills on "Fannie Mae" and "East 2 West" and Ritenour's soft-toned guitar lines on "Magic Carpet Ride," a synth-paved journey through a couple of interesting tempo changes. Strong tunes? A few, including "The Closer I Get To You," a quiet-storm vehicle for Patti Austin and Peabo Bryson's delicious vocal duet, and "Licorice," a catchy melody that has its fleeting moments of guitar and piano beauty. Even then, though, the spirited improvisational essence of jazz is so diluted and the potion Fourplay is peddling so weak that it's hard to

imagine what kind of curative value this elixir has. —Dan Ouellette

Elixir—*Elixir*; *Dream Come True*; *Play Lady Play*; *Why Can't It Wait Till Morning*; *Magic Carpet Ride*; *Whisper In My Ear*; *Fannie Mae*; *The Closer I Get To You*; *East 2 West*; *Licorice*; *In My Corner*. (63:57)

Personnel—Bob James, piano, keyboards, synthesizers; Lee Ritenour, guitars; Nathan East, bass, vocals (5, 9); Harvey Mason Jr., drums, marimba, percussion; Phil Collins (4), Patti Austin (8), Peabo Bryson (8), vocals; Heather Mason, Vern Arnold, Cisco, background vocals (11).



Markus Stockhausen

Possible Worlds

CMP 68

★★★½

Miles Davis cited German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen as an important influence on his mid-'70s concept. Here, completing the circle, Stockhausen's trumpet-playing son Markus (who has recorded several jazzier outings for ECM) includes in the notes to *Possible Worlds* a parenthetical note: "I also asked myself what Miles' approach might have been."

In fact, the way this disc was built suggests some of Davis's (and producer Teo Marcero's) more involved tape constructions: Markus, pianist Fabrizio Ottavucci and cellist Rohan de Saram played a one-take free piece, then later Markus went back into it, adding more trumpet, brother Simon's synthesizers and Ramesh Shotham's Indian percussion. The result is an interesting juxtaposition of real-time improvisation and organic textures with studio manipulation and alternately engaging and drippy washes and effects. (Though it bears repeated listening, *Possible Worlds* is sometimes bogged down by an unwarranted element of saccharine sentimentalism in Simon's synth-sound selection.)

De Saram is a member of the Arditti String Quartet and one of the world's finest cellists. He and Ottavucci open the hour-long work with sparse piano and cello interplay, though the interaction of reverb and electronics starts quickly. At about 11 minutes, synth moves along gently with the piano, like a shadow; five minutes later, a sudden burst of unison piano and voice is given strangely commercial-sounding electronic drum accompaniment, while trumpet plays slow, long tones and cello whispers fragile high harmonics. The best moments are perhaps those in which Markus plays acoustic duets with piano (24 minutes) and cello (33). In the former, intense sawing from de Saram precedes an echoey trumpet

melody, which floats splendidly across the aural landscape. —John Corbett

Possible Worlds—*Possible Words*. (57:45)

Personnel—Stockhausen, trumpet, piccolo trumpet, slide trumpet, quarter-tone flugelhorn; Fabrizio Ottaviucci, piano, voice; Rohan de Saram, cello; Simon Stockhausen, synthesizers, electronic percussion; Ramesh Shotham, percussion (gatham, kanjira, cymbals, milkpot).



Surman/Krog/Rypdal/ Storaas

Nordic Quartet
ECM 21553

★★★★

Ketil Bjørnstad

The Sea
ECM 21545

★★★

Norwegian guitarist Terje Rypdal has reemerged after devoting several years to compositions for orchestra. Starting with last year's *If Mountains Could Sing*, and continuing with these two collaborations, he again brings his strongly emotional, Hendrix-inspired playing to a small-group context.

