

Winners—The 45th Annual Critics Poll

# DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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Can. \$4.30



**Tony Williams**  
**Enters Hall of Fame**

**Kenny Wheeler**

**A Great Day In Chicago**

**BLINDFOLD TEST:**  
**Don Was**

# the man

**SONNY ROLLINS**  
**JAZZ ARTIST OF THE YEAR**





## 16 45th Annual Down Beat International Critics Poll

### ■ *Sonny Rollins:* *Jazz Artist of the Year*

By Bob Belden

Cover photograph of Sonny Rollins by John Abbott.

### ■ *Tony Williams:* *Hall of Fame*

By Robin Tolleson

Cover photograph of Tony Williams courtesy of Blue Note Records.

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By John Ephland

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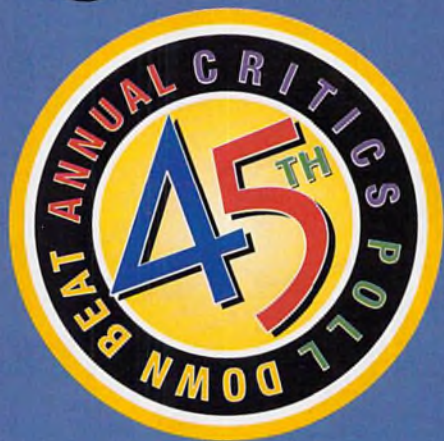


### Kurt Elling

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# the steady



Clockwise from top left: Cassandra Wilson, Frank Ku-umba Lacy, Steve Turre, Wynton Marsalis, Regina Carter, Bill Stewart, Phil Woods and James Carter.

If jazz polls tell us anything, it's that artists don't live and die on each album they make. Rather, their popularity and esteem is based on the breadth of their recorded work and the consistency of their live performances. Indeed, a true jazz musician's career is a long-tone exercise, a steady burn.

In our annual International Critics Poll, many of jazz's established talents appropriately return as winners year after year: J.J. Johnson, Milt Jackson, Jimmy Smith, Stephane Grappelli, Joe Williams, to name a handful. But in

addition to these strongholds, each poll yields plenty of switcheroos that reflect the ever-shifting tides of critical opinion. This year, Kenny Barron edges Keith Jarrett on piano, Joe Zawinul trades places with Herbie Hancock for the electric piano title, Tito Puente regains command over percussion and John Scofield nudges out Bill Frisell on guitar.

The poll caps a banner year for Wynton Marsalis, re-elected king of not only the trumpet hill, but composer as well. While critical reviews of his Pulitzer-winning *Blood On The Fields*

tour have varied from mediocre to masterpiece, it's by far the most ambitious work of his career and, as one critic put it, the most memorable jazz event of the year.

Conch player Steve Turre scores a victory in the miscellaneous instrument category, out-tooting harmonica Toots Thielemans, a longtime Critics Poll winner. It's been years since the trombonist first answered the call of the seashell, but Turre has brought it to a new level, composing music for a conch choir of sorts and taking the show on the road. "When I first heard



# Andy Bourn



Steve play the shells on David Sanborn's TV show *Night Music*, I liked the fact that it was a fresh idea, but I found it to be a bit gimmicky. He's mastered it now, and he's really making beautiful, meaningful music with them," said one critic who caught Turre's conch-augmented ensemble at this year's IAJE convention in Chicago.

In the categories of "talent deserving wider recognition," or TDWR for short, upsets abound. The Amsterdam-based Clusone Trio makes its mark as acoustic jazz group, young gun Antonio Hart cuts through on alto

saxophone, Ronnie Cuber stakes out a high post in the re-shuffled baritone sax ranks, Brad Mehldau outshines aspiring piano lions, Bill Stewart rolls into high drum gear, Marilyn Mazur makes a dent in percussion and Kurt Elling rants his way to male vocalist recognition. And for the second year in a row, an aggressive James Carter tops TDWR in both tenor saxophone and Jazz Artist of the Year categories.

Special congratulations to "The Man," Sonny Rollins, who wins Jazz Artist and Tenor Saxophonist of the Year (Page 18). With the exception of

some fine reissues on several labels (and a few extra gray hairs), this year has been business as usual for the tenorman who got his nickname, "Newk," because he resembled Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Don Newcombe. Among critics, though, there's been a growing consensus that he is our greatest living jazz artist.

The highest honor of all goes to none other than the late Tony Williams (Page 26), whom we welcome into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Our only regret is that he not with us to enjoy it. Drum roll, please ... —Ed Enright



# Jazz Artist of the Year

**T**here's something about the sax that makes it impossible for saxmen to resist talkin' shop in each other's company. When a colossus like Sonny Rollins starts talkin', be ready for an in-depth lesson in saxology.

Rollins, who won double honors in the 1997 Down Beat Critics Poll as Jazz Artist of the Year *and* Tenor Saxophonist of the Year, took up the horn 50 years ago. He's had a long career, as both a sideman and leader, onstage and in the recording studio—a portion of which is represented on two new boxed sets, the two-CD *Silver City* (Milestone) and the six-CD *The Complete Recordings* (RCA, due out this summer). Needless to say, what he knows about the instrument could overload the "hang" capacity of even the hippest sax enthusiast.

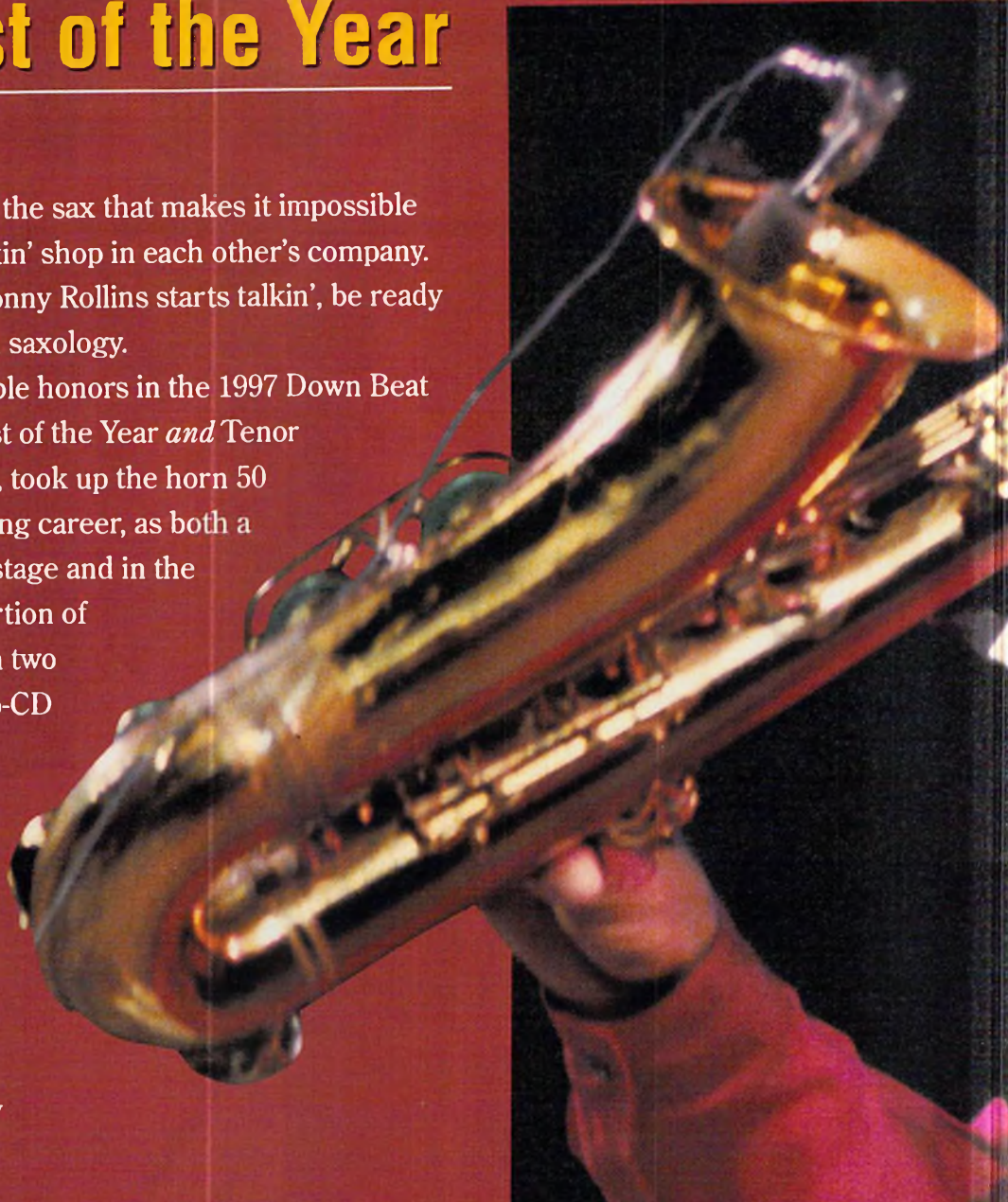
We caught up with Rollins in May as he was preparing to embark on a two-week tour of Japan. What follows is an edited version of what happens when two sax lovers *really* start talking.

**BOB BELDEN:** *What drew you to the saxophone?*

**SONNY ROLLINS:** What really drew me to the instrument was Louis Jordan.

**BB:** *The Tympany Five?*

**SR:** Right, the Tympany Five. I used to hear them over my at uncle's house. He had a lot of these old country blues records. I didn't like all of them, but the Louis Jordan Tympany Five, that really struck a chord in me. So that began my liking the saxophone. I had always liked music, but I think that kind of made me conscious of that particular instrument, and I began to recognize that instrument when I heard it. I would have been around six to seven years old.



## JAZZ ARTIST OF THE YEAR

- 95 Sonny Rollins
- 88 Ornette Coleman
- 80 Wynton Marsalis
- 68 Joe Lovano
- 42 Benny Carter
- 35 Charlie Haden
- 22 Herbie Hancock
- 21 Randy Weston
- 20 Bill Frisell

## TDWR

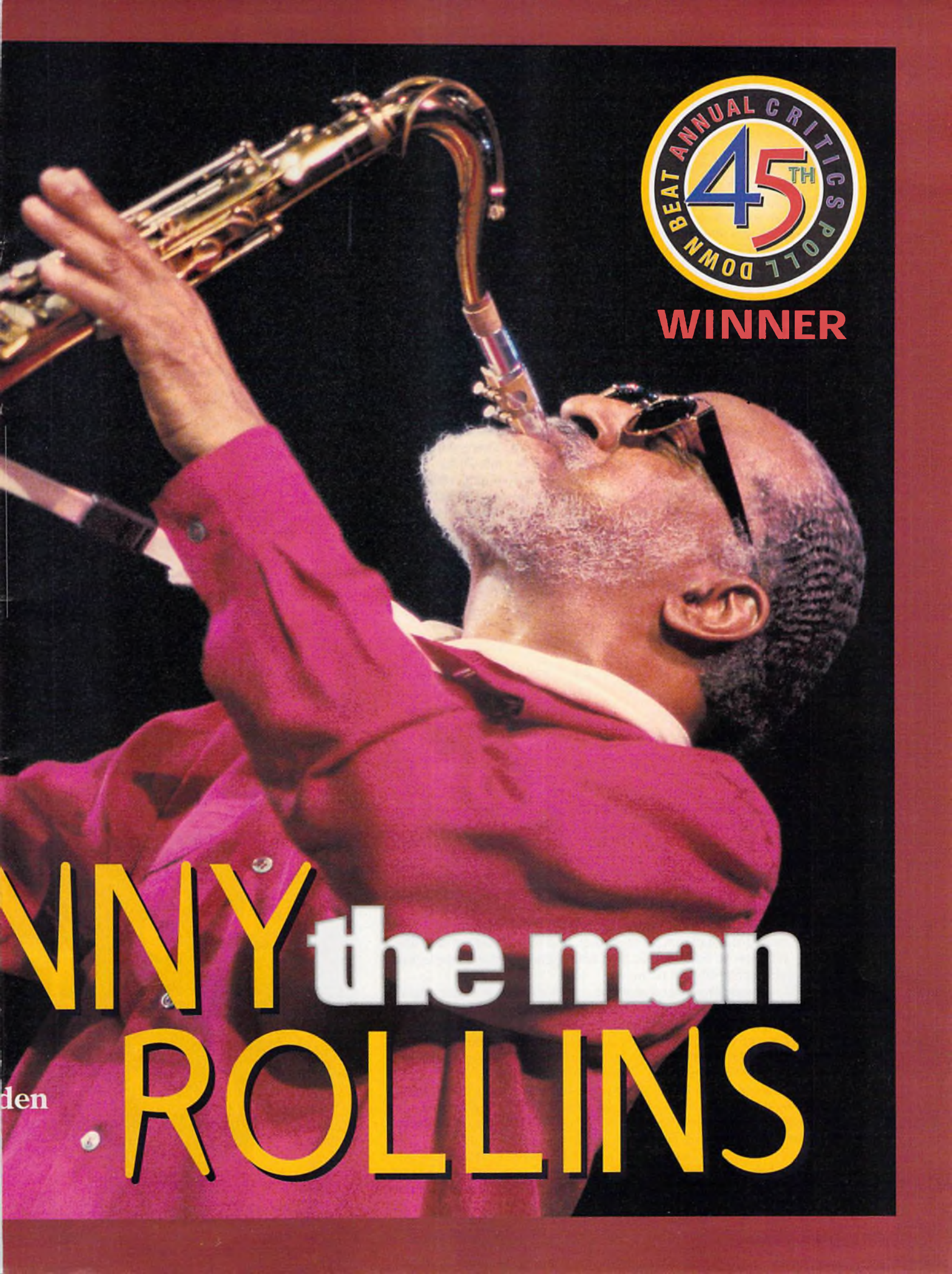
- 41 James Carter
- 36 Dave Douglas
- 32 Nicholas Payton
- 26 Cassandra Wilson
- 24 Christian McBride
- 20 Fred Anderson
- 20 Cyrus Chestnut
- 20 Maria Schneider

# SON

By Bob Be

R. ANDREW LEPLEY





**WINNER**

**ANNY** the man  
**ROLLINS**

den



**BB:** *Did you have an instinct for a particular horn?*

**SR:** When I first began to see Jordan (not in person, but I saw pictures of him), he had a really great King Zephyr. So some years later, when I got my first tenor, which I think was probably in 1944 or something like that, I got a King tenor.

**BB:** *When did playing the saxophone become a social event for you?*

**SR:** Well, the music came first. Because when I was a kid, about 11 ... my father was in the Navy, and in the summertime I used to go down to Annapolis where he was stationed, at the academy there. There was a girl. She was older than me, actually, but I had big eyes for her. She worked at the academy. So anyway, one day Erskine Hawkins was playing there, and I went there and saw the band and everything, and then I saw this girl, Marjorie Brown, up there sort of with the musicians. And I got really crushed, because I knew, well, hey, that's ...

**BB:** *That's where her interests lie.*

**SR:** Really. Why would she mess around with a little squirt like me, you know? I wanted to be like my idols. I wanted to be like Louis Jordan. I wanted to be like Coleman Hawkins. I wanted to be up there. I wanted to be a musician playing, you know?

**BB:** *When did you first hear Coleman Hawkins?*

**SR:** Well, I heard Coleman Hawkins, I guess, around the time of that record, "Body And Soul." I would imagine I probably heard him around the late '30s. There were some older guys on my block who were into Duke Ellington and all these people. So I sort of got a really good education, you know, as a kid growing up and liking jazz. We used to always go and listen to all these records. I'd listen to Ben Webster and all those guys, and really got a good insight into him. But I liked his playing a good deal. I thought that Coleman was really

"I WANTED TO BE LIKE MY IDOLS.  
I WANTED TO BE LIKE LOUIS JORDAN.  
I WANTED TO BE LIKE COLEMAN HAWKINS.  
I WANTED TO BE UP THERE ... PLAYING."

an important figure. And I liked his demeanor, sort of the pride and dignity with which he carried himself.

**BB:** *Did you have an instinct for discerning that one particular musician attracted you more than another musician? Then would you study this particular person more?*

**SR:** I listened first a lot to Louis Jordan, before I really even knew about Coleman Hawkins. Then when I found out about Coleman Hawkins, I was attracted, I think, to his sound (he had that great sound), and then it just seemed like he knew so much music. Just his mental thing and intellectual approach really got to me.

**BB:** *Because there was a moment. ... I don't know how you would describe the style of playing before Hawkins, but it seems to me like harmony wasn't as important as the motion, I guess.*

**SR:** Exactly. Coleman had so much of that harmony down pat, and he really had it to a high art. A lot of young guys don't even really like Coleman Hawkins today. I mean, they know of him and they respect him, but I think they don't relate to him that much. But the thing I liked about him was, as you said, the harmony. I mean, the harmonic concept was so advanced. Somebody told me the other day, as a matter of fact, that Coleman was a real big fan of Art Tatum.

**BB:** *Do you feel that the '40s were a good time for a musician, as opposed to maybe 10 years prior or 10 years later?*

**SR:** When I was coming up, I was sort of coming right around the time of the

# '50s



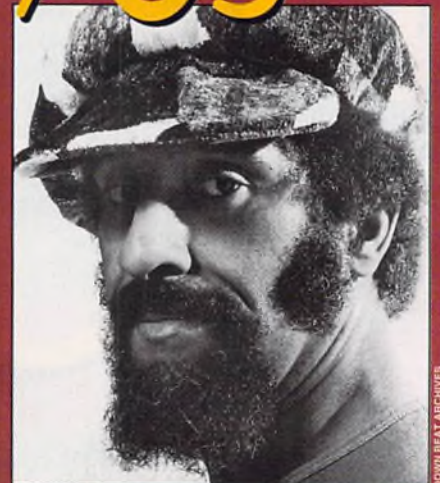
DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

# '60s



BERNIE THRASHER

# '70s



DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES



small group. As I said, I liked Louis Jordan & the Tympany Five, and then I was just getting in there while Hawkins was doing a lot of his small-band work, all of the wonderful work that those guys were doing, and of course leading right into bebop with Charlie Parker and Dizzy and those small bands.

**BB:** *Hawk had the first bebop session.*

**SR:** That's right! In fact, do you know a guy named Scott Devoe? He's an author who is writing a book about the birth of bebop and the years before bebop. But at the center of the book is Coleman Hawkins. It's a very interesting book. He sent me a manuscript, and I endorsed it because I thought it had a lot of interesting facts in there about how Hawkins was actually a much more important figure in bebop than a lot of people recognize. So I would say, yeah, Hawkins was a very important man, and he was playing a lot of these chords and stuff.

**BB:** *Bird played chords on the saxophone.*

**SR:** Yeah, I think Bird came very much out of Coleman.

**BB:** *Were you attracted much to Lester Young?*

**SR:** I was. You know, what happened was that one day on my block there was a guy ... you know, one of these older guys that was really into music. He came down the street, and he said, "Who's the greatest saxophonist?" We all said, "Coleman Hawkins." He said, "No, Lester Young." So then we said, "Oh, Lester Young; who's this guy?" And then I began listening to Lester Young. So I got into Hawkins first. But when I heard Lester Young, of course, he's completely phenomenal

also. So, yeah, I began listening to Lester after Hawkins, but once I heard him, I realized I was in the presence of greatness.

**BB:** *During this time, was there any perception that what these musicians were doing was*

used to go to a lot of Paul Robeson's rallies and so on. As you know, he was quite a political figure as well. So Paul Robeson was really one of my early, early heroes.

**BB:** *I think Hawkins might have been the first of the jazz musicians to get that kind of acclaim at that time.*

**SR:** I wouldn't argue with that at all. I think Hawkins had the same kind of dignified demeanor and so on. ... Yeah, that might have been one of the things that attracted me to his playing. But I also saw him a lot, because I used to live uptown. When I saw him in person, he was always a guy who was sharp, he always had a big Cadillac and all this stuff. He carried himself in a very dignified manner, which was not always the case with well-known musicians.

**BB:** *This period was where you became known in the jazz world. Outside of your own desire to succeed, was there someone who made things a little bit easier for you?*

**SR:** Well, I would say that I just got a reputation, word-of-mouth, you know; well, there's some young guy uptown who can play—this kind of stuff. Then I worked with Babs Gonzalez and recorded. But also, when I was in high school, the latter stages of high school, I was rehearsing with Thelonious Monk's band every afternoon. So Monk was a very important.

**BB:** *In 1949 and '50, you started making records. How does the recording process today compare with those early dates?*

**SR:** You know, in those days, when we recorded, there were two takes maybe. I mean, I'm trying to recall, but I know we didn't do 10 takes on one song. Maybe we'd do two takes on a song, and I would say that would be the norm.

