

1996 DB SUMMER JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE

# DOWNBEAT

*Jazz, Blues &*

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**HERBIE  
HANCOCK**

Remembered:  
**GERRY  
MULLIGAN**

**JIM  
HALL**

**MIKE  
STERN**

**BUDDY  
GUY**

**BILL FRISELL**

# REBEL'S DAY OFF





## 16 Bill Frisell

### *Reckless Introvert*

The shy, rebellious Frisell has made a career out of different musical perspectives, leading his own warped projects and collaborating with high-profile artists of all types. Now, the mild-mannered, much-in-demand guitarist has a new concept to explore. Dan Ouellette joins him on one of his few days off.

Cover photograph of Bill Frisell by Kevin Ellsworth.



KEVIN ELLSWORTH

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# Bill Frisell

# Reckless

# Introvert

By Dan Ouellette

Photography by Kevin Ellsworth

It's a gray, drippy Seattle day in early January and Bill Frisell is pretty psyched. Today, he's going to one of his favorite hangs: Andersen's Stringed Instruments, where owner Steven Andersen is almost finished handcrafting Frisell's first custom-made guitar. As Frisell enters the shop, he can't hide his excitement as he goes to the workbench and touches the guitar's flamed-maple back and spruce top. "Now you can really call yourself a jazz guitarist," says Andersen, who's familiar with Frisell's more current work that crisscrosses many genre borders. "But you'll have to study Charlie Christian's chops to play this guitar."

Frisell shakes his head no. "It's not like I'm going to try out something new on this guitar. But as I get rid of all the garbage I've been using—the volume pedal and some of my electronic stuff—I want to go back to hearing the real sound the guitar makes." What? Bill Frisell without his mad-scientist's rack of effects and his distinctive volume pedal that he once vowed he would never abandon?

He explains: "You see, I had been using a compressor, which squashes the dynamics when you play louder and softer. Then I would use the volume pedal to compensate. Basically they were just cancelling each other out. It took me 20 years to figure out that I didn't need either to get the sound I wanted." Plus, with his feet freed up, he's no longer fixed to one spot on the stage. "It's not like I'm going to be dancing around, but if I want to move to hear the hi-hat cymbals better, I just walk closer. It sure is nice to move around and hear the music from a different perspective."

Frisell has made a career out of "different perspectives," embracing music from many sources and using what he's learned by osmosis to compose his own passionate albeit oftentimes loopy tunes. His idiosyncratic guitar voicings are infused with rock and country influences as much as with jazz (he snarls, jokes, shrieks, muses, grooves, caresses and joyrides on his instrument). His beautifully melodic compositions are laced with wry humor. And his bands feature odd combinations of instrumentation (his latest group is a quartet without a standard bass-drum rhythm section). In short, this mild-mannered guitarist is a downright rebel who has miraculously been given free rein by his record company, Nonesuch, to follow his muse.

You'd never guess that meeting or talking to him. Frisell speaks softly, laughs easily, sighs periodically, occasionally grimaces as if he's done or said something wrong or potentially offensive, and often cuts off his sentences without completely finishing his thought. But get the





aw-shucks Frisell on the bandstand, and presto!—he's a musical savage. "The stage is the place where I can do anything I want with music, where anything's possible, where I can break rules and nobody ever gets hurt," he says. "It's not

like driving a car a hundred miles an hour through a red light and killing all these people. But with music you can be just as reckless in other ways."

**F**risell bloomed as a guitarist when he began to cross-pollinate the lyrical flow of jazz guitarists he was studying with the grit and jolt of all his electric guitar rock heroes from the '60s. "I had gone to Berklee for one semester, studied with Jim Hall for a while and then returned to Denver. But the prospects of making a living with my guitar looked bleak." An ES-175-playing friend, Mike Miller, began blasting off with rock riffs on his axe, which in turn inspired Frisell to rethink his commitment to playing straight-ahead jazz.

"A light went off. It seemed that what I had been doing was dishonest. I was denying [the validity of] the time I had spent trying to figure out how to play Hendrix and Clapton licks. Learning jazz was valuable because I got the basics. But bringing my own experiences back into that late '50s/early '60s jazz thing, well, that's when everything exploded wide open." Frisell returned to Berklee, studied with Herb Pomeroy and made a point of playing "avoid notes"—those notes you're cautioned not to use when you play a chord—in search of richer sounds to link

him further to his past. "That's all I've been doing ever since, except that it keeps getting bigger. Now I'm going way back to when I was a kid, performing in a marching band, playing clarinet, even remembering songs I heard when I was two years old. Whatever comes up, I'm going to use and not judge even if someone thinks it's not cool."

Speaking of unorthodox musical approaches, take Frisell's new quartet, which features violinist/tuba player Eyvind Kang, trumpeter Ron Miles and trombonist Curtis Fowlkes. To discuss the genesis of this group, you have to start with the demise of his longstanding trio with bassist Kermit Driscoll and drummer Joey Baron. "Welllllll," Frisell starts out slowly, searching for the right words. "Joey ... he didn't exactly quit. He really wants to put more time into his own band."

Frisell says that the last thing in the world he wanted to do was replace Baron. Then he began thinking that he had been playing with the same rhythm team for so long, they were like a safety net for him. "I wasn't even sure if I could play without them. So I thought I'd do something completely different and form a new band without drums or bass."

In addition to everyone in the group having to perform double duty supplying rhythms, Frisell says that the combo of instruments affords him the freedom to work on a more orchestral sound. "It's so different from the traditional guitar-bass-drum thing, even though Joey, Kermit and I never played like a typical jazz trio. This group, with the violin and brass, can play an orchestral range of sounds. It's gigantic. It's given me a chance to write and arrange in an even bigger way. I do have a lot less freedom for what I can play because there's a lot more to negotiate with four people than three. But it's also put right in my face certain musical challenges, such as the time factor. You know, making sure



# herbie Hancock

The New Standard



a tune doesn't slow down or speed up. That's the reason I got all these guys. They all have a great sense of rhythm."

For *Quartet*, the group's new CD (produced by longtime associate Lee Townsend), Frisell dipped into his portfolio of recent film scores: a couple pieces from the Buster Keaton silent short *Convict 13*, another two from the soundtrack he wrote for the Italian film *La Scuola*, and then a half dozen from *Tales From The Far Side*, an animated TV special created by cartoonist/good friend Gary Larson that aired in the fall of 1994. He then rearranged the pieces to allow for more improvisational latitude. He also tossed into the mix a couple impromptu numbers and a reworking of "Twenty Years," a solo guitar piece from his *Is That You?* album. "That's the perfect example of what this quartet can do," Frisell says. "This song takes on a new life and is given a clarity it never had before."

Like much of Frisell's previous work, *Quartet* finds the guitarist and company meandering through vast musical terrains. Case in point: the opening tune, "Tales From The Far Side" (the main theme of the TV show), which begins as a lyrical, whimsical waltz and ends with Frisell coaxing his guitar to play distant explosions and quiet screams. Structurally the piece hooks up with Larson's visuals, which move in a floating motion over hills and end inside a barn owned by Frankenstein. Other tunes include "Egg Radio," based on a cartoon segment entitled "The Egg Beater Massacre," "Bob's Monsters," about a truck accident involving monsters and garden rakes, and "In Deep," which makes allusions to the cowboy tune "Deep In The Heart Of Texas."

A common thread running through *Quartet* is the juxtaposition of the playful and lyrical with the dark and foreboding. "Much of what I do deals with opposites. I like things to be delicate and spaced out, but I want the music to kick ass,

too." There's also a compelling mixture of mirth and melancholy in his compositions that evokes the spirit of Buster Keaton. "The more I watched his films, the more I recognized his genius. I felt like I got to know him. I always thought of him as just a guy who fell down a lot. But there's a dark sadness in his films. The surface may be slapstick and funny, but there are a lot of different emotional layers at work. I hope to get that same vibe with my music."

In the last year and a half, Frisell—one of the most in-demand guitarists in the jazz ranks as well as arguably the shyest cat in the biz—has been working overtime, traveling nearly non-stop throughout North America and Europe. He's had a jammed calendar gigging with his own groups, putting the finishing touches on *Quartet*, contributing his distinctive guitar licks to countless collaborations and recording sessions with a wide range of peers from Gary Peacock to Elvis Costello, and most recently setting up camp in Nashville with his close friend Wayne Horvitz, who assembled a crack crew of musicians for a brilliant country disc that should see the light of day later this year or early next January.

But on this particular afternoon, Frisell finds himself in the midst of his first extended stretch of time in the last 15 months where he doesn't have to pack his bags, buckle up his guitar case and hit the road again. So, when he's not hanging out in guitar shops, how does this guitar superhero in the body of a classic introvert spend his down time?

Frisell notes that he's taken up bicycle riding since he and his family (his daughter Monica is in fourth grade) fled New York/New Jersey in 1989 for more spacious digs in Seattle. He sheepishly admits that he frequents a Barnes & Noble book and record complex located not far from his neighborhood, close to

# Once again, Herbie Hancock sets The New Standard

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**John Scofield**

**Dave Holland**

**Jack DeJohnette**

**Don Alias**



new jazz arrangements of songs by:

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the university district of the city. He's a little embarrassed that he likes such a chain-store operation, but figures there's no other place nearby where he can lounge in comfortable chairs and leaf through books and magazines. He hastens to add that he does spend time digging through CD bins in the record stores on University Way near the University of Washington campus. And then he mentions the occasional low-key guitar jams with Gary Larson, who lives nearby.

Frisell, his brown hair graying around the temples as he approaches 45, truly deserves these opportunities to chill out and recharge. In addition to his prolific musical output with his own bands (last year Nonesuch released two albums of Keaton soundtrack music and Gramavision issued a live trio date recorded in 1991), the guitarist has been buried up to his peghead working with several collaborators, including Ginger Baker (*Going Back Home*, Atlantic Jazz), Gary Peacock (*Just So Happens*, Postcards), Elvis Costello (*Deep Dead Blues*, Warner Brothers/Nonesuch import) and another Seattle neighbor, Michael Shrieve (*Fascination*, CMP). And that's only scratching the surface.

"My experiences have been great," he says, relaxing over a late lunch at the Longshoreman's Daughter Cafe, down the street from Andersen's shop. "I feel very lucky. I met Gary Peacock playing a date with Paul Motian. We had a vague conversation then about doing something sometime. When we finally recorded the duo album, we really hooked up. I'd love to play with him again. Same with Elvis. We met working on Hal Willner's *Weird Nightmare* Mingus project. He invited me to play at the Meltdown Festival in London last June, and we recorded the show. We rehearsed for a half an hour and did the gig. I love working with vocalists."

As for his collaboration with Baker—the fulfillment of a long-term dream by music journalist/producer Chip Stern to bring the drummer, guitarist and bassist Charlie Haden together—Frisell beams: "That was fun. It was really amazing. I mean, that goes way back. I went to see Cream play in 1966 or '67, so that's deep down inside my subconscious. Boy, to get to play with Ginger. I'm not sure he even knew who I was. I just walked into the

studio, introduced myself and we tried to find something in common. It was a thrill." He grins like a little kid, then laughs. "Ginger'd play a beat and for a second I thought I was Eric Clapton."

Frisell reports that he recently went back into the studio with Baker and Haden for round two, an album that also features Bela Fleck on a couple tracks and guitarist Jerry Hahn. Working with the latter was a special treat. "Jerry was another one of my heroes that I always forget to talk about. It was so cool to meet and play with him. My pat answer for the country influences in my music is that I grew up in Colorado. But when I really think about it, it was Jerry's deep country playing on the *Tennessee Firebird* album Gary Burton made in Nashville that really inspired me."

