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18 Joni Mitchell & Cassandra Wilson

Alternate Tunings

To the casual observer, pairing Joni Mitchell and Cassandra Wilson might seem odd. Scratch the surface and you'll find they share much common ground, most obvious being a love for jazz and poetry; but folk music, alternate tunings and a hunger for greater harmonic freedom are there as well. As if that weren't enough, both singer/songwriters share a deep passion for the music of Miles Davis.

By John Ephland

Cover photograph of Joni Mitchell and Cassandra Wilson by Dennis Keeley.

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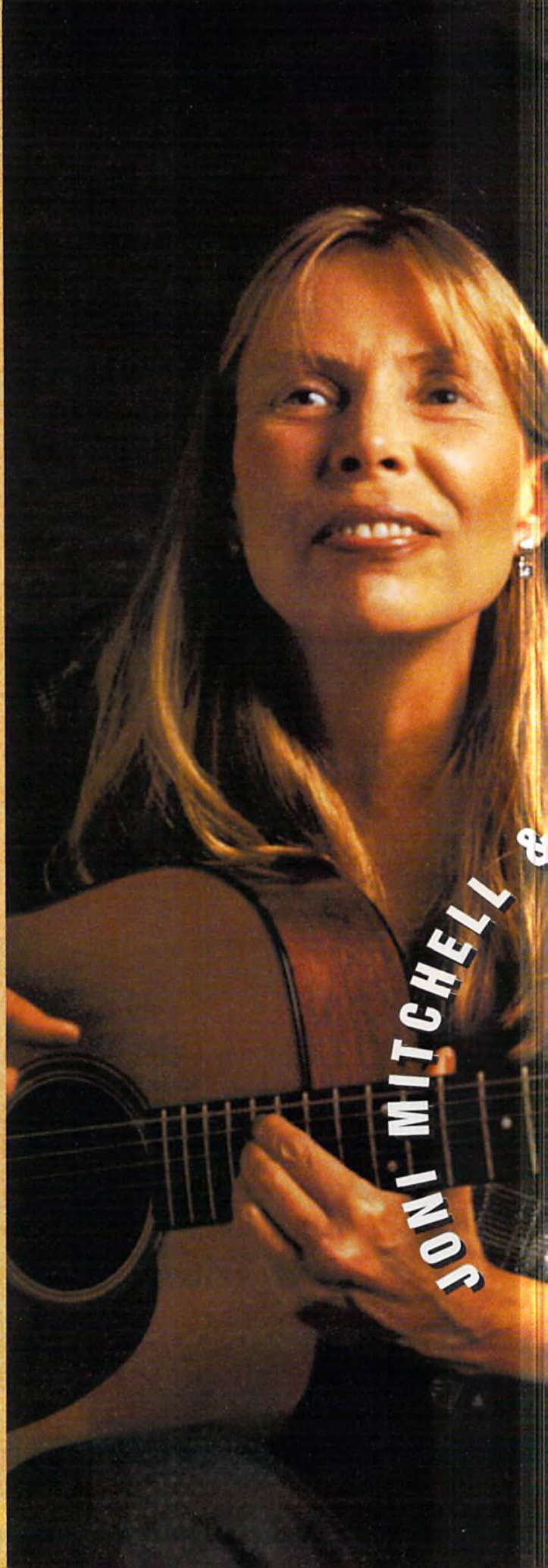
Jimmy Scott

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Their paths had never crossed. One is from the cold and blustery fields of Alberta, Canada, the other straight out of Jackson, Miss. Joni Mitchell and Cassandra Wilson have more in common now that they've spent a long evening together, but their kinship, a musical bond thick as blood, has deep roots.

Mitchell's latest work involves drums-only accompaniment. With her arsenal of created guitar tunings, she and Brian Blade (that's right, Joshua Redman's drummer) have formed a music both spare and florid, improvisational even as it surrounds that inimitable voice. (Untitled at presstime, the album is scheduled for a February release date.) Mitchell—whose last feature in these pages was a 1979 cover story on the occasion of her recorded collaboration with the late Charles Mingus—has been on a roll of late: among other awards, two Grammys for last year's *Turbulent Indigo*; Billboard's Century Award, a new honor the newsweekly bestows on musicians from all genres who've made a highly significant impact on the arts in this century, also in '95; and induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this year. This fall sees the release of *Hits* and *Misses*, two career-spanning anthologies of her work with every label she's ever recorded for. Having just turned 53, clearly, she has much to celebrate.

While Mitchell may have worked with Mingus, Pat Metheny, Jaco Pastorius, Michael Brecker and—with the exception of one—all of Miles Davis' former mid-'60s sidemen, Wilson's jazz pedigree is better known to Down Beat readers. Witness her recent wins, starting with last year's Readers Poll and continuing with both the Readers and Critics polls for top female jazz singer this year (see Aug. '96, and page 40 in this issue). Apart from her success with *Blue Light 'Til Dawn* and *New Moon Daughter*, the 40-something singer's recent work includes guest spots on Javon Jackson's *A Look Within*, David Sanchez's *Street Scenes*, guitarist Pat Martino's next record, a duet with Dianne Reeves on the Bob Belden-produced *Strawberry Fields*, music for the sound-





CASSANDRA WILSON

ALTERNATE TUNINGS

By John Ephland

Photography by Dennis Keeley

track to the current film *Rosewood*, and recording and touring with Wynton Marsalis this winter as part of his ambitious *Blood On The Fields* project.

The musicians met in Los Angeles for dinner earlier this year at Adriano's, a fashionable Bel Air restaurant. The conversation/interview, which spilled over to Wilson's hotel, dealt with the mechanics of music, definitions and the relevance of jazz, "that widened harmony," and Miles Davis. Both women were earnest, robust and, at times, a tad wild, Mitchell taking the reins often in a conversation that jumped off the path more than a few times.

JOHN EPHLAND: *Both of you seem pretty restless when it comes to making music. What makes your music sound different?*

JONI MITCHELL: What opened the door for me was that my left hand couldn't get at the chords that I heard in my head. So I tuned the guitar to the chords that I heard in my head. [Folk musician] Eric Anderson showed me open G and D modal tuning. After that, I never played in standard tuning.

CASSANDRA WILSON: That's what I started out doing: playing guitar and singing Joni Mitchell songs. But it was something I had stored away.

JM: What years?

CW: It was '74, '75, '76.

JM: And coffeehouses were still around?

CW: In Jackson, Mississippi, no less. Check that out. I figured out the tuning on [Mitchell's] "For The Roses," and that was it. I was gone. I was taken by the tunings. There was Miles, I remember, when I was four or five; then when I got to be 15, there was Joni. The tunings were the thing. That's what opened up everything for me.

JM: It's that widened harmony that they create.

CW: There's a resonance.

JM: And even just simple bar chords. You can make instant music with them all, with those really wide chords. First of all, you can't get them on a guitar without the tuning. It's physically impossible. You widen the orchestral breadth of the instrument considerably. You've dipped it down into the upper-bass range, for one thing. You've got a lot more bottom on the music than the normal guitar. And there are inversions that it couldn't have been possible to finger.

CW: Unless you have really beautiful, strong, wide hands, you can't get the same kind of resonance inside of a Spanish tuning.

JM: Because the strings are so tight.

CW: Once you find the place for it, the guitar speaks. The only problem is my bass player complains. Because when we do the open tunings, we're off into his space. We overlap.

JM: Now, when I add bass, the bass player wants to go polka-dotted along on the bottom. Especially in pop music. He wants to come in and stay in. I think, "Bump, bump, bump," kind of four-on-the-floor almost, only a little more creative, but not much. So he's putting dark polka-dots across the whole thing. So I'm saying to bass players, "Do you have to stay in all the time? Couldn't you go up in the mid-range and play a counter-melody?" ... There's a lot of quotes from Stravinsky in my music, if you listen. From *Rite Of Spring*. It's a little jazzy, but it's not jazz. It's jazzy in that the harmony is wider, but jazz has its own harmonic laws.



JE: *You're breaking up stuff and you're making your own music.*

JM: According to the guy who wrote a book on jazz, [multi-instrumentalist] Victor Feldman, he defined it and locked it into harmonic laws. Victor Feldman apparently wrote a technical teaching book or some kind of book on jazz harmony [Musicians Guide To Chord Progression]. We were playing on a date.

What was it? "Moon At The Window." Victor was playing vibes. Well, on this one, he got really uptight. I thought the words were bothering him because he's a family man and it was about people with the incapacity to love, and he had a very loving family. I thought the words must be bothering him. I said, "Are the words bothering you?"

He said, "I hate the harmony and the harmonic movement." I had to stop and

send him home. I said, "You can't play on something that you hate!" I played the piece for Sarah Vaughan. She had a comment on it: "That's a strange form," she said to me. I said, "It's not really a strange form, it's an old standard form. It has a verse at the beginning that never comes back, then it's got A-B-C three-part melody like most standards do. There's one chord that changes the interval as it goes into the C section that's a bit shocking. I don't know what it is, whether it's a fourth or—I don't know technically what it is. It comes in a little bit odd, but it's a good odd. It's no odder than any change in life. It's kind of like a "but." The thing is drifting off ... "but." That's how I think that chord works. It sets up an alternative view point.

JE: *So you were breaking the rules?*

JM: I don't think there are any rules left to break. But she thought so. Wayne Shorter came in, and he's the broadest musician that I've ever worked with. He knows the numerical language, the alphabetical language, and the flyshit, yet he chooses to play through metaphor, as I do. He's the only metaphor guy I know.

CW: Couldn't you find a classical musician that understands?

JM: I'm sure there would be somebody if you knew where to look; but a lot of times, classical musicians can't interpolate. They've always had the guidelines someone else wrote. It kind of kills their ability to improvise, in a lot of cases. Not all. But I think you have to grow up doing both.

JE: *When you say "improvise," what does that mean?*

JM: Making it up [laughs], as opposed to reading it.

JE: *What do you think, Cassandra?*

CW: What's the Jazz Age? What is improvisation? What is jazz?

JM: It's a fine line.

JE: *We seem to live in a time where there's a hardening of terms.*

CW: I didn't think about jazz when I started listening to Joni.

I think everything we've produced in America is jazz.

JE: *Everything we do is jazz?*

CW: Yeah. Because we've learned how to improvise.

JE: *That's interesting, Cassandra. Have you been thinking about this long, that everything we do in America is jazz?*

I mean, it swings, too. Right? Excuse me for bringing up Wynton [Marsalis], but ...

CW: While I eat?!

JE: *I find what both of you sing draws me in. You each ask the listener to get closer as opposed to what belters do with their singing.*

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—JONI

JM: Belters tend to be showy, not intimate. We can probably both belt, if you like that kind of theater. I'm not sure that I do. It's like grandstanding to me. I said to Mingus, "Who's your favorite singer?" expecting Bessie [Smith] or Billie Holiday. He said Judy Garland—a grander, showier kind of singing. It's an interesting question. We both could sing that way, I'm sure.

CW: How do you get a voice like that? And how are you able to maintain a voice like that? How can you sing night after night after night at full broth and not rip your throat out? I'm not into that. I'm a Miles Davis child.

JM: Miles is my favorite singer, and probably yours, too [laughs]. So tasteful.

CW: The first Miles I heard was *Sketches [Of Spain]*. That was just so damn expansive. I'm a Miles fan. I love all of his work.

There's specific periods that I bond to. It's nostalgia, though. But I listen to it all. I love it all.

JM: Miles was a fine, fine sonic innovator. And some of the music of the bands he inspired, and kicked into gear, that's some of the finest music I've ever heard. ...The later stuff I think he had less inspiration. It took him longer to play. It seems like he stood around more. He was so pure. He really waited until he heard something that he felt.

CW: So much of it has to do with the emotions.

JM: I'm at that place now, in a way. I'm almost too picky to go on. I'm still making the music, and I've got some new ideas. But you get narrower, in a way. It takes more and more to get you off. Mingus, at the end, couldn't stand anything except a couple of Charlie Parker records. He couldn't stand his own music. He'd go, "He's falsifying his emotion. That ain't shit." He heard all the effort people put forth and very little purity and sincerity. I get that way sometimes. My jive detector gets too sensitive and music just sounds awful to me. All of it.... In a certain way, we do most of our enthusiastic listening in our youth. It's the backdrop for our courtships, and you stow it and you're sentimental. The songs with the Pioneers, Roy Rogers' backup band, I'm just thrilled listening to those old songs. That's the music of my pre-teens. It's much better music than I realized as a child. Sentimental, kind of cornball, classic cowboy stuff. I never was much of a country & western fan, but I love listening to that. It swings. It's got that element of jazz in it.

JE: *And their hearts are in it so much.*

JM: And every track is excellent.

CW: Like *Turbulent Indigo*. I heard it the other night. The song is, "You've made everything I fear and everything I" There's this passage or this space where there are two bars and it's a repeating thing. For me, it's the epitome of the economy of



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motion. Two changes that just tear everything up. Tears everybody up. And it's only the space of two bars. It's in the middle of it and comes out of nowhere. It's like harmonically, how does this fit in here? Where does it come from?

JM: Weird things. It comes out of the tunings.

CW: I know. That's *you*. And I'm always prepared for it. But this one, I wasn't prepared for it because it's so spare. It's only *two bars*.

JM: Or Miles plays this flat note on the end of "It Never Entered My Mind." This is a really early recording. He draws this note flat, and he holds it flat all the way out. If he played it in pitch, it wouldn't do this to you, what it does. It's the saddest note.

CW: It's not a flatted fifth, is it? *[laughs]*

JM: No! It's a flatted *flat!* Know what I mean? It is FLAT! It's like, out of tune. But if he played it in tune, it wouldn't have the impact. It's the saddest note in the world. It's like he just lost it on this note. Sometimes I go through these periods where I get temporary perfect pitch and everything is driving me nuts! I go and put that thing on.

CW: That's why you had to find those guitars. Because of the tunings. I deal with maybe two or three tunings. I can't imagine what you have to deal with because I know you must have hundreds of them.

JM: I have 60. But that's too many.

Now we're in the lounge of the Hotel Nikko. The bar band starts their set playing Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight."

JM: *[To Cassandra]* What do you think about Monk? You're also a piano player. Does he have an influence on you?

CW: Definitely. Monk is the main influence. I took classical piano lessons for seven years, so that was my first introduction

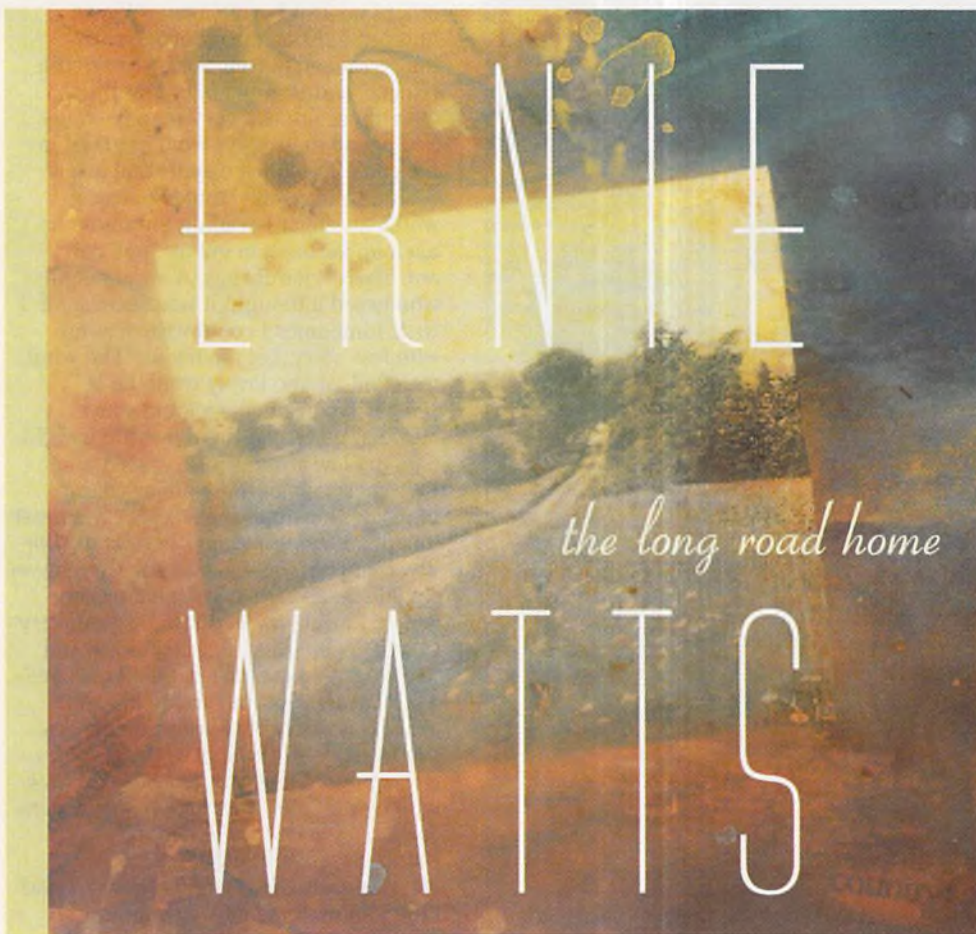
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—CASSANDRA



to music formally. But Monk, *Monk's Dream*—that album was one of the first albums, along with *Sketches Of Spain*, that I heard as a kid. When I started playing piano, those were the first piano sounds I heard. Later came the classical things: Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Ravel, that whole piano tradition out of Europe. The first sounds I heard from the piano were this weird kind of *[makes 'tink tink tink' sounds]*. That's the way I play piano now. Economy playing.

JM: I just discovered Monk two nights ago. I knew the name. I heard all kinds of stories, like, "Monk could paint! He painted a bowl of flowers and an ax!" But I never really knew what he was about. Monk hasn't worked his influence on me, but he's going



Saxophonist Ernie Watts, who has played every conceivable musical genre with artists ranging from The Rolling Stones to Barbra Streisand to Lee Ritenour, has returned home on this traditional jazz masterpiece. Joining Watts on this blues-tinged project are Kenny Barron on piano, Reggie Workman on acoustic bass, Mark Whitfield on electric guitar and Carmen Lundy performing two vocal numbers. The Long Road Home was recorded direct to 2-track and showcases the superior audio quality of JVC Music.

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to. The first thing that caught my eye was that he played flat-fingered like Laura Nyro, instead of with an arch, which is harder, I think, for going fast. Then, of course, the obvious, which everybody notes, is how he's always working from the top down and cross-handing. But the thing that really amazed me is the economy, the minimalism of it. How beautiful it was! I'm a chord-puller. I like hybrid colors, like triads or full-fisted chords.

JE: *I can tell by the way you play your guitar that you do that.*

JM: But this guy is linear and very percus-

sive. On the left hand, he may be pulling totally tonal chords, or sometimes just rocking from the black to the white to the black to the white keys. Very, very minimal, but god! When it fibers in with the other players, a lot of times, if the piano player has a lot of chops—this has been my experience in hiring piano players for my band—they get really pianissimo on you and they start scribbling over all these intricate things and they take up a lot of space and they over-embellish.

CW: That's why I don't have a piano player.

JM: It's hard to find a minimalist.

CW: They figure: "OK—88 keys? I've got to play every one of them. 12 notes? I've got to play every note." And it's the instrument itself, you can't really blame them. Unless you really have the serious discipline and you can focus on bringing the piano into a small space, condensing it, it's hard to do that. I think it's hard for a lot of pianists. Now the old cats, who used to comp with the singers, understood how to do that. A lot of space.

JM: Leaving the vocalist room to breathe.

CW: And for the imagination.

JM: Miles, too. He was Mr. Economy. If you don't feel anything, don't play it.

JE: *The two of you are band players as well as vocalists. But you also imply—Cassandra, you do it more than Joni—the use of space. You both imply a lot, and I sense you don't feel like you have to say everything and put everything out there. You leave stuff out so people can fill it in for themselves.*

JM: Speaking more for Cassandra, because of my wordiness, I am first responsible to my words. So when I play with a band, I have to be the leader. Well, the words have to be the leader. And if there's any room for anyone to get in, well, good luck! We did a jam one time, and it was ridiculous. It was Herbie Hancock's pilot for a series. Two drummers: Vinnie Colaiuta and I forget the other one; two horn players, Wayne Shorter and David Sanborn; Bobby McFerrin and myself. And we're doing "Hejira" and "Furry Sings The Blues." Now, those are two very moody songs. You got all these guys waiting to get in the gaps. Two horn players and a scat singer, so to speak—that is to say, a wordless singer—waiting for a hole to open up for them to get an "ooh aah" out. There's hardly any. A lot of people who heard it thought it was successful. I wish sometimes I could write a song with less story. Let me try it: "The wind, the wind, oh the lovely wind. La la." [laughs] You can take a lot of space between those and then give them eight bars to blow around!

CW: There's something about your phrasing that implies space. It's the most unique phrasing. When I first heard the way that you would say all the things you would say, and when I started writing songs, I would try to do that. I would try to write poetry and sing it and I would just sort of—I couldn't get it all in! That's a special art. Not everybody has that.

JE: *This is one of the reasons we got you two together—we kind of saw Cassandra coming from more of a jazz-oriented background and going toward pop music, however savage a description that is.*

CW: Dangerous. Dangerous.

JM: Cassandra, forgive me, but from the little I know, that doesn't sound quite

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accurate. She's got a classical piano background, she's listening to jazz as a young person, but she's also a singer of folk music. Right?

CW: What do you call all that?

JM: That's just good American fun!

[laughs] I don't think we're coming from anything that radically different. I'm coming first from classical music, a couple years of piano where they crack you at the knuckles. I could memorize faster than I could read. I was not going to be

literate, apparently. Well, as it turned out, I didn't need to. There were rare occasions that I did, but I just needed an interpreter. You hire a guy to write the lead sheets out. Then you're home free. It's an important thing. I mean, I wish I had it.

CW: Well, it's important to have the tools to communicate. Especially in the jazz world. If you don't have those tools, there's no respect there, on a certain level. I treasure both of them now. I'm glad to have it all, but I think there's a certain kind of opening you get when

you approach your instrument intuitively. The trade-off is, because you don't know the rules, you can open doors, open windows. That's what the tunings were for me. It was like a way out. When I first tapped back into it, it was like, *whew!*

JM: It's a tool for discovery. That's the great thing about it. It's like a no-man's land. It's uncharted territory.