**BB:** *So when you went in to make a record, you were just documenting where you were at at that moment?*

**SR:** No. I myself didn't think anything about that. I didn't think much about that. Actually, I was just so much in heaven to be there, playing with these guys, and to be playing and then making a record. ... I mean, I was just trying to represent myself in a good way. I didn't think much beyond the actual fact of,



**"JAZZ NEEDS SOME DIGNITY. IT NEEDS TO BE LOOKED AT AS A SERIOUS, IMPORTANT ART."**

*considered art?*

**SR:** Well, I think

Hawkins is the one that gave me the sense that this is something beyond even the feel-goodness of music. Not that there's anything wrong with the feeling-good aspect of music.

**BB:** *In the '40s, did the musicians develop a sense of artistry about what they did?*

**SR:** Well, I think that's probably true. There are some other social implications. For instance, Charlie Parker, I think, was one of the people who really wanted jazz to be looked at as an art music rather than as an entertainment music. That was one of the things that attracted us in our crowd to Charlie Parker, because there was a certain dignity he had about playing, about the music. So there was a social element that came in there also. People wanted to be accepted as the artists that they were.

**BB:** *I was going to mention a parallel of [singer/actor/political activist] Paul Robeson to Hawkins.*

**SR:** Well, Paul Robeson was one of my heroes. As a boy, we

"Well, we're making a record," and that was it. Who knows if people would even hear the record? You know what I mean. There wasn't this kind of media exposure like there is now. You would have to go and hunt up jazz records. So I mean, so what? ... I made a record with J.J. [Johnson]. Who knows how many people would even hear that record besides the true jazz people, you know? Or maybe it might not even be heard at all. So I didn't think of anything beyond just appearing in the studio and having a chance to make a record.

**BB:** *With RCA, did that period see a change in your methodology?*

**SR:** In a way, it was. Because at the time that happened, you see, I had signed a long-term agreement with RCA. So I think this was different than when I'd go in to do a Blue Note recording or something, and I'd make one record, or make two records, and that would be it until the next time Al Lion called me up again. [laughs] When I went with RCA, that was a sea change, because then I was signed to do, I think it was six LPs.

**BB:** *Of which, eight eventually came out.*

**SR:** Yeah.

**BB:** *You had a big deal at the time. Down Beat reported it as, for that time, a pretty good amount of change.*

**SR:** Yeah, it was a lot of money. It was a pretty nice contract.

**BB:** *Do you ever pick a tune because it has a feeling on the horn?*

**SR:** I pick a tune, and then it sometimes has a feeling on the horn after I pick it. Or I pick a tune because I like it, and then if I'm



lucky, it has a feeling on the horn.

**BB:** *Do you ever get into a phase where you'll play a certain tune a lot, and then eventually it disappears from your repertoire?*

**SR:** Well, "Three Little Words" would be one of those songs. There's a song I used to play, "I'm Old Fashioned." I really used to play it over and over, and really liked it. And then, finally, it just seemed like I couldn't get anything going on it any more, so I stopped playing it. I tried to play it recently because it's on a compilation album they put out, and I just couldn't get into it. So, yeah, I have phases where there are certain songs which I get into, and then that's it. After a while, then you want to do something else, for some reason. I don't want to say that I've gotten everything out of this song; I hate to say that you can get everything out of anything. So let's just say that maybe my approach to

**BB:** *Of course. That's the one that sells the most.*

**SR:** Yeah. So I mean, I had just gotten really [disenchanted] with record companies and these shyster people. Not just the companies. There's a lot of agencies. As most musicians are, I was at the mercy of these unscrupulous agents. So I just got away from the business world for a while. I mean, that's the period when I went to India, and so on and so forth. So I had sort of gotten away from the industry. I mean, I never stopped playing. I always had my horn wherever I went. And I never stopped playing myself, but I just got away from the business end of it.

**BB:** *So you signed with Milestone. Do you feel you've had a comfortable relationship?*

**SR:** Well, you see, I had recorded for Orrin Keepnews when he had Riverside in New York. So as Orrin tells the story, I was

**"I ALWAYS WANTED TO HAVE CONTROL OVER WHAT I DID, BECAUSE I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT WHAT CAME OUT WAS THE BEST REPRESENTATION OF SONNY ROLLINS."**

the song finally reached its limit, and maybe I would have to approach it in a different way.

**BB:** *From '69 to '72, you were absent from the scene. Did you rest during this time?*

**SR:** Well, I wouldn't quite say "rested." I had gotten burned, I would say, by a lot of record companies, so that I was sort of afraid to get involved with the record people. I didn't want to have anything to do with the people at record companies. Also, one of the companies that I was with, ABC, I had one record for them. ... I'd made several, but one of the records I'd made for them, they said, "Gee, Sonny, we can't sell this record; this is too ..."

**BB:** *East Broadway Rundown.*

**SR:** Right!

doing a solo concert at the Whitney Museum one day, and he was there, and he says to me, "Well, gee, Sonny, why don't you start recording again?" At that time, he was with Audio Fidelity. So then I went with him, and then shortly after that he turned the label into Milestone. ... I mean, they went with the Fantasy people. Then I stayed there, and after I started producing my own things, then Orrin got out of the picture—but I just stayed out there with the company. And 25 years passed by.

**BB:** *You've managed for a long time to have total say over your recordings. Is that something that when you had the opportunity, you knew this was the time to do it?*

**SR:** Well, I became very self-conscious about recording around the '70s. I wanted to do a lot of takes on everything and try to put



JOHN ARBUSTI



out the best representation of what I could do. Of course, I was doing that in the '60s also, so I shouldn't say that. I mean, when I was with RCA, I had access to the RCA studios up on 24th Street, and I used to go by there 24 hours a day, you know, whenever I wanted to, and practice. Then, I also was able to do a lot of different tracks. I remember I was up there with George Avakian, who was producing me at that time, and I had the option of doing as many tracks as I wanted to—he deferred to me. So that was something I started doing before. But in the '70s, I also wanted to have that kind of control. I always wanted to have control, of course, over what I did, for one thing because I wanted to make sure that what came out was the best representation of Sonny Rollins, and I thought I knew what that is. Now, I might not be perfect in that. Some people hear things in my playing that I don't hear, you know. But nevertheless, I felt that I wanted to be able to have the final say in what came out. So it was something that I had always been trying to do, and I did get that amount of autonomy at Milestone, yeah.

**BB:** *Is there something you haven't done yet as a recording artist or as a soloist?*

**SR:** Well, I hope so. Because if not, I would probably head for the graveyard. I mean, I hope there's a solo that I haven't played yet. As a matter of fact, I am trying to get to something that I haven't done before. So as far as soloing, yes, I hope there is. As far as context, yeah, there's a lot of playing situations that I haven't been in yet—many of them. I mean, actually, it's endless.

**BB:** *You've done some orchestral stuff.*

**SR:** Right. I did do one orchestral piece. In fact, I think I might do that again. There's been some talk about doing that again next year. So we may revisit that piece, which is OK.

**BB:** *The album *The Bridge* [recorded in 1962] was an incredibly influential record.*

**SR:** Yeah, I like *The Bridge* a lot. A lot of people like that.

**BB:** *The sound of jazz at that time was harder, much harder, and *The Bridge* has an airier texture to it.*

**SR:** Mmm-hmm. I think so. Yeah, I think it was. ... Well, remember, when I made *The Bridge*, I was sort of away from the jazz scene for a while, so I probably didn't reflect anything really that was happening around me so much. I mean, it was strictly coming from me and the group, you know.

**BB:** *What is your response to the release of bootleg recordings?*

**SR:** The reason why I have been so much against bootleg records is because I always viewed it as a way that unscrupulous people are profiting off of the poor, beleaguered musicians. I've never looked at it in an artistic way. Because most of these records, nobody gets paid. So I always view the whole industry as people that are just ripping off the artist. Now, that puts me in a very funny position, because I feel that way; at the same time, when I hear something by somebody that I like that was previously unrecorded, I mean, it really knocks me out. If I heard something by Art Tatum that was never released, I'd probably turn flips. So as a listener, it puts me sort of in an ambiguous position.

**BB:** *You recently played [the big pop venue] *Tramps* in New York. Is this ...*

**SR:** ... a trend? [laughs]

**BB:** *Is this a sign of a new direction?*

**SR:** Well, the thing is this: As you know, for career reasons I decided a long time ago that I wanted to play concerts because it would just be more prestigious, it would be better for jazz as a whole, not just for Sonny Rollins. ... It would be better for the business if jazz musicians of some repute would do concerts, wouldn't have to play clubs all the time. So anyway, I decided to just have a concert career, and that's what I've been doing for quite a while now. However, I have been in the habit of playing the [pop-oriented club] Bottom Line in New York; I used to go down there once a year or something like that.

**BB:** *And the Beacon occasionally.*

**SR:** Right. Well, the Beacon [concert hall] is sort of a big house.

**BB:** *Do you like concerts because the environment is so much more your environment?*

**SR:** Yes, that's part of the reason. And the conditions, the back-

stage conditions are much more pleasant—all these things, they make a difference. Being able to have a nice dressing room and all this stuff ... I believe in that. Even though there are always going to be people that say, "Well, gee, why not the good old conditions of being in a smoke-filled, whiskey-drenched nightclub? Boy, you guys were really playing music then." You're always going to get people who say that, or say, "Well, gee, Billie Holiday was great because she was a dope addict." I mean, this kind of mentality is going to be around all the time.

**BB:** *When did you really make the complete transition to concerts from the club environment?*

**SR:** Well, I would say that outside of the fact that I played the Bottom Line annually for some years, I have been playing concerts probably since the late '70s. So I would say that at least 20 years, give or take a few years maybe.

**BB:** *So, in a sense, there were environments where you were playing that you would consider as intimate as any club in New York. Yet people seem to mis-perceive that as not playing in clubs.*

**SR:** Well, you have to remember: When I did those [engagements at clubs like Bogarts, Rockefeller's, the Bottom Line, Great American Music Hall], I did it for, like, one night or two nights at the most. So most people conceive of a club as like six nights a week. If I go to a place like the Roxy, I'll play there for two nights. I don't believe I played at the Roxy for more than that. I didn't play at the Music Hall for more than two nights. Bogart's, those places, maybe one night. Those clubs were one-night, two-night places. That's why the perception was also given credibility: "Well, he's not really playing clubs, because he's not there six nights a week." Right?

**BB:** *Yeah, exactly. You can play concerts all over the world; would you want to play clubs all over the world?*

**SR:** Right. Well, I wouldn't want to play clubs all over the world, either. Jazz needs some dignity. It needs to be looked at as a serious, important art form. And if you're going to be playing in nightclubs, I don't care what you say, you're not going to get that kind of respect for it. Not that the respect is even the thing that's going to put jazz over the top—I don't know. But it's just the idea that if you're just playing nightclubs, it just diminishes the music in some kind of way. At this time, in 1997, I think it's just not enough to be playing nightclubs. It's just not enough, you know. It wasn't for me 20 years ago. It's not proper. If you want to do it, OK. But you shouldn't have to do it. DB

#### EQUIPMENT

Sonny Rollins plays a Selmer Mark VI tenor, 130 series; a Berg-Larsen metal mouthpiece, size  $130\frac{1}{2}$ —a big one; and either a LaVoz medium or Fred Hemke  $2\frac{1}{2}$  reed.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

+ 3—Milestone 9250  
 OLD FLAMES—Milestone 9215  
 FALLING IN LOVE WITH JAZZ—Milestone 9179  
 THE SOLO ALBUM—Milestone 9137  
 THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS—RCA Victor 09026-68675  
 MILESTONE JAZZSTARS IN CONCERT—Milestone 55006  
 SILVER CITY—Milestone 25218-2501  
 G-MAN—Milestone 9150  
 HERE'S TO THE PEOPLE—Milestone 9194  
 ALFIE—Impulse! 224  
 SONNY ROLLINS ON IMPULSE!—Impulse! 223  
 THE BRIDGE—BMG/Victor Jazz 68518  
 A NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD VOL. 1—Blue Note 46517  
 A NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD VOL. 2—Blue Note 46518  
 THE COMPLETE PRESTIGE RECORDINGS—Prestige 7-4407  
 WAY OUT WEST—Fantasy/OJC 337  
 FREEDOM SUITE—Fantasy/OJC 067  
 SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS—Fantasy/OJC 291  
 TENOR MADNESS—Fantasy/OJC 124  
 WITH THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET—Fantasy/OJC 011

with Thelonious Monk  
 BRILLIANT CORNERS—Fantasy/OJC 026  
 MONK—Fantasy/OJC 016  
 AND THE JAZZ GIANTS—Riverside 60-018

with Miles Davis  
 AND HORNS—Fantasy/OJC 053  
 BAGS' GROOVE—Fantasy/OJC 245





# Hall of Fame

By Robin Tolleson

## HALL OF FAME

- 71 Tony Williams
- 53 Milt Jackson
- 45 Elvin Jones
- 42 Jo Jones
- 40 Clark Terry
- 37 Nat "King" Cole
- 31 Jimmy Blanton
- 29 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 28 Muhal Richard Abrams
- 23 Roy Haynes
- 23 John Lewis
- 23 McCoy Tyner
- 21 Milt Hinton
- 21 Jimmie Lunceford
- 21 Red Norvo

No disrespect intended, but the only way Tony Williams could've been voted into Down Beat's Hall Of Fame this year was by his leaving us suddenly, tragically, at the age of 51. The drummer was so musically active, no one would have considered it for another 10 years, even though he was a lock for the honor. Tony would have had a better chance at Album of the Year with *Wilderness*, of winning as best drummer for the umpteenth time or of placing in the Composer category under Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. But Hall of Fame? Not yet.

We all have memories. I remember Tony calling me shortly after we did his first Blindfold Test in 1986, curious what kind of grade I gave him, gently chiding me for not "testing" him on some Mahler or Brahms. Now that I think back on it, I should have played some Ennio Morricone for him, because Tony loved film music. What he seemed to like best out of what I played him that day was a track in 7/8 by the Canadian progressive rock trio Rush. I also remember being on assignment for Down Beat in Sao Paulo in 1989, just off the plane and lost in a huge hotel lobby, a white guy with bad Portuguese, when Tony made the very

cause they were so much in love,"

Baker says softly. "We did a gig at the Opera House in Verona—myself, Tony, Max Roach and M'Boom. We were looking forward to getting together again in New York. In Verona it was more like a drum battle, but I wanted to do the African thing with Tony and Max where the drummers all play together."

As Colleen Williams eulogized at her husband's memorial, "Tony was no 'yes

# TONY WILLIAMS

Tony was voted into the Hall of Fame because the memories he left behind are Hall of Fame memories. Memories of the way he took the jazz world by storm as a teenager, coming to New York with saxist Jackie McLean, of how he took musical control of Miles Davis' band in the 1960s, positioning the swing slightly on top of the beat. Tony's bravado at asking Miles why he didn't practice the horn. The drummer's experimental first fusions with Larry Young and John McLaughlin and the Tony Williams Lifetime with Alan Holdsworth that brought so many rockers into the jazz world. The incendiary fill he played on national TV kicking off the jazz big band at the Grammy Awards in 1988. The bright yellow drums, the look of an album cover, the sound in a certain concert hall.

warm, human gesture of approaching me to put me at ease, camcorder in hand.

Max Roach knew Tony when he was 13, when the youngster had already learned most of the other drummers' licks. "I think one of the most important things about Tony was that he played the total instrument," Roach says. "The drum set, of course, has many parts that you can deal with alone: bass drum, snare drum, all the facets of the standard set. But he's taken that American one-man percussion band and done some wonderful things with it. For me, he's one of the papas, and he reached that at an early age."

Ginger Baker was a pallbearer at Tony's memorial service in San Francisco, along with Roach, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Stanley Clarke (see May '97). "I feel sad for Colleen [Williams],

man.'" He expected to be treated with respect, and gauged a concert promoter by the quality of the transportation from the airport and the hotel provided. Tony's face couldn't lie. If he was playing and misfired on a lick, you could tell it in his look of disdain. If he was unhappy with a musical situation, he'd just stop playing. He was a passionate perfectionist who would speak his mind.

"The last time I saw Tony, I just walked up and told him I loved him. He turned around and had that smirk on his face that he always had," says drummer Dennis Chambers. "I first met him in 1980 in Philly. I was in P-Funk and he had his band with Bunny Brunel and Alan Pasqua. I saw him at the Star Theatre and he gave me an old 24-inch Istanbul K. cymbal. Tony could be weird sometimes.





TOM COPI

MITCHELL STRAIN



VERYL OAKLAND

When we were together I never bothered him. If he would speak, fine, we'd take it from there. If not, hey, don't worry about it."

Just like young boys in the 1960s tried to be like Mays, Mantle or Clemente, and ballplayers today mimic Ripken, Gwynn or Griffey Jr., drummers for over three decades have had Tony Williams to try to imitate. Drummer Steve Smith (Journey, Steps Ahead) says, "Musically, he's been a very significant influence, what he played on the drumset and how he thought. I fantasized how he was thinking to the best of my ability. Doing it my way, but trying to put myself in that zone." And just like Michael Jordan takes it personally when someone says he only shoots the jumper, Tony didn't like to be referred to simply as a jazz drummer. He fancied himself the best rock drummer in the world, too. Best drummer, *period*. Naysayers should check out his tantaliz-

ing work with Public Image Ltd. on *Album* or Yoko Ono on *Starpeace*.

Williams' mastery was not appreciated solely by drummers. When guitarist Carlos Santana was working with Tony on *Swing Of Delight* in 1985 he commented, "It's like Miles said, I don't think there's anybody alive that can play what this cat plays. He's absolute conviction. I don't think 'question mark' or 'doubt' is in Tony Williams' vocabulary. When he hits it, it's so solid it's almost scary. I told him that George Lucas could do a movie on one of his solos alone."

In the mid-'80s, Williams began driving his Mercedes each week from his Marin County home across the bay to UC Berkeley, to study composition with Dr. Robert Greenberg. He began writing more and more substantial, melodic material for his jazz quintet, and his orchestral compositions are the cornerstone of his final studio album,

*Wilderness*, which also features an ensemble of Michael Brecker, Stanley Clarke, Hancock and Pat Metheny. "Tony felt sure about the music," says Brecker, "and his playing was great always. The highest quality. Real innovative. He changed the shape and direction of drumming, came up with a whole new vocabulary, and was constantly looking for new ways of playing and new ways of making his drums sound."

At the time of his death, Williams was scheduled to play a week at Catalina's with his quintet, then fly to New York to record with Roach, Baker and M'Boom, then fill in for Anton Fig on *Late Night With David Letterman* for three nights, and then begin work on a project with guitarist/singer Pat DiNizio of the Smithereens.

There's no way that Tony Williams should be in the Hall of Fame yet, but all of us are sad to confirm it's true. **DB**





# Albums of the Year

## Honkers, 45s & Museum Pieces



Ornette Coleman might be a legend, even an artifact of free-jazz, but his music rings on, as evidenced this past year by two important new recordings, both issued at the same time and featuring the same group. *Sound Museum Hidden Man* won as Jazz Album of the Year even though it was essentially in competition with itself in the form of *Sound Museum Three Women* (which received almost enough votes to make the list).

Both *Sound Museums* are acoustic albums in contrast to Coleman's ongoing work with the electric Prime Time band. Perhaps the most distinctive feature with these recordings was his decision to use the piano again, an instrument he ditched almost 40 years ago. Pianist Geri Allen's playing is superb as she's supported, cajoled and inspired by bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Denardo Coleman, the occasional vocalist and Coleman's alto, violin and trumpet playing. (Both albums, by the way, contain essentially the same material played differently.) For the critics, this past year represented Ornette Coleman's continued return to form: He was just seven votes shy of matching Sonny Rollins for Jazz Artist of the Year (not to mention Prime Time's *Tone Dialing* placing second as 1996's Jazz Album of the Year).

While the Bill Evans boxed set of Vanguard recordings came in second for Jazz Album of the Year (some critics voted for this title as a reissue), the lion's share of votes for boxes and multi-disc sets, not surprisingly, was in the Reissue of the Year category. Ten out of the 12 titles that placed were made up of at least two discs, including the phenomenal six-CD Dexter Gordon box *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions*, the three-CD *The Complete Blue Note Sam Rivers Sessions* (do I detect a pattern here?) and the biggest surprise of the bunch: the two-CD Sun Ra collection *The Singles*, made up of, that's right, jukebox 45s.

Saving the best for last: Like last year, another Miles Davis boxed set won for Reissue of the Year. But unlike *Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel*, which won out by only two votes over the John Coltrane box of Atlantic material in 1996, the three-time-Grammy-winning *The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* of Miles and arranger/conductor Gil Evans kicked butt (no offense, Dexter). *The Complete Recordings* repeated a pattern established with the *Plugged Nickel* set by offering both a compact-disc version (six discs with a splendid package from Columbia Legacy) along with an 11-LP, 180-gram version (from Mosaic).