Like any great musician who finally discovers his voice, Frisell says that his signature playing refers back to many musicians. He went through a period where he was emulating Jim Hall, right down to the such details as guitar make, amp size and performance mannerisms. Then he tried in vain to play like John McLaughlin. "Physically, I wasn't able to get the speed thing down. But that's around the time that I began to realize what I couldn't do and recognize what I had. That's when I was ready to find my own way. It's all about being honest."

Equally important in forming his distinctive guitar voice, Frisell says, has been his session work, most notably with Motian, with whom he continues to tour. "I get so much from standing on stage next to him and hearing what he's playing. It generates things I could never come up with myself." And then there's John Zorn, who Frisell credits with shaking him out of a comfortable zone several years ago by expanding his guitar vocabulary with new structures and speed.

Frisell's reserved, unpretentious demeanor begs the question: Does he realize how good a guitarist he is? He's embarrassed and responds with bashful modesty that borders on self-deprecation. "I feel pretty inadequate. I don't have that much command of the instrument and there's so much more I need to know about music. It's so overwhelming. I'm getting better, but sometimes I still feel the same way I did the second week I started playing the guitar. I still can't believe I'm making records. Being in polls and stuff ... that can be incredibly distracting and dangerous."

As if on cue, Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue* begins playing over the speakers at the Longshoreman's Daughter Cafe. Frisell pauses to listen, then adds, "Once I start thinking I have it together, all I have to do is hear one note played by Miles, and forget it. Now, that's reality. That's something to aspire to."

DB

## EQUIPMENT

Frisell's main axe these days is a spruce-body Klein, built by Steve Klein. He also owns a new handmade archtop custom-built by Steve Andersen. In addition, he has an Andersen flat-top, which was a gift from *The Far Side* cartoonist Gary Larson. Frisell says Larson drove up to his house and threw it onto his lawn as a thank-you for working on the score to the *Tales Of The Far Side*, an animated television special aired in 1994. Frisell also plays a Fender '57 re-issue Stratocaster. He uses various gauges of D'Addario strings, depending on the guitar.

While Frisell has shelved his volume pedal and compressor lately, he continues to run his guitar signal through a Rat distortion box and a Tech 21 XXL. His rack of delays features a Boss DD1 (digital delay) and a Digitech 8-second delay. He uses a Lexicon LXP1 for reverb and sometimes uses a Lexicon Jam Man. In addition to a Fender Princeton Reverb amp from the '60s, Frisell uses an old Gibson amp; both have 10-inch speakers.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

QUARTET—Nonesuch 79401  
 BILL FRISSELL/KERMIT DRISCOLL/JOEY BARON  
 LIVE—Gramavision 79504  
 MUSIC FOR THE FILMS OF BUSTER KEATON: THE  
 HIGH SIGN AND ONE WEEK—Elektra/Nonesuch  
 79351  
 MUSIC FOR THE FILMS OF BUSTER KEATON: GO  
 WEST—Elektra/Nonesuch 79350  
 THIS LAND—Elektra/Nonesuch 79316  
 HAVE A LITTLE FAITH—Elektra/Nonesuch 79301  
 WHERE IN THE WORLD?—Elektra/Musician 61181  
 IS THAT YOU?—Elektra/Musician 60956  
 BEFORE WE WERE BORN—Elektra/Nonesuch 60843  
 ECM WORKS—ECM 837 272  
 LOOKOUT FOR HOPE—ECM 78118-21350  
 RAMBLER—ECM 78118-21287

### as co-leader:

AMERICAN BLOOD SAFETY IN NUMBERS—  
 Intuition 2064 (Victor Bruce Godsey, Brian Ales)  
 DEEP DARK BLUE—Warner Brothers/Nonesuch  
 9362 46073 (Elvis Costello) (import only)  
 JUST SO HAPPENS—Postcards 1005 (Gary Peacock)

### with Paul Motian:

TROISM—Soul Note 121074  
 PAUL MOTIAN ON BROADWAY, VOL. 3—  
 JMT 422-849157  
 PAUL MOTIAN ON BROADWAY, VOL. 2—JMT 834440  
 PAUL MOTIAN ON BROADWAY, VOL. 1—  
 JMT 834430  
 PSALM—ECM 78118-21222

### with John Zorn:

NAKED CITY: GRAND GUIGNOL—Avant 002  
 FILMWORKS: 1986-1990—Elektra/Nonesuch 79270  
 NAKED CITY—Elektra/Nonesuch 79238

### with Robin Holcomb:

ROCKABYE—Elektra/Musician 61289  
 ROBIN HOLCOMB—Elektra/Musician 60983

### with Don Byron:

MUSIC FOR SIX MUSICIANS—Nonesuch 79354  
 TUSKEGEE EXPERIMENTS—Elektra/Nonesuch 79280

### with various others:

TWO DOORS—CMP 74 (Michael Shrieve)  
 GOING BACK HOME—Atlantic Jazz 82652  
 (Ginger Baker)  
 FASCINATION—CMP 67 (Michael Shrieve)  
 A SONG I THOUGHT I HEARD BUDDY SING—  
 Evidence 22057 (Jerry Granelli)  
 FINDING MY WAY HOME—DIW 859 (Rinde Eckert)  
 THE WEIRD NIGHTMARE: TRIBUTE TO CHARLES  
 MINGUS—Columbia 52739 (various artists,  
 produced by Hal Willner)  
 THIS NEW GENERATION—Elektra/Musician 60759  
 (Wayne Horvitz)





**H**erbie Hancock comes down the stairs of his two-story plush home in the hills that lie between West Hollywood and Beverly Hills wearing a white robe, brown pajamas and a drowsy look. He's an hour late for a scheduled 11 a.m. interview, but he has a good excuse.

"I was up all night on the Internet, finding out about a new pickup truck I'm buying for my wife, Gigi, as a birthday present," he says directly.

Hancock, as he puts it, has his fingers into a lot of things besides a piano, from multimedia projects and cutting-edge Internet audio productions to up-to-the-minute advances in technology, be it a device he can use for audio or film post-production to the latest software release for his Macintosh computer.

"I like a lot of different kinds of music," says the 56-year-old with a sly smile a bit later, much more awake now that he's left

his living room and parked himself in front of his Silicon Graphics high-end computer to scan the Internet's World Wide Web while he chats with a guest.

Hancock's wide range of interests tend to derail him at times. Take his latest album, the just-out *The New Standard* for Verve, the pianist's first instrumental and acoustic studio recording since his *Quartet* album for Columbia in the early '80s. The native of Chicago who studied both music and engineering at Iowa's liberal arts Grinnell College wanted this recording to be a personally long-awaited follow-up to his 1968 Blue Note gem *Speak Like A Child*, where the tunes were both subtle and powerful and delicate scoring made a sextet featuring the great Thad Jones, among others, sound like an orchestra.

"But I really didn't have time to write that album, do all the arrangements," says Hancock with frustration in his voice. "I

knew I had to work with someone else, and I have no problem doing that." Hancock, for example, had plenty of technical assistance from the late Darrell Robertson, who was a co-producer on his 1994 Mercury release, the less-commercially-successful-than-anticipated, pop-funk-hip-hop-jazz effort *Dis Is Da Drum*. (Signed with Polygram, Hancock is available to make jazz albums for Verve, pop-oriented works for Mercury and classical projects for Deutsche Grammophon.)

So *The New Standard* became something else, a project of contemporary songs by the likes of Don Henley, Peter Gabriel, Lennon and McCartney, and Stevie Wonder that involved the seemingly tireless artist along with co-producer/Verve Vice President Guy Eckstine and admitted-Hancock-ophile/arranger Bob Belden.

The album was conceived by Eckstine. "I gave him three ideas to choose from and he liked this one," Hancock says in a later



# Herbie's

## Search For New Standards

by Zan Stewart

phone interview. "We talked last spring," he says from his office, after he's perused the White House's Website, noting, "Man, there's so much to learn here."

"Guy said to me, 'When we think of standards, who writes standards, we think of people like Gershwin, Cole Porter. Well, how long are we going to continue to think of these guys? When is it going to change, and what's going to change it? Who are the newer people going to be that we say write standards, who's going to be added to that list?' We don't know but it could be Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, who knows? So we took tunes by writers of today and restructured them to make them sound as if they were originally written to be jazz tunes."

On paper, the project might lack appeal for fans of Hancock's distinctive pointed-then-warm approach to acoustic jazz, typified by, say, a brief, 45-minute trio set last November at the Blue Note club in New York. There, the pianist, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Gene Jackson ranged between an extremely reworked version of Cole Porter's "I Love You" to an in-the-pocket run-through of the favorite "Cantaloupe Island."

But the proof is in the hearing. A few listens to Hancock's *New Standard* top-drawer crew of saxophonist Michael Brecker, guitarist John Scofield, Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette tackling Henley's "New York Minute," Wonder's "You've Got It Bad, Girl" and the artist

formerly known as Prince's "Thieves In The Temple" should reveal to anyone remotely interested the depth of this album the wealth of its musical virtues.

At the outset, Eckstine gave Hancock 40 tunes, from which he picked 20, whittled those down to 12 or 13, which were then ultimately sketched out by Belden. Despite the outside assistance, the album has Hancock's hand all over it. The music sounds like he's written it: It has his edge, his, pardon the pun, verve, his sense of drama and flair, and his sure-as-he's-born, down-home funkiness. Much of the credit for this result goes to Belden's deft scoring.

The amazingly well-researched Belden, 39, acclaimed for his consummate knowledge of Miles Davis, says he knows all of Hancock's recorded oeuvre, and that rather than "trying to think for Herbie here, I tried to think like him in a way that would allow him to come to the music and change it, personalize it, which he did," Belden says in a phone conversation from his New York City apartment.

In the studio, Hancock "tweaked" Belden's arrangements to suit his needs. The pair turned the date's dazzling opener, the Hancock-selected Henley ballad, "New York Minute," into a medium-up-tempo scorcher, and gave Gabriel's "Mercy Street" a vivacious Latin-ish flavor that's just right for Brecker's soprano sax. "That was the way I heard the interpretation," says Eckstine.

Then there's "Scarborough Faire"

("That's more straightahead, though we did mess with the chords," the pianist says) and "When Can I See You Again," a hit for Kenneth "Baby Face" Edmonds, which adopts an easy groove.

Hancock had more initial input on Prince's "Thieves In The Temple." "On my first album [*Takin' Off*], I did 'Watermelon Man,' and I wanted to come up with something with that approach, based on something that far back, and I found it," he says.

And he "radicalized" "You've Got It Bad, Girl." "You know how it goes," Hancock says, and then hums the tune of the soft, sensuous Wonder love song. "Well, we played the first part as is, then added," and here he sings a fast curlique figure. "Then we changed keys, eventually modulating back to the first key. Later, at the bridge we changed keys again, and at the end, we played the last phrase three times, going up a step each time."

This kind of finagling with numbers has long intrigued Hancock. "I always liked harmony," says the man who started playing piano at age 6; discovered jazz as a teenager and who was influenced by Bill Evans, among others; an artist known for his unique take on jazz harmony. "Reworking tunes, especially standards, keeps them exciting for me. That's why I do it."

For *The New Standard*, Hancock assembled "the best players I could think of," rehearsed for three days last summer,



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JIMMY KATZ/GIANT STEPS

"We don't know [who will be writing the new standards].  
... So we took tunes by writers of today and restructured them to make them sound as if they were originally written to be jazz tunes."

then recorded the date at Manhattan Center, a huge studio at 34th Street and 8th Avenue often used for recording classical albums. The collection concludes with a solo piece, a previously unrecorded Hancock tune called "Manhattan," taped at Belden's behest.