The collaborative *Nordic Quartet* finds common ground among John Surman's ruminative bass clarinet and soprano sax, Karin Krog's plaintive, understated vocals and Rypdal's tormented guitar work. This CD recaptures the ECM sound of earlier years, with Rypdal generating a gut-wrenching wail of anguish, and Krog offering softly detached vocals recalling her haunting *Such Winters Of Memory* (1982) collaboration with Surman. With ample use of effects and reverb, Rypdal plays in a volatile style reminiscent of early albums like *Odyssey* ('75), which evoked the open spaces and distorted guitars of Miles Davis' *Get Up With It* period. Although Surman's duets with his colleagues are intriguing, the quartet tracks, including "Traces" and "Wild Bird" are the most lyrical and haunting. "Ved Sorevatn" is eerie and spectral, with the smooth surfaces and liquid phrasing of Surman and Krog offset by Rypdal's energetic rough-edged solos. Working without a conventional rhythm section, the quartet's sound has an airy quality grounded only by Rypdal and pianist Vagleik Storaas.

Despite Rypdal's orchestral leanings, *The Sea*

finds the guitarist seemingly at cross-purposes with pianist/composer Ketil Bjørnstad. The classically oriented Bjørnstad, aided by cellist David Darling, lays out stately, solemn themes, perhaps reminiscent of Sibelius, only to have them repeatedly subverted and disrupted by the squall of Rypdal's guitar, or by Jon Christensen's percussion. Rypdal played the same role for Bjørnstad's *Water Stories* CD ('92). *The Sea* derives much of its color and life from these raucous juxtapositions. Like misbehaving party guests, Rypdal and Christensen act up and cause trouble. Without them, the energy level drops considerably in favor of a polite, subdued formality. Parts "IV" and "IX" stand out in this

overly-long suite because Bjørnstad successfully blends Rypdal's fury and Christensen's dramatic drumming with Darling's deep, resonant textures and the composer's spare, elegant piano. —Jon Andrews

Nordic Quartet—*Traces; Unwritten Letter; Offshore Piper; Gone To The Dogs; Double Tripper; Ved Sorevatn; Watching Shadows; The Illusion; Wild Bird*. (50:27 minutes)

Personnel—John Surman, soprano and baritone saxophones, alto and bass clarinets; Karin Krog, voice; Terje Rypdal, electric guitars; Vagleik Storaas, piano.

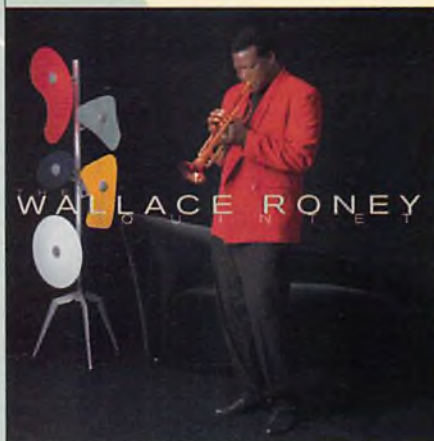
The Sea—*The Sea I-XII*. (74:42)

Personnel—Bjørnstad, piano; David Darling, cello; Terje Rypdal, guitars; Jon Christensen, drums.

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JAZZ

They All Loved Paris

by Howard Mandel

The enthusiasm Parisians lavished on American jazz artists after World War II was amply rewarded by those swing-to-bop individualists who felt capable of anything—exploding the big band, redefining the beat, charting unusual intervals, speaking truth through instruments. The Disques Vogue series—15 CDs so far, representing almost twice that many recording sessions between 1948 (Dizzy Gillespie's big band) and 1964 (Sidney Bechet with a symphony orchestra), originally intended to please European Hot Club members—is newly available on CD. While production values (sound quality, documentation and packaging) vary, the music is of uniformly high and sometimes very special quality, indeed.

Dizzy Gillespie/Max Roach In Paris (Disques Vogue 09026-68213-2; 65:49: ★★★★★) This collection's keystone is a thrilling concert from the Salle Playel that realizes the dramatic new potential of



Coleman Hawkins: in top form

jazz orchestras. Besides bravura Diz, rare documentation of Chano Pozo (on George Russell's "Afro-Cuban Drum Suite") and the Gillespie-Fuller book, there are inspired solos from Big Nick Nicholas, Cecil Payne, John Lewis and singer Kenny Hagood; ensemble power to spare ("Things To Come"), the charm of bop clowning. Though the sound's the most primitive of any

tonians Harold Baker, Jimmy Hamilton, Quentin Jackson and Sonny Greer—which, given the company, sounds square and tired.