JE: *You could say you both haven't gone from point A to point B. Instead, you've always been where you are all along.*

CW: We are all complete. I like that. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Joni Mitchell plays a custom-made, solid-body electric guitar made by Fred Walecki of Westwood (Calif.) Music. It has a generic Stratocaster shape, but with none of the standard Strat electronics; this and other tricks make the instrument very lightweight. The only pickup is a Roland GK-2A, which provides a separate signal for each string. These individual signals are processed by the Roland VG-8, a powerful guitar processor about the size of a large laptop computer that sits on the floor near Mitchell when she performs. The VG-8 allows easy access to one of her trademark compositional tools, namely, alternate tunings (she has somewhere near 60 different tunings).

Even though the "computer guitar" is tuned normally, the VG-8 is capable of changing the pitch of individual strings, and storing the results as one of 128 patches. As Joni says, "You can cue the guitar in all these different tunings, digitally, in terms of pluses and minuses. I can sit down and just dial up another tuning." While the VG-8 is capable of imitating the sound of virtually any guitar, Mitchell uses one sound for most of her tunings that's a combination of acoustic and electric. The VG-8's stereo outputs are fed straight into the house P.A. and monitors. Mitchell uses three monitors—the center one is for her voice only, while the left and right are for the VG-8 as well as a stereo mix of drummer Brian Blade's kit. Mitchell uses D'Addario strings, starting with a .010-gauge high E.

Cassandra Wilson plays a 1948 Martin D-18 guitar with D'Addario strings. Her microphone of choice is a beyerdynamic.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Joni Mitchell

HITS—Reprise 46326
MISSES—Reprise 46358
TURBULENT INDIGO—Reprise 45786
NIGHT RIDE HOME—Geffen 24388
CHALK MARK IN A RAIN STORM—Geffen 24172
WILD THINGS RUN FAST—Geffen 2019
DON JUAN'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER—Elektra 701
SHADOWS & LIGHT—Asylum 704
MINGUS—Elektra 505
HEJIRA—Elektra 1087
THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWN—Elektra 1051
MILES OF AISLES—Elektra 202
COURT & SPARK—Elektra 1001
FOR THE ROSES—Asylum 5057
BLUE—Reprise 2038
LADIES OF THE CANYON—Reprise 6376
CLOUDS—Reprise 6341
JONI MITCHELL—Reprise 6293

Cassandra Wilson

NEW MOON DAUGHTER—Blue Note 32861
SONG BOOK—Verve 697 124 097
BLUE LIGHT 'TIL DAWN—Blue Note 81357
CASSANDRA WILSON LIVE—jMT 849149
DANCE TO THE DRUMS AGAIN—DIW/Columbia 53451
SHE WHO WEEPS—Verve 834 443
JUMPWORLD—Verve 834 434
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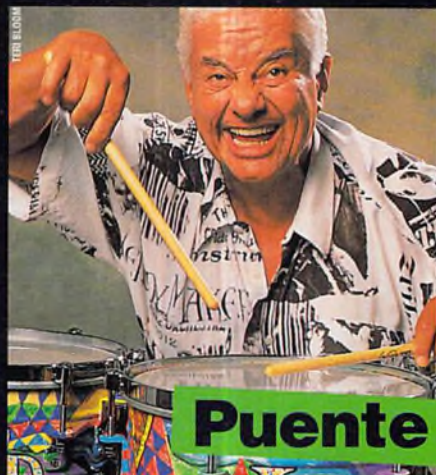


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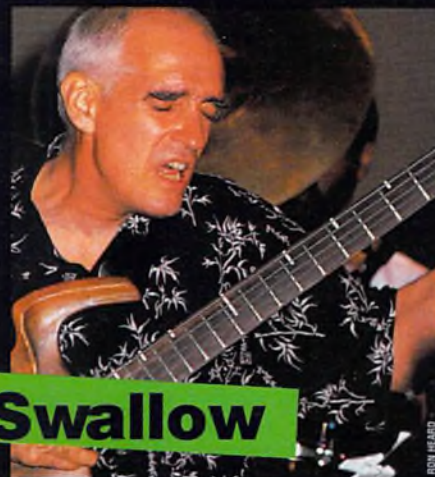
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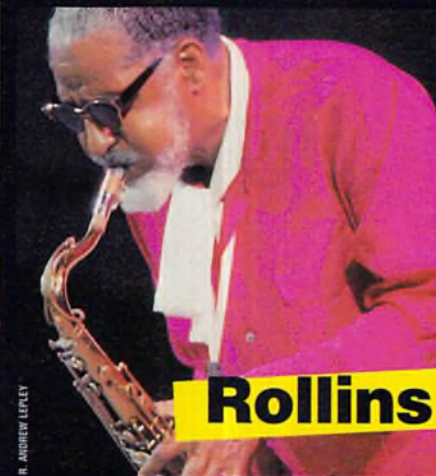
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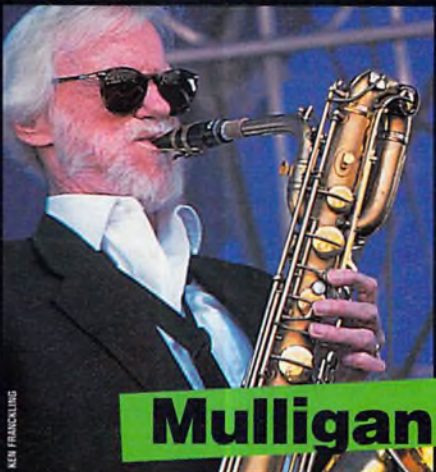
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Rollins



Silver



Mulligan

The readers have spoken, and once again, they've thrown a few curveballs into their choice picks in jazz, blues and beyond for 1996.

First up are the big winners. We welcome Horace Silver, the pianist/bandleader long admired for his composing chops, into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Silver might come as a surprise to some, but a quick look back on past Readers polls shows that the hard-bop grandpop has been a contestant all along. Tenor saxophonist extraordinaire Joe Lovano celebrates yet another poll double victory as he takes home two crown jewels, Jazz Musician of the Year and Jazz Album of the Year.

As with any Down Beat poll, we expected upsets mixed in with the traditional strongholds. Kenny Garrett led the charge as he wrestled the Alto Saxophone category from long-time winner Phil Woods. Tom Harrell took top Trumpet honors, a follow-up to this year's victory in the Critics Poll, but unexpected nonetheless. And established talent Mark Murphy shot up to first place as Male Singer, displacing perennial winner Joe Williams.

Some big-name players missing from the winners circle in recent years reclaimed their crowns, like Sonny Rollins, whom the readers haven't chosen as top Tenor Saxophone since 1991, and Benny Carter, once again recognized as the great Composer he is. Other winners of note: Maria Schneider aced the Arranger category, the Count Basie Orchestra took back the Big Band title from McCoy Tyner, Cassandra Wilson repeated as top Female Singer and Tito Puente resurfaced as numer-one Percussionist.

Let's not forget the mainstays of the poll, repeat winners like Steve Lacy, Steve Swallow, James Newton, Jimmy Smith, Milt Jackson and B.B. King. Sadly, this will be the last of 44 straight Readers Poll wins for the late baritone saxophonist and Hall of Famer Gerry Mulligan, whose presence we'll miss in future polls.

In the following pages, we present the results in their entirety. Congratulations to all the winners, and best of luck next year to all the runners-up.
—Ed Enright

Hall of Fame

Horace Silver



198 Horace Silver

- 152 Milt Jackson
- 128 Wayne Shorter
- 122 McCoy Tyner
- 108 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 100 Don Cherry
- 88 Clark Terry
- 76 Elvin Jones
- 62 Carmen McRae
- 60 Nat King Cole
- 42 Betty Carter
- 38 Sonny Stitt
- 38 Stanley Turrentine

By Zan Stewart

Here's a pop quiz: Write down the names of 10 songs composed by Horace Silver. (No, you can't go look at his albums. ... Well, OK, if you have to.)

"Song For My Father." "Cookin' At The Continental." "Señor Blues." "Blowin' The Blues Away." "Sister Sadie." "Peace." "Gregory Is Here." "The Hardbop Grandpop." "Nutville." "Doodlin'."

That's my 10. What's yours?

The point is, when you hear the name Horace Silver, you think of his unique,

signature-bearing compositions, don't you? And if you're at all familiar with his music, naming 10 tunes, maybe even 20, is pretty easy. But even if Silver's name rings few bells, you've probably heard "Song For My Father," his 1964 hit that has all but become his theme song. "I have to play that or the people go home disappointed," he says.

Mostly due to his songs, but also via his dynamic, to-the-point piano playing and his evocative arranging style, Horace Ward Martin Taveres Silver has been a longtime member of the modern jazz elite. His major-league jazz debut with Stan Getz in

1950 led to his stints with Lester Young and Art Blakey, his recordings with Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Clifford Brown, his more than 25 years as a Blue Note recording artist.

Any time is a fine time to celebrate the wondrous works of Horace Silver, but now is a better moment than most. As of this issue, the noted jazzman has been selected to the Down Beat Hall of Fame, where he now joins such past bandmates as Davis, Rollins, Blakey, Getz, Brown, Coleman Hawkins, Young and J.J. Johnson, all previously elected to this highest of jazz posts.

"Hey, this is a big deal," says the 68-year-old Silver of the honor, that typical upbeat lilt in his voice. "I finally got in, and it was before I died."

Deep down, to be sure, Silver is pleased. His whole metaphysical viewpoint—which he began to share with his fans and colleagues on a three-volume series of albums in the '70s called *The United States Of Mind*—is based around positive thinking. Thus, when asked how he feels in general, Silver responds, "Today is a good day. I've got a lot to look forward to, a lot more music to give the world and I'm excited about that."

His career, as you might imagine, has also brought him considerable pleasure. "It's gone pretty much the way I wanted it to, the way I dreamed that it would," he says during a chat from his ocean-view home in Malibu, Calif., where he's lived for 10 years. "I've gotten to work with many of my idols: Coleman Hawkins, Pres, Miles, Art Blakey. I'm a happy man."

When you interview Silver about his career, you naturally have to ask him for highlights. The first one he named was being hired by Getz in Hartford, 1950. "That got me started," he says.

Here's the backstory that leads up to that event. Silver, who was born on Sept. 2, 1928, in Norwalk, Conn., fell in love with music when he heard Jimmie Lunceford's band at the Rowton Point amusement park near his home. "I was flabbergasted and realized I wanted to be a musician," he recalls.

Silver was about 12 at the time, and he had been playing piano for a couple of years. But, like so many of us, he wasn't much of a practicer. In fact, he had wanted to quit. "But my dad wouldn't let me," he says. "He told me, 'You begged me for this piano and you wanted to take lessons, so you're going to keep on. You'll thank me for this one day.' And I did."

The exposure to Lunceford sparked Silver, and he began to take music seriously, practicing so much, in fact, that the neighbors "complained that I was playing too late at night."

Silver was first enthralled by the Caribbean folk music of the Cape Verdean Islands played by his father and friends at family parties, the black gospel vocals he heard at this mother's Methodist church and boogie woogie. "Before I could even read music, I copied note-for-note Earl Hines' 'Boogie Woogie On The St. Louis Blues,' Eddie Heywood's boogie-woogie version of 'Begin The Beguine' and Erskine Hawkins' 'Black Out.'"

As a teenager, when he also took up tenor sax for a while, he discovered pianists Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum ("One of my greatest honors was to have Teddy record two of my tunes on an album on Cameo Records"), saxophonists Hawkins and Young ("I loved Hawk, but I tried to play my tenor like Pres") and eventually the boppers: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and, of course, Bud Powell, the man who, along with Thelonious Monk, became his primary model.

All of these varied influences were rolling through the head and hands of the pianist when Getz arrived in Hartford to play a gig at a club called the Sundown, where he was backed by a local trio headed by Silver. The tenorman liked the pianist so much that he hired him on the spot, and made him a member of his quartet for two years, recording three of Silver's tunes—two of which, "Split Kick" and "Penny," are available on Getz's *The Roost Quartets*.

Silver then moved to New York, and his career started to take off. He worked with Hawkins, and with Young, and made his first album for Blue Note, a trio date in 1953. Then in 1954, two members of the quartet he was leading at Minton's in Harlem—tenorman Hank Mobley and bassist Doug Watkins—were joined by trumpeter Kenny Dorham and drummer Blakey, recording under the name *Horace Silver & The Jazz Messengers*.

The band's name became simply the Jazz Messengers for a two-volume album recorded live at the Cafe Bohemia in 1955, and then Blakey took over the name. But Silver kept Mobley and Dorham as his own tenor-trumpet team for a while, and was never sorry.

"I've played with a lot of front lines, and, for my particular taste, Hank and Kenny were the hippest, the slickest," he says. "Those cats played so well together, and individually their solos were great. They were such harmonic masters, the way they could make those changes."

In this period, Silver had a previously little-reported association with Parker. He worked with the alto giant on a dance job in Buffalo, N.Y. "Walter Bishop was sick and couldn't make it, and the others were Charlie Mingus and Kenny Clarke"—and Bird sat in a couple of times with the pianist's quartet that featured Mobley. Silver also sat in with Parker at the Club Baby Grand in Harlem. "Walter Bishop asked me if I wanted to play, and I told him yeah. Miles also sat in, so did Gerry Mulligan. That was a helluva set."

1 Hall Of Fame, 2 Ways To Get In

Legends in jazz, blues and beyond can be elected into the Down Beat Hall of Fame by way of the annual Readers Poll (published each December) or Critics Poll (each August). It all started in 1952 with the Readers; the Critics got into the game later, in 1961. With this month's addition of Horace Silver, there are currently 86 DB Hall-of-Famers, listed below in chronological order of their induction. —ed.

Readers Poll

- 1952 Louis Armstrong
- 1953 Glenn Miller
- 1954 Stan Kenton
- 1955 Charlie Parker
- 1956 Duke Ellington
- 1957 Benny Goodman
- 1958 Count Basie
- 1959 Lester Young
- 1960 Dizzy Gillespie
- 1961 Billie Holiday
- 1962 Miles Davis
- 1963 Thelonious Monk
- 1964 Eric Dolphy
- 1965 John Coltrane
- 1966 Bud Powell
- 1967 Billy Strayhorn
- 1968 Wes Montgomery
- 1969 Ornette Coleman
- 1970 Jimi Hendrix
- 1971 Charles Mingus
- 1972 Gene Krupa
- 1973 Sonny Rollins
- 1974 Buddy Rich
- 1975 Canonball Adderley
- 1976 Woody Herman
- 1977 Paul Desmond
- 1978 Joe Venuti
- 1979 Ella Fitzgerald
- 1980 Dexter Gordon
- 1981 Art Blakey
- 1982 Art Pepper
- 1983 Stephane Grappelli
- 1984 Oscar Peterson
- 1985 Sarah Vaughan
- 1986 Stan Getz
- 1987 Lionel Hampton
- 1988 Jaco Pastorius
- 1989 Woody Shaw
- 1990 Red Rodney
- 1991 Lee Morgan
- 1992 Maynard Ferguson
- 1993 Gerry Mulligan
- 1994 Dave Brubeck
- 1995 J.J. Johnson
- 1996 Horace Silver

Critics Poll

- Coleman Hawkins
- Bix Beiderbecke
- Jelly Roll Morton
- Art Tatum
- Earl Hines
- Charlie Christian
- Bessie Smith
- Sidney Bechet & Fats Waller
- Pee Wee Russell/Jack Teagarden
- Johnny Hodges
- Roy Eldridge & Django Reinhardt
- Clifford Brown
- Fletcher Henderson
- Ben Webster
- Cecil Taylor
- King Oliver
- Benny Carter
- Rahsaan Roland Kirk
- Lennie Tristano
- Max Roach
- Bill Evans
- Fats Navarro
- Albert Ayler
- Sun Ra
- Zoot Sims
- Gil Evans
- Johnny Dodds, Thad Jones & Teddy Wilson
- Kenny Clarke
- Chet Baker
- Mary Lou Williams
- John Carter
- James P. Johnson
- Edward Blackwell
- Frank Zappa
- Julius Hemphill
- Artie Shaw



Horace Silver, circa 1956, with Doug Watkins (left), Hank Mobley and Art Farmer

By 1956, Silver was a leader on record but rarely, if ever, in person. Then he found himself with a hit, "Señor Blues," off *Six Pieces Of Silver*, and suddenly he was in demand. The late booking agent/manager Jack Whittemore called him and said there was a club in Philadelphia that wanted him for a week's work. Silver declined, but not for long.

"I told Jack I didn't have a band, so he said, 'Well, why don't you put one together and go down there and make that money?'" Silver recalls. "So I hired Hank Mobley, Art Farmer, Doug Watkins and Art Taylor. We rehearsed, then went down and packed the place."

Suddenly, he was a leader. "The guy [in Philadelphia] wanted us back in two months. In the meantime, I got another gig and it snowballed. I had never wanted to be a leader, just a well-known sideman, but I felt it was my destiny."

Silver never looked back. For a time, his bands were ad hoc units—Mobley and Clifford Jordan were sometimes the tenormen, Farmer and Dorham often held the trumpet chair. Then, in late 1958, he assembled one of his most lasting and satisfying combinations, headed by trumpeter Blue Mitchell and tenorman Junior Cook. The quintet was together until 1964 and made such memorable albums as *Blowin' The Blues Away* (1959), with "Sister Sadie" and "Peace," *Horace-Scope* (1960), with "Nica's Dream" and "Strollin'" and *Doin' The Thing* (1961), with "Filthy McNasty."

"As much as I loved Hank and Kenny, I gotta say this: Blue and Junior played more well-rounded than any front line I've had," says Silver. "I could fully utilize my talents in terms of writing. I could write funky and they could handle that, solo-wise. A ballad, they could handle that. Hip, they could handle. I could depend on them and we had a lot of success."

But perhaps nothing like what happened when Silver employed saxophonist Joe Henderson and trumpeter Carmell Jones to play "Song For My

Father," that infectious, loping Latin-funk-blues piece that pushed the similarly titled LP onto *Billboard* magazine's top 200 pop albums chart. As Silver himself says, he's got to play the number every night, which turns into a very real creative challenge.

"When you've played something 1,000 times, the question I always ask myself is, 'What am I going to play on my solo?'" he says. "What can I do that's different? Sometimes, I come through and pat myself on the back. Other times, it's, 'Aw, I played the same old shit I've played before.'"

After Henderson and Jones, Silver hired a cast of now-luminaries for his quintets and recordings, including saxophonists Michael Brecker, Bennie Maupin, Bob Berg, Ralph Moore and Red Holloway and trumpeters Randy Brecker, Tom Harrell and Brian Lynch. They have collectively appeared on such albums as *Silver 'n Brass* (1975), *Pencil Packin' Papa* (1994) and *The Hardbop Grandpop* (1996).

Michael Brecker spoke for many of Silver's sidemen when he assessed the value working under the pianist's egis. "I spent a little over a year with Horace, and it was like a university of jazz," says Brecker, who played on a few tracks on *In Pursuit Of The 27th Man* (1972). "He taught me useful things, like how to shape my solos, how to say what I needed to say in a short period of time, how to present myself."

Much of that same information is now included in Silver's recent book, *The Art Of Small Combo Jazz Playing, Composing And Arranging*, which includes "seven compositions scored for quintet and a lot of musical philosophy."

In the early '80s, he formed Silveto Productions, issuing new albums like *Spiritualizing The Senses* and *Music To Ease Your Disease* on Silveto Records, and *Horace Silver Live: 1964*, a collection of earlier unreleased material, on Emerald.

Asked about his compositional process, Silver said he mostly works spontaneously, and often in the morning. "I usually wake up with a phrase going through my head, and I'll either run to the piano and play it,

or, if I'm on the road, I'll sing it into my tape recorder," he says. "Then, I'll try to expand the phrase into eight bars, find a suitable bridge, and I've got a song."

He's asked if he has favorite songs. "My songs are like my children. How can you like one more than another?" he says. "But I'm usually thinking about the more recent stuff, like 'Gratitude' [on *The Hardbop Grandpop*—see "CD Reviews" Nov. '96] or 'My Mother's Waltz' [on *Pencil Packin' Papa*], which is not in the style of the Horace Silver Quintet, but I'm a growing boy. I can't stay in the same groove all the time." Then he laughed.

Silver still has some goals, you bet. He wishes for more awareness of his music, and of jazz in general. "This music should be more popular. It's such a great American art form, so uplifting," he says. He'd also like to see a dance company like Alvin Ailey or the Joffrey Ballet choreograph some of his songs. "Take it on a world tour. That would be exciting."

Looking his life over, Silver is glad things happened the way they did, when they did. "I'm glad I was born when I was," he reflects. "Then, in New York, you could hobnob with all these dudes. Like, I got to know Monk pretty good. I'd got to his house sometimes, bring him a bottle of wine, and he'd sit and play tunes for me." Or when Silver wrote a tune called "No Smoking," based on Bud Powell's style: Powell heard Silver play it at Birdland and asked for a leadsheet. "It always made me feel good that he liked it," Silver says. "I've been blessed." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Horace Silver plays a Steinway piano.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE HARDBOB GRANDPOPOP—Impulse! 192
PENCIL PACKIN' PAPA—Columbia 64210
IT'S GOT TO BE FUNKY—Columbia 53812
HORACE-SCOPE—Blue Note 84042
THE BEST OF. VOLS. 1&2—Blue Note 91143, 93206
CAPE VERDEAN BLUES—Blue Note 84220
SONG FOR MY FATHER—Blue Note 84185
BLOWIN' THE BLUES AWAY—Blue Note 46526
THE JAZZ MESSENGERS AT THE CAFE BOHEMIA, VOLS. 1&2—Blue Note 46521-22
AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS—Blue Note 46140

with various others

A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND VOLS. 1&2—Blue Note 46519-20 (Art Blakey)
MILES DAVIS VOLUME ONE—Blue Note 81501
WALKIN'—Fantasy/OJC 213 (Miles Davis)
AFRO-CUBAN—Blue Note 46815 (Kenny Dorham)
EARLY ART—Fantasy/OJC 880 (Art Farmer)
THE ROOST QUARTETS—Roulette 69052 (Stan Getz)
THE EMINENT JAY JAY JOHNSON, VOL. 2—Blue Note 81506
BLOWING IN FROM CHICAGO—Blue Note 28977 (Clifford Jordan & John Gilmore)
J.R. MONTEROSE—Blue Note 29102
SONNY ROLLINS VOL. 2—Blue Note 81558

Jazz Musician of the Year

Joe Lovano

- 411 Joe Lovano**
- 330 James Carter
- 150 Keith Jarrett
- 150 Sonny Rollins
- 135 Wynton Marsalis
- 128 Michael Urbaniak
- 96 Joshua Redman
- 93 Benny Carter
- 87 Herbie Hancock
- 86 Ornette Coleman
- 86 Tom Harrell
- 86 Cassandra Wilson
- 66 John Scofield
- 57 Wayne Shorter

Think of Joe Lovano as another baby boomer come of age. For the second consecutive year, the Down Beat Readers Poll honors Lovano as Jazz Musician of the Year and for Jazz Album of the Year, this time with *Quartets: Live At The Village Vanguard*. Take into account his acclaim as Jazz Artist of the Year in the 1995 and '96 Critics polls, and the jazz community's embrace of Lovano tightens into a bear hug.