"Donald Byrd had told me about a tune that Herbie wrote that made him cry," Belden says. "I asked him to play it. There was Herbie at this nine-foot Steinway, at the end of making his first jazz album in Manhattan in years, relaxing after two long days of recording. His reflections on the event seemed to be in this tune. It was a beautiful soliloquy."

Hancock says he'll tour in support of the album, playing dates in Europe in April and May, and in the U.S. in June, July and August. He'd like to use the recording band but openly admits that it would be

"way too expensive." So he plans on using the trio of Holland ("Dave is amazing—he can play anything") and Jackson with a saxophonist, maybe "a new young guy."

Hancock was a young guy himself when he hooked up with Miles Davis, with whom he played from early 1963 to mid-'68. The power of the trumpeter's influence is shown by the fact that Hancock—in reminiscing about him and the recordings the band made at the Plugged Nickel in Chicago in 1965—talks about Davis in the present tense, even though he hasn't been in Miles' band for over 25 years and the trumpeter's been dead four years.

"Miles, as long as you're working on something, he's happy," Hancock says with a quiet tone that reflects deep respect. "That's what he wants. He doesn't have to understand it or anything. He just wants to

### EQUIPMENT

Herbie Hancock owns a Steinway & Sons nine-foot concert grand as well as a seven-foot Baldwin grand piano. His electric music includes a Korg T-1/WFD, Wavestation AD and M-1; a Roland MK80, JD-990 and D550; Ensoniq TS-10; Yamaha DX711 with E! (extra-memory package); Rhodes Chroma with expander; Studio Electronics SE-1; Yamaha VL-1; Aquila MR-2 wireless system; E-mu Proteus 1,2 and 3; and a Studio Electronics MIDI Moog.

His outboard equipment includes a Korg A-1, Lexicon 480L and PCM 70, Ensoniq DP-4, Eventide H3000E harmonizer, Zoom 9002, Rane MIDI EQ, Dynamic controllers, Drawmer gates, UREI LA-4s, and Digitech Vocalist. For electronic percussion work, he uses a Linn 9000. Samplers include the Waveframe Audioframe 1000, New England Digital Synclavier 3200, Digidesign Synclavier 3200.

Digidesign Samplecell II, Sound Accelerator II and Ensoniq ASR-10.

Microphones include the Shure SM-57, SM-58 and PZM; an AKG C414 and C451; Sennheiser 421 and 411; and assorted beyerdynamic, Nakamichi and Sony mics. In the studio he also has handy a TimeLine MicroLynx synchronizer and a Euphonix mixing console.

In his office he uses a Macintosh Power PC 8100 computer with a 80 mhz processor and a 20-inch SuperMac color monitor. For personal and Internet use, Herbie has an Indy computer, made by Silicon Graphics and outfitted with a 4 gigabyte hard drive, a 150 mhz processor and a Silicon Graphics 17-inch color monitor. To speed up his Internet traveling, Hancock uses an ISDN high-speed line, run through a Pipeline router made by Ascend.

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE NEW STANDARD—Verve 314 529 584  
DIS IS DA DRUM—Mercury 522 681  
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THE PRISONER—Blue Note 468452  
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SPEAK LIKE A CHILD—Blue Note 46136  
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with Miles Davis

THE COMPLETE LIVE AT THE PLUGGED  
NICKEL 1965—Columbia 66955  
NO BLUES—JMY 1003  
CIRCLE IN THE ROUND—Columbia 46862

IN A SILENT WAY—Columbia 40580  
FILLES DE KILIMANJARO—Columbia 46116  
NEFERTITI—Columbia 46113  
SORCERER—Columbia 48954  
E.S.P.—Columbia 46863

with various others

A TRIBUTE TO MILES—Qwest/Reprise 9 45059-2  
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THE PROCRASTINATOR—Blue Note 33579  
(Lee Morgan)  
OUT OF THIS WORLD—Fresh Sound 137  
(Donald Byrd/Pepper Adams)  
A NEW PERSPECTIVE—Blue Note 84124 (Donald Byrd)  
FREE FORM—Blue Note 84118 (Donald Byrd)  
ETCETERA—Blue Note 33581 (Wayne Shorter)  
SCHIZOPHRENIA—Blue Note 32096 (Wayne Shorter)



know you're seriously working on something. That's what he pays us to do. His job is to make some sense out of it, and to play the trumpet. That's what he takes on as a challenge. That's what makes him a great leader. I can verbalize it now. But I didn't understand it so concretely then. I was too young."

Asked about the Plugged Nickel sessions, Hancock, perhaps surprisingly, had only listened to one CD of the newly remastered material. But he had no problem recalling the time.

"That band [which also included Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams and Ron Carter] evolved so quickly," the pianist says almost wistfully. "It would go through a series of evolutions in a few months and then we'd be into something different. When we went into the Plugged Nickel, we were sick and tired of playing certain things that we would expect each other to play that we decided to go in the other direction, which we called 'anti-music.' So, it was look out for the unexpected. So we knew that was the beginning of another transition and that it would probably sound like crap at first. But sometimes you get these urges and you have to go through them. That's how you develop."

Hancock admits that, at the time, he thought the playing was terrible and never listened to any of the playbacks. Today, he's happily surprised. "That stuff doesn't sound bad at all," he says. "It's raw, but you can sense the creativity."

Discussing his various non-performance activities, Hancock—who has been practicing Buddhism for 23 years—mentions a CD-ROM that combines the history of the U.S. in the 20th century with the history of jazz, currently in the works from his Hancock & Joe Productions company and slated for an October release. Then there's his Rhythm of Life Foundation, a corporation that's developing computer software that will hopefully enhance the quality of life in America. "Our basic philosophy is 'technology for humanity,'" he says, as he walks out into the California winter sunshine to bid a guest goodbye. "The idea is to make products that are geared for humanity first, instead of the other way around."

As a parting question, Hancock is asked if he can envision a life outside music, and his answer to the negative is quite specific. "I could do something with technology, but it wouldn't be right," he says. "The conclusion I've come to is that the best thing I do, as much as I love [technology] and electronic music, is play the acoustic piano. That's what I should be doing. Even on *Dis Is Da Drum*, most of my solos were acoustic. I know how to do that. That's something that I can't possibly do on synthesizers. It's something that I do that other people don't do. I don't know what it is. Yes, I do. It's my voice, that's all." **DB**

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# GO ON BY

*If you're a jazz fan of long or recent standing, you were probably saddened to hear of Gerry Mulligan's death on January 20, still a youth at 68.*





# e, Jeru

By John McDonough

**M**ulligan's journey from young musician to jazz icon was not the standard career path. He began as a child of the Charlie Parker culture who once served three months for a heroin bust in the early '50s—your typical white, crew-cut, bebop junkie; then made himself into one of the most distinguished, dashing and cultivated figures of the music world by the '70s. He might have traveled the path of his partner and alter ego of those early days, Chet Baker, for whom there was no redemption and who was ravaged, then done in by his behavior. But not Mulligan. The forces that drive talent to destroy itself tend to be a puzzle to those of us who admire talent from some distance. Maybe Mulligan's brilliance was shielded by an intellect that somehow warned him of the consequences of his behavior on his talent. The fact that he put a high value on his talent and its possibilities made it worth protecting. It's just a theory, though; intellectuals mess up, too.

However he managed it, Mulligan emerged from the '50s clean, intact and with a lot going for him. He had assumed the special role as both arranger and player in the famous Miles Davis Nonet sessions at mid-century. And there was his brief but defining body of quartet work with Chet Baker. All this made him not merely famous by age 30 but historically important—ironically so, in a way. Though Mulligan would spend the vast majority of his professional life in the East, he was nevertheless fated to become the personification of "West Coast jazz."

Although the baritone sax has never been a heavily contested category in jazz polls, the stability of his stature as an instrumentalist was nevertheless remarkable and surely unprecedented. When Mulligan, nicknamed Jeru by Davis, first popped up in the 1949 Down Beat Readers Poll on baritone, he was in fifth place under Serge Chaloff, Harry Carney (the reigning baris at mid-century), Ernie Caceres and Leo Parker. Mulligan got 53 votes. Over the next three years he closed

the gap, finally displacing Chaloff and Carney in 1953. From then until 1995—42 years!—he would ring up the most extraordinary string of unbroken victories in the history of the Poll. (The Critics Poll honored him almost as well.)

He wore the mantle of celebrity with great charm and flair, and cut an Astaire-like figure of lean and classic elegance in a double-breasted blazer. He had a wide range of friends that reached beyond the jazz world. His long friendship with Judy Holliday came at the height of her

Mulligan was associated with Sandy Dennis, whom he first saw with Jason Robards in the original production of *A Thousand Clowns*. He moved between these worlds of jazz and theater seamlessly.

By the time he made his first Concert Jazz Band recordings in 1960, he was back in New York. His groundbreaking CJB was the music Mulligan might have written for Stan Kenton had Kenton permitted him back in 1952.

Later, with his white hair and beard, he assumed the look of a professor, a role he



Gerry performs with dancer Janice Rule in the 1960 movie *The Subterraneans*.

Broadway and film career in the '50s and '60s. He had a film career of his own, after a fashion, when he became the offscreen centerpiece of Johnny Mandel's score for *I Want To Live*. It was the true story of a California woman who liked jazz and Mulligan in particular, was convicted of a murder charge, and sent to the electric chair. In those days modern jazz was the filmmaker's all-around symbol for drugs, sin and, by 1960, beatniks (*Man With The Golden Arm*, *Sweet Smell Of Success*, *The Wild One*, *The Subterraneans*, etc.). Later

was well endowed to play. He was a strong advocate for jazz with a deep knowledge of jazz history, much of it seen firsthand. He was born in 1927. He could talk about music from the outside as a scholar as easily as he could from the inside as a musician. He was intelligent, articulate and suffered the uninformed with an icy impatience. When I found Mulligan among my dinner companions for several nights running on the 1994 Sovereign of the Seas jazz cruise, I held my breath at first, only to discover a delightful and witty ensemble



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player at conversational counterpoint.

I was not the only one to have that first reaction, though. "When I became editor of *Down Beat* in May, 1959," Gene Lees wrote last year in his *Jazzletter*, "I had lunch with Jack Tracy [a previous editor] and asked him a question: '... who am I going to have trouble with?' 'Three guys,' Jack said. 'Buddy Rich, Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan.' Perhaps because Jack had forewarned me, I had trouble with none of them, and indeed became very fond of all three. None more so than Gerald Joseph Mulligan."

Mulligan's musical values were, what we would call today, I suppose, neo-classical. When he was asked in 1991 and '92 to serve as artistic director of a jazz concert series at Ravinia near Chicago, Mulligan made no pretense of his programming philosophy. He booked the players whom he wanted to hear—and with whom he wanted to play: Lionel Hampton, Dave Brubeck, Oscar and Ella, Kenny Davern, Bob Wilber, Wynton Marsalis and Gunther Schuller.

He also played with his shortlived 1992 replication of the Miles Davis Nonet, "Re-birth Of The Cool," with Lee Konitz and Bill Barber. Though launched with a fine CD on GRP, he seemed disappointed, if not exactly surprised, that the group received no more bookings that summer than the original group got in 1948 (two weeks at the Royal Roost).

Mulligan was an inveterate musical conversationalist who wanted to play with nearly everybody. The first time I saw him was at the 1965 *Down Beat* Jazz Festival playing with Roy Eldridge. His discography documents meetings with Thelonious Monk, Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, Scott Hamilton, Stan Getz, Astor Piazzolla and Paul Desmond, whom he ultimately replaced in the Dave Brubeck Quartet in 1968. There were also long-term associations with Art Farmer and Bob Brookmeyer.