Roy Eldridge In Paris (Disques Vogue 09026-68209-2; 60:57: ★★★½) With Zoot Sims, pianist Dick Hyman and drummer Ed Shaughnessy of the Benny Goodman sextet in which he was serving, Little Jazz sings "It Don't Mean A Thing" with Anita Love, then lets loose rampant trumpet vitality. Program your CD for distinctly different song sequences, choosing from two complete takes of "The Man I Love," three of "Undecided," two of "Wild Driver" and two "Easter Parade"s. The first takes are faster and raggedy. The first heart-in-horn "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" take is it.

Thelonious Monk/Joe Turner In Paris (Disques Vogue 09026-8210-2; 72:50: ★★★★★½) Here's thirty minutes of crystalized Monk, recorded solo for the first time in '52. He's confounding, subdued, spritely and utterly precise, dealing a great, plainspoken "Round Midnight," dryly sentimental "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," block-chorded "Reflections," "We See"—nine gems in all. This Joe Turner is *not* Kansas City singer "Big Joe," who's pictured, but a very stylish, post-stride New York-sharpened piano professor. In a prime recital, he tickles out "Tea For Two" (three takes), "Got The World On A String," an original "Wedding Boogie," his specialty Frankie And Johnnie" and others.

In Paris Highlights (Disques Vogue 09026-68217-2; 73:37: ★★★★★) A generous 20-track sampler, *In Paris Highlights* compiles choice cuts from all of the above, plus Mulligan-Brookmeyer quartets, Frank Foster's foursome, Lionel Hampton's jam trio, Lucky Thompson's French octet, Quincy Jones' 1953 arrangement for Gigi Gryce's septet of "Paris The Beautiful"—a feeling evidently shared by all the musicians represented in this distinguished series.

Vogues, no recompense is necessary. Not to discount four bonus tracks of Roach in the studio a year later, dropping bombs on his elegant team: Kenny Dorham, James Moody (on tenor), Al Haig and Tommy Potter.

Coleman Hawkins/Johnny Hodges In Paris (Disques Vogue 09026-68215-2; 71:20: ★★★★★) Top-form Bean swaggers through "Paper Moon," some blues, his only "Sophisticated Lady" (six titles total) in December '49. Bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke are among his sympatico French players and expatriates. This session is paired with 15 tracks by Hodges' '51 orchestra—actually an octet, of Don Byas, young pianist Raymond Fol, Elling-

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B E Y O N D

Latin Jammers

by Larry Birnbaum

It may be, as composer/arranger Chico O'Farrill has said, that jazz made a greater impact on Cuban music than vice versa. But since Cuba, like Brazil, has an improvising tradition of its own, it's not always easy to tell where the Latin riffs leave off and the jazz licks begin. A sampling of recent releases all make the Latin-jazz connection somewhere along the line, but each takes a different point of departure and arrives at its own destination.



Patato: irresistibly propulsive

Patato, Changuito y Orestes: *Ritmo y Candela* (Redwood 9503; 52:25; ★★★★★) Recorded in San Francisco, this album brings together three great percussionists—Cuban legends Carlos "Patato" Valdez and Jose Luis "Changuito" Quintana and New York salsa stalwart Orestes Vilato—in a laid-back West Coast version of the Cuban *descarga*, or jam session. "San Francisco Tiene Su Propio Son," a relaxed yet irresistibly propulsive *guajira*, sets a nostalgic tone; "Desde el Fondo del Rio" smoothly blends synthesizers with santeria chants, and "Calipso en las Nubes" shimmers to the soft stroke of Jeff Narell's steel drums. Elsewhere the material wears thin, but the drummers carry the day, buoying the music with steamy undercurrents of rhythm, climaxing in a brilliant three-way duel.

Mongo Santamaria: *Mongo Returns* (Milestone 9245; 53:42; ★★★) The title refers to Santamaria's return to the Fantasy label group. Compositions and arrangements by Marty Sheller, including charts of Stevie Wonder's "You've Got It Bad Girl" and Marvin Gaye's "When Did You Stop Loving Me," harken back to the conga master's funky '70s heyday, giving the album a bright but dated feel. Band regulars like trumpeter Eddie Allen and guests like pianist Hilton Ruiz contribute swinging, unspectacular solos, leaving Mongo himself, with his oak-solid tempos, to carry the momentum.