What accounts for Lovano's remarkable connection with the jazz community? Cleveland-based saxophonist Ernie Krivda has known the Lovano family for many years. Krivda maintains that Lovano's special qualities relate to his upbringing as the son of a working musician (Tony "Big T" Lovano) in an environment which taught respect for jazz as a living, working tradition. "Cleveland has always had players who don't sound like anybody else," he observes, "and Joe grew up with that." Lovano readily points to his life experience as a foundation. When he talks about Cleveland's tradition, the names come quickly, from the obscure (drummer Jacktown Jackson) to Jim Hall, and even Albert Ayler.

Krivda acutely observes that Lovano's generation values openness, cultural diversity and exploration. Baby boomers now account for a large part of the critical and audience segments of the jazz community. In essence, Joe Lovano's multicultural, multi-generational approach reflects the values of his generation. Saxophonist George Garzone, who's



R. ANDREW LEFLEY

known Lovano since their days at Berklee, and has used him as a foil in recent recordings, agrees with Krivda that, from the musician's perspective, Lovano possesses the versatility and determination to do whatever is necessary to succeed.

Quartets offers dual servings of hearty, gimmick-free, meat-and-potatoes jazz. The unique aspect of *Quartets*, Lovano believes, is the use of two different lineups to explore programs of originals and standards, respectively. For the piano quartet date, Lovano chose to play tenor saxophone only. He explains, "With a trumpet in the quartet, I play a lot more soprano. If I'm the only horn in a quartet, I'm mainly on tenor." Trumpeter Tim Hagans, another longtime Lovano associate, points to Joe's attention to tone shapes and colors. "Without a piano, he wants a flugelhorn and a harmon mute to add color," says Hagans, "but with [his band] Universal Language, I play open trumpet."

Quartets demonstrates Lovano's ability to move smoothly to the inside and outside of his target with the finesse of a pitcher working the strike zone. Garzone affirms that "Joe has the ability to cross over in all styles, but he keeps the tradition close at hand, whether he's with Woody Herman, Paul Motian or Carla Bley." A followup

to *Quartets*, featuring Vanguard performances by Lovano's trio and by Universal Language, remains a possibility.

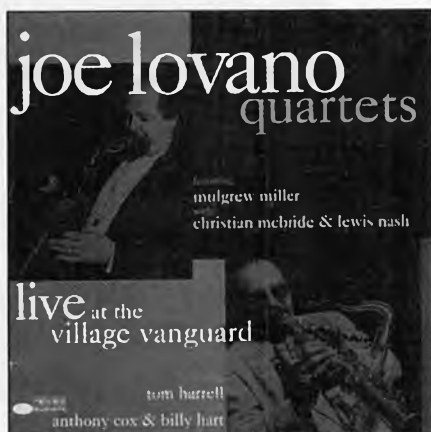
The potent combination of popular and critical appeal earns Lovano artistic license. His imminent *Celebrating Sinatra* CD allows him to pursue his interest in tonal color through expanded ensembles (e.g., woodwinds, string quartet) while reinventing songs performed by Frank Sinatra. (Lovano slyly notes that the singer's vast repertoire affords an opportunity to play almost any tune one chooses.) Hagans calls attention to Lovano's writing skills. "Trying to play Joe's lines horizontally over the chord changes he writes is difficult, comparable to playing Bird or Monk," says Hagans.

In addition to his working quartet and Universal Language, Lovano is eager to develop a touring ensemble capable of executing orchestral arrangements from *Rush Hour* and *Celebrating Sinatra*. He'd also like to record with a trio, and solo performance (accompanying himself with gongs) fascinates him as well. "Joe comes from tradition," says Hagans, "but he wants to do what nobody else has done." Playing with greater confidence than ever, Lovano is ready to realize those goals. As Garzone says, "It's his prime time—right now!"

—Jon Andrews

Albums of the Year

A New Center



Jazz Album

- 303** *Quartets: Live At The Village Vanguard, Joe Lovano* (Blue Note)
- 249 +3, Sonny Rollins (Milestone)
- 207 *Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note*, Keith Jarrett Standards Trio (ECM)
- 117 *Kansas City Soundtrack*, various artists (Verve)
- 105 *The New Standard*, Herbie Hancock (Verve)
- 93 *New Moon Daughter*, Cassandra Wilson (Blue Note)
- 81 *Triology*, Kenny Garrett (Warner Bros.)
- 60 *Tone Dialing*, Ornette Coleman (Harmolodic/Verve)
- 45 *Close Your Eyes*, Kurt Elling (Blue Note)
- 45 *Blue Skies*, Stan Getz (Concord Jazz)

Blues Album

- 209** *Live—The Real Deal*, Buddy Guy with G.E. Smith & The Saturday Night Live Band (Silvertone)
- 164 *Blues Of The Month Club*, Joe Louis Walker (Verve)
- 156 *Turn It On! Turn It Up!* Roomful Of Blues (Bullseye Blues)
- 136 *Grateful Heart*, Ronnie Earl (Bullseye Blues)
- 132 *Phantom Blues*, Taj Mahal (Private Music)
- 104 *Honey Dripper*, Charles Brown (Verve)
- 92 *Long Way Home*, Gatemouth Brown (Verve)

Beyond Album

- 150** *Colossal Head*, Los Lobos (Warner Bros.)
- 54 *Lost Episodes*, Frank Zappa (Rykodisc)
- 50 *How Long Has This Been Going On*, Van Morrison (Verve)
- 38 *Mercury Falling*, Sting (A&M)

By the time you read this—dear, perpetually polled reader—Bill Clinton will have been re-elected president.

Strange lead for a piece about the annual Down Beat Readers Poll? Not really. American music, like political polls, has always been a useful reckoning of the American heart. Charlie Parker's assertive style was a heady harbinger of the civil rights movement, and Bob Dylan told us the times were changing before most people even knew they were riding the wave. So what is the Readers Poll telling us now? With one very important exception, it says that, like the president, we have found a new, reconsolidated center, one that has come to terms with much of the past, but isn't so sure about the future.

Take Joe Lovano, whom you chose (again) for Jazz Musician of the Year and best Jazz Album of the Year, as well as number two for Tenor Saxophone (two votes behind Sonny Rollins). Lovano's album *Quartets: Live At The Village Vanguard*, which features two quartets—one pre-Ornette and one post-Ornette—demonstrates what most musicians knew all along, that there is a musical continuity from "inside" hard-bop to "outside" free-improv. Tom Harrell, whose colorist ear and sophisticated sense of line grace the "outside" disc on *Quartets*, displaced Roy Hargrove and Wynton Marsalis in the Trumpet category. As a composer, Wynton came in ninth, of 10, and his Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra placed eighth, of nine, as a big band. Can we safely declare victory for the forces of reaction, which dominated jazz for most of the 1980s? I think so. The stock market calls this kind of leveling out a "correction."

Other winners can be read in the same light. Charlie Haden, who won for Acoustic Bass and whose Quartet West took the Acoustic Jazz Group category, is an avant-garde hero applying his innovations to traditional forms. Keith Jarrett, who won for Acoustic Piano and whose Standards Trio came in third with

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Keith Jarrett At *The Blue Note*, is another pioneer re-examining an old format: the piano trio. Mind you, Jarrett isn't touting those old tunes as some misconceived "canon." By playing material so familiar that it melts away, he, like Lovano, Harrell and Haden, aims at the real "standards" of jazz: spontaneous creativity and interaction between players, in the moment. Herbie Hancock had the same idea with his best-selling album *The New Standard* (Verve), but *Down Beat* readers heard the thin material and placed it fifth.

Some elements of the avant-garde may finally have been folded into a new center, but rock fusion, that other 1960s innovation, seems to have faded into deserved oblivion. Hancock (first in Electric Keyboard) and John Scofield (first for Guitar and Electric Jazz Group) are the only winners who could be confused with this school. The reason Scofield remains? The blues, which endures as a fundamental value for jazz listeners. Oddly, however, there is precious little direct intercourse between blues and jazz musicians themselves (*pace*, Jerry Granelli). How many jazz players own, or have even heard, *Live—The Real Deal*, by Buddy Guy with G.E. Smith & The Saturday Night Live Band (a repeat for Guy), which placed first with readers for top Blues Album of the Year? That's a shame, because it's a classic.

Jazz musicians may not listen to much blues, but many are avid explorers of other world folk musics. Yet this is precisely where the new center, like the country, gets confusing. *Los Lobos* is tops with the readers for *Colossal Head* as best Beyond Album of the Year. Indeed, their assimilated new disc sounds more like contemporary rock than the vivacious, Angeleno roots music they pioneered. (At least Tito Puente, whom readers chose as their favorite percussionist, tries to mix things up.) Some of the most exciting jazz being played is of a culturally hyphenated disposition, such as the music of Jon Jang or Ivo Perelman. But these musicians don't even register on the reader radar. Why not?

Jazz at its heart is a hyphenated music, a complex two-step between African-American and Euro-American culture: Assimilate or separate? New Americans always have wrestled with this question. The enduring strength of jazz, like the culture at large, has been its ability to enrich itself through new influences. Stylistically, jazz in 1996 seems to be at an equilibrium between its past and present, but uncertain about the ethnic borders of its future.

—Paul de Barros

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Alto Saxist of the Year

Kenny Garrett



FRANKLIN LEPLAT

391	Kenny Garrett	47	James Carter
331	Phil Woods	47	Lee Konitz
168	Jackie McLean	42	Steve Coleman
153	Ornette Coleman	24	Gary Bartz
152	Benny Carter	23	Bobby Watson

In what is developing into a significant pattern, voters in the Readers Poll have once again pushed tradition aside by bestowing this year's alto saxophone crown on one of the youthful jazz cats, Kenny Garrett. Garrett's stunning upset unseats jazz elder Phil Woods, who dominated the Alto Saxophone category since 1975. Even Garrett seemed surprised by the news. "I'm just happy to be recognized," he said. "Phil has been there a long time."

However, the 36-year-old saxophonist was pleased with the results. "This is all about recognition. I've been doing this for a long time. People got to know me when I played with Miles Davis, but it's really great to be noticed now that I'm out front as a leader and writer."

For Down Beat readers, Garrett's award-winning year began with him gracing the September 1995 cover with Roy Hargrove. At the time, the saxophonist's CD *Trio* (Warner Bros.), dedicated to Sonny Rollins and Joe

Henderson, was being celebrated as one of the year's best recordings. He followed up that triumph earlier this year with the equally remarkable *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane* (Warner Bros.), his seventh recording as a leader. Again, praise was widespread for the album which featured guitarist Pat Metheny, bassist Rodney Whitaker and drummer Brian Blade. *Pursuance* garnered a ★★★★★ review in these pages (see "CD Reviews" Aug. '96). In commenting on how masterfully the alto saxophonist rendered Trane's material, reviewer Jim Macnie noted, "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."

Down Beat readers obviously agreed, enough so to reward Garrett, who's already begun working on his next album of original material, with top Alto Saxophone honors for 1996.

—Dan Ouellette

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Trumpeter of the Year

Tom Harrell

Tom Harrell is finally getting his due. This was a poll-winning year for the 50-year-old Harrell as he swept the trumpet category in the Critics and Readers polls. Long known as an ace musician by the jazz cognoscenti, he's enjoying the benefits of finally having a major label, RCA Victor, behind him this past year.

Harrell's career has taken him down a long road of varied experiences. "I've been lucky because the musicians I've played with have made me aware of new levels of creativity and feeling," says Harrell. "I'm always searching for beauty in music. Music can take all kinds of forms, be stretched out and experimental, and still be beautiful."

In the first half of this decade, Harrell established himself as a leader and recording artist for independent labels like Criss Cross, Contemporary and Chesky. His success got the attention of RCA Victor, which released the ambitious *Labyrinth* earlier this year.

The support furnished by a major label helped catapult Harrell's music to a much wider audience; the number of gigs, and media attention, are way up. It's also enabled him to expand his musical boundaries: "On *Labyrinth*, I was able to record with an expanded horn section and percussion, something I've wanted to do for a long time. It was an experiment, using different influences in my music."

Along those lines, Harrell is busy writing music for his next recording, which he says will incorporate various rhythms from the Caribbean and Latin America. "I want to combine different rhythms. I try to create musical situations that make me play in ways I've never played before ... and to influence the other soloists and accompanists to play in new ways also," he says. He also plans to write music for chamber orchestra and other ensembles, "with a focus toward bringing together musical influences from other cultures. Jazz is really a world music. It's a global village."
—Michael Bloom



KEN FRANKLING

368	Tom Harrell	122	Lester Bowie
266	Roy Hargrove	96	Dave Douglas
230	Wynton Marsalis	96	Art Farmer
172	Wallace Roney	94	Nicholas Payton
126	Clark Terry	94	Arturo Sandoval

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128	John Medeski	145	Tony Williams	56	Alvin Batiste	67	David Murray (bass clarinet)
118	Muhai Richard Abrams	47	Lewis Nash	42	Kenny Davern		



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- 47 Michael Urbaniak (lynon)
- 35 Bob Stewart (tuba)
- 33 James Carter (bass clarinet)
- 22 Don Byron (bass clarinet)

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- 225 Mark Murphy**
- 186 Joe Williams
- 152 Kevin Mahogany
- 149 Mel Tormé
- 109 Tony Bennett
- 106 Bobby McFerrin
- 58 Kurt Elling
- 58 Jon Hendricks
- 24 Jimmy Scott
- 19 Frank Sinatra

Female Singer

- 292 Cassandra Wilson**
- 204 Betty Carter
- 93 Diana Krall
- 77 Shirley Horn
- 73 Abbey Lincoln
- 49 Ella Fitzgerald
- 48 Dee Dee Bridgewater
- 40 Sheila Jordan
- 33 Dianne Reeves
- 19 Carol Sloane

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- 305 Take 6**
- 178 Manhattan Transfer
- 157 New York Voices
- 108 Jackie & Roy
- 103 Hendricks Family
- 98 Four Freshmen
- 78 Zap Mama
- 74 Sweet Honey in the Rock

Blues Musician

- 384 B.B. King**
- 248 Buddy Guy
- 72 John Lee Hooker
- 56 Charles Brown
- 56 Otis Rush
- 55 Ray Charles
- 53 Taj Mahal
- 42 Gatemouth Brown
- 40 Ronnie Earl

Blues Group

- 143 B.B. King**
- 96 Roomful of Blues
- 72 Buddy Guy
- 39 Robert Cray
- 33 Charles Brown
- 24 Otis Rush
- 10 Taj Mahal

Beyond Musician

- 248 Van Morrison**
- 224 Sting
- 164 Eddie Palmieri
- 124 Cachao
- 120 Ornette Coleman
- 120 Dr. John
- 100 Stevie Wonder
- 76 Cesaria Evora

Beyond Group

- 186 Los Lobos**
- 129 Sting
- 123 Jerry Gonzalez & The Fort Apache Band
- 87 Neville Bros.
- 87 Eddie Palmieri
- 81 Cachao
- 81 The Fugees
- 80 Kronos Quartet
- 78 Morphine
- 58 Greg Osby

Phil Woods **Jazz**



Soldier

By Michael Bourne

First, there's his sound. Unmistakable, and always soulful. Then, there's his style. Immediate, and always swinging. Also, his phenomenal *chops*. He twists and turns phrases up, down and around his alto sax with a quickness that seems effortless. One might wonder, as some said of Paganini, whether Phil Woods sold his very soul to play so *darned* good.

Woods, turns 65 on Nov. 2, has recorded around 100 albums as a leader or co-leader, around 400 albums altogether. Curiously, while many of his earliest recordings in the '50s are available on CDs, many of his recordings of the '60s into the '80s are not yet compacted—no doubt because he's recorded for so many independent and European labels. Certainly, he doesn't look back but continues recording prolifically—including four new CDs.

Another Time, Another Place is a live performance at Boston's Regattabar with the ageless master Benny Carter. *Astor & Elis* is a tribute to the Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla and the Brazilian singer Elis Regina. *The Phil Woods Quintet Plays The Music of Jim McNeely* spotlights the pianist/composer's edgy tunes. There's also a forthcoming live quintet recording, plus the *Into The Woods* retrospective of his Concord years and a Mosaic collection celebrating the 20th anniversary of his working band (see "CD Reviews" Jan. '96).

Gigging is what Phil Woods lives for. Especially with the quintet of trumpeter Brian Lynch, pianist Bill Charlap and, since the group came together in 1974, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. They prefer playing acoustically—no mics, no amps, just *them*, alive and swinging. And whenever, wherever and with whomever he's playing, that indescribable *sound* of Phil Woods comes through.

Woods was voted Down Beat's "New Star" in 1956 and has been voted number one Alto Sax in the Critics Poll 20 times between 1970 and '96. Woods also won top Alto Sax in the Readers Poll *every* year from 1975-'95. The opening question seemed inevitable.

MICHAEL BOURNE: *Why do you play alto saxophone?*

PHIL WOODS: I believe that's what I was put on earth to do, be an alto player. I thought about that when I started playing. I had a pretty good natural sound, like I was gifted in that respect.

My uncle left it to me in a will. I'd discovered where he kept it, but I was more interested in melting it down and making toy soldiers out of it, making my

"Any damned fool can play good at 25. Having a career in your 20s and 30s is not too challenging. Let's hear what they can play when they're 40!"

own Golden Horde. He mistook my larcenous intent for an interest in music.

I really had no interest in playing. I was given the alto and I put it back in the closet, but my mother said, "Don't you think you should take lessons? Your uncle went to a great deal of trouble to leave it to you." Even at age 12 I realized that dying could be construed as a great deal of trouble, so I let my fingers do the walking through the Yellow Pages. So much in life is fortuitous, and I came across a great music teacher, Harvey LaRose. Before I went for my first lesson, I asked him, "Should I bring the alto?" and he said, "It would be a good idea, son, to bring a saxophone to your first saxophone lesson."

I played the lesson, and then I went home and put the damned thing back in the closet, and when I went the next week, I could play the lesson. If I'd had a more straight-laced teacher, he might've said, "You're faking it! You're not using your

ear! You're not practicing!" But he realized that I must have a fair retentive ability, a pretty decent ear to be able to play the lesson without working at it. So we nurtured that aspect, and within six months I was totally hooked.

I think within that first year, 1943-'44, I saw Duke Ellington's band with Johnny Hodges, and that really knocked me out. Hodges played a song called "Mood To Be Woo'd," which my teacher had given me that week. My teacher was giving me Johnny Hodges transcriptions, Benny Carter transcriptions. Way before I heard Charlie Parker, I was into Benny and Johnny. And then I heard Parker and my course was fairly clear, that was what I wanted to do. Bird's music really spoke to all the young people in that period.

MB: *You've called yourself one of "Bird's Children," and so many musicians of your generation were inspired by Charlie Parker. But really, how does a musician create his own sound, his own style? How do you even practice being original and not imitative?*

PW: I'm a pretty well-trained musician. I listened to everything that came before me. I never tried to copy Charlie Parker. I was just as interested in Sonny Stitt and Bud Powell and Louis Armstrong and Tab Smith and Pete Brown.

MB: *Did you transcribe and learn solos?*

PW: I learned one solo of Bird's, "Koko." I listened to solos, and if I liked something, I'd steal it, but I never sat down and copied a whole chorus. That's not what it's about. It's not about imitation. You listen and find little things that appeal to you, and, as Dizzy used to say, "If you like it and you can *hear* it, you can *have* it!" Just to model a whole chorus after Charlie Parker, that's painting by the numbers. That's not really improvising. And there's so much work still to be done. I'm still just as in love with what Johnny Hodges did, still trying to get that slide from top to bottom.

I used to practice 28 hours a day, and much more importantly, I used to *play* a lot. We were always jamming at Chuck Andrews' pad. When I was doing my study with Lennie Tristano, I'd go for a lesson, and then we'd go to Romeo's for dinner. We always knew the spaghetti was fresh.

We could see it in the pot in the window. Then we'd got to Main Stem Records and buy all the latest sides. I'd take off the heads from the records, but I never copied solos. I'd analyze them and study them, but I didn't write them down.

MB: *Your generation of the alto sax, with Cannonball, Jackie McLean, Lee Konitz, all more or less the same age, all of your have totally different sounds, and yet there's always a touch of Benny and Johnny and especially Bird.*

PW: Lee Konitz was asked why he didn't copy Bird, and he said, "Because it's too hard!"

MB: *You eventually married Chan Parker and raised Bird's kids, Kim and Baird. Did you know Bird much as a person?*

PW: Oh, I didn't know him. I was just one of the alto players in town. One time he offered to buy me lunch. You hear all these stories about him ripping off everybody, but he was really kind to young musicians. That was a really important lesson to me, and I've always tried to take time and be encouraging to young musicians. That's what Bird was like, in spite of all the propaganda and the tales about his other life. He might've ripped off somebody, but he didn't mess with the young cats.

MB: *In notes for your 1956 Prestige album The Young Bloods, Ira Gitler wrote: "Jazz may not be solely a music of youth but there are qualities which musicians have in their youth that they seldom have again. For something gained there is sometimes something lost and vice versa. Maturity is gained through the years and the same years smother the fires of youth." What have you gained or lost in the 40 years since then?*

PW: I've lost a step or two. I've got false teeth now. I can't quite do what I used to do. I'll be 65 this year and I'm not quite as fleet of eighth notes as I once was. I don't think I've lost any musicality, but facility ... I've had a little trouble with my chops. Chops are the hard part.

I think that I've gained the resources that I have. And because of my dental problems, I've learned to play without any pressure at all. I have a very loose and relaxed embouchure now, which will give me longevity—and it'll have to do, because I can't grip it like I used to. You start out playing a million notes, but you learn to try and find *one* note that makes some sense. Any damned fool can play 100 miles an hour, but it's that one note at that right time that touches somebody.