A decision was made to issue only the studio material and save the famed Carnegie Hall concert as well as any other live music for later release. No matter. What we got were the landmark recordings *Miles Ahead*, *Porgy And Bess*, *Sketches Of Spain*, the underrated and

unfairly maligned bossa nova classic *Quiet Nights* and the stereo alternate of *Miles Ahead*, along with tons of outtakes and studio chatter. So much extra, in fact, critic Paul de Barros was moved to write in his 5-star review: "While the overall clarity of sound on all discs has been vastly improved by [Phil] Schaap and Bob Belden ... one has to question the merit, even for aficionados, of issuing all this rejected material, especially where Miles or an orchestra member simply turned in a honker."

But, oh, what honkers!

—John Ephland

### JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 50 Ornette Coleman Quartet  
*Sound Museum Hidden Man* (Harmolodic/Verve)
- 40 Bill Evans, *Turn Out The Stars, The Final Village Vanguard Recordings June 1980* (Warner Bros.)
- 28 Don Byron, *Bug Music* (Nonesuch)
- 28 Chick Corea, *Remembering Bud Powell* (Stretch)
- 28 Charlie Haden & Pat Metheny, *Beyond The Missouri Sky* (Verve)
- 25 Kenny Garrett, *Pursuance* (Warner Bros.)
- 25 Joe Henderson Big Band, *Joe Henderson Big Band* (Verve)
- 25 Various Artists, *Kansas City* (Verve)
- 17 Mingus Big Band, *Live In Time* (Dreyfus)
- 16 Joshua Redman, *Freedom In The Groove* (Warner Bros.)
- 15 Greg Osby, *Art Forum* (Blue Note)
- 14 Benny Carter & Phil Woods, *Another Time, Another Place* (Evening Star)
- 14 Brad Mehldau, *The Art Of The Trio Volume One* (Warner Bros.)
- 14 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, *Coming About* (enja)
- 14 John Scofield, *Quiet* (Verve)

### REISSUE OF THE YEAR

- 173 Miles Davis & Gil Evans  
*The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings*  
(Columbia Legacy/Mosaic)
- 107 Dexter Gordon, *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (Blue Note)
- 66 Sun Ra, *The Singles* (Evidence)
- 55 Sonny Rollins, *Silver City* (Milestone)
- 37 Charlie Parker, *Yarbird Suite: The Ultimate Collection* (Rhino)
- 27 Lee Morgan, *Live At The Lighthouse* (Blue Note)
- 17 Sam Rivers, *The Complete Blue Note Sam Rivers Sessions* (Mosaic)
- 15 Lennie Tristano & Warne Marsh, *Intuition* (Capitol/Blue Note)
- 14 Oscar Peterson Trio, *The London House Sessions* (Verve)
- 13 Louis Armstrong, *The Complete RCA Victor Recordings* (BMG Classics)
- 13 Art Tatum, *20th Century Piano Genius* (Verve)
- 13 Various Artists, *The Debut Records Story* (Debut)





# The Winners ...

## RECORD LABEL OF THE YEAR

### 245 Verve

- 146 Blue Note
- 63 Mosaic
- 49 Concord
- 36 Black Saint/Soul Note
- 31 ECM
- 28 Evidence
- 26 Impulse!
- 25 Columbia
- 24 Delmark
- 21 Warner Bros.
- 20 hat ART
- 16 Arbors

## PRODUCER

### 190 Michael Cuscuna

- 93 Orrin Keepnews
- 37 Giovanni Bonandrini
- 34 John Snyder
- 29 Manfred Eicher
- 29 Richard Seidel
- 25 Craig Street
- 24 Hal Willner
- 23 Lee Townsend
- 20 Jean-Philippe Allard

### TDWR

- 47 Bob Belden
- 27 Manfred Eicher
- 24 Delfeayo Marsalis
- 23 Bill Laswell
- 22 Don Sickler
- 22 Craig Street
- 22 Lee Townsend

## COMPOSER

### 100 Wynton Marsalis

- 74 Benny Carter
- 70 Henry Threadgill
- 68 Maria Schneider
- 61 Ornette Coleman
- 42 Muhal Richard Abrams
- 36 Carla Bley
- 33 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 30 Randy Weston
- 28 Horace Silver
- 20 Charlie Haden

### TDWR

- 56 Maria Schneider
- 35 Tom Harrell
- 26 Rodney Kendrick
- 25 Myra Melford
- 22 Jon Jang

## ARRANGER

### 84 Maria Schneider

- 64 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 56 Melba Liston
- 54 Benny Carter
- 53 Bob Belden
- 45 Carla Bley
- 41 Slide Hampton
- 36 Chico O'Farrill
- 35 Frank Foster
- 34 Bill Holman
- 22 Wynton Marsalis

### TDWR

- 57 Maria Schneider
- 49 Don Sickler
- 35 Bob Belden
- 30 George Gruntz
- 29 Slide Hampton

## BIG BAND

### 210 Mingus Big Band

- 99 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra
- 70 Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra
- 67 Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra
- 66 Count Basie Orchestra
- 49 Joe Henderson Big Band
- 38 Carnegie Hall Jazz Band
- 26 Kansas City Big Band
- 26 McCoy Tyner Big Band
- 20 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

### TDWR

- 79 Either/Orchestra
- 56 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra
- 53 George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band
- 41 Gerald Wilson & His Orchestra
- 28 Mingus Big Band
- 24 Willem Breuker Kollektief
- 20 Carnegie Hall Jazz Band

## ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

### 104 Charlie Haden's Quartet West

- 69 Phil Woods
- 60 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio
- 46 Joshua Redman
- 45 Joe Lovano
- 42 Chick Corea's Bud Powell Band
- 32 Ornette Coleman
- 23 John Zorn's Masada
- 23 Roy Hargrove
- 20 Herbie Hancock

### TDWR

- 27 Clusone Trio
- 25 Leon Parker
- 23 Brad Mehldau
- 22 Roy Hargrove
- 21 Joshua Redman

## ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

### 114 John Scofield

- 74 Pat Metheny Group
- 66 Bill Frisell
- 56 Yellowjackets
- 53 Ornette Coleman's Prime Time
- 45 Medeski Martin & Wood
- 44 Steve Coleman
- 38 Zawinul Syndicate
- 27 Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus

### TDWR

- 62 Medeski Martin & Wood
- 53 Charlie Hunter Trio
- 48 Steve Coleman
- 30 Bela Fleck & The Flecktones
- 19 Wayne Horvitz & Zony Mash

## TRUMPET

### 156 Wynton Marsalis

- 144 Tom Harrell
- 128 Roy Hargrove
- 79 Nicholas Payton
- 62 Lester Bowie
- 58 Clark Terry
- 37 Art Farmer
- 36 Ruby Braff
- 33 Wallace Roney
- 32 Jon Faddis

### TDWR

- 98 Nicholas Payton
- 85 Dave Douglas
- 45 Claudio Roditi
- 44 Ron Miles
- 35 Russell Gunn
- 29 Kenny Wheeler
- 28 Malachi Thompson

## SOPRANO SAXOPHONE

### 260 Steve Lacy

- 137 Wayne Shorter
- 121 Dave Liebman
- 76 Jane Ira Bloom
- 64 Branford Marsalis
- 48 Evan Parker
- 47 Bob Wilber
- 35 Jane Bunnett

### TDWR

- 77 Jane Bunnett
- 66 Jane Ira Bloom
- 54 James Carter
- 44 Evan Parker
- 41 Greg Osby
- 27 Steve Wilson
- 23 Chris Potter
- 17 Branford Marsalis

## ALTO SAXOPHONE

### 158 Phil Woods

- 131 Jackie McLean
- 115 Kenny Garrett
- 104 Lee Konitz
- 89 Ornette Coleman
- 67 Benny Carter
- 40 Frank Morgan
- 39 Bobby Watson
- 29 Gary Bartz
- 29 Steve Coleman

### TDWR

- 84 Antonio Hart
- 65 Vincent Herring
- 51 Sonny Simmons
- 47 Jesse Davis
- 47 Kenny Garrett
- 31 Gary Bartz
- 30 Wes Anderson
- 28 Steve Coleman
- 28 Steve Wilson

## TENOR SAXOPHONE

### 292 Sonny Rollins

- 126 Joe Lovano
- 116 Joe Henderson

Maria



STUART BRINMAN

Nicholas



KEN FRANKENBERG

Antonio



ALAN HARRIS

Barron



R. ANDREW LEFELY

Bluiett



ALAN HARRIS



- 64 David Murray
- 55 Joshua Redman
- 45 Johnny Griffin
- 41 James Carter
- 36 Michael Brecker
- 23 Pharoah Sanders

**TDWR**

- 74 James Carter
- 62 David Sanchez
- 56 Joshua Redman
- 41 Fred Anderson
- 32 Craig Handy
- 27 Seamus Blake
- 23 Javon Jackson

**BARITONE SAXOPHONE**

**186 Hamiet Bluiett**

- 160 Nick Brignola
- 92 Ronnie Cuber
- 70 James Carter
- 63 Joe Temperley
- 58 John Surman
- 57 Cecil Payne
- 56 Gary Smulyan

**TDWR**

- 92 Ronnie Cuber
- 58 James Carter
- 57 Gary Smulyan
- 52 John Surman
- 31 Scott Robinson
- 24 Joe Temperley
- 23 Don Byron

**PIANO**

**94 Kenny Barron**

- 93 Keith Jarrett
- 84 McCoy Tyner
- 67 Tommy Flanagan
- 51 Cecil Taylor
- 50 Herbie Hancock
- 47 Randy Weston
- 40 Hank Jones
- 38 Chick Corea
- 31 Geri Allen
- 28 Gonzalo Rubalcaba

**TDWR**

**62 Brad Mehldau**

- 46 Cyrus Chestnut
- 36 Matthew Shipp
- 35 Jacky Terrasson
- 31 Danilo Perez
- 27 Marilyn Crispell
- 25 Benny Green
- 23 Geri Allen
- 23 Myra Melford

**ORGAN**

**239 Jimmy Smith**

- 126 Joey DeFrancesco
- 86 Jack McDuff
- 62 Jimmy McGriff
- 43 John Medeski
- 43 Lonnie Smith
- 31 Larry Goldings
- 23 Barbara Dennerlein
- 21 Amina Claudine Myers

**TDWR**

**89 Larry Goldings**

- 60 John Medeski
- 56 Barbara Dennerlein
- 50 Chris Foreman
- 50 Dan Wall
- 49 Joey DeFrancesco
- 35 Wayne Horvitz
- 29 Amina Claudine Myers

**ELECTRIC KEYBOARD**

**162 Joe Zawinul**

- 151 Herbie Hancock
- 81 Chick Corea
- 69 Lyle Mays
- 34 John Medeski
- 21 Wayne Horvitz
- 20 Muhal Richard Abrams

**TDWR**

**78 John Medeski**

- 50 Wayne Horvitz
- 25 Adam Holzman
- 24 Lyle Mays
- 18 John Surman

**GUITAR**

**166 John Scofield**

- 138 Bill Frisell
- 98 Jim Hall
- 89 Kenny Burrell
- 66 Pat Metheny
- 47 Howard Alden
- 27 Pat Martino
- 25 John McLaughlin
- 25 James "Blood" Ulmer
- 25 Mark Whitfield

**TDWR**

**67 Charlie Hunter**

- 51 Russell Malone
- 40 Mark Whitfield
- 33 Howard Alden
- 29 Joe Morris
- 29 Bern Nix
- 24 Derek Bailey

**ACOUSTIC BASS**

**188 Charlie Haden**

- 152 Dave Holland
- 123 Ray Brown
- 83 Ron Carter
- 75 Christian McBride
- 45 George Mraz
- 35 Gary Peacock
- 30 Reggie Workman
- 28 Milt Hinton

**TDWR**

**83 Christian McBride**

- 51 George Mraz
- 50 William Parker
- 42 Charnett Moffett
- 28 Anthony Cox
- 23 Barry Guy

**ELECTRIC BASS**

**214 Steve Swallow**

- 86 John Patitucci
- 82 Bob Cranshaw
- 55 Marcus Miller
- 36 Stanley Clarke
- 35 Bill Laswell
- 33 Jamaaladeen Tacuma

**TDWR**

**42 Bill Laswell**

- 42 Eberhard Weber
- 26 Marcus Miller
- 24 Lonnie Plaxico
- 23 Victor Wooten
- 20 Avery Sharpe

**DRUMS**

**188 Elvin Jones**

- 148 Roy Haynes
- 109 Max Roach
- 89 Jack DeJohnette

- 53 Billy Higgins
- 50 Tony Williams
- 30 Andrew Cyrille
- 24 Lewis Nash

**TDWR**

**67 Bill Stewart**

- 59 Leon Parker
- 41 Ralph Peterson
- 39 Greg Hutchinson
- 38 Joey Baron
- 32 Lewis Nash
- 31 Brian Blade

**PERCUSSION**

**118 Tito Puente**

- 99 Triok Gurtu
- 64 Jerry Gonzalez
- 55 Famoudou Don Moye
- 53 Airtu Moreira
- 43 Nana Vasconcelos
- 42 Ray Barretto
- 33 Don Alias
- 31 Giovanni Hidalgo
- 27 Pancho Sanchez
- 22 Mino Cinelu

**TDWR**

**47 Marilyn Mazur**

- 44 Kahil El Zabar
- 34 Giovanni Hidalgo
- 32 Steve Berrios
- 30 Jerry Gonzalez
- 22 Don Alias
- 20 Hamid Drake

**TROMBONE**

**227 J.J. Johnson**

- 182 Steve Turre
- 105 Ray Anderson
- 62 Frank Ku-umba Lacy
- 40 George Lewis
- 38 Curtis Fuller
- 30 Al Grey
- 22 Robin Eubanks

**TDWR**

**73 Frank Ku-umba Lacy**

- 64 Wycliffe Gordon
- 57 Conrad Herwig
- 54 Craig Harris
- 45 Robin Eubanks

**CLARINET**

**246 Don Byron**

- 119 Eddie Daniels
- 80 Kenny Davern
- 62 Buddy DeFranco
- 57 Paquito D'Rivera
- 53 Marty Ehrlich
- 49 Alvin Batiste
- 37 Phil Woods

**TDWR**

**90 Ken Peplowski**

- 44 Michael Moore
- 43 Louis Slavic
- 35 Marty Ehrlich
- 26 Kenny Davern

**FLUTE**

**192 James Newton**

- 129 Lew Tabackin
- 119 James Moody
- 97 Frank Wess
- 51 Dave Valentin
- 50 Henry Threadgill
- 28 Herbie Mann
- 24 Hubert Laws
- 19 Sonny Fortune





**TDWR**

- 72 Jane Bunnett**  
 51 Kent Jordan  
 37 Sonny Fortune  
 29 Frank Wess  
 24 Lew Tabackin

**VIBES**

- 306 Milt Jackson**  
 183 Bobby Hutcherson  
 140 Gary Burton  
 56 Steve Nelson  
 36 Lionel Hampton  
 21 Mike Mainieri  
 19 Terry Gibbs

**TDWR**

- 106 Steve Nelson**  
 96 Joe Locke  
 64 Bryan Carrott  
 45 Bill Ware  
 44 Jay Hoggard

**VIOLIN**

- 279 Stephane Grappelli**  
 98 Leroy Jenkins  
 75 Billy Bang  
 54 Jean-Luc Ponty  
 47 Regina Carter  
 40 John Blake  
 37 Johnny Frigo  
 34 Claude Williams  
 33 Mark Feldman

**TDWR**

- 96 Regina Carter**  
 61 Mark Feldman  
 42 John Blake  
 29 Claude Williams  
 28 Johnny Frigo

**MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT**

- 119 Steve Turre (conch shells)**  
 109 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)  
 91 Howard Johnson (tuba)  
 66 David Murray (bass clarinet)  
 57 Bela Fleck (banjo)  
 46 Bob Stewart (tuba)  
 32 Ernst Reijseger (cello)  
 24 Richard Galliano (accordian)  
 22 James Carter (bass clarinet)  
 21 Howard Levy (harmonica)  
 20 Marty Ehrlich (bass clarinet)

**TDWR**

- 45 Howard Johnson (tuba)**  
 32 Dino Saluzzi (accordian)  
 26 James Carter (bass clarinet)  
 25 Bob Stewart (tuba)  
 24 Ernst Reijseger (cello)

**MALE VOCALIST**

- 183 Joe Williams**  
 77 Jon Hendricks  
 72 Kevin Mahogany

- 68 Tony Bennett  
 61 Mark Murphy  
 48 Bobby McFerrin  
 45 Kurt Elling  
 41 Jimmy Scott  
 40 Mel Tormé  
 23 Andy Bey  
 20 Ray Charles

**TDWR**

- 90 Kurt Elling**  
 74 Kevin Mahogany  
 41 John Pizzarelli  
 34 Freddy Cole  
 32 Andy Bey  
 26 Miles Griffith  
 23 David Frishberg  
 21 Mark Murphy

**FEMALE VOCALIST**

- 201 Cassandra Wilson**  
 175 Betty Carter  
 158 Abbey Lincoln  
 93 Shirley Horn  
 48 Dee Dee Bridgewater  
 35 Diana Krall  
 34 Dianne Reeves  
 31 Sheila Jordan  
 30 Carol Sloane

**TDWR**

- 88 Diana Krall**  
 47 Sheila Jordan  
 43 Patricia Barber  
 24 Dee Dee Bridgewater  
 24 Carol Sloane  
 22 Kitty Margolis

**BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR**

- 116 B.B. King**  
 75 John Lee Hooker  
 71 Charles Brown  
 66 Buddy Guy  
 37 Taj Mahal  
 36 Joe Louis Walker  
 25 Luther Allison  
 21 Lucky Peterson  
 20 Junior Wells  
 19 R.L. Burnside  
 19 Otis Rush

**TDWR**

- 54 Joe Louis Walker**  
 41 Keb' Mo'  
 30 Corey Harris  
 28 Ronnie Earl  
 24 Gatemouth Brown  
 24 Lucky Peterson  
 15 Luther Allison

**BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR**

- 35 James Cotton**  
*Deep In The Blues* (Verve)  
 26 Corey Harris  
*Fish Ain't Bitin'* (Alligator)  
 20 Taj Mahal

*An Evening Of Acoustic Music* (Ruf)

- 18 Johnny Adams  
*One Foot In The Blues* (Rounder)  
 17 Ronnie Earl  
*Eye To Eye* (Audioquest)

**BLUES GROUP**

- 61 B.B. King**  
 58 Buddy Guy  
 50 Roomful Of Blues  
 37 Charles Brown  
 23 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters  
 16 John Lee Hooker  
 15 The Cheatham's

**TDWR**

- 26 Taj Mahal & The Phantom Blues Band**  
 23 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters  
 22 Lucky Peterson  
 19 Roomful Of Blues  
 19 Saffire The Uppity Blues Women

**BEYOND ARTIST OF THE YEAR**

- 49 Cesaria Evora**  
 38 Van Morrison  
 25 Dr. John  
 21 Lyle Lovett  
 20 Sting  
 17 Joni Mitchell

**TDWR**

- 19 Me'Shell NdegéOcello**  
 18 Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan  
 17 Salif Keita

**BEYOND ALBUM OF THE YEAR**

- 20 Me'Shell NdegéOcello**  
*Peace Beyond Passion* (Warner Bros.)  
 16 Us3  
*52nd & Broadway* (Blue Note)  
 15 Sergio Mendes  
*Oceano* (Verve Forecast)  
 15 Third Rail  
*South Delta Space Age* (Antilles)

**BEYOND GROUP**

- 36 Los Lobos**  
 35 Jerry Gonzalez Fort Apache Band  
 32 Kronos Quartet  
 21 Morphine  
 20 Neville Brothers  
 19 NRBO

**TDWR**

- 20 Oranj Symphonette**  
 18 T.J. Kirk  
 15 Steve Coleman

**Diana**

**Walker**

**Bunnett**

**Goldings**

**Mehldau**



# THE CRITICS

Following is a list of critics who voted in Down Beat's 45th annual International Critics Poll. A total of 101 critics voted this year, distributing 10 points among up to three choices (no more than five votes per choice) in each of two categories: Established Talent and Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. The participants were:

- Don Albert:** DB; the Johannesburg Star; The Sunday Independent; Tribute magazine; Vuku SA; Jazz Studio TV program.
- Frank Alkyer:** editorial director, DB.
- Jon Andrews:** DB.
- Zoë Anglesey:** DB; Bomb; Vibe; Soho Arts magazine; editor, The Multicultural Review; The Village Voice; Gawk (online).
- Paul de Barros:** DB; Seattle Times; Coda; 5/4; Earshot.
- Peter Bastian:** DB; Jazz Podium; Jazzthetik, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik.
- Chuck Berg:** JazzTimes; Jazz Educators Journal; American Music; Topeka Capital-Journal; Lawrence Journal-World.
- Larry Birnbaum:** DB; Pulse!; Newsday; Rhythm Music; New York Latino.
- Bob Blumenthal:** Boston Globe; Atlantic Monthly.
- Brett Bonner:** Living Blues; Blues Access.
- Philip Booth:** DB; Sarasota Herald-Tribune; Billboard; WUSF-FM (Tampa, Fla.).
- Fred Bouchard:** DB; JazzTimes; Boston Phoenix; Bossa.
- Michael Bourne:** DB; editor, Hennessy Jazz Notes; WBGO-FM (Newark, N.J.).
- Herb Boyd:** DB; NY Amsterdam News; Black World Today; Metro Times; others.
- Stuart Brin:** DB; Pulse!; Living Blues; Blues Access; Off Beat.
- Pawel Brodowski:** editor, Jazz Forum (Poland).
- Kenneth Burgmaler:** Jazz Alley TV; CNN; E!; National TV Series.
- Aaron Cohen:** DB; Chicago Tribune; Coda; Rhythm Music.
- Thomas Conrad:** DB; Stereophile.
- John Corbett:** DB; The Wire; Pulse; Live!; Coda; Chicago Reader; Chicago Tribune; author, *Extended Play: Sounding Off From John Cage To Dr. Funkenstein*.
- Owen Cordle:** JazzTimes; Raigh News & Observer.
- Joe Cunliff:** DB; Hyde Park Herald; Northwest Leader; West Suburban Post; others.
- Stanley Dance:** Jazz Journal (London); Bulletin HCF (Paris); JazzTimes.
- Clive Davis:** The Times; The Sunday Times; BBC Music magazine; Wilson Quarterly.
- Chip Deffaa:** New York Post; Entertainment Weekly; Crescendo (London); author, *Voices Of The Jazz Age*.
- Len Dobbin:** Mirror; CKUT Radio; Coda.
- Bill Douthart:** DB.
- José Duarte:** Portuguese radio, press, television.
- Jonathan Eig:** DB; editor, Chicago; Jazziz.
- Lofton Emenari:** Chicago Citizen Newspaper Group; African Word Journal.
- Gudrun Endress:** editor, Jazz Podium (Germany); Radio SDR (Stuttgart).
- Ed Enright:** editor, DB.
- John Ephland:** managing editor, DB.
- J.B. Figli:** programming committee/Chicago Jazz Festival.
- Ken Franckling:** DB; United Press International; Swing Journal; JazzTimes.
- Maurizio Franco:** Musica Jazz; Musica e Dischi; MusicaOggi; Il Sismografo.
- Jack Fuller:** Chicago Tribune.
- Gerard J. Futrick:** Coda.
- Phil Gallo:** Deputy news editor, Variety; Daily Variety.
- Alain Gerber:** Radio France; Diapason; Percussions; Les Cahiers Du Jazz.
- Ira Giller:** DB; JazzTimes; Swing Journal; Musica Jazz.
- Frank-John Hadley:** DB; Jazziz; Miami New Times; Boston Phoenix.
- Jean-Marie Hacquier:** Jazz Hot.
- Jesse Hamlin:** SF Chronicle.
- Michael Handler:** DB; Jazz Ncw; East Bay Express; KCSM-FM.
- Dave Helland:** DB; Pulse!; Keyboard; Schwann Spectrum; Rolling Stone On-Line.
- Robert Hicks:** DB; Coda; The Villager; Downtown Express; Rhythm Music.
- Lee Hildebrand:** associate editor, Express newspaper; SF Chronicle Sunday Datebook.
- Geoffrey Himes:** Washington Post; Request; Replay; Patuxent Newspapers.
- Eugene Holley Jr.:** DB; JazzTimes; Vibe; Elegance; Village Voice.
- Randi Hultin:** DB; Jazznytt; Jazz Journal.
- Michael Jackson:** Wire; New City; Jazz On CD; Jazzwise.
- Niranjan Jhaveri:** DB; Jazz Podium; Jazz Chords; Jazz Changes; Jazz Forum; Jazz-India Newsletter.
- Willard Jenkins:** DB; JazzTimes; Schwann Spectrum; Jazz Now.
- Bob Karlovits:** DB; The Tribune Review (Greensburg, Pa.).
- Kirby Kean:** DB; Philadelphia Inquirer; CMJ; Carbon 14.
- Larry Kelp:** KPFA-FM radio (Berkeley, Calif.); SF Chronicle; East-Bay Express; Contra Costa Times.
- Kiyoshi Koyama:** Swing Journal; NHK-FM.
- Peter Kostakis:** DB.
- John Lilweiler:** author, *The Freedom Principle; Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life*.
- Jaap Lüdeke:** Concert Zender (Holland Radio)
- John McDonough:** DB; Wall Street Journal; NPR.
- Howard Mandel:** DB; Rhythm Music; Pulse!; The Wire; Jazziz; Jazz Central Station; Jazzhouse; The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz; JVC program guides.
- Rick Mattingly:** Modern Drummer; Musician; Percussive Notes.
- Massimo Milano:** Jazz; Jam; Il Giornale Della Musica; Il Manifesto; Il Sis Mografo; Carnet.
- Dan Morgenstern:** director, Institute Of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University; Annual Review of Jazz Studies.
- Alan Nahigian:** DB; Jazziz; JazzTimes; Musica Jazz; Pulse!
- Michael G. Nastos:** DB; Cadence; Ann Arbor News; All Music Guide; Harp Column; Detroit Blues Monthly; WEMU-FM (Ypsilanti, Mich.).
- Stuart Nicholson:** author, *Jazz 1980s Resurgence; Ella Fitzgerald; Billie Holiday*; Observer; BBC Music Magazine.
- John Norris:** Coda magazine.
- Dan Ouellette:** DB; Stereophile; Pulse!; SF Chronicle.
- Thierry Pérémarti:** Jazzman.
- Terry Perkins:** DB; St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Riverfront Times; St. Louis American.
- Michael Point:** DB; Austin American-Statesman; Jazziz.
- Brian Priestley:** DB; Jazzwise; Jazz-FM (London); co-author, *Jazz: The Rough Guide*.
- Robert Protzman:** DB; St. Paul Pioneer Press; Midwest Jazz; Twin Cities Jazz Society Newsletter; KBEM-FM radio.
- Doug Ramsey:** JazzTimes; Texas Monthly; author, *Jazz Matters*.
- Ben Ralliff:** New York Times.
- Howard Reich:** Chicago Tribune; DB.
- Dark Richardson:** DB; San Francisco Bay Guardian; East Bay Express; Jazziz; San Francisco Examiner; SF Chronicle.
- Mark Ruffin:** producer/host, WBEZ-FM; jazz editor, Chicago magazine; JazzUSA; Chicago Sun Times.
- Robert D. Rusch:** editor, Cadence.
- Mitchell Seidel:** DB; Hot House; JazzTimes; The Jazz Report.
- Phil Schaap:** DB; curator/archivist, WKCR.
- Chris Sheridan:** DB; author, *Count Basie: A Bio-Discography, Brilliant Corners: A Thelonious Monk Bio-Discography* (forthcoming).
- Fred Shuster:** DB; Mojo; New Musical Express; LA Daily News.
- Joel Simpson:** DB; Piano Today.
- Jack Sohmer:** JazzTimes; The Mississippi Rag.
- Yves Sports:** Jazz Hot.
- Chip Stern:** Stereophile.
- Zan Stewart:** DB; Stereophile; Swing Journal; Musica Jazz.
- W. Royal Stokes:** editor, Jazz Notes.
- Andrew Sussman:** jazz writer.
- Ron Sweetman:** CKCU-FM (Ottawa, Ontario); Coda.
- Robin Tolleson:** DB; Modern Drummer; Mix.
- Ron Welburn:** JazzTimes.
- Josel Woodard:** Jazziz; JazzTimes; Entertainment Weekly; Musician; L.A. Times.
- Russell Woosner:** DB; Philadelphia Weekly
- Scott Yanow:** All Music Guide To Jazz; Jazziz; Cadence; Coda; Mississippi Rag.
- Shoichi Yui:** Swing Journal; Mainichi Press.
- Mike Zwerin:** International Herald Tribune (Paris).

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JOHN REEVES





Author A.A. Milne based his classic children's tale, *Winnie-The-Pooh*, on a Canadian brown bear that had journeyed to England with a World War I soldier. Had Milne arrived in London a generation before he did in 1952, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler—another transplanted Canadian—could have been the inspiration for the charmingly gloomy character Eeyore.

Like the pin-tailed storybook donkey, the 67-year-old Wheeler has a tendency to be hard on himself, expect the worst and be slightly suspicious when things turn out better than hoped. And who's to say he has the wrong outlook? Despite developing his distinctive trumpet voice on more than a dozen recordings of his own and about 60 others, festival promoters are reluctant to book him without all-star bandmates like Dave Holland or Jack DeJohnette.

"I don't know why, but the [North American] festivals have never been interested in me," Wheeler says on a trans-Atlantic phone call. "I think some of them feel I'm not far-out enough, and others feel I'm too far-out. It used to make me angry, but it doesn't bother me anymore. Still, I regret not being able to do what I want."

What he'd like to do is tour more extensively with his quartet of pianist John Taylor, bassist Chris Lawrence and drummer Adam Nussbaum, or make an album with fellow

Kenny Wheeler

IN A

# Melancholy

TO NE

Canadians Paul Bley and Sonny Greenwich, or write more big-band music. The latter is a pursuit he particularly misses.

"I had a nice period around 1990 when I had quite a long British tour paid for by the British Arts Council. The album *Music For Large & Small Ensembles* came out of that. That was very successful, and I thought after that there would be quite a lot of call for what I do, but there wasn't any. Times change. I mean, I never was in fashion, but I'm certainly not now. I have the itch again to write some big-band music, even if nobody wants it. It'll always be there if somebody else wants it."

Fellow trumpeter Dave Douglas, who recently worked with Wheeler in England, believes there should be no shortage of takers. "Kenny's compositions are jazz standards; I learned them at music school. When you're studying the music, Kenny Wheeler's tunes are one giant area where you need to focus. They're unique in jazz composing—the different ways of having the chords move, different types of chords, always really interesting phrase lengths; odd phrase lengths, but somehow with melodies that make them work."

Saxophonist Rob Frayne, another musician in his 30s who has studied Wheeler's music and worked alongside him, adds: "He uses thick, heavily weighted chords, and shares the transparent voicing ability that Gil Evans had for thinning out a thick chord. It's almost romantic music in that there are these beautiful melodies, but there's always a bit of variation, and they always tell a story."

Characteristically, Wheeler modestly dodges the compliments. "If anything, my composing has gotten simpler. To me, it sounds quite simple and melodic." He doesn't mind the romantic tag, though.

"I try to write my idea of a nice, slightly melancholic melody. A lot of the old standards were very sad, but when I hear them now it makes me feel quite happy and good. You take sad sounds like Billie Holiday or Miles—they had kind of a melancholic way about them, but I loved it very much."

By James Hale





As a trumpeter, however, Wheeler was frustrated. The solo opportunities in Dankworth's band were slim, and there was a new air of improvisatory freedom blowing in from Europe. At London's Little Theatre Club, players like John Stevens and Evan Parker were experimenting with free music, and the open format gave Wheeler something intangible he was missing. "I find playing free with people I like very therapeutic. I feel much better afterward, [although] I would find it hard to say whether what we played was good or bad. I just knew that I'd gotten something out of my system."

In addition to work with Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Mike Gibbs' orchestra and drummer Tony Oxley's sextet, Wheeler formed his own band. "In 1969 and '70 my idea was to have a group of musicians I liked, no matter what area of jazz they came from. I had some straightahead players, some dixieland guys and a few free players all mixed up. I loved the sound of that band."

The push and pull of free music and tightly structured compositions has marked his career ever since. He has balanced the abstractions of the Globe Unity Orchestra and Anthony Braxton with the cut-glass creations of Azimuth (which he co-leads with pianist John Taylor and vocalist Norma Winstone) and a wide variety of studio work.

Still, it wasn't until the mid-'70s release of the star-packed *Gnu High* and *Deer Wan* on ECM that Wheeler's music became widely known in North America. Sideman the caliber of Keith Jarrett, DeJohnette and Holland were the perfect vehicles for Wheeler's texturally rich writing, and producer Manfred Eicher's crystalline sound showcased his lyrical, wistful playing. Wheeler seems at home on the label, which has subsequently released six more recordings, including this year's gorgeously austere *Angel Song* with Lee Konitz, Bill Frisell and Holland (see "CD Reviews" April '97).

Wheeler may be wary of life's disappointments, but he has never been afraid to follow his instincts. At 22, he suddenly changed his mind about becoming a high school teacher and booked passage on a ship bound for England. The vague idea—planted in his mind by a boyhood friend and future *Down Beat* editor, Gene Lees—that there were English bands needing trumpet players seemed more appealing than enrollment in Montreal's McGill University.

What bands there were mostly ignored him, and he wound up finding work at the post office. After two years and marriage to an English woman, he began getting gigs with Tommy Whittle, Joe Temperley and, eventually, John Dankworth.

The six-year relationship with Dankworth was a seminal one, with Wheeler using the alto player's band to develop his writing and arranging style. In 1968, Dankworth appeared, along with Dave Holland, John McLaughlin, Tony Coe and others, on *Windmill Tilter*, which showcased Wheeler's compositions and helped to establish him as a highly individualistic writer.

proud as he is of *Angel Song*, Wheeler remains highly critical of his

own playing. "I hardly ever listen to anything I've played. When I listen, there's always something where I say, 'Why the hell did I play that phrase?' When you're improvising you don't have time to judge or fiddle about with what you're playing. It's not like composing, where you can take your time. If I could get into the same trance-like state that I get in when I'm writing, I could play a good solo. But I've never reached it."

That kind of harsh self-criticism astounds devotees like Douglas, who recently invited Wheeler to play Booker Little's compositions with him. "I think he's absolutely an original stylist on the

trumpet," says Douglas. "It's amazing to me that he's not more respected and known."

Wheeler is not sure he wants that. "I don't try to be a mentor to younger players. I suppose I feel a little uncomfortable that young people are trying to play my music. I'm quite happy to be a little bit unknown. I wouldn't last very long with fame and riches."

His discomfort with recognition has influenced his decision to remain in London. "I feel much more comfortable in a big city because I can walk for hours and no one notices me. If you walk along in the country, the farmer's dog comes out and barks at you, or people look up at the stranger passing by."

Although he recognizes the advantages of basing a musical career in New York City, he isn't sorry he decided not to move there. "I've only played New York maybe 10 times, and I definitely have the feeling I'm in a foreign country."

His diffident manner and soft voice, which has taken on a light English accent over the years, gives Wheeler an aura of sad resignation, but he rejects the notion that he has regrets. "I feel as happy with my life as a person could be. I get to play good music a lot, and I'm doing what I like best for a living."

Asked if he has any musical goals beyond more work with his own band, Wheeler brightens and says: "I'd like to maybe one day record with Sonny Rollins, one of my favorite players." Then, in a tone that straddles playfulness and self-reproach, he adds: "Of course, the way Sonny can solo all night, I might never get a chance to play." **DB**

#### EQUIPMENT

Kenny Wheeler uses a French Besson trumpet and a Yamaha flugelhorn. After years of using a smaller mouthpiece—a product of his big-band years—Wheeler has switched to a Bach 3C.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

ANGEL SONG—ECM 21607  
 THE WIDOW IN THE WINDOW—ECM 21417  
 MUSIC FOR LARGE & SMALL ENSEMBLES—  
 ECM 21415/6  
 FLUTTER BY, BUTTERFLY—Soul Note 121146  
 DOUBLE, DOUBLE YOU—ECM 21262  
 DEER WAN—ECM 21102  
 GNU HIGH—ECM 21069  
 WINDMILL TILTER—Fontana (out of print)

with Paul Bley:  
 TOUCHÉ—Justin Time 97

with Dave Holland:  
 THE RAZOR'S EDGE—ECM 21353  
 SEEDS OF TIME—ECM 21292  
 JUMPIN' IN—ECM 21269

with various others:  
 HOW IT WAS THEN ... NEVER AGAIN—ECM 21538  
 KARYROBIN—Chronoscope 2001 (Spontaneous Music Ensemble)  
 RAMBLER—ECM 21287 (Bill Frisell)  
 ART & AVIATION—Arabesque 0107 (Jane Ira Bloom)  
 BLUE CAMEL—enja 7053 (Rabih Abou-Khalil)  
 20TH ANNIVERSARY—FMP 45 (Globe Unity Orchestra)  
 TEN TRIBUTES—RAM 4517 (Claudio Fasoli)  
 JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR (Original Cast Recording)—MCA 11542



# A Great Day In chicago

GROUP PHOTO MARKS 50 YEARS  
OF JOE SEGAL'S JAZZ SHOWCASE

*By John McDonough*

he best club owners are more missionary than businessman, driven by absolute certainty of faith in their own personal taste, come what may.

Plenty has come the way of Joe Segal, the tall, spidery Chicago founder and custodian of the Jazz Showcase, who has become famous around town and country over the years as much for his persistence as his preferences. Regarding the former, he's been alive and kicking—sometimes just barely—as a force for jazz for precisely 50 years at this writing. As to his preferences, the photo you see on the next page, taken in January during the International Association of Jazz Educators meeting in Chicago, crams into one wide-angle lens the essence of what the Jazz Showcase has been about over the decades.



Jazz Showcase proprietor Joe Segal (left) with regular club headliner Johnny Griffin and Wayne Segal

RONALD HEARD





STANDING, AT LEFT (l-r): L.D. Young, Jack Cecchini, Kahil El'Zabar, Stardust Green, Al Erich, Lloyd Schad, Bob Dogan, Laura Hoffman (partially hidden), Warren Kime, Burgess Gardner, Carl Farley, Henry Johnson, Steve Jensen, Dick Buckley and Len King. STANDING, AT RIGHT: Jim Herndon, Wayne Jones, Penny Tyler, Sonny Turner, Lucy Reed, Iqua Colson, Joe Iaco, Ernest Outlaw. STANDING IN MIDDLE: (at rear) William "Bugs" Cochran, Steve Patton; (top row) Jeff Lindberg, Charlie Brougham, Neil Tesser, Jim Cooper, Fred Simon, James Camack, Bob Parton, Doug Beach, Cy Touff, Mike Kocour, Eddie DeHaas, Jim McNeely, Dan Shapera, Cozy Eggleston;

Jeff Newell, Ted Buttermann, Marshall Vente, Bob Koester, Joan Hickey, Rich Corpolongo, Dick Wang, Tom Radke, Tony Garcia, Paul Wertico, Jimmy Willis, Mark Walker, Reggie Willis, Mike Friedman, Paul Serrano, Walter Strickland, Bob Ojeda, Rich Pardo, Stu Genovese, Bob Cousins, Ronnie Kolber; Sonny Seals, Ari Brown, Charles Wallon, James Slaughter, Vandy Harris, Artie "Duke" Payne, Ajaramu, Joe Diorio, Ed Thigpen, Redd Holt, John Wright, Stu Katz, Red Holloway, Bunky Green, Larry Smith, Jerry Coleman, Robert Shy, George Hughes, Malachi Thompson, Lady Marie Eggleston, Bill Traut, Kurt Elling, Lawrence Hobgood. SITTING: (on stage)

Pictures like this by Marc PoKempner, inspired by the famous Art Kane photo taken in Harlem for the January 1959 issue of *Esquire*, have become events in themselves. This is especially so as mortality chisels ineluctably at the population of jazz giants; Marian McPartland is the only player from the original Kane photo to appear in this one.

Altogether, it constitutes at least a partial honor roll of the Jazz Showcase headliners Segal has presented over the years. Many are virtual neighbors who have made their careers primarily in Chicago: Larry Novak, Franz Jackson, Wilbur Campbell and Redd Holt. Others such as Barrett Deems and Sonny Cohn have traveled widely as sidemen (with Armstrong and Basie) but reside in Chicago. Some are national figures of enduring legend, like Milt Jackson and Buddy DeFranco. And, of course, there's the man around whom this picture more or less revolves, Joe Segal.

Segal came to Chicago in 1946 from Philadelphia after army service during World War II. He entered Roosevelt University in 1946 and almost immediately became active in the school jazz scene. That was when he first met Charlie Parker.

"He worked once as a sub for Charlie Ventura at a dance sponsored by a fraternity of Roosevelt," Segal says. "Ventura had just played the Chicago Theater, and there was a union rule that said within a certain time you couldn't work the area. It so happened that Teddy Reig, who managed Bird, heard about it and offered Parker for the date. The word got around within about three days that Bird was coming to Roosevelt. There were only a handful of Bird fans there. The rest were from the fraternity, and they didn't know one Charlie from another.

"The other time, while appearing at the Bee Hive, he came to one of our Tuesday Sessions. Because Bird had a

reputation of not showing up, we had a guy stationed downstairs, and he came running up and says, 'He's here.' It seemed like a magnet as he came in, and the joint filled up with people. We even got a wire recording until some guy made us stop. Bird said we could record."