Rumba Club: *Desde La Capital* (Palmetto 2013; 49:34; ★★★½) This Maryland-based group suffers from a sense of cultural schizophrenia, with the Hispanic percussionists laying down crisp Latin rhythms while the Anglo horn section blows smart bop lines. The material is similarly divided between jazz standards like Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" and salsa tunes like Tito Puente's "Oye Mi Guaguanco" and Ruben Blades' "Todos Vuelven." But bassist Andy Gonzalez, who also produced the album, glues the session tightly together, and if the players don't speak the same musical language, they certainly groove to the same crackling beat.

Poncho Sanchez: *Soul Sauce* (Concord Picante 4662; 59:26; ★★★) Like Mongo Santamaria, Sanchez launched his solo career after a stint with Cal Tjader. Here, the California *conguero* pays tribute to his late mentor with a set of Tjader-associated tunes, including such favorites as "Poinciana Cha Cha," "I Showed Them" and the title track, as well as Sanchez' own "Song For Cal." Using vibist Ruben Estrada to fill Tjader's shoes, Sanchez cranks out a virtual carbon copy of his breezy, pastel-shaded sound. But though the craftsmanship is superb, the level of inspiration never goes beyond the sincerest form of flattery.

Jesus Alemany: *¡Cubanismo!* (Hannibal 1390; 50:07; ★★★½) Recorded in Havana, this album consists of instrumental Cuban dance music rather than Latin jazz, allowing the players to improvise in a style wholly their own. Alemany, formerly lead trumpeter with the group Sierra Maestra, has a fat, greasy tone and a stratospheric high register, while Alfredo Rodriguez has a crunching, percussive command of the piano, both showing little jazz influence. The band, which includes several Irakere alumni as well as percussion legend Tata Güines, smokes like a fine cigar on originals like Orlando Valle's "Descarga De Hoy" and classics like Arsenio Rodriguez' "Pa Que Gocen."

Jane Bunnett: *Rendez-Vous Brazil/Cuba* (Justin Time 74; 61:02; ★★★) Despite its title, this album doesn't bring together the musics of Brazil and Cuba. Instead, it's brings together musicians from Brazil (guitarist Filó Machado and percussionist Celso Machado), Cuba (pianist Hilario Duran and bassist Carlitos del Puerto) and Canada (saxophonist/flutist Bunnett and trumpeter/husband Larry Cramer) to perform a set of Brazilian music. The common ground they share is jazz, but the communication seems slightly strained. Still, with their sunny spirit and sparkling technique, the musicians manage to create a festive atmosphere on rhythmic tunes like "Ritos De Angola" and "Forró Na Vovó." **DB**

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REISSUES

To Play & Play Again

by John Ephland

It all began with a drum roll: Dec. 19, 1960's "Ring-A-Ding Ding!" announcing Frank Sinatra's artist-centered/artist-owned creation, Reprise Records. Meaning "to play and play again," the label's moniker spelled home to Francis Albert from 1960 until 1988. Indeed, the swinging swagger of that opening cut from the singer's first new album of the same name typifies the attitude that runs through most of *Frank Sinatra: The Complete Studio Recordings* (Reprise 46013: ★★★★★), a massive 20-CD collection that plays like a modern chunk of Americana.

The box to beat all boxes, *The Complete Studio Recordings* comes in a leather suitcase, with a serial number on a brass plaque (in a limited-edition 20,000) and lists for \$500. Altogether, there are 452 songs, including 70 new to CD in the United States and 18 previously unissued anywhere (over 24 hours of music total), and a hardcover 96-page booklet with extensive notes and photos. Released here for the most part in chronological order "according to the date on which vocals were recorded" (as opposed to how they may have appeared on records), the effect, for those familiar with the originals, is to have a greater appreciation for song order and the way those albums were put together, crafted, so to speak. Audio quality is uniformly excellent.