Mulligan's signature work tied him forever to the "cool" school. But the moniker owed more to his associations than his actual playing. He "was actually one of the rare jazzmen in the modern idiom," John S. Wilson once noted in his book *The Collector's Jazz: Modern*, "who carries the stigmata of 'hot' jazz." With the Brubeck Quartet and countless concert and festival appearances, he produced booming, aggressive, hard-swinging improvisations.

When worthy musicians got together he became a compulsive and competitive player. He is prominently featured with Billie Holiday and Count Basie in the famous 1957 TV special *The Sound Of Jazz*. But my most vivid recollection of this Mulligan goes back to a memorable White House jazz concert in June 1978. Jazz was still young enough that its entire history

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GIUSEPPE G. PHOTO

could be gathered on one stage. Musicians from Eubie Blake to Cecil Taylor were there. Some played and some were asked to make introductions. Among the latter was Mulligan, who left his bari in Connecticut. But as dusk settled over the South Lawn, Lionel Hampton started calling everyone up on stage for the final jam session. Mulligan suddenly seemed to grow mad with frustration at the thought of sitting this one out. Without his baritone and desperate, he cast about for a horn, any horn. Finally he managed to persuade the clarinetist of a New Orleans brass band to loan him his instrument, then bounded up on stage just in time to join in "Flying Home" and "In The Good Old Summertime."

Mulligan's early years won him enduring fame and an assured and prominent place in jazz history. His recording career spanned 1945-95, and leaves much for posterity to consider. **DB**

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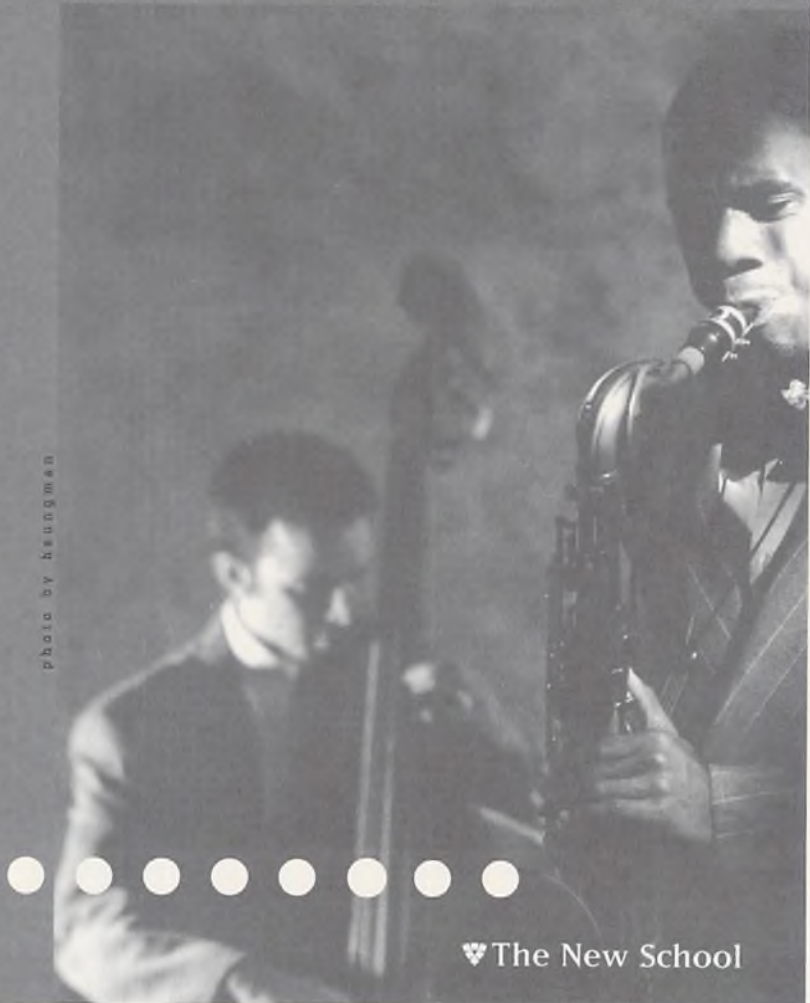
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 The New School





## John Zorn Masada

**Hei (Five)**

DIW-899

★★★★

There's a lot of history tied up in this music. And yet, minus the titles and album graphics, *Hei* could be heard "simply" as a solid jazz quartet date, albeit with some strong ethnic flavors. At presstime already past their sixth (*Vav*) album, and with no end in sight, John Zorn Masada is an ongoing project fueled by Zorn's compositions performed with this same personnel. (Incidentally, the recording quality is fabulous.)

According to the *Academic American Encyclopedia*, Masada was a "natural rock fortress on the western shore of the Dead Sea in south-east Israel that served as the final outpost for the Jewish Zealots in their revolt against Rome during the 1st century AD." In 73, a mass suicide of 960 Zealots followed Rome's final conquest of the fortress. As for the titles, they are derived from the *Talmud*, the collection of writings on Jewish law and tradition, and are a cross between Hebrew, Chaldeic and Aramaic words. The series is dedicated to Jewish scholar and founding father of Cultural Zionism Asher Ginzberg, who died in 1927.

Aside from the heavy history, the band is a truly smokin' unit that combines form and fierceness as one. This music also showcases that side of Zorn the player that is usually obscured by his less jazz-oriented, more structured works. The general feel on *Hei*, despite the smoke, is one of melancholy if not lament, the variable rhythms and melodies suggesting a kind of longing. The opening "Paran" sets the stage with images of Jewish wedding band music, followed by "Halisah" and more Middle Eastern melody lines buttressed by a perky bass ostinato, trumpeter Dave Douglas and Zorn intertwining solos, blending and eventually splintering off as they raise the heat. The sad, ruminative "Yoreh" seems like a pause before the band returns to yet another Mideast medium-tempo pulse on "Beeroth," this time featuring dynamite tom-tom work from Joey Baron (whose playing throughout is outstanding). By now, it becomes obvious that Zorn and Douglas' thematic unison lines are the pattern, with occasional rubato breaking up what are generally ostinato rhythm beds (the swing pulse comes later).

*Hei* kicks ass in places, "Hobah" conjuring the sight of an overwound watch turned loose in an Ornette music factory. All hell breaks loose, the Zorn we've come to know and love offering his weeping and wailing alto sax next to Douglas' more tempered blowing, bassist Greg Cohen's Haden-ish slurrings and more toms from Baron. Brief, spritely, beboppish starts and stops, with fierce double-tonguing from Zorn characterize the very Ornettish (circa early '60s) "Lakum," while Coltrane's lament "Alabama" is evoked amidst bop interludes and a kind of Ornette/Don Cherry/Charlie Haden conversation on "Makedah." And "Hafsa'ah" closes the program on, of all things, a (relatively) swinging note.

As for the history lesson, forget it (if you must) and just enjoy this great music.

—John Ephland

*Hei*—Paran; Halisah; Yoreh; Beeroth; Hobah; Neshamah; Lakum; Makedah; Halla'ah. (57:10)

*Personnel*—Zorn, alto saxophone; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Greg Cohen, bass; Joey Baron, drums.



## Kenny Burrell Midnight At The Village Vanguard

Evidence 22124

★★★★½

The first of Kenny Burrell's four sessions at the Village Vanguard (the notes say three but miss a 1989 date for Contemporary) was nearly 40 years ago, a fact which tempts me to review the Village Vanguard. What other club venue has mastered the art of survival with such a skillful accommodation to both artistic and urban renewal?

But it's the art of Mr. Burrell, who is no slouch at survival himself, that is the business here. One of his longevity secrets, no doubt, is consistency of form, inspiration and sound—dividends paid nightly by his sagacious virtuosity. *Midnight At The Village Vanguard*, from 1993, is a prime example. There is no sense of excess in his work here; no flaunting arpeggios, no overstuffed codas. Burrell prefers to soothe, not startle, and is very much a fundamentalist of the instrument when it comes to his sound. Its character and intonation, in fact, are remarkably like the Charlie Christian you hear on the famous Minton's jam sessions.

"Come Sunday" probably qualifies as the magnum opus here, though "Little Sunflower" rambles on longer. "Sunday" doesn't ramble. Burrell renders the Ellington staple from *Black, Brown And Beige* with hymnlike lyricism on acoustic guitar, then guns the tempo with a vamp figure and continues on electric guitar. The second part is the "David Danced [Before The Lord With All His Might]" sequence, a minor distinction at best, since Ellington merely scavenged "Come Sunday" from *BB&B* (1943), retitled it and installed it in his first Sacred Concert ('64). Burrell plays in a powerful and concise groove on the shoulders of Sherman Ferguson's rock-solid, swinging brush beat and bass accents, and even neatly inserts snatches of other Ellingtonisms ("I'm Beginning To See The Light") along the way.

The pieces alternate from fast to slow to fast, etc., and end with a swaggering turn through "Do What You Gotta Do," a standard stop-time blues. This contrasts with a more intimate and brittle Burrell CD (*Lotus Blossom*, Concord Jazz) recorded in 1995 and issued about the same time. In any case, the guitarist clearly

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Howard Mandel	John Ephland
<b>JOHN ZORN MASADA</b> <i>Hei (Five)</i>		★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>KENNY BURRELL</b> <i>Midnight At The Village Vanguard</i>		★★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★
<b>CASSANDRA WILSON</b> <i>New Moon Daughter</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★½
<b>PEE WEE RUSSELL</b> <i>The Individualism Of Pee Wee Russell</i>		★★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½



remains in command of one of the most prolific and stable careers in jazz. —John McDonough

**Midnight At The Village Vanguard**—*Bemsha Swing; Little Sunflower; Cup Bearers; Ruby My Dear; Cottontail; My One And Only Love; Come Sunday/David Danced; Parker's Mood; Do What You Gotta Do; Kenny's Theme.* (76:52 minutes)

**Personnel**—Burrell, guitar; James Williams, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Sherman Ferguson, drums.



## Cassandra Wilson

### New Moon Daughter

Blue Note 32861

★★★★★

Instant classic. *New Moon Daughter* is sure to further the career and reputation Cassandra Wilson's earned as *fin de siècle*

diva and jazz siren entrancing both devotees of the avant garde and those who know no jazz at all. A warmly inviting and authentic voice promoting multicultural roots, who imbues all she appropriates with genius far surpassing post-modern gloss, Wilson recasts the American songbook so hits of Billie Holiday, Son House, Hoagy Carmichael and Hank Williams ring true alongside those of U2, the Monkees and Neil Young. She limns her own songs of faith facing adversity and the solace of sensual love—essentially, blues themes—in a manner both unassuming and persuasive, seemingly offhand but compelling to the point of seduction. Arrangement-wise, too, Wilson and producer Craig Street, her match, prove that less is more, silence equals suspense, and resonant ambiance is emphatically dramatic.

Overall, Wilson's art is more comparable to Billie's and Carmen McRae's than to Ella's or Sassie's—which is to say every drop of her thick chocolate alto bears the weight of coherent storytelling before it indulges the glories of vocal display. Yet Wilson has range, and when she releases a higher-register phrase, or a quicker-than-usual string of phonemes, you realize that musical restraint has let her insinuate herself as close as a slow dance partner. That's just fine: though her tempos are moderate, Wilson swings with the insouciance of a natural, remaining ever aware of and responsive to the instrumental overtures taking place around her.

Despite the stark mordancy of "Fruit," there's no overkill here—rather, gem-like tracks around five minutes long you'll wish were

longer. With acoustic guitarist Ross, specialty plectrist Breit, fiddler Burnham, accordionist Cedras and deft percussionists Bowne, Baptista and Haynes back from Wilson's phenomenal *Blue Light 'Til Dawn*, and too-rarely-heard cornetists Haynes and Morris adding their cries, the stage might be set for an ambitious, extended, daringly improvised composition.