The Cold War was just beginning between Russia and the West, but it was already going on in jazz between swing and bebop. But Segal was no bomb-thrower. "My first records were Bechet, Goodman and Condon," he says affectionately. "I saw Benny Goodman at the Earle Theater in Philly and used to hear the Condon concerts from Town Hall on the radio every Saturday. When I once heard the Cootie Williams band, I couldn't figure out what his pianist was doing. It was Bud Powell."

Segal may have been a child of swing, but at 21 he was young enough to be swept up in the excitement of bop. He wrote a jazz column for the Roosevelt





Bill Russo, Franz Jackson, Grady Johnson, Ira Sullivan, Jimmy Ellis, Willie Pickens, Phil Thomas, Joe Johnson, Eddie Johnson, Robert Barry, Truck Parham; (on chairs) Audrey Morrison, Brad Goode, Barrett Deems, Morris Jennings, Curtis Prince, Wilbur Campbell, Earma Thompson, Marlene Rosenberg, John Young, John Whitfield, Buddy DeFranco, Larry Gray, Junior Mance, Steve Rodby, Milt Jackson, Rufus Reid, Marian McPartland, Richard Davis, Lou Washington, Bill Yancey, George Freeman, Julian Priester, Fred Anderson, Johnny Pate, Von Freeman, Mike Smith, Ron Friedman, Eddie Baker; (on floor) Art Davis, Joel Spencer, Steve Eisen,

Eric Hochberg, Eric Schneider, Bobby Meyer, Jim Ryan, Mark Colby, Bobby Lewis, Larry Novak, Judy Roberts, Greg Fishman, Art Hoyle, George Bean, Pat Mallinger, Ron Blake (partially hidden), George Fludas; Joel Brandon, Tom Tom Washington, Anna Dawson, Erwin Helfer, Frank Dawson, Greg Sergo, Chuck Hedges, John Bany, Rusty Jones, Don Shelton, Ron Modell, Audrey Morris (partially hidden), Alejo Poveda, Johnny Frigo, Rick Frigo, Steve Colson, Ernest Dawkins, Bethany Pickens, Jodie Christian, Kelly Sill, Kelly Brand, Emmanuel Cranshaw; (front) Wayne Segal, Ben Pardo and Joe Segal.

student paper, *The Torch*, reporting the local action in the hip language of the day. The next couple of decades found Segal booking jazz groups on an ad-hoc basis around town.

It wasn't until 1957, he says, that he started using the name of the Modern Jazz Showcase, later shortened to just the Jazz Showcase. "That was when I started at the Gate of Horn on Monday nights," he says. "It was supposedly four weeks of Mondays, but we ended up doing four years." The formula was one Segal still uses. Club management would turn over the venue on a dark night for Segal to book. He'd get the admission and be responsible for paying the talent; management would get the bar receipts.

"Then we engaged the French Poodle at Oak and Clark for Sunday afternoons," he says. "Next we went south to the Sutherland at 47th and Drexel and did Tuesdays. Pretty soon we had a little string of venues so we could go for three nights."

But as jazz venues went in Chicago, Segal was low man, depending on the kindness of club owners with nights to spare. The Blue Note was at its peak in the Loop and had a lock on Ellington, Basie, Harry James and other top names. Over on Wacker and Michigan the London House was the local keyboard mecca for Oscar Peterson, Erroll Garner, George Shearing, Teddy Wilson, as well as small groups led by Gene Krupa, Coleman Hawkins, Jonah Jones, Lester Young and even Red Nichols. Dixieland thrived at Basin Street, Bob Scobey's and Jazz Ltd. There was still a solid audience on the South Side, and much of the newer talent was found at McKee's and the Sutherland. Segal's rotating locations survived on mostly local talent and rock-bottom admission prices.

Segal was a kind of underground figure, promoting his attractions with block-lettered window cards on yellow cardboard. During the '60s, he traveled a

weekly round of stores and lampposts around town personally distributing them. They were as ubiquitous as stop signs. Segal's lack of overhead made his a small but persistent figure, well equipped for survival. He began booking Wells Street spots when that area became hot in the '60s. At the Plugged Nickel, Showcase regulars Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt put on sessions that those who were there still remember.

In 1969, the Jazz Showcase found its first semi-permanent location in the Northpark Hotel on Lincoln Avenue. Segal still ran sessions on Wells Street, bringing in Charlie Mingus to the Brown Shoe. "People said be careful of him," Segal says. "But he was a pussy cat."

By the '70s, the Showcase had moved into a Rush Street joint called the Happy Medium and began booking occasional big bands such as Woody Herman, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Thad Jones-Mel Lewis and even Count Basie. Segal had





A group led by Franz Jackson (left) performs at the new Joe's Bebop Cafe on Navy Pier.

acquired a reputation for mobility by now. When he had to leave the Happy Medium for brief periods, he landed in the Quiet Knight, the Vibes and even an old Wobblies union hall.

"When I started at the Gate of Horn," Segal says with a little regret, "I didn't realize what I had. I might have been a [Norman] Granz or [George] Wein. But I was too into the music, happy charging a buck or two and splitting it with the musicians. Nobody else knew the musicians and had the rapport I did."

Because he knew the musicians, competition with other clubs for the same artists sometimes became

personal, with the players caught in the middle. "I may have felt some animosity at the moment," he says. "But what am I going to do, tell someone, 'Don't work?'"

By the early '80s, the big old clubs were gone. The Blue Note disappeared in 1961, the London House in 1975. McKee's and the Sutherland were gone with the whole South Side scene. Segal's only direct competition was Rick's Cafe American, part of a Holiday Inn. The problem with Rick's wasn't the competition. The problem was that with resources Segal lacked, Rick's was bidding up the price of talent. "And the price doesn't come down," he says. "Rick's was gone in a few years, but the damage was permanent."

Segal has always been sensitive where the concern is money, which seems forever scarce in his world. Musicians tell the joke about the night the ghost of Charlie Parker appears at the door of the Showcase. Segal is overwhelmed with joy and emotion. Parker smiles and starts to walk in. "Hey, Bird," Segal says. "It's \$15 now."

But the club business is the place where art meets commerce without mercy. Years of squeezing out a profit has left Segal a bit jaded about the business rituals of music. His relationships to the musicians he hires suggest an awkward mix of devoted fan and defense adversary. "In 1957 at the Bee Hive, Sol Tannenbaum was screaming that Art Blakey was asking \$1,500 a week," he says. "By the late '60s, I was paying him around \$7,500. Then, in the last few years of his life, it was \$12,500 to \$15,000. I have old promo cards from Rush Street showing the covers were \$3 weekdays, \$7 on the weekend. New Year's Eve was \$12; today, it's \$40 or \$45, and I'm low."

"We used to be able to bring in one or two single players and use a local rhythm section. Now that's getting rare. Scott Hamilton, James Moody, maybe Harold Land or Teddy Edwards will do it. But most want their own groups: Stanley Turrentine, Frank Wess, Frank Foster. Does that cost money!"

Segal won't discuss specific fees. "Some artists have big reputations," Segal says, "but people don't come out to see them. And some of the people we used to use have gotten just too expensive for our small room. They can make two, three, four times my price in one night doing a concert—unless they really want to play and they're not just into making money. Milt Jackson I'll use, because he's Milt Jackson. I think he's the greatest living player in the Bird genre."

Today, Segal has outlasted his competitors and commands the hill, consistently booking top-shelf, straight-ahead talent for six-day engagements.

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# THE SCENE OF THE shoot

By Joe Segal

The idea of a group photo is, of course, not new. Art Kane's "Great Day in Harlem" shot for Esquire magazine set the tone in 1957. But we felt we couldn't pass up the opportunity to celebrate the beginning of the Jazz Showcase's 50th-anniversary year with a love-in photo at this year's IAJE convention in Chicago. The setting was ideal, since many of the musicians associated with the Showcase were scheduled to attend. Two-thirds of the artists contacted were able to come.

As in the famous Harlem picture, it took quite a while to get everyone in place because of the great feelings of love and comradeship that exuded as musician after musician crowded into the room. Some had not seen each other for more than 30 years, or since their fledgling days as student musicians. It was warm and marvellous.

All in all, my count is 164. Many of the artists aren't known outside of the Chicago area, although most have performed and recorded worldwide. All have played at one time or another in one of more than 40 venues under the Showcase banner since 1947. We've also included some non-playing personalities who have been supportive throughout the years, and some of the music educators from the area.

I'd like to personally thank IAJE Past President Bunky Green, current head Shelly Berg and all of the administrative group headed up by Bill McFarlin and Bill Lee for putting all of the wheels in motion and for setting up a special all-Chicago tribute concert to our own Eddie Harris.

Although the picture you see is by Marc PoKempner, the shoot was directed by Steve Green with assistance from Scott Pollard. Our heartfelt thanks to all of the musicians, Down Beat and everyone who helped make it a success.

"I'm the only one now," he says. "If musicians want to work a Chicago club, they usually come to me." He's better off than at any time in his long history. After 15 years in the historic Blackstone Hotel, the property was sold to a religious group, forcing the Jazz Showcase to move once more. As in the past, it was for the best. In March 1996, Segal landed in the middle of the hottest entertainment district in town at 59 W. Grand with seating for 170. Moreover, a mile east, he and his partners, including his son, Wayne, have opened Joe's Bebop Cafe in the revitalized Navy Pier area. The cafe

features top Chicago players (Franz Jackson, Eric Schneider, Erwin Helfer) and no admission charge, while the Showcase presents the big names. A free trolley connects the two. And a block or two south, there is the Jazz Record Mart and a local jazz joint called Andy's. "We're sort of like a golden triangle of jazz," Segal says.

And now, after 50 years of persistence in the face of attrition, Segal is the big cahoona on the scene. No one can doubt that he remains in it for the love of the music, to which he has given so much. But the word is, Bird still will have to pay his \$15 at the door when he drops by. **DB**

## D.D. Jackson Paired Down / Vol. I

With James Carter, David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett, Billy Bang, Hugh Ragin, Santi Debriano



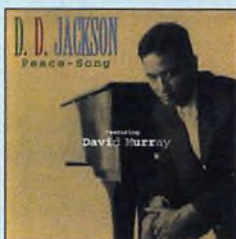
Pianist and composer D.D. Jackson has been hailed by critics for his innovative approach to the piano and for his original compositions. The New York-based Canadian has also been closely associated with many of the most influential, cutting-edge artists working in jazz today, including

David Murray, Kip Hanrahan, Dewey Redman, Billy Bang and Hamiet Bluiett. "Paired Down, Volume I" is an exciting new project which features Jackson performing original duet material with some illustrious colleagues. In addition to duets with Murray, Bang and Bluiett are collaborations with James Carter, Santi Debriano and Hugh Ragin.



"D.D. Jackson is to me the most innovative musician of his generation."  
- David Murray, The Village Voice, Jan. 7, 1997

James Carter appears courtesy of Atlantic Records



### Peace-Song featuring David Murray

This 1994 recording was D.D. Jackson's astonishing debut as a leader, and features an explosive David Murray in particularly fine form throughout this session of Jackson originals. With John Geggie (bass) and Jean Martin (drums). "Fans of unlettered New Jazz, melodious and sprightly, informed by tradition without being stifled by it, will find much to appreciate on this auspicious inaugural."

- Gene Kalbacher, CMJ, July 10, 1995

### Rhythm-Dance

This follow-up to "Peace-Song" is perhaps even more impressive. Working within a trio format, with bassist John Geggie and drummer Jean Martin, Jackson produced a riveting session, entirely self-composed, and performed with a rare fervour, conviction and originality.



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# CD REVIEWS

AUGUST 1997

**KEY**  
 Excellent ★★★★★  
 Very Good ★★★★  
 Good ★★★  
 Fair ★★  
 Poor ★



## Herbie Hancock & Wayne Shorter

1 + 1  
 Verve 537 564

★★★½

The Headhunter meets the Weather Man on peaceful acoustic ground in this intimate, inward looking (and perhaps nostalgic) CD of nine duets and one fragment by Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. The album-note claims to a "monumental historic collaboration" seem, I think, a bit ripe with hype. Indeed, the most monumental thing about this, judging by the huge list of thank-yous, is the hoard it apparently took to get these guys together.

What we actually have is something small in scale, limited in objective and highly impressionistic in outcome. Old Hancock and Shorter fans will enjoy hearing these men find their way back to unmediated musical interplay. Each attained large audiences in the '70s in high-voltage fusion bands (Hancock in Headhunters and Shorter in Weather Report). Yet, even in the maelstrom of circuitry, there were rare acoustic pauses (the Shorter/Joe Zawinul duet on "Blackthorn Rose" from the *Mysterious Traveller* album) that are precedent for what happens here.

Shorter flutters, muses and soars about on soprano throughout, while Hancock provides alert harmonic contexts. The program produces few compositions of strong melodic integrity or staying power, exceptions being Hancock's lyrical and quite memorable "Joanna's Theme" and Shorter's austere variation on a scale called "Aung San Suu Kyi." Mostly the music sets a lean, slow, rather astringent mood at the outset, with Shorter's dry, vibratoless soprano, and sticks to it to the point where everything melts together. Shorter's long, sweeping notes frame his distinct sound with uncommon purity. But it's Hancock's edgy, probing keyboard on "Meridianne" that provides most of the seasoning to Shorter's mourns. There are periods of graceful interplay ("Sonrisa") and direct exchanges of phrases and trills ("Memory Of Enchantment"). But "Visitor From Nowhere" is fairly typical of the dynamic pattern in which the players work their way leisurely into the piece, build to a level of intense but never excessive turmoil, then pull back and coast to

a smooth landing.

If my remarks leave you with an impression of respect and appreciation for the talents and intentions of what these two fine musicians have produced, but do not suggest great love or enthusiasm for the results, who am I to argue with myself?  
 —John McDonough

1 + 1—*Meridianne*—A Wood Sylph; Aung San Suu Kyi; Sonrisa; Memory Of Enchantment; Visitor From Nowhere; Joanna's Theme; Diana; Visitor From Somewhere; Manhattan Lorelei; Hale-Bopp, Hip Hop. (61:58)  
 Personnel—Hancock, piano; Shorter, soprano saxophone.



## Bill Frisell

Nashville  
 Nonesuch 79415

★★★★½

According to the press material for *Nashville*, the guitarist's acquaintance with the home of country music was nil before he paid the home of country music a visit in order to record this album. Judging from the results, it's hard to believe Frisell's only exposure might have been from watching Minnie Pearl and the Grand Ol' Opry on TV. The cover is reminiscent of Bob Dylan's great *Nashville*

*Skyline*, an album the folkie-turned-rocker-turned-country-bumpkin recorded on location in 1969 with some of country music's finest.

Frisell's *Quartet* ('96)—featuring another drummerless band and minus what critic John Corbett called Frisell's "electronic whatchamacallits"—documented a continued downshifting for the former scrabbling New York Downtowner, the albums *This Land* and *Have A Little Faith* essentially starting it all. What is most striking about Frisell, whatchamacallits or no, is how, like all great artists, he makes you forget where you are, losing you in a swirl of creativity that has little or nothing to do with genres, or, in this case, settings. Like Dylan in '69, the new *Nashville* is not about being iconoclastic, but about moving away from expectations and toward a real musical center. OK, he could have used Johnny Cash instead of Robin Holcomb for vocals (Holcomb being the lone fellow out of town), her delicate vibrato singing, while genuine and effective on Neil Young's "One Of These Days," making me think the wallpaper might've been peeling off the studio walls as she sang the '60s pop ditty "The End Of The World."

For those jazz esthetes who prefer to mock "country and western," there's much of Frisell's idiosyncratic swing, "lonely steel guitar" tone and picking style to savor. Given his musical affinities, he didn't have too far to go from where his sublimely bent sensibilities have already taken him. Listen to the blues "We're Not From Around Here" to get the perfect melding of Frisellian Americana with tales from the Far Side, straight from the heart of Dixie. Produced by Wayne Horvitz, *Nashville* takes you into an empty bar, a five & dime, within shooting distance of Sunday church.

The choice of bandmates, like a well-oiled piano trio, suggests they've known each other's moves for years. Not everyone plays on every cut, so the richness of, say, Ron Block's banjo, or Jerry Douglas' dobro, really stand out. Indeed, Frisell the orchestrator/colorist (and

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>HERBIE HANCOCK &amp; WAYNE SHORTER</b> <i>1+1</i>		★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★½
<b>BILL FRISELL</b> <i>Nashville</i>		★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★★½
<b>JIM HALL</b> <i>Textures</i>		★★★	★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★
<b>WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET</b> <i>Takin' It 2 The Next Level</i>		★★★★	★★½	★★½	★★★



composer of 11 of the 14 tunes here) uses the beauty of acoustic instruments on a number of especially delicate jams: the anachronistic "Gimme A Holler," "Dogwood Acres," "Mr. Memory," "Brothers," to name a few.

And like the title to this genuine collection of musicianly arranged and performed music, a song like "Shucks" sums it all up: The melody sings out the lines to the children's song "Three Blind Mice" en route to some modest but thoroughly enjoyable picking between Frisell and Douglas. Virtuosity without the flash. That's Nashville, that's Bill Frisell. —John Ephland

**Nashville**—*Gimme A Holler*; *Go Jake*; *One Of These Days*; *Mr. Memory*; *Brother*; *Will Jesus Wash The Bloodstains From Your Hands*; *Keep Your Eyes Open*; *Pipe Down*; *Family*; *We're Not From Around Here*; *Dogwood Acres*; *Shucks*; *The End Of The World*; *Gone*. (63:05)  
**Personnel**—Frisell, electric and acoustic guitars; Viktor Krauss, bass; Jerry Douglas, dobro (1-6, 9, 10, 12); Ron Block, banjo (2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14); acoustic guitar (3, 7); Adam Steffey, mandolin (2, 3, 6-8, 11, 13, 14); Robin Holcomb, vocals (3, 6, 13); Pat Bergeson, harmonica (2, 8).



## Jim Hall

**Textures**  
 Telarc 83402

★★★½

However fans think of guitarist Jim Hall—playing with Sonny Rollins, with Jimmy Giuffrè, with Bill Evans or Art Farmer—it's safe to say he's not best known as a composer. But as early as '61 his writing was featured on *John Lewis Presents Contemporary Music: Jazz Abstractions—Compositions By Gunther Schuller & Jim Hall* (Atlantic, out of print), and in fact before moving to L.A. in the mid-'50s, Hall had studied composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. So a record like *Textures*, which spotlights Hall's compositional talents alongside his wonderful way with a pick, doesn't exactly come out of thin air.

Still, it's bound to surprise some listeners, not least for its eclectic stylistic program, including expressive contraptions of 19th-century classical music, folk and popular material, and Hall's own impressionism-influenced jazz concept. On the first half of the record, Hall uses his mildly amped, de-trebled electric setup, while the second half consists exclusively of bright acoustic guitar.

The pieces fall into two basic groups, one featuring brass instruments in different configurations and one utilizing string ensembles. "Fanfare" kicks the disc off with an appropriately introductory statement, snips of Mardi Gras march and dialogue for electric guitar and brass-band. (A weirdly perfunctory blues-walk

cliché cadence shuts the track off.) Equally as lively, the disc's last track, "Circus Dance," is a nifty composition in triple meter, full of dark corners, carnivalesque overtones and Marcus Rojas' chugging tuba. More stately horn chords initiate "Reflections" before a rolling jazz waltz enters, pushed by Scott Colley's propulsive bass, brass flourishes and Hall's tasty guitar.

The string compositions are also varied. Most successful among them, "Quadrologue," sports a misshapen string quartet (electric guitar instead of first fiddle, plus bass on the low end). Fascinating contrary motion in the lines (deliberate viola/cello against bubbling guitar/bass) and spot-on rhythmic playing by Hall, whose guitar intellect is a delight. With Middle Eastern borrowings in its slightly kitschy melody, the colorful, programmatic "Ragman" constructs a strings-and-percussion platform for guitar and Joe Lovano's soprano. The longest piece is the least absorbing: "Passacaglia" s neo-romantic ambitions lack the distinctiveness of the other tracks, and Hall's solo-acoustic parts are much more harmonically interesting than the weighty, derivative string arrangements with which they alternate. Along with the only complete dead spot on the disc, "Sazanami," a steeldrum feature that doesn't generate much (and consequently fades out), "Passacaglia" shows the shortcomings of any pretense of "seriousness" in such a project. The most serious music on *Textures* involves Hall's guitar as much as his pen, jazz as much as concert composition; the legitimizing touch of "classical" doesn't automatically lend a piece gravity. Fortunately, Hall usually ignores these distinctions in favor of strong music. —John Corbett

**Textures**—*Fanfare*; *Ragman*; *Reflections*; *Quadrologue*; *Passacaglia*; *Sazanami*; *Circus Dance*. (51:33)

**Personnel**—Hall, electric and acoustic guitars; Joe Lovano, soprano saxophone (2); Jamie Finegan, Ryan Kysor, trumpet (1, 3, 7); Claudio Roditi, flugelhorn (1, 3); Alex Brolsky, french horn (1, 3); Conrad Herwig (1, 3, 7); Jim Pugh (1, 3), trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba (1, 3, 7); Terry Clarke, drums (1-3, 6, 7); Gordon Gottlieb, Kenny Wolleson, percussion (2); Derek DiCenzo, steel drum (6); Scott Colley (2-6), Anthony Falanga (2, 5), bass; plus string sections (2, 4, 5).