MB: *When the "young lions" phenomenon came along, with all the 20-somethings getting gigs and contracts, musicians of your generation were often annoyed and even out of work—although, you were once a "New Star" yourself.*

PW: We didn't separate ourselves into "young lions" and "old lions" in those days. We all played together. There were still big bands where we had a chance to share in

"What I am is a good player, and that's what my band is all about, playing a good repertoire, playing songs that don't get played enough or at all. ... Yeah, I believe that I'm a standard bearer and always have been."

the life experience. Young musicians today are graduating from schools but have never been on the road and know nothing about life. I find a lot of what these young jazz groups are playing to be very regressive. I find more excitement in hip-hop!

I don't understand all the noise about somebody able to play at 25. Any damned fool can play good at 25. Having a career in your 20s or your 30s is not too challenging. Let's hear what they can play when they're 40! Let's see if they can *carry* the fucking horn when they're 88! My hero is Benny Carter.

MB: *Ron Wynn in the new All Music Guide To Jazz wrote a thumbnail sketch of you that says, "Phil Woods has fought the good fight since the '50s"—meaning for bebop and mainstream straightahead jazz. Do you feel like a standard bearer?*

PW: Yeah. I sure do. I've been a soldier. I don't think that I've changed the course of music as we know it. If I could've changed it, I would've done it years ago. What I am is a *good* player, and that's what my band is all about, playing a good repertoire, playing songs that don't get played enough or at all. We play everything from an old Benny Carter tune to George Wallington's "Godchild" or a new Jim McNeely piece. We cut a pretty wide stylistic swath. I think that's important. Yeah, I believe that I'm a standard bearer and always have been.

MB: *What keeps you fighting the good fight?*

PW: I guess it's all the good men who've

died for it. I'd never want to do anything that would embarrass Zoot Sims or Al Cohn or any of my friends who are no longer with us. *They* were the standard bearers. I inherited from them and I want to be true to them.

Jazz is a very strong art form—in spite of being "dead" every four years. Jazz is an international force. I can go anywhere in the world, and even if I don't speak a guy's language, if he plays a horn, we can get on the bandstand and communicate instantly. The jazz community is very small, but it's very much in touch with reality.

MB: *You've "fought the good fight" with the same band all these years. How have you endured together?*

PW: Bill Goodwin and Steve Gilmore and I have been together 24 years! They're dedicated players, and we've always tried to be fair. I don't keep all the money, and they need the music like I need the music. The common denominator is that we love playing what we play.

MB: *You've added another horn over the years, Tom Harrell and now Brian Lynch on trumpet, Hal Crook for a while on trombone. When there's another horn player, is the gig easier for you or a challenge?*

PW: I like having another horn. Then you have a *band*. A quartet limits your palette. When you've got two horns, it opens up the music to other possibilities. I can play clarinet, and we can get into some other colors, like Ellington. A quintet is ideal. It's the classic bebop lineup, trumpet and alto.

ALAN HANCOCK

MB: *Is it more satisfying for you having a band than being a soloist?*

PW: Absolutely. We're a repertory company. We work a lot on arrangements, getting as much sound as possible out of five guys. It's not just a couple horns with a back-up group. We spend an awful lot of time on details, the voicing of the bass, the piano, the lead, the fine points that the average person might not notice but we notice. We're always working on new material. This band chews up more material than any band that I've ever played with. I think that's part of the band's appeal.

MB: *It probably keeps the band fresh when you split from time to time into other projects, like this summer's Sax Machine with Charles McPherson, Gary Bartz, Jesse Davis and the Cyrus Chestnut Trio.*

PW: We recorded in Montreux, but I don't

know whether we'll get that out. We'll play the Blue Note next March. I hope with the same cats.

MB: *It's curious that throughout this conversation, you haven't ranted. There are all these stories about you being angry.*

PW: Yeah. I read that I do diatribes. It's just that I don't suffer fools gladly. I always try to be reasonable. I have a good life.

Having fun playing music is the name of the game for me. Don't get me wrong. I'm totally serious about music. I'm just bored with all this stuff about "America's art

form" and the agony of being an artist. Have a beer! Play a song!

MB: *One last question. I've always wondered, what's with the hat? Even when you're in a tuxedo, you have a "formal" hat.*

PW: Everyone is entitled to one affectation. I've always worn a cap. If you check out an old photo of the Quincy Jones band in the '50s, I'm wearing a cap. I've been wearing a cap for 40 years. It's pretty strange now in my band. I'm surrounded by four bald pates. I'm the only guy with any hair—and I'm wearing a hat. **DB**

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Jerry Gonzalez

Latin Jazz In The Trenches

By Larry Birnbaum

It's Monday, Latin night at New York's S.O.B.'s. But though the floor is crowded, no one dances. Instead, rubbernecks ring the stage and crane to get a better view of Jerry Gonzalez & The Fort Apache Band, arguably the world's premier Latin-jazz ensemble.

The sextet snaps smartly into the groove on pianist Larry Willis' composition "Isabel, The Liberator," with three horns stating the Oliver Nelson-like theme in glorious harmony. The Panama-hatted Gonzalez, a rumpled white shirt and baggy khakis draping his lanky frame, takes the first solo on flugelhorn, suggesting Kenny Dorham or the Miles Davis of *Kind Of Blue*. John Stubblefield's winding, loping tenor sax solo is strongly reminiscent of John Coltrane, as is Joe Ford's sharper, more angular alto spot. Willis plays a stomping bebop solo with a McCoy Tyner-ish modal edge, as Gonzalez's brother Andy lays down deep, throbbing vamps on an electric upright bass. Meanwhile, Jerry sits down behind a battered set of wooden congas, bobs his head and rocks his body as he laces Steve Berrios' furious trap-kit rhythms with Afro-Cuban accents.

The set nearly duplicates the track list of Fort Apache's latest album, *Fire Dance*, a live recording (made at Blues Alley in Washington, D.C.) that mostly reprises tunes the band has played over the past two decades. But if the material—a Thelonious Monk number set to a rumba beat, a bolero turned jazz ballad, a Miles-style original by Joe Ford—has a familiar ring, the performance is fresh and fiery, filled with the kind of urgent energy that made the '60s sounds of Davis and Coltrane so inspiring in the first place.

"We did a gig at the Iridium opposite [trumpeter] Randy Brecker," says Gonzalez, noting that Brecker's group included a former Miles Davis sideman, drummer Al Foster. "Al kept telling me he couldn't believe that Miles and me didn't ever meet, because if we did, we would have hit it off. Even Randy was saying, 'Yo, take it easy. It's hard to keep up with you cats.'"

The intensity of Fort Apache's music reflects the personalities and lifestyles of its members. "They live life with a go-for-broke abandon that ordinary mortals don't approximate," says Todd Barkan, who has produced Fort Apache's last four albums. "Jerry has a tendency to burn the candle at both ends, but that's part of what defines his character and makes him a special human being. As Dexter Gordon said of Thelonious Monk, 'He's not exactly the boy next door.'"

Gonzalez, 47, sits amid a dense clutter of conga drums, straw hats, cassettes and career memorabilia (photos, posters, Grammy nomination medals and plaques for winning Down Beat's Readers and Critics polls) in his dark, tiny walk-up studio apartment in the heart of Greenwich Village. "I was born and bred in New York," he says. "The music we play couldn't come from anywhere else, because the elements that are involved just





don't exist on the same levels that they do here.

"A lot of bands think that Latin jazz is just playing some blues on top of a mambo rhythm, but they can't play jazz. I mean, there isn't a Latin-jazz band out there that can swing. They've got no concept of what bebop is all about. The record companies are looking at these young boys, but they don't have the essence of the New York vibe. They lack the excitement of the past, because they never experienced it for themselves. But we've got a seasoned band of men who've been around and seen it all. We've been in the trenches and the foxholes for a long time. We're not kids just starting to play."

Barkan sees Fort Apache's maturity as "a sustained investigation of possibility" that he doesn't hear in a lot of other Latin jazz. "There's a spontaneity and dialog going on that is very rare," Barkan said. "They create a bitches brew of these disparate elements, and then they let the music take them as much as they take the music. It never happens exactly the same way twice. They can hear and react to each other with enough flexibility that the music really goes to surprising places."

Although they wore tuxedos at a Lincoln Center concert last year, the Apaches seem more comfortable on stage in Polo shirts and jeans. "The young cats are trying to keep a certain public image, wearing the suits and ties, and we seem to have the label of the outlaws, the renegades," says Gonzalez. "But jazz doesn't come from any clean-cut place, and whatever they're doing to try to remold the image of it is just for marketing. It doesn't mean that everybody who plays jazz is a junkie, but you have to live life to be able to play it. You have to know what the jazz life is."

If Fort Apache's three African-American members are at a disadvantage playing in clavé (the underlying 3-2 or 2-3 accent pattern of Afro-Cuban music), it doesn't show. "It took Larry Willis a while to get into the clavé and know how to use it as a device for rhythmic tension," says Gonzalez, "but he understands it now. Stubblefield is getting his clavé together, and Ford just has a natural clavé. I know jazz cats who think they know about the clavé, but they don't have a natural gyroscope for that. You've got to listen to a lot of guaguanco and rumba, a lot of drum stuff, to understand it. You've got to live that life, just like you'd live a jazz life."

Gonzalez lives both lives, with no lifestyle change in sight. For the future, he projects a second volume of *Fire Dance* and possible albums of boleros, Los Muñequitos tunes and Monk compositions. "There's a lot of things to be done that I know no one else can touch," he says. "If I'm able to continue recording, and we're able to survive on a

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELIZABETH GOLLOUBINSKY

Jerry Gonzalez: A Bronx Tale

Born in Mahattan 47 years ago, Jerry Gonzalez was raised in the Bronx. "I started playing congas because of Mongo Santamaria, who at that time was playing with Cal Tjader," he says. "I grew up with the mambo and all of that, but the stuff that really influenced me was Latin jazz. The music that came out of Tjader's band at that time is what set the direction of where I wanted to go, along with Tito Puente's *Top Percussion* album, Willie Bobo's albums and Eddie Palmieri's use of improvisation. Those are things that seeded it for me."

While playing congas in a Latin-jazz quintet he organized with younger brother Andy, Jerry studied classical trumpet at New York's High School of Music and Art, which Willis and Berrios had also attended. "The teachers there weren't interested in jazz," he says, "so I just kept practicing on my own."

Gonzalez then enrolled at the New York City College of Music, where Kenny Dorham was a classmate; a couple of years later he joined Dizzy's Gillespie's combo as a percussionist. After touring with Gillespie, Gonzalez began a four-year stint with Palmieri, during which he immersed himself in Afro-Cuban rhythms, especially the folkloric rumbas of drum-and-chant groups like Los Muñequitos de Matanzas. Then, together with Andy and timbales legend Manny Oquendo, he split with Palmieri to found the progressive salsa band Libre. "With Libre," he says, "whenever a jazz musician would sit in and take a solo, you'd know immediately. They'd be playing all the right notes, but the placement of the rhythm would be off, and Manny would turn around and go, 'There's a Chinaman in this group somewhere.'"

"At the same time, on the side, I was nurturing the jazz chops and the rumba stuff, putting it together and jamming in the basement of my mom's house in the South Bronx," he says. "We had Larry Young, Kenny Dorham, Rene McLean, Woody Shaw, Virgilio Marti, Patato, Chocolate Armenteros, Alfredo de la Fe, Alfredo Rodriguez, Eddy

Martinez, Wilfredo Velez, Barry Rogers, Jose Rodrigues.

Everybody came by my house." The basement sessions led to the formation of the Grupo Folklorico y Experimental Nuyorquino, a Cuban-oriented all-star band that recorded two highly influential albums before disbanding.

Gonzalez pursued his dream of a rumba-jazz fusion in jam sessions at the New Rican Village and Soundscape. In 1979 producer Kip Hanrahan offered Gonzalez a chance to record for his American Clavé label; the resulting album, *Ya Yo Me Curé*, featured 14 musicians in a heavily percussive set ranging from Afro-Cuban chants to Duke Ellington and Wayne Shorter standards. It also included a revolutionary treatment of Monk's "Evidence" based on Cuban pianist Frank Emilio's "Gandinga, Sandunga Y Mondongo." The album led to a European tour, prompting Gonzalez to christen his hitherto nameless ensemble after the beleaguered police station in the 1981 movie *Fort Apache, The Bronx*. The group recorded two live albums at European festivals, but the economics of touring with a large ensemble proved unworkable. For its next album, a Monk tribute recorded in New York, the band slimmed down to a quintet comprising the Gonzalez brothers, Willis, Berrios and tenor saxist Carter Jefferson. When saxophonist Joe Ford joined, the resulting sextet cut two more albums for Sunnyside. But in 1993, Jefferson died, and his place was taken by John Stubblefield. Since then the lineup has remained stable, and the group's three albums for Milestone have had the benefit of major-label distribution. —Larry Birnbaum



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level that's respectful, we're going to continue to put out new and fresh stuff."

In 1984, Gonzalez told *Down Beat*: "I have a strong faith that we can be successful and make a living and also be happy in a creative musical sense. This is what I want." Today, he says: "I'm on the way—haven't changed a bit of what we've been doing or the direction we've been in on any kind of commercial level. I do believe that the music is strong enough to transcend all of that." DB

EQUIPMENT

Jerry Gonzalez plays a Selmer Chorus trumpet, model 80-J, with a Vincent Bach #6C or Dennis Wick #4B mouthpiece. He plays a Yamaha flugelhorn with a Dennis Wick flugelhorn mouthpiece. He uses regular Harmon aluminum and copper mutes—"the cheapest ones," he says. "They get the best sound."

Gonzalez recently signed an endorsement contract with Latin Percussion, but as of this writing, he has yet to pick out his new equipment. Meanwhile, he continues to play the same set of handmade wooden congas he's used for 25 years. Gonzalez fashions his own drum heads from untrimmed cowhide squares, which he buys directly from LP owner Martin Cohen.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

FIRE DANCE—Milestone 9258
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Herb Ellis
Down-home
 Justice 1003

★★★½

Down-home treats us to the current work of guitarist Herb Ellis, one of the few contemporaries and disciples of Charlie Christian still picking. Ellis has been reaching his biggest audiences of late through the Oscar Peterson Trio CDs on Telarc. But here he slows down and indulges in a fairly laidback set of his own tunes (with the exception of "Blues In The Closet").

The CD opens with a pair of simple but breezy blues riffs ("I Know What I Want," "Conversations") in which Ellis digs in for the kind of intense and swinging jogs that mark his best work. But he never falls into the kind of tempo overdrive he is obliged to dish up with the Peterson trio. The closer, "Homecoming," is an equally engaging and propulsive concerto for mainstream guitar.

If everything in between were as good as these, we might have some five-star Ellis on our hands here. What we get instead is a pull back to safer and prettier grounds where the tempos range from ballad speed to Latin-lite. Ellis' melodies are attractive and eminently playable, especially "A Woman With Love In Her Eyes," which tips us to an Ellis penchant for Nashville country contours. Rebecca Franks has some appropriately mournful plunger trumpet here as well. But the best of the mid-section is "I'm A Lover," with its stylish, slow blues guitar and some punchy piano by Stefan Karlsson. Ellis and Karlsson, in fact, display an especially lively rapport on "Homecoming." And note Ellis' graceful pickup after Karlsson's solo on "Woman."

The hidden treasure here is Oscar Pettiford's "Blues In The Closet" (mistitled "Blue In The Closet" in the booklet), an unaccountably uncredited bonus cut accessible only by rewinding from track one to nearly four minutes below the start point. If you want to play this silly little game, though, you will be rewarded by the most energetic Ellis on the disc, plus some unidentified hot violin that turns out to be Johnny Frigo doing Stuff Smith and a Ray Brown bass line the size of a locomotive. Buddy DeFranco is the clarinetist.

—John McDonough

Down-home—*I Know What I Want; Conversations; Sunrise; Sunflower; I'm A Lover; A Woman With Love In Her Eyes; Charlotte; Down-home Blues; Bella; Homecoming;*

Blue (sic) In The Closet. (48:36)
Personnel—Ellis, guitar; Buddy DeFranco (11), clarinet; Stefan Karlsson, piano; Rebecca Coupe Franks (3, 4, 6, 9), trumpet; David Craig, Ray Brown (11), bass; Sebastian Whittaker, drums.



Donald Byrd
Electric Byrd
 Blue Note 36195

★★★★

Electric Byrd is a period piece. Or is it? Recorded in one day back in May 1970 at Rudy Van Gelder's famous New Jersey studio, trumpeter Donald Byrd's album does feature some echoplex, excessive reverb and ubiquitous wah-wah electric guitar. And electric keyboardist/arranger Duke Pearson's soft-sheen production enhances what is essentially a "music of mood," to quote Nat Hentoff's liner notes. But to listen to much of what passes for jazz blends these days, *Electric Byrd* sounds very contemporary.

Despite the electronics, fellow seekers Byrd and Pearson seem to be more interested in subtleties of rhythm, space and orchestral colors; and, except for the expendable but cute closer, "The Dude," there isn't a backbeat in sight. While "Estavanico" opens the album with Wally

Richardson's dreamy guitar musings on the theme, it soon takes shape around a gentle samba beat with Jerry Dodgion and Lew Tabackin's flutes and Pepper Adams' baritone sax stating the melody à la Gil Evans. Carter's bass and Mickey Roker's drums (his snare drum sounds fantastic) add just the right amount of punch. Byrd's trumpet eventually joins the flutes and bari only to move on into the album's first solo, his bleeding, bent horn lines lingering on notes reminiscent of Miles Davis, circa *Sketches Of Spain* and the then-current *Bitches Brew* (e.g., splashes of echoplex).

Laying on or behind the beats, Byrd's trumpet is a particularly good fit on "Essence," a tune built around a three-note vamp that eventually disappears into the body of the song's swinging one-chord saunter. Carter's contrary-motion bass lines are less pronounced here; instead, his walking notes become the anchor around which not only trumpet but flute and tenor saxophone solo as well. "Essence" deconstructs slightly at song's end without becoming a muddle, a recurring feature of *Electric Byrd* that demonstrates band cohesion and strong musicianship.

Primordial, fluid exchanges between Moreira, Byrd and Pearson lead into the peppy 6/4 groove of the percussionist's "Xibaba," a close cousin to Chick Corea's "Return To Forever." (Unfortunately, distortion mars Byrd trumpet playing here.) Byrd emerges from Hermeto Pascoal's feathery flute solo with Pearson's Fender Rhodes keeping pace, everything tethered to Carter's one-note bass line. Here again, the mood moves toward a dream state when the music almost stops two-thirds of the way through. This unexpected suspension adds an element of mystery.

Electric Byrd, part of Blue Note's Rare Groove series, can be heard in tandem with Byrd's *Fancy Free* and *Kofi*, albums that preceded and followed *Electric Byrd*, respectively. All three featured similar material and personnel in large-format settings. Heard today, *Electric Byrd* and *Kofi*, in particular, sound ambitious—and fresh.

—John Ephland

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
HERB ELLIS <i>Down-home</i>		★★★½	★★½	★★	★★★★½
DONALD BYRD <i>Electric Byrd</i>		★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
FRANK ZAPPA <i>Läther</i>		★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
FRED ANDERSON <i>Birdhouse</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★	★★★★½

Electric Byrd—*Estavanico; Essence; Xibaba; The Dude*. (43:51)

Personnel—Byrd, trumpet; Jerry Doogion, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Frank Foster, tenor saxophone, alto clarinet; Lew Tabackin, tenor saxophone, flute; Pepper Adams, baritone saxophone, clarinet; Bill Campbell, trombone; Hermeto Pascoal, flute (3); Duke Pearson, electric piano; Wally Richardson, guitar; Ron Carter, acoustic bass; Mickey Roker, drums; Airtio Moreira, percussion.



Frank Zappa

Läther

Rykodisc 10574/76

★★★★

Zappaphiles generally choose up sides over the material after 1975. I, for one, found his admittedly adolescent, scatological, puerile, parodic, satirical and sometimes undeniably idiotic lyrics to be a source of guilty pleasure. Indeed, I was with Zappa up to *Sheik Yerbouti*, at which point the silly verbal drivel seemed to outweigh the brilliant musical corners and I moved elsewhere for my dose of counterculture. Listening back decades later, some of that music still sounds fresh and interesting, while some has aged less gracefully.

Rykodisc has been reissuing the full Zappa catalog with religious fervor, and this three-disc set is the (leather) feather in their cap. The locus of a battle between Zappa and Warner Bros., *Läther* was originally designed to be a four-LP set of unprecedented proportions setting its sights on the full expanse of his musical purview. The label balked, forcing him to repackage the material (re-editing some of it in the process) as four single records: *Zappa In New York, Studio Tan, Sleep Dirt* and *Orchestral Favorites*. (All of these are already back in print individually on Ryko.) But the only way listeners could hear *Läther* as it was first conceived was courtesy of a 1977 broadcast that Zappa arranged—to spite the brothers Warner—on a local radio station, a broadcast that predictably led to bootleg versions.

Remastered from the original two-track tapes, recorded at various different sessions and live concerts in the mid-'70s, the music sounds absolutely fabulous here. In terms of substance, there's plenty of nutritious instrumental work to chew on, including, for the jazz-centric, "The Purple Lagoon," with Patrick O'Hearn's fusion bass and Terry Bozzio's 7/8 time underpinning strong blowing from the Brecker Brothers and Ronnie Cuber's bari. Compositionally, Zappa had no firm partisanship—he'd include bits and pieces of anything he could use. Take "Naval Aviation In Art?" with its 20th-century string ensemble

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meeting a quick percussion flourish (followed by a mocking voice: "God, that was really beautiful!"), or the set's title track, with its wah-wah guitar melody and intriguing changes. Zappa's intros and outros are loaded with luscious stuff. For instance, the lushly orchestral tune "Re-gyptian Strut" starts with a snippet of *musique concrete* (studio patter and other audio gunk transformed into fascinating sound), a genre more fully explored on "Duck Duck Goose."

"Revised Music For Guitar & Low Budget Orchestra" is one of Zappa's wonderful poly-stylistic contraptions (originally recorded by Jean-Luc Ponty on the violinist's 1970 album *King Kong*), with quickie-mart genre shifts and trend-setting guitar treatments; this leads directly to "RDNZL," a showcase for rewarding solos by Zappa and George Duke with plenty of Frank's patented xylophone (or marimba) unisons. I'd think, given its hip-hoppish beat and Curtis Mayfield chords, that "Duke Of Orchestral Prunes" could be a smash in some trip-hop camps, if it weren't for that insistent guitar solo. And as for his influence as a guitarist, listen to the super "The Ocean Is The Ultimate Solution," and then compare with some of Henry Kaiser's most adventurous work.