Well, there's spontaneity aplenty, though it occurs within designs as conscious as the choice of pedal steel for "Skylark," the ironic subversion of "Last Train," the reconception of "Death Letter." What's so satisfying is that Wilson's realizations revivify material from within their original intent—and her own "Solomon," "Find Him" and "Little Warm Death" also fuse meaning and musical feeling into one complete experience. No, carp not about *New Moon Daughter*: the luscious ups and downs of mood and sound Street and Wilson sequenced render this album repeated pleasurable listening, and pace it—dark start to promising end—like one through-plotted piece. —Howard Mandel

**New Moon Daughter**—*Strange Fruit; Love Is Blindness; Solomon Sang; Death Letter; Skylark; Find Him; I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry; Last Train To Clarksville; Until; Little Warm Death; Memphis; Harvest Moon.* (59:43)

**Personnel**—Wilson, vocals, acoustic guitar; Chris Whitley, resophonic guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Graham Haynes, Lawrence "Butch" Morris, cornet; Brandon Ross, acoustic and octave guitars; Kevin Breit, acoustic, electric and resophonic guitars, tenor banjo, Irish bozouki; Dougie Bowne, floor tom, drums; Cyro Baptista, percussion; Mark Anthony Peterson, bass; Gib Wharton, pedal steel; Charles Burnham, violin; Tony Cedras, accordion; Jeff Haynes, bongo, percussion; the Peepers, background vocals.

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## Pee Wee Russell

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★★★★

The unique clarinet sound of Charles Ellsworth "Pee Wee" Russell brightened many a cloudy session upon entering the scene back in the late '20s. With his rubbery phrasing, sometimes coarse tone and wonderful—though downright bizarre—melodic ideas, Russell's one for whom the title "individual" always rings true.

The music on this CD was recorded in 1952, live at George Wein's Storyville club in Boston,

just after Russell returned from a major operation on the overused liver that almost cost him the last 20 years of his life. Along with the solid rhythm section (very boisterous drumming from Kenny John), the clarinetist is joined by trombonist Eph Resnick—who had studied with pianist Lennie Tristano—and a 24-year-old Ruby Braff, whose trumpet already sounds fluidly fab. But the real interest here is on Russell, who blows brilliantly despite his recuperative state.

Ignoring supposed boundaries between trad and modern, Russell made outlandishly creative statements in the context of a familiar repertoire of conventional Chicago-style jazz. Take his solo on the mouldy old standby "St. James Infirmary"—laconic and blithely unconcerned with the changes, his clarinet floats hauntingly over the group, as if it was having an out-of-body experience. Following a barrelhouse piano solo and Resnick's smooth 'bone on "St. Louis Blues," check out the unusual shape and unexpected repetitions of Russell's short spot. Thrills galore, courtesy of the man called Pee Wee.

The Japanese Denon company has been busy reissuing Savoy's catalog for a few years. Here, they've made an unfortunate decision by reissuing the '70s double album exactly as it came out then, replete with microscopic liner notes (reduced from 12-inches down to three!). Instead of reissuing the reissue, they could easily have gone back to the original two LPs

(original covers would have been preferable) and augmented them with Dan Morgenstern's super text in a readable font size.

The package may not be perfect, but the music is certainly worth it. Russell rules!

—John Corbett

**The Individualism Of Pee Wee Russell**—*Love Is Just Around The Corner; Squeeze Me; Ballin' The Jack; I'll Do Most Anything For You; California Here I Come; St. James Infirmary; Baby Won't You Please Come Home; The Lady's In Love With You; Struttin' With Some Barbecue; St. Louis Blues; Sweet Lorraine; Sentimental Journey; If I Had You; Coquette; The Lady Is A Tramp.* (71:33)

**Personnel**—Russell, clarinet; Ruby Braff, trumpet; Eph Resnick, trombone; Red Richards, piano; John Field, bass; Kenny John, drums.



## Barbara Dennerlein

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## Take Off!

Verve 314 57 664

★★★★

## That's Me enja 7043

★★★

**W**hat a difference a couple of years makes. Sometimes that's all it takes to graduate to the next level. Judging between her flawed enja finale, *That's Me*, and her scintillating Verve debut, *Take Off!*, that's most certainly the case with Hammond B-3 ace Barbara Dennerlein. Just as the exclamation in its title suggests, her new recording—featuring old gigging friends trombonist Ray Anderson, guitarist Mitch Watkins and drummer Dennis Chambers—soars with funky delight.

Dennerlein parties down as she cooks up hefty slabs of churning grooves plenty hip for dancing. Uptempo monsters include the rowdy title piece, where she and her bandmates whoop it up for a full 10 minutes; the dj dream tune "Give It Up" (again, more spirited group interplay); and "Victory Blues," the swinging, organ-burbling lead-off number.

On *That's Me*, the German-born Dennerlein also visits Groovesville frequently. That's good news because she's at her best pumping tunes like "Grandfather's Funk" and "Dancing Shoes" full of fluid B-3 tempo surges. She also settles into a fine bebop-greets-funk zone on "Monkology," with rollicking Thelonious allusions in the head and Chambers undergirding the proceedings with a hip shuffle rhythm. Anderson's composition, "One For Miss D." (the only piece here she didn't write herself), also shines with its bright comic strut blown into motion by the clowning trombonist. But Dennerlein's show stalls when the pace slackens. The clues-infused waltz "Three Hearts" stands as a rather tepid ballad until Anderson and Dennerlein close it with instrumental glee. Likewise, the back-to-back "Love Affair" numbers flag with a melodramatic organ solo and overall dispassionate playing until Watkins sounds the wake-up call with a rousing solo spot half way through "Forever And Never." Then there's the end song, "Downtown N.Y.," which suffers from its overblown playing and slick, almost gloomy feel.

The 32-year-old Dennerlein has rectified those shortcomings on *Take Off!* It's an inspired set that showcases her maturing strengths as composer, bandleader and B-3 talent. While the fiery tunes are still the highlights (she gives the funk a boost by enlisting the support of percus-

sionist Don Alias, vibes player Joe Locke and, on half the numbers, bassist Lonnie Plaxico), she also scores with the less flashy numbers. The intriguing "Fata Morgana" opens slowly then develops into a picturesque mid-tempo ride with Anderson's distinctive 'bone voicings and Mike Sim's exotic-sounding soprano saxophone lines. The melancholic ballad "Purple" veers dangerously close to lite jazz fare but is nonetheless delivered with deep passion. And Tadd Dameron's "Hot House" (the sole cover) is treated to a straightahead bop read featuring the crisp harmonies of trumpeter Roy Hargrove and Sim on alto sax.

—Dan Ouellette

**Take Off!**—*Victory Blues; Take Off; Fast Food; Fata Morgana; Hot House; Purple; Fly Away; Bo-Peep; Green Paradise; Give It Up.* (68:44)

**Personnel**—Dennerlein, Hammond B-3 organ, foot-pedal bass, synthesizer, piano; Roy Hargrove, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mike Sim, soprano, alto, tenor, baritone saxophones; Ray Anderson, trombone; Mitch Watkins, acoustic, electric guitars; Joe Locke, acoustic, MIDI vibraphones; Lonnie Plaxico, acoustic, electric basses; Dennis Chambers, drums; Don Alias, percussion.

**That's Me**—*Grandfather's Funk; Dancing Shoes; That's Me; Three Hearts; Monkology; Love Affair—The Ballad; Love Affair—Forever And Never; One For Miss D.; Downtown N.Y.* (63:41)

**Personnel**—Dennerlein, Hammond B-3 organ, foot-pedal bass, synthesizers; Ray Anderson, trombone; Bob Berg, tenor saxophone; Mitch Watkins, electric guitar; Dennis Chambers, drums.

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★★★★

**N**ow, the mainstream, bop-oriented school and the no-holds-barred corps of the avant garde have been co-mingling. Lovano is one of several players who produces music that swings yet is not always structure-bound, speaking with authority, authenticity and a singular voice, shaping, as did Ornette and Trane in the '60s, jazz to come.

These two live recordings display Lovano's fondness for group interaction and piano-less trio playing (the quartet with Tom Harrell), for flat-out cooking (the quartet with Mulgrew Miller) and for exploring the possibilities of larger-ensemble playing (the *Worlds* recording).

The Vanguard sessions are extraordinary. The Harrell/Cox/Hart band, recorded in 1994, is loosely conceived, bringing out Lovano's freewheeling side. On either tenor, soprano or C melody sax (where he resembles Eric Dolphy on bass clarinet), he'll play simply one moment, deliver a complex swirl the next. On the fairly straightforward "Fort Worth" or the rough-and-tumble "Uprising," low register tones are followed by sudden, split altissimo tones. On "I Can't Get Started," chords are honored, then disavowed. Bolstered by his hurly-burly yet buoyant tone, Lovano never fails to make music.

The wondrous Harrell—another chance-taker but with closer ties to bebop—uses these open frameworks mostly to issue melodically graceful, rhythmically powerful lines, though he, too, sometimes eschews the harmony. His tone, a firm center surrounded by waves of soft air, sings. The superb Cox, unjustly underrated, and dynamo Hart are phenomena, building fires everywhere.

The Miller band, recorded in 1995, showcases an infrequently revealed Lovano: the modern-minded saxophonist who has bebop in his heart. Backed to a tee by Miller, McBride and Nash, the tenorman plays old chestnuts (Bird's "Willie" he learned as a youth from his father, Big Tony L., a king of Cleveland tenorists) and personal favorites: Trane's "Lonnie's Lament," delivered at a spiffy medium groove, and "26-2." Here Lovano is at his most accessible, swinging down the house, without dropping his quality level one iota. The exquisite rhythm team matches him move for move, solos with abandon to boot.

*Worlds*, recorded in France in 1989, is a predecessor of Lovano's "Universal Language" sextet, boasting an interesting collection of frontline horns, including Silvano's voice, to give life to these expressive pieces. This album is often rambunctious, as when Frisell and Valente solo simultaneously on "Worlds," or when Lovano and his singer/wife roam freely on "Round Dance." Strong rhythm underpins everything, which aids Lovano's spirited improvisations, as on "Square." Evocative stuff.

—Zan Stewart

**Live At The Village Vanguard**—Disc One: *Fort Worth*; *Birds Of Springtime Gone By*; *I Can't Get Started*; *Uprising*; *Sail Away*; *Blues Not To Lose*; *Song And Dance*. (61-28)

**Personnel**—Lovano, tenor, soprano, C melody saxophones; Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Anthony Cox, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Disc Two: *Lonnie's Lament*; *Reflections*; *Little Willie Leaps*;

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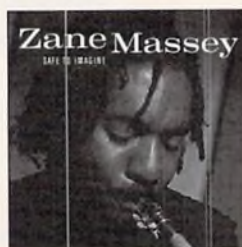
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Ari Brown's recent activity is dizzying. He is currently in Elvin Jones' group, Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio, and has recorded with Lester Bowie, Malachi Thompson and others. *Ultimate Frontier* is the debut album from a Chicago tenor sax legend.



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Bob Blumenthal's review of *Brass Knuckles* (Massey's first Delmark album) said, "He has developed a big, groff tenor sax sound and a concept of great continuity and rhythmic momentum." *Safe To Imagine* is another stirring, emotional offering from an important voice of '90s jazz.



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*This Is All I Ask*; 26-2; Duke Ellington's *Sound Of Love*; *Sounds Of Joy*. (66:00)

**Personnel**—Lovano, tenor saxophone; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

**Worlds**—Worlds; Round Dance; Tafabalewa Square; Two Hearts; Spirit Of The Night; Lutetia; Bosstown. (56:48)

**Personnel**—Lovano, tenor, soprano saxophones, alto clarinet; Bill Frisell, guitar; Tim Hagans, trumpet; Gary Valente, trombone; Judi Silvano, voice; Henri Texier, bass; Paul Motian, drums.



