

# THE 44th ANNUAL DB CRITICS POLL



HALL OF FAME



ARTIST OF THE YEAR



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PIANIST SUPREME

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# New World Order

## JAMES CARTER

Commanding Wider Recognition



## 16 James Carter's *Urgent Affair*

Saxophonist James Carter has amazed the jazz world with his ferocious chops and enormous sound, preaching love for the instrument and delivering a message of great urgency.

By Ed Enright

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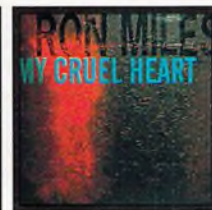
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# JAMES CARTER'S

# Urgent Affair

B Y E D E N R I G H T

**JAMES CARTER LOVES SAXOPHONES.** He collects them, cares for them, cleans them, demands their attention and plays the spit out of them.

Carter's turbulent affair with saxes rides as wild as a fatal attraction: He gets tough with his woodwind mistresses one minute, sweet-talks them the next. His harem boasts sopranos, altos, C-melodies, tenors, baritones and numerous exotic off-shoots. When he plays, Carter treats each with passion and an element of danger, then casts them aside for another—always promising to return. His love for the horn knows risk and satisfaction; they remain inseparable.

"I identify with the whole attitude behind aggressive playing, especially if it's something urgent to say," says Carter, near the beginning of our conversation at Riva restaurant on Chicago's Navy Pier. "Of course, it's all really urgent to say."

When you're 27 years old, urgency comes as naturally as your sex-drive in spring. And when you have the chops and daring of James Carter, your message gets heard 'round the world. Since the release of his first solo outing, *J.C. On The Set* in 1994, the Detroit native has amazed the jazz world with his tornado-like torrents of licks, squeaks and whispers, his outside-one-moment-inside-the-next melodic lines that leave the listener gasping for breath and begging for more.

He became a critics' favorite almost overnight, getting votes in almost every woodwind category of the Down Beat International Critics Poll and winning Talent Deserving Wider Recognition for Jazz Musician of the Year two years in a row (see page 22). And he's about to turn even more heads with the mid-August release of the movie *Kansas City*, in which he plays a chick-cruising, drink-swilling, tenor-battling Ben Webster.

Whether he acknowledges it or not, Carter follows in the progressive tenor tradition of (take your pick) Webster, Lester Young, Chu Berry, Coleman Hawkins, Paul Gonsalves, Sonny



Rollins and John Coltrane. He draws on all styles imaginable, bridging the gap between the straightahead and the avant-

garde in a single breath.

"I must say that with all of the concerted effort that goes

into coining particular individuals, I really don't aspire to go

into any categories," he says, shrugging off the suggestion

that he's a modernist. "There's no need to relegate yourself

to a particular time pattern by saying you're a theorist or

something like that. There's time, and more importantly,

there's energy wasted in efforts like that—especially among

those who are here to inform others."

As Carter says, even a modernist's time has to pass. But he

wants to stay right in the middle of the action; his art is the art

of the moment.

"I just wind up telling myself I'm an artist who wants to sur-

vive the environment he and other people are in. That's more

broad than just being considered a modernist, ego, traditional-

ist, ad infinitum. It has a lot more to do with vocabulary, too.

You're dealing with it from a global [perspective], not just a

Kansas City style. Cool style and all this other stuff."

Obviously, Carter has a problem with musicians who commit

themselves to a particular style at the expense of making their

own personal statement. "One of the things really missing in

the players nowadays is that there's too much emphasis on

everything that's academic. The spiritual content has been lost,

partly because of the music being institutionalized in the first

place through universities and camps. Even though I attended

camp, these situations would have been the downfall of others

because of his absence of the need to talk about how it makes

you feel and portray that to other people." As he's often said in

the past, Carter credits his first private saxophone teacher,

Donald Washington, with

steering him in a more

spiritual direction at an early

age. "If it wasn't for him, I

might have looked at it some

other way, rather than just

taking it as more common-

denominator information as far

as scales and that general

mathematical stuff goes.

Everybody has access to that;

it's about what you do with it

afterwards."

Carter knows damn

well what to do with it

afterwards: He has an

absolute blast. At a

recent gig at Schubas

in Chicago, Carter tore

through up-tempo tunes

and ballads with malicious

glee. Ably backed by his regu-

lar working trio of pianist

Craig Taborn, bassist Jamb

Shahid and drummer Tani

each overstated phrase with a hilarious punchline.

Carter roared through his soprano with a quick, harsh swell

to announce his arrival. He toyed with a single note for a

whole chorus, working up a head of steam and never once

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RAY DOOLITTLE





RONALD HEARD

## "THERE'S TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON EVERYTHING THAT'S ACADEMIC. THE SPIRITUAL CONTENT HAS BEEN LOST."

letting up the intensity; all the while, his right arm swung low and loose at his side, as if Carter were on a bad-ass stroll through the 'hood, showing off his new squeeze. Then Carter let it rip and whistled fiercely on the straight sax. He practically tore the floor out from under the crowd, a mixture of older jazz devotees and younger bohemian types ready for pyrotechnics but hardly prepared for Carter's brand of electrocution. Carter even

surprised himself on occasion, which he indicated with a quick upward swing of the horn and a startled gasp ("Whoah!").

Carter live is like cartoons on amphetamines. One second, he's a soprano version of the teacher from *Peanuts*; in a blink, an Indian snake-charmer. He launches into a series of animal-like effects: a cageful of birds being attacked by cats, a dying duck, a rooster at dawn and a bumblebee in heat. With a lightning-fast upward gliss and a sweep of the horn, Carter grabs his own needle and zips himself off the turntable. That's just the first tune.

When Carter tires with the comic animation, he reveals a dark side. He opens his eyes wide and glares out at the audience, threatening them with evil-sounding split tones. He conjures sinister overtone chords with interior notes that move eerily, like worms blindly wriggling in a carcass. He rolls his eyes up into his head until you can just see white through the squints. Then, suddenly, he jumps into an extensive quote from "Merrily We Roll Along" (the *Looney Tunes* theme), as if to say, "Just kidding," and falls apart into frenzied freedom.

Carter pays passing tribute to numerous saxophone influences during his set, evoking tones of everyone from Johnny Hodges (sweet alto vibrato) to Sonny Rollins (quotes and jokes) to Albert Ayler (shrill tenor hysteria). In general, Carter speaks with great respect for jazz's elder statesmen, even though his deconstructionist ragings might seem at times irreverent. In fact, he dedicated an entire CD to his musical forefathers: *Conversin' With The Elders*, his sophomore album for Atlantic, released in June. In addition to Carter's regular band, the CD features seasoned veterans Buddy Tate on tenor/clarinet and Sweets Edison on trumpet, outcats Hamiet Bluiett on baritone and Lester Bowie on trumpet, plus fellow Detroiter Larry Smith on alto.

"Buddy's and Sweets' inclusion were almost automatic because I grew up listening to them on an old Count Basie-Billie Holiday record," says Carter. "There's something real hip about hearing a person one day on an album or on the radio and just fantasizing about playing with them; then finally, years later, they're still around. There was a sense of urgency in dealing with Sweets and Buddy, being able to seize the opportunity where you're able to give them credit while they're still here to receive it."

Carter's association with Bluiett started in the early 1990s when he began playing in a saxophone ensemble situation with Julius Hemphill (Carter played on *Five Chord Stud* and *The Fat*

*Man And The Hard Blues*); he met Bowie in 1988 and played and recorded with Bowie's regular quintet and the New York Organ Ensemble over the next couple of years (check out *Funky T*, *Cool T* and *Organizer*). Smith, whom Carter looked up to as a teenager, makes his recording debut on the CD.

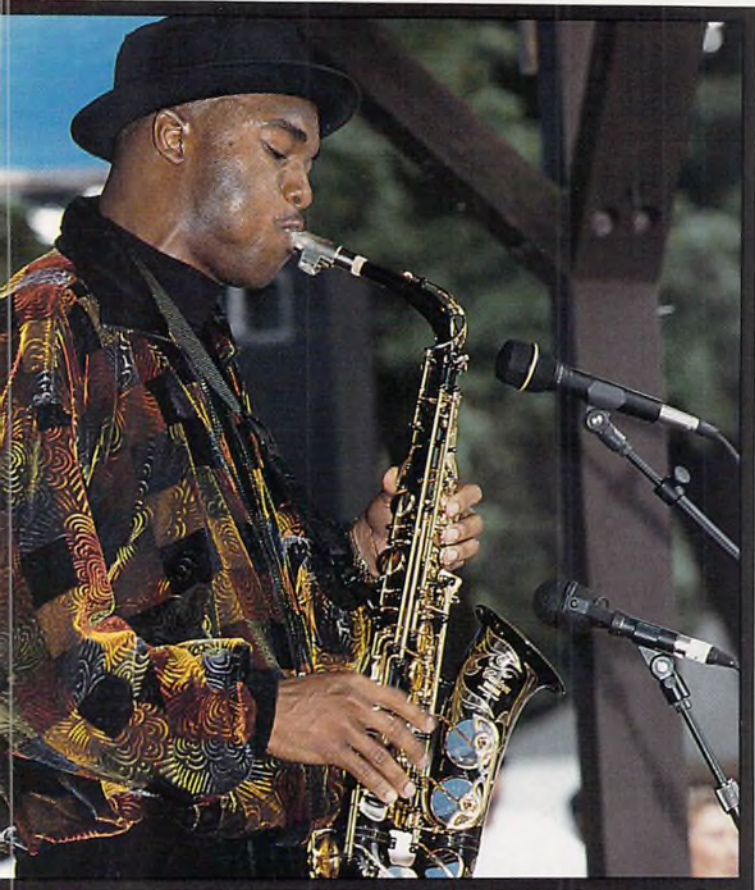
"It was no-nonsense with most of these cats," Carter continues. "When it came time to play, there wasn't any mess. In one sense, I would align myself with that type of tradition. ... That gets back to crossing the gap and passing the information or the torch from one generation to the next. Certain peers, young individuals, tend to treat older individuals as relics, especially if they're dead. But if they're still alive, a whole lot of them still want to play as opposed to retiring or something like that."

Indeed, Carter converses heavily with his guests of honor, swapping solos with straightforward seriousness and at times getting downright silly with tune-quoting and genre-jumping. But when Carter makes his "here comes the bride" solo entrance after Sweets on "Lester Leaps In," he's not kidding around; in August he plans to marry to longtime girlfriend Tevis Williams. Other noteworthy cuts include "Naima" with Bluiett, "Moten Swing" with Tate and "Parker's Mood" with Smith. Carter switches saxes to match each guest on each tune, opting for bass clarinet to double Tate's clarinet on the Tate-penned blues "Blue Creek." As far as the more spontaneous jams go, Bowie is listed as composer of the ragga-laced "FreeReggaeHiBop," while Carter takes credit for the playful "Atitled Valse."

Atlantic is also planning to release a video for "FreeReggaeHiBop" that will be aired on VH1 and BET on Jazz. Who knows—with Carter's flashy clothes and visually appealing stage antics, he might end up appealing to the MTV generation. He's already started to build the following: He was named one of *Rolling Stone's* hottest artists of 1995 and was the only jazz musician to place in the *Village Voice's* 23rd Or 24th Pazz & Jop Poll.

Carter officially joined the jazz big leagues last year with the release of the ballads-laden *The Real Quietstorm*, which rose to the number-four spot on *Billboard's* jazz chart. Amid accusations of selling out under pressure from the label, Carter insists that he conceived the project himself, choosing the tunes from a compilation tape he'd made years ago for his own listening pleasure. "Atlantic fell into cahoots with it because they knew I believed in it, as well as it being a good marketing tool," Carter says. "Not too many artists my age want to play an album that's strictly ballads."

Not too many artists Carter's age have strong convictions about how record companies should market their artists, either. The subject came up when we asked Carter if he thinks it's fair that an artist has to pay for all of the expenses of a recording project. He weighed his response carefully: "Yes and no. I would say no because the artist is basically putting his all toward the session. But if the label is properly promoting it to the point where it even crosses boundaries into other markets and they wind up getting hits, then the answer is yes. They might look at it like, 'Well, here comes another cat with a flash-in-the-pan type of hit'; I don't see that as being fair. But if they do maximize the publicity and the distribution to the point where even a dead person knows about it—of course there's



"THE PERFECT, UTOPIAN SITUATION WOULD BE IF JAZZ HAD THE SAME FOLLOWING AS HIP-HOP OR R&B MUSIC, WHICH IT DID AT A PARTICULAR TIME, LIKE WHEN LOUIS ARMSTRONG RECORDS WERE SELLING OUT OF FRUIT-AND-VEGETABLE STORES LIKE HOTCAKES."

some sarcasm intended there—it would be cool. Everyone would see the results in a snap, particularly with the music. You would have folks trying to get historically hip to other things that are going on, as well as follow you as a beacon for future things to come. You'd start seeing turnovers, like when rap records go gold in light of a month's release, if that was on the agenda of the powers that be. But it isn't, and it hasn't been. With jazz, it's been deemed a secular music, and it's been kept that way. But ironically, it has a gospel precedent that's only been transferred to the instruments. Spiritually speaking, there's nothing secular about it.

"The perfect, Utopian situation would be if jazz had the same following as hip-hop or r&b music, which it did at a particular time, like when Louis Armstrong records were selling out of fruit-and-vegetable stores like hotcakes. If you get back to the point where the music as a whole was important to get out to

# Antonio Carlos Jobim and Friends

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individuals, it could definitely share the likeness of other music that's out there now—especially considering that's where other musics came from in the first place.”

**W**hen it's all cut and dried, Carter claims to have no aspirations beyond self expression. He wants to be remembered as “a surveyor of life through music.” But how does he assess his playing? Does he realize his impact, or feel like he's forging any new ground, modernist or not?

“I would feel that in certain instances, that's the case. ... I'm not trying to pat myself on the back, but according to musicians and critics alike, there really hasn't been an individual who has shaken hands with the avant garde and the traditional. Nobody's ever bothered. Especially in the papers. Unless it's something like Albert Ayler's 'The Truth Is Marching In,' which he did for **Down Beat** back in '66; he aligns himself with the spiritual, gospel; I identify with that wholeheartedly. Everything that one considers a shriek or a wailing or sobbing doesn't necessarily have to be that; it means different things to different individuals at different times. It's all good because it's a part of life, rather than being part of academics, which can come and go.”

Bottom line: Carter doesn't care what any critic thinks. He says he enjoys all criticism, and takes the favorable comments with a grain of salt—as well he should at age 27, no matter how monstrous his chops. “What's always going to be at the helm of things is what the music's saying. If the music says that I'm not dealing, if the horn says I'm not dealing, then it's definitely going to come out. And I should seek to rectify it as soon as possible. That's what's going to have the final say-so. People

can say all they want to, but if I get my point out—whatever it is at that particular time—and I enjoy getting it out, then other people wind up enjoying it, too.” He points to his heart: “Because it started from here.”

DB

#### EQUIPMENT

Carter owns a collection of more than 50 vintage saxophones and other woodwinds, which he restores himself. In live performance, Carter plays Yamaha Custom soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxes. He uses Rico Plasticover reeds of varying strengths on all of his saxes.

Carter outfits all of his saxes with Geoff Lawton mouthpieces, which he was turned on to by baritonist Hamiet Bluiett. “Hamiet plays RIA mouthpieces now. But one day he had a Lawton on him and I was talking about how I wanted to put more air through the instrument. He said, 'I got this piece, maybe I could let you check it out. It's metal, and I'm having dental problems at the moment, so I'm unable to use it.' I checked it out and enjoyed the mouthpiece since the first time I slapped a reed on it. I told him how much I enjoyed it, what I got out of it, and he gave it to me. It's the one that he did most of his recordings on.”

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*CONVERSIN' WITH THE ELDERS*—Atlantic Jazz 82908

*THE REAL QUIETSTORM*—Atlantic Jazz 82742

*JURASSIC CLASSICS*—DIW 886

*JC ON THE SET*—Columbia/DIW 66149

#### soundtracks

*KANSAS CITY*—Verve 529 554

#### with various others

*SAXEMBLE*—Qwest/Warner Bros. 9 46181 (Saxemble)

*RUSH & HUSTLE*—WenHa 230 (Wendell Harrison)

*FIVE CHORD STUD*—Black Saint 120140 (Julius Hemphill)

*THE FAT MAN AND THE HARD BLUES*—Black Saint 120115 (Julius Hemphill)

*FUNKY T. COOL*—DIW 853 (Lester Bowie)

*ORGANIZER*—DIW 821 (Lester Bowie)

*THE TOUGH YOUNG TENORS*—Antilles 422-848767

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Newsweek



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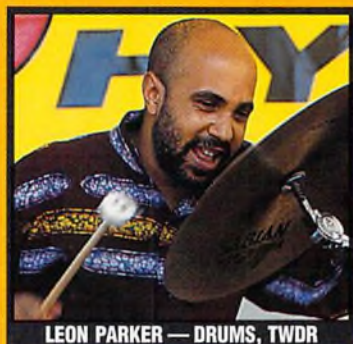


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# New World Order



LEON PARKER — DRUMS, TWDR



FRANK KU-UMBA LACY — TROMBONE, TWDR



PHIL WOODS — ALTO SAXOPHONE



MINGUS BIG BAND — BIG BAND



HAMIET BLUIETT  
BARITONE SAXOPHONE



TOM HARRELL — TRUMPET

**No,** we don't share a political vision with former president George Bush. But we have been counting points of light lately (or were those votes?) as our Critics Poll results reveal a new crop of burning jazz stars.

As he did last year, saxophone daredevil James Carter scores a triple crown of TDWRs (talent deserving wider recognition) under Jazz Artist of the Year, Tenor Saxophone and Baritone Saxophone. And crooner Kevin Mahogany has repeated as head TDWR in the Male Vocalist category. Fast becoming more than just critics' faves, Carter (see cover story, page 16) and Mahogany (see feature, page 36) are perhaps the brightest stars in what we regard as a new pecking order among musicians. This year's poll marks several upsets, a changing of the guard, if you will.

While some frequent poll-placers regain their crowns—Randy Weston takes back the top Composer spot from Henry Threadgill, Phil Woods is reinstated as the reigning altoist, B.B. King is back as Blues Artist of the Year—others win for the first time, or at least for the first time in a long time. The Mingus Big Band, a local favorite for New Yorkers, takes home the Big Band prize. Tom Harrell grabs the Trumpet

trophy from Roy Hargrove (who snatched it from under Wynton Marsalis last year). Bill Frisell nabs the top Guitar award (we consolidated the Electric and Acoustic Guitar categories into one this year because the distinctions were becoming impossible). Roomful of Blues rolls up and gets the checkered flag for Blues Group. And it looks like Hamiet Bluiett takes a leading role as Baritone Saxophonist, filling the void created by the departure of repeat-winner Gerry Mulligan.

Fires are burning in the TDWR categories, too. Our critics (listed on page 34) shine the spotlight on 8 Bold Souls and the Jacky Terrasson Trio (tied for Acoustic Jazz Group), Kenny Garrett (Alto Saxophone), Terrasson (Piano), Barbara Dennerlein (Organ), John Medeski (Organ), Eberhard Weber (Electric Bass), Steve Berrios (Percussion), Frank Ku-umba Lacy (Trombone), Jane Bunnett (Soprano Saxophone), Regina Carter (Violin), Diana Krall (Female Vocalist), Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters (Blues Group) and other newcomers to the TDWR winners circle. Special congratulations to repeat-winner Joe Lovano as Artist of the Year and our new Hall of Famer, Artie Shaw.

—Ed Enright





# Hall of Fame Artie Shaw

## 42 Artie Shaw

- 41 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 40 Don Cherry
- 39 Milt Jackson
- 34 Nat "King" Cole
- 33 Clark Terry
- 31 Elvin Jones
- 30 Jimmie Lunceford
- 28 Horace Silver
- 25 Jimmy Blanton
- 24 McCoy Tyner
- 22 Sonny Slitt
- 22 Carmen McRae
- 21 John Lewis
- 13 Erroll Garner
- 13 Frank Sinatra
- 12 Muhal Richard Abrams
- 11 Jo Jones
- 11 Red Norvo
- 11 Bunny Berrigan

Shaw's absence from the Down Beat Hall of Fame has done considerably more damage to the Hall than it has to him. As Shaw himself said, "It's about time."

It is perhaps a slightly perverse tribute to his legend and his contribution to music that he did it the hardest way possible: He made it in alive. More than a few Hall of Fame incumbents, while ultimately deserving, have come to this accolade somewhat prematurely under the sentimental cover of an obituary. We won't mention names, of course. As this is written, though, Shaw has just passed his 86th birthday (May 23) and is enjoying fine health and literary amusement in his home in Newbury Park, north of Los Angeles.

The history of the big band era of the '30s and '40s, which put real jazz on the throne of American popular music for the 10 best years it would ever have, can be boiled down to about seven glimmering prewar brand names, here listed alphabetically: Basie, Dorsey, Ellington, Goodman, Lunceford, Miller and Shaw.

Shaw is a late child in this pantheon. He hit it big in the fall of 1938 with his breakthrough, "Begin The Beguine." But it was only after a slow rise through the ranks of the New York studio scene (he was on the original "Billie's Blues" date with Billie Holiday in 1936), through his early attempts at a swing band that recorded for Brunswick in 1936-'37 (most of which are now on Artie Shaw: *Best Of The Big Bands* CDs on Columbia), and finally the band that went to RCA Victor and put him over.

Though Shaw and Benny Goodman were both clarinet-playing leaders, one could rarely confuse their bands and never what came out of their clarinets. Shaw's sound was big, cool, round and diamond-hard at the top of the register. His lines were long, Zephyr-like and smooth. He seemed less interested in pure improvisation than in reconfiguring a good tune. His most famous solo—and one of the crown jewels of jazz history musicians still play verbatim—is on his 1940 "Stardust." It is a definitive specimen of melodic improvisation, as is, for that matter, his 1939 "Stardust," which Shaw himself included in a 1992 Bluebird CD of personal favorites (*Personal Best*).

Shaw shed bands like a reptile sheds skins. There were at least seven, each with its own story to tell. The early Brunswick unit was well crafted but without spark. It did produce the quintessential Shaw aesthetic, however: songs

Perhaps **DB** critics can be forgiven for waiting 44 years to install Artie Shaw in the Down Beat Hall of Fame.

After all, he did retire from performing in his usual huff, finally and forever, about the time the Hall opened for business, thus letting an immense musical talent slide into atrophy.