Läther also has some of Zappa's best-loved/most-despised songs and stories. The 20-minute epic "The Adventures Of Greggery Peccary" is both musically stunning and full of surreal humor, while the surf-on-speed of "Lemme Take You To The Beach" and Don Pardo's intro to "Punky's Whips" have lasting laughs. (Most guiltily, I admit I think "Broken Hearts Are For Assholes" is pretty nifty, too!) But the funnies elsewhere are less so—"Titties 'n Beer," "Tryin' To Grow A Chin" and especially the interminable narrative of "The Legend Of The Illinois Enema Bandit" all pale in light of Zappa's other, more interesting subversions of taste. That said, the balance falls decidedly in the positive, and it's a definite plus to hear *Läther* as a whole, warts and all.

—John Corbett

Läther—*Re-gyptian Strut*; *Naval Aviation In Art?*; *A Little Green Rosetta*; *Duck Duck Goose*; *Down In De Dew*; *For The Young Sophisticate*; *Tryin' To Grow A Chin*; *Broken Hearts Are For Assholes*; *The Legend Of The Illinois Enema Bandit*; *Lemme Take You To The Beach*; *Revised Music For Guitar & Low Budget Orchestra*; *RDNZL*; *Honey, Don't You Want A Man Like Me?*; *The Black Page #1*; *Big Leg Emma*; *Punky's Whips*; *Flambé*; *The Purple Lagoon*; *Pedro's Dowry*; *Läther*; *Spider Of Destiny*; *Duke Of Orchestral Prunes*; *Filthy Habits*; *Titties 'n Beer*; *The Ocean Is The Ultimate Solution*; *The Adventures Of Greggery Peccary*; *Regyptian Strut* (1993); *Leather Goods*; *Revenge Of The Knick Knack People*; *Time Is Money*. (57:41/57:19/58:24)

Personnel—Zappa, guitar, vocal, percussion (1, 27), bass (5), keyboards (23), synthesizer (25); Ray White, guitar, vocals (4, 7-9, 13-16, 18, 20, 24, 28); Davey Moire (10), Ricky Lancelotti (6), vocals; Eddie Jobson, violin, keyboards (4, 7-10, 13-16, 18, 20, 24, 28); George Duke (1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 17, 19, 26, 27), Andre Lewis (3), keyboards; Dave Samuels, vibes (9, 13-16, 18, 20, 24); James "Bird Legs" Youman (1, 12, 27, 30), Dave Parlato (2, 19, 22, 23), Roy Estrada (3), Patrick O'Hearn (4, 7-9, 13-18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28), Tom Fowler (6, 11, 26), Max Bennett (10), bass; Ruth Underwood, percussion, synthesizer (1, 9, 12-18, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30); Emil Richards (1), percussion; Chester Thompson (1, 11, 12, 17, 19, 26, 30), Terry Bozzio (2-4, 7-9, 13-16, 18-20, 22-24, 28), Jim Gordon (5), Ralph Humphrey (6), Paul Humphrey (10), drums; Chad Wackerman, drum overdubs (27); Don Pardo, narration (9, 16); brass sections, including Bruce Fowler, Randy Brecker, Tom Malone; reed sections, including Michael Brecker, Lou Marini, Ronnie Cuber; orchestra conducted by Michael Zearott (2, 19, 22).



Fred Anderson Birdhouse

Okka Disk 12007

★★

A brawny tone and whopping attack are the primary stylistic elements of venerable tenor player Anderson, who, pushing 70 and decidedly Chicagocentric, defines the term regional artist. Though pockets of improvisers around the world are familiar with his sound, he is nonetheless absent in several published indexes of jazz improvisers. The "Fred who?" vibe is understandable: Anderson has only recently begun to be recorded as a leader.

But while *Birdhouse* might go far toward characterizing the saxophonist's determination, it won't do much to help convince the uninitiated of his substance. Clunky and predictable, this



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animated blowing session winds up being a curiously humdrum listening experience.

Some of the record's pitfalls may be endemic to a career that has found virtue in an open-ended brand of experimentalism. In the mid-'60s, Anderson helped nurture the then-nascent Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. During that era a 15-minute piece of hard honking, such as *Birdhouse's* "Like Sonny," was a conventional method of expression. But operating sans schematic is a tack best suited to virtuosos. By the time "Like Sonny" concludes, the vibe of a football scrimmage has emerged. The band rumbles through open territory, continuously bouncing off each other. It may be an invigorating experience, but ultimately Anderson's band has a slackness that detracts from its overall vehemence. Chalk it up to a quest for immediacy, but realize that the lack of any formal arrangements breeds a lumpy set of mannerisms.

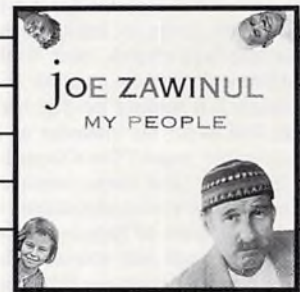
Somehow the unit transcends the triteness on the disc's only ballad, "Bernice." At 16:12 its rumination is extensive. But a coherence sustains itself throughout, even allowing an idiosyncrasy like Anderson's wayward tone to be blessing. Here the band squeezes some subtlety out of its collective approach. The hyper bash of drummer Hamid Drake is cooled off enough to reveal his creativity. Pianist Jim Baker and bassist Harrison Bankhead hitch up the harmonic wagons, generating an effective sense of unity even as they drift a bit.

"Waiting For MC," recorded at an earlier session and suffering from a low-fi demeanor, is a 14-minute duet between Drake and An-

derson. Its value is slight, not unlike the connection made between the pair. It makes you long for the rapport fostered by Anderson drummer Steve McCall on a previous Okka disc. "Waiting For MC" ultimately resubstantiates the unqualified respect that the musicians give to operating in the moment, but unintentionally illustrates the downside to such risk. To a degree it's characteristic of the whole program: born of an esthetic wherein jam-session exertion gets more props than compositional depth. A record like *Birdhouse* proves that it helps to have both on your side. —Jim Macnie

Birdhouse—*Birdhouse*; *Bernice*: Like Sonny; *Waiting For MC*. (65:05)

Personnel—Anderson, tenor saxophone; Jim Baker, piano; Harrison Bankhead, bass; Hamid Drake, drums.



Joe Zawinul

My People

Escapade 63651

★★★½

Stories Of The Danube

Philips 454 143

★★★

When Joe Zawinul refers to "my people," he's thinking globally. His freshest and most vital project in a decade, *My People* features world-spanning vocals by Salif Keita, Thania Sanchez and Tuvan throatsinger Bolot. Keita's passionate contribution to "Bimoya" recalls the Malian singer's excellent collaboration with Zawinul on Keita's *Amen* CD (Mango, 1991). "Mi Gente" showcases urgent vocals from Sanchez along with horns and a Latin percussion crew including Alex Acuña. These performances energize familiar rhythms and Zawinul trademarks, such as keyboards bass lines and Korg Pepe solos.

The revolving cast of players includes the current Zawinul Syndicate, along with important contributions from percussionists Arto Tunçboyacıyan and Trilok Gurtu. With or without electronic treatments, Zawinul's own vocals are not on a par with those of his guests. Tracks like Keita's "Waraya" would have benefited from a stronger vocal presence than Zawinul's at the center. Could the multi-cultural interactions of *My People* predict directions for a reunited Weather Report?

As far back as *The Rise & Fall Of The Third Stream* (1967), Zawinul has created collisions between European and non-European tradi-

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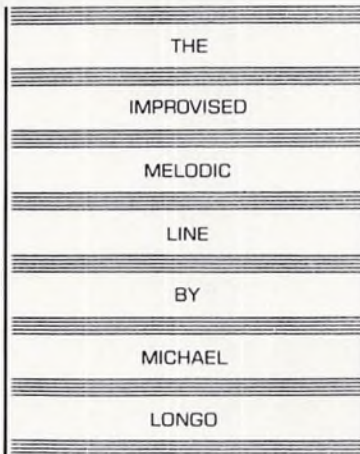
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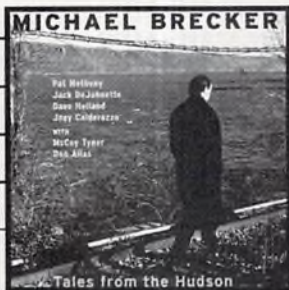
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tions. *Stories Of The Danube* carries this tactic to an extreme. Composed from hours of improvisations and scored for orchestra with improvising soloists, this ambitious, episodic work attempts to link the diverse cultures joined by the Danube River. (Yes, there's even a waltz.) Like a river, the piece wanders and turns, changing its speed and direction. There are few recurring themes or reference points to direct the listener or shape the composition. While recognizable melodies from Zawinul's past surface, including a transformed "Dr. Honoris Causa" and a somewhat muted "Unknown Soldier" (from Weather Report's *I Sing The Body Electric* [1971]), this is not a symphonic Weather Report album. It's ironic that two highlights of *Stories Of The Danube*, "Introduction—Gypsy" and "Introduction—Sultan" rely on dramatic improvisations by Amit Chatterjee and Burhan Öçal, and are less dependent on the orchestra. —Jon Andrews

Danube; Unknown Soldier; Introduction—Sultan; Finale. (63:27)
Personnel—Zawinul, keyboards, vocals; Amit Chatterjee, guitar, vocals (4); Burhan Öçal, oud, percussion, vocals (7); Arto Tunçboyacıyan, percussion, vocals (4, 7); Walter Grassmann, drums (4, 6, 7); members of the Czech State Philharmonic Orchestra Brno.



Michael Brecker

Tales From The Hudson
 Impulse! 191

★★★½

When fellow Philadelphians Michael Brecker and McCoy Tyner join forces, there's guaranteed potent chemistry. In the last few years since the two made their onstage debut at Yoshi's in Oakland, they've continued to build on their mutual admiration

and inspiration by gigging and recording together. Brecker's tenor sax presence on Tyner's last CD, *Infinity*, helped to make it the pianist's strongest studio outing in years. Tyner returns the favor on *Tales From The Hudson*, Brecker's first solo album in six years, with guest appearances on two tunes, both of which prove to be highlights.

As expected, ensemble interplay flourishes, especially on the soaring opener "Slings And Arrows," which is fueled by Brecker's high-octane blowing. The band swings with authority through Joey Calderazzo's gorgeous "Midnight Voyage," dips into the anguished zone for Brecker's aching "Naked Soul" and catches fire again for a dash through the leader's "Cabin Fever," where, inexplicably, only Brecker really breaks loose from a state of four-walled confinement with a solo burst of out playing.

But there are no setbacks with Tyner present. Pat Metheny's "Song For Bilbao" develops into one of those end-of-the-set barnburners as Tyner sprinkles his piano magic, Brecker loses himself in billows of tenor sax gusto, percussionist Don Alias sparks the rhythm and Metheny (recording with the pianist for the first time) delivers horn-like guitar synth licks. The same group also triumphs with Brecker's "African Skies," the best track of the disc. The piece swells with exhilarating performances by all bandmembers (Tyner twinkling the high notes and Brecker hollering on his sax), then ebbs in volume at its radiant close to a hush of gentle rhythms and quiet voicings. —Dan Ouellette

My People—Introduction; Waraya; Bimoya; You Want Some Tea Grandpa?; Slivovitz Trails; Ochy-Bala; Orient Express; Erdapfée Blues; Mi Gente; In An Island Way; Many Churches. (52:40)

Selected personnel—Zawinul, keyboards, Korg Pepe, keyboard bass, acoustic guitar, lead vocals; Salif Keita (3), Bolot (6), Thania Sanchez (9), lead vocals; Gary Poulson (2, 5, 9), Amit Chatterjee (5, 7, 9, 11), guitar; Bobby Malach, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 8, 10); Mike Mossman, trumpet, trombone (2, 3, 8, 10); Matthew Garrison, bass (2, 5, 8); Paco Sery (2, 3, 5), Tal Bergman (5, 11), drums, percussion; Arto Tunçboyacıyan, percussion, vocals (2, 4, 5, 7, 11); Trilok Gurtu (3, 7, 8), Alex Acuña (9), various percussion.

Stories Of The Danube—The Beginning; Mountain Waters; Empire; Introduction—Gypsy; Voice Of The



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Tales From The Hudson—*Slings And Arrows; Midnight Voyage; Song For Bilbao; Beau Rivage; African Skies; Introduction To Naked Soul; Naked Soul; Willie T; Cabin Fever.* (60:28)

Personnel—Brecker, tenor saxophone; Pat Metheny, guitar, synth guitar; Joey Calderazzo (1, 2, 4, 7-9), McCoy Tyner (3, 5), piano; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Don Alias, percussion (3, 5).



Ornette Coleman

Three Women (Sound Museum 1)

Harmolodic/Verve 531 657

★★★★★

Hidden Man (Sound Museum 2)

Harmolodic/Verve 531 914

★★★★★

First, an admission. I lost Ornette Coleman long ago, shortly after he went Prime Time and submerged his unprecedented expressive intelligence in a maelstrom of voices less compelling than his own. It was a substantial loss, because even longer ago I had worn out records like *At The Golden Circle* and *Ornette On Tenor*.

Therefore the personnel listing for these two new releases arrives as major news. Not only has Coleman returned to an acoustic context, he has included a piano—the instrument that he excised, to considerable controversy, 35 years ago. Another intriguing aspect of the two *Sound Museums* is that they contain different renditions of the same 13 compositions. It is a premise that assures special insights into Coleman's creative process. But the biggest news here is Ornette's strongest recorded work in years. These two albums contain continuously unexpected music of daring urgency and wholeness.

One of Coleman's "harmolodic" tenets is that "the concepts of space and time are not past or future but the present." But compare the two versions of "European Echoes" here to the one on the first *Golden Circle* album from 1965, and you find that the eternal harmolodic present has room for evolution. The earlier version is a stark sing-song. On both *Three Women* and *Hidden Man*, the piece is much deeper and denser, with Charnett Moffett's bass hammering rivets across the open spaces and Denardo Coleman's drums surging and breaking and receding while Ornette ranges wide and far. But most of the contrast comes

from the powerful presence of Geri Allen.

In Coleman's acoustic quartets from the '60s, Don Cherry's pocket trumpet spattered its staccato insights one note at a time. Allen's piano brings a new expansive fullness to Coleman's ensemble concept, which he describes as "four players ... expressing their opinions free of the leader." On "City Living" from *Three Women*, her splashes and leaps and thunderous clusters are her unfettered confirmations of Ornette's piercing alto saxophone "opinions." She is a tranquil counterpoise within the group turbulence of "Sound Museum" from *Hidden Man*. But she responds directly to Ornette on "Monsieur Allard" from *Three Women*, throwing huge shapes that incorporate his call. Coleman's players rarely "solo." Allen is instead an omnipresence, like the jagged poetry she cleaves on "What Reason," or her suspensions to establish "Biosphere" (both from *Three Women*).

Moffett and Denardo Coleman match this music like they were born in it, which they were. (Charnett is the son of Charles Moffett, who played drums in one of Coleman's most notable trios, and Denardo is Ornette's son.) Moffett's work here places him with the most important living bassists: He is awe-inspiring in his articulate ferocity. Denardo's cymbals are a momentum of their own bright plane to which the other players can attach themselves or not.

As for "the leader," he plays, in his 66th year, with astonishing freshness and passion. The voice, with its displaced accents and asymmetrical phrases, is unmistakably his, but now his sound on alto saxophone is the most plaintive and generous and naked of human cries. You feel that voice like a stab on the opening title track for both albums, and it transforms itself as the *Sound Museums* unfold. On "City Living" he talks in tongues, and on "What Reason" he painfully, beautifully traces a dirge. (Sometimes the voice briefly becomes a keen violin or a trumpet's heartfelt stammering.)

It is natural to talk about each member of the quartet in turn, yet these albums are group achievements. The fascination is to discover how disparate elements are made to cohere on the fly as the players listen to and inspire each other, and also to hear how each version of the 13 compositions is an independent collective act of the imagination. There is discipline in this music (only one piece is as long as five minutes), yet once a song begins it goes where it must, because Coleman has always known that jazz is free.

Record producer Joe Harley has said of Coleman's art, "It always takes a few minutes to acclimatize ... and then everything else sounds wrong for a while." That's how I know I've found Ornette Coleman again. I'm in that space where everything else sounds wrong.

—Thomas Conrad

Three Women—*Sound Museum; Monsieur Allard; City Living; What Reason; Home Grown; Stopwatch; Don't You Know By Now; P. P. (Piccolo Pesos); Women Of The Veil; Yesterday, Today, And Tomorrow; Biosphere; European Echoes; Mob Job; Macho Woman.* (55:16)

Personnel—Coleman, alto saxophone, violin, trumpet; Geri Allen, piano; Charnett Moffett, bass; Denardo Coleman, drums; Lauren Kinhan, Chris Walker, vocals (7).

Hidden Man—same as above except substitute *What A Friend We Have In Jesus (Variation)* for *Don't You Know By Now.* (50:49)

Personnel—same as above minus Lauren Kinhan, Chris Walker.

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Michael Wolff

2 AM

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★★★★

Rob Schneiderman

Keepin' In The Groove

Reservoir 144

★★★★½

For starkly contrasting approaches to the art of modern trio playing, investigate these two pianists' latest releases.

Wolff—the former musical director of the *Arsenio Hall Show* who also spent solid stints with saxophonists Sonny Rollins and Cannonball Adderley in the '70s—reveals a tinge of Herbie Hancock's influence as both piano stylist and composer, trading in dissonance here, eschewing it there.

Schneiderman is a longtime member of the group TanaReid—though, for the past two years he's been at U.C. Berkeley, pursuing a Ph.D. in mathematics. A Bud Powell disciple with touches of Kenny Barron, the pianist sticks mainly to beauteous, bebop-bent swing, but is not adverse to the now-and-then edgy statement.

Recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio the day after last January's horrendous blizzard, Schneiderman's near-flawless *Keepin'* runs much like a live set: The songs are heard in the order performed, there was no mixing, no fixing. The CD has a live, present sound and plenty of superlative, unfettered blowing. The program is mostly "repertoire": bop giant Powell's little-known title-track blues, Tadd Dameron's evergreen "On A Misty Night," Eddie Harris' dandy "Deacceleration," Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop." Working with his decidedly attuned partners Reid and Tana, the leader employs a gloriously round sound and lets his fertile imagination roam where it will. On the jaunty "Caravan," the speedy "Bebop," the medium-paced "Daahoud" and others, one phrase seems to suggest the next—it could be transposed up or down a step, or it could simply be a logical evolution of the precedent—and soon you have a long garland of tones that has unfolded organically. This makes for very satisfying listening. Reid pulls the strings hard, sending forth a large sound and Tana kicks and prods the proceedings with a salubrious jubilation.

Given his fondness for density, Wolff's performances of his originals (and Miles Davis'

"U'n'I") are refreshingly open and musical. And despite his virtuosity, there's often plenty of space between notes, and an appealing general absence of rush. Has he ever played as mellifluously? Even *Jumpstart*, an album released in 1994 that also sported McBride and Williams (one guesses that their tracks here are derived from that occasion) was more rambunctious.

The pianist's improvisations on "2 AM" and the calypso "Mama Tell Me" are chock full of sweet, pointed lines balanced by thick, sometimes abrasive chordal textures. "U'n'I" has a pleasing gait, while "Conversation" creeps along, yet is never languid. Wolff is backed just so by McBride and Williams—he supports,

nudges, but never overrides—and bassist Williams and Carrington. A natty McBride solo replete with riff ideas and neatly tied-off resolutions on "2 AM" is a standout. —Zan Stewart

2 AM—U'n'I; *The Conversation*; *Jamaican Turnaround*; *Mama Tell Me*; *2 AM*; *Nat Is Here*; *Poppy*; *Thanatos*; *The Mews*; *Nita*. (58:05)

Personnel—Wolff, piano; Christian McBride, John B. Williams (3, 4), bass; Tony Williams, Terri Lyne Carrington (3, 4), drums.

Keepin' In The Groove—*Keepin' In The Groove*; *Four*; *On A Misty Night*; *Tugboat*; *Daahoud*; *This Is For Albert*; *Caravan*; *Bebop*; *Deacceleration*. (60:43)

Personnel—Schneiderman, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Akira Tana, drums.

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Jimmy Scott

Heaven

Warner Bros. 46211

★★★★

Anyone who's caught Jimmy Scott perform knows how transfixing the experience is. A diminutive man with a female-sounding alto (the result of a hormonal deficiency disorder), Scott sings like no other vocalist in pop or jazz, employing idiosyncratic phrasing that's a striking mix of clipped syllables and quivering vibrato. While in his early 20s, he scored a hit, "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" with the Lionel Hampton Band in 1949. However, the singer was rarely heard from over the next 40 years until he staged a club comeback in the late '80s and then recorded two sublime albums of jazz-oriented tunes for Sire/Warner's *All The Way* in 1991 and *Dream* in 1994. Despite the major-label visibility, he's still an artist who enjoys only a cult following.

He deserves more recognition in lights of his latest release, *Heaven*, a compelling jazz-meets-gospel collection of hallowed traditional and atypical contemporary hymns delivered with consummate grace. Produced by Craig Street—who's proven his finger's on the pulse of new jazz vocalese by overseeing projects by Cassandra Wilson and Holly Cole—*Heaven* showcases Scott singing about faith, forgiveness and the longing for spiritual beauty. Most of the tunes move at a plodding pace as he measures each lyric with a blues-tinged melancholy. The effect is eerie yet intimate, unnerving yet soulful. Scott does apply a modest flame to a couple of tunes. He lopes through a rendition of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," drawing out the profundity of that hit song's lyrics. And on "What Are They Doing In Heaven Today," Scott unbridles his joy with a spirited scat.

Crucial to *Heaven's* success is pianist Jacky Terrasson, who arranged the numbers and leads the trio of percussionist Joseph Bonadio and bassist Hill Greene that commendably supports Scott. Terrasson's superb comping is consistently understated and often iridescent. He plays perfectly the role of contemplative church accompanist on the traditional "There's No Disappointment In Heaven" and delivers a stunning angular solo on the title track, the quirky Talking Heads number about a bar called Heaven that Scott stamps with his distinctive signature. Terrasson's on the mark with dissonant chords and floral twinklings on Scott's haunting trudge through the hymnal standard "Wayfarin' Strangers," which also

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starts Bonadio offering an array of apropos sound effects. —Dan Ouellette

Heaven—Heaven; All My Tears; Waylarin' Stranger; People Get Ready; He Looked Beyond My Faults (And Saw My Needs); When He Returns; What Are They Doing In Heaven Today; Just As I Am; There's No Disappointment In Heaven. (46:49)

Personnel—Scott, vocals; Jacky Terrasson, piano; Hilliard (Hill) Greene, bass; Joseph Bonadio, percussion.