## Mary Lou Williams

### Zodiac Suite

Smithsonian Folkways 40810

★★★★★

## Zoning Smithsonian Folkways 40811

★★★★★

In 1945, when *Zodiac Suite* hit the racks on 10-inch vinyl played at 78 rpm, Mary Lou Williams wasn't a young lioness of unknown quality, but a 35-year-old vet of a ranging performance circuit that included Midwest ballrooms and Manhattan nightclubs. She'd done her time on stage, carving a rep as a hip composer/arranger with Andy Kirk's Clouds of Joy. Kansas City was Williams' prime stomping ground, and during the '30s she inundated the area with the catchy melodies she seemed to ceaselessly concoct.

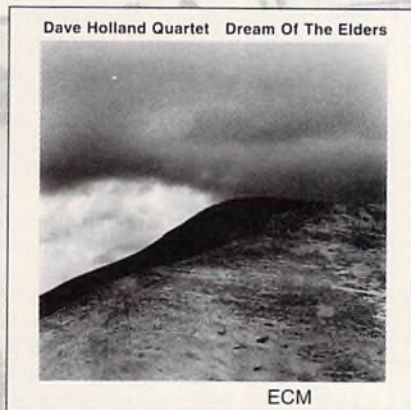
*Zodiac Suite* is the sound of a much-reduced unit working in the service of such irresistible themes. Blending sophistication and intimacy, these 17 tracks find bassist Al Lucas and drummer Jack Parker conversing with the pianist, offering bits of syncopation that inject a bluesy swagger into the parlor-music personality of the date. Duke Ellington and Jimmy Blanton had recorded their piano/bass duets five years previous, and the *Zodiac Suite* is kin to those historic exchanges. Yet it's hard to imagine Williams' intricate miniatures not raising the eyebrows of all who heard them at the time. Almost instantly memorable, their clever construction beguiled listeners by revamping the functions of theme and variation.

The tunes are utterly amiable; each sounds like something that could please a crowd gathered 'round a jukebox. But their pop facade can't hide the elaborate action taking place. Cadences shift, harmonies make unexpected turns, silence is revered. Most pieces evoke the spirit of their titles/signs. "Libra" is a waltzing fantasia, "Leo" a growling march; the saw agitation of "Gemini" comes neatly balanced. Their structures position Williams as a modernist, albeit one who was staunch in her dedication to blues power. The six alternate takes included offer a more comprehensive view of the pianist's esthetic coordinates.

Taking stock of Williams' artistic position during any given period is crucial, because she constantly maneuvered through new ideas. Advances were made with each era. By 1974's *Zoning*, she was one of the most adventurous keyboardists around. Her phrasing was intrepid, and her trio music included forays into dissonance. Here, a boogie motif might lead to a pattern of block chords, and be followed by some delicate dusting of the upper register—core elements were constantly being varied and technique abounds. But Williams was also willing to momentarily forsake melody to romp in zones where mannerisms are excluded. Second pianist Zita Carno trades progressive ideas on "Zoning Fungus II."

Determining the placement of pulses and deciding how to negotiate her chosen rhythms made Williams one of jazz's more thoughtful

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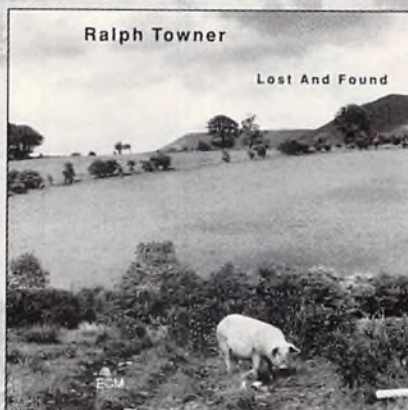
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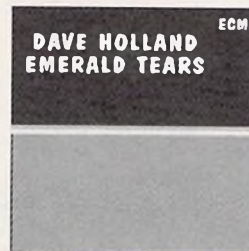
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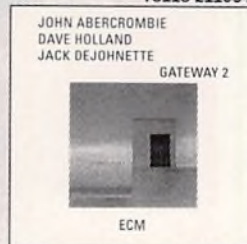


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small-band orchestraters. Some *Zoning* tracks ride funky grooves ("Play It Momma"), others open the door to the cosmos ("Ghosts Of Love"). Combining both was something at

which Williams was highly adept. All the music here—save "Olinga" and "Holy Ghost"—was written by her. With an attention to dynamics that made her an authority on swing,

both *Zodiac Suite* and *Zoning* remind us of jazz's mutability. Heard together they help explain how Williams was one of the masters.

—Jim Macnie

**Zodiac Suite**—Aries; Taurus; Gemini; Cancer; Leo; Virgo; Libra; Scorpio; Sagittarius; Capricorn; Aquarius; Pisces; Aries; Cancer; Virgo; Scorpio; Aquarius. (43:14)

**Personnel**—Williams, piano; Al Lucas, bass; Jack Parker, drums.

**Zoning**—Syl-O-Gism; Olinga; Medi II; Gloria; Intermision; Zoning Fungus II; Holy Ghost; Medi I; Rosa Mae; Ghost Of Love; Praise The Lord; Gloria; Play It Momma. (61:32)

**Personnel**—Williams, piano; Bob Cranshaw, electric bass; Mickey Roker, drums; Zita Carno, piano (5, 6).

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## Terence Blanchard

### The Heart Speaks

Columbia 67415

★★★

Since replacing his fellow New Orleanean Wynton Marsalis in Art Blakey's Messengers, Blanchard has carved his own conservative trumpet niche with a big, buttery tone and a little help from Spike Lee. Unlike Marsalis, he's no zealot; if anything, he's overcautious, seldom straying from the mainstream canon of Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and Freddie Hubbard.

For this foray into Brazilian music he's collaborated with Ivan Lins, whose compositions have been covered by more jazz artists than any Brazilian save Milton Nascimento and Antonio Carlos Jobim. The gentle, cinematic structures suit the trumpeter's style to a T, and Blanchard intones the complex but appealing melodies almost unadorned, using a smearsy tone to create vocal inflections, with Lins sometimes singing along as unobtrusively as a shadow.

Blanchard does bring out the jazzy aspect of Lins' songs, so that "Antes Que Seja Tarde," for example, sounds like Davis' "So What," and "Congada Blues" resembles Wayne Shorter's "Footprints." He also shifts the beat in a jazzier direction, resulting in rhythms that slog stiffly between swing and samba. Many of the tempos are painfully slow, and Blanchard's deliberate, unhurried improvisations tend to drag, but his playing, while derivative, is never clichéd, and his sassy swagger carries the day on tunes like "Nocturna" and "Choros Das Aguas." In this

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languid atmosphere, pianist Edward Simon's introspective solos shine, but the most impressive performer is Lins, who plays his own piano on "Meu Pais" and his theme song "Love Dance," crooning in a soft, high blur of a voice that suggests Nascimento without the falsetto.

—Larry Birnbaum

**The Heart Speaks**—Aparecida: *Antes Que Seja Tarde; Meu Pais (My Country); Valsa Mineira; The Heart Speaks; Congada Blues; Nocturna; Just For Nana; Orizimbo And Rosicler; Choros Das Aguas; Love Dance/Comercar De Novo; Menino; Aparecida Reprise.* (64:24)

**Personnel**—Blanchard, trumpet; Ivan Lins, vocals (1-4, 6, 8, 9, 11-13), piano (3, 11); Paulinho Da Costa, percussion (1-4, 6, 9, 12, 13); Oscar Castro-Neves, guitar (1-3, 9, 13); Edward Simon, piano (1, 2, 4-10, 12, 13); David Pulphus, bass (1-10, 12, 13); Troy Davis, drums (1-7, 9, 10, 12, 13); David Bohanovich (2), Fred Zlotkin (8, 10), cello.



## Bill Mays Trio

**An Ellington Affair**  
Concord Jazz 4651

★★★★

**P**aying tribute to Duke Ellington is one of those dangerous propositions. First, it sounds like a good idea: great music, broad appeal. Then, with any luck, it occurs to the person making the recording that there had better be some way of distinguishing this effort from all those other tributes out there.

Working with the late Carl Jefferson of Concord, Bill Mays hit upon a solution that works. This recording avoids the most over-worked Ellington compositions and gives a fresh quality to the well-known ones it does include. Dissonances added to the harmonies and a 5/4 meter transform "Satin Doll" into a more brooding tune than would seem possible after hearing, say, a perky Stephane Grappelli rendition.

What's interesting is that the interpretations are neither completely nostalgic nor totally modern but a savvy mixture of the two. This versatile trio can conjure up a boogie-woogie feel on "I'm Just A Lucky So And So" that's not so far from an Ellington recording made in the '30s, or summon images of Charleston dancers kicking up their heels to the ricky-tick time of "Dancers In Love." Then on the "Flower" medley, Mays shows the influence of post-Ellington pianists, notably Bill Evans.

Mays himself commands a range of expres-

sion that can create a sweeping quality, as on "Something To Live For" or a sparer, quieter approach on "Don't You Know I Care (Or Don't You Care To Know)." His playing on "Day Dream," set at a sleepy tempo, is especially appealing for the way he relaxes and explores all the reaches of the keyboard. As ever, Goldsby and Nash keep a solid time feel behind him.

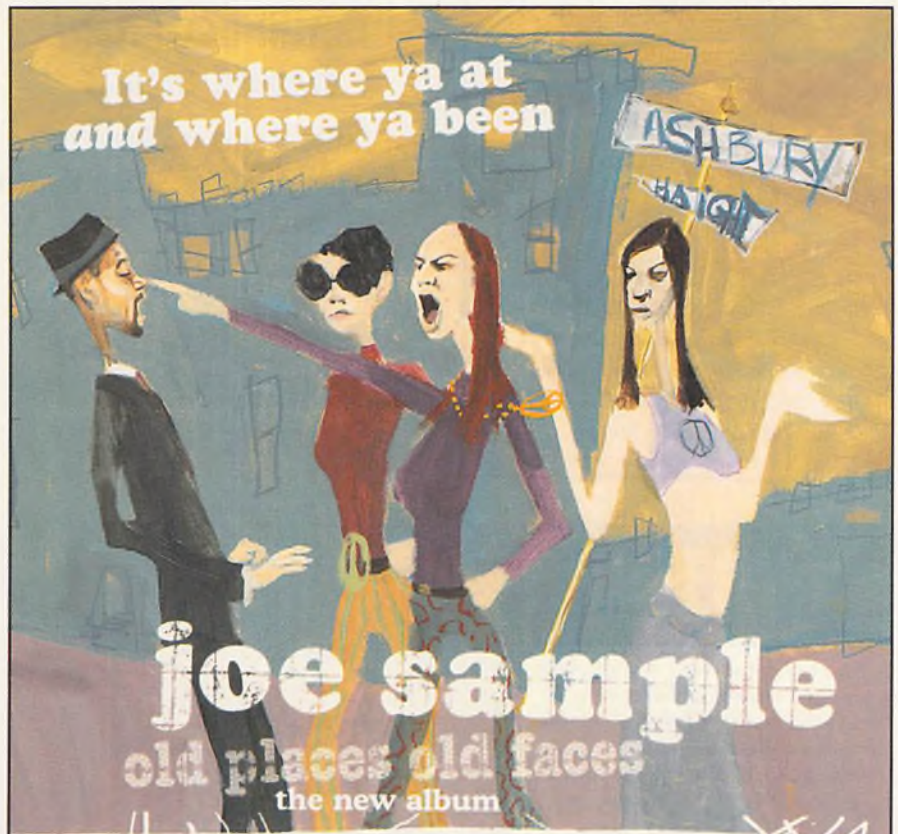
One curiosity on the disc is the frenetic, bop-pish "Wig Wise," which has a dense texture similar to Ellington's 1962 recording with

Charles Mingus and Max Roach (*Money Jungle*, Blue Note). In the end, it's sensitivity to the legend of Ellington that allows Mays, Goldsby and Nash to go their own way on this tribute.