So maybe the voters can be forgiven. But probably not. There are those records, remember, which have not atrophied. And there is the sheer enormity of his presence and talent in the history of American music. For a Hall of Fame to confer status, it must first derive status. Suffice it to say that

selected with a superb instinct for beautiful melody and framed by Shaw and arranger Jerry Gray in a transparent simplicity of brass and reeds. The result was such an astounding number of self-effacing little masterpieces, it's a wonder they aren't played constantly by university lab orchestras. Two on the *Personal Best* CD make the point: "Lover Come Back" and "I Surrender Dear." Each starts with clarinet and fans out into some of the most sculpted and singing sax soli work ever recorded (outside of Benny Carter), bursting with the urgency of improvisation in ensemble form, yet at moderate tempos.

Rarely has a switch in drummers so transformed a band as when Buddy Rich joined at the end of 1938. For the next year, Shaw presided nightly over the most sustained perfection of his career. He once explained in an interview that a score is only a map telling roughly where the treasure is buried. To get to the music, you have to get past the score. The notes on the paper are like a wall between the musician and the music. He

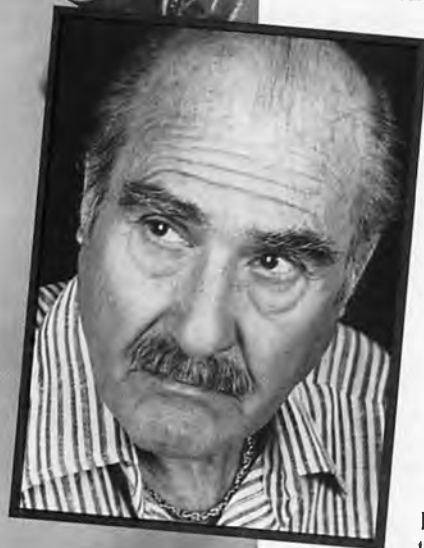
**S**HAW MAY HAVE HATED THE PERSONAL FAME THAT WAS ATTACHED TO HIS MUSIC. BUT HE IS CONTENT, EVEN PLEASED, THAT THE MUSIC ITSELF MET HIS STANDARDS.

meant, of course, that only when one totally conquers the mechanical can one disregard the medium of the score and deal directly with the music. Playing together for a year got this band past the score and into music.

The repertoire was a mix of standards and punchy, graceful riff pieces: "Everything's Jumpin'," "Back Bay Shuffle" and Teddy McCrae's tornado of a chart, "Traffic Jam," surely the wildest, most uninhibited studio recording ever made.

While all this great music was being played in the Hotel Lincoln in New York (now the Milford Plaza), Shaw was fuming. Music publishers were telling him what to record and telling him if he didn't he'd be washed up. Sometimes he did. "The worst mistake I ever made," he once said, with some exaggeration perhaps, "was recording 'You're A Sweet Little Headache.'" But he was also among the first to record Cole Porter's "Do I Love You," Rodgers and Hart's "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and Kern's "All The Things You Are"—before anyone could see they would be the classics they are today. "Three chords for beauty," he likes to say, "and one to pay the rent."

But this philosophic sense of accommodation came later. In 1939 there were the mobs of fans. "I hate the music business," he told interviewers in the fall of 1939. Old Gold Cigarettes yanked him off the air when he called his fans—their customers—"morons." But **DB** fully supported him in a front-



page editorial. "Let's applaud him for his courage," we said, "and hope a new and greater respect will come from business men and promoters for a musician trying to be a better musician."

Shaw's problems were more systematic than any single grievance, though. He just hated being famous. So on Nov. 15, 1939, he up and retreated to a tiny Mexican town, leaving behind one of the greatest big bands that ever played. When he came back a few months later with a couple of Mexican tunes under his arm, success continued to stalk him like a pervert. Using a studio band, it was "Begin 'The Beguine'" all over again with "Frenesi," although "Adios, Mariquita Linda" was the more evocative melody.

In the early '40s, Shaw finally made more time for his music. He traveled a broken-field path, never remaining in one place too long. For a man who didn't want to be pinned down by an adoring public, this was the way he liked it. He extended himself into longer formats. Arranger/composers Paul Jordan and Eddie Sauter provided him with some of the most ambitious and distinctly anti-pop work of the period. Jordan's "Evensong" is pure Third Stream that surely no one but Shaw would have dared record. By 1945, Sauter, along with Ray Conniff, added the two crowing classics to the Shaw library: "Summertime" and "'s Wonderful."

Starting in 1940 Shaw had recorded numerous little "chamber" pieces with his Gramercy Five, first using a swinging harpsichord, then straight piano. They never competed with the Benny Goodman sextet, nor were they intended to. They were smaller in scale and lower in temperature, content to make their way with a keen sense of smartness and civility.

Shaw's politics were often as inquisitive as his music, and in 1951 his name landed on an evil little sheet called *Red Channels*, which purported to have all the dope on the communists. Shaw's name was among the 151 suspects listed. Today it is an honor roll of American arts and letters, and many wish they had been on it. But in 1951, it could mean no work in radio,

television or film. Shaw continued to turn out records

on Decca, but felt sufficiently intimidated to move to Spain during the late '50s. In 1991 I did a public radio program on the 40th anniversary of *Red Channels* and assembled a group of survivors that included Norman Corwin, Morton Gould and Oscar Brand. I called Shaw and, thinking he'd welcome a chance to talk about something other than why he gave up the clarinet, asked if he'd join the panel. He surprised me. He said no, he'd rather not. The period was still too painful for him to remember.

Shaw was probably always a writer at heart. He's been doing it for the better part of the last four decades. His specialty is autobiography, both direct (*The Trouble With Cinderella*) and indirect, meaning a novel he's been playing with for years about a bandleader in the '30s. It's all part hobby, part therapy, part job.

Shaw's last important works were the Gramercy Fives of 1953-'54, which he recorded and leased first to Norman Granz and most recently MusicMasters. He's proud of them, as he is of all his best work. He

may have hated the personal fame that attached to his music. But he is content, even pleased, that the music itself met his standards and stands imperishable and much honored on the brink of a new century.

—John McDonough



# Jazz Artist of the Year

# Joe Lovano



**H**OW HAS JOE LOVANO COME SO FAR SO FAST? THE SHORT ANSWER IS GRATIFYING:

*Sheer excellence still sells.*

mainstreamers respect his impeccable fundamentals.

Each of the last two years has seen a major Lovano album on Blue Note. Last year there was *Rush Hour*. This year there is *Quartets*, a double CD that contains two nights from two different gigs at the Village Vanguard. One night is a revelatory pianoless interaction with DB Critics Poll winner Tom Harrell; the other is a celebration of roots with pianist Mulgrew Miller. (Another release in 1996 was *Worlds*, an intriguing septet recording made in France in 1989, unearthed by the Evidence label.)

Since last year's poll victories, Lovano has toured Europe with Symbiosis, the ensemble formed to explore the tonal and rhythmic implications of Gunther Schuller's arrangements for *Rush Hour*. The personnel includes cellist Erik Friedlander, bassist Ed Schuller, drummer Bob Meyer and Joe's wife, vocalist Judi Silvano. The fall tour culminated at an event titled *I'll Take Manhattan* at Lincoln Center, for which Lovano was commissioned to compose "New York Fascination."

Then there are the trios. "The trio format is the basis of a lot of what I do," Lovano states. "Even when I'm playing with a large ensemble, I want to sound like I am spontaneously reacting to a rhythm section." Trio configurations have included Cecil McBee/Carmen Castaldi, which toured the West Coast and Brazil in the fall, and Bill Frisell/Paul Motian, which hit 18 European cities in 19 days in May. ("You couldn't do that in the U.S.," Lovano says. "There aren't enough clubs.")

The coming year's calendar teems with projects. First is a summer U.S. tour with a quartet including Kenny Werner, Anthony Cox and Yoron Israel. A new quartet called Grand Slam, with Jim Hall, was scheduled to tour this summer and play the Montreal Jazz Festival. ("It's very rewarding for me to play with Jim Hall because he played with my father before I was born," Lovano says. "The music is intimate and pure, with lots of open spaces.") The best news for Lovano fans is that another major album is already in the can, scheduled for release by the end of the year. It contains standards associated with Frank Sinatra and uses a string quartet, woodwind quintet, harp, voice and jazz rhythm section. Given the broad appeal of its subject matter, it is likely to become the biggest Lovano album yet.

The jazz world says he has arrived. Joe says: "I'm still searching. My whole sound and concept and execution is just starting to crystallize. Now I can concentrate on developing ideas. I believe that people are hungry to be part of an audience where the music unfolds. I want to learn more about participating in that unfolding. You're a student all your life if you're involved in what improvisation really means."

—Thomas Conrad

## 92 Joe Lovano

- 62 Wynton Marsalis
- 46 Sonny Rollins
- 39 Keith Jarrett
- 35 Randy Weston
- 33 Ornette Coleman
- 31 Benny Carter
- 31 Charlie Haden
- 22 Cassandra Wilson
- 20 Joshua Redman
- 19 Bill Frisell
- 15 Tom Harrell

## TDWR

### 60 James Carter

- 36 Christian McBride
- 29 Cassandra Wilson
- 22 Nicholas Payton
- 20 Fred Anderson
- 20 Dave Douglas
- 20 Joshua Redman
- 20 Jacky Terrasson
- 19 Cyrus Chestnut
- 14 Tom Harrell

**T**he ascent of Joe Lovano has been rapid. In DB's '89 Critics Poll, he was just one more promising tenor, finishing ninth in the "TDWR" category on his instrument. By 1995, he stood astride both the Critics Poll and the Readers Poll like a colossus. In both ballotings, he won "Jazz Artist Of The Year" and "Jazz Album Of The Year" (the latter honor for *Rush Hour* with Gunther Schuller), and in the Readers Poll scored a rare hat trick, also placing first in the tenor saxophone category. This year he has again received what is arguably the most closely watched annual endorsement accorded by the international jazz press: in the 1996 Critics Poll, he has repeated as "Jazz Artist Of The Year."

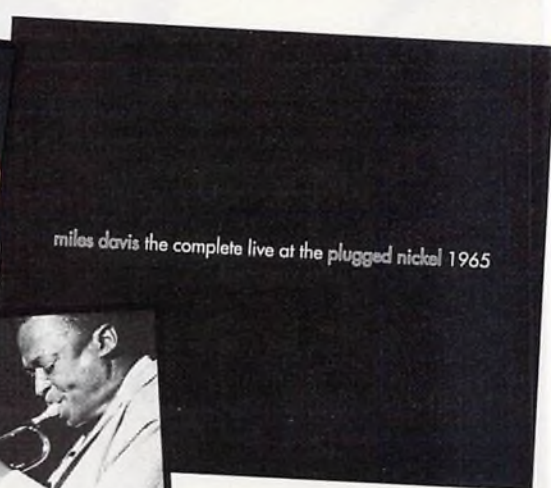
How has Joe Lovano come so far so fast? The short answer is gratifying: sheer excellence still sells. His recordings and his well-attended concerts present an instrumentalist of vast technical command whose interests encompass a broad spectrum of the art form and whose spirit continually pushes the creative envelope. The support for his stature is now all but universal. Young outcats love his fearlessness; middle-aged



# Albums of the Year Reaching Critical Mass



TEHR BLOOM



miles davis the complete live at the plugged nickel 1965



## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

### 44 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio, *Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note* (ECM)

- 31 Ornette Coleman & Prime Time, *Tone Dialing* (Harmolodic/Verve)
- 31 Sonny Rollins +3 (Milestone)
- 25 Herbie Hancock, *The New Standard* (Verve)
- 25 Joe Lovano, *Quartets: Live At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note)
- 22 Cassandra Wilson, *New Moon Daughter* (Blue Note)
- 20 Kenny Garrett, *Triology* (Warner Bros.)
- 19 John Coltrane, *Stellar Regions* (Impulse!)
- 15 Abbey Lincoln, *A Turtle's Dream* (Verve)
- 14 Charlie Haden & Hank Jones, *Steal Away* (Verve)
- 14 Billy Harper, *Somalia* (Evidence)

## REISSUE OF THE YEAR

### 97 Miles Davis, *Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel* (Columbia)

- 95 John Coltrane, *The Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* (Rhino/Atlantic Jazz Gallery)
- 66 Eric Dolphy, *The Complete Prestige Recordings* (Prestige)
- 41 Various Artists, *Big Band Renaissance: The Evolution Of The Jazz Orchestra* (Smithsonian)
- 23 Duke Ellington, *The Far East Suite: Special Mix* (Bluebird)
- 22 Oliver Nelson, *Blues & The Abstract Truth* (Impulse!)
- 21 Andrew Hill, *The Complete Blue Note Andrew Hill Sessions: 1963-1966* (Mosaic)
- 14 Lee Morgan, *The Complete Fifties Blue Note Lee Morgan Sessions* (Mosaic)
- 13 Lester Young, *The Complete Alladin Sessions* (Blue Note)
- 12 Sun Ra, *Sound Of Joy* (Delmark)

Boxed sets aren't just for reissues anymore—at least according to our critics. Indeed, the success of large CD packages has spilled over into the new releases department, as *Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note—The Complete Recordings* (ECM), a six-CD package, and the eight-CD *Miles Davis—The Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel 1965* (Columbia) won as Album of the Year and Reissue of the Year, respectively.

In the case of the Jarrett box, the '96 critics' choice for best piano couldn't have done it without his trusty sidekicks of 13 years, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The Standards Trio has given America's classic songbook a passionate facelift. As Peacock told *DB*, "You listen to 'Stella By Starlight,' say, and you become seduced, you become drunk, you drowned. ... There's a love affair going on ... and rapture, an ecstasy." That spirit of "diving in" with both feet reached a critical mass with the Blue Note set, everything the band played at the well-known New York club on June 3-5, 1994. Over seven hours of music, 37 pieces with only three repeats. Earfuls by the bushel.

Speaking of earfuls, what can *DB* say that hasn't been said already about the Miles Davis *Plugged Nickel* package? Previously released as a Japanese import, as partials of single and double albums, the *Plugged Nickel* sessions were finally released in their entirety, with original cuts restored for the first time. Both Columbia and Mosaic Records got in on the action with remixed eight-CD and 10-LP packages, respectively. (It was the CD version that caught the critics'

eyes, ears and votes.) As for the music, Davis' now-fabled quintet of Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter and Tony Williams played their typical set list of mostly standards with spooky, effervescent aplomb before a casual, mostly appreciative Chicago crowd in December of '65.

In what is perhaps the closest hybrid of blues-meets-jazz out these days, guitarist Ronnie Earl hit some kind of stride with *Grateful Heart: Blues & Ballads* (Rounder), winning for Blues Album of the Year (see page 51). For Beyond Album of the Year, both Cuban bassist/bandleader/legend Cachao and the L.A. crossover band Los Lobos won for *Master Sessions Volume II* and *Colossal Head*, respectively (see page 34). The logical followup to *Master Sessions Volume I, Volume II* (Crescent Moon/Epic) is the remaining music of 77-year-old Israel Lopez Cachao's celebrated October '93 Afro-Cuban jazz recordings, which features a stellar (and assorted) cast of mostly Latin players, including Paquito D'Rivera, Richie Flores and Rolando Laseries.

Los Lobos returned with a kick-ass, roots-rock-styled collection titled *Colossal Head*. Having heard the band live, I can attest that David Hidalgo, Steve Berlin, Conrad Lozano, Cesar Rosas and Louie Perez use studio wizardry not as a shield but as a magnifying glass, their artistry setting fires to everything dry and crusty.

Finally, congratulations to Verve Records, which won again for Record Label of the Year (four years running).

—John Ephland

# And the Winners are...



**MARIA SCHNEIDER — COMPOSER, TDWR**

KEITH FRANKOVSKI



**EITHER/ORCHESTRA — BIG BAND, TDWR**

KEITH FRANKOVSKI



**JOHN SCOFIELD — ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP**

STUART BRININ

## RECORD LABEL OF THE YEAR

- 192 Verve**  
150 Blue Note  
42 Concord  
41 Evidence  
40 Mosaic  
31 Black Saint/Soul Note  
26 Impulse!  
25 Delmark  
25 ECM  
21 hat ART  
20 DIW  
13 Telarc

## PRODUCER

- 152 Michael Cuscuna**  
50 Giovanni Bonandri  
44 Orrin Keepnews  
43 Richard Seidel  
29 John Snyder  
28 Manfred Eicher  
23 Lee Townsend  
20 Hal Willner

## TDWR

- 39 Craig Street**  
34 Werner X. Uehlinger  
32 Bob Belden  
25 Jean-Philippe Allard  
18 Bill Laswell  
18 Delfeayo Marsalis  
18 Gerry Teekins

## COMPOSER

- 93 Randy Weston**  
52 Benny Carter  
50 Henry Threadgill  
47 Muhal Richard Abrams  
47 Carla Bley  
43 Anthony Braxton  
42 Toshiko Akiyoshi  
41 Wynton Marsalis  
32 Ornette Coleman

## TDWR

- 37 Maria Schneider**  
28 Tom Harrell  
26 Geri Allen  
26 John Zorn  
20 Bobby Previte

## ARRANGER

- 73 Toshiko Akiyoshi**  
65 Melba Liston  
58 Bob Belden  
57 Carla Bley  
47 Gunther Schuller  
36 Benny Carter  
27 Slide Hampton  
27 Bill Holman  
22 Frank Foster  
22 Chico O'Farrill

## TDWR

- 64 Maria Schneider**  
43 Bob Belden  
40 Don Sickler  
31 Slide Hampton  
24 George Gruntz

## BIG BAND

- 107 Mingus Big Band**  
83 Akiyoshi/Tabackin  
68 McCoy Tyner Big Band  
52 Count Basie Orchestra  
43 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra  
41 Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra  
36 Willem Breuker Kollektief  
32 Either/Orchestra  
28 David Murray Big Band  
27 Illinois Jacquet

## TDWR

- 71 Either/Orchestra**  
62 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra  
33 Gerald Wilson & His Orchestra  
27 George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band  
26 Willem Breuker Kollektief

## ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

- 96 Charlie Haden's Quartet West**  
69 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio  
54 Phil Woods  
46 Joe Lovano  
37 Joshua Redman  
29 Modern Jazz Quartet  
29 Randy Weston  
25 Wynton Marsalis  
21 World Saxophone Quartet

## TDWR

- 25 8 Bold Souls**  
**25 Jacky Terrasson**  
22 Roy Hargrove  
22 Steve Lacy  
19 Leon Parker

## ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

- 105 John Scofield**  
84 Bill Frisell  
66 Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus  
61 Ornette Coleman & Prime Time  
47 Pat Metheny  
35 Steve Coleman  
26 Yellowjackets  
23 Zawinul Syndicate  
20 Medeski, Martin & Wood

## TDWR

- 52 Medeski, Martin & Wood**  
40 Charlie Hunter Trio  
36 John Zorn's Naked City  
30 Steve Coleman & Five Elements  
22 Bela Fleck & The Flecktones

## TRUMPET

- 117 Tom Harrell**  
116 Wynton Marsalis  
77 Roy Hargrove  
75 Lester Bowie  
64 Art Farmer  
55 Clark Terry  
43 Wallace Roney  
34 Ruby Braff  
29 Jon Faddis  
29 Arturo Sandoval

**TDWR**

- 72 Nicholas Payton**  
 55 Dave Douglas  
 47 Claudio Roditi  
 33 Tom Harrell  
 32 Graham Haynes

**SOPRANO SAXOPHONE**

- 201 Steve Lacy**  
 103 Jane Ira Bloom  
 87 Wayne Shorter  
 83 Dave Liebman  
 58 Bob Wilber  
 48 Branford Marsalis  
 34 Evan Parker  
 30 Jane Bunnett

**TDWR**

- 86 Jane Bunnett**  
 45 Jane Ira Bloom  
 38 James Carter  
 35 Greg Osby  
 33 Evan Parker

**ALTO SAXOPHONE**

- 139 Phil Woods**  
 127 Jackie McLean  
 88 Ornette Coleman  
 54 Lee Konitz  
 49 Benny Carter  
 42 Kenny Garrett  
 40 Frank Morgan  
 33 Bobby Watson  
 27 Charles McPherson  
 20 Steve Coleman

**TDWR**

- 55 Kenny Garrett**  
 51 Vincent Herring  
 43 Sonny Simmons  
 42 Antonio Hart  
 39 James Carter

**TENOR SAXOPHONE**

- 189 Sonny Rollins**  
 138 Joe Lovano  
 101 Joe Henderson  
 75 David Murray  
 56 James Carter  
 39 Joshua Redman  
 38 Johnny Griffin  
 22 Pharoah Sanders  
 18 Illinois Jacquet

**TDWR**

- 83 James Carter**  
 39 Joshua Redman  
 39 David Sanchez  
 36 Dewey Redman  
 28 Fred Anderson

**BARITONE SAXOPHONE**

- 150 Hamiel Bluiett**  
 95 Nick Brignola  
 91 Gerry Mulligan  
 61 James Carter  
 55 Cecil Payne  
 55 John Surman  
 35 Gary Smulyan  
 23 Joe Temperley

**TDWR**

- 76 James Carter**  
 67 Gary Smulyan  
 47 Joe Temperley  
 35 John Surman  
 32 Ronnie Cuber

**PIANO**

- 89 Keith Jarrett**  
 78 Kenny Barron  
 75 Hank Jones  
 70 McCoy Tyner  
 65 Tommy Flanagan  
 43 Cecil Taylor  
 32 Randy Weston  
 28 Dave Brubeck  
 25 Ahmad Jamal

**TDWR**

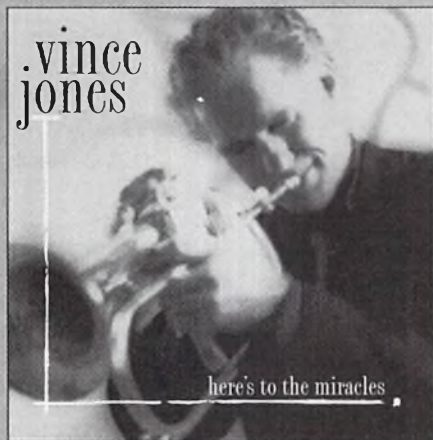
- 55 Jacky Terrasson**  
 41 Cyrus Chestnut  
 35 Geri Allen  
 28 Marilyn Crispell  
 25 Benny Green  
 24 Kenny Drew Jr.  
 24 Matthew Shipp

**ORGAN**

- 207 Jimmy Smith**  
 128 Joey DeFrancesco  
 65 Jimmy McGriff  
 61 Jack McDuff  
 46 Barbara Dennerlein  
 33 Larry Goldings  
 31 Amina Claudine Myers  
 22 John Patton  
 20 John Medeski

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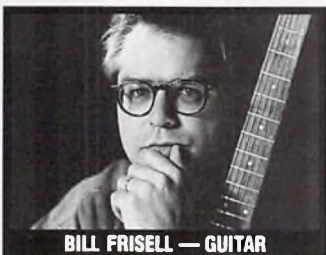
**BARBARA DENNERLEIN**  
ORGAN, TDWR