Courtney Pine

Modern Day Jazz Stories

Antilles 529 028

★★½

Coming almost a decade after Pine's debut, *Modern Day* is a pastiche of jazz moods—Coltrane-influenced post-bop, vocals, funk, pop—given a hip-hop spin.

Albums such as this, which don't have the cumulative focus of a single style, rely on the power of the various tracks to persuade. And while Pine is an extremely capable instrumentalist and conceptualizer who can certainly offer shining stuff, too many of these numbers are undermined by esthetically lukewarm, even ill-chosen, passages that mar their luster.

At his best here, Pine employs a full, bold tone on tenor and a sweeter sound on soprano to give spine to such simply crafted but engaging Coltrane-flavored originals as "Unknown Warrior" and "Dah Blessing." The latter, underpinned by an easy, agreeable lope, finds Pine shifting from clusters of notes that seem to bounce off each other to sudden caterwauls as he mixes his vocabulary with his idol's.

But Pine can also fall victim to impersonal excess. On the funk-minded "Garden Of Eden," the leader issues non-stop streams of notes via circular breathing, unconsciously (it's presumed) recalling Kenny G's banal meanderings. And on the blisteringly paced "Creation Stopper," Pine lets all stops out; his shrieks and tangled lines are derivative, a retro look at Trane's most outside work rather than a personally identifiable statement.

D.J. Pogo's turntable scratches, while initially interesting, ultimately distract and annoy. Elsewhere, there are many small fires created by guest Cassandra Wilson, who is quite evocative on "Don't" and the driving "Rivers," her deep, almost-tenor voice riveting; pianist Geri Allen, whose solo on "Creation" finds her playing crisp, listenable ideas in a harmonically loose context; trumpeter Eddie Henderson's volatile exchanges with Pine on "Each One"; Ronnie Burrage's feisty drumming; and bassist

Charnett Moffett's thick-as-your-wrist tone.

—Zan Stewart

Modern Day Jazz Stories—Prelude—The Water Of Life; The 37th Chamber; Don't Xplain; Dah Blessing; In The Garden Of Eden (Thinking Inside Of You); Creation Stopper; Absolution; Each One (Must) Teach One; The Unknown Warrior (Song For My Forefathers); I've Known Rivers; Outro-Guiding Light. (59:09)

Personnel—Pine, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Geri Allen, acoustic piano, Hammond B-3 organ; Charnett Moffett, double-bass; Ronnie Burrage, drums, percussion; D.J. Pogo, turntables; Eddie Henderson, trumpet; Cassandra Wilson, voice (3, 10); Mark Whitfield, guitar.



Joshua Redman

Freedom In The Groove

Warner Bros. 46330

★★★★½

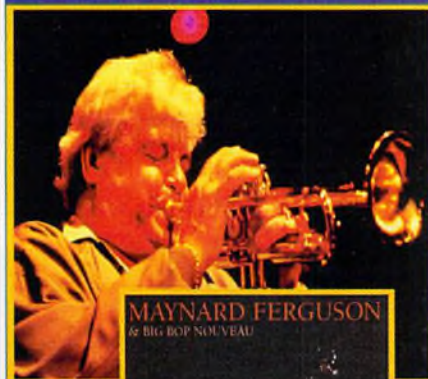
When Joshua Redman made his recording debut in 1993, he established himself as a young tenor player to be reckoned with. He had a gorgeous tone, good lines, solid time. Best of all, he had an imagination. *Freedom In The Groove*, a collection of Redman originals, is an exciting display of his development in every direction, particularly in that last respect.

As on Redman's last album, *Spirit Of The Moment*, he is joined by pianist Peter Martin, bassist Christopher Thomas and drummer Brian Blade, all players who are sympathetic to Redman. The addition of guitarist Peter Bernstein adds textural interest and gives Redman a good partner to trade lines with.

The styles are more varied on this release than on the more straight-ahead jazz of 1994's *MoodSwing*. *Freedom In The Groove* finds Redman dipping into gospel, funk, blues, bop and free-jazz, mixing things up so thoroughly and creatively that you don't think about the origins nearly as much as the personal, integrated results. Redman's compositions sound more assured than ever, and *Freedom* has the consistent quality of one person's voice, always in control. As in the most fluent bebop, relaxation rules, even through the densest lines.

Freedom marks Redman's debut on alto, which he only recently started playing. "Invocation" starts out with just Redman on alto, engineered to sound as resonant as if he were playing in an ancient cathedral. Joined by mysterious rustlings in the rhythm section, Redman makes the transition into a modal jazz feel, and then—smooth as can be—into swinging time. It's not just the elements, which owe something to Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane's esthetics, that make this such an

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impressive achievement. It's the remarkable ease and inventiveness with which Redman puts the pieces together.

As a soloist, no matter whether on soprano, alto or tenor, Redman comes up with great ideas, and his execution simply doesn't allow for stray notes. (It's as if Sonny Rollins had met a good editor.) There's a gospel feel to "When The Sun Comes Down," where Redman pours out fervent lines on tenor. "Dare I Ask?" summons memories of Jobim with its light, coy tenor lines and its slippery, sunny harmonies. "Pantomime" shows Redman able to communicate equally well on soprano, offering its simple repeated melody in an initially relaxed setting and developing power and thrust as he improvises on the tune.

Redman can also write and play longer, more complicated tunes. Just check out the swinging "Cat Battles," where Martin's pianism perfectly complements his wending, searching solos.

This disc finds a good balance between styles, and its variety means that it can appeal on a number of levels. Richie Cole could have a great time with the funky "Can't Dance." The title is ironic in that these rhythms could induce even the most rhythm-impaired to shuffle a few steps on the dance floor. And that's one of the best compliments you could pay Redman: From the minute he starts playing, he gets you under his spell. —*Elaine Guregian*

Freedom In The Groove—*Hide And Seek; One Shining*

Soul; Streams Of Consciousness; When The Sun Comes Down; Home Fries; Invocation; Dare I Ask?; Cat Battles; Pantomime; Can't Dance. (69:08)

Personnel—Redman, soprano saxophone (2, 9), alto saxophone (6, 10), tenor saxophone (1, 3-5, 7, 8); Peter Bernstein, guitar (1-5, 8); Peter Martin, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Brian Blade, drums.



Chico Freeman & Brainstorm

Sweet Explosion

In + Out 7010

★★½

Chico Freeman

Still Sensitive

India Navigation 1071

★★★★

Where's Chico Freeman been? Here are two recent communiqués from the saxophonist after a few years away from recording. *Sweet Explosion* records Freeman live (in 1990) with Brainstorm, his fusion quintet. Brainstorm plays a smooth, easygoing brand of melodic fusion that owes a clear debt to the classic Weather Report combination of saxophone, synthesizers and hand drums. As good-natured as "Afro Tang" and "Pacifica" may be, there would be little reason to listen without Freeman's surging horn lines, which are too often bathed in soft reverb. You find yourself waiting, through Delmar Brown's synth solos and forgettable vocals, for the saxophone to return. Freeman works with a pitchrider and "synthophone," and still redeems some predictable material, with "On The Nile" a highlight. *Sweet Explosion* often sounds generic, as though it could have been recorded at any time since 1980. The audience for Freeman's acoustic music won't find much substance here.

Still Sensitive, newly recorded for the revived India Navigation label, finds Freeman back on the true path. A sequel to his *Spirit Sensitive* release (India Navigation, 1979), this CD allows Freeman to explore and reconsider ballads in an intimate quartet format with strong support from bassist Cecil McBee and pianist John Hicks, regular contributors to early Freeman LPs like *Spirit Sensitive*. That album created a stir because Freeman, then an adventurous "young lion," demonstrated such a strong feel for traditional material.

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Boston Globe,
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With several recordings of standard repertoire now under his belt, Freeman no longer needs such grounding. As before, he's less interested in radical reworkings of the material or technical displays than in straightforward, evocative readings of songs like "Angel Eyes" or "Answer Me, My Love," where his tone is breathy and soulful, somewhat reminiscent of Ben Webster. The most interesting tracks often turn out to be less familiar songs, like "If I Should Lose You," which benefits from Hicks' elegant, tasteful piano intro. If one or two tracks sound perfunctory, the overall warmth and mood created by Freeman on tenor win you over.

—Jon Andrews

Sweet Explosion—*Peaceful Heart; Exotic Places; Afro Tang; My Heart; Pacifica I, II & III; Read The Signs; On The Nile.* (74:26)

Personnel—Freeman, tenor and soprano saxophones, synthophone, IVL pitchrider, backing vocals; Delmar Brown, piano, keyboards, vocals; Norman Hedman, percussion; Alex Blake, acoustic, electric basses; Tommy Campbell, drums; W. Leyn, backing vocals (6).

Still Sensitive—*Answer Me, My Love; Angel Eyes; When I Fall In Love; Nature Boy; If I Should Lose You; In Her Eyes; Time After Time; Someone To Watch Over Me; After The Rain; San Vicente.* (69:40)

Personnel—Freeman, tenor, soprano saxophones; John Hicks, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Winard Harper, drums.



Ray Barretto

My Summertime

Owl/Blue Note 35830

★★★★½

This album comes closer than any of Barretto's recent releases to recapturing the spirit of his glory days as a sideman on classic hard-bop sessions of the '50s and '60s. It's more than just a nostalgia trip, though, as he energizes the set with emotion as well as percussion, putting the heart back into heart-beat. Barretto's conga technique, shaped by his immersion in jazz before Afro-Cuban music, is utterly distinctive, but in his quirkily personal choice of material, cleverly arranged and solidly performed by his young band, he sculpts the sound as much with his head as his hands.

Bop standards like Duke Jordan's "No Hay Problema (No Problem)" and Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor" receive radiant readings, with trumpeter Michael Mossman and tenor saxophonist Adam Kolker providing lush, Messinger-ish harmonies and crisp, potent solos. Mossman's "Brother Ray," riding a riff similar to the one on Tito Puente's "Oye Como Va," locks into Barretto's favorite mid-tempo

groove, while pianist Hector Martignon's "Fait Accompli" leans toward fusion without the electronics. Ironically, the band sounds hippest on the sentimental standards "When You Wish Upon A Star" and "Autumn Leaves," thank to ingenious arrangements by Kolker and Mossman that distill corn into cognac.

Although he hardly solos, Barretto is a constant percussive presence, giving the music its thrust and bite. He's got his Latin rhythms down pat, but his priority is swing, and he plays the congas with a true jazz sensibility, never straightjacketing his bandmates. On "Summertime-(Guajira)," he explains in words that jazz and Cuban country music are "the

two worlds I love" before singing Gershwin's masterpiece in a shower-stall tenor, but only at the very tail end of the concluding "Worlds I Love" does he turn his salsa side fully loose.

—Larry Birnbaum

My Summertime—*No Hay Problema (No Problem); In Your Own Sweet Way; Brother Ray; When You Wish Upon A Star; Autumn Leaves; While My Lady Sleeps; Off Minor; Fait Accompli; Summertime-(Guajira); Worlds I Love.* (65:43)

Personnel—Barretto, congas, vocal (9); Hector Martignon, piano; Michael Philip Mossman, trumpet, trombone, flugelhorn; Adam Kolker, tenor and soprano saxophones; Jairo Moreno, electric and acoustic basses; Vince Chericco, drums; Mayra Casales, chekere (2, 4, 10); Alfredo "Tito" Gonzalez, guiro (3, 9).

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David S. Ware Quartet

Dao

Homestead 230

★★★★½

Entranced by agitation and smitten with the intriguing nature of textural extremism, Ware and his cohorts have been honing a severe group concept for years now. Oddly, its balance is delicate. Unable to withstand a hung jury, its race for inner unanimity is furious. Through records on Silkheart, DIW and Homestead, the band has continuously cultivated a fierce collective personality; its debt to the esthetic of might adopted by '60s hornsmen like Pharaoh and Ayler is as obvious as Wynton's is to Armstrong, Ellington and Miles. Around 1991, with the *Soul Gestures In Southern Blue* trilogy, Marsalis eclipsed his

status of echo expert by utterly personalizing his instrumental voice. With this extended suite built around the philosophical-religious codes from the overground, Ware does the same. *Dao* is a breakthrough record, the place where a previously cloudy point of view finally crystallizes.

The "untainted precognitive creativity" that is mentioned in Peter Margasak's liners may or may not be responsible for the articulate manner with which the foursome administers its uproar, but these players have never been captured on record with more persuasive eloquence. (Jim Anderson, who recorded the date, should take a bow, too.) The level of accord makes up for almost all of the music's flaws, like the predictable dynamic trajectory and the meager melodies. Instead, texture and interplay become paramount.

The first is most apparent in the sound of the leader's tenor. It's as sumptuous as it is abrasive. Listening over and over to Ware at top volume in a small room begets many a sensual high. He's more in tune with sonic minutia than Peter Brötzmann, and has more flat-out control than Charles Gayle. In his tone is a labyrinth of filigree that the band continuously acknowledges. Shipp's harmonic offerings and Dickey's quixotic moves prompt the leader into more drastic territory; Parker's incessant incantations enhance the blowouts more than ever before. Their surges and swells are rich, allowing us to hear design in the midst of abstraction. Though I'd have deep-sixed one of the two 15-plus-minute escapades, *Dao* flows like crazy.

—Jim Macnie

Dao—*Interdao; Motif Dao; Rhythm Dao; Tao Above Sky; Dao Forms; Dao Feel; Dao.* (72:47)
Personnel—Ware, tenor saxophone; William Parker, bass; Matthew Shipp, piano; Whit Dickey, drums.

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Jackie McLean

Hat Trick

Blue Note 38363

★★★★½

This is JayMac back on familiar Blue Note soil—standards, blues, ballads, his classic "Little Melonae"—and sounding swell, that tart, sharp tone identifiable from the first notes. Whatever intervening journeys he has taken, no matter how long teaching at the U. of Hartford has kept him away from his horn, the 64-year-old remains at heart a bebop dynamo, and he can always go home again.

McLean gets dandy support from Onishi, whose Monk-tinged-with-Bud Powell accompa-

niment both provides a hardy guide for the leader and sets him loose. She talks to him, he listens and vice versa. Reeves and Nash are right there with her, and under him.

On the opening "Melonae," McLean exhibits his continued passion for fluid, intricate lines that avoid clichés, that always surprise, that end with precise finishes, as neatly tied as sailors' knots. He colors his work with slowed, murmured growls, leaping arpeggios and blues gusto. Less-rapid numbers such as "Cottage" and "Left" allow more space for delicious double-times amidst general calm, while "Solar" is full of punch and pizzazz.

Onishi, featured on her "Sweet Georgia Brown"-based "Hat," takes advantage of her solo spots, issuing attractively wobbly lines on "Melonae," resonant parallel octaves on "Solar."

McLean calls this group his new quartet; it's one to watch for. —Zan Stewart

Hat Trick—Little Melonae; A Cottage For Sale; Solar; Bags' Groove; Will You Still Be Mine; Left Alone; Jackie's Hat; Sentimental Journey; Bluesnik. (53:57)
Personnel—McLean, alto saxophone; Junko Onishi, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

released as an accompaniment to Hadju's tome, features 15 tracks culled from the Verve/Polygram catalog by the author. He's shown wisdom and good musical sense in his choices, which range from the famed to the all-but-unknown, recorded between 1950 (Oscar Peterson's "After All") and 1991 (Joe Henderson's "Isfahan.")

The composer, who died in 1967, appears as pianist/arranger on two tracks, and simply as arranger on two others, and these are the disc's zenith. "Three And Six" is a little gem, a brief, tender statement from the glorious Johnny Hodges, with breathy underparts from Ben Webster, Lawrence Brown, Ray Nance and Roy Eldridge. Strayhorn backs Webster's voluminous warm breaths on "Chelsea Bridge," and adds splashes of colorful piano. Hodges has an encore on "Your Love Has Faded," another superbly poignant number from the composer who mastered aural melancholy.

Other fine moments: Dizzy Gillespie, his Harmon-mute sound like a hundred points of light, floats over Clare Fischer's vaporous woodwinds and brass on 1962's "Upper Manhattan Medical Group"; Ella Fitzgerald's touching "Something To Live For," backed by Duke; and Cecil Taylor's jaunty 1957 "Johnny Come Lately," evidencing the pianist's punchy sound à la Duke, and his hide-and-peek, reasonably (for him) tame lines.

Portrait Of A Silk Thread, recorded in 1994, offers eight Strayhorn premieres of pieces unearthed by musicologist Walter van de Leur. The ace orchestra, full of vital lesser knowns,

maintains an allegiance to the composer's intent.

Some of the works are stunningly modern, like the two-chord basic harmony and chromatic melody of "Le Sacre Supreme," which sounds almost 20 years ahead of its time. There are lovely ballads, too, like the comely "Blue Star" and the lament, "Love Has Passed Me By Again," where Van Rooijen distributes telling, hushed notes.

For simple pleasure, there's "Cashmere Cutie," a fox trot that glides gracefully.

—Zan Stewart

Lush Life: The Billy Strayhorn Songbook—Lush Life; Rain Check; Chelsea Bridge; Far-Eastern Weekend; After All; Something To Live For; Upper Manhattan Medical Group; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Johnny Come Lately; Your Love Has Faded; Satin Doll; Three And Six; Isfahan; Blood Count; Take The 'A' Train. (68:34)

Leader personnel—Sarah Vaughan (1); Art Farmer (2); Ben Webster (3); Louie Bellson (4); Oscar Peterson (5); Ella Fitzgerald with Duke Ellington (6); Dizzy Gillespie (7); Frank Morgan (8); Cecil Taylor (9); Johnny Hodges and Billy Strayhorn (10); Billy Eckstine (11); Johnny Hodges (12); Joe Henderson (13); Stan Getz (14); Jazz At The Philharmonic (15).

Portrait Of A Silk Thread: Newly Discovered Works Of Billy Strayhorn—Blue Star; Bagatelle; Love Has Passed Me By Again; Le Sacre Supreme; Portrait Of A Silk Thread; Tonk; Wounded Love; Cashmere Cutie; Lana Turner; Pentonsilic; Lament For An Orchid; The Hues. (68:04 minutes)

Personnel—Jerry Van Rooijen, leader; Ack Van Rooijen, flugelhorn; Mike Booth, Ruud Breuls, Erik Veldkamp, Peter Van Soest, trumpet; Martijn Sohler, Ilya Reijngoud, Hans-Jörg Vink, trombone; John Ruocco, clarinet; Albert Bellman, Hans Meijdam, Toon Roos, Ab Schaap, Nils Van Halften, saxophones; Rob Van Bavel, piano; Frans Van Der Hoeven, bass; Erik Ineke, drums.



Various Artists

Lush Life: The Billy Strayhorn Songbook
Verve 529 908

★★★★

The Dutch Jazz Orchestra

Portrait Of A Silk Thread: Newly Discovered Works Of Billy Strayhorn
Kokopelli 1310

★★★★

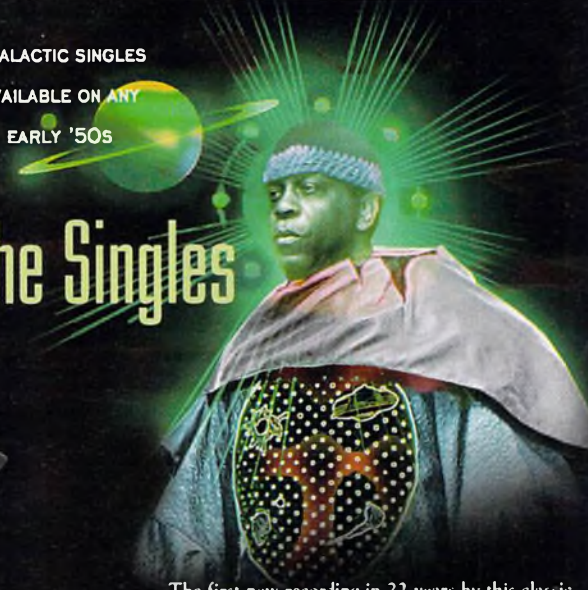

With *Lush Life*, David Hadju's bio of Strayhorn, getting more than a few splendid notices (see "Riffs" Sept. '96), there's a thirst for this unhailed genius' music. These two discs, each in their own way, offer a cool drink. An Ellingtonian by trade but at individual at heart, Strayhorn's music had Ducal ebullience, but never without his own voice.

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Dave McKenna & Joe Temperley

Sunbeam And Thundercloud
Concord Jazz 4703

★★★★½

Dave McKenna

The Piano Scene Of
Koch Jazz 7809

★★★★½

There are certain musicians whose distinguishing voices do not fully emerge below a certain tempo—or above it, for that matter. One of them is Dave McKenna, a pianist who has enjoyed a furiously loyal, cult-sized following since the '60s. His most striking signature has always been his way of unleashing long, single-note lines of astonishingly propulsive power locked in a rigorous, rhythmic formality of eighth notes, all the while balancing them with a relentless, rolling, left-handed bass line. The combination produces a linear groove that flies like an arrow.

The immaculate accuracy and precision of his attack make him all but unmistakable at middle and fast tempos. But on ballads, where these resources aren't in play, his effervescence and visibility are inclined to shrink.

When Epic Records recorded McKenna in the 1955 trio sessions that make up *The Piano Scene Of Dave McKenna*, no one made any mistake about this. He rarely falls below a steady trot, quick pieces like "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans" and "This Is The Moment" hitting you right between the eyes with the suddenness of their force and purity of their sheer swing. The rhythm section keeps time and never clutters his path with anything fancy. McKenna himself is perhaps the least fancy player in jazz. The fact that he almost never comps or chords with his left hand, for instance, instantly relieves his style of one of the most monumental clichés of modern piano playing. This neat little collection of 12 tunes and eight alternates may be the ultimate no-nonsense reissue of the year.

Sunbeam And Thundercloud finds McKenna in a dozen good duets with baritone Joe Temperley, whose rugged swing negotiates a fine line between Ellington's Harry Carney and Gerry Mulligan. He moves between ballads and jump tunes with an easy poise, and swings up a storm on "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me" throttled along by McKenna's

bass lines.