—Elaine Guregian

**An Ellington Affair**—*I'm Just A Lucky So And So; Satin Doll; I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart; Day Dream; Wig Wise; "Flower" Medley—Little African Flower/Single Petal Of A Rose/Passion Flower; Dancers In Love; Don't You Know I Care (Or Don't You Care To Know); My Azure (To Duke); Something To Live For.* (57:00)

**Personnel**—Mays, piano; John Goldsby, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.



This master keyboardist follows-up an album of incisive jazz funk (*Did You Feel That?*), a set of lavishly orchestrated mood pieces (*Invitation*), a brilliant instrumental concept album (*Ashes To Ashes*), and a splendid collaboration with a slew of vocalists (*Spellbound*), by returning to an acoustic trio accompanied by some longtime musical compatriots.

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**CD REVIEWS**



**Borah Bergman/  
Hamid Drake**

**Reflections On Ornette  
Coleman And The Stone House**  
Soul Note 121280

★★★½

**Borah Bergman/  
Roscoe Mitchell with  
Thomas Buckner**

**First Meeting**  
Knitting Factory Works 175

★★★

**A**n explosive presence, pianist Borah Bergman threatens to overwhelm the listener with a flood of ideas. The high-speed turbulence of Bergman's performances can be off-putting, so prickly and challenging as to limit opportunities for emotional connection. In addition to his "The Stone House," Bergman uses four Ornette Coleman tunes from *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* to launch agitated improvisations in this live performance with Chicago percussionist Hamid Drake. Two frenzied versions of "Focus On Sanity" are scarcely recognizable, but Bergman's takes on "Lonely Woman" and "Peace" are remarkable, as the pianist breaks the themes down to component parts and re-imagines them. On "Lonely Woman," Bergman reverses the roles associated with the pianist's left and right hands, playing the melody with the left and using the right for emphasis and contrast, then builds up a rumbling wall of sound with his left, creating a drone effect with impressive overtones. Drake constantly adapts his attack to complement Bergman's shifts in direction. On "Peace," he accentuates Bergman's fury with thunderous crescendos.

Despite Bergman's knockout technique, *Reflections On Ornette Coleman And The Stone House* offers little insight into Coleman's music. Bergman's approach recalls John Zorn's *Spy Vs. Spy* tribute to Ornette, as each adopts Coleman's themes to support an agenda, but loses important facets of Coleman's music in the translation.

In contrast to Bergman's hyperkinetic playing on *Reflections*, the duets and trios of *First Meeting* are often ruminative and austere. On most tracks, Bergman permits silences, plays with restraint and adds short flashes of color in conversation with Roscoe Mitchell. On soprano and alto saxophones, Mitchell provides the primary narrative and continuity, though his voicings are often spare and constrained to the point of frugality. These abstract encounters lean more to the esthetic of improvised "new music" than to the jazz idiom. For "Stone Mountain," the tension increases considerably, as Mitchell and Bergman engage in a dense, high-energy exchange of ideas. Thomas Buckner's baritone voice is added for "One Mind," intertwining with Mitchell's saxophone lines. Buckner's eerie, wordless vocals make use of an extended vocal technique to give the piece a human quality that tempers the detachment and severity pervading much of *First Meeting*.

—Jon Andrews

**Reflections On Ornette Coleman And The Stone House**—*Focus On Sanity; Lonely Woman; Peace; Congeniality: The Stone House; Focus On Sanity.* (53:40)  
**Personnel**—Bergman, piano; Drake, drums.

**First Meeting**—*First Meeting; Deep Delta; Stone Mountain; Clear Blue; One Mind.* (62:24)  
**Personnel**—Bergman, piano; Mitchell, soprano, alto saxophones; Buckner, voice (5).

**"CYNTHIA CRANE, A TREAT!"**

—Michael Bourne, WBGO-NJ

Fourteen bittersweet midnight-blue songs, featuring smoky-voiced Cynthia Crane ("exciting chanteuse" Variety) and arranger/accompanist Mike Renzi, backed by Jay Leonhart, bass; Ronnie Zito, drums; Bill Easley, sax; Jay Berliner, guitar; Warren Chiasson, vibes; Wayne Andre, trombone and Grammy Award-winner Michael Leonhart on trumpet.

This CD marks Crane's graduation to a major force among the new crop of American jazz singers

—Martin Schaeffer BACKSTAGE

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## CD REVIEWS

# JAZZ

## Paris When It Sizzled

by Howard Mandel

**A**s issued on 15 CDs, the Disques Vogue recordings originally produced for post-World War II French jazz fandom attest to the enduring vitality of artists we've come to take for granted. Since Gerry Mulligan's passed, his two volumes of clear-eyed pointillism (in quartet with Bob Brookmeyer) may gain some notice. Let the following comments alert you to other delights ripe for rediscovery.

demonstrated bravura wit and grace worthy of his swing stardom during October '49 with tenor saxist Byas, second trumpeter Merrill Steptter and three more unknowns; a month later with Steptter, Bill Coleman, two European tenorists, an alto/bari saxophonist, and rhythm trio; and on eight tracks with Alix Cornbelle's orchestra (but Buck's arrangements) from '53. When the beat gets loggy, his fellows turn routine, or the material lapses towards corn, Clayton masterfully redeems the proceedings.

*Lee Konitz/Bob Brookmeyer In Paris*



WILLIAM F. GOTTLEBER

Dizzy: innovative and satisfying

**Dizzy Gillespie In Paris, Volume 1** (Disques Vogue 09026-68360; 77:46: ★★★★★) This disc captures an exuberant live concert from '53, generously featuring bop singer Joe Carroll and (on "I Can't Get Started" only) Sarah Vaughan. There's both inspired clowning ("Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac," "Ooh-Shoo-Bee-Doo-Be") and serious blowing. Diz counts off ferocious tempos and plays blazing ("The Champ"), lyrical ("My Man"), innovative and satisfying horn, reminding us what jazz sorely lacks. Little-known alto/tenorist Bill Graham and rhythm-trio pianist Wade Legge, bassist Lou Hackney, drummer Al Jones acquit themselves admirably, too. *Volume 2* includes Don Byas and Nat Peck amid French sidemen.

**James Moody/Frank Foster In Paris** (Disques Vogue 09026-68208; 73:53: ★★★½) Moody/Foster combines Moody's dates with a French quintet and settings for strings and winds from '51 with six tracks by Foster and a local rhythm trio from '54. Bird's influence on Moody is particularly evident on the combo's fast "Lover Come Back To Me," but he sounds only like himself on the ballads ("That's My Desire," "More Than You Know"). Moody plays tenor as well as alto on the five rococo orchestrated numbers. Foster is burly yet relaxed throughout his session, and the Gauls lend fine support.

**Buck Clayton In Paris** (Disques Vogue 09026-68358; 66:14: ★★★★★) Clayton

(Disques Vogue 09026-68359; 57:12: ★★★★★) Konitz's '53 date, cut during his visit with Stan Kenton's orchestra, is a textbook on thematic interpretation, abstraction and improvised variation. He assays five radically different takes of "I'll Remember April," two "All The Things" and two "These Foolish Things" (plus "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To") with childhood pal Jimmy Gourley on hot guitar and Stan Levey using brushes to keep the beat hopping. Lee's tone is clean, dry and focused, his fingers fleet as his imagination. Valve trombonist Brookmeyer, with the rhythm duo from Mulligan's quartet, Gourley and Renaud, offers two Basie tunes, "Lover Man" and Bird's "Steeplechase," with deftly tempered virtuosity.

**Sidney Bechet In Paris, Volume 1** (Disques Vogue 09026-68357; 47:46: ★★★½) This one opens with the great expatriate soprano saxist outlining themes of his '53 ballet score "La Nuit Est Une Sorciere" on piano and discussing them in French. A 23-minute symphonic version of the grandiose and rather Gothic work (with Bechet soloing powerfully) follows, then a rendition of his 24-minute symphonic rhapsody-ballet "La Colline Du Delta (Hillside On The Delta)" from '64, with Claude Luter credibly taking the soprano sax role (as Bechet died in '59). More than a curiosity, this album demonstrates that even the earliest jazzmen harbored—nay, fulfilled—composerly aspirations.

DB



BEYOND

Bring The Noise

by Jon Andrews

Noise—the final frontier. One person's symphony is another's cacaphony. Artists as diverse as John Zorn and Pat Metheny have experimented with noise as a compositional tool, or an end in itself. As with free-jazz, there is no gain from casual listening. This music works best on a visceral level, through committed listening at an enveloping volume.

**Elliott Sharp/Carbon: *Interference*** (Atavistic 50; 61:27; ★★★★★) The latest configuration of Sharp's Carbon ensemble may be his tightest and most focused vehicle. Sharp continues to emphasize a group sound, with drummer Joseph Trump's big beat prominent in the mix, while Sharp's singular voice on doubleneck guitarbass mingles with David Weinstein's samples and Zeena Parkins' anxious, chattering electric harp. Sharp not only devises his own instruments and processing, but he's achieved a distinctive vocabulary and compositional logic. Sharp's solos are twisted and tightly wound, twitchy with pent-up energy. (Atavistic:



Elliott Sharp: twitchy

P.O. Box 578266, Chicago IL 60657-8266)

**Borbetomagus: *Experience The Magic*** (Agaric 1992; 58:52; ★★★½) When the roar of Borbetomagus tears through the speakers, one concludes that a monster has occupied the stereo. Two saxophones and one electric guitar lose much of their definition, resolving into one organic, feedback-charged howl. Without familiar reference points, you listen for variation, overtones and color shifts. Dense, amorphous and loud. *Experience The Magic* tests the limits of players, listeners and engineers alike. (Agaric: 3

Haring Ave., Sparkill NY 10976)

**Hooker/Rinaldo/Parkins: *The Gift Of Tongues*** (Knitting Factory Works 179; 70:34; ★★★★★) This live trio performance strikes with almost elemental force. Imagine the roll and crash of William Hooker's drums as thunder, the dense waves and squalls created by Lee Rinaldo's guitar as clouds and Zeena Parkins' piercing electric harp as lightning. Rinaldo is best known as an unorthodox guitarist for the influential alternative-rock group Sonic Youth who relishes sonic textures, rich with feedback and overtones. "Stamina" is a punishing, ultimately cathartic 54-minute marathon of turbulence, with the indefatigable Hooker charting the course.