## World Saxophone Quartet

**Takin' It 2 The Next Level**  
 Justin Time 93

★★½

It's been over two decades since David Murray, Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake and Hamiet Bluiett hooked up in New Orleans

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and became the World Saxophone Quartet. They opened ears in the '70s, simultaneously underscoring the importance and possibility of reed sections, and thrived during the '80s, investigating the formal variants of a horns-only approach.

But every band has its heyday, and for the last few years the novelty of the WSQ, as well as the vitality of its recordings, has diminished. Recapturing its glory days on record seems to be a tough assignment for the ensemble. Their second disc for the Canadian Justin Time label (and their second with John Purcell as a full-fledged member), is a mildly compelling date that, while offering a contextual modification (full rhythm section, y'all) and moments of true inspiration, nevertheless generates ho-hum results.

Though the disc starts strong, with two nifty Lake tunes, the quality of the writing is dodgy. The alto saxist has a way of balancing elements of dissonance and accord, turning oft-catchy melodies into kaleidoscopic maneuvers. When he pushes the rhythm section into the blend as craftily as he does on "Wiring," the juxtapositions further enhance the intrigue. A muscular-yet-nimble funk laid down by drummer Ronnie Burrage acts as fertile soil helping to sprout Lake's oddly blended horn phrases. Though the band rides a somewhat linear Caribbean groove on "Rio," the same kind of crafty contrast stimulates the action. Lake is likely the most mature composer of the bunch.

In comparison, Bluiett's forte is riffs and raucousness. His "Blues For A Warrior Spirit" puts a vamp in motion and lets the guys blow a spell—a WSQ formula if there ever was one. Calvin Jones' bass helps drive the action, turning a repeated pattern into a platform for propulsive swing. But the solo-solo-schematic, regardless of how exclamatory or emphatic the statements are, becomes predictable. The excursions follow each other like jets waiting to leave from LaGuardia. It's only when they start to simultaneously rev their engines that the textural labyrinth becomes charged. At almost 13 minutes, the ominous Murray ballad that follows doesn't do much to amend the trajectory. Neither does the trite uptempo piece by Burrage that conflates the Art Ensemble's "Odwalla" and Trane's "Giant Steps." One way to build a more focused atmosphere would have been to lop off the last 24 minutes of the program; the final three pieces are the disc's

most mediocre.

The idea of interspersing curt solo passages between the longer tunes is righteous—enhancing the program's flow is always a goal—but none of the soliloquies are very vibrant, especially pianist Donald Blackman's nod to Liberace, "The Peace Before." Murray's gurgling bass clarinet also seems bereft of meaning. The WSQ have dealt with a broad spectrum of ideas over the years—tone poems, shriek-a-thons, soul tones, African drummers, Ellingtonia. Sustaining inspiration and generating concepts in this post-everything jazz era ain't easy. With a bit more pith on their side, and a longer time spent at the drawing board, the title *Takin' It 2 The Next Level* wouldn't be such an empty promise. —Jim Macnie

**Takin' It 2 The Next Level**—Wiring; Soft Landing; Rio; The Peace Before; Blues For A Warrior Spirit; The Desegregation Of Our Children; When The Monarchs Come To Town; Endless Flight; Ballad After Us; Australopithecus. (67:10)

**Personnel**—David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Hamiet Bluiett, baritone sax; Oliver Lake, alto sax; John Purcell, saxello, tenor sax; Donald Blackman, piano and keyboards; Calvin Jones, acoustic electric bass; Ronnie Burrage, drums and miscellaneous percussion.



## Buckshot LeFonque

Music Evolution  
Columbia 67584

★★★★

**T**his may be the "mother" of mixed bags. If you like your jazz whacked, your pop bopped, your rap ripped and your rock really rolled, then this venturesome sack of sound is good to go. As if that weren't enough, our man

Buckshot has tossed in a little poetry and recitation.

All you subversives who like your margins extended and categories smashed will get a special kick out of the phat flava here. "Music evolution change/Sometimes the common makes it sound strange" is a line from the chorus of the title tune, and it establishes the mood and attitude of this latest Branford Marsalis production. It's a catchy, anthem-like rap that's delivered at a blistering pace by a vocalist with the odd name of 50 Styles: The Unknown Soldier. Against his raw declaration that scores white rock & roll and fake jazz, Marsalis' soprano saxophone alternately feeds the tempo and cools off the Black nationalism that erupts here and elsewhere.

The rapper makes several more riveting appearances, but we get thankful breaks between his heated rhymes, most rewardingly by covalist/pianist Frank McComb. McComb fulfills his role as ballad relief man with a voice that will remind you of Stevie Wonder, circa 1970s. He demonstrates a similar strained but melodic pitch on "Another Day," and he possesses a pleasant resonance that should earn him his own date in the studio. Some better lyrics would augment such future engagements.

Among Buckshot's other guests are actor Laurence Fishburne, whose short soliloquy on "My Way (Doin' It)" evokes a primordial Africa and futuristic images, which is consistent with the album's blend and bend approach. Tess (Marsalis?) lays down a smooth poetic piece "Weary With Toil," where once more Branford's luxuriant saxophone embellishes the moment.

On "Jungle Grove" all the sampling and rapping—which at various stages of "Music Evolution" includes Redman, Method Man, Eric B & Rakim and G.U.R.U.—are temporarily suspended and the core band jumps to the center with a lavish and witty arrangement, spiced nicely by Russell Gunn's trumpet, Rocky Bryant's drums and the soulful vamps of pianist Joey Calderazzo. It is another Marsalis, however—trombonist Delfeayo—who truly energizes the setting with his vigorous, thoughtfully conceived solo.

Compared to all the other attempts to merge jazz and rap, to make bebop and hip-hop coalesce, this is among the finest and most realized efforts. And as it evolves, it is sure to get better. Shoot yo' best—Buckshot! —Herb Boyd

**Music Evolution**—Here We Go Again; Music Evolution; Waseveritis; James Brown; Another Day; Try These On; A Buckshot Rebuttal; My Way (Doin' It); Better Than I Am; Paris Is Burning; Jungle Grove; Weary With Toil; Black Monday; Phoenix; Samba Pop; And We Out. (63:09)

**Personnel**—Marsalis, tenor, soprano saxophone, vocals, conductor, programming; Rocky Bryant, percussion (1, 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14); DJ Apollo, *Wheels Of Steel* (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 15); 50 Styles: *The Unknown Soldier* (2, 3, 6-8, 10, 13, 15); G.U.R.U. (11), vocals; Reginald Veal, acoustic bass (2); L. Carl Burnett, guitar (2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14); Joey Calderazzo, piano (2, 11, 15); Russell Gunn, trumpet (2, 4, 11, 12, 15); Mino Cinelu, percussion (2, 9, 11, 12); David Sanborn, alto saxophone (4); Reggie Washington, bass (4, 8, 9, 12); John Touchy, trombone (4); "Hey" Man Jefferson, *screamin' and shoutin'* (4); Frank McComb, vocals and keyboards (5, 9, 14); Ben Wolfe (11, 14), Eric Revis (13), Will Lee (5), bass; Carol Webb Sortomme, concert master (5, 9); Barry Finclair (5, 9); John Pintavalle (5, 9), Donna Tecco (5, 9), Melanie Baker (9), Marti Sweet (9), violin; Alfred Brown (9), Sue Pray (5, 9), Julien Barber (5, 9), Crystal Garner (9), Carol Landon (9), Mark Orrin Shuman (9), Ellen Westermann (9) viola; Rebecca Young (9), Diane Barere (9), Richard Locker (5, 9), cello; Rob "Wacko" Hunter, background vocals (8); Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone (11); Matthew Backer, keyboard programming (13).



## LARRY CORYELL

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**Derek Bailey  
Pat Metheny  
Gregg Bendian  
Paul Wertico**

**The Sign Of 4**  
Knitting Factory Works 197

★★★★

**Paul Wertico  
Gregg Bendian**

**Bang!**  
Truemedea 96731

★★★★

**Derek Bailey**

**Music And Dance**  
Revenant 201

★★★½

**D**on't worry about Derek Bailey going mainstream. He hasn't abandoned his doggedly individual, uncompromising approach to the guitar in search of mass-market acceptance. These provocative, somewhat crazed encounters with Pat Metheny occur on Bailey's turf, drawing the younger guitarist further into the wilds of improvised music. For Bailey, these live and studio sessions expose his spiky, unpredictable logic to legions of Metheny fans as yet unfamiliar with the spontaneous combustion of collective improvisation. For Metheny, *The Sign Of 4* completes the outward-bound trajectory that started with *Song X* (Geffen, 1986) and continued with the industrial-strength *Zero Tolerance For Silence* (DGC, 1994), recalling the turbulence and frenzy of both projects.

Most tracks feature electric guitars, and Metheny proves to be a good foil for Bailey, supplying a linear approach and a piercing wail to complement Bailey's clipped phrases and overheated squalls. Metheny's serious commitment to free playing is immediately evident, starting with the howling, punishing solo that occupies much of the hour-long "A Study In Scarlet." Bailey responds to Metheny's assault with churning, distorted waves of noise, while the drummers Gregg

Bendian and Paul Wertico attack their instruments without respite, playing anything and everything but a steady groove.

The remaining sessions are more varied, ranging from spacious, calm interludes to raging exchanges among drummers and guitarists, with the most ambitious improvisations, including "Fortune," "Tracks" and "In Quest Of A Solution," embracing both extremes. The studio session, titled "The Science Of Deduction," is best of all, with acoustic tracks such as "Strange Story" and "The Aurora" making use of Bendian's vibes and ethnic percussion to shape the quietly mysterious interactions of Bailey and Metheny. One wishes that more such strange and fragile acoustic pieces had been included.

(Bendian's duets with Bailey on the guitarist's overlooked 1995 CD *Banter* from O.O. Discs are well worth searching out.) Most of the improvisations succeed in drawing the listener into the vortex of the activity and communicating a sense of group motion and common purpose. The three-CD set is inexpensive, priced to encourage risk-takers and thrill-seekers. New facets and inter-relationships are sure to emerge after repeated listenings.

Wertico and Bendian's working relationship predates *The Sign Of 4* by a few years. *Bang!* collects spirited, entrancing live and studio sessions from 1993 and 1994, with the two versatile percussionists joining forces to create "spontaneous compositions" for an arsenal of tuned, ethnic and conventional percussion

**A LIFE AS VIBRANT  
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"[A] meticulously researched, vibrant biography, which has the potential to become the definitive word on Armstrong's life and remarkable career." —*Variety*

His musical innovation and exuberance made him a household name, yet the full story of his extravagant life has never been told. Now, drawing on a vast, previously unexplored archive of Armstrong's writings and recordings, acclaimed biographer Laurence Bergreen presents an intimate, provocative, and definitive portrait of the founding father of jazz—the man Bergreen calls, "the pursuit of happiness personified."



Photos: From top: Bert Stern; Condé Nast



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instruments. "Pulse Paths" suggests music from Ghana, by way of Steve Reich, by layering log drums and prepared drums with steady, incremental changes in patterns. On most tracks, one percussionist lays down a rhythmic foundation for his partner's improvisations, though the roles, the instrumentation and the foundation itself constantly shift. These change-ups give "Criss-Cross Current" and the dynamic "Tiltwaive" their color and variety.

*Bang!* offers superior sound quality to capture the nuances of the performances. (On *The Sign Of 4*, such subtleties are often obscured by the buzz and blare of electric guitars.) I'm impressed by the economy and purpose of these duets—there's rarely a sense of excess or noodling. The sense of structure and design displayed by Wertico and Bendian recalls Max Roach's M'Boom ensemble. Like M'Boom, they transcend categorization as "jazz" or "world music." (Truemedi Jazzworks: P.O. Box 24543, Cleveland OH 44124)

Without instrumental accompaniment (but not alone), Bailey's inventions can be heard in a pure, distilled form on *Music And Dance*, which documents a 1980 performance with dancer Min Tanaka. The guitarist values the flow of ideas between participants, i.e., the instrumentalist provides a foundation for the dancer, but also reacts spontaneously to the dancer's movements. In this case, Tanaka's contributions are not perceptible to the listener, who hears only one side of the conversation. This missing element makes Bailey's performance more perplexing than should be the case. A rainstorm interrupts "Rain Dance," and the resulting sounds also impact on and direct Bailey's playing in a unique, Cage-ian interaction.

Mixing moments of pristine, luminous sound with harsh, brittle passages, *Music And Dance* argues that Bailey prizes the array of remarkable sounds generated by his guitar over any expectations of how the instrument should sound. The recording quality is a little rough, and the performance was previously available only at Bailey's concerts. This is a challenging CD, even by Bailey's standards,

and I prefer to hear him in a format with audible give-and-take.  
—Jon Andrews

**The Sign Of 4**—*A Study In Scarlet; Evidently; Untidy Habits; The Rule Of Three; Strange Story; The Aurora; Tracks; A Break In The Chain; One Object; Euclid; Fortune; Poisoned Arrows; Trichinopoly; Ransom; Antecedents; In Quest Of A Solution.* (62:53/61:22/68:13)

**Personnel**—Bailey, electric and acoustic guitars; Metheny, electric and acoustic guitars, guitar synthesizer; Bendian, drums, vibraphone, percussion; Wertico, drums, percussion.

**Bang!**—*Pulse Paths; Ballad?; Dancing In Tiers; Criss-Cross Current; Tiltwaive; Metal Urge; Scarlet Constellations; Worn March.* (61:53)

**Personnel**—Wertico, drums, percussion; Bendian, drums, vibraphone, percussion.

**Music And Dance**—*Rain Dance; Saturday Dance.* (53:46)

**Personnel**—Bailey, guitar.



## Muhal Richard Abrams

**Song For All**  
Black Saint 120161

★★★½

**W**hen jazz writers rhapsodize over Muhal Richard Abrams, they most often applaud his work with large ensembles, touting the sophisticated, visionary arrangements, the crowd-pleasing blues stomps and the more cerebral explorations. His projects for smaller groups tend to be over-

looked. *Song For All*, performed by Abrams' septet, doesn't achieve the same heights as sublime Abrams Orchestra CDs like *Hearings Suite* (Black Saint, 1989) and *Blu Blu Blu* (Black Saint, 1993), but it offers intriguing compositions and some solid solos. Rather than emphasize Abrams' gift for arrangements, *Song For All* showcases his talents as a passionate, inventive soloist. The compositions emphasize rhythm and solos in somewhat spare settings, with limited ensemble playing.

The rhythm section of drummer Reggie Nicholson and bassist Brad Jones plays a critical role in shaping these compositions, with particularly effective work from Nicholson on the robotic march of "Dabadubada" and the busy, precise patterns of the CD's centerpiece, "Over The Same Over." Abrams' piano introduces "Marching With Honor" and drives the piece forward, culminating in an intricate, cascading solo. His approach to synthesizer is singular, contributing an icy sheen or, in the case of "Imagine," creating otherworldly environments. Of the soloists, Abrams, vibraphonist Bryan Carrott and trombonist Craig Harris turn in consistently strong, engaging solos. "Steamin' Up The Road" will become a favorite, as it salutes tradition with roaring, aggressive jazz played at a furious tempo as solos by Abrams and Carrott take flight.

—Jon Andrews

**Song For All**—*Song For All; Dabadubada; Marching With Honor; GMBR; Over The Same Over; Line Time; Steamin' Up The Road; Imagine.* (77:25)

**Personnel**—Abrams, piano, synthesizer; Eddie Allen, trumpet; Aaron Stewart, tenor and soprano saxophones; Craig Harris, trombone; Bryan Carrott, vibraphone, percussion; Brad Jones, bass; Reggie Nicholson, drums; Richarda Abrams, vocals (1).



## Ron Affif

**Ringside**  
Pablo 2310-962

★★★★

## Rudy Linka

**Always Double Czech!**  
enja 9301

★★★★

**W**ith three studio albums in the Fantasy catalog and his confidence steeled by a successful appearance at the Village Vanguard, Affif agreed with producer Eric Miller that it was the right time to make his first "live"

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*Greg Abate*



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recording. So, the record company converted Studio A into a makeshift club, invited a few well-wishers, and let Affif's New York-based trio do their thing. Offering his second enja album, Linka and first-call sidemen George Mraz and Marvin "Smitty" Smith deliver the goods, too.

On the opener, "If I Were A Bell," Affif plays his guitar with the barely contained verve of a big-league pitcher starting off the ball game with one blazing fastball after another. His brash display of tricky fast fingerings almost numbs the listener, but he gets a crisp, clean sound despite his haste. The 31-year-old Pittsburgh native cools down, done with showing off, on "Don't Make Me Pull That Tongue Out," an original titled after an expression favored by his boxer father. Affif's blues intonation is impressive, and he's right in sync with bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Colin Bailey.

Affif really hits the mark mid-concert. His single lines and chordal exclamations in the Gershwin evergreen "Love Walked In" have a special warmth and communicative nature. In the captivating slow original, "Farewell," he mounts sincere feeling and creative thought on all his phrases; the benefits of being supported by familiar players rather than a pick-up band are obvious. Affif's natural capacity for swinging is displayed throughout "Uncle Joe," a full-of-life original named after the influential Joe Pass, and his gentle waltzing interpretation of "I Should Care" is persuasive in the clarity and imagination of his musical thinking. The mood the trio establishes on "I Should Care" is so evocative that this 10-minute-plus performance passes in a flash. The last part of the concert, an uptempo reading of "Alone Together" followed by Affif's lyrical "tone poem" "Holly," comes as a postscript to that wonderful stretch of four songs.

Another valuable, undervalued player is Linka, a Czech residing in New York since the mid-'80s, who numbers John Abercrombie and John Scofield among his fans. In general, his solos unfold at a leisurely pace on this program of 10 originals and "Come Rain Or Come Shine," with melody and harmony studied fascinatingly. He lets every note he chooses work for him, and what he elects to leave out further enriches his music.

Often in guitar trio jazz, delicacy arrives at the expense of suspense or tension, but Linka and his friends Smith and Mraz (*Double Czech*, get it?) are no run-of-the-mill group. "The Man From Waikiki" is lyrical, lovely, but there's a welcome touch of turbulence generated by the musicians. The trio's remaking of that Arlen/Mercer chestnut shows their suave command and their conflicting impulse to break loose. "And How Are You...?" pulls back from prissiness with aggressive tempo shifts and abrupt changes in dynamics. Plugged in, Linka cuts a swath with his guitar, as in "Room #428" and "Bob's Tune," with Smith stoking fires, and not one of the trio resorting to cliché or sounding the least bit uninvolved. —Frank-John Hadley

**Ringside**—*If I Were A Bell; Don't Make Me Pull That Tongue Out; Love Walked In; Farewell; Uncle Joe; I Should Care; Alone Together; Holly.* (54:26)

**Personnel**—Affif, guitar; Essiet Essiet, bass; Colin Bailey, drums.

**Always Double Czech!**—*Coming Through; Room #428; Air Jamaica; Our Drives To K1; The Man From Waikiki; Bob's Tune; Secret Inside; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Way Back; Now This; And How Are You In The Mornings?* (61:55)

**Personnel**—Linka, guitars; George Mraz, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.



## Kenny Garrett

### Songbook

Warner Bros. 46551

★★★★½

This is powerhouse music, the state of the art. It's energetic, melodic, elating, modern, chance taking, traditional, sad, intelligent, gritty. It's Garrett's finest hour, and it will play well for years and years.

A superb follow-up to last year's *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane, Songbook* contains all Garrett tunes. While many of these have simple (though memorable) melodies, the songs are nonetheless finely crafted: The rhythm section almost always has something to play, e.g., a repeating bass line, a deft piano figure, that is in contrast to Garrett's lead and fleshes out the compositions. The foursome—Kenny Kirkland, Nat Reeves and Jeff "Tain" Watts are the first-rate others—play these

numbers with verve and precision and passion. This is not a pickup band, but a group that's both recorded and performed together for some time. It shows.

There's a splendidly wide breadth to these tunes. The opening "2 Down" and the closer "Sounds" are both medium-tempo swingers, platforms for solid, hearty blowing. "Before It's Time" is a contemporary jazz ballad, à la Trane's "After The Rain," "Brother Hubbard" is both a salute to Hubcap and a dirge for his current health problems, while "House" is a rouser that will make you shout. "Wooden Steps" is an edgy blues variant, and "November 15" is another dulcet-toned number. Garrett paces the disc, following a heated selection with a calmer one; he often solos briefly and gives Kirkland plenty of room.