PHOTO: VIEZ



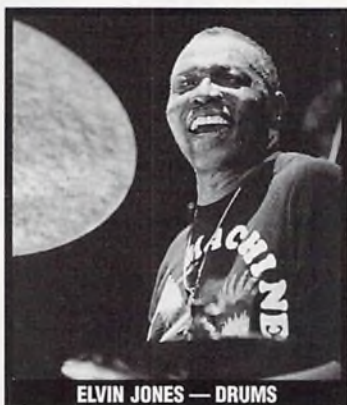
**HERBIE HANCOCK**  
ELECTRIC KEYBOARD

PHOTO: VIEZ



**BILL FRISELL — GUITAR**

PHOTO: BARCELONA



**ELVIN JONES — DRUMS**

PHOTO: BENNIN



**KEN PEPLOWSKI**  
CLARINET, TDWR

PHOTO: BARCELONA



**TRILOK GURTU**  
PERCUSSION

PHOTO: VIEZ



**REGINA CARTER — VIOLIN, TDWR**

PHOTO: BARCELONA

## TDWR

- 78 Barbara Dennerlein**  
74 Larry Goldings  
55 Joey DeFrancesco  
39 John Medeski  
32 Amina Claudine Myers  
25 Jeff Palmer

## ELECTRIC KEYBOARD

- 124 Herbie Hancock**  
123 Joe Zawinul  
75 Chick Corea  
43 Wayne Horvitz  
43 Lyle Mays  
20 George Duke

## TDWR

- 53 John Medeski**  
51 Wayne Horvitz  
40 Lyle Mays  
28 Adam Holzman  
24 John Surman  
20 Muhal Richard Abrams

## GUITAR

- 120 Bill Frisell**  
119 John Scofield  
90 Kenny Burrell  
75 John McLaughlin  
33 Pat Martino  
32 John Abercrombie  
29 Pat Metheny  
24 Howard Alden  
22 Tal Farlow  
20 Herb Ellis  
20 Mark Whitfield

## TDWR

- 42 Howard Alden**  
37 Russell Malone  
28 Mark Whitfield  
21 Bern Nix  
20 Charlie Hunter  
20 Frank Vignola  
18 Kevin Eubanks

## ACOUSTIC BASS

- 161 Charlie Haden**  
115 Dave Holland  
106 Ray Brown  
79 Christian McBride  
53 Ron Carter  
44 Gary Peacock  
31 George Mraz  
30 Milt Hinton  
25 Ray Drummond  
19 Reggie Workman

## TDWR

- 71 Christian McBride**  
67 Anthony Cox  
33 George Mraz  
29 Reggie Workman  
26 William Parker  
21 Charnett Moffett

## ELECTRIC BASS

- 207 Steve Swallow**  
59 Bob Cranshaw  
53 Stanley Clarke  
52 Marcus Miller  
51 John Patitucci  
27 Bill Laswell  
27 Jamaaladeen Tacuma  
19 Jack Bruce

## TDWR

- 40 Eberhard Weber**  
35 Bill Laswell  
33 Marcus Miller  
21 Bob Cranshaw  
20 Avery Sharpe  
19 Lonnie Plaxico

## DRUMS

- 131 Elvin Jones**  
113 Jack DeJohnette  
112 Max Roach  
67 Roy Haynes  
67 Billy Higgins  
28 Andrew Cyrille  
23 Lewis Nash  
20 Joey Baron  
18 Idris Muhammed  
18 Tony Williams

## TDWR

- 51 Leon Parker**  
41 Bill Stewart  
39 Marvin "Smitty" Smith  
37 Brian Blade  
34 Joey Baron  
24 Lewis Nash  
22 Hamid Drake  
22 Greg Hutchinson  
22 Ralph Peterson

## PERCUSSION

- 101 Trilok Gurtu**  
88 Tito Puente  
76 Jerry Gonzalez  
59 Airtio Moreira  
36 Don Alias  
33 Nana Vasconcelos  
31 Famoudou Don Moye  
29 Ray Barretto  
27 Pancho Sanchez  
27 Kahil El'Zabar

## TDWR

- 43 Steve Berrios**  
40 Jerry Gonzalez  
37 Marilyn Mazur  
36 Kahil El'Zabar  
34 Don Alias  
31 Giovanni Hidalgo

## TROMBONE

- 184 J.J. Johnson**  
128 Steve Turre  
115 Ray Anderson  
49 Slide Hampton  
34 Curtis Fuller  
30 George Lewis  
26 Robin Eubanks  
21 Frank Ku-umba Lacy

## TDWR

- 74 Frank Ku-umba Lacy**  
60 Robin Eubanks  
42 Craig Harris  
37 Wycliffe Gordon  
32 Ray Anderson

## CLARINET

- 191 Don Byron**  
110 Eddie Daniels  
70 Ken Peplowski  
61 Kenny Davern  
54 Alvin Batiste  
48 Marty Ehrlich  
46 Buddy DeFranco  
37 Paquito D'Rivera  
20 Phil Woods

**TDWR****64 Ken Peplowski**

55 Michael Moore  
49 Louis Sclavis  
41 Marty Ehrlich  
37 Kenny Davern

**FLUTE****155 James Newton**

95 Lew Tabackin  
92 James Moody  
72 Frank Wess  
51 Henry Threadgill  
30 Dave Valentin  
29 Hubert Laws  
21 Herbie Mann

**TDWR****56 Jane Bunnett**

46 Kent Jordan  
45 Sonny Fortune  
28 Frank Wess  
28 Ali Ryerson  
28 Dave Valentin

**VIBES****276 Milt Jackson**

133 Bobby Hutcherson  
119 Gary Burton  
43 Steve Nelson  
37 Lionel Hampton  
27 Terry Gibbs

**TDWR****112 Steve Nelson**

61 Joe Locke  
49 Jay Hoggard  
40 Bill Ware  
31 Karl Berger

**VIOLIN****209 Stephane Grappelli**

98 Billy Bang  
79 Leroy Jenkins  
63 Jean-Luc Ponty  
41 Mark Feldman  
33 Johnny Frigo  
26 John Blake  
23 Claude Williams  
18 Svend Asmussen

**TDWR****65 Regina Carter**

61 Mark Feldman  
37 Johnny Frigo  
29 John Blake  
26 Eyvind Kang  
24 Svend Asmussen  
24 Claude Williams

**MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT****126 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)**

90 Steve Turre (conch shells)  
73 David Murray (bass clarinet)  
58 Howard Johnson (tuba)  
48 Bela Fleck (banjo)  
26 Don Byron (bass clarinet)  
19 Ernst Reijseger (cello)  
18 Bob Stewart (tuba)  
16 James Carter (bass clarinet)  
15 Richard Galliano (accordion)

**TDWR****38 Howard Johnson (tuba)**

24 Diedre Murray (cello)

21 David Darling (cello)  
20 James Carter (bass clarinet)  
20 Marty Ehrlich (bass clarinet)  
20 Ernst Reijseger (cello)  
20 Dino Saluzzi (accordion)

**MALE VOCALIST****153 Joe Williams**

92 Mel Tormé  
65 Bobby McFerrin  
51 Tony Bennett  
48 Mark Murphy  
45 Kevin Mahogany  
38 Jimmy Scott  
23 Jon Hendricks  
21 Kurt Elling

**TDWR****75 Kevin Mahogany**

47 Kurt Elling  
30 David Frishberg  
28 John Pizzarelli  
24 Freddy Cole  
20 Mark Murphy

**FEMALE VOCALIST****163 Cassandra Wilson**

123 Betty Carter  
90 Abbey Lincoln  
81 Shirley Horn  
67 Dee Dee Bridgewater  
56 Sheila Jordan  
24 Diana Krall  
21 Carol Sloane  
20 Dianne Reeves

**TDWR****64 Diana Krall**

43 Patricia Barber  
29 Sheila Jordan  
25 Dee Dee Bridgewater  
25 Ann Dyer  
22 Holly Cole

**VOCAL JAZZ GROUP****106 Take 6**

82 Hendricks Family  
79 Manhattan Transfer  
42 New York Voices  
31 Jackie & Roy  
20 Sweet Honey In The Rock

**TDWR****32 Sweet Honey In The Rock**

31 Zap Mama  
20 New York Voices

**BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR****109 B. B. King**

92 Buddy Guy  
70 Charles Brown  
50 Gatemouth Brown  
34 John Lee Hooker  
33 Otis Rush  
28 Taj Mahal  
24 Joe Louis Walker

**TDWR****38 Lucky Peterson**

27 Joe Louis Walker  
25 Keb' Mo'  
24 Ronnie Earl  
18 Gatemouth Brown

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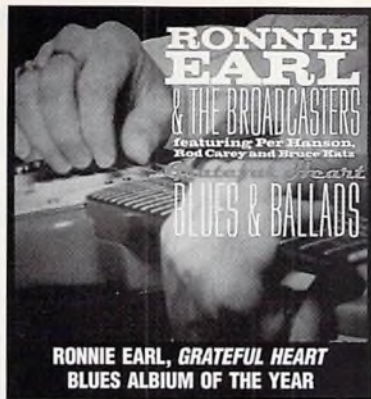
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**RONNIE EARL, GRATEFUL HEART**  
BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR



**ROOMFUL OF BLUES — BLUES GROUP**

## BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 33 Ronnie Earl Grateful Heart (Bullseye Blues)**
- 26 Joe Louis Walker, *Blues Of The Month Club* (Verve)
- 25 Gatemouth Brown, *Long Way Home* (Verve)
- 21 Taj Mahal, *Phantom Blues* (Private Music)
- 17 Charles Brown, *Honey Dripper* (Verve)
- 15 Roomful Of Blues, *Turn It On! Turn It Up!* (Bullseye Blues)
- 15 Robert Ward, *Black Bottom* (Rykodisc)
- 13 John Lee Hooker, *Chill Out* (Pointblank)
- 13 Skip James, *The Early Recordings* (Yazoo)

## BLUES GROUP

- 53 Roomful Of Blues**
- 50 B.B. King
- 43 Buddy Guy
- 32 Charles Brown
- 24 Robert Cray
- 20 Cheatham
- 19 Otis Rush
- 17 Cephas & Wiggins
- 17 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters

## TDWR

- 35 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters**
- 30 Roomful Of Blues
- 25 Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials
- 17 Lucky Peterson
- 17 Saffire The Uppity Blues Women

## BEYOND ARTIST OF THE YEAR

- 28 Cesaria Evora**
- 27 Van Morrison
- 26 Richard Thompson
- 25 Dr. John
- 22 Cachao
- 21 Eddie Palmieri
- 20 Ornette Coleman

## TDWR

- 39 Cachao**
- 29 Salif Keita
- 27 Maleem Mahmoud Ghania
- 25 Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
- 25 Ali Farka Toure

## BEYOND ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 35 Cachao, Master Sessions Volume II (Crescent Moon/Epic)**
- 35 Los Lobos, Colossal Head (Warner Bros.)**
- 34 Cesaria Evora, *Cesaria Evora* (Nonesuch)
- 25 Steve Berrios, *First World* (Milestone)
- 22 Randy Weston, *The Splendid Master Gwana Musicians Of Morocco Featuring Randy Weston* (Antilles/Verve)
- 20 Eddie Palmieri, *Arete* (Tropijazz)
- 16 Frank Zappa, *The Lost Episodes* (Rykodisc)
- 15 Van Morrison, *How Long Has This Been Going On* (Verve)

## BEYOND GROUP

- 41 Los Lobos**
- 38 Jerry Gonzalez Fort Apache Band
- 30 Cachao
- 30 Eddie Palmieri
- 29 Kronos Quartet
- 28 Morphine
- 28 Neville Brothers
- 20 Greg Osby
- 19 Baaba Maal
- 19 Fugees

## TDWR

- 35 Wayne Horvitz's Pigen**
- 33 T.J. Kirk
- 27 Kronos Quartet
- 25 Steve Coleman
- 25 ROVA

## THE 44th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CRITICS POLL THE CRITICS

Following is a list of critics who voted in DB's 44th annual International Critics Poll. A total of 89 critics voted this year, distributing 10 points among up to three choices (no more than five votes per choice) in each of two categories: Established Talent and Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. The participants were:

- Don Albert: DB** the Johannesburg Star, Tribute magazine; Vuku SA, Jazz Studio TV program.
- Frank Alkyer: DB** editorial director.
- Jon Andrews: DB.**
- Zoë Anglesey: DB** Bomb, Jazz Report; SF Weekly.
- Robert Baranello: DB** music editor, NY Nightlife.
- Paul de Barros: Seattle Times; 5/4; Earshot.**
- Chuck Berg: JazzTimes; Jazz Educators Journal; Topeka Capital Journal; Lawrence Journal-World.**
- Larry Birnbaum: DB** Pulse!, New York Latino Monthly; JazzTimes; Jazziz.
- Brett Bonner: Living Blues; Blues Access.**
- Philip Booth: DB; Tampa Tribune; Billboard.**
- Michael Bourne: DB** editor, Hennessy Jazz Notes; WBGO-FM (Newark, N.J.).
- Herb Boyd: DB** author, Brotheman.
- Pawel Brodowski: editor, Jazz Forum** (Poland).
- Aaron Cohen: DB** Coda; The Baller.
- Thomas Conrad: DB** Stereophile.
- John Corbett: DB; The Wire; Pulse; Live!**; Coda; Chicago Reader; Chicago Tribune; author, *Extended Play: Sounding Off From John Cage To Dr. Funkenstein.*
- Owen Cordle: JazzTimes; Raleigh News & Observer; JazzScope.**
- Joe Cuniff: DB** Hyde Park Herald; Leader & Post; Inside Lincoln Park.
- Stanley Dance: Jazz Journal** (London); Bulletin; HCF (Paris); JazzTimes; author, *The World Of Count Basie.*
- Clive Davis: DB** London Times; Sunday Times.
- Chip Deftaa: New York Post; Entertainment Weekly;** author, *Voices Of The Jazz Age, Blue Rhythms, Swing Legacy.*
- John DiIberto: host/producer, Echoes** (Public Radio International); Jazziz; Pulse; Audio.
- Len Dobbin: Mirrors; CKUT Radio; Coda.**
- Bill Douthart: DB.**
- José Duarte: Portuguese radio; press; television.**
- Jonathan Eig: DB** Chicago; Dallas Morning News; Jazziz.
- Lofton Emenari: Chicago Citizen Newspaper** Group; WHPK-FM.
- Gudrun Endress: editor, Jazz Podium** (Germany); Radio SDR (Stuttgart).
- Ed Enright: editor, DB.**
- John Ephland: managing editor, DB.**
- J.B. Figi: programming committee/Chicago Jazz Festival.**
- Ken Franckling: DB; United Press** International; Swing Journal; New England Jazz News; Bossa; JazzTimes.
- Maurizio Franco: Musica Jazz; Musica e Dischi; MusicaOggi; Il Sismografo.**
- Jack Fuller: publisher, Chicago Tribune.**
- Gerard J. Futrick: Coda.**
- Phil Gallo: DB; Daily Variety; Variety;** LA Weekly.
- Alain Gerber: Radio France; Diapason;** Percussions; Les Cahiers Du Jazz.
- Ira Gitler: DB; JazzTimes; Swing Journal;** Musica Jazz; Boz; Jazz magazine; co-author, *The Encyclopedia Of Jazz In The '70s.*
- Frank-John Hadley: DB; Jazziz; Pulse!** Blues Wire; Boston Phoenix; author, *The Grove Press Guide To The Blues On CD.*
- Jean-Marie Macquier: Jazz Hot.**
- Michael Handler: DB; Jazz Now.**
- Dave Helland: DB; Pulse!** Vibe; Guitar Player; Piano & Keyboard; Keyboard; New Country.
- Robert Hicks: DB; Jazziz; The Villager;** Downtown Express; Guitar Player; Bass Player; Coda.
- Lee Hildebrand: San Francisco Chronicle;**
- Geoffrey Himes: Rolling Stone; Washington Post; Request.**
- Eugene Holley Jr.: DB; JazzTimes; NY Latino.**
- Randi Muttin: DB; Jazznytt; Jazz Journal.**
- Niranjan Jhaveri: Jazz India; Jazz Yatra** organizer; Jazz Podium; Jazz Forum; Jazz Echo.
- Gene Kalbacher: editor & publisher, Hot** House; columnist, CMJ New Music Report.
- Leigh Kamman: The Jazz Image** (Minnesota Public Radio).
- Bob Karlovits: DB; The Tribune Review** (Greensburg, Pa.).
- Kirby Kean: DB; Philadelphia Inquirer;** Philadelphia Weekly; Carbon 14; Magnet; In Transit.
- Larry Kelp: San Francisco Chronicle; East-Bay** Express; Performing Songwriter; Berkeley Voice; Diabolo; KPFA radio (Berkeley, Calif.).
- Kiyoshi Koyama: Swing Journal; NHK-FM.**
- Peter Kostakis: DB.**
- Tom Krehbiel: CD Review; Buffalo News.**
- John Litweiler: DB; author, The Freedom** Principle; Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life.
- Jaap Lüdeke: DB; Euro Jazz Radio** (Netherlands).
- John McDonough: DB; Wall Street Journal.**
- Howard Mandel: DB; Pulse!; NPR.**
- Rick Mattingly: DB; Modern Drummer** Musician; Percussive Notes; Drum Business; Music Inc.
- Dan Morgenstern: director, Institute Of Jazz** Studies; Rutgers University.
- Alan Nahigian: DB; Jazziz; JazzTimes; Pulse!**
- Michael G. Nastos: DB; Cadence; Ann Arbor** News; WEMU-FM (Ypsilanti, Mich.).
- Stuart Nicholson: author, Jazz: The 1980s** Resurgence; Ella Fitzgerald; Billie Holiday; The Wire; BBC Music Magazine.
- John Norris: publisher, Coda magazine.**
- Dan Ouellette: DB; Pulse!; CD Review;** East Bay Express; San Francisco Examiner; San Francisco Chronicle.
- Thierry Pèremarti: Jazzman.**
- Terry Perkins: DB; St. Louis Post-Dispatch;** Riverfront Times; St. Louis American.
- Michael Point: DB; Pulse!; Austin American-** Statesman; Midwest Jazz.
- Robert Protzman: St. Paul Pioneer Press;** Midwest Jazz; Twin Cities Jazz Society Newsletter; KBEM-FM radio.
- Doug Ramsey: JazzTimes; Texas Monthly** author; Jazz Matters.
- Derek Richardson: DB; San Francisco** Guardian; East Bay Express; Pulse!; Option.
- Robert D. Rusch: editor, Cadence.**
- Mitchell Seidel: DB; Hot House; JazzTimes;** The Star Ledger; The Jazz Report.
- Chris Sheridan: DB; author, Count Basie:** A Bio-Discography.
- Fred Shuster: DB; The LA Daily News;** The New Musical Express; London Radio.
- Joel Simpson: DB; Keyboard.**
- Jack Sohmer: JazzTimes; The Mississippi Rag.**
- Yves Sportis: chief editor, Jazz Hot.**
- David Steinberg: Albuquerque Journal.**
- W. Royal Stokes: editor, Jazz Notes; author,** *Swing Era New York: The Jazz Photographs Of Charles Peterson and The Jazz Scene: A Informal History From New Orleans To 1990.*
- Andrew Sussman: jazz writer.**
- Ron Sweetman: CKCU-FM** (Ottawa, Ontario).
- Kevin Whitehead: DB; author, New Dutch** Swing.
- Scott Yanow: JazzTimes; Jazziz; Cadence;** Coda.
- Shoichi Yul: Swing Journal; Mainichi Press;** Amuse.
- Mike Zwerin: DB; Mojo; Vogue; Telerama;** Details; International Herald Tribune (Paris).



# Kevin Mahogany's Swingin' New Thing

By Michael Bourne

*"Jazz has been around a while.  
Kicked around but held its style.  
Picked up everything you hear.  
Put a fresh new sound in your ear.*

*But not everybody got the word.  
Thought it all died after Bird.  
We're still swingin'!"*

So sings songwriter Kevin Mahogany as drummer Greg Hutchinson whips up a boogaloo and organist Larry Goldings rumbles an undercurrent of Philly funk. Mahogany scats straightahead through the roiling rhythm, but there's also an in-your-face hip-hop testament in his lyrics.

"I wrote this song—and I put that beat to it—because I kept hearing people talking about how artists today are doing new stuff and it's not swinging. I was hearing these purists saying that young artists are technically great but they're not swinging. I'd hear them talking about Nicholas Payton, about Wynton Marsalis, about James Carter, artists who I think are swinging the music just as hard as ever. I even heard somebody say that Betty Carter doesn't swing! If anyone is swinging, these people are! I got fed up hearing that stuff.

"I really think some of the purists have a misconception. It's not that the new

artists aren't swinging but that the new artists are not doing songs the way that the purists are used to hearing them. When you hear a version of a song, that's the way some people want to hear it all the time. When someone comes along and changes it, they get upset because it's not the same. But the music *always* changes. And it should! It always did. It always will."

"Still Swingin'" is a highlight of *Kevin Mahogany*, his fourth album as a leader, his first album with Warner Bros.—and comes just as he's been voted a third year running as the Male Vocalist "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" in *DB's* Critics Poll (see p. 22). There's no question that he's a jazz singer in every sense of what jazz is supposed to be. He sings blues *profundo*—deep, deep, bottomless blues. But it's only natural, Mahogany having been born in Kansas City. He sings ballads with a romantic richness, his voice dark and burnished like ... mahogany. He's also one of the rare jazz singers who can actually scat worth a damn. Mahogany's scat is no babble of miscellaneous syllables. He can improvise vocally like an instrumentalist, often with breathtaking speed, yet always articulating the notes, creating his own themes and variations through the changes. He can even scat a drum solo—cymbals and socks, paradiddles and ratamacues.

Even so, the new album is certain to bother some jazz purists, musician and critic alike. There's not one jazz standard. There's not one American Popular

Song—unless you count the beautiful ballad "When October Goes" with lyrics of Johnny Mercer but music by Barry Manilow. There's one song that was recorded by Eddie Jefferson ("Oh! Gee!"), also a celebration of Afro-Brazilian grooves ("Little Black Samba"). But most of the songs on the new album originated in pop. Mahogany sings songs of Harold Melvin ("Yesterday I Had The Blues"), James Carr ("Dark End Of The Street"), Al Kooper ("I Love You More Than You'll Ever Know"), Bonnie Raitt ("I Can't Make You Love Me"), Stevie Wonder ("I Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer") and an r&b classic of Fats Domino, "I'm Walkin'"—the only song written before Mahogany was born in 1958.

"If I'd been born with Count Basie, with Joe Williams, in that time period, I'd be doing that material. What they've done is the music of their time, of their youth, and I was born later. I've done their music, because I really think you can't go forward without knowing where you've been. But now I'm interpreting the music of my youth, the music that I grew up with. I have a lot more influences, and that just gives me a larger palette to pick from.