But more than half the CD is below McKenna's best cruising speeds, with a loping mid-tempo "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart" marking the point where the pianist comes out of the shadows. "I Got Rhythm" is the fastest piece (perhaps a tad too fast) and has some exciting ping-ponging between the two players. McKenna's economy and power have changed little over the years, and when he's at his best here, it's his best. All things considered, here is half a great McKenna album.

—John McDonough

Sunbeam And Thundercloud—*Once In A While; Sunbeam & Thundercloud; Sunset & The Mockingbird; Gone With The Wind; Black And Tan Fantasy; I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart; Lotus Blossom; Tricotism; Nightingale; I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me; I Wish I Knew; I Got Rhythm.* (63:45)

Personnel—McKenna, piano; Joe Temperley, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet (5), soprano saxophone (9).

The Piano Scene Of—*This Is The Moment; Silk Stockings; Way Down Yonder In New Orleans; Fools Rush In; Expense Account; Lazy; Splendid Splinter; Lickety Split; Along With Me; Secret Love; Da-Da-Da, Go Dig-It; I Should Care; Silk Stockings; Expense Account; Way Down Yonder In New Orleans; Lickety Split; Secret Love; Da-Da-Da, Go Dig-It; I Should Care.* (66:50)

Personnel—McKenna, piano; John Drew, bass; Osie Johnson, drums.



Freddy Cole

A Circle Of Love
Fantasy 9674

★★★★½

The Cole family has been one of the country's most gifted musical clans, most notably Nat "King" Cole. And because he made such a large and memorable impression, it is difficult to tell whether his style—and especially his voice—has been a blessing or curse for his younger brother, Freddy. By now such discussion must be old hat for Freddy because he endures and with his latest release seems to honor his famous sibling's legacy and to further impose his own considerable talents.

His treatment of Abbey Lincoln's "A Circle Of Love," the CD's title tune, is certainly an attempt toward the latter as he assumes an almost recitative delivery to the song's poetic feeling. Yes, that common Cole resonant voice prevails, but that is genetic and can't be helped. But, as he does on "You're Nice To Be Around," Cole appears to be working on an intimate, talkative approach while retaining a melodic texture.

Another element that may distance him

from his brother is the addition of such musicians as pianists Cyrus Chestnut and Larry Willis, vibist Joe Locke, saxophonist Don Braden and guitarist Jerry Byrd. Byrd has two sterling solos on "How Little We Know" and "Manha de Carnaval" that infect the mood and provide Cole with a jazz impetus that may be a metier more to his liking.

On "If I Had You" there is a gorgeous solo by Chestnut, with Cole following in a relaxed, swinging mode that's completely engrossing. He applies a similar smoothness to "All Too Soon" that is pushed to a jazzier plateau by Danny Moore's muted trumpet.

To show that he is comfortable with Nat's ghost, Cole does "How Little We Know" and "Never Let Me Go," and the familiar arrangement and phrasing are flawlessly duplicated. By this gesture Cole may be declaring, "Yes, I'm Nat's brother, and I'm proud of it." Perhaps, too, it is another way of asserting his own individuality and placing his special mark on the lovely ballads. —Herb Boyd

A Circle Of Love—You're Nice To Be Around; Manha de Carnaval; They Didn't Believe Me; How Little We Know; I Wonder Who My Daddy Is; A Circle Of Love; Never Let Me Go; All Too Soon; If I Had You; Angel Eyes; Temptation; September Morn. (63:33)

Personnel—Cole, vocals, piano; Cyrus Chestnut (1, 3, 9), Larry Willis (2, 6, 7, 10-12), piano; Jerry Byrd, guitar (2, 6, 8, 10, 11); Joe Locke, vibes (1); Mel Martin, alto flute (1); George Mraz (1, 3, 9), Tom Hubbard (2, 4, 6, 8, 10-12), bass; Steve Berrios, drums; Don Braden, soprano saxophone (6); Joe Ford, soprano saxophone (11); Danny Moore, trumpet (8, 10).



Jack Walrath

In Montana
Jazz Alliance 10030

★★★

Jack Walrath & The Masters Of Suspense

Hipgnosis
TCB 01062

★★

W it has been a key ingredient of Jack Walrath's music since the get-go, and for the most part the musical hokum generated by the trumpeter's ever-morphing Masters of Suspense unit has enhanced the level of frolic written into the music itself. But

on *Hipgnosis* the levity doesn't go far toward bolstering the meager jazz-rock created by the one-time Mingus sidemen. Here, the Suspense crew belies its name by offering predictable beats and harebrained lyrical content.

The trouble also lies in the instrumentation. A front line of Dave Fiuczynski's electric guitar and the leader's brass are so similar in tone, that the creation of a rich sound is an uphill battle. Driven by acoustic bass and drums, they try to put some meat on the bones of compositions that seem like exercises in genre writing. Some alluring passages blossom, however, like the first half of "Mingus' Piano," or the beginning of "Blues Sinastra." But the former ultimately dissolves into gib-

berish by Walrath spoken through a bullhorn (or some voice enhancer) and blended into Caribbean dance rhythms. Walrath needs a vocalist other than Dean Bowman to convey such blather. Though formally episodic (during "The Games," the pomo shape shifting comes fast and furious), the hourlong program ultimately turns tedious.

Recorded some 16 years ago, *In Montana* reveals that Walrath was spouting creative autonomy even before the Freeman claimed the Treasure State as a haven. It's ridiculous to compare it to *Hipgnosis*, but it's right to declare that its memorable heads, ensemble unity, esthetic reach and prog-swing make it a minor treat. Hard-bop is what it's being culled from,

Jeri Brown April in Paris

Jeri Brown's collaboration with the late Jimmy Rowles established her as one of the most innovative new voices - definitely one to watch. Now the exquisite "April In Paris" confirms her talent for the rendition of ballads. Here she is joined by legendary french bassist Pierre Michelot, pianist Alain Jean-Marie and drummer John Betsch. With her expressive four-octave range, Jeri Brown delivers pure vocal magic on this elegant session recorded in Paris. With stunning versions of "Once Upon A Summertime," Jimmy Rowles' "Morning Lovely" and a new composition written with Kenny Wheeler, this is one "April In Paris" you won't soon forget!

Also available: "A Timeless Place," with Jimmy Rowles (Just 70-Z) and "Fresh Start," with Cyrus Chestnut, Avery Sharpe & Walli Mannamund (Just 78-Z).



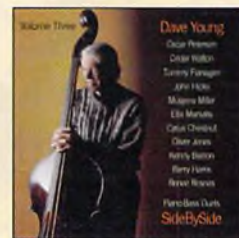
Kenny Wheeler & Paul Bley Touché

Sparks fly on this intriguing duo session, remarkably the first meeting of these two formidable improvisers. Kenny Wheeler, whose intense, highly personal style has secured his reputation as one of the greatest living trumpeters, is paired with Paul Bley, one of jazz's most consistently fascinating solo pianists. Thirteen all new original compositions are featured. Also available by Kenny Wheeler: "1976" (JAS 9506-2), by Paul Bley: "Sweet Time" [solo piano] (Just 56-Z).

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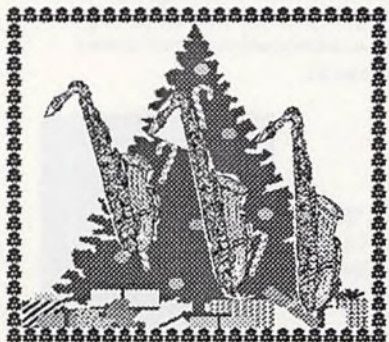
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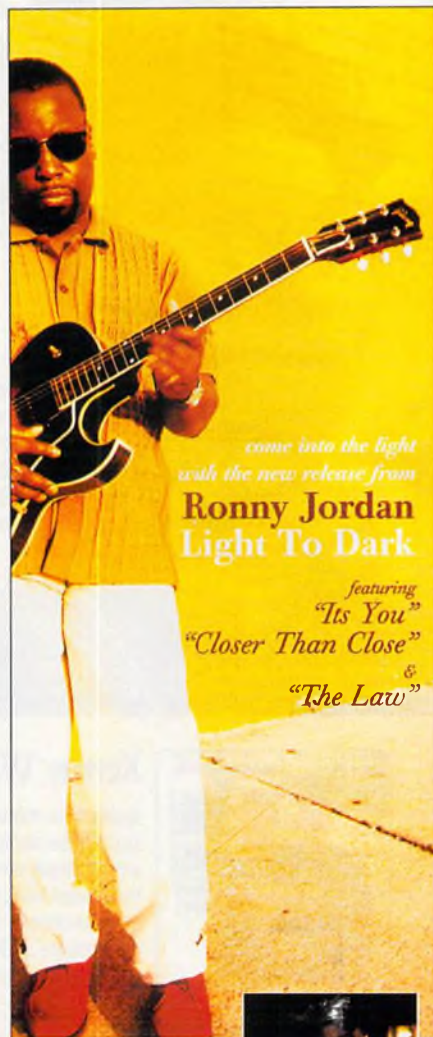
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but just having stepped out of Mingus' shadow at the time, the trumpeter must have realized that staying open to sundry rhythmic options is one way of cultivating surprise. "Grey And Blue" is teeming with diverse notions ultimately reigned in with savvy writing. David Murray's Octet was pushing a similar agenda during the era that *In Montana* was recorded. Walrath's disc is a bit straighter than that band's work. But it's a romp that reminds high-spiritedness is one of jazz's most attractive components. —Jim Macnie

In Montana—Lodgelian Mode; Ron's Blues; A Wolf Gang Of Arabia; What A Thing; Where Have I Been Here Before; Grey And Blue; Blues In The Guts; Montana; Remembrance; Seper B; A Nod Or A Wink; At Home In Rome; Reverend Red. (62:34)

Personnel—Walrath, trumpet and flugelhorn; Chuck Florence, tenor and soprano saxophones; Bob Nell, piano; Kelly Roberty, bass; Jim Honaker, drums.



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Hipgnosis—Hip Gnosis; Trane Trip; Philosopher Stone; Mingus Piano; Blues Sinistra; The Games; Baby Fat; Premature Optimism; Eclipse; Love Enough For Everybody. (64:07)

Personnel—Walrath, trumpet and flugelhorn, voice; Dean Bowman, voice; David Fuzczynski, guitar; Hill Green, acoustic bass; Cecil Brooks III, drums.



Howard Johnson & Gravity

Gravity!!!

Verve 531 021

★★★½

You won't hear a single sax or trumpet solo on this disc, and that's partly what makes it so interesting. Imagine this—a swinging combo fronted by tuba-meister Howard Johnson and as many as five supporting tubists. Between phat, full-bodied chords and surprisingly high-pitched bop runs, they set a new standard of oompah madness, if ever there was one.

Contrast keeps *Gravity!!!* from becoming just another textbook for tuba students. Shattering stereotypes, the various players showcase the myriad sounds a tuba can create, and they make it all fun. On Jackie McLean's "Appointment In Ghana," Johnson attacks his horn like a boxer in the ring, throwing blows with the sting of Lee Morgan. Elsewhere, notably on "Yesterdays," we hear Johnson's richly voiced arrangements. Hear them on a real stereo, not a boombox, or you'll miss many of the round textures that only a pack of tubae can unfurl.

The program notes are sketchy, so sometimes it's unclear which soloist is which. In any case, some brass-blowing beast engages in creative tuba-telling at the end of "Kelly Blue," first making the horn talk like Charlie Brown's teacher, then laying down a funky multiphonic groove, then pushing his range to the lowest extreme.

Not to detract from his tuba virtuosity, but the best track—and most memorable moment—comes when Johnson defies gravity and soars several octaves higher than usual, having set aside the tuba for another ax: a pennywhistle. After David Letterman's Paul Shaffer sets the mood with a brief piano intro, Johnson swoops into Coleridge Taylor Perkinson's "Way Cross Georgia." Johnson's no dilettante; his pennywhistle is a deft one that takes us not just 'cross Georgia, but toward tropical paradise. Then Dave Bargeron sculpts a euphonium solo remarkable not only for its upper-register chops, but also for a soulful feel and tasteful use of space.

If there's a bone to pick in this beefy medley, it could use fewer standards and more Johnson

originals like "Here Comes Sonny Man." Johnson's phrasing here speaks of maturity, something he has gained over the years performing with Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, Gil Evans and countless others. He has fielded tuba groups since 1968, in fact, but this is the first time a label has documented one of his own groups. Here's to Verve for letting Gravity loose, and may jazz tuba never be the butt of jokes again.

—John Janowiak

Gravity!!!—*Big Alice; Stolen Moments; 'Way 'Cross Georgia; Kelly Blue; Be No Evil; Yesterdays; Here Comes Sonny Man; Appointment In Ghana; 'Round Midnight; And Then Again.* (64:57)

Personnel—Johnson, F and BB⁺ tubas, pennywhistle; Dave Bargeron, tubas and euphonium; Bob Stewart (1, 4-6), Earl McIntyre (1-6, 8), Joe Daley (1-6, 8), Tom Malone (2), Carl Kleinstaubler (2-4, 7, 8), Marcus Rojas (2, 4, 7, 8), Nedra Johnson (5), tubas; Raymond Chew (1, 4, 6), Paul Shaffer (3, 5, 7), James Williams (2, 8), piano; Bob Cranshaw, (1, 4-6), Melissa Slocum (2, 3, 7, 8), bass; Kenwood Dennard (1, 4-6), Kenny Washington (2, 3, 7, 8), drums; George Wadenius, (3, 7) guitar; Victor See Yuen (3, 7, 8), percussion.



Jimmy Giuffre/Paul Bley/Steve Swallow

Conversations With A Goose
Soul Note 121258

★★★★

Jimmy Giuffre

The Train And The River
Candid 71011

★★★½

This very trio with Giuffre, Bley and Swallow pioneered a gloriously open form of contrapuntal improvisation in the '50s; their records *Thesis, Fusion* and *Free Fall* stand as three of the great documents of early free music. In 1989, the trio began recording together again. And now, closing in on 40 years after they started (!), the threesome continues to push ahead, having jettisoned compositions altogether.

Giuffre has pared down his larger '70s instrumental battery to clarinet and a little soprano. His brief, searching solo piece "Echo Through The Canyon" offers a straight shot of the 72-year-old master's inimitable sound, and his lucid, ambling linearity is evident on the title cut. As ever, Bley plays the piano with a mercurial touch and frightening intuition for where the others will go. The major difference

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between the group's current sound and its earlier identity is Swallow's choice to go electric. I find electric bass in jazz as difficult to swallow as most flutes and harps, but Swallow is extremely tasteful and musical, favoring the upper, guitarish register. Listen on "Watchin' The River" as the old friends strike up a vibrant dialogue, starting staccato, leading seamlessly to flow, Bley and Giuffre breaking out for shared high trills—very intimate and absolutely cohesive.

Giuffre's interest in water and vehicles of motion seems to have long informed his choice in titles—"The Train And The River" was part of the repertoire of his late-'50s trio with Bob Brookmeyer and Jim Hall, and he revived the bluesy tune on this 1975 date for Candid. Indeed, this trio explores music that moves along by different means, from the introspective inner travel of "Tibetan Sun" and "Om" to the forward-pushing additive meter of "Celebration." The way his bass is mic'ed, Tokunaga's upright sounds more electric than Swallow's—what he's doing is alright, but his barren tone detracts. Kaye's drums, bells, small percussion and xylophone are appropriately supportive, and Giuffre utilizes bigger instrumentation to advantage: He plays the theme to the title cut on both clarinet and tenor and utilizes the flute and bass flute with insight.

It's undeniable that Giuffre should have received more acclaim for his velvet revolution, a gentle revolt that lives on in his excellent contemporary work. —John Corbett

Conversations With A Goose—*Conversations With A Goose; The Flock Is In; Echo Through The Canyon; Three Ducks; Watchin' The River; Campfire; Cobra; Among The High Rocks; White Peaks; Calls In The Night; Lonely Days; Jungle Critters; Restless.* (58:46)

Personnel—Giuffre, clarinet, soprano saxophone; Bley, piano; Swallow, electric bass.

The Train And The River—*The Train And The River; Elephant; Tibetan Sun; The Listening; River Chant; The Tide Is In; Tree People; Om; Celebration.* (43:56)

Personnel—Giuffre, clarinet, flute, bass flute, tenor sax; Kiyoshi Tokunaga, bass; Randy Kaye, percussion.



Bob Mintzer

Big Band Trane

dmp 515

★★★★

The title is a bit misleading: It might be expected that most, if not all, of these pieces would be by, or associated with, John Coltrane. Nope. Only "Supreme" and "Impressions" were written by him, while his version of "Things" brought him widespread recognition. The others, the leader assures us in the notes, were inspired by the momentous jazz figure.

Fair enough, because, ultimately, it's a damn good album. Mintzer is a clear-headed, crafty writer with a strong sense of both form and melody. As fans of his previous dmp big band albums like *Departure* and *Only In New York* know, he, like Tadd Dameron or Toshiko Akiyoshi, composes parts that are interesting both to listen to, and to play.

"Impressions" exemplifies Mintzer's style. The trombones state eight bars of the theme, then Markowitz plays a tasty chorus with the trio, then the brass offer the complete melody, with asides from the saxes. Next comes a one-chorus sax soli that introduces Yellin's keep-you-thinking, percolating solo. As an interlude between the altoist and trumpeter Mossman, the band plays an eight-bar phrase four times, ignoring the half-step ascent that occurs at bar 17. Mossman wails, too.

"Supreme" is loaded with fine stuff. A wild, uncredited trombone solo sets the stage for Malach's potent essay. Here, despite band parts all over the place, including one soft segment where the background floats ingeniously, the feeling of Trane's quartet is palpable. "Things," with writing that reflects Dolphy's scores to "Africa/Brass," is another highlight.

The non-Trane tunes are solid, too. "Run For Your Life" is a "Rhythm" changes dash where Brecker quadruple tongues (!!) at will, and cooks, too. "One People," which boasts an angular line delivered over a crisp yet subtle Riley rock beat, also includes scored sections arriving and departing like vague klaxon horns heard in a dream.

This sharp-sounding package is enhanced by several natty Mintzer solos. —Zan Stewart

Big Band Trane—*My Favorite Things; A Love Supreme; Acknowledgement; Run For Your Life; Prayer For Peace; One People; Impressions; Spirits; Ancestors; Softly Spoken; Trane's Blues.* (65:51)

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Personnel—Mintzer, Lawrence Feldman, Bob Malach, Roger Rosenberg, Peter Yellin, saxophones; Randy Brecker, Laurie Frink, Tony Kadleck, Bob Millikan, Michael Mossman, Marvin Stamm, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mike Davis, Keith O'Quinn, Larry Farrell, Dave Taylor, trombone; Phil Markowitz, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; John Riley, drums.



Paul Plimley

Everything In Stages
Songlines 1503

★★★★½

Paul Plimley Trio

Density Of The Lovestruck Demons
Music & Arts 906

★★★★

A mover-and-shaker on the Vancouver creative music scene for more than 20 years, pianist Paul Plimley has risen from regional to international significance in the last half-decade, releasing great records with longterm partner bassist Lisle Ellis and multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, and now *Density Of The Lovestruck Demons* with Ellis and Californian drummer Donald Robinson. *Everything In Stages*, Plimley's first outing alone, should also make him a sought-after soloist on the world stage.

It's clear that Plimley's first love is Cecil Taylor. Like Taylor, the Canadian chooses the unique extra low-end of a Bösendorfer, which resounds with metal pulses on "Your Head Is Now A Drum," a spacious, delicate exposure of the piano's deep interior regions. His keen sense of shifting tonal loci is influenced in no small measure by Taylor, too. But on "Influx," his lyrical runs might call to mind Abdullah Ibrahim or even Hampton Hawes, and "Select Magical Skyfall" consists of pretty, consonant harmonies with cyclical patterns emphasizing rhythmic independence in each hand. Made up of lots of very different, short pieces, *Everything In Stages* is an imaginatively sequenced, wonderfully dynamic program. (For the computer-friendly, it's also got an award-winning interactive CD-ROM component.)

On *Lovestruck Demons*, Ellis and Robinson help derail the normal piano-trio sound, not so much by demolishing it, but by gently tugging at the idiom's foundations. Plimley builds up a repetitive, funky riff on "In The Hand Of The

Land," then cleverly disintegrates it. Where free-jazz drummers have the rep of being reckless bashers, Robinson is cut from subtler cloth—his brushes on "Trio Tuning" and light touch on Ornette Coleman's "W.R.U." and Plimley's "Miles" are masterfully understated, with gentle swing that betrays early studies with Kenny Clarke. Ellis' fat, gut string tone is always a pleasure. On both this and Plimley's solo disc, there's no flailing: It's disciplined music, in search of a well-considered form of freedom.

—John Corbett

Everything In Stages—Your Head Is Now A Drum; Shards From A Future Melancholy; Influx; Waitress Laughter;

Kicks 'n Boogie; Select Magical Skyfall; Digital Bracelets; Castanets For Pinocchio; Touch Of Orisas; Evolution Of Adjacent Moments; What Time Is It?; And The Answer Is ...; Parachute Four; Where When Is What; You And Her; Sirens For Ulysses; Phase Two, Further In The Drum. (63:08)

Personnel—Plimley, piano, various percussion, voice, conch.

Density Of The Lovestruck Demons—M Tracks (Part One); W.R.U.; In The Hand Of The Land, Eyes To The Sky; Miles; Ritual Advance; M Tracks (Part Two); Trio Tuning/I Heard It Over The Radio/The Reception/I Heard It Over The Radio; Density Of The Lovestruck Demons; Fast-Action Potion. (60:49)

Personnel—Plimley, piano; Lisle Ellis, bass; Donald Robinson, drums.

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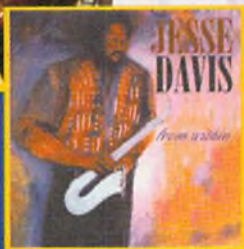
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JAZZ

Saxophonic Strutters

by Jim Macnie

Arguably jazz's most iconic instrument, the following discs all unite two or more saxophonists. Their individual personalities help shed light on the ever-in-flux relationship connecting all reed players.

ROVA: *Ptow!!* (Victo; 55:37; ★★★½) *Ptow!!* shows an astonishing state of accord. Some tracks are frothy and expressionistic, like alto player Steve Adams' salute to Shostakovich. Some are contemplative and wry like Larry Ochs' title cut. There are compositional trap doors and elaborate esoterica with ROVA; but there's also music from artists who want to communicate with those who lack a musical slide rule. *Ptow!!* is a spot where both reach over the fence and make amends. A triumph of versatility.