As for the music, Sinatra's attention to craft, diction, the credit given to arrangers and composers, the sheer musicality, not to mention his richly textured, one-of-a-kind baritone voice, are constants. Sure, you sometimes wish he'd recorded more songs unadorned by all that brass, those woodwinds, strings and voices. One gets the impression Sinatra was lonely without them, when all he needed was a piano. But then, with arrangers like Johnny Mandel, Nelson Riddle, Gordon Jenkins, Billy May, Neal Hefti and Don Costa, buddies Bing, Dino and Sammy, and the too-brief pairings with Count Basie and Duke Ellington, who could say no?

From the start, it's an upbeat, swinging affair for most of the first three albums as Sinatra carries over much of his '50s hipster persona, occasionally throwing in ballads from yesteryear (e.g., "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" from his tribute to former boss Tommy Dorsey, *I Remember Tommy*). At times, the swingers and ballads are heard



Singin' about "Guys & Dolls": Frank, Bing Crosby and Dean Martin in 1963

from separate releases as he continues a kind of "concept album" approach stemming from his '50s albums for Capitol (e.g., *Swing Along With Me* and *Sinatra & Strings*, *Swingin' Brass* and *September Of My Years*). For all Sinatra's jazz credentials, it isn't until Count Basie shows up in October 1962 on *Sinatra-Basie* that we hear some real improvising from fellow musicians. For example, most of Frank Wess' flute solo on the medium swinger "My Kind Of Girl" (with only rhythm-section accompaniment) deliciously undermines the more tightly arranged sectional voicings normally heard opposite the singer. That truly personal sound sharing the spotlight can also be heard in his bossa nova collaborations with Antonio Carlos Jobim (Sinatra's best work outside his swing-era repertoire, recorded in '67 and '69) as well as Ellington (hear Johnny Hodges' exquisite, plaintive alto solo on "Indian Summer," '67). The singer's first decade with Reprise also includes wonderful, definitive versions of classic Sinatra tunes: e.g., "Nancy," "Put Your Dreams Away," (the first) "All Or Nothing At All," "My Kind Of Town," "In The Wee Small Hours," "Stardust," "Without A Song," "That's All."

As the '60s gave way to the '70s, Sinatra's primary rhythmic approach shifted from a swinging backbeat to a gentle, ineffectual pop pulse spurred more by an electric bass than drums. At times, his ongoing search for new standards took

him down blind alleys, his infatuation with pop poet Rod McKuen, for one, suggesting a kind of desperation. The occasional, new "Strangers In The Night," "Cycles," "That's Life," "Summer Wind," "Theme From New York, New York" and, of course, his latter-day anthem, "My Way"—while not exactly Rodgers & Hart, Cahn & Van Heusen or Gershwin—helped Sinatra reinvent himself in the midst of ineffectual drivel like Barry Manilow's "I Write The Songs," Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline," even disco versions (no kidding) of "Night Day" and "All Or Nothing At All!" The '80s showcase a seasoned but strong Sinatra returning to more standards, including some new old ones like "Mack The Knife," "Everything Happens To Me" and "Stormy Weather," Ol' Blue Eyes ending it all with a very appropriate (and swinging) "My Foolish Heart."

The Complete Reprise Studio Recordings (the few live albums, including the great Basie/Quincy Jones *Sinatra At The Sands*, are not here) amply reflect a career immersed in all kinds of love songs. But right alongside love and affection, Sinatra also sang as and for the loser. He may not have been a blues singer (his rendition of "Learnin' The Blues" with Basie in '62, rife with blues feeling, is still a 32-bar song), but his singing at times mirrored the pain, longing and fear that comes with loneliness and a broken heart. In Sinatra's case, it was a blues drenched with sophistication. **DB**

BLINDFOLD TEST

MARCH 1996

Jacky Terrasson

by Jim Macnie

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.

Jacky Terrasson has been one of jazz's most buzzed-about improvisers since he won the Thelonious Monk Competition in 1993. His ability to reharmonize vintage melodies, turning them into novel thematic springboards, keeps listeners rapt. Also rousing are his trio's inventive tempo shifts; oddly, the morphing has helped generate a signature sound for the band. His first Blue Note record, *Jacky Terrasson*, was applauded by all who dug adventure.