**Wayne Horvitz and Pigpen: *Live In Poland*** (Cavity Search 22; 61:28; ★★★½) With Naked City and the President behind him, Horvitz' work with Pigpen centers on his approach to sampling. Horvitz adopts a gritty guitar sound on "Band Of Joeyes" and "The Front," and feeds Briggan Krauss' sampled alto sax lines back for an impromptu saxophone choir on "Cause I'm In Love Yeah." Horvitz assumes other disguises, and injects streams of sampled sounds. Spirited and occasionally uneven, *Live In Poland* includes a jumping version of Eric Dolphy's "Miss Ann." (Cavity Search: P.O. Box 42246, Portland OR 97242)

**Earwax Control: *2 Live*** (Naim Audio 007; 73:23; ★★★½) Away from his duties with the Pat Metheny Group, drummer Paul Wertico pursues raucous, free-flowing improvisations with Chicago-based Earwax Control. Wertico's credits include "weird noises and feedback." He's also the center of gravity, maintaining pulses and grooves, surrounded by Jeff Czech's guitar and violin, and Gordon James' keyboards. Healthy doses of distortion and "found sounds" intrude, often changing the direction of the performance. Earwax Control balances creativity with a sense of fun. (Naim Audio: Southampton Rd., Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2LN, England)

**Faust: *Rien*** (Table of the Elements 24; 42:57; ★★★★★) Reunited after 20 years, this German ensemble once again blends rock beats, improvisation, electronics, industrial sounds and performance art. *Rien* is a challenging puzzle, an evolving freeform construction perpetrated by guitarist Jean-Hervé Peron and drummer/percussionist Werner Diermaier. Peron's buzzing, distorted guitar lines and drones blend with power tools. The hypnotic "Long Distance Calls In The Desert" is a perverse mixture of wind, distant trumpet and crunching machine sounds. *Rien* is fascinating, occasionally infuriating and utterly unique. (Table of the Elements: P.O. Box 5524, Atlanta GA 30307) **DB**

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# REISSUES

## Corner On The Classics (II)

by John Corbett

**C**lassics Records offers an instructive lesson: by unearthing and combining material from different sessions for different record labels, they provide a more complete perspective on a musician's work than rigidly label-specific reissues, like those so diligently undertaken by RCA/Bluebird, Decca and Columbia (see "Reissues" Dec. '95). Indeed, using its giant catalog as raw data, any number of alternative histories of jazz might well suggest themselves.

**Thomas Morris: 1923-1927 (Classics 823; 60:36; ★★★½)** A fascinating, forgotten figure lost in the competitive waters of early jazz, cornetist Thomas Morris is primarily known for his involvement with other musicians, including Clarence Williams and Fats Waller. However, the native New Yorker led tough bands through the period covered here, recording for Okeh, Victor and the more arcane Van Dyke label. Eight of the tracks include cornetist Bubber Miley (prior to his Ellington involvement) blowing in fine form, and later tracks also feature pre-Ellington trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton. Morris' wah-ful cornet work sounds great on "Lonesome Journey Blues," and on other early cuts there are lots of neat percussion breaks, zany vaudevillian sax blurps, tuba honks, banjo skanks and 'bone blats—mostly by unknown musicians. Morris won't make you pack up your King Oliver records, but he's definitely worth a rummage through the dustbin.

**Edgar Hayes And His Orchestra: 1937-1938 (Classics 730; 72:00; ★★★★★)** Pianist Edgar Hayes gained experience with the Mills Blue Rhythm Band (who have five discs of their own on Classics). With his own big band, recording for Variety, Vocalion, Brunswick and Decca, he spotlit his exceptional arranging. Check out his intricate and unique reworking of the Tizol-Ellington classic "Caravan." Swinging fervently in this pre-bop context is drummer Kenny Clarke; he doubles on vibraphone on "Satan Takes A Holiday." "Edgar Steps Out" gives a clear earshot of Hayes' strengths as a pianist, while tenor saxophonist Joe Garland—who was acclaimed a few years later for his work with Louis Armstrong—is a strong presence on the big-band pieces, including his own "Stomping At The Renny."

**Edmond Hall: 1937-1944 (Classics 830; 66:55; ★★★★★½)** Lesser known than fellow clarinetists Sidney Bechet and Johnny Dodds,



Sheer manic brilliance: Earl Hines

Edmond Hall was on their par, leading superb bands like those on this compilation. He's expressive, soaring and flexible—a thoroughly enchanting, down-home soloist. The most unusual of the groups here is the drumless quartet that recorded for Blue Note in 1941 (four tracks, all prominently featuring Charlie Christian's acoustic guitar) with Meade Lux Lewis exclusively on celeste. Somehow, Lewis makes that instrument's novel exotic shimmer get low down 'n' dirty. Sessions with six- and seven-piece groups (the latter recording for Commodore) powered by drummer Big Sid Catlett might draw comparisons with contemporaneous sides by the Port of Harlem Jazzmen. Check out James P. Johnson teasing the keys off the piano on "Royal Garden Blues" and "Blue Note Boogie," or Hall tossing a quick cascade of notes into the theme of "The Man I Love."

**Earl Hines And His Orchestra: 1939-1940 (Classics 567; 60:36; ★★★★★)** I'd recommend this entire release on the strength of one track alone. Of course, the fifth disc of Hines' music on Classics contains many other magic moments, including some with crooner Billy Eckstine and with the pianist's effortless orchestra. But skip to the eighth cut, "Child Of A Disordered Brain," one of two 1939 solos on a Storytone electric piano; here is sheer manic brilliance, absolute rhythmic and melodic genius. It should be required listening for anyone who thinks that "out" music came from thin air. Like the more obscure jazz characters documented by the label, Classics attends to folks like Hines with uncommon precision and thought, in the process turning up gems like this one.

DB

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# BLINDFOLD TEST

APRIL 1996

## Jim Hall

by Michael Bourne

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.

**P**at Metheny once observed that his generation of jazz guitar, including John Scofield, John Abercrombie, Mick Goodrick and Bill Frisell, all have very different sounds and yet somewhere in all of their sounds is Jim Hall. "That's a nice compliment, but I don't really hear myself," says Jim Hall. "The ironic thing is that I now listen to *these* guys. Music is a family and we all learn from each other. I started playing as close as I could like Charlie Christian, and then I encountered Wes Montgomery and Tal Farlow. I said to myself that I'd never be able to do what they do, so I'd better find Jim Hall."

Jim Hall found his uniquely lyrical musical self in the '50s and '60s playing a whole spectrum of jazz from Ornette Coleman to Paul Desmond, Bill Evans to Sonny Rollins. Hall's newest album, *Dialogues* (Telarc—see "CD Reviews" Feb. '96), features encounters with Bill Frisell, Mike Stern, Gil Goldstein, Tom Harrell and Joe Lovano.

Amazingly, this is Hall's first Blindfold Test for **DB**. He requested that the selections not be limited to guitar players. He wrote extensive notes while listening and often chuckled with delight.

### Hargrove/McBride/Scott

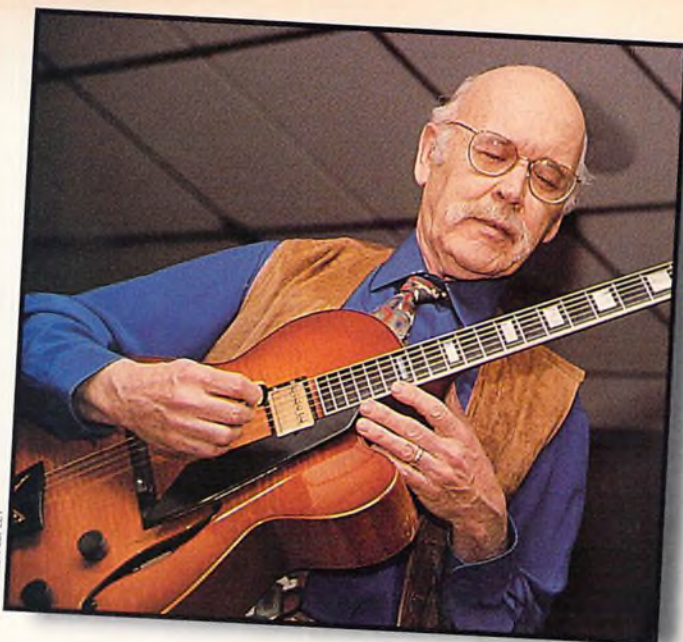
"Star Eyes" (from *Parker's Mood*, Verve) Roy Hargrove, trumpet; Christian McBride, bass; Stephen Scott, piano.

That was fascinating. I enjoyed that. I'm inferring from the bridge quote that it might be Roy Hargrove. It kept my attention, and, for me, that's the key, to get somebody's attention and hold it. I loved the ending. I thought the bass set a really nice groove right at the start. I was curious what they were going to play. I thought first that it was an old Horace Silver record or it might be Freddie Hubbard, and then they started playing "Star Eyes" and I was surprised. I like the arrangement. I think on the trumpet solo it went from 3 into 4 on the bridge and back to 3, then they did the opposite on the piano solo. As a lover of melodies, I missed the bridge melody. It's a really nice melody and the piano kind of avoided it. I loved the piano voicings at the end, the nice close chords he was playing. It kept my interest all the way, even though the actual improvising was a bit predictable. It was like late-bebop kind of playing, but I loved the whole thing. Having no idea what's going to follow, I'd rate this pretty high, like 4 stars, just for an imaginative presentation of the tune.

### Fred Hersch

"Out Of Nowhere" (from *Dancing In The Dark*, Chesky) Hersch, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Tom Rainey, drums.

That's another one I enjoyed a lot. It kept my interest right to the very last note. The piano player didn't play the last note of the melody. It sounded like maybe the drummer played it. It got my interest right off the start with the cymbals. I thought first it was coming from the street, then I realized it was the drummer, like he was scraping against the cymbals, kind of like an arco bass. I thought it was an appropriate treatment of "Out Of Nowhere." Everybody had great technique. I kept thinking "What are they going to do?" I thought they were going into time, but they didn't—which I loved. I also thought the recorded sound was



excellent. I could hear the whole texture from the bass drum up to the scraping sounds. It might've been the Keith Jarrett trio but didn't have his recognizable mannerisms. I wouldn't recommend that they play that at a dance on a Saturday night, but it's a really fascinating treatment of the tune. I'd give that also a very high rating, 4½ stars. I'm holding back a little because I don't know what's coming next. It might be Beethoven and he'd get 5.

### Paul Motian

"How Deep Is The Ocean?" (from *On Broadway, Vol. III*, jMT) Motian, drums; Lee Konitz, alto sax; Joe Lovano, tenor sax; Bill Frisell, guitar; Charlie Haden, bass.

More nice stuff. I'm enjoying this. I think that I've sorted out who most of the guys are. I love Bill Frisell's playing because he surprises me all the time. When I go to see him live or work with him, I literally laugh out loud because I don't know what's going to come out or *when*. He'll play something with his fingers, but he's got a tape loop going and it comes out later or some other stuff comes out. He also makes me think of Thelonious Monk. Familiar tune, and cute treatment. I loved the tempo. It stayed in 2, like a dance tempo, a nice groove. I'm inferring that it's Paul Motian on drums. I don't know who the bass player is but I liked him also. A bass solo at that tempo can be yawn-inducing but I thought he used space and openness very nicely. I'd give that 4½ stars, a nice tune and kind of a brave treatment. The ending sounded a little like dixieland in the way the guys were playing off each other. I miss the spirit of dixieland, just guys playing lines against each other.

### Frank Vignola

"Ready And Able" (from *Appel Direct*, Concord Jazz) Vignola, banjo; Sam Pilalian, tuba; Billy Mitchell, tenor sax; Junior Mance, piano; John Goldsby, bass; Joseph Ascione, drums; Jimmy Smith, composer.

I was tapping my foot all the way through that. I love the banjo. I've never heard anybody play contemporary music like that on a banjo. At the beginning, I wrote down "great groove." I thought at first it was an organ group, the groove was so *thick*. I love the bass player and the drummer. It's a familiar tune. It may be an old Bird tune. I really enjoyed the tenor player. He's probably somebody of my generation. He did some Lester Young things there. I really think tenor is my favorite instrument. I got a big kick out of the tuba solo. It was funny in parts, and he went into the upper register really well. The banjo is such a laughed-at instrument and he just knocked me out. It was brave to do this. In a way it was predictable and old-fashioned but it was so happy. I have no idea who it was. I'll give that 5 stars, the same as I would give Arnold Schoenberg in a completely different way. **DB**