"All the songs were picked the same way. [Senior VP of Jazz] Matt Pierson as the producer and I looked at tunes that we thought were good tunes regardless of the genre they came from. We tried to pick tunes that had good lyrics or that would allow me to use the range of my voice maybe in a different way. We talked about what I could do or an arrangement



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RONALD HEARD

**“When someone comes along and changes [a song, people] get upset because it’s not the same. But the music always changes. And it should!”**

we could do.”

Two of the outstanding and most familiar songs on the album are quite different from the originals. “I Never Dreamed You’d Leave In Summer” doesn’t have Wonder’s overwhelming orchestration but is sung simply with the piano and is much more touching. “I’m Walkin’” doesn’t have Domino’s romping beat but literally *walks*. “I heard Irene Krall sing it on a cruise, and I thought it was so cool. It’s really a blues. I went from his uptempo version to a walking tempo, and I extended the arrangement to give it a stop-time thing.”

Mahogany’s musical director, James Weidman, arranged four of the songs. Larry Goldings also arranged four songs and played piano and organ, joined by guitarist Peter Bernstein, bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Greg Hutchinson, percussionist Bashiri Johnson and saxophonist Kirk Whalum. That the singer himself is a vocal instrumentalist in the band is evident, especially when he scats.

“I’m lucky, because a lot of my scatting came naturally. Part of it came because I used to play saxophone. I’d reached a plateau on saxophone where ideas would come into my head but I couldn’t get them through my fingers, especially when it came to the solo. I could read anything written on the paper, but when it came to being creative, being spontaneous, I couldn’t get it to my fingers. Really, that’s where it started. I could pull the horn away and scat it, sing it, but I couldn’t play it.

“I started saxophone when I was very young, and even then I could take some nonsense syllables or licks that a horn would do and I’d scat it and practice it at faster and faster speeds. I liked Charlie Parker and wanted to be the Charlie Parker of scat. I wanted to be really super-fast and clean, so I focused on making sure that when I did scat, I hit

definite pitches, because that’s what Charlie Parker did. He didn’t just slide around on the horn.

“I still envision a saxophone when I’m scatting, and I’m still working on my scatting. You can rehearse the same way that you practice any instrument. I used to take Jerry Coker’s *Patterns Of Jazz* and go over those patterns like any instrumentalist would. I’d sing the lines that were written out for the saxophone. I’d practice in all the keys, then increase the tempo or slow it down, and get those sounds under my tongue.

“Really, the difference between a saxophone and singing is embouchure. Breathing is not necessarily the same but phrasing is similar. Remember that a solo instrumentalist is trying to sound like a *voice*, trying to phrase like a voice would. And as a vocalist, I have the advantage of words. Words can be a little more expressive than just a melody. I finally put down the saxophone so I could focus on singing. I felt that if I were really going to be a vocalist, I needed to work on *that voice*.”

Mahogany quit playing saxophone in 1981. He sang early on in the church choir and, with his brother and sister, often imitated the Jackson Five and the Temptations around the house. But, encouraged by his mother to learn music, young Kevin was a clarinet prodigy in grade school. He doubled on tenor sax in the high school band. He also studied at the Charlie Parker Foundation and, already being bigger than the other kids, was handed a baritone sax. “I was the only one who could blow it!”

Mahogany was playing in a big band already at age 12 and often was playing alongside musicians who’d been around during the height of Kansas City swing. “I was sitting on the bandstand with Ben Kynard, Herman Bell, Carmell Jones, longtime fixtures in Kansas City. There was a lot of history on the bandstand, guys who’d been popular in the region, guys who’d played with Bennie Moten, and I was learning music from them.” Mahogany evokes some of that history in the Robert Altman “jazz memory” movie *Kansas City*, joining other musicians of the ‘90s playing in the spirit of 1934. Mahogany as a bartender sings the blues, as Joe Turner once did, only

he's singing songs of Jimmy Rushing. "I Left My Baby" appears on the Verve soundtrack album and in the movie; "Harvard Blues" is on the all-music video to be released in the fall.

Ironically, it wasn't the bluesful heritage of Kansas City that inspired Mahogany to become a full-fledged vocalist. "I heard Al Jarreau's *Look To The Rainbow* with 'Take Five' on it. I thought that was the way all music was going to go—jazz harmonies with, for want of a better word, pop melodies. When I checked out who Al Jarreau listened to, that's when I found Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Jon Henricks was really the shit. He's got everything going. He's got a good voice. He scats. He swings.

"I started researching backwards, all the way back to Louis Armstrong. I had access to Armstrong's earlier stuff at the Foundation, and I asked Ahmad Aladeen, my clarinet and saxophone instructor at the Foundation, what I should sing, what tunes I needed to learn. He told me songs like 'A' Train,' 'Satin Doll,' a list of tunes."

That he's one of the best jazz singers of his generation is obvious. That he's one of the few extraordinary *male* jazz singers of his generation is a shame. I can name (maybe) *six* young male jazz singers of consequence—and even some of *them* don't have record deals. "I was told when I first came up that records by male singers don't sell, and before I signed with enja, they were looking for a female singer; but I convinced them to give me a chance."

*Double Rainbow*, his debut album from '93, made it onto the *Billboard* charts and introduced him to the wider jazz audience. *Kevin Mahogany*, with Warner's marketing might, should catapult the singer even further. And maybe his "hip-hop" belief that jazz is "Still Swingin'" will get through to other young male jazz singers—and even the purists.

"I imagine that some people will say that I'm trying to 'cross over' with that song, but that's not what it's about. It's what I feel. It's what I'm saying." **DB**

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

KEVIN MAHOGANY—Warner Bros. 46226  
YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES—enja 9039  
SONGS AND MOMENTS—enja 8072  
DOUBLE RAINBOW—enja 7097

as guest vocalist

TESTIMONIAL—Atlantic Jazz 82755 (Carl Allen)  
IT DON'T MEAN A THING—enja 8066 (Elvin Jones)  
DANGEROUS PRECEDENT—Sea Breeze 2046  
(Frank Mantooth)  
SOPHISTICATED LADY—Sea Breeze 2074  
(Frank Mantooth)  
DANGEROUS—Concord Jazz 4707  
(Marlena Shaw)  
PASSION DANCE—Telarc 83385 (Roseanna Vitro)  
KANSAS CITY—Verve 529 554 (soundtrack)

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# Interactive

## Imagination

### George Lewis' Wild Trombone

By John Corbett

both took up the 'bone in third grade, and we're but a hop, skip and jump from the back alley where, home from Yale in the summer of 1971, Lewis stumbled on the Muhal Richard Abrams rehearsal that soon led to a deep involvement in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). "Any creative mind eventually ends up questioning its own premises," Lewis surmises, a statement that could encapsulate his own career, a life full of consistent interrogation and reinvention. But he's merely reflecting on the current jazz scene. "You have to give Wynton and those guys credit for insisting that black people should have a very important voice in outlining what African American culture is all about. I think that's a good thing to do. But then, I have a pretty expanded view of what the African American tradition can be. I've learned from some really amazing individuals representing a pretty diverse take."

Consider some of those "amazing individuals" with whom the 43-year-old has worked and you get an idea of where he's coming from. While in New Haven, the philosophy major hooked up with drummer Gerry Hemingway, trumpeter Leo Smith, bassist Wes Brown, reed-player Oliver Lake and pianist Anthony Davis. Back in Chicago, he joined the AACM, studied composition with Abrams and was a member of his band. "I can't say enough about Muhal," says Lewis. "There's that famous quote from [Joseph] Jarman that before he met Muhal he didn't care for the life he'd been living. My dad says I fit that category, too." In the same period, Lewis worked with AACM co-founder Fred Anderson's group, "getting helpful critiques from people like the late trombonist Lester Lashley" and stretching out at legendary all-night sessions. Since the mid-'70s Lewis has had an especially fruitful relationship with reed player and composer Anthony Braxton.

"In my experience from playing with Count Basie [1976] to the AACM, nobody was locked out to the extent that I hear in



Lewis performs with Muhal Richard Abrams' Experimental Band at the '95 Chicago Jazz Festival as part of the 30th anniversary of the AACM. Henry Threadgill looks on.

**G**eorge Lewis may be the ideal spokesman for catholicism in creative music. Ideal, that is, because his musical actions speak just as loud as his words and his remarkable openness is firmly grounded in a specific cultural tradition and sense of community. He's one of the world's finest trombonists, able to leap from downtown conceptualism to down-home blowing in a single bound—just ask Delfeayo Marsalis, who recently had a private one-on-one session with George in Italy (a musical "getting to know you"). Lewis is purposeful and self-assured,

while in the same stroke he's restless, ready for anything. When he returns to his hometown Chicago, he always makes a point to come out and jam with newcomers and old friends at the Velvet Lounge. Meanwhile, at his most recent home in San Diego, he's busy working on intermedia installations and designing new ways to interface human beings with computers.

Discussing issues near and far in the record-lined studios of University of Chicago's radio station WHPK, we're spitting distance from the Lab School where Lewis and classmate Ray Anderson

the media. I remember sitting in the Count Basie band bus discussing the merits of Anthony Braxton with Al Grey and Jimmy Forrest. They didn't say it's complete nonsense, they just said I have some problems with it. So we could discuss it. But it was never locked out as ... " he adopts a stern voice, "... *This is not part of black music.* Nobody ever said anything that stupid. How could they? The only questions were: What about tradition? What about virtuosity? And these are *real* issues, not just some blanket condemnation or an attempt to tar someone with 'This is too European' or that sort of simplistic race-baiting.

"They let me play exactly how I wanted to play. I got to play solos every night. I'd try out making noise, weird combinations, playing silence. Anything. I played exactly like I would with Fred. And I did not get fired! What's more, it generated a lot of interesting discussions. People weren't inalterably opposed to freer forms of music. In fact, Basie came up to me and started talking—he never talked that much, and who was I—but he said: 'I really like all this experimenting you're doing. You know, that's what *we* did.' I thought, god, this guy's connecting what I'm doing with what he was doing. I guess I was pretty naive and it had never

occurred to me that these guys were also experimental musicians. But he would go out every night, and he might play the piano with his elbows: completely experimental, utterly spontaneous, but really informed by *everything*. After that, I had a little less patience for people who wanted to detach tradition from experimentation."

As for his instrument, Lewis has clear ideas: "People should try to *get wild* on the trombone. There are so many different kinds of sounds—in some ways the older, pre-J.J. [Johnson] generation seemed more sensitive to the timbral possibilities than the current group, which seems focused on articulation and speed issues."

Imbued with a sense of his own American jazz heritage, Lewis has nevertheless also involved himself actively in several European musical communities. While he had already begun to investigate electronics by 1977, he started working with computers in 1980, the same year he began playing with Gil Evans. Early in the '80s, Lewis moved to Paris, where he was commissioned to work on an interactive computer music piece at the renowned electronic-music lab IRCAM. After Paris, Lewis moved to Amsterdam, where he

worked at the electronic music studio STEIM, and while there solidified a long-standing partnership with pianist Misha Mengelberg, who he calls "the Muhal Richard Abrams of Holland."

Lewis had already forged connections with European free improvisers like Mengelberg, saxophonist Evan Parker and guitarist Derek Bailey, but his tenure on the continent allowed him to play with virtually every free musician in the biz; indeed, he's the black American musician who has worked most extensively with European improvisers. By 1985, Lewis realized "it was time," and he moved back to the States, returning to New York where he made a collaborative installation project with computer mentor David Behrman and became a member of News For Lulu with John Zorn and Bill Frisell. "I damn near starved for a couple of years," he laughs with a trademark mix of joviality and bite. "Everything had changed in New York; I don't remember '87 as being a very good year!"


In '89, Lewis moved back to Chicago, where he taught for a year at the School of the Art Institute, eventually settling in San Diego, where he is now chair of the "Critical Studies/Experimental Practices" wing of UCSD's music department. "Teaching in art school, I grew to realize that I was an interdisciplinary artist all along," he later recounts on the phone from California. His work developing an interactive computer program for improvisers led to the record *Voyager* with saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell. Lewis' interdisciplinary orientation blossomed on *Changing With The Times*, the title track of which revolves around a spoken narrative based on his father's life. Now he's at work writing a piece for ROVA Saxophone Quartet, gigging as a member of the 'bone quartet Slideride and putting the finishing touches on another text-based project, this time built around a basketball poem by frequent collaborator Quincy Troupe.

As a pedagogue, Lewis bemoans the lack of good scholarship on improvisation. Searching for more good lit, Lewis recently made Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson's book part of his students' reading list. "I've heard basketball compared to bebop, and I don't think it's like bebop—especially the way the Bulls do it. I think it's more like free improvisation or the AACM: Everybody's making a sound because you need to make that sound, not because you need to stick out as a personal ego thing. But at the same time you do bring something to the table and at the right moment you're allowed to express that, the way Michael Jordan does for instance. There's still an idea of personal narrative about it; you can't be completely selfless because you have to tell your story. In Jackson's book,

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you see direct analogies—when he starts to describe the basic principles of the triangle offense, the idea of spacing and that the offense should spread out and leave space for everyone. The same way, in European free improvisation, the downtown New York scene and the AACM it's about integrating your story with all the rest of the stories that are out there." **DB**

## EQUIPMENT

George's trombone is a Vincent Bach Stradivarius model 42B with an F attachment and lightweight slide. He uses a Schilke 53 mouthpiece. "Trombone fetishists don't have much to work with compared to saxophonists," he adds. "Unless you want to talk about cold-cream vintages."

Lewis' own Voyager computer software composes and responds to music in real-time—it was written in Formula, a version of the Forth programming language created in the mid-'80s by composer Ron Kuivila and computer scientist David Anderson. Lewis' hardware includes four Korg AG-10 sound modules, a Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Time Piece, Mackie 1202 mixer, Roland CP-40 pitch-to-MIDI converter, IVL 4000 pitch-to-MIDI converter and an Apple Macintosh 145 Powerbook.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

**VOYAGER**—Avant 014  
**CHANGING WITH THE TIMES**—New World 80434  
**MORE NEWS FOR LULU**—hat ART 6055 (John Zorn, Bill Frisell)  
**NEWS FOR LULU**—hat ART 6005 (Zorn, Frisell)  
**CHICAGO SLOW DANCE**—Lovely/Vital 1101 (out of print)  
**HOMAGE TO CHARLES PARKER**—Black Saint 120029 (out of print)  
**GEORGE LEWIS/DOUGLAS EWART**—Black Saint 120026  
**SHADOWGRAPH**—Black Saint 120016  
**GEORGE LEWIS**—Black Saint 0016 (out of print)  
**THE GEORGE LEWIS SOLO TROMBONE RECORD**—Sackville 3012 (out of print)

### with Anthony Braxton

**ENSEMBLE (VICTORIAVILLE) 1988**—Victo 07  
**CREATIVE ORCHESTRA MUSIC**—Bluebird 6579  
**DONAUESHINGEN (DUO) 1976**—hat ART 6150  
**DORTMUND (QUARTET) 1976**—hat ART 6075

### with Muhai Richard Abrams

**MAMA AND DADDY**—Black Saint 120041  
**SPIRITMONESTY**—Black Saint 120032

### with Richard Teitelbaum

**CYBERBAND**—Moers 03000  
**CONCERTO GROSSO**—hat ART 6004

### with various others

**SUITE FOR FRIDA KAHLO**—Audioquest 1023 (James Newton)  
**ANOTHER PLACE**—Moers 0158 (Fred Anderson; out of print)  
**20TH ANNIVERSARY**—FMP 45 (Globe Unity Orchestra)  
**YANKEES**—Celluloid 5006 (Zorn, Derek Bailey)  
**BIG SCIENCE**—Warner Bros. 3674 (Laurie Anderson)  
**EPISTEME**—Gramavision 79508 (Anthony Davis)  
**FUTURITIES**—hat ART 6031/32 (Steve Lacy)  
**FROM SAXOPHONE AND TROMBONE**—Incus 35 (Evan Parker; out of print)  
**GIVE AND TAKE**—Black Saint 120072 (John Lindberg, Barry Altschul)  
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**DUTCH MASTERS**—Soul Note 121154 (Lacy, Misha Mengelberg, Han Bennink, Ernst Reijseger)  
**CHANGE OF SEASON**—Soul Note 121104 (Lacy, Mengelberg, Bennink, Arjen Gorter)

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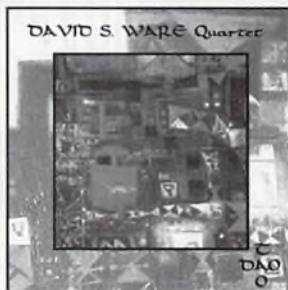
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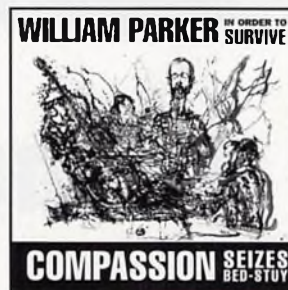
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# A Long Look At Stan Getz

By Don DeMicheal

*Stan Getz's 49-year musical career, which ended with his death in 1991, knew many peaks and lows. In the following "Classic Interview," reprinted (and edited) from our May 19 and June 2, 1966, issues, we find the tenor saxophonist reflecting on his return to America from Denmark in 1961 and the great success of the many hit albums he recorded in the following few years. Getz and his musical legacy are brought to life in the recently released biography Stan Getz: A Life In Jazz (Morrow) and its companion CD Stan Getz: A Life In Jazz—A Musical Biography (Verve).*

**H**e was a reigning figure in the jazz kingdom, but he had been away from the capital for almost three years. Winds of change blew through the realm. Reigning figures toppled right and left. But he was more than a prince of the kingdom. He was a symbol—the Cool One, the white god of jazz. A lot of people were out to get him, simply because he was who he was. He was the focus of derision—not just because of his color or his success but also because of his arrogance.

So when Stan Getz came home from Denmark in January 1961, he would have to prove himself all over again. Perhaps not completely, for few, even his enemies, demeaned his artistry and skill as a tenor saxophonist. And though there were not

many, he still had staunch friends who believed in him.

Yet the enemy was numerous.

At his first night-club engagement in New York City after his return, he was met, according to writer Bill Coss, by "the haters, musical and otherwise, who came to find out whether the young white man, who had lengthened the already legendary and unorthodox Lester Young line into something of his own, could stand up against what is, in current jazz, at least a revolution from it (or revulsion about it). ... The still broad-shouldered, blue-eyed, bland-faced young man met musicians backstage, and they tried him with words and with Indian-hold handshakes of questionable peace and unquestionable war."

Recalling the earlier days, Getz's wife,

Monica said, "There were few musicians who could upset him by their opinions about his music. He never felt insecure about his music (because I believe he has always played what he had to play, regardless of climate of opinion or trends), only himself. Outside his world of music, he always felt vulnerable and lost. In the past, he'd had a life of frightening experiences. He didn't understand the world, and he distrusted the people in it. His reaction was to close up behind a wall of anger, to hurt before he might be hurt."

Gradually Getz had become as skilled in the put-down as he was in making music. The hostility he encountered served to bring out the verbal skill more and more. And though a guarded person, he could be withering when piqued.

He was like a man with his back to the wall, a terribly proud man. He gave evidence of being alternately hurt and crushed.

"When we first got back," Monica said, "he was starry-eyed, happy, excited and eager to hear what had been happening in the States during his absence. He eventually became disappointed at what he felt was a dead-end street of pretentious experimenting and repetitious, self-indulging choruses—the more pretentious the music, the more ecstatic the hipsters. In fact, hipsters had seemed to become the larger part of the audience. Many true jazz aficionados had quit coming, being confused and bored. Only old friends like Miles and Diz gave him solace and hope and worried with him about the directions of jazz. It was heart-breaking to see his old defense coming back."

**W**hen Getz left for a Jazz at the Philharmonic tour of Europe in 1958, Monica, expecting their first child, decided to join him and brought his three children for what was to be a three-month stay. It lasted almost three years.

The Getzes took a house near Elsinore castle, about 30 miles outside Copenhagen. Getz said during his stay in Denmark that he was tired of America's overemphasis on competition and "tired of tearing around making money" for money's own sake, adding he felt there were other things in life and that money was only a means to something else. In Denmark, he said, he had more time for his music and family and enjoyed the truthful, relaxed way of living in that country.

"I wanted to find peace of mind," he told writer Jack Lind. "That's hard to do in the United States."

But by the end of 1960, he had decided to come back to his homeland.

Soon after his return in early '61, he observed that European musicians study



DAVE PELL

jazz as they would any other art form, "but they really don't *have* to play it. Over here, the minorities—Negroes, Jews, Italians—who are most of the jazz musicians ... it's sort of social protest. ... But then, there's the whole boiling pot going on here. I wish there was some way that there could be a balance between the stimulation in the United States and Europe's climate for creativity."

Asked what his impressions of the U.S. jazz scene were, he said then, "Everybody is playing so many notes. So much of the beauty has gone out of the music. Too many people connected with jazz are trying to bulldoze you with it. ... I feel embarrassed sometimes when I go into a club and hear these people playing so consciously avant garde. You cannot hide a lack of taste or musicianship behind a barrage of notes, or by using hit-or-miss methods. Valid evolution has to come about naturally, of necessity. You can't force direction upon true music.

"I read somewhere that a Negro musician said, 'The '50s were the decade of the white musician, but now *we're* in.' I don't blame Negroes for feeling that way, but it's not true that a white man cannot play jazz ... that's not true, just as sure as I'm sitting here.

"I wish there really were integration, so you could like or dislike anyone on his own merits."

He still feels the same today.

"A lot of it to me is still ugly, unnecessary and unnatural," he said recently. "I guess I just have my own conception of music—that's all. Music should inspire and elevate people, give them some kind of good emotion. Sadness and anger are parts of jazz, but anger is different from hatred. There is so much hatred in life that music should bring out more positive emotions. Hatred is destructive."

**I**n January 1962, *Focus* was issued. It was a remarkable record, perhaps his finest artistic achievement. Eddie Sauter had written several pieces for a string section, over which Getz improvised. The record, which Getz says is his favorite, drew great critical acclaim, and more and more people began to pay closer attention to what Getz was doing.

Getz said that in early 1962, guitarist Charlie Byrd asked him to help get some Brazilian songs recorded. Byrd had come across them while on a tour of Latin America and had become enamored of the music.

"I stayed at his house one night while I was working in Washington," Getz recalled, "and he played this record by Joao Gilberto, which he had brought back from South America. I thought it was lovely music. I liked the melodies, the chords and the rhythm, and I decided to make a record."

The recording was made in March 1962. The album, of course, was *Jazz Samba*, and the single of "Desafinado" taken from it skyrocketed Getz to a heady position in the pop-music industry. It also brought him his widest audience.