From the first notes of the leader's solo on "2 Down," we know who he is: His pleasingly rough sound is unique, and there's a singularity to the way he organizes the various jazz languages he speaks—Coltrane's angularity, Bird's fluidity, Ornette's freedom among them. In this compelling solo, and others, Garrett plays interesting scalar ideas, notes so speedy they form dense bunches, up and down arpeggiations, more. Kirkland's comping is spare: The band often sways between a quartet and trio feeling, and sometimes the pianist strolls, further freeing and proceeding. Two other dynamo outings are "Wooden," which roars after a tension-building start, and the funky, bluesy yet decidedly current "House," where Garrett's plaintive wails have a pulpit-based, "I'm gonna tell everybody" stance.

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There's plenty on the softer side, too. "Before" has its lovely line played first by Kirkland (for a while it seems to be a piano trio number), and finally the leader. Here, on "November 15," "Hubbard" and other not-so-intense tunes, Garrett's sound opens up and has a warm, appealing roundness that pulls the listener. His ideas, too, are less notey; he savors his choices, and we do, too.

Kirkland is the other spotlighted soloist, and he's terrific. On "2 Down," he finds ideas he likes and repeats them a few times, like a kid playing with one favorite toy, and then another. On "She Waits," he leaves so much space between his notes that he seems to be working in slow motion. Reeves has a couple of moments that boast fat, well-ordered notes, and Watts plays with the fervor and élan we expect from him.

—Zan Stewart

**Songbook**—2 Down & 1 Across; November 15; Wooden Steps; Song A Sing Of Song; Brother Hubbard; Ms. Maja; The House That Nat. Built; She Waits For The Sun; Before It's Time To Say Goodbye; Sounds Of The Flying Pygmies. (59:45)

**Personnel**—Garrett, alto saxophone; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.



## Eliane Elias

**The Three Americas**  
Blue Note 53328

★★★

The dominant America that emerges on *The Three Americas* is Latin, and with Elias as our guide we sample a smorgasbord of rhythms and song forms—Cuban songs, guaguancos, chorangas, rumbas and mon-

tunos; Puerto Rican guachas; Argentinean tangos; and Brazilian choros and bossa novas. To this degree its appeal is ethnomusicological rather than presentation. Only occasionally is prominence given to distinct blues and jazz motifs, whose absence is all the more conspicuous when she dips into the classical modes of Antonio Carlos Gomes and Astor Piazzolla.

Eliane opens with a balanced mix of the Americas on "An Up Dawn" and "The Time Is Now," but with each succeeding cut she moves further away from the jazz core that she has explored so well in the past. On the latter selection her festive, two-hand romp suddenly fades into a mid-tempo statement that shifts in mood and imagery from Sao Paulo to St. Paul. This is an exciting blend of the exotic and the prosaic, but, alas, Elias, has other appointments to keep.

Two of these assignments—"Brigas Nunca Mais" and "Chega De Saudade," popularly known as "No More Blues"—are effectively rendered and harken back to a previous album Elias devoted to the work of Antonio Carlos Jobim. Like another Brazilian native, Astrud Gilberto, her voice may not be endowed with much range, but it conveys a pleasant and rather seductive sensuality. More of this, and more of Oscar Castro-Neves and Dave Valentin, would have lifted the project out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

—Herb Boyd

**The Three Americas**—An Up Dawn; The Time Is Now; Caipora; Choroango; Chega De Saudade; Crystal And Lace; Brigas Nunca Mais; Introduction To Guarani; O Guarani; Jungle Journey; Missing You; Jumping Fox. (50:21)

**Personnel**—Eliane, piano and vocals; Marc Johnson, bass; Satoshi Takeishi, drums; Cafe, percussion; Manolo Badrena, percussion; Dave Valentin, flute (1, 6); Gil Goldstein, accordion (4); Oscar Castro-Neves, guitar (5, 7); Mark Feldman, violin (4).

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## Enrico Pieranunzi Trio

Seaward

Soul Note 121272

★★★½

A natural storyteller, pianist Enrico Pieranunzi uses graceful, arching melodic lines and tasteful embellishments to develop flowing, gently swinging narratives. With "L'Heure Oblique" and "What You Told Me Last Night," Pieranunzi excels in establishing poignant, pensive moods around very pretty melodies. "Seaward" is a lovely, aptly named tone poem with an irresistible ebb and flow. Every so often, he breaks the spell with biting jazz explorations like his spiky Gershwin



adaptation "This Is For You/But Not For Me." The trio's performance of Jerome Kern's "Yesterdays" mines new aspects of that standard, taking it in unpredictable directions with very satisfying results.

Bassist Hein Van de Geyn makes a strong impression on this date—he reminds me of Eberhard Weber in favoring the upper register of the double bass, and of David Holland in his strong melodic capabilities (e.g., his lead bass on Wayne Shorter's "Footprints").

The CD falters slightly over its second half, as a feeling of sameness starts to creep in. Perhaps Pieranunzi tries one too many tugs at the heartstrings. This could have been a gem of a disc with tighter programming and fewer songs. As it is, *Seaward* makes a charming, elegant companion. —Jon Andrews

**Seaward**—*Seaward*; *L'Heure Oblique*; *Straight To The Dream*; *Footprints*; *The Memory Of This Night*; *Yesterdays*; *Je Ne Sais Quoi*; *This Is For You/But Not For Me*; *Key Words*; *I Hear A Rhapsody*; *What You Told Me Last Night*. (71:05)

**Personnel**—Pieranunzi, piano; Hein Van de Geyn, bass; André Ceccarelli, drums.

ute to Lester Bowie, but James Zollar's wah-wah trumpet solo sounds more like Wynton Marsalis' neo-Ellingtonian than Bowie's squawking expressionism. "Pantomime," "Inside Out" and "Tight Squeeze" also flirt with abstraction, but in a concrete way, so that solos by Zollar, alto saxist Randall Connors and pianist David Berkman seem studied rather than spontaneous. Other tunes suggest Herbie Hancock or Wayne Shorter, with Connors and Zollar playing sleek, pungent post-bop licks. McBee makes his bass sing with ringing vibrato in the top register and smooth resonance on the bottom—propulsive but never overbearing. His compositions, derivative without being imitative, draw deeply on the blues, building complex patterns out of familiar elements in a way that is challenging yet accessible.

Recorded at the twilight of the free-jazz era, *Alternate Spaces* looks back at hard-bop and forward to the chamber jazz of the '80s. The loose, open-ended blowing, together with the distant, slightly muffled sound quality, gives the album the feel of a jam session, with moments of inspiration cheek by jowl with stretches of tedium. Chico Freeman's ululating soprano sax solo on "Come Sunrise," for instance, erupts with an intensity that's wholly out of character with the rest of the tune, while Don Pullen surprises with every pianistic sprinkle or spatter. McBee's bass is often more speech-like than lyrical, lending the music a conversational air, but his well-constructed compositions, from the ominous elegy of the title track to the fractured funk of "Sorta, Kinda Blue," provide the improvisers with a solid foundation. —Larry Birnbaum

**Unspoken**—*Pantomime*; *Unspoken*; *Catfish*; *Sleeping Giant*; *Lucia*; *Inside Out*; *Slippin' n Slidin'*; *Tight Squeeze*. (48:09)

**Personnel**—McBee, bass; James Zollar, trumpet; Randall Connors, alto saxophone; David Berkman, piano; Matt Wilson, drums.

**Alternate Spaces**—*Alternate Spaces*; *Consequences*; *Come Sunrise*; *Sorta, Kinda Blue*; *Expression*. (61:36)

**Personnel**—McBee, bass; Don Pullen, piano; Chico Freeman, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute, bass clarinet; Allen Nelson, drums; Famoudou Don Moye, percussion.



## Cecil McBee

**Unspoken**

Palmetto 2023

★★★½

**Alternate Spaces**

India Navigation 1043

★★★½

Like others who walk the line between bebop and free-jazz, McBee fell out of favor in the '80s, but now, as young lions creep gingerly toward the precipice of freedom, the times may be catching up to him. McBee's latest release, his first as a leader in a dozen years, and a recent reissue of a 1977 session offer a study in contrast, at least on the surface. The new album, with a group of youthful sidemen, is polished and relatively conservative; the old one, recorded with the bassist's peers, is ragged and edgy. The common thread—aside from McBee's superb bass playing, with its firm, resilient tone and buoyant rhythmic bounce—is his strong, tightly structured writing, that while often reminiscent of Miles Davis' '60s band, is highly distinctive and consistently inventive.

Even at its most daring, *Unspoken* is carefully controlled, cleanly executed and buffed to a lapidary luster. "Catfish," for example, is a trib-



## Charles Lloyd

**Canto**

ECM 21635

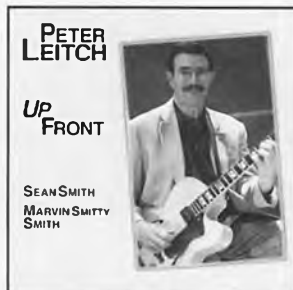
★★½

Five albums into his recent comeback on ECM, Lloyd still projects the new-agey spiritualism that made him the Pied Piper of jazz to a generation of flower children. But

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while his music is redolent of Eastern mysticism, it's not aural wallpaper: His robust tenor sax throbs with controlled passion, and his wistful lyricism has a decidedly Western cast. But the oceanic fervor of his '60s recordings has given way to more muted sentiments, and on *Canto* his meditative musings sound limp and shallow, drifting listlessly along without fire or rigor. Pianist Bobo Stenson and bassist Anders Jormin, both Swedes, are largely content to go with the flow, and even drummer Billy Hart can't manage to give the session much backbone.

"Tales Of Rumi" slowly unfolds into a peculiar theme that sounds like an Israeli hora as performed by John Coltrane. Coltrane's influence also hangs heavily over the ballads "How Can I Tell You" and "Desolation Sound," with Lloyd adding his own distinctive flutters. On the title track, Lloyd is soothing to the point of irritation, making Stenson's coolly pristine solo seem almost exciting by comparison. Lloyd's Tibetan oboe on "Nachiketa's Lament" offers some timbral variety, while muscular solos by Jormin and Hart enliven the gropingly Coltrane-esque "M." But there's no such diversion on "Durga Durga," just waves of semi-sweet atmospheric.

Perhaps Lloyd's greatest weakness is as a composer; without strong melodies, his tunes simply bog down in interminable, unstructured rumination.

—Larry Birnbaum

**Canto**—*Tales Of Rumi: How Can I Tell You; Desolation Sound; Canto; Nachiketa's Lament; M; Durga Durga.* (65:18)  
**Personnel**—Lloyd, tenor saxophone, flute, Tibetan oboe; Bobo Stenson, piano; Anders Jormin, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



## Essence All Stars

**Jackies Blues Bag: A Tribute To Jackie McLean**  
 HipHop Essence 8015

★★★★

## Grand Central

**Tenor Conclave: A Tribute To Hank Mobley**  
 Evidence 22175

★★★½

To restate the obvious, McLean and Mobley have long been considered two of jazz's finest saxophonists, men with singular, alluring approaches and recognizable tones whose compositions have inspired numerous

cover versions. They were both initially active in the early '50s, matured during that decade and had, for a while, successful careers. (McLean, who is still with us, took time out to teach in the '70s and '80s, but has since been a powerfully resurgent presence; Mobley, who died in 1986, peaked in the '60s, then, sadly, waned, due to ill health.)

These tributes take substantially different routes. *Jackies* (sic) *Blues Bag* is pretty much just that: eight saxophonists exploring five classic blues-based items from McLean's pen, along with one by pianist LaMont Johnson and a slow JayMac line, "A Ballad For Doll," dedicated to his wife, Dolly. On *Tenor Conclave*, only two tenorists explore a variety of Mobley's material. Each disc has something to offer.

*Jackies Blues Bag* draws its program from such albums as *Jackie's Bag*, *Jacknife* and *Bluesnik* (Blue Note). The tunes are smartly arranged by producer Milan Simich, and the blues emphasis doesn't lead to a letdown. The fact that the soloists stay pretty much within the '50s and '60s framework of these tunes is also a plus.

"Bluesnik," originally done uptempo, is here offered as a undulating boogaloo; Branford Marsalis, taking a break from his passion for Ornette Coleman, plays a refreshingly swingin', markedly musical solo. Justin Robinson's alto is also down-home and solid. The evocative "Blue Fable" lets altoist Donald Harrison deliver the most Jackie-like improv on the date, his tone parched, his melodically pleasing ideas unpinned with rhythmic swagger. Here Craig Handy hews to the changes with grit and flair.

For the boppish "Dr. Jackie," Marsalis plays a lovely soprano solo, and pianist Johnson, who was with McLean in the '60s, mixes it up, offering funky slow lines and then double-time sprints. A change-up occurs on "Blues Inn" as Joe Lovano and drummer Idris Muhammad are the lone aces. The expected fires are ignited. Johnson's solo piece, "Dr. Mac Jackie," is the definition of poignancy. Both Vincent Herring and Javon Jackson tear it up on "Midtown Blues." Abraham Burton's heart-opened reading of the serene "Doll" closes it out.

*Tenor Conclave*, which explores numbers first heard on such albums as *Tenor Conclave* (Prestige) and *Soul Station* and *The Turnaround* (Blue Note), recalls Mobley in spirit if not in specific. He was an artist who held harmony in high regard, and he loved to find unusual ways to juxtapose chord tones with those that weren't, swinging always.

For the most part, Handy and Coltrane prefer a more contemporary approach, freely substituting the chord of one's choice for the given one. This is basically their method on the crisptempoed title track, the equally brisk "This I Dig," the blues "Hank's Waltz," the Latin/swing mix of "East Of The Village" and others. It's a modern style that is, by turns, hard swinging, exhilaratingly edgy, cool and austere. Handy's blues, "Hanksville," on the other hand, is decidedly Mobleyesque in mood and mode, a medium-slow scorcher where Handy's rhythmic vitality and melodicism builds to a high peak. Pianist Billy Childs' solo is also in the pocket.

The hornmen don't play like Mobley (nor should they); they have their own voices to develop. Coltrane is a fluent and lyrical artist with a round, appealing sound who can lay out long lines of high invention. "If I Should Lose You" reveals his tender side, "Take Your Pick"

his more ardent and facile. Handy has a somewhat gruff tone, a keenly aggressive attack and he expertly uses rhythm to create heat. Childs, too, is a modern stalwart; his solos crackle with ideas that both sing and sting. Burno is a solid player, each of his notes a hearty thump.

Then there's Blackman. Has she always played this well or have I, among others, just overlooked her outstanding kitwork? Here, she backs the themes to a tee, then listens keenly to the soloists, echoing their ideas, perhaps suggesting subsequent ones. "Hank's Symphony" is her feature and she burns. More bands should hire her; she's a sparkplug.

—Zan Stewart

**Jackies Blues Bag**—*Bluesnik; Blue Fable; Dr. Jackie; Blues Inn; Dr. Mac Jackie; Midtown Blues; A Ballad For Doll.* (43:13)

**Personnel**—LaMont Johnson, piano; Rodney Whitaker, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums; Justin Robinson (1), Donald Harrison (2), Vincent Herring (6), Abraham Burton (7), alto saxophone; Craig Handy (2), Joe Lovano (4), Javon Jackson (6), tenor saxophone; Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone (1), soprano saxophone (3).

**Tenor Conclave**—*This I Dig Of You; Hank's Waltz; If I Should Lose You; Hank's Symphony; Hanksville; Take Your Pick; East Of The Village; Soul Station; Tenor Conclave.* (58:18)

**Personnel**—Ravi Coltrane, tenor and soprano saxophones (except 5); Craig Handy, tenor saxophone (except 3); Billy Childs, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; Cindy Blackman, drums.



**Lenny Breau**  
**Cabin Fever**  
 Guitararchives 0002

★★★★½

When Lenny Breau died at the age of 43 in 1984, he was a guitar hero well known for his innovative pianistic approach. In developing a style that freed him to comp chords while simultaneously picking single-note melodies, he owed as much to pianists Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner as to guitarists in the classical and flamenco realms. As a result, Breau developed a singular voice on his six-string axe—and late in his career a seven-string model that he used to explore more expansive chordal voicings. Even though he constantly battled substance abuse during his short lifetime, Breau garnered a reputation as an underground guitar legend. He first recorded in 1968 for RCA (thanks to a contract set into motion by his hero Chet Atkins), releasing several other LPs (most of which have never been reissued on CD) for the label in the '70s.

Posthumously, Breau's reputation continues. The MHS imprint has issued two collections of



live recordings (*The Livingroom Tapes, Vol 1 & 2*), and Guitarchives Music Inc. in North Vancouver, B.C., has even dedicated itself to dredging up unreleased Breau material. The label's first album was a 1995 two-CD duet set, *Live At Bourbon St.*, recorded in 1983. The follow-up is the fine *Cabin Fever*, a solo album recorded in the Canadian bush in the early '70s during a time when Breau needed to flee the city (Toronto) and its demons. In an illuminative interview included as the last "track" of the CD, cabin owner and recording engineer Glen McDonald reflects back on the crude "studio" conditions (a gasoline-powered generator and kerosene-fueled lamps) and Breau's "collision-with-the-world" state of mind.

But the main draw of this CD is Breau's flash and dazzle on a Ramirez nylon-stringed classical guitar as he delivers a raw mix of standards and originals. He's in top form as he effortlessly offers spontaneous lyrical musings and multiple mood shifts within a tune. Breau's best standard cover is his remarkable improvisational journey through Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love?" He steers his guitar playing in several different directions, ranging from gentle harmonics to a riveting scurry over the strings reminiscent of the *William Tell Overture*. But the highlights are Breau originals including the edgy and fast "East Side" and the bright, blues-based "Lenny's Mode." CD executive producer Randy Bachman (of Guess Who/Bachman-Turner Overdrive pop fame) deserves credit for keeping the Breau flame alive.

—Dan Ouellette

**Cabin Fever**—Lenny's Warm Up/Autumn Leaves; Lenny's Mood; East Side; You Came To Me Out Of Nowhere; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Days Of Wine And Roses; Lenny's Mode; Here's That Rainy Day; Celtic Dream Stream. (58:50)  
**Personnel**—Breau, acoustic guitar.



## Kurt Elling

**The Messenger**  
 Blue Note 52727

★★★

**K**urt Elling's debut recording, *Close Your Eyes* (Blue Note, 1995), was nominated for a Grammy. He placed second in the Male Vocalist/TDWR category in the 1996 Down Beat Critics Poll. He has received all this attention partly because of intrinsic merit, and partly because of weak competition. The much-remarked latter-day renaissance in the art of singing jazz has been almost exclusively a diva phenomenon. Kurt Elling is one of the very few new boys out there.

Elling spills his guts on every song, and

what he does is indisputably jazz. He scats and rants and twists standards like "April In Paris" into a gruff hip-hop drone and blows free on the changes. When it works, his audacity makes him sound special, like on "Nature Boy." He starts within the song, but then gradually bends the lines with wide leaps and goes a little crazy with wordless wailing and then brings it back. On "Prelude To A Kiss," after Eddie Johnson's languid, Websterish tenor saxophone intro, Elling's mooning entrance is deliciously decadent.

But Elling's originals—whether composed in advance or spontaneously "ranted" or both—do not work as reliably as the standards he uses for launching pads. He is more poet-aster than poet. When he goes for philosophical profundity ("The Beauty Of All Things") or poignant eulogy ("Prayer For Mr. Davis") or hip street stories ("Tanya Jean"), his language often fails him, dissipating his creative impulse

in flashes of the ordinary, the obvious, the not-quite-funny.

Elling is also best in small doses. He sells every song so hard. His voice can falter and go flat, or blur into unattractive hoarseness. He lacks the refinements of his sources: He is not as witty as Jon Hendricks, nor as articulate as Mark Murphy, nor as charmingly bestial as Tom Waits. But we will hear more from Kurt Elling. He has genuine assets, like passion and youth and light competition. —Thomas Conrad

**The Messenger**—Nature Boy; April In Paris; The Beauty Of All Things/The Dance/Prayer For Mr. Davis; Endless; Tanya Jean; It's Just A Thing; Ginger Bread Boy; Prelude To A Kiss; Time Of The Season; The Messenger. (72:08)  
**Personnel**—Elling, voice; Laurence Hobgood, piano, synthesizer; Eric Hochberg, acoustic bass (7, 8, 11); Rob Amster, acoustic and electric basses (1-6, 9, 10, 12); Paul Wertico (1-5, 7-9, 11); Jim Widlowski (2, 6, 11, 12), drums, percussion; Edward Petersen (6, 12); Eddie Johnson (10), tenor saxophone; Orbert Davis, trumpet;flugelhorn (2, 5); Cassandra Wilson, voice (11).