Ray Brown Trio: *Some Of My Best Friends Are ... The Sax Players* (Telarc 8388; 72:29; ★★★★★) Warm sound, wise improvs, and a refreshingly deep sense of swing—that's what bassist Brown brings to a session that touts finesse at virtually every phrase. Half of those invited are masters; Stanley Turrentine, Benny Carter and Joe Lovano each demonstrate as much certitude as they do creativity. Hear Carter hang behind the opening lick of "Love Walked In," or Turrentine make nuances sound emphatic on "Port Of Rico." Josh Redman's "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" solo, brimming with cleverness and sophistication, is headier than several parts of his new disc. And Jesse Davis' "These Foolish Things" is a study in winning dynamics that breeds bonhomie.

SaxEmble (Warner Bros. 46181; 50:14; ★★★★★) Graying squawker Frank Lowe's answer to the WSQ has a lot of jukebox power in it. Credit the hot-sauce mentality of the tenor player's Memphis roots, or simply realize that the band is without a sophisticated arranger. Whichever, academia is left behind on this loosey-goosey date; these horns are blown by guys who played hooky from school. James Carter's star power and lung capacity generates the most agitated exclamation. His trip through Ayler's "Ghosts" is nothing but bluster, an Irish wake held by Southern holy rollers. Bari player Michael Marcus handles the bottom, sometimes a tad too stiffly. Altoist Cassius Richmond darts and weaves, often a tad too anonymously. Several tunes are trite, riff-driven ditties. But from "Hard Times" to "Lowe Down & Blue," the charm of the woolly treatment remains obvious.

Cinghiale: *Hoofprints Of The Snorting Swine* (Eight Day Music 80001; 65:10; ★★★½) Don't be fooled by the macho title—there's plenty of lyricism in the music of this two-man team from Chicago. Mars Williams and Ken Vandermark push the envelope, they also lick the stamp. There's a sense of duty or



Stanley Turrentine: emphatic nuances

completeness that makes this far-flung foray come off as a thoughtful excursion. Which doesn't mean that they're as articulate in the duo setting as, say, Steve Lacy and Evan Parker. Lesser players, Williams and Vandermark lack the control, chops and conception it takes to make timbral minutia and stormy overtones as meaningful as they need to be in order to convince that chasing another cat's tail is a relevant venture.

Billy Tipton Memorial Quartet: *Box* (New World 80495; 54:56; ★★★★★) The jukebox reference is useful again, but in a different way. This is a record about melodies. Four sax players and a trap drummer—all women from the Northwest with prog and punk credentials—contour their approach(es) to suit each track. The moments of vivid interplay are many, be they ersatz NOIA rhythms driving an overtly sunny theme ("Soleil") or a take on Hendrix's "Manic Depression" that strikingly stresses laconia over rage. Amy Denio and Jessica Lurie compose most of the fare, and each realizes that planning is crucial. Their unique sense of tweakery makes the already-discrete tunes even more singular.

Various Artists: *The Colossal Saxophone Sessions* (Evidence 22130; 65:42/67:30; ★★★★★) A dabbler's fiesta, this multi-reedist outing is revealing because it unites at least two saxists—John Zorn and David Murray—with key stylistic forbears. For Zorn it's Lee Konitz, with Murray it's Archie Shepp (both also on the dates). The alto players harmonize and swoop on "Devil's Island," showing just how sweet a puckish nature can be. The tenors chomp down a bit more, as similarities in meaty tone and aggressive action come to the fore. Before the 20 tracks conclude, the jamming has revealed how the myriad variations on the bop language have more similarities than differences. The rhythm section—drummer Joe Chambers, bassist Rufus Reid and pianist George Cables, generally moving as one—remain basically the same. The 12 saxophonists (playing in different combinations and also including Frank Morgan, Dave Liebman and Steve Coleman) manage to go their own way and still stay joined at the hip. **DB**

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BEYOND

Cuban Sugar

by Larry Birnbaum

Despite a tightening of the U.S. embargo, more Cuban music has been entering this country than at any time since the Castro revolution. Cuba's battered economy has obliged its musicians to reach out to international markets, while the commercial salsa scene in New York and Puerto Rico has gone stale. In short, we've got the money, and they've got the beat.

Various Artists: Havana Club (Milan Latino/BMG 35768; 69:37; ★★★★★) Salsa music is essentially Cuban, but Cubans scorned the "imperialist" S-word until lately. Now the hottest singer in Havana calls himself El Medico de la Salsa ("Dr. Salsa"), and his music, like that of current hitmakers Charanga Habanera, NG La Banda and Issac Delgado, clearly reflects the brash, jazzy influence of Latin New York, complete with occasional raps. Even pioneering groups like Irakere and Los Van Van (also represented here) have abandoned their homegrown explorations to jump on the salsa bandwagon. But the singing is heartier, the arrangements craftier, and the rhythms snappier and more intricate. No mild peppers—this is authentic hot sauce.

Gema Y Pável: Cosa De Broma (Nubenegra/Intuition 3181; 49:13; ★★★★★½) Side-stepping salsa to create their own progressive fusion, Gema Corredera and Pável Urkiza work jazz, rock and Brazilian music into Cuba's folk-pop troubadour tradition. Layering Beatles or Manhattan Transfer harmonies over airily textured, oddly syncopated guitar, horn, synthesizer and percussion arrangements, they transform Cuban compositions from the '30s through the '70s—plus the Chico Buarque-Tom Jobim bossa "Te Amo" and the Lennon-McCartney classic "Girl"—into music that's wholly contemporary, deeply sophisticated and utterly unique.

Armando Garzón: Boleros (Corason/Rounder 131; 54:52; ★★★★★½) Like salsa, the bolero is a Cuban product that's been internationalized. Having faded since its popular heyday in the '30s and '40s, the bolero was recently revived by Mexican pop idol Luis Miguel, but Armando Garzón brings it back home to it—and his—birthplace in Santiago de Cuba, singing melancholy vintage boleros to the springy, folksy beat of the Quinteto Oriente's guitars and bongos. No ordinary bolerista, Garzón adds elements of medieval classicism, pop, rock and jazz. Crooning in a stratospheric tenor like a Cuban Jimmy Scott, he conveys sentiment without sentimentality.

Marcelino Guerra: Rapindey (Nubenegra/Intuition 3185; 49:46; ★★★★★) Guerra, nicknamed Rapindey, died on June 30 in Spain, where he recorded this album in 1995



Armando Garzón: bringing it all back home

with a group of veteran Cuban musicians. In the '30s he sang harmony in Havana with such legendary groups as the Septeto Nacional; a decade later he sang lead in New York with Machito's Afro-Cubans. He's mainly renowned, however, as a composer of popular hits, many of which, like "Pare Cochero" (the opening track here), remain firmly embedded in the salsa repertoire. But this is no salsa album; instead, Guerra's tunes are presented in an old-fashioned guitar-combo setting, with Rapindey singing some numbers in a bluff tenor while leaving the boleros to divas Jacqueline Catellanos and Omara Portuondo.

Maraca Y Otra Visión: Havana Calling (Qbadisc 9023; 63:28; ★★★) Many Cuban jazzers develop solid chops, but their feel for the idiom is often shaky. Orlando "Maraca" Valle played flute with Irakere for six years, and with his own group he flaunts the same sort of flashy virtuosity that Irakere was known for. The band tosses off tricky runs with the split-second precision of a jet-fighter exhibition team, but there's no sense of swing, and the material itself sounds like smooth jazz on speed. The percussion section, however, is incredible, especially when joined by guests like conguero Miguel "Angá" Díaz and the rumba troupe Los Muñequitos de Matanzas.

Jane Bunnett And The Cuban Piano Masters (World Pacific 32695; 62:09; ★★★★★½) Canadian reedist Bunnett has carved out a career niche as a sort of musical liaison between Cuba and the West. Here she performs a drumless set of Cuban chamber jazz with pianists José Maria Vitier and Frank Emilio Flynn and bassist Carlitos del Puerto. Vitier, best known for his film scores, displays a heavily classical technique but manages to swing on "Caleidoscopio." Emilio, the septuagenarian dean of Cuban jazz pianists, is more impressive, particularly on his solo feature "Midnight Theme," where he radiates tenderness while maintaining rhythmic tension. The weakest link is Bunnett, who plays soprano sax and flute with little originality or depth. **DB**

REISSUES



Paul Chambers: ahead of the pack

Deep In The Groove

by John Corbett

Speaking as an avid used-record hunter, I can report that Blue Note's ongoing "Connoisseur Series"—initiated last year and now numbering more than 40 releases—and "Rare Groove Series" are having the intended impact on the rare Blue Note market. But just as collectors are beginning to anticipate lower prices as these hard-to-find goodies become more widely available, some of the CD releases have already gone out of print. So it's worth snapping them up as quickly as they appear.

Dizzy Reece: *Blues In Trinity* (Blue Note 32093; 47:27; ★★★★★) West-Indian born British resident Reece was joined on this great 1958 date by some compatriot Brits (Terry Shannon, piano; Lloyd Thompson, bass; Tubby Hayes, tenor sax), the indefatigable Art Taylor on drums, and on a couple of tracks, fellow trumpeter Donald Byrd. It's one of the few Blue Notes not recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's Hackensack studio, but still has "the sound." Aside from Reece's delightful trumpet work, Hayes is the highlight—riveting, booting tenor sax solos, including a feature version of "'Round Midnight." Thompson plays against the

blinding tempo set by A.T. on the title track, one of six wonderful Reece originals.

Grant Green: *Sunday Mornin'* (52434; 47:11; ★★★★★); ***Solid*** (33580; 47:37; ★★★★★½); ***Green Street*** (32088; 54:15; ★★★★★) Some of the most sought-after Blue Notes have been by the great Green, who should definitely grace any guitar-friendly collection with his clean tone and driving phraseology. Like the best organists, Green's feet were firmly planted in the blues, as heard on the stripped-down '61 trio date *Green Street*. Green steps out relatively long-form in this setting (tunes averaging seven-and-a-half minutes), sharing hits with drummer Dave Bailey and riding repeated riffs like a guitar-slinging Jimmy Smith. Green's inventiveness allows him to run endless variations over blues changes without tedium. Recorded in the same year as *Sunday Mornin'*, he succeeds where many others fail in combining guitar-lead with support piano, beautifully played by Kenny Drew. Along with Green's own blues "Freedom March" and the gospel-ish title cut, the St. Louisian includes a stirring "God Bless The Child," a swingin' take on Miles Davis' "So What" (Green's solo shows he kept a keen ear on modal jazz) and a slick version of the movie theme to "Exodus." Although most of

the Connoisseur Series consists of records released when they were recorded, Green's '64 sextet session *Solid* only came out after he died in 1979. It's a classic, also featuring piano—McCoy Tyner, playing very sympathetically—with Elvin Jones on drums, Bob Cranshaw on acoustic bass, Joe Henderson on tenor and James Spaulding on alto. In this serious school of jazz-fish, Green holds his own swimmingly, staying true to his signature lines on George Russell's "Ezz-thetic" and the Sonny Rollins title track. Most exciting, though, is Jones, whose boundless bounce foreshadows his work with Green in Larry Young's superb group later that same year.

Paul Chambers Quintet (52441; 41:36; ★★★★★½); **Jack Wilson: *Something Personal*** (52436; 45:02; ★★★★★½); **Andrew Hill: *Smoke Stack*** (32097; 61:03; ★★★★★) Three records that place bass in the foreground, albeit in different ways. *Paul Chambers Quintet* is from '57, and it literally puts Mr. P.C. ahead of the pack, letting him take prominent solos on two Benny Golson tunes (plus one alternate take), a couple of standards and two originals. Otherwise, a typical first-class Blue Note hard-bop blowing session, here, with Cliff Jordan on tenor, Byrd on bright trumpet, and Chambers settling into some mean swing with Elvin and the ever-tasteful Tommy Flanagan. Pianist Jack Wilson's *Something Personal*, from '66, is really a rare bird (I'd never seen it before), and while all

its ingredients aren't as choice as *Chambers*, it's an oddball item still worth a listen. First off, there's the bass element: On the first two tracks (including Ornette Coleman's "The Sphinx"), Charles Williams Jr.'s bass is augmented by Ray Brown on cello (!), while Brown takes over with his gargantuan upright sound on the remaining five tracks, the final of which is a never-released version of Coltrane's "Mr. Day." Add to this a young Roy Ayers on vibes, as well as Wilson's lean piano, and you've got a very interesting hornless record—Varney Barlow's sometimes sluggish drumwork is the only component that doesn't shine. From the neat to the sublime: Hill's *Smoke Stack*, too, has no horns; instead, it brilliantly combines bassists Richard Davis and Eddie Khan with Roy Haynes on drums and the leader on piano. Sometimes the basses intertwine, while on "Wailing Wall," Khan walks behind and Davis plays off-pitch arco up front. Seamlessly linking freeplay with elegant composed material (all of it by Hill), and with its unheard of instrumentation, this record still sounds adventurous today (so in '63 it must have flipped some wigs). This version has four alternate takes, though everything here has been available on Mosaic's Blue Note Hill box.

John Patton: *Memphis To New York Spirit* (35221; 58:03: ★★★); Ronnie Foster: *Two-Headed Freap* (32082; 37:22: ★★½) Two different perspectives on funky organ music. On these solid '69/'70 sessions (available for the first time on this Rare Groove release), Patton comes out of a more chicken-shack B-3 bag, with James "Blood" Ulmer on guitar, Marvin Cabell on reeds and Leroy Williams on drums, and on two tracks the tenor sax of George Coleman in place of Ulmer; the guitarist's interesting tune "Bloodyun" and Patton's slowed-down version of the Meters' "Cissy Strut" are both worthy. Foster's got a fusiony kind of funk: sweeter organ sound, smooth mix, burbling electric bass, extra percussion, zany guitar effects. Like most of the Rare Grooves, there are dud tracks (e.g., a miserable take of Al Green's "Let's Stay Together"), but then there's some groovy goodness on this 1972 record to make up for that, too.

Lonnie Smith: *Move Your Hand* (31249; 49:53: ★★★★★) Smith's live 1969 date, with Rudy Jones on tenor and Ronnie Cuber on baritone sax, is super on all counts. It swings its hard funk (drummer Sylvester Goshay doing a dead-on Idris Muhammed), and the leader's organ sound injects hot jets of soul into the proceedings. The group even manages to make funk-up versions of the Coasters' "Charlie Brown" and Donovan's "Sunshine Superman" into hip-shakin' hits. **DB**

Flashback: Bassist Bob Cranshaw remembers his sessions with Grant Green fondly: "We hit some good grooves—Grant was a groovy guitarist. And the time feel on the record was really good, we knew we'd lock up and have a good time. I consider myself a

rhythm bass player. Elvin, 'cause he plays so differently, I tried just to lay the time down. I didn't listen to any of Coltrane's bassists to change my approach—I did what I do."

Cranshaw recalls the requirements of recording in Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio: "You couldn't put things on the piano or touch anything, and he wore these white gloves because he'd paid a lot of money for this equipment. Grant was having drug problems, and Rudy made sure we didn't burn his piano, which wasn't impossible. That's how he maintained his studio. I'd heed his warnings. I wanted to be his friend, so I was conscious of

what he wanted. Rudy is the Blue Note sound. He was the extension, the other part of the group."

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- Dizzy Reece: *Blues In Trinity*: ★★★½ (8/20/59 issue)
- Grant Green: *Green Street*: ★★★★★ (12/7/61)
- Grant Green: *Solid*: ★★★★★ (11/80)
- Jack Wilson: *Something Personal*: ★★★★★ (11/16/67)
- Andrew Hill: *Smoke Stack*: ★★★ (11/17/66)

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BLINDFOLD TEST

DECEMBER 1996

Howard Johnson

by Dan Ouellette

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.

While Howard Johnson plays a number of different instruments, ranging from pennywhistle to baritone saxophone, he's best known as a tuba maestro. He got his first big break in 1964 with Charles Mingus and later went on to enjoy a long musical association with Gil Evans.

He also toured with Dizzy Gillespie, Abdullah Ibrahim and George Gruntz, recorded with McCoy Tyner's Big Band and Carla Bley; and founded and led the Saturday Night Live Band. Even though he formed his jazz tuba choir Gravity in 1968, the band didn't make its recording debut until earlier this year when Verve released *Gravity!!!* (see p. 74).

This Blindfold Test was not only Johnson's first but also the first to be given in front of an audience. It took place at this year's Monterey Jazz Festival before a crowd of 150 people in the Dizzy's Den nightclub. Even though he agreed in advance to give the selections a star rating, Johnson declined to do so at the onset of the Blindfold Test.

Fletcher Henderson

"Copenhagen" (from *The Fletcher Henderson Story*, Columbia/Legacy, rec. 1924/1994) various artists, including Henderson, piano; Louis Armstrong, trumpet; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Don Redman, alto saxophone, clarinet; Bob Escudero, tuba.

I really like this piece a lot because of the arranging and the improvising. It works better than most attempts at this kind of jazz arrangement today. It reminds me of old Fletcher Henderson material. The trumpeter is a strong soloist, and it didn't bother me that the alto sax player was so out of tune. When you're listening to these musicians, you're hearing a big commitment to what they're playing. This is just as exciting as anything Coltrane ever did. These guys are that far into it.

It's difficult trying to guess who the tuba player is. The music sounds old enough to make me think it could be Billy Taylor. Whoever it is he's mostly just doing his job here holding the rhythm section together with the drums and banjo.

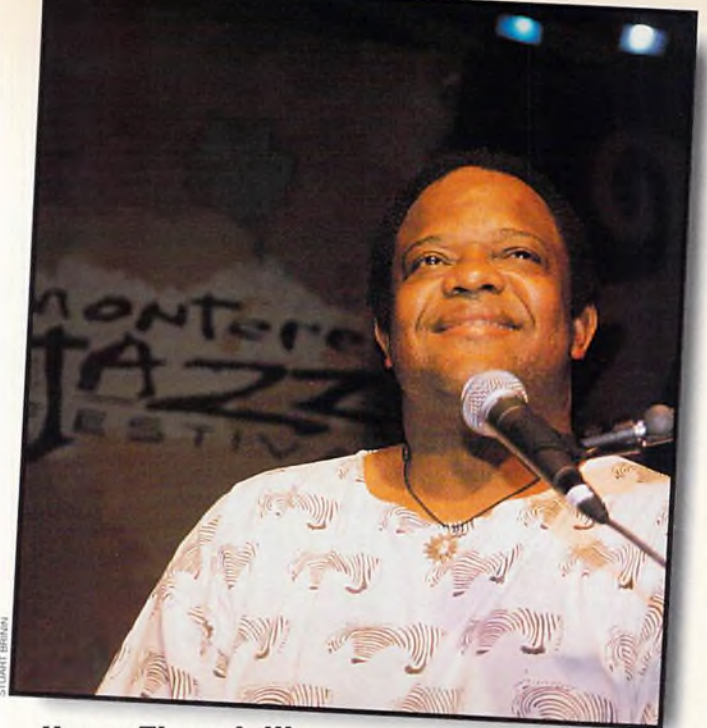
Weird Nightmare: Meditations On Mingus

"Meditations On Integration" (from *Weird Nightmare: Meditations On Mingus*, Columbia, 1992) Henry Threadgill, flute; Bill Frisell, guitar; Marc Ribot, banjo; Art Baron, tuba; Francis Thumm, Harmonic Canon; Greg Cohen, bass; Michael Blair, drums; Don Alias, percussion.

I know this composition very well. It's Mingus' "Meditations." He made various recordings of this tune that were meditations on different subjects. In fact, when I was in his band, he'd call it a meditation on whatever he was feeling or thinking about on a given night. This version was arranged by someone who didn't know the music very well. I haven't heard it, but I understand Hal Willner produced a Mingus tribute record with arrangements by different musicians. I'm thinking this could be from that album because it has the feel of someone given six days to come up with an arrangement of a Mingus number. The arrangement also makes it difficult for me to tell who the tuba player is. I think Mingus' music deserves much better care than this.

DO: This was Willner's *Weird Nightmare with Henry Threadgill* arranging.

Henry didn't get it. In most cases, he knows what to do, but he missed on this one. "Meditations" doesn't go quite like this.



Henry Threadgill

"Try Some Ammonia" (from *Too Much Sugar For A Dime*, Axiom, 1993) Threadgill, alto saxophone; Mark Taylor, french horn; Brandon Ross, Masujaa, electric guitars; Dorian L. Parreott II, Edwin Rodriguez, Marcus Rojas, tubas; Gene Lake, drums.

This is the proof of my last statement that Henry Threadgill usually knows what to do. This is a wonderful piece. I'd guess this is his Very Very Circus band with Marcus Rojas. It sounds like there are two and maybe three tubas, although I could be hearing Mark Taylor's french horn. This must be one of Henry's own compositions. He knows it better than he knew Mingus. I love the drums on this piece. For me, the tuba players could have used a little more freedom than Henry has given them. I understand there's a composition involved and Henry pretty much tells the band how he wants it played. But the music would have benefited from allowing the tuba players more free rein. Then again, if a tuba player like Bob Stewart was playing, the piece would have had a stronger sound and been covered better.

Bob Stewart

"Law Years" (from *Then & Now*, Postcards, 1996) Stewart, tuba; Jerome Harris, guitar; Graham Haynes, cornet; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone; Buddy Williams, drums.

That's nobody but Bob Stewart. This is a good example of the zone that Bob owns. When you think of someone playing warm, you also think of tender. But with Bob, the warm is dangerously warm and really full. I haven't heard anyone play like that on a tuba. I'm not sure who else is playing with Bob, but I like this number a whole lot. It's a composition everyone in the band understood. They didn't feel like they had to play it in lock step. It's performed with spontaneity and emotion, which enhanced my experience as a listener. That's what bandleaders are supposed to do: give you something evocative to feel.

Plunge

"394" (from *Falling With Grace*, Accurate, 1995) Mark McGrain, trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Avishai Cohen, bass; Bob Moses, drums.

I'm totally mystified by who this is. It reminds me of those guys from Chicago, 8 Bold Souls with Aaron Dodd on tuba. But I can't zero in on who this might be. I like the piece even though I don't care for the multiphonics the tuba player plays at the beginning. But overall, I thought the piece hung together and was performed quite well. The tuba player's groove was really something. Tuba players today are learning that to play tuba bass they don't have to sound like a string bass. This guy definitely works the groove as a tuba thing.

DB