The popularity of "Desafinado" set off a wave of bossa nova recording by jazz musicians, and the market was soon flooded. At the same time, paradoxically, many were saying jazz was dead, or dying. But in his own way, Getz had shown that jazz musicians could reach persons other than jazz fans and that jazz was a long way from its grave.

Yet even with an artistic triumph and a hit record, Getz was not completely rid of his insecurity. On stages across the nation, he poked fun at "Desafinado," often referring to it as "Dis Here Finado." And as if to complete the picture of a man disdainful of his high place in a profession,

he went through a period when he publicly made fun of his success.

One Getz sideman has observed that even when "Desafinado" was big, "you still didn't know if you were working, and if you were, how much you'd be paid—or if you'd be paid. Then Monica stepped in."

"Now we have quite an organization," Monica said recently. "I sometimes get the credit, but there are many people involved. My role is to see that Stan and the other musicians are treated with dignity and legitimacy in the business world. It used to be accepted practice for musicians to be taken advantage of, and I have fought against it. Things are much better now. Stan enjoys playing more now, as a result."

When "Desafinado" became such a commercial success, did he feel he was facing a dilemma by being a big-selling record artist as well as one of the finest jazz musicians?

"I just felt that I was lucky enough to have had hits to bring me to a wider audience," he said, "but that I was never going to stop trying to play good music. I play what I have to play, true to what I've always believed in. ... There's always some who feel that success makes music invalid. I have never compromised. But anybody that comes to hear me knows I'm still playing the same way I always played, with the addition of worthwhile new material.

"I don't purposely try to go in a different direction, like some people do. I just have my own idea about music. I want to play it the way I feel it. You can call it whatever you want, but that's the way I play. I've always tried to play exactly what I thought was right—that's the only reason I'm still in the business."

In 1963 his determination to do something the right way brought about another hit record.

Because he felt that *Jazz Samba* lacked some of the real bossa nova feeling, he became determined to make an album of bossa nova that would be "right." Practically everyone was against his doing it. Even officials of his record company believed it would be wasted effort because, they said, the bossa nova boom was deflating.

Getz later said he felt he hadn't said his last word on the music, and he wanted to record with Joao Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim, the Brazilians usually credited as fathers of bossa nova. Getz felt Gilberto and Jobim had been largely ignored in the United States, and he wanted to make a record with them to bring them to wider attention.

"Joao can't speak English—only Portuguese—and I wanted to know what the lyrics he sang meant in English," Getz recalled. "So his wife Astrud, who was a housewife and had never sung

professionally, translated the lyrics into English, and I asked her to sing them on the record, much to Joao's and Jobim's dismay."

The result was the *Getz-Gilberto* album—and the single of "The Girl From Ipanema."

Another project that Getz is proud of is the soundtrack for *Mickey One*, which consisted of his improvisations and Eddie

**"I don't purposely try to go in a different direction, like some people do. I just have my own idea about music. I want to play it the way I feel it. ...that's the only reason I'm still in the business."**

Sauter's writing. It was an undertaking that caused him great anguish—stemming from, again, his concern for doing something right.

The week before Getz was to record his part of the music, Gary Burton, the Getz quartet's vibraharpist and road manager, observed:

"He hasn't taken any recording project as seriously since *Focus*. He's drinking more, eating less, not sleeping for three or four days in a row, listening to the music over and over. I wish he could do it without having to do so many things to himself before he can get down to doing it. He puts so many obstacles in front of himself to get to it.

"He's playing less overtly now than he used to. It's more subtle and much more interesting. But a lot of people don't understand it—the rhythm section doesn't play a driving four, and we don't have a piano. ... But he's playing more of those little spots of genius—that happens more often now. He's playing more freely and is more willing to go into new areas than he was, say, 10 years ago, even though new things are sometimes very strenuous for him."

Today Getz is stronger than he's ever

been. His bitterness comes out less often. His control of himself—and his music—is more firm and sure. Situations that just a short while ago would have brought forth an explosion from him he now usually takes in stride, though he still can blow up. His humor—which never left him—is in the foreground more often than before. Once he sets his mind to something, he is not easily swayed.

In short, he is a more complete person.

Speaking about his changed concept of music, he perhaps also reflected on his current state of being when he said:

"It's difficult to say how your concept changes, because it happens so slowly. You don't even notice it, and you shouldn't. I've more definite ideas now, and I'm sure of what I want to do—so that the music comes out sounding more sure. And I know more. I've learned a lot more about music and the saxophone and how to play it, but most of all, I've learned a great deal more about life. Whatever it is, life reflects in your music."

The quartet he now leads is a congenial one, which adds to his peace of mind. There is a closeness among its members—Burton, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Roy Haynes—not often found in jazz groups.

Recently while simultaneously being interviewed, trying a new mouthpiece, having his horn adjusted and getting a massage, Getz planned a surprise birthday party for Haynes. He ordered a cake, called Burton and asked him to get a present (a gold cigarette lighter), and made plans for the surprise (to Burton: "Tomorrow, after the second set, I'll act like I'm bugged and call a conference in my room.")

"It was like a New Year's Eve party," Haynes said later.

Though Getz is now more open about some things than he was in past years, he still finds it difficult to talk about music.

"I don't know what to tell you about music," he said. "Each person is an individual; each person is himself ... of the greats anyway—the rest are just copies in one way or another. There are a few people everybody gets most of their things from—the greats. You hear other musicians all the way down the line not playing themselves because maybe they haven't found themselves yet. Maybe they're young. Or maybe it's an imitation of one of the true greats. And to mock, to imitate somebody else's music, makes the originator sound worse. ...

"A lot of people are professional talkers about music; they really have affirmative ideas. That's one of the reasons I like jazz—there's really nothing to say about it. ... But some people can talk you black and blue about this theory and that theory. But I say let music speak for itself." **DB**

## Wallace Roney Speaks Out

**S**avvy trumpeter Wallace Roney has had it up to here with the endless clichés and weak Miles Davis comparisons he's been subjected to over the years.

Instead, he'd like people to take notice of his inventive ensemble. For *Down Beat's* March issue, Roney was profiled in a piece full of "unimaginative clichés that reporters revert to because they don't know anything else to write about me." Here, the 36-year-old Roney takes time out to respond.

To start, he wanted to make a point about his band, made up of Antoine Roney on tenor and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet and alto flute; Ravi Coltrane on tenor and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet and alto flute; pianist Carlos McKinney; drummer Eric Allen; Clarence Seay on bass; and, especially, pianist Geri Allen. "I've played with a lot of great bands and I picked the musicians in my group because they are the baddest and most forward-thinking players I know. They all have the dexterity, and none of them are scared to push the limits of their creativity. These musicians play together as if they can read each other's minds."

Roney also lashed out at the continual references to Davis, which he says have dogged his career. "As for all the Miles stuff in the [DB] article, you should know I'll never get tired of talking about him. Miles is my idol and I love him. But Zan [Stewart, the writer of the piece] and I spent 10 minutes on Miles late in the interview. After we had talked about my giving a horn to Clark Terry, my playing with Sonny Rollins, my band and other things, the piece starts with: 'Wallace Roney continues to be surrounded by the aura of Miles Davis.' What's that supposed to mean? That's just making sound bites for people to think that's all I am. At this point, I can never be just another Miles clone. I'm trying to live up to what Miles saw in me. Whether I'm the heir to the throne or not, whatever it was that McCoy Tyner, Tony Williams, Jay McShann and the rest saw in me when they hired me, that's what they wanted me to contribute to their music. I'm never going to run from Miles. But writers don't have to introduce me and my music to the audience in the context of Miles every single time.

"There's more to me than what



Wallace Roney

happened in 1991, as important as that moment was and is for me [when Roney performed with Davis at the Montreux Jazz Festival, and was essentially conferred special status with the soon-to-die trumpet legend]. I don't see other trumpet players like Tom Harrell being explained in terms of Freddie Hubbard."

Roney said his band is attempting to push musical boundaries and isn't simply basking in past glories. "We're utilizing forms that aren't typical, and harmonies that aren't the usual subdivisions of rhythm. We're trying to make it swing as basic as if it were 4/4, and improvising on top as if we're painting a picture." Referring to the band's latest album, *The Wallace Roney Quintet* (see "CD Reviews" June '96), he adds, "The record sounds okay, but the band is amazing live."

Also important to Roney's career are his ongoing collaborative efforts. For example, his interview discussed his work with Sonny Rollins. "I played a couple of tunes with Sonny Rollins in November at the Beacon Theatre in New York around the time of the DB interview [see "Caught" March '96 issue]. We did two rehearsals. In the first, I went in and we rehearsed for maybe five minutes. Sonny was playing light and my chops were so strong because I had just gotten off the road. So, he says, 'That's it, we'll come back tomorrow.' I went home and told my brother that we played for five minutes and Sonny wasn't sounding too strong. I joked that I was going to tell Sonny he's got to play more than that. So, the day of the gig, I got to the soundcheck a bit late and Sonny was already playing. And he was burning. *Burning*. I was so caught up in being late that I didn't notice the intensity he was playing with. He was looking right at me, and with his body he's saying, 'C'mon, man. Play!' He was so much stronger than I remembered, and he was really going for it. I took my horn and started going for it, too. We were doing it right there at the soundcheck, and everyone was hollering. When we got to

the concert, he played his butt off. But I think some of his best playing was at that rehearsal. The tunes were 'St. Thomas' and 'Tenor Madness.' Also, that same week, I had given Clark Terry a blue Martin Committee trumpet by Leblanc, just like the one Miles played and I play."

Roney also took issue with DB's characterization of his music as difficult to understand. "It's not that hard to digest. Somebody's idea of dissonance is just somebody else's idea of exotic harmony. We don't just put a note there like, 'Splat.' These notes are like beautiful flowers. It's emotional music. We also talked about Herbie, Ornette Coleman, Wayne Shorter, Tony, Ron Carter, Elvin Jones, McCoy, Cecil. Some of the guys eventually went to a more commercially acceptable music, but that doesn't make them any less avant garde today. Anything those guys want to do is acceptable to me. These are the superpowers. It's pure genius.

"As for the future of jazz, the club owners should hire bands instead of all-stars every time. We need more multi-night gigs. Then, word gets out and everybody makes money. I'm also in favor of double-bills in nightclubs, like my band and Roy Hargrove, or Elvin Jones and Tony Williams' group, or Joe Henderson and Rollins, or Geri and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. We need these creative double-bills. Every time I've done something like that, it's been a very rewarding experience. I think the record companies of both artists should get behind the idea because it helps them sell records. It seems like such a simple idea. How come they don't jump on it? And the clubs would make more money if it were more than just one night only.

"I hope DB keeps trying to find out what's going on inside the music. I don't think DB should be ashamed of being a jazz magazine that sometimes features other things. All the other music forms have their magazines. But nobody else is really covering jazz. And DB shouldn't just look at the cats with the record contracts. DB used to do that. Let's do it again. Finally, I want to thank DB for giving me this chance to have my say." —Fred Shuster

# Return To The Jazz Big Leagues

It's said he was John Coltrane's favorite bassist. Several Coltrane recordings, among them *Olé* and *Ascension*, attest to why the saxophonist practiced exclusively with him for a year. No less than Max Roach and Dizzy Gillespie used him in their respective bands; he also acquired an enduring reputation for playing on record dates fronted by, among others, Art Blakey and Coleman Hawkins. Modern jazz of the late 1950s and early '60s was all the more vital for his contributions. Art Davis is his name.

"Maybe people will say, 'Oh, Art is still alive and working!'" muses the 62-year-old Davis, whose new album—*A Time Remembered* (Jazz Planet), with Herbie Hancock, Marvin "Smitty" Smith and Coltrane's son Ravi—signals his return to the jazz big leagues (see p. 54). Davis' energy and creative levels are high and he distinguishes himself as in days of yore.

"I think it's time to come out now," he says. "It's been over 10 years since I did my last CD [*Life*, on Soul Note]. A lot of people, which is sad, didn't know that I was living and wondered whatever happened to me." How far his career revival goes depends on the response to the album. "It's up to the people. If the people want me, I will accede to their commands."

The people lost track of Davis decades ago. In the '60s, he played in NBC's studio band and took freelance pop or classical jobs in New York. The '70s saw Davis studying psychology at local universities, occasionally appearing around town with the likes of Barry Harris and Pharoah Sanders. After earning a Ph.D. in 1982, he gave up music and took a full-time job teaching; Dr. Davis also kept busy as a practicing psychologist.

But since relocating to Southern California in 1986, Davis has been "trying to get a balance with music and teaching and psychology." He leads his own quintet, with which he hopes to record and someday tour the festival circuit here and abroad. (How about club one-nighters? "No! I don't want to do that.") Davis has initiated an annual tribute to John Coltrane at the World Stage in South Central Los Angeles that coincides with the saxophonist's birthday in September—Ravi Coltrane and L.A. Philharmonic pianist Zita Zarno are among the celebrants. There's also his community-service organization, the Dr. Art Davis Fan Club and a non-profit program known as BASS (Better Advantages for Students and Society), whose combined good deeds include putting on jazz shows at



Art Davis

convalescent homes and granting scholarships to high schoolers. Davis says, "We preach harmony and understanding because there are all races and cultures, and we all get along."

Davis keeps tabs on today's string-bass talents. "Interestingly enough," he notes, "some of the things I was doing way back are done now, and people are being lauded for that: glissandos, intervallic solos, the use of the bow, the use of quarter tones,

doing double- and triple-stops on the bass, being able to use the instrument in a free form, breaking up the time." He prides himself on being one of the trailblazers who gave emotional impetus to unaccompanied playing: "I used the approach of soloing from your heart and being more creative rather than playing mechanical licks on the instrument."

From the heart, that's Art Davis, revitalized jazzman. —Frank-John Hadley

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# Tripping On The Job

**T**he idea of bouncing off to far-flung destinations for a one-nighter doesn't phase Steve Kuhn. He recently took his trio to Cancun for an afternoon show.

"It's more daunting to my friends," chuckles the pianist/composer. "They say, 'Oh, how romantic, they're flying you down for a couple of days, what fun!' But to me," and for this part the Brooklyn native puts on his best laissez-faire accent, "it's a job."

The notion of Kuhn as a working musician is easy to appreciate. Since his early days gigging with Kenny Dorham, John Coltrane and other icons, one bandstand or another has been a temporary home to the 58-year-old. Travel is a way to see natural glory ("the blue of the ocean in Mexico was magnificent," he offers) but also a chance to experience less-than-optimum working conditions ("the piano we used down there was a piece of crap").

Bogus equipment didn't lessen the impact that Kuhn's ensemble had on its

audience, however. Pieces, several from the pianist's new *Remembering Tomorrow* (ECM), were poignant enough to bring tears to a few eyes. Though rare, eliciting that kind of response is another plus for the working improviser. "Some people are very emotional; you really know you've gotten to people when that happens," he says.

Surrounded by drummer Joey Baron and bassist David Finck, the trio context is Kuhn's metier of choice. But, he reminds, in the eyes of booking agents, piano trios lag behind quartets and quintets with horns. "But you've got to go with what you hear," he says flatly, "and lately it's been trio. We have a conversational approach in the group. I think the people that work in the band enjoy it because they can fully express themselves: the job is not just to accompany me."

Crucial to Kuhn's criteria for picking playmates is the feeling of natural camaraderie. He believes it's pointless to travel extensively with even the slightest tension in the ranks. Baron is new to the group, and the pianist says the drummer's sunny demeanor helps the overall vibe of the music.


Another beloved partner—and one with a much lengthier history of playing with Kuhn—is vocalist Sheila Jordan. "Sheila's so easy to travel with," he assures, "and that's important. When things aren't going right—say the piano tuner has used a



Steve Kuhn

cheap strobe machine on the instrument and it's way, way out—it's great to have a pal with whom you can either share your frustration or just laugh."

Jordan and Kuhn recently did 10 duo concerts in Japan. The Far East trip helped clarify what audiences far away from the States currently think of Kuhn's artistic persona. "Sometimes just being the artist, it's hard to perceive what's going on with your music around the world, until you go somewhere and people come up offering their opinion. If you don't get exposed to that firsthand, it's confusing: 'What's my position in the marketplace these days?' But once you get some positive feedback, it can be quite gratifying." —*Jim Macnie*




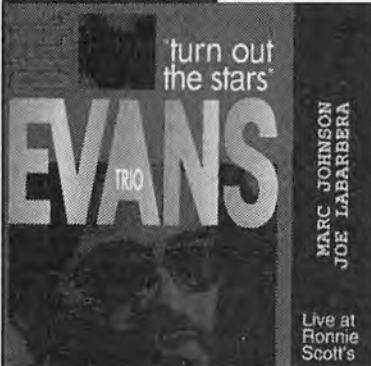
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# Bill Evans

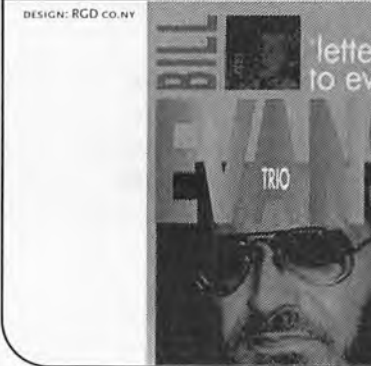
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# Mixin' Muddy With Trane

**R**onnie Earl is one of the most innovative blues guitarists recording today. Wait a minute—make that one of the most innovative jazz guitarists recording today. Or is it jazz-blues? How about blues-jazz?

It's hard to tell by listening to Earl's new album, *Grateful Heart: Blues & Ballads* (Rounder). The guitar passages and solos are certainly sterling. The problems start when you attempt to categorize Earl. On *Grateful Heart* he swings from blues to jazz and back again. There's blues grit in the jazz tracks and jazz moods in the blues numbers. There are no vocal tracks to help to detect his true destination. All you can do with *Grateful Heart* is sit back and enjoy this five-star recording.

"I don't think things, especially music, ought to have labels on them," explains Earl from his Massachusetts home. "I know that sounds like a cliché, but that's the way I feel. I like abstractions. I like breaking down barriers. To me, there's no difference between jazz or blues. *Grateful Heart* is me saying that with my guitar."

*Grateful Heart* is also something of a payback album, since it is dedicated to three of Earl's music mentors: John Coltrane, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Duane Allman. "Skyman," which was written for Allman, is one of the album's most touching tracks. On it, Earl's guitarwork flows like sweet water. "I was always such a big fan of Duane Allman," says Earl. "He was such a great player, which makes it an even bigger pity that he died way before his time."

Tributes also go out to David "Fathead" Newman, which Earl celebrates by having Newman perform on the album, and to Carlos Santana, to whom the track "Song For A Sun" is dedicated. There's even a tribute track to Vietnam veterans called "Welcome Home" on *Grateful Heart*.

Although Earl first surfaced as a guitarist in Roomful of Blues and was calling blues giants like Muddy Waters a main inspiration, Earl was deep into Coltrane's recorded catalogue by the time he was 18. Before that, Earl's father would take his son to see jazz concerts that featured the likes of Charles Mingus and Dizzy Gillespie. "It took a while for these first musical impressions to become identifiable in my music, but they were also there with Muddy and Howlin' Wolf, and T-Bone Walker and others."

For the past decade or so, Earl has taken his group the Broadcasters from straight blues to a musical field whose crop is both blues and jazz. Then, when

singer/harmonica player Sugar Ray Norcia left the Broadcasters a couple of years ago, Earl began experimenting with an all-instrumental approach. On albums such as *Still River* (AudioQuest) and *Language Of The Soul* (Rounder), Earl fully embraced the all-instrumental idea, letting his guitar soar.

"I don't read music or know anything about theory," Earl muses. "But that's okay, because over the years I found out what matters most is to play from your soul. That's where your real feelings are found. If you can get them into your music, then you're really onto something as an artist."  
—Robert Santelli



Ronnie Earl

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# CD REVIEWS

AUGUST 1996



## Arcana

### The Last Wave

DIW 903

★★★

A collision of improvising pioneer Derek Bailey with free-fusion father Tony Williams had devastating potential; Bailey has recently recorded with Japanese rockers Ruins and, of course, in the '70s Williams led the group Lifetime with Bailey's fellow countryman, British guitarist John McLaughlin. No doubt a new noise classic is what producer Bill Laswell had in mind when he arranged the daylong session for *The Last Wave*. In a way, it follows the formula he used with Ronald Shannon Jackson and Peter Brötzmann in *Last Exit* ("lasts" are big for an apocalyptic romantic like Laswell): juxtapose rock-friendly African American drumming and European free improvising. Unfortunately, Laswell didn't exercise the discretion not to play on the record himself, for in the end his laborious and mainly uninteresting bass playing dilutes the encounter.

The record is not without its merits, though. Williams lays down steady rock beats in place, convening with Laswell effectively on "Broken Circle"; meanwhile Bailey throws out extreme noise terror over the top on electric guitar. Sadly, that 11-minute track is marred by a dopey hip-hop beat introduced out of the blue by Williams and is unsuccessfully aided by Laswell. "Pearls And Transformation" starts with the loosest jazz feel, but Williams sometimes seems lost and looking for something to do, as in the long stretch during which he thumps a bass-drum heartbeat (a stalling tactic he recycles at the end of "Transparent Wasteland"). Over much of the record, Williams pounds the living follicles out of his tom-toms; his regular strokes often make him sound more like a chops-maniacal heavy metal drummer than the jazz innovator we heard behind Dolphy, Miles and McLaughlin. But he's pretty astounding at it; listen, for instance, as he finishes "Cold Blast" with a single crisp snare roll.

In denser parts, Laswell simply blots out the finer details of what Bailey's doing, much of it involving stroked string textures, shifts between heavy distortion and clean tone, and a hard-to-pin-down sense of time. A taste of what

fascinating rhythmic interplay a drum/guitar duet might have produced reveals itself at the beginning of "Tears Of Astral Rain"—Williams' rimshots and Bailey's rock-hard picking mix neatly. (Alas, Laswell's in there the whole time, gumming it up.) There's also a passage in the middle of "The Rattle Of Bones" in which Bailey's plucked harmonics suddenly move in a strange dance pulse alongside Williams' backbeat for a shining moment. That track begins with Laswell's best playing, processing and preparations expanding his limited instrumental vocab. —John Corbett

**The Last Wave**—Broken Circle: Cold Blast; The Rattle Of Bones; Pearls And Transformation; Tears Of Astral Rain; Transplant In Wasteland. (60:28)

**Personnel**—Tony Williams, drums; Derek Bailey, guitar; Bill Laswell, bass.



## Kenny Garrett

### Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane

Warner Bros. 46209

★★★★

Big-band Trane, trombone Trane, solo-piano Trane: The master's turf is much-trampled these days—you'd better have a

secret weapon or a novel approach when walking that stately, eruptive walk. Compared to other formal interpretations, *Pursuance* (the title to one piece from Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*) is relatively orthodox. But with Pat Metheny on hand, the alto/guitar angle does allow Garrett's genuflection to veer away from overt echoes of Trane's tenor/piano setup, and as layers of the onion start to fall away, it becomes obvious that this is a highly imaginative date. Here, the little moves make all the difference.