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# JAZZ

## The Rhythm Thing

by Paul de Barros

**T**oo often, we talk about trios as if the pianist were leader, the bassist and drummer, sidemen. But the way a pianist's left hand speaks to the bass line, or how his right converses with the ride cymbal, are really more crucial to a trio's success than the hierarchy between three musicians. Listening to trios this way, we can appreciate what a challenge it is to weave together many voices with purpose and swing.

**Don Friedman Trio: *The Days Of Wine And Roses*** (Soul Note 121277; 66:46; ★★★½) I have a bias for trios where roles are fluid and equal. Bill Evans-style, and for players who improvise expressively on melody and sound. Don Friedman plays with the churning, pressure-and-release of Evans but takes an occasional flyer into straightahead romance as well as wild abstraction. Though sometimes his lines lose momentum, with bassist Marco Ricci and drummer Giampiero Prina, Friedman is particularly successful on originals such as "Free At Last," where his expanded vision of the piano leads to streaks, clusters and quietly pastel reservoirs, and "New Dawn," a lovely original ballad.

**Alan Broadbent Trio: *Personal Standards*** (Concord Jazz 4757; 61:35; ★★★★★) Broadbent's faraway, yearning "Song Of Home" spurred Charlie Haden to hire him for Quartet West, but the pianist is even more compelling with his own trio on this musing album of originals spanning the pianist's 34-year composing career. The New Zealand-born keyboard man sparks highly original conversations between his hands, offering gentle dialogue on "Ballad Impromptu" and sharp debate on the bluesy "Uncertain Terms." His buttery articulation ("Song Of Home") and lighter-than-air touch ("Chris Craft") are anchored by bassist Putter Smith, with drummer Joe LaBarbera supporting, pushing and commenting.

**Tommy Flanagan Trio: *Sea Changes*** (Evidence 22191; 63:35; ★★★★★) If you want to hear just how perfectly trio parts can fit, check out Peter Washington's bass as it cuts a path through Tommy Flanagan's voicings on "How Deep Is The Ocean," the fifth tune on this elegant album of songs tied loosely by a water theme. Flanagan, of course, is simply one of our best: When he makes a phrase, it's as if he were breathing.



Kevin Hays: a mercurial aura of suspended time and harmony

Who else could play such explosive, splashy lines on Bird's "Relaxin' At Camarillo," his left hand roving like that of some bebop Teddy Wilson, yet remain so calm? Drummer Lewis Nash turns in a ringing and witty tom-tom solo on Tommy's "Verdandi."

**Kevin Hays (with Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette): *Andalucia*** (Blue Note 55817; 55:22; ★★★★★) Most contemporary pianists show the influence of Bud Powell's long, horn-like bop lines. Young Kevin Hays has a different lineage, one you can guess from the masters working with him—bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette. As a soloist, Hays erupts with short bursts and jumpy exclamations, with the trio as a unit completing each thought, pushing rhythmic borders. Yet underlying all this activity runs the mercurial aura of suspended time and harmony patented by the classic '60s Miles Davis rhythm section. Hays seems to be listening most to the delightfully rickety snare and cymbal ticking of DeJohnette, who contributes two fine solos, including an absolutely perfect, finishing touch to "Hart" (for Billy) on the open sock cymbal. Carter plays a more traditional role, walking, anchoring and reaching up into the melody on "That's All." The Spanish-tinged title cut, a waltz, is a keeper; Lennon and McCartney's "And I Love Her" and Hays' Carib-funk "Agua" recall the rock-steady pop hauteur of Herbie Hancock. A fine, forward-looking piano-trio disc.

**Junko Onishi Trio: *Live At The Village Vanguard II*** (Blue Note 33418; 56:24; ★★★) This cheeky young pianist's bluesy, bombastic, take-no-prisoners style sounds like Gene Harris on the bullet train. The second installment of her 1994 date at the Vanguard (with bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley) would have been a lot more listenable from end to end, however,

had she forgone a 20-minute recess into faux-Japanese, clatter-and-silence improv, no doubt lots of fun, live, but not something you want to hear over and over. The rest of the disc just roars. Onishi's hard-hitting octaves and Riley's snare drum bring an ominous, martial strut to Monk's "Brilliant Corners," which suddenly drops from a breakneck tempo to butt-swinging half-time. Her arching patterns fly easily over the changes.

**Andy LaVerne Trio: *Bud's Beautiful*** (SteepleChase 31399; 64:30; ★★) Don't let Chick Corea's marvelous tribute get in your way of enjoying this fine homage to Bud Powell by Andy LaVerne, who captures to a tee the bubbly joy, roller-coaster phrasing, nutty staccato attack and surging momentum of the bopmeister. Reprising seven songs from his 1993 solo Powell tribute, LaVerne adds seldom-heard compositions such as the minor humoresque, "Danceland," a clever marriage of "Bouncing With Bud" with "Bud's Bubble," and the rare "Topsy Turvey," on which the trio rises to pure flow. Though Billy Hart's fills on snare drum occasionally are too aggressive, on most of the tunes, he and Peter Washington find an ensemble groove that works.

**Jeff Colella Trio: *Letting Go*** (Sea Breeze 3024; 55:39; ★★) That beckoning, surging sea Bill Evans plunged himself into sometimes drowned his followers, but Jeff Colella is a sure and creative swimmer. Eschewing standard roles, bassist Eric von Essen improvises counter-melodies and drummer Kendall Kaye plays with the time without losing it in this highly integrated trio. From the watery introspection of "Peace" and crystalline ring of the title tune, both by Colella, to the Jarrett-like vamps of "With The Spirit Of Joy," this is an altogether attractive and appealing album, with only a few lapses into pure prettiness. **DB**



# BEYOND

## Pops From The Past

by Dan Ouellette

It was 30 years ago today that Sgt. Pepper taught the world to play, with the Beatles ushering in a wellspring of unprecedented pop-music experimentation. In the midst of social and political turmoil when the cries for freedom and the call for rebellion were being proclaimed loudly and clearly, musically, the counterculture bloomed in the magical year of 1967: The first-ever rock festival, staged in Monterey, ushered in the Summer of Love; pop group the Byrds was metamorphosing itself into a cutting-edge leader; and Jimi Hendrix blazed onto the scene with meteoric brilliance. How well does it all hold up 30 years later? Judging by a sampling of the latest reissues from that era, surprisingly well.

**The Jimi Hendrix Experience: *Are You Experienced?*** (Experience Hendrix/MCA 11602; 60:20: ★★★★★); ***Axis: Bold As Love*** (Experience Hendrix/MCA 11601; 39:21: ★★★★★½); ***Electric Ladyland*** (Experience Hendrix/MCA 11600; 75:27: ★★★★★); ***First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*** (Experience Hendrix/MCA 11599; 69:35: ★★★★★) Three of the four potent albums Hendrix released during his lifetime are included in this first batch of sonically pristine re-issued CDs (with bonus tracks) issued under the careful supervision of Experience Hendrix and piloted by the Hendrix family, which fought legal battles for years to control Jimi's work. *Are You Experienced?* (1967) features the pile-driving rhythms of "Purple Haze," the deep blues of "Red House" (a bonus track), as well as Hendrix's amazing guitar/vocal display and the volcanic, Philly Joe Jones-influenced drumming of Mitch Mitchell. Hendrix's second album, *Axis: Bold As Love*, pales only slightly by comparison. Originally issued as a double LP, the classic *Electric Ladyland* finds him freed from the confines of AM radio's three-minute song length, boldly jamming with jazz sensibilities on "Voodoo Chile" and "Rainy Day, Dream Away." Hendrix's posthumously released music sees the light of day for the first time in the form he originally envisioned on the electrifying *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*, which feels unfinished—the tragic reality given Hendrix's death.

**The Byrds: *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*** (Columbia Legacy 65151; 58:28: ★★★★★); ***Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*** (Columbia Legacy 65150; 58:53: ★★★★★½); ***Dr. Byrds And Mr. Hyde*** (Columbia Legacy 65114; 52:00: ★★★★★); ***Ballad Of Easy Rider*** (Columbia Legacy 65113; 56:52: ★★★★★) Columbia/Legacy's



Jimi Hendrix: playing with meteoric brilliance

latest round of Byrds CD reissues focuses on the years 1967-'70, when the group, despite its personnel fluctuations, was at its most adventurous what with its psychedelic tang and country twang. Not all experiments succeeded, however. The best of the pack is *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*, a full immersion into bluegrass, country and gospel. A revelation in 1968, the seminal album, which helped spawn the country-rock movement, features superb takes on the Louvin Brothers' "The Christian Life" and Dylan's "You Ain't Going Nowhere" as well as several previously unreleased bonus tracks. 1967's *Notorious Byrd Brothers*, characterized by its stylistic juxtapositions, sounds dated in stretches; 1969's *Dr. Byrds And Mr. Hyde* mixes cooking country-rock with so-so covers; and 1970's country-folk *Ballad Of Easy Rider* intersperses catchy tunes with bland performances.

**Various Artists: *The Monterey International Pop Festival: 30th Anniversary Box Set*** (Rhino 72825; 74:51/74:34/74:01/74:41: ★★★★★½) With its motto "music, love and flowers," the intoxicating Monterey Pop Festival not only inaugurated the Summer of Love, it brought together a wide array of acts as well: from Hugh Masekela's jazz to Ravi Shankar's Indian ragas, Canned Heat's country boogie to Paul Butterfield's powerpacked electric blues, the Mamas & the Papas' soft pop to the shrieking rock of Big Brother & The Holding Company with then-unknown vocalist Janis Joplin. Since this four-CD collection samples the three-day party, there are the expected performance peaks (including Mike Bloomfield and the Electric Flag's romp through the jump-blues "Wine" and Otis Redding's soul-shaking, soul-caressing set) and valleys (the Byrds' jangly, Beatlesque set). The highlight: Hendrix's incendiary U.S. concert debut (two months before the release of *Are You Experienced?*). There's polite applause when he's introduced. By the end of the scorching nine-tune set, the crowd's been transported to a state of guitar-induced delirium. **DB**

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# REISSUES

## They Owned 'Em

by Zan Stewart

**M**usician-owned labels, while not plentiful, have been around for decades. Two of the most successful—the first financially and artistically, the second simply the latter—have been Capitol and Debut. Capitol was started by songwriters Johnny Mercer and Buddy DeSylva, along with music retailer Glenn Wallichs, in 1942; while Debut, extant from 1952-'57, was headed by Charles Mingus and Max Roach, their significant others and monetary benefactors. Recent boxed sets tell the story.

**The Debut Records Story (Debut 4DCD-4420; 69:06/68:56/73:45/75:35: ★★★★★½)** gives a splendid overview of '50s modern jazz—from Mingus, Roach (with their own groups and with other artists), Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Miles Davis, J.J. Johnson, Thad Jones, Kenny Dorham, et al. While much of this material is on CD now, there are several tracks that have not been readily available, either as CD reissues or outside multi-disc sets.

Highlights abound. There's some timeless live Bird. Five tracks are from the late '40s in New York City clubs; and while the sound is rough, Parker is magnificent, his genius unfurled. Miles and Red Rodney are the excellent trumpeters. And there are three cuts from the wondrous 1953 Jazz at Massey Hall date, with Dizzy, Max, Bud and Mingus, the last recorded meeting of the two horns. Powell gets three tracks, among them the evocative "Embraceable You" and an exhilaratingly fleet "Cherokee," with a most-mellifluous Roach solo. The drummer's band, with the first recorded Hank Mobley, has three cooking tracks.

Mingus is heard in everything from duos and quintets to small orchestras. The smaller groups, e.g., the trio with Billy Taylor, allow for sumptuous readings like "Bassically Speaking." The larger-group units offer both edgy stuff, like "Extrasensory Perception," with Lee Konitz, hard swingers such as "Jump Monk" and the dulcet palette of "Portrait," with the marvelous Thad Jones. Jones, on his own, is especially moving on "You Don't Know What Love Is," with ace piano help from brother Hank. The remarkable Dorham scores with both his soft voice and his imaginative horn while Davis has three moments, among them being "Nature Boy." And trombonists Johnson, Kai Winding, Bennie Green and Willie Dennis heartily swing through three tunes.

Lesser-known treasures come in the form of Sam Most's whizzing-by clarinet artistry, John LaPorta's Bird-/Tristano-minded alto, Oscar Pettiford's cello on "Stockholm Sweetnin'" and the bluesy tinge to John Dennis' piano work.



Trombonist Jack Teagarden with (l-r) Pee Wee Russell, Jack Lesberg, Max Kaminsky and Morey Feld, 1947: a long look at jazz from the Capitol sessions

**The Classic Capitol Jazz Sessions (Mosaic MD12-170; 63:26/58:16/59:36/57:23/56:37/57:53/63:35/68:52/68:35/70:11/50:52/54:52: ★★★★★)** gives a long look at dates for Capitol between 1942 and 1953 that, in almost all cases, warranted less than full album original issues. The sessions, in genres from dixie to swing to bop, feature so many greats: Louis Armstrong (a single item), Cootie Williams, Benny Carter, Sonny Greer, Rex Stewart, Jack Teagarden, Eddie Miller, Louie Bellson, Red Norvo, Bobby Hackett, Mel Powell, Frankie Trumbauer and many others. There are 264 tracks, of which 46 are previously unissued.

The box flows stylistically forward, starting with traditional. Tenorman Eddie Miller, who has a Pres-like liteness, scores with the moody "Yesterdays" and the brisk "Nagasaki." Drummer Zutty Singleton's full-kit sound is a delight in several spots. Mercer sings a few, in pleasing form, and Trumbauer, Lester's idol, has three; on "China Boy," his C-melody sax tone is almost transparent, and his lines float. Unique tenorman Bud Freeman has a bunch from 1953, toying gently with such melodies as "Indian Summer." Hackett, in the lone set not for Capitol (but thrown in anyway!), exhibits his gorgeous, tightly-packed tone on a delightfully creeping "Pennies From Heaven" and a more explosive "I Want To Be Happy."

The swing stuff starts with a grand date led by drummer Big Sid Catlett and guitarist Al Casey. There's the motoring-right-along "I Never Knew" with Joe Guy's bristling trumpet sound, and a cooking "How High The Moon," a spotlight for the fat-toned tenor of Illinois Jacquet. Jack Teagarden's slide work is so smooth on "Stars Fell On Alabama," and Peggy Lee's does a dandy job with "That Old Feeling." Anita O'Day's first session is released in toto here, with a tasty

"How Come?" featuring her relaxed way of improvising lyrics. Carter is heard on many tracks, among them a sizzling "I Surrender Dear" on trumpet, and the easygoing line for "Malibu." Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, et al. team up for "A Song Is Born," from a film date. Other solid sessions are led by Stewart, Williams (with Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson) and Greer (with sublime Barney Bigard music).

There are a handful of modern-leaning moments. Drummer Louie Bellson's date from 1952 gathers Billy Strayhorn, Wardell Grey and Clark Terry for eight cuts, from the uptempo "Jeep Is Jumping," a romp for the superb Grey and Terry and some Shorty Rogers' lines such as "Sticks," an outing for the leader. Vibist Red Norvo includes Dexter Gordon on a few tracks, and clarinetist Stan Hasselgard employs Barney Kessel's bop sensibilities to give his 1947 session some flair.

Jazz-history buffs will find this set especially important, because it documents so many major and minor figures during the period of the '40s, giving air to a lot of great and good music that has been hidden the vaults. The swing-era listener will also benefit from this boon, as will the bebop-oriented fan, who wants to better understand what preceded that style.

Dan Morgenstern contributed informative liners to both packages, though sometimes he gets his musical aspects mixed up, e.g., confusing "Rhythm" changes with a blues. **DB**

Initial Down Beat reissue ratings:

- J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding and others: *Four Trombones (Debut)*: ★★★★★½ (5/16/57 issue)
- *Jazz At Massey Hall, Vol. 1*: ★★★★★ (12/30/53); *Vol. 2*: ★★★★★ (12/30/53); *Vol. 3*: ★★★★★ (5/5/54)
- *Kenny Dorham Quintet*: ★★★ (8/25/54)



# BLINDFOLD TEST

AUGUST 1997

## Don Was

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.

**D**on Was is one of the premier pop music producers of the '90s. He's been at the helm of dozens of successful albums by a wide array of artists, including Bonnie Raitt, Iggy Pop, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan. In addition to working on numerous soundtracks, Was directed the 1995 documentary film *Brian Wilson: I Just Wasn't Made For These Times*.

Was' latest endeavor is his Verve Forecast enhanced CD, *Forever's A Long, Long Time*, which showcases obscure Hank Williams songs interpreted in radically new musical contexts, including funk, r&b, jazz, acid jazz and rock.

Was took a break from working with Francis Ford Coppola on the soundtrack to the director's new film *The Rainmaker* to undergo his first Blindfold Test, which took place in San Francisco. Wearing a Thelonious Monk T-shirt for the occasion, Was started off the session by playing a tape of freshly recorded tunes from the new Rolling Stones album he's producing for fall release.

### Miles Davis Quintet

"Orbits" (from *Miles Smiles*, Columbia/Legacy, rec. 1966/1992) Davis, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, tenor saxophone; Herbie Hancock, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

I can't remember which Miles album this is from. *Miles Smiles*? To me, that record was always about Tony Williams. As a bass player, I used to listen to it by rolling the low end off and trying to walk his patterns. I never lasted in the ring longer than 10 seconds. This also tells you about the internal clock running in Ron Carter to be able to lock down and stay there. This tune is a great example of how all the guys in that group fed off Tony's rhythms for their solos. Everyone's listening to him and reacting. You could call this "Conversations With Tony."

I was always struck by Miles' phrasing on this record. It's different. It's more conversational. He's talking in quick clips. This is the greatest music in the world. There's never been a better band in any kind of music. If radio stations back then played this tune five times a day, it would have been a pop hit. Stars? The max.

### James Carter

"Freereggaehibop" (from *Conversin' With The Elders*, Atlantic, 1996) Carter, tenor saxophone; Lester Bowie, trumpet; Craig Taborn, piano; Jaribu Shahid, bass; Tani Tabbal, drums.

I don't know who this is. It's a noble experiment. When the Jamaicans came up with reggae, they were listening to radio stations in New Orleans. But they were listening on these tiny transistor radios that could only capture the top end. So in trying to emulate the music they convoluted the rhythms and accidentally came up with reggae by turning the beat around. This tune is throwing it back.

One of the beautiful things about reggae is that the beat allows you to be relaxed and lyrical in your playing. If I produced this record, I would have had these guys smoke a joint or have a drink and then try it again. I don't think this is a Jamaican rhythm section. It's two degrees too regimented for me. They've got the technique down but not that indefinable relaxation and haphazardness that create a languid feel. If that had happened here, the horn players could have stretched out 10 times greater



than they have. But it's cool. It's a great idea. 5 stars for intent, and 3, make that 4, for execution.

### Little Jimmy Scott with the Paul Gayten Band

"Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere" (from *Regal Records Live In New Orleans, Specialty/Fantasy*, rec. 1951/1991) Scott, vocals; John Hunt, trumpet; Ray Abrams, tenor saxophone; Pee Wee Numa-Moore, baritone saxophone; Teddy Brannon, piano; Thomas Legande, bass; Wesley Landis, drums.

Is this a bootleg record? No? Is this Jimmy Scott? Wow. One of the hallmarks of his singing is the relaxation of his phrasing. But this band is so laid back he's singing on top. It just occurred to me that maybe working with bands of that era is where he got his vocal style. I like this piece a lot. I'll give it 5 stars just for the feel. That's a deep pocket he's in. Maybe Jimmy Scott sounds so relaxed now because everybody plays so uptight these days. This track should be mandatory listening for every rhythm section in the world. I also like the distorted sound system in the room. It works as an atmospheric tool.

### Bill Frisell

"Pipe Down" (from *Nashville*, Nonesuch, 1997) Frisell, guitar; Ron Block, banjo; Adam Steffey, mandolin; Pat Bergeson, harmonica; Viktor Krauss, bass.

That's great. Really cool. Who's the guitar player? Is it Mark Knopfler? Whoever it is, he's really great. I like the piece a lot, especially how there's a tension-building section that changes simply by the harp and banjo accenting the 2 and 4. By hitting the backbeat, it turns into a bluegrass song. As soon as they slightly shift up on the accents, the tune returns to a pensive mood. It shows how two styles that you'd think are on the opposite ends of the spectrum can be married with the slightest phrasing nuances.

I wish I had made this record. The guitarist's style is incredibly evocative. His playing refuses to be pigeonholed from phrase to phrase. It's like he has multiple personalities in every chorus. But it all holds up perfectly. This is truly innovative. Everyone is really listening to each other. So, who is it? Bill Frisell? He's a wonderfully enigmatic guitarist. He's hard to pin down. On this tune he plays with total mastery of his instrument. You could call him to play on anybody's record. With Jackson Browne? He'd be great. With Trane. Same thing. You can hear all those aspects of Bill's playing in this one cut. That's hip. This is as cool as anything I've heard in a long time. 5 stars. **DB**