The group's new *Reach*—again recorded with bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Leon Parker (who has since left the trio)—expands on the imaginative aspects of the ensemble's playfulness. "The new record is better than the first," bluntly states the 30-year-old bandleader. "I honestly don't think the first did us justice, as far as energy goes."

This was Jacky's first Blindfold Test.

Earl Hines

"Child Of A Disordered Mind" (from *Piano Man: Earl Hines, His Piano And His Orchestra, RCA/Bluebird, 1989/rec. 1939*) Hines, piano.

Whoooooo! Willie the Lion? Great stride stuff there. I know it's not Tatum; I think I would have recognized Tatum by now. Fats? I give up. Oooh, I don't know, but I like it. It's not historical, it's someone who has heard some advanced harmonics. It's not that old, it's someone who has heard some new chords, some new progressions already. But I can't say who it is.

JM: *It's Earl Hines.*

Honestly, I never really checked him out. Some areas I had to skip. When was it recorded?

JM: 1939.

Oh boy. The stride concept was great because you had to keep a groove going, and the left hand was always busy doing that. Then when people started playing in ensembles, the piano could be freed up ... thank God. That's great stuff. Tradition, you can't mess with that. So ... 4 stars.

Eric Reed

"Ka-Boose" (from *The Swing And I, MoJazz, 1995*) Reed, piano: Ben Wolfe, bass: Greg Hulchinson, drums.

Is this remastered? This is a young guy trying to sound older. This the same piece: Ha!—nice, nice change. Is this Rodney Kendrick? Cyrus [Chestnut]? Let me shut up. I hear some of the licks that are dated, but not the real shit at the same time.

JM: *What about the changing tempos?*

Yeah, everybody's doing that now.

JM: *It's Eric Reed.*

Oh yeah, we've met at Bradley's. I haven't checked all the young guys—there so much, and I'm dealing with me. I'd buy a record if it's someone I've heard live. Otherwise, I don't check out records just to keep up. 2½ stars.

Aki Takase

"Perdido" (from *Perdido, enja, 1982*) Takase, piano.

Hmm ... Randy Weston? It's pretty free.



JM: *Is that a turnoff?*

No, I like the liberties. I would say early Cecil, but no, I doubt it. It's "Perdido," but he's really going out now. No, I know it's not Randy now. I don't like to put restrictions on things. I like the concept of stretching and being that free, but I don't really hear this. Who is this guy?

JM: *Aki Takase.*

I never heard of her. Different artists have different esthetic concepts. I like the way she played the tune—in and out—but I thought there wasn't much of a foundation in the middle there. I hate to rate someone without knowing their stuff, but if I have to, 2½ stars.

Brad Mehldau

"Nice Pass" (from *Warner Jams Volume 1, Warner Bros., 1995*) Mehldau, piano; Clarence Seay, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

Yeah, yeah ... I like this head. Yeah. I hear some Chick, some Mulgrew. Wow, I like this guy. I don't know who it is, but ... Gonzalo? Phew! That left-hand stuff is pretty open. Tight head, man, I love it. Is it someone I should know?

JM: *Brad Mehldau.*

Okay, okay, alright. That's a challenging piece just to play the head. This is great, because I've heard him a few times, but he didn't sound like this at all. This is much more adventurous.

JM: *The idea of the groove appeals to you?*

They were very tight together. Just to play the head means something. Sometimes you've got cats playing the head and it's like, "You might as well start soloing, because the way you play the head doesn't mean anything." But there's a statement being made here. Go, Brad. Plus it's his tune. Go. 4½ stars.

Mary Lou Williams

"Scorpio" (from *The Zodiac Suite, Smithsonian Folkways, 1995/rec. 1945*) Williams, piano; Al Lucas, bass.

Whooh, a very involved piece. I'm thinking of several guys here. Well, first of all, I love it. Okay, I'll say Duke or early Ahmad? Could be Elmo Hope, but I doubt that.

JM: *What do you mean involved?*

Different parts, shifting, slowing down tempos, going to different phases—a concept. I love that.

JM: *Your own stuff is always on the prowl. Well, it's Mary Lou.*

Ahh! Shame on me. She was way in advance, man. Very nice. 4½ stars. Can I take this home? Yeah? Cool.

DB