Garrett's last blast, *Trilogy*, was dedicated to Sonny Rollins and Joe Henderson, tenor players—idea men, really—for whom style is literally substance. It's that level of creativity to which the young alto players aspire, and as he rampages through "Giant Steps" is recast yet again on *Pursuance*, and this time it's a rhythmic minefield that the band perceives as a hopscotch grid. Garrett and Metheny prance and frolic throughout, proving that resourcefulness can be quite recreational. Even the permutations of "Liberia" 's regal theme have their frolicsome moments.

Garrett's not glib regarding Coltrane's drama, though. Much of *Pursuance*'s program deals with the master's more lush and furious pieces, and the leader's natural eloquence with the blues language proves sublime. His lines can be knotted and raw, or surprisingly supple. On "After The Rain," they're both. With Brian Blade's toms and bells nudging the group, Garrett milks his soulful legato early on, and bears down to wax feverish toward the end. He even coaxes some deep blues out of Metheny. Pat's "Dear Lord" solo is economical—utterly strategic in its use of notes. Yet, the overall feel is plush. *Pursuance* is a chance to hear Metheny as a sideman, an isolated incident given his status as a leader, and whether comping or wailing he acquits himself as an agent provocateur.

Though Trane is the spirit hovering over the scene, another icon flits by. Part of "Latifa" and the uproar at the boiling point of "Lonnie's

KEY

Excellent  
Very Good  
Good  
Fair  
Poor

★★★★★  
★★★★  
★★★  
★★  
★

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>ARCANA</b> <i>The Last Wave</i>		★	★★★	★★★	★★★
<b>KENNY GARRETT</b> <i>Pursuance</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★
<b>BILLIE HOLIDAY</b> <i>All Or Nothing At All</i>		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★1/2
<b>ART DAVIS</b> <i>A Time Remembered</i>		★★★★★	★★★	★★★1/2	★★★★



Lament" conjure images of Metheny's manic collaboration with Ornette Coleman on 1986's *Song X*. Pat's intermittently plugged into his sound-effects thingamajig, going synth crazy when the mood strikes. It certainly isn't daunting to Garrett, who matches him howl for howl. In fact, it's just another textural gambit, one of the singular moves that keep the action engaging.

There may not be a high concept driving this date, but the true level of its creativity becomes more and more clear as you hone in on the minutia at work. In Garrett's hand, control and decorum manage to elicit some of the summer's most passionate mainstream music. When the blowing is this inspired, the thrills are many. —Jim Macnie

**Pursuance**—*Countdown; Equinox; Liberia; Dear Lord; Lonnie's Lament; After The Rain; Like Sonny; Pursuance; Alabama; Giant Steps; Latifa (aka "Untitled")*. (66'01)  
**Personnel**—Garrett, alto saxophone; Pat Metheny, guitar; Rodney Whitaker, bass; Brian Blade, drums.



## Billie Holiday

### All Or Nothing At All

Verve 529 226

★★★

As I await with interest my Hot Box colleagues' reactions to this collection of 1956-'57 Billie Holiday, my own instinct is to pinch myself and ask, is this shriveled cackle really singing?

On two CDs, Verve gives us three Holiday albums (*Distingue Lovers, Body And Soul* and *All Or Nothing At All*) recorded in consecutive sessions during August 1956 and January 1957. An alternate of "Comes Love" and one instrumental, "Just Friends," are added (both are on Verve's 10-CD Holiday boxed set). The chance to hear vintage Ben Webster and Harry Edison makes this a tempting offer. But then there's the singer.

The jazz world, of course, has long separated itself into two camps on Billie's career, the prewar vs. postwar fans. They glare at each other across the barricades as fervidly as pre- and post-fusion Miles Davis cultists hiss back and forth. My sense is that today the preponderance of published opinion sees this material as the stuff of artistic magnificence.

I find this a patent denial of the obvious, surpassed only perhaps by the Simpson verdict. Interestingly, this view also contrasts sharply with critics in the '50s, who seemed able to see this work much more clearly for what it was—the faded shadow of a once jazz performer.

Her tainted pitch and recalcitrant vibrato are aggravated by instincts that have congealed into mannerisms, the little arcs and dips that end her phrases. You may find yourself squirming in the slow, creeping tempos she began to favor in the early '40s. Among the saving graces of these sessions is that about half the material trots along at a decent pace, sparing everyone those long quivering notes. And the songs and the musicians are the finest, too; that helps. The format typically gives Billie a chorus, followed by formidable soloists, then a vocal reprise. She is clearly a one-chorus-at-a-time singer. One winces as she attempts to break loose and improvise her way through a second chorus on "Cheek To Cheek." She flaps her wings, but nothing happens.

To find magnificence in any of this, one has

to retreat into the free-form esthetics of performance art. Jazz critics in the '50s embraced her as a singer and found her slipping. Today there's a way around that. Excuse the musicianship, embrace her as society's victim, feel the pain and blame the system.

For Billie's part, at least, these records are more theater than music. In that, however, she fulfills what Neal Gabler once neatly called the "covenant between celebrity and public." She lived as her audience expected her to. Though it's convenient that America's Edith Piaf should be black, I see her here less as a martyr to racism than as a sad-eyed, self-abusive woman of flawed character who made the least of her opportunities. —John McDonough

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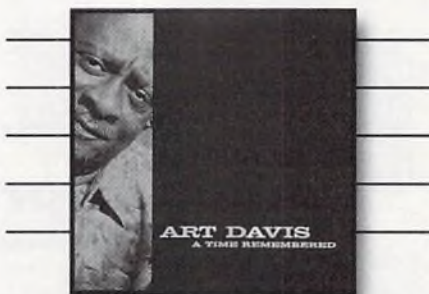
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## CD REVIEWS

*Cheek To Cheek; Ill Wind; Speak Low; We'll Be Together Again; All Or Nothing At All; Sophisticated Lady; April In Paris; I Wished On The Moon; Moonlight In Vermont; A Foggy Day; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Just One Of Those Things; Comes Love (alt); Comes Love; Day In, Day Out; Darn That Dream; But Not For Me; Body And Soul; Just Friends (instrumental); Stars Fell On Alabama; Say It Isn't So; Love Is Here To Stay; One For My Baby; They Can't Take That Away From Me; Embraceable You; Let's Call The Whole Thing Off; Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You.* (68:37/64:01)

**Personnel**—Holiday, vocals; Harry Edison, trumpet; Ben Webster, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Rowles, piano; Barney Kessel, guitar; Joe Mondragon (1-8, 20-23), Red Mitchell (9-19, 24-27), bass; Alvin Stoller (1-19), Larry Bunker (20-27), drums.



## Art Davis

### A Time Remembered Jazz Planet 5001

★★★★

There's nothing extraordinary about Art Davis' *A Time Remembered*. That's unless you consider a small-group date with no frills or "special guests," a rock-solid repertoire and damn good musicianship all around essential ingredients.

There are delights aplenty here, not the least of which is the veteran bassist Davis' return to action (see p. 49). "Smitty" Smith's swinging simpatico, relatively restrained accompaniment mingles with a very mature-sounding Ravi Coltrane. The biggest kick, however, comes from listening to Herbie Hancock, sideman extraordinaire. Free to roam and support on acoustic piano, *A Time Remembered* stands in marked contrast to Hancock's recent *The New Standard* if only because he has nothing to prove, no agenda to follow. The only "standard" here seems to be great playing amongst peers. For Hancock, the result is his best "straight-ahead" playing since the *Round Midnight* soundtrack days of the mid-'80s.

But this is Art Davis' date. Leading from the "back" of the band, the tasteful bassist fosters cohesion, developing just the right groove or mood from piece to piece. Davis' pacing of the set includes tunes associated with former collaborators (e.g., Monk's "Evidence") to originals ("Everybody's Doing It" and his three-part suite "A Time Remembered") to Hancock's "Driftin'." Blues, boogies, ballads, they're all here.

Perhaps the most impressive piece is Coltrane's "Olé," a tune Davis recorded with Trane

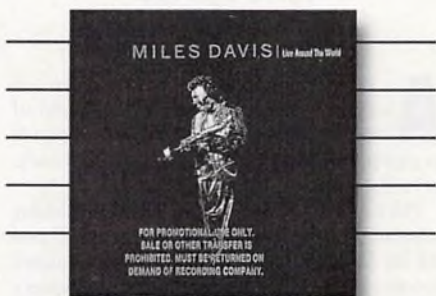
in '61. Here, the song may only be half as long (9:08), but the treatment is just as sincere, the Spanish waltz avoiding clichés as son Ravi emulates his father's soprano without attempting to imitate it. (In fact, to these ears, young Coltrane sounds refreshingly himself.) The most eloquent passages from his horn can be heard on Strayhorn's lovely "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing," his tenor sounding sumptuous, agile, relaxed yet effective. Hancock's turns here are pure magic. And Davis finds a way to solo through them both, naturally, almost without being noticed.

Hancock's "Driftin'" finds the composer getting almost manic in his solo (especially compared to the original), his chords taking the tune's bouncy gait into another realm (if not another key!). The swing he and Davis create, both of them dragging slightly behind the beat, draws you in like a whirlpool. Hancock may not be driftin' here, but who cares?

There ain't a dud to the date. Some work better than others (Davis' "Art's Boogie" and "Everybody's Doing It" are fun but relatively lightweight, insubstantial affairs; "A Time Remembered" is a strong finale). And the production is a tad dry, giving, for example, Smith's snare too much prominence. But Davis, whose intention with *A Time Remembered* was to reflect the many forms of jazz, makes everyone sound like they've been playing together for years. Not a mean feat given the transient nature of jazz musicians these days. —John Ephland

**A Time Remembered**—Evidence: *A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Driftin'; Everybody's Doing It; Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye; Art's Boogie; Olé; A Time Remembered; Sorrow, Uplift, Joy.* (69:06)

**Personnel**—Davis, bass; Ravi Coltrane, tenor and soprano saxophones; Herbie Hancock, piano; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.



## Miles Davis

### Live Around The World Warner Bros. 9 46032

★★★★

Miles Davis shrewdly predicted that, after his death, the tape vaults would fly open. His posthumous catalog should soon rival that of Hendrix or Elvis. *Live Around The World* documents Davis' last working groups from 1988 through 1991, usually a "double quartet" lineup with saxophonist Kenny Garrett and bass guitarist Foley the featured sidemen. Keyboardist/co-producer Adam Holzman compiled this "virtual concert," following a representative set list and selected performances from

several shows. Performances of tunes from *Tutu*, *You're Under Arrest* and *Amandla* are often superior to the studio versions, and the band outperforms my memories of frustrating, uneven concerts.

Davis' once-controversial covers of pop tunes benefit from expansions and improvements. "Human Nature" quickly metamorphoses into an eerie, quiet space, where Garrett joins Miles with a long, brooding alto solo that gathers intensity and consumes the tune. Davis stretches out on a long version of "Time After Time," where he's more an interpreter than an improviser, decorating the melody, investing it with new substance.

Three unrecorded Davis originals are included. "New Blues" seems not so new, a variant on the slow blues he favored, but "Wrinkle" suggests a possible result of the abandoned collaboration with Prince, with its whirlwind funk driven by frenzied synthesizers from Davis and Kei Akagi. As a coda, the CD closes with a foreboding "Hannibal" from Miles' final show. His tone is piercing and jagged, and he's followed by another strong, equally scary solo from Garrett. *Live Around The World* also offers an opportunity to hear intriguing players, e.g., Akagi, bassist Benny Rietveld and percussionist Marilyn Mazur, whose work with Davis is not otherwise documented.

—Jon Andrews

**Live Around The World**—*In A Silent Way*; *Intruder*; *New Blues*; *Human Nature*; *Mr. Pastorius*; *Amandla*; *Wrinkle*; *Tutu*; *Full Nelson*; *Time After Time*; *Hannibal*. (70:49)

**Personnel**—Davis, trumpet, keyboards; Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone, flute (1-5, 7-11); Rick Margitza, tenor saxophone (6); Foley, Benny Rietveld (1-6, 9-10), Richard Patterson (7-8, 11), bass guitar; Adam Holzman (1-4, 6, 9-10), Kei Akagi (5-8, 10), Joey DeFrancesco (1-2, 4), Robert Irving III (3, 9), John Beasley (5), Deron

Johnson (11), keyboards; Ricky Wellman, drums; Marilyn Mazur (1-4, 9), Munyungo Jackson (5-6, 10), Erin Davis (7, 8), percussion.



## Bill Frisell

Quartet  
Nonesuch 79401

★★★★

## Ron Miles

My Cruel Heart  
Gramavision 79510

★★★★

The news that Bill Frisell was weeding some of the electronic whatchamacallits out of his setup is good to hear. While it's

hard not to admire Frisell's versatility, musicality and all-around inventiveness, the way he used the volume pedal—though a signature gesture—seemed to evade the most difficult and arguably most personal part of guitar playing: attack. In Frisell's wake, for worse rather than better, has come a flood of imitators inequipped to deal with the basic question of how to pluck a string.

Listen to the layered-guitar coda at the end of "Tales From The Far Side," on the super new *Quartet*: Here's a hard-picking Frisell, changing the direction of the tune just before it ends. "Egg Radio" takes the same tack, as the elegant, if slightly cheeky, melody suddenly snaps into something much weirder on the way (way) out. And check out the way he

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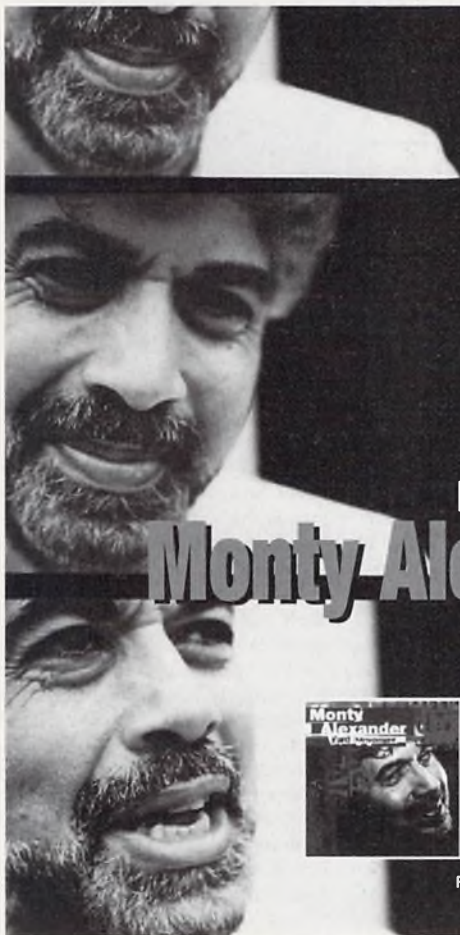
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digests his own fanfare-ish tune and spits it back at the tail of "The Bacon Bunch." Gary Larson's cartoons blur the line between the cute and the twisted, and Frisell's music for the Larson TV special, which makes up about half of *Quartet*, straddles the same fence. (Con)fusing genres and styles, it's somehow quirky and sinister at the same time.

With an extremely malleable new group, the guitarist makes the music work fine without original visuals. Utility infielder Kang nails ultrahigh notes for effect, pizzas in tandem with the leader, turns his violin into a ukulele

on "Dead Ranch" and fiddles around folkishly on "In Deep" and jazzily on the great "Bob's Monsters." Here and there, he gives bottom to the brass section with tuba blats. Fowlkes and Miles are both perfect accomplices, too, with the right humor and drama for the job. "Convict 13" is an off-kilter blues written for the Buster Keaton film of the same name (ditto for the haunting "The Gallows"), while "Stand Up, Sit Down" and "Coffaro's Theme" come from Frisell's soundtrack to the Italian film *La Scuola*. Here's hoping this foursome makes much more music soon.

*My Cruel Heart*, Miles' third date at the helm, is even more forcefully eclectic than *Quartet*. From the hard Hendrix guitar punch that opens "Finger Palace," the Denver-based trum-

peter moves between seemingly incompatible zones, all united by his solid horn and wicked funnybone. Superimposing and hard-cutting between disparate times, genres, energies and moods, Miles proves himself a talented arranger with an ear for detail. For instance, in the middle of the dense title track, a guitar hooks up with the bass drum on a disconcerting but seductive unison pattern. Miles likes to lay slow horn lines over busy backdrops—especially Royston's ripe hip-hop beats and explosive thrash rhythms—but when he chooses to uncork, he's capable of fleet-valved runs and open-throttle upper-register squalls. A very welcome addition to the creative music scene.

—John Corbett

**Quartet**—*Tales From The Far Side; Twenty Years; Stand Up, Sit Down; Convict 13; In Deep; Egg Radio; The Bacon Bunch; Prelude; Bob's Monsters; The Gallows; What?; Dead Ranch; Coffaro's Theme.* (62:02)

**Personnel**—Frisell, electric and acoustic guitars; Ron Miles, trumpet, piccolo trumpet; Eyvind Kang, violin, tuba; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone.

**My Cruel Heart**—*Finger Palace; Howard Beach; Erase Yourself; My Cruel Heart; Naked; Fire Downtown; Boy Gone; Say It Loud; Rachel Has A Secret; Hosea & Gomer.* (56:45)

**Personnel**—Miles, trumpet; Artie Moore, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Todd Ayers (1, 3, 4, 8), Farrell Lowe (1, 3, 8, 9), Eddie Turner (1, 4), Arnie Swenson (4), Dave Willy (4), guitars; Fred Hess, tenor sax; Kari Miles, flute (4, 7); Eric Moon, piano (3, 4); Al "Hammond" Moore, organ (1, 4); Mark McCain, samples (7); John Stubbs, synthesizer, samples (4).

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## Nicholas Payton

### Gumbo Nouveau

Verve 531 199

★★★★

**W**ith his deep connections to New Orleans jazz, it was inevitable that trumpeter Nicholas Payton would confront his musical heritage head-on. He's done that with his second date as a leader, *Gumbo Nouveau*, a strong collection of songs traditionally associated with New Orleans, given up-to-date arrangements by the trumpeter. Payton reaffirms that the buzz surrounding his trumpet playing is entirely justified. He offers a complete package, including a broad range of expression from joyful exuberance ("Whoopin' Blues") to breathy sensitivity ("Way Down Yonder In New Orleans"), as well as a warm, full tone and clean articulation. At age 22, his command of his instrument is compelling.

Payton is not afraid of ghosts. He takes on Louis Armstrong's "Weather Bird" and "Wild Man Blues" without fear. These classics

are much revered and studied, but infrequently recorded. The trumpeter sounds completely confident on "Wild Man Blues," full of swagger and bravado with elastic, "vocal" phrasing, and pianist Anthony Wonsey contributes a solid, bluesy solo. "Weather Bird" is less successful, with Payton and Wonsey sounding a little tentative.

A skeptic might ask whether Wynton Marsalis hasn't already made this record. Yes and no. Wynton has most often explored the New Orleans tradition through his own compositions. Still, Payton's smooth sextet arrangement of "When The Saints Go Marching In" and Trane-ish "St. James Infirmary" would fit well on any of Marsalis' albums. If *Gumbo Nouveau* doesn't break any new ground, this winning, enjoyable CD confirms the vitality of the compositions while it showcases Payton's abilities.

—Jon Andrews

**Gumbo Nouveau**—Whoopin' Blues; When The Saints Go Marching In; Wild Man Blues; After You've Gone; Way Down Yonder In New Orleans; Down In Honky Tonk Town; I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues; Li'l Liza Jane; Weather Bird; St. James Infirmary. (57:01)

**Personnel**—Payton, trumpet; Jesse Davis, alto saxophone (1-2, 4, 6, 8, 10); Anthony Wonsey, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass (1-8, 10); Adonis Rose, drums (1-8, 10).



## Jonny King

### Notes From The Underground

enja 9067

★★★★½

One of the best rushes in jazz is when you hear a band like Jonny King's for the first time and instantly know you have found something truly exceptional. It does not have to do with tempo. The fires of inner necessity illuminate both tone poems ("Soliloquy") and hard stuff ("Caffeine") alike. It does not have to do with breaking rules. It has to do with how these players push themselves, burning their bridges behind them.

Jonny King (like his most famous sideman, Joshua Redman) comes to the music by an unlikely avenue—the Ivy League (Princeton, Class Of '87, and Harvard Law School). Until now, he has been known (to the extent that he has been known) as a composer. *Notes From The Underground* offers six freshly angular King compositions (along with "Mean To Me" and Herbie Hancock's "Blow-Up"), but it also marks him as one of the strongest piano voices of the new generation, and a bandleader who kicks ass.

King's playing is fiercely percussive, with

left-hand accents that clang like Monk's, and a right hand that rains startling clusters, all connected. In the liner notes he cites one of his mentors, Mulgrew Miller, who believes that "everything falls into place if you play with a certain rhythmic conviction." King has a certain rhythmic conviction like Bill Gates has certain assets or Michael Jordan certain moves around the hoop. His music is tense with propulsion held barely in check.

Peter Washington and Billy Drummond are the heart of that energy. (Hear Washington twitching inside "Blow-Up" like a trance-inducing shaman or like a *nouveau* Buster Williams.) Steve Nelson is the most important vibraharpist to emerge since the Jackson-Burton-

Hutcherson era. He enriches the ensemble, and he also throws huge wheeling solos. Joshua Redman could not pour more of himself into this session if it were his own. From his lurching, clarion entrance on "Gnosis," he is committed. *Notes From The Underground*, in fact, conveys more of the experience of Redman in concert than most of his own recordings. In person, you can get high on Joshua Redman, when he erupts with boundless ideas that spill over each other in their zeal to be born. You feel some of that euphoria on "Blow-Up" and in the wild lyricism of his soprano solo on "Caffeine."

Could there be other cats as bad as Jonny King lurking in the hallowed halls of Harvard

## Ranee Lee featuring Ray Brown & Ed Thigpen "You Must Believe In Swing"



Singer **Ranee Lee**'s fifth recording is a tribute to swing, containing such standards as *Nice and Easy*, *Fine & Mellow*, *I've Got The World On A String*, and other treasures, supported by an internationally diverse sextet, from Copenhagen to Melbourne.

## D.D. Jackson "Rhythm-Dance"

This follow-up to "Peace-Song", **D.D. Jackson**'s internationally-acclaimed debut, is perhaps even more impressive. Working within a trio format, with bassist **John Geggie** and drummer **Jean Martin**, Jackson has produced a riveting session, entirely self-composed, and performed with rare fervor, conviction and originality. Also available: "Peace-Song", featuring **David Murray**. (JUST 72-2)



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## Michael Marcus "Reachin'"

Multi-instrumentalist **Michael Marcus** is one of very few musicians playing such instruments as the stritch and saxello, instruments closely related with **Rahsaan Roland Kirk**. His broad imagination and excellent musicianship is supported beautifully here by bassist **Steve Neil**, guitarist **Bruce Edwards** and drummer **Cindy Blackman** on this great 1995 session recorded in New York.



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# CD REVIEWS

Law School?

—Thomas Conrad

**Notes From The Underground**—*Gnosis: Notes From The Underground; Soliloquy; Caffeine; Mean to Me; Blow-Up; The Common Law; Las Ramblas.* (58:48)

**Personnel**—King, piano; Joshua Redman, tenor and soprano saxophones; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Peter Washington, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.



## Teōdrōss Avery

**My Generation**  
Impulse! 181

★★★

When jazz labels battle for market supremacy, the warriors are 20something phenoms. Impulse! offers as its champion 22-year-old saxophonist Teōdrōss Avery, gifted with a strong, pure tone on tenor and soprano. *My Generation* is Avery's second release, and it covers a broad range of styles from Coltrane and Monk to reggae and radio-friendly urban-contemporary sounds. As commendably eclectic as Avery's interests may be, this makes for a diffuse listening experience. (Joshua Redman's first CD was much the same.) Avery focuses on crisp, upbeat tunes with clean, polished articulation of themes. His "Addis Ababa" evokes mid-'60s Coltrane with a component of exoticism, and he delivers the theme with passion and some discreet overblowing, but does little to develop it.

Avery benefits from some very fine guitar playing with John Scofield and Mark Whitfield on hand for three tracks apiece. Scofield gives "Sphere" and Donald Brown's reggae-tinged "Theme For Malcolm" unusual texture and character. He's particularly perverse and unpredictable on the knotty, Monk-inspired "Sphere." Whitfield's guitar percolates through the funk of "My Generation" and flies through the bright, uptempo "It's About That Time," accompanying Avery's fastest, most furious playing of the date.

Next time out, you want to hear Avery strike more sparks, and allow some rough edges and friction.

—Jon Andrews

**My Generation**—*Addis Ababa; Mode For My Father; Theme For Malcolm; Lover Man; To The East; Mr. Wonsey; Salome; Sphere; My Generation; Anytime. Anyplace; It's About That Time.* (69:14)

**Personnel**—Avery, tenor and soprano saxophones; John Scofield (2, 3, 8), Mark Whitfield (4, 9, 11), Peter Bernstein (6), guitar; Charles Craig, piano (1, 5, 7, 10); Rodney Whitaker, bass; Greg Hutchinson, drums; Andrew Daniels, percussion (5); Black Thought, rap (9).



## Cyrus Chestnut

**Earth Stories**

Atlantic Jazz 82876

★★★★

**Another Direction**

Evidence 22135

★★★½

Chestnut's third Atlantic recording solidifies his position just as it implies a certain trajectory. At 33, the pianist is indeed among a select group of jazzmen worthy of tracking. The two-year incremented distance between *Earth Stories* and *Another Direction* confirms that Chestnut is on the move.

Because audiences have responded so enthusiastically to his penchant for drama, this Baltimore native races jocular runs (Chestnut recreates joy as a Baptist) into detonated chords. His signature attack culminates in such a thunderhead of stupendous volume that salvos of layered crescendos float above their echoes until they vanish. The opener, a speed-demon tune called "Decisions, Decisions," taunts—topnotch chops need only apply.

Distinct for its superior sound, this CD offers the secular blues—straightforwardly in "Grandmama's Blues" (Chestnut quotes "Going To Kansas City"); boppishly on "Cool-daddy's Perspective" with its distinguished call-and-response horn section; and traditionally with the gusto of stride on "Nutman's Invention #1." His own "Blues From The East" comes off as a slow waltz while the subtle bossa nova "My Song In The Night" makes for dancing. Even with sudden rhythm and time changes, bassist Steve Kirby and drummer Alvester Garnett never miss a beat; they accentuate the exquisite trio feeling that Chestnut inspires.

Collectors of Chestnuts will go for his debut recording, *Another Direction*, first released in Japan. Chestnut reharmonizes the intro to "My Funny Valentine," while his version of "Blue Skies" comes off funky. When he slows things down on "Alone In Love With Love," we hear the fluency of his touch and creative logic. The "Duke Medley" is a test he passes with flying colors. Like on subsequent recordings, Chestnut's emerging style characteristically signals a shift into pianistic fireworks that in turn cue a sudden time change. Fond of exaggerated contrasts, he often punctuates a closing statement with a dry, flat, Basie-like *clink, clink*. In a nutshell, the superb trio on *Earth Stories* sounds most together because touring and fine-tuned

adjustments have kept Cyrus Chestnut moving conceptually in "another direction."

—Zoë Anglesey

**Earth Stories**—*Decisions, Decisions; Grandmama's Blues; My Song In The Night; Nutman's Invention #1; Blues From The East; Cooldaddy's Perspective; Maria's Folly; East Of The Sun And West Of The Moon; Gomez; Whoopi; In The Garden.* (48:54)

**Personnel**—Chestnut, piano; Steve Kirby, bass; Steven Carrington, tenor saxophone; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone (6); Alvester Garnett, drums.

**Another Direction**—*Revol: For All We Know; Duke Medley; My Funny Valentine; Blue Skies; Alone Together; Alone In Love With Love; Jambalaya.* (48:09)

**Personnel**—Chestnut, piano; Christian McBride; Carl Allen, drums.



## Pharoah Sanders

**Message From Home**

Verve 529 578

★★★

## Pharoah Sanders Quartet

**Welcome To Love**

Evidence/Alfa Jazz 22137

★★★★½

That Pharoah Sanders possesses several potent musical impulses is a fact almost as common as the prominent role he has played in the history of avant-garde and free-jazz. Two of these trajectories—his powerful, shrieking sound that can make the flesh crawl and his more tender tendencies that can make the flesh weak—are equally showcased here.

*Message From Home* in many ways harkens back to the Sanders that enlivened the '60s with his *Tauhid*, *Karma* and *Thembi*, although this time around the results are a tad more eclectic with the Upper and Lower Egypt tonalities buffeted by rhythmic influences from West Africa. Yes, the chanting surfaces on a couple of takes, but not in an overwhelming manner as in the past. And most impressive is "Nozipho," where the characteristic explosions from Sanders' tenor saxophone arrive just in time to break a repetitive cycle of incantations.

There are very few eruptions on *Welcome To Love*. The mood is sedate, laidback and entirely beguiling. If anyone has the right—or the nerve—to tamper with tunes so inextricably

linked to John Coltrane, it's Sanders. To these time-worn standards Sanders brings a fresh and extended breath—and breath is the operative word because on each of these mellow renditions Sanders' breathing, his way of grasping the song's essence, is remarkable. Moreover, and perhaps most apparent, is the manner in which he concludes a phrase, teasing it and then endowing the tune with his personal, breathy curlicues and filigree. And this application of signature is strikingly evident during the haunting coda of "Say It (Over And Over Again)" and at the end of "Moonlight In Vermont."

The quartet has memorable moments throughout this beautiful recording, but things really come together on Billy Eckstine's classic "I Want To Talk About You." Pianist Henderson, a longtime Sanders associate, matches the leader's expressive tone and feeling, and much of it is reminiscent of McCoy Tyner's modal majesty with Trane. —Herb Boyd

**Message From Home**—Our Roots (Began In Africa): Nozopho; Tomoki; Ocean Song; Country Mile. (50:12)

**Personnel**—Sanders, tenor and soprano saxophones, flutes, bells, bowls, vocals; Michael White, violin; William Henderson, acoustic and electric pianos, vocals; Bernie Worrell, electronic keyboards, vocals; Jeff Bova, programming, electronic keyboards; Foday Musa Suso, kora, dousongonni, vocals; Dominic Kanza, guitar; Charnett Moffett, acoustic bass; Steve Neil, acoustic and electric basses; Hamid Drake, drums, tablas, frame drums, vocals; Aiyb Diegg, chatan, congas, bells, gongs, vocals; Salie Suso, Mariama Suso, Fanta Mangasuba, Fatoumata Saka, vocals.

**Welcome To Love**—My One And Only Love; Say It (Over And Over Again); You Don't Know What Love Is; I Want To Talk About You; Nancy (With The Laughing Face); Polka Dots And Moonbeams; The Nearness Of You; Moonlight In Vermont. (54:01)

**Personnel**—Sanders, tenor and soprano saxophones; William Henderson, piano; Stafford James, bass; Eccleston W. Wainwright Jr., drums.



## Henry Butler

For All Seasons  
Atlantic Jazz 82856

★★★½

Henry Butler sounds only like himself—no mean trick at this late date. His piano style is rooted in the rich cultural soil of his birthplace, New Orleans. But it also reflects a comprehensive musical education that's taken him from the Louisiana School For The Blind through Southern University and Michigan State (where he earned an M.A. in voice). Some of the world musics he touched along the way include German lieder, Profes-

sor Longhair, gospel, Alvin Batiste and Schubert. The outcome is sweepingly pianistic and blues-based, with glimpses of luminous lyricism and atonal intrusions upon ancient stride forms. It requires all of Butler's prodigious technical facility to hold these disparate elements in tenuous balance.

For All Seasons is his fifth recording. There are five originals (all structurally interesting and all different), two standards and "St. Louis Blues." The latter is great fun, raining 80 years' worth of piano upon a bedrock archetypal groove. Jobim's "How Insensitive" rides on the tension between our expectations (derived from hundreds of treatments of the song as a swaying, delicate samba) and Butler's New Orleans hard-funk transformation. He throws

everything at it: splashing double-time fills and dissonant shards and on-the-fly quotes from "Surrey With The Fringe On Top."

The rhythm section of Dave Holland and Herman Jackson supports every Butler digression like they knew it was coming. Holland is an omnipresence, an undercurrent of intelligence flowing all through this music. The direct-to-two-track analog recording even gets his instrument's bottom octave.

For all his gifts, Butler has not yet reached the level of the strongest new piano voices like Cyrus Chestnut and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. These players possess vivid identities; they compel us to care about musical expressions which emerge unmistakably from inner necessity. We stand slightly apart from Butler's art, enter-

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tained by bravura exercises in ambidextrous virtuosity and cross-cultural eclecticism. It is meaningful that the most emotionally involving piece is "Souvenir d'un Amour," where Butler lets trombonist Steve Turre tell the story of a "real relationship," straight from the heart.

—Thomas Conrad

**For All Seasons**—Blues For All Seasons; How Insensitive; St. Louis Blues; A Winter's Blues; Souvenir d'un Amour; Without A Song; Spring Jam; Love In Autumn. (55:52)  
**Personnel**—Butler, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Herman Jackson, drums; Steve Turre, trombone (5).



### John McLaughlin

**The Promise**  
 Verve 529 828

★ ★ 1/2

**M**cLaughlin's latest is a star-studded career retrospective, recalling his *Johnny McLaughlin Electric Guitarist* album from 1978. *The Promise* traces the guitarist's journey from blues-rock to raga-fusion and beyond. Each track features a different lineup, recorded at a different studio in England, Europe, the U.S. or Japan, with present and former McLaughlin associates recreating or representing his various musical phases. McLaughlin stamps the force of his personality across the stylistic spectrum, making genres as disparate as hard rock and new age seem cozily compatible.

But the result is mostly rehashed flash, its pretentiousness underscored by intermittent nature sounds or readings of Dante's verses or Zen haikus. Still, there are moments of inspiration, including an extended Michael Brecker-sparked meltdown that, by itself, is worth the price of the album.

Trading warp-speed blues licks with Jeff Beck on "Django" or twining flamenco filigree with Al Di Meola and Paco de Lucia on "El Ciego," McLaughlin shows more polish than passion. With Joey DeFrancesco filling in for Larry Young on organ on "Thelonius Melodius" and for Miles Davis on trumpet on "No Return," McLaughlin captures the flavor but not the energy of his original work with the Davis and Tony Williams bands. "The Wish," featuring Trilok Gurtu and Zakir Hussain, is a similarly uninspired Mahavishnu retrospective. Acoustic exercises like "Amy And Joseph" and "The Peacocks" groan with new age sentimentality, but the brief "English Jam," with

Sting on bass, revisits classic British rock with tongue-in-cheek pizzazz. "Shin Jin Rui," an Oriental-tinged fusion jam with Dave Sanborn, is listless and clichéd, but "Jazz Jungle," with Brecker replacing Sanborn in the same ensemble, burns white-hot for a full 15 minutes, as Brecker rockets into the ozone. McLaughlin himself catches fire toward the end, and after the band suddenly halts, aptly asks, "Why'd you stop there, when I'd just got my second breath?"

—Larry Birnbaum

**The Promise**—Django: Thelonius Melodius; Amy And Joseph; No Return; El Ciego; Jazz Jungle; The Wish; English Jam; Tokyo Decadence; Shin Jin Rui; The Peacocks. (73:39)

**Personnel**—McLaughlin, electric, acoustic and MIDI guitars, keyboards, with, among others, Paco de Lucia (5), Al Di Meola (5), Philippe Loli (11), acoustic guitar; Tony Hymas (1), Jim Beard (6, 10), keyboards; Pino Palladino (1), James Genus (6, 10), Sting (8), Yann Maresz (11), bass; Marc Mondesir (1), Dennis Chambers (2, 6, 10), Vinnie Colaiuta (8), drums; Joey DeFrancesco, organ (2), trumpet (4); Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (6); David Sanborn, alto saxophone (10); Don Alias (6, 10), Trilok Gurtu (7), percussion; Zakir Hussain, tabla (7); Nishat Khan, sitar (7), spoken vocals.



### Groove Collective

**We The People**  
 Giant Step/Impulse! 187

★ ★ ★

**G**roove Collective's second project, tracked in the studio, sounds like an exhilarating soul-jazz jam session—tighter than the New York ensemble's first outing recorded live at its home-base club, Giant Step, yet still loose enough to keep the proceedings invigorating. *We The People* will appeal to the hip, young club-hopping crowd hungry for deep grooves and a spacious dance floor.

The Collective's first disc, despite its many fusion flaws, successfully broke down barriers in exposing listeners fed on a steady diet of urban-pop culture to the rich world of jazz. Likewise, *We The People* (the debut disc on the crossover Giant Step division of Impulse!) unites the two disparate musical camps without seriously compromising the jazz essence. Musicianship is strong throughout (especially noteworthy are multi-saxist Jay Rodriguez, trombonist Josh Roseman, trumpeter Fabio Morgera, and percussionists Nappy G and Chris Theberge); improvisation, though not virtuosic, is commendable; and the collective ensemble spirit makes for highly charged instrumental interplay.

The album stalls with such lukewarm tracks as "Lift Off" (a soft 'n' warm vocal tune with

sweet, floating flute lines) and "Caterpillar" (a too-tame, too-smooth vibes-led interlude between upbeat numbers). Also, "Everybody (We The People)" veers a trifle too close to the horrid mid-'70s disco zone. Highlights include the jazz-coated hip-hop tune "I Am," the highly percussive, Afro-pop/Latin-jazz flavored "Loisaida," the hushed-to-rousing "Fly" buzzing with Afro-Cuban rhythms and the funk-fueled, jazz-steeped "Sedate," the most interesting composition of the pack. The best tune, however, is "Jay Wrestles The Bari Constrictor" (part one opens the album, part two ushers in its ending), where Rodriguez blows with squirming, boa-fat baritone gusto.

—Dan Ouellette

**We The People**—Jay Wrestles The Bari Constrictor, Part 1; Loisaida; Lift Off; Everybody (We The People); Fly; Sneaky; I Am; Caterpillar; Hide It; Anthem; Sedate; Jay Wrestles The Bari Constrictor, Part 2; Nightwaves. (69:14)  
**Personnel**—Richard Worth, flute, alto flute, piccolo, shakuhachi, kalimba, vocals; Gordon "Nappy G" Clay, timbales, bongos, talking drum, percussion, vocals; Itaal Shur, synthesizers, Rhodes, piano, Hammond B-3, vocals; Genji Siraisi, drums, guitar (5), vocoder (4), vocals; Bill Ware III, vibes, Rhodes, piano, vocals; Jay Rodriguez, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, bass clarinet, berimbau, gaita, vocals; Josh Roseman, trombone, keyboards, guitar (11), vocals; Fabio Morgera, trumpet, flugelhorn, wah-wah cornet, vocals; Chris Theberge, percussion, vocals; Adam Rogers, electric guitar (2, 4); Saul Rubin, acoustic guitar (13); Vinia Mojica (3), MC Babebe Power (7), vocals.



### Horace Tapscott

**aiee! The Phantom**  
 Arabesque 0119

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

**F**or decades, Horace Tapscott has been entrenched in Los Angeles, supervising his Arkestra big band and other community jazz associations rather than hitting the road and spreading word of his great artistry. As he's made so few records for labels other than his own spottily distributed Nimbus imprint, Tapscott's recent alliance with a high-profile independent record company should please his cult following and stir up interest among those many jazz buffs who've heard of but never heard this elusive 62-year-old in action. Whatever your vantage point, do not miss Tapscott's inaugural album for Arabesque because it is an unqualified triumph, packed with challenging but accessible music that expresses hope for the human condition à la the affirmative writings of Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison.

Tapscott impresses as a composer, his melodies at once inspirational and fascinatingly skewed, his choice of time signatures eccentric,



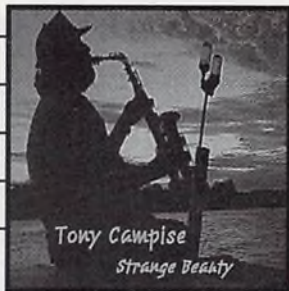
his keen imagination balancing dissonance and consonance for convincing drama. The suite "Drunken Mary/Mary On Sunday," born of his memories of a down-and-out acquaintance from his youth, and essayed in variant forms on earlier Tapscott recordings, evolves from a heavyhearted lumbering waltz into a strutting piece filled with gossamer optimism, divided by a short section for drums. The almost 16-minute-long "Mothership," constructed on a repeated phrase in the bass, has a proud martial air, and "To The Great House" carries with it an enigmatic stateliness, the rhythms jumping at us in surprising ways. The two pieces he didn't compose—"The Goat And The Ram Jam" and "Inspiration Of Silence," by Arkestra members Jesse Sharps and Ernest Straughter respectively—are grist for his mill.

As a pianist, Tapscott knows what he's all about, suggestions of Monk and Randy Weston blending into his singular percussive language. Throughout the album, he plays with surety, on-the-edge boldness, emotional commitment and limitless resourcefulness, ceaselessly alert to his colleagues in the Manhattan studio. Fellow gray-beards Marcus Belgrave, Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille, joined by the more-than-capable young alto player Abraham Burton, are on top of their game, serving the compositions with life-asserting lyricism or grit in their playing. They sound like a band, a wise and marvelous one at that.

—Frank-John Hadley

**aiee! The Phantom**—*To The Great House; The Goat And Ram Jam; aiee! The Phantom; Drunken Mary/Mary On Sunday; Inspiration Of Silence; Mothership.* (59:21)

**Personnel**—Tapscott, piano; Marcus Belgrave, trumpet; Abraham Burton, alto saxophone; Reggie Workman, bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums.



## Tony Campise

### Strange Beauty

Heart Music 011

★★½

**A** Ben Webster for the '90s—that's the kind of player Tony Campise apparently wants to be. And with his wide, whoo-who-who tenor tone and quavering vibrato, sometimes he creates a pretty good facsimile. All in all, though, *Strange Beauty* is a flawed attempt at reinventing the past. What was acceptably sweet in 1950 often sounds corny today, and Campise's musicianship isn't always strong enough to bring him compelling into the present.

Playing tenor, alto and soprano saxophones as well as flute and bass flute on one recording would be a challenge to anyone's identity. Campise often tries too hard for effect, laying

on excessive moans and growls. He proves himself capable of restraint with a poignant performance (on soprano) of "What'll I Do," but on "Christopher," where he also plays soprano, his tone is plasticky and his improvisation lacks direction.

If Campise's playing is erratic, so is the engineering of this recording. "Stardust" suffers from way too much reverb; it sounds as if Campise were playing in the subway. It's not fair to write off Campise because of a low point like this, though. The first track, "Try To Remember," offers a more flattering index of Campise's strengths and weaknesses. Here he displays an impressively broad, smooth tenor sound and a talent for drawing out a long line. Still, he can't stop himself from going over the

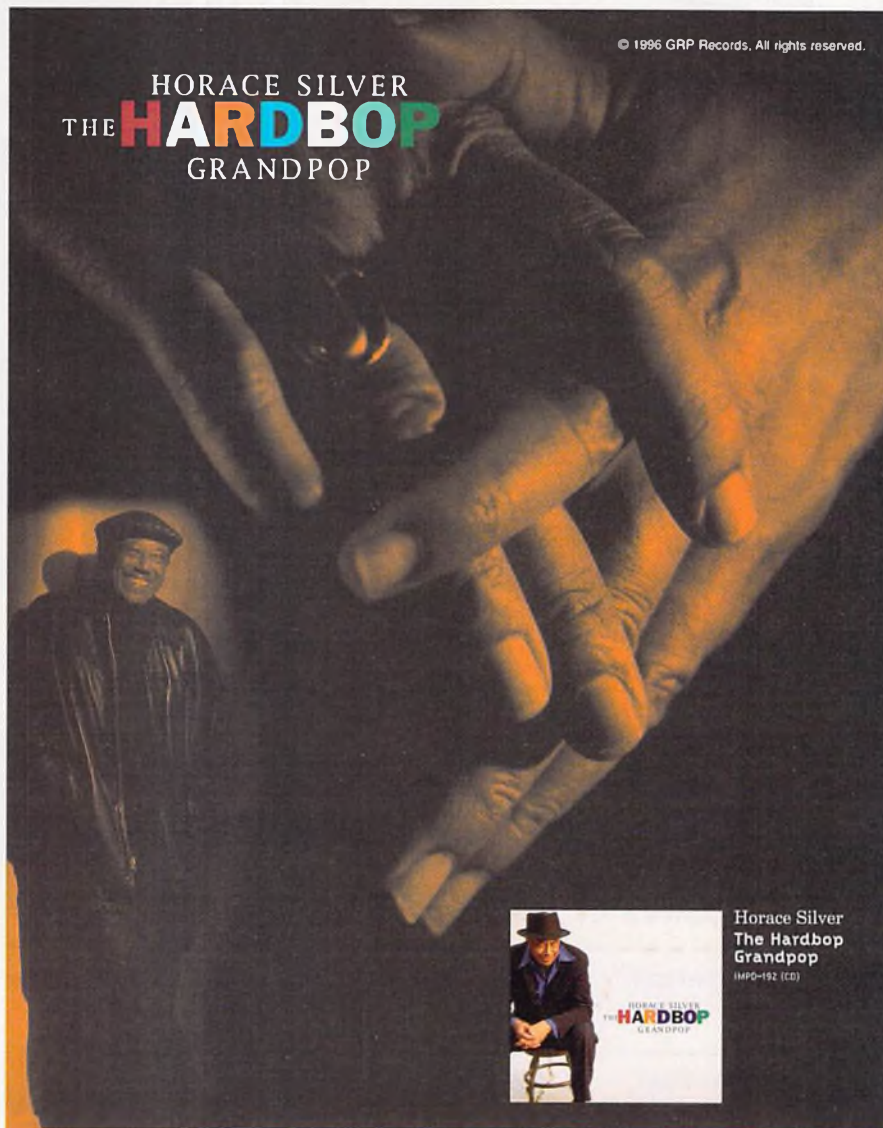
edge into soupiness and showy squealing.

Pianist Joe LoCascio contributed more than half of the tunes on this recording, so it's surprising that he doesn't have a stronger influence on the results. Guitarist Fred Hamilton gets some good lines in, but he, LoCascio, bassist John Adams and drummer Ed Soph generally take a back seat to Campise's larger presence.

—Elaine Guregian

**Strange Beauty**—*Try To Remember; Mr. Lott; Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry; Christopher; Closer; (Meet) The Flintstones; Bailad Of Chet Baker; Strays; End Of A Love Affair; Love Comes Quietly; Strange Beauty; What'll I Do; Stardust.* (58:30)

**Personnel**—Campise, tenor saxophone (1-3, 5, 7, 8, 10), alto saxophone (6, 9), soprano saxophone (4, 12), flute (11), bass flute (13); Joe LoCascio, piano; Fred Hamilton, guitar (4, 6, 7, 9-12); John Adams, bass; Ed Soph, drums.



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## JAZZ

## Ciao Down

by John Corbett

For a quarter century, the Milan-based sister companies Black Saint and Soul Note have churned out top-quality music representing a remarkable continuum of jazz subgenres. Recently having passed the producer's mantle from father Giovanni to son Flavio Bonandrini, they press on steadily into the late '90s with continued success.

**Bill Dixon: *Vade Mecum*** (Soul Note 121208; 77:45: ★★★★★) Though an essential player of the mid-'60s New York free-jazz insurgence, trumpet and flugelhorn innovator Bill Dixon hunkered down teaching the same year that Black Saint/Soul Note started. While Dixon's only released a few documents over the last three decades, he's steadily maintained his research, and on this stunning quartet record—seven free improvisations, including the absolutely devastating "Viale Nino Bixio 20"—the company he keeps is equal to the job of showcasing his concept. Dixon's utterly original approach to the horn alternates between big, fat, echoey tones (especially lush on flugel) and harsh, uncompromisingly rasped lip noise. Barry Guy and William Parker are such different bassists you could easily not think of it as a two-bass affair—Parker's deep-end high-action palpability is perfectly offset by Guy's swift and delicate sounds. Together with the humongous color range of drummer Tony Oxley, it's a bristling session, folding energy and texture together into an organic melange.

**Oliver Lake Quintet: *Dedicated To Dolphy*** (Black Saint 120144; 54:44: ★★★½) Oliver Lake's alto bears the indelible mark of Dolphy: intervallic leaps, angled patterns and against-the-pulse gear shifting. Here he takes the legacy out for a spin on material by or associated with Dolphy, including the classic Mal Waldron vehicle "Fire Waltz," a couple of brilliant pieces from *Out To Lunch* ("Hat And Beard" and "Something Sweet Something Tender") and Dolphy's most-played tune, "Miss Ann," as well as two of Lake's own compositions ("Nov. 80" and "Page 4"). The arrangements are solid, as is the band, with Charles Eubanks on ivories, Belden Bullock on bass and Cecil Brooks III on drums. Most notable, though, is St. Louis trumpeter Russell Gunn, a remarkably fluid and inventive young voice and excellent foil for Lake's strong playing.

**Glenn Horiuchi: *Calling Is It And Now*** (Soul Note 121268; 64:21: ★★★★★) Californian pianist Horiuchi is on the frontline of new Japanese-American creative jazz, and this new disc ups the ante on



Oliver Lake: taking Dolphy for a spin

his fine quartet date from '89, *Oxnard Beat* (Soul Note). With the combustibility of tenor saxophonist Francis Wong and a dynamite rhythm team of bassist Anders Swanson and drummer Jeanette Wrate, Horiuchi swings between fiery free play and his neatly structured, spacious, never over-involved tunes. Wong can also play great burr-ful melodies, like he does on the joyous "Out Root" and the lovely ballad "Heart Place," and the leader finds subtle, unстереotypical ways of integrating elements from Asian musical traditions into music with a hard jazz core.

**Klaus Suonsaari: *Inside Out*** (Soul Note 121274; 71:30: ★★★½) Though he swings steadily with dead-on bassist Ray Drummond and pianist Renee Rosnes, Finnish drummer Klaus Suonsaari dulls this decidedly inside date with over-sweet tunes like his own "Her Song" and lackluster front-line arrangements for Scott Robinson's soprano and tenor saxes and flute, Scott Wendholt's trumpet and flugel, and Steve Nelson's vibes. Aside from its charts, the Finn's piece "Choices" is a solid short-solos blower—Wendholt is particularly confident.

**Jeff Palmer: *Island Universe*** (Soul Note 121301; 74:19: ★★★½) Organist Jeff Palmer's got the makings for a hot combo, with alto saxist Arthur Blythe back on track, synthetic guitarist John Abercrombie and free-jazz pioneer drummer Rashied Ali stirring the free-ish cauldron. The leader's expansive organ may remind one of Larry Young, though Palmer's apt to grow more frantic and furious. His 10 transparent tunes perfectly suit Ali, who sounds more committed than usual. A sly touch of Theloniousness on "Amerigo" begs a question: When will someone attempt an organ record of Monk's music? **DB**

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# BEYOND

## Afro-Pop Evolution

by Larry Birnbaum

In the last 25 years, African pop has evolved into a world-class genre, easily capable of challenging Western sounds for esthetic if not commercial supremacy. A batch of recent releases by artists from former French colonies illuminates the process of musical transformation from traditional to modern.

**Akendengue: *Maladalite* (Mélodie/Qualiton 66976; 60:15: ★★★★★)** Gabon's poet laureate has cut brilliant albums in Paris since the mid-'70s without raising a ripple in the U.S.—yet. Here, with producer Hughes de Courson, the blind singer/songwriter combines influences as disparate as pygmy chants and baroque cantatas into a sumptuous Pan-African mix. Using acoustic guitars, bass and cello along with women's voices and an assortment of African string and percussion instruments, Akendengue layers sophisticated rhythmic textures over simple call-and-response riffs. The tunes themselves are seldom as striking as the gorgeous arrangements, but when they are, as on "R'Rag-nambié," with its unmistakable echo of the Velvet Underground, the impact is irresistible.

**Touré Kunda: *The Touré Kunda Collection* (Putamayo 121; 43:44: ★★★★★)** In the early '80s, the Touré brothers, from Senegal, achieved a commercial breakthrough in France, establishing "world music" as a viable marketing niche. On this collection, containing tracks from their 1993 album *Sili Beto* plus earlier hits, their high-tech African/Caribbean fusion seems dated—brash and crude by comparison to today's sleeker, subtler crossover sounds. Still, they maintain a rootsy, homegrown feel behind the funk and reggae beats, and they've got a gift for catchy hooks, especially on older tunes like "Wadini" and "Ndoungo."

**Salif Keita: *Folon ... The Past* (Mango 162-531 022; 56:19: ★★★★★½)** With his 1987 album *Soro*, Keita set a standard for contemporary Mandinka pop that aspiring West African stars still emulate. The "golden voice of Mali" has since moved on to more cosmopolitan sounds, often with uneven results. On *Folon*, however, the gears never grind and the cultures never clash, as the crack ensemble seamlessly fuses griot songs with reggae, funk and fusion. "Mandjou," for example, takes Weather Report back to the motherland, while "Sumun" makes it seem like James Brown never left. Longtime Keita colleagues like guitarist Ousmane Kouyate and keyboardist Jean-Philippe Rykiel carve deep, ornate grooves, but Keita himself, one of the most soulful singers on the planet, carries the emotional weight.



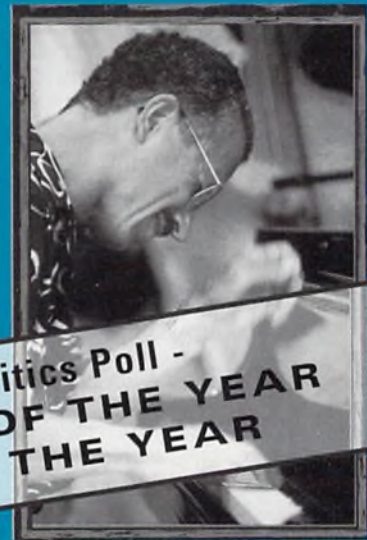
Salif Keita: Weather Report meets James Brown

**Askia Modibo: *Was Reggae* (Stern's Africa 1060; 57:19: ★★★★★)** Reggae has rooted, or rerooted, itself throughout Africa, mostly following Bob Marley's classic formula. But this Milian rastaman colors roots reggae with the pentatonic shadings of his own Songhai and neighboring Bambara and Wassoulou peoples. The combination sounds completely natural on soaring numbers like "Les Aigles Du Mali," with modal melodies that strip reggae clean of clichés. The lilt is lively enough to sustain interest, even though—as the sole traditional track, "Devaluation," makes plain—Malian music is actually closer to blues than reggae.

**Angélique Kidjo: *Fifa* (Mango 162-531 039; 43:48: ★★★★★½)** For *Fifa*, the Paris-based Beninese diva Angélique Kidjo attempts to recapture her credibility with samples of traditional music, but these snippets are overwhelmed by the funky studio mix. Her gritty voice still packs a punch, but she sings several songs in English, sacrificing her exotic allure.

**Yandé Codou Sène & Youssou N'Dour: *Gaïnde* (World Network 58.391; 61:39: ★★★★★½)** N'Dour lends his voice and band members to several tracks, but this is primarily an album of traditional Serer music from Senegal, featuring Sène with her chorus and drummers. She's an amazing singer—her vocal chords must have a whammy bar—and her extraordinary troupe sounds like something out of Bulgaria or Tahiti, at least until the heavy percussion kicks in. N'Dour's voice is sweeter but less profound, and his pretty guitar accompaniment on "Sama Guent Guini" can't capture the earthy spirituality of the talking drum and one-stringed violin on "Riti Fa Tama." But when the two singers duet against a synth-washed backdrop on "Lees Waxul," past and future merge in a moment of transcendent beauty. **DB**

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## REISSUES

## The Early, Restless Searches

by Zan Stewart

**S**tan Kenton started his orchestra in 1941. Pushed by inner and outer (e.g., financial) demons, he flip-flopped through many styles before arriving at his mid-'50s brass-heavy, sometimes swinging approach.

*The Complete Capitol Studio Recordings Of Stan Kenton 1943-47* (Mosaic 7-163; 70:43/71:29/70:38/66:54/61:42/63:47/45:54; ★★★½) There are 153 tracks on seven CDs (or 10 LPs), with 69 vocals, mostly by June Christy, Gene Howard and Anita O'Day. Of the bunch, 16 have never been issued and 52 are transcriptions made for Armed Forces radio.

Disc one (from 11/19/43 to 5/4/45) is highlighted by several fine vocals by O'Day, whose hip delivery lights up "And Her Tears Flowed Like Wine" and "I Want A Grown-Up Man" and Christy's spiffy debut on the Latin-bent "Tampico," Kenton's first million-seller. Instrumentally, there's "Eager Beaver," the original "Artistry In Rhythm" and Boots Mussulli's lovely Johnny Hodges-like alto on "Balboa Bash." Most arrangements are by Kenton or Gene Roland.

Disc two (5/4/45 to 12/20/45) opens with "Opus In Pastels," spotlighting Kenton's characteristic staccato and robust manner of sax writing, and closes with "Intermission Riff," lifted in part from Gerald Wilson's "Yard Dog Mazurka." Christy is warmly appealing on Roland's version of "Just Sittin' And A Rockin'," and baritone Howard is soothing on "Say It Isn't So." Buddy Childers' high-wire trumpet is splendidly showcased on "I Surrender Dear."

By disc three (12/20/45 to 7/12/46), Kenton finally has a recognizable identity, typified by walls of brass often written by the band's new chief arranger, Pete Rugulo. Examples: Vido Musso's creamy Coleman Hawkins-based tenor sax shouts over blaring trumpets and trombones on "Come Back To Sorrento," and Shelly Manne's most musical drums battle with brass wails on "Artistry In Percussion." Elsewhere, Kenton shines as a relaxed blues player on "Artistry In Boogie."

Slow songs steal disc four (7/12/46 to 7/25/46). Kenton's piano is sparse and persuasively Garner-esque on "Yesterdays" and "I've Got The World On A String," both showcases for Kai Winding's burnished trombone. As is a sumptuous "Lover Man," replete with dramatic brass from Rugulo. Christy, just 20, sounds world-weary and almost childlike on "Willow Weep For Me."

Kenton's "Concerto To End All Concertos" begins disc five (7/26/46 to 3/31/47). The first of the leader's symphony-meets-jazz-



Kenton: ponderous material mixed with splendid showcases

band pieces offers ponderous scalar passages as well as solo settings for, among others, Mussulli, who rips out intricate lines. At one point, the trumpets are orchestrated à la Ravel. Related numbers include "Collaboration" and "Rhythm Incorporated." "Machito" is a Latin/brass rouser, and a few numbers introduce the five-member vocal group the Pastels.

Though there are a few ace vocals, the concert pieces dominate disc six (3/31/47 to 10/22/47). Some are pretty bad, like Rugulo's aptly titled "Monotony" and the overly grand "Theme To The West." Others fare better: "Introduction To A Latin Rhythm" has some big brass chords and a snippet of Bob Cooper's Lester Young-embracing tenor, and "Lament" spotlights delicate lines from Laurindo Almeida's guitar.

Disc seven concludes with a mix: the catchy flavor of "Peanut Vendor," with Milt Bernhart's alluring trombone; Rugulo's "Cuban Carnival," with its obtuse melody; and a heartily swinging "How High The Moon," with bits of amateurish scatting from Christy and fine, brief solos from trombonist Eddie Bert and altoist Art Pepper. An added bonus: "Metronome Riff," with guests Dizzy Gillespie, Buddy DeFranco, et al. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902)

**Broadcast Transcriptions (1941-1945)** *Music and Arts 883; 77:48; ★★★* This is early Kenton looking for his sound. The band recalls Lunceford ("La Cumparsita"), Benny Carter (the reed voicings on "Reed Rapture"), as saxes have a featured voice. "Tico Tico" and the driving "El Choclo" are snazzy Latin/swing ditties. Vocals by O'Day are a plus.

**At The Las Vegas Tropicana (Capitol 35245; 72:20; ★★★★★)** Here, Kenton is heard in 1959 with a fine band that includes trumpeter Jack Sheldon, altoist Lennie

Niehaus and tenorman Richie Kamuca sporting many arrangements by Gene Roland. The outfit swings handily, and sans the leader's propensity for bombast. Highlights: the straightforward "Puck's Blues," Johnny Richards' Latinized look at "I Concentrate On You" and Niehaus' Bird-leaning alto having a field day on "It's All Right With Me."

Flashback: Pete Rugulo recalls how Laurindo Almeida, featured on Kenton material starting in 1947, joined the band. "I was doing some writing for Stan in Paul Weston's office at the Capitol building on Vine Street [in Hollywood] in early 1947. Laurindo came by and played some unbelievable things for me. He was like Segovia. We were starting to get interested in Latin music, and when Stan heard him, he hired him on the spot. I needed a feature for him, so I wrote 'Lament.' I think it worked out all right."

Lennie Niehaus on the *Tropicana* date: "We were playing the lounge, which was like playing a concert. Then Capitol decided to record us, so we went into the main showroom. It was after the last show, about 2:30 a.m. The place was packed, and a lot of the other top acts in town came to hear us because we were recording. We did a two-hour show. The band was loose, relaxed and really swinging. We just were having a ball." **DB**

Kenton's initial **Down Beat** ratings: Due to the fact that the Mosaic collection covers material done for Capitol during the pre-album era, either no rating or a four-musical-note system was used, starting with the May 20, 1946, issue. Two examples of songs rated from that issue follow, along with the original *Tropicana* rating:

- *Painted Rhythm*: ♪♪♪
- *Four Months, Three Weeks, Two Days, One Hour Blues*: ♪♪
- *At The Las Vegas Tropicana*: ★★½ (1/19/61)

# BLINDFOLD TEST

AUGUST 1996

## Tommy Flanagan

by Dave Helland

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and 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.

A funny thing happened on the way to the podium at the International Association of Jazz Educators convention last January—the federal government shut down. While the IAJE named Tommy Flanagan—along with J.J. Johnson and Benny Golson—a Jazz Master, the National Endowment for the Arts funds the award. Since the federal government wasn't writing any checks, the envelope Flanagan and the others received were empty. The check arrived in the mail a week later. No stranger to prize-winning, Flanagan previously received the prestigious Danish JazzPar Award in 1992.

Flanagan began his professional career in Detroit playing with Milt Jackson, Thad Jones and Elvin Jones before moving to New York City, where he subbed for Bud Powell at Birdland. The 67-year-old pianist's resume includes stints as music director for both Ella Fitzgerald and Tony Bennett as well as the recording session that produced John Coltrane's "Giant Steps." One of the defining stylists of post-bop jazz piano, he thinks "a lot of young players today don't have their identity yet because we haven't heard them that much. The only reason I think I might have an identity is that I've been playing long enough to have one. I certainly sounded like other people when I began to play."

Flanagan's latest release is the trio date *Tommy Flanagan Over Seas* (Alfa Jazz).

### Diana Krall

"I'm An Errand Girl For Rhythm" (from *All For You*, Impulse!) Krall, piano, vocals; Russell Malone, guitar; Paul Keller, bass.

Diana Krall. I think she's a fine pianist and does very well accompanying herself. I really like it—4½ stars. I've heard her several times, most recently at the IAJE convention.

DH: What's the key to being a good accompanist for a singer?

Well, you just heard it. She knows where she's going and knows what she wants to hear behind herself. That's the whole extent of being a good accompanist, whether for yourself, or comping for another singer. Give them support, that's it, and that's what she was doing. The only other person I knew who did it that well was Nat Cole.

### John Colianni

"Heart Shaped Box" (from *At Maybeck*, Concord Jazz, 1994) Colianni, piano.

A lovely mood he set here. I have no idea who it is.

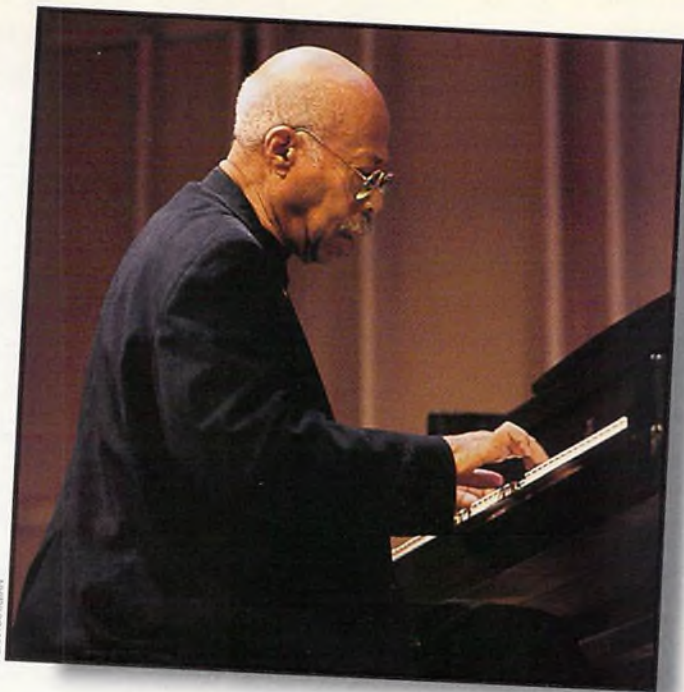
DH: The song was written by grunge rocker Kurt Cobain. Did you hear anything melodically or harmonically that interested you? Something that you might want to explore?

I didn't hear anything like that there. Actually, it's kind of a simple melody. What he did with it was interesting. It's a minor mode, kind of circular. It's interesting what he did in that small space. 4 stars.

### Jess Stacy

Solo on "Sing Sing Sing" (from *Live At Carnegie Hall*, Columbia, 1938) Stacy, piano.

I know that recording—an historic recording—I'm very familiar with it. "Sing, Sing, Sing." There were two or three pianists that shared that stage that night. This is Jess Stacy. Teddy Wilson



played things with small groups. I heard it as a youngster, in the early '40s. I like Jess Stacy, but out of the three pianists that were there I much prefer Teddy Wilson. His style was more accessible. And I found it more appealing to me, the way I wanted to play. Jess Stacy was kind of perky, but I shouldn't say that. He was a stylist, but it didn't move me the way that the other guys did. Of course the other guy was Basie. I'd give it a high rating: 4½ stars or 5.

### Dave Burrell

"New Orleans Blues" (from *Brother To Brother*, Gazelle, 1993) Burrell, piano; David Murray, tenor saxophone.

Jelly Roll Morton. I have no idea who those players could be. I think it was a little calculated for me to really say whether I like it or not. If I knew who the people were I would know why they were playing like that.

DH: It was Dave Burrell and David Murray.

Oh, good. I know both of them. I don't associate that kind of playing with them. But if it's them, that's a great effort on their part to bring that off, to make it sound so authentic. That's worth 5 stars, I would think.

### Thelonious Monk

"In Walked Bud" (from *Genius Of Modern Music, Volume One*, Blue Note, 1989/rec. 1947) Monk, piano; George Taitt, trumpet; Sahib Shihab, alto saxophone; Bob Paige, bass; Art Blakey, drums.

The onliest Thelonious playing "In Walked Bud."

DH: What is there in this tune that captures the essence of Bud Powell?

Bud had a lot more facility to play the piano. But Thelonious had his own facility; he used it in a way that suited him. If you ever saw him play—very individual, unique in the way he approaches the piano, how he gets sound out of it. On the other hand, Bud's sound was made more traditionally with his force and dynamics, his ideas, his conceptions. If you went into a place where Monk was playing, even if he wasn't playing, you knew it was Monk's music if you just heard the rhythm.

DH: Is it hard to play Monk's music correctly, with those rhythms?

No, that's the easy part. It's his notes that might escape you, exactly the way he played them. In fact, some of his melodies give you the rhythm, the feeling of it.

DB