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Monk On Monk

**Steve Swallow &
Bob Cranshaw**

**Lifetime Achievement Award:
Bill Gottlieb**

**BLINDFOLD TEST:
Joe Lovano**

**KENNY
GARRETT**

**Mission
possible**





ALAN NAHIGIAN

26 Bob Cranshaw & Steve Swallow

16 **Kenny Garrett**
Mission Possible

After almost 20 years on the scene, Garrett has emerged ever brighter as a new star following a spate of strong recordings and ongoing international tours with consistently high-level personnel in his bands. His mission: to spread the word that music exists on a level higher than mere entertainment.

By Howard Mandel

Cover photograph of Kenny Garrett by Alan Nahigian; Thelonious Monk by Bill Gottlieb.

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Wynton Marsalis



"Gatemouth" Brown

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Mission

possible

By Howard Mandel

Tim on a mission," grins saxophonist Kenny Garrett. Before you say, "What's your code name—who sent you?" or before you marvel at how many times you've heard that a generation of players has come to believe their calling is divine, or before you wonder whether young jazzers are trained by their elders in the art of the interview (as Kevin Kostner drilled Tim Robbins in evasive clichés to toss at sportscasters in the film *Bull Durham*), know this: Few who pursue the music of John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Johnny Hodges, et al. can truthfully (yet without bragging) cite as their first gig out of high school three years with the Mercer Ellington Orchestra, followed by concurrent stints in and out of New York with Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and five years—five years!—as Miles Davis' right-hand man.

After almost 20 years on the scene, Garrett has emerged ever brighter as a new star following a spate of strong recordings and ongoing international tours with consistently high-level personnel in his top-notch

bands. Pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Jeff Watts—in the Kenny Garrett Quartet for almost two years now—sure know how to kick up a storm under this spirited, 36-year-old, apple-cheeked altoist, as they recently proved to cognescenti audiences at the Manhattan club Sweet Basil and to CD listeners via *Songbook*, Garrett's latest album. In late June, at a midnight Knitting Factory concert during the Texaco New York Jazz Festival, Garrett's group (with Donald Brown subbing for Kirkland) wailed through a set split neatly between works associated with the great Coltrane, including "Giant Steps," and Kenny's own compositions, not exclusively from *Songbook* but favoring his crowd-pleasing, updated soul sound.

"My mission is to spread the word that the music exists on a certain high level. And as long as I have my health and the Creator's blessing, I'll keep doing that," Garrett staunchly maintains. And you gotta believe, all his professional background and much of his personal history seems to lead to his present position. A cheerful, righteously devoted musician working toward a



Garrett with Miles Davis in 1988

purpose somewhat higher than mere entertainment. Garrett focuses on his craft and its continuing challenges. His horn's cries are honest, and his songs' shapes hold firm and true. Having come up as a dependably inspired sideman, Garrett has become a quietly confident leader. He's bided his time, but revealed his talents. Who better to affirm as a hero?

"I like melodies, melodies you can remember," avows Garrett, composer of all the tracks on *Songbook* and a raft of tunes for his previous albums, including the title song on last year's *Pursuance*, a project that focused otherwise exclusively on the compositions of Trane. *Pursuance* featured Pat Metheny as a guest artist, which provides a glimpse into the nature of Garrett's daring.

"It was the first time I recorded with a guitarist, the first time I even played with a guitarist, so it was a whole new experience," Garrett mentions. "See, I'd met Pat when I was playing with Miles in Rome, and we talked about playing together, the way musicians do. Then I called him, said I want to do a Pat Metheny sort of record with synthesizers and stuff. But I didn't want to rush it, and it turned out we weren't going to have time to arrange it, so my manager suggested I do the music of John Coltrane.

"John Coltrane! A couple years ago I'd written 'Sing A Song Of Song,' which I saw people responding to very well, and I'd wondered what it was about this song that made people so enthusiastic—maybe something spiritual. So I'd checked out John Coltrane closely, looked into what was going on." With a glance, he suggests what he found was as awesome as an unreachable peak or some bottomless depth. "Of course, I'd listened to Coltrane for years; he's one of my long-time heroes. But I took my manager's saying that as a signal it was time for me to really deal with his music. So I took the challenge on.

"Then it was a matter of finding who could really play it. McCoy [Tyner] is still around, Elvin [Jones] is around, and Reggie Workman—but I didn't want to approach it that way. I

"Miles always wanted his musicians to push the envelope. He wanted you to find your own way."

called up Pat and said, 'Can you just play these voicings for me from "Equinox"? I want to hear what the guitar sounds like.' He said, 'I can't voice it the way a piano would, but I can find the notes.' And he played me some chords. Once I heard them I said, 'That's fine, this will be fine, no problem, see you tomorrow.'" Bassist Rodney Whittaker and drummer Brian Blade, of Garrett's regular circle, formed the rhythm section.

"What I had to do was not play like Coltrane, but play in his spirit. So I put on some music. I just listened to him and started thinking about how I could keep the integrity of the music without trying to imitate him and keep my own voice happening. His playing is so powerful and intense and overwhelming, you have a tendency to want to play like him. But I always try to be true to myself, because people can hear when you're not true to yourself. So I listened to pick up the spirit of it, and tried to play what that was, and hoped people would like it."

Garrett has recorded on flute, soprano sax and straight alto, too. But his interest in the tenor horn is manifest, and on *Pursuance*, if not before, Garrett's proved capable of translating something of Coltrane's determined, probing restlessness, beyond literal licks, to his lighter horn. Not as a copycat—as a musician of many dimensions.

Songbook expands on those dimensions. "It has a softer side

some people haven't heard," Garrett says of his current projection. "I thought it was time to bring songs like 'Before It's Time To Say Goodbye' [a slow, minor-key waltz] to the forefront. When people think of Kenny Garrett, they tend to think of 'Black Hope,' 'Jackie And The Beanstalk,' what I call my burnout tunes. But I write all styles of music. I just don't necessarily bring them all to the table."

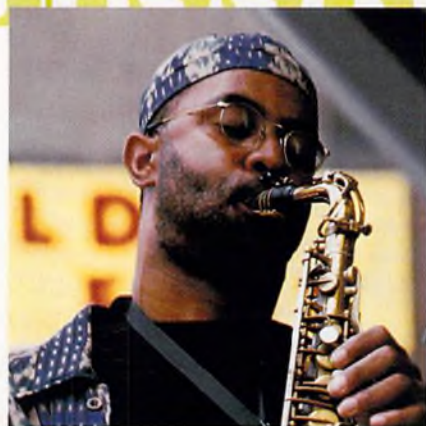
"Before" is lovely, and "November" has a nice bittersweet lilt; "Sing A Song Of Song" floats on a catchy (if familiar) progression, "Ms. Baja" has a samba ambiance and beat. "She Waits For The New Sun," also in a minor mode, is also reflective. But there's no dearth of fire on *Songbook*, and spontaneous interplay among finely attuned colleagues is its eminent attraction, over fussy arrangements or polished orchestrations.

"I can practice something, get it to the point where it will sound good on the record—that's fine, but anybody can do that," the saxist continues. "But what I want to do is find out what I need to work on, and the only way to do that is not to rehearse but basically to go in the studio and say, 'Let's try this!'"

"I always try to be true to myself, because people can hear when you're not true to yourself."

room, he had presence. Miles had the same presence. When he walked in a room it was frightening sometimes, his presence. Not many people have that.

"He took us into the studio once, in Stuttgart, Germany, just after we'd done a gig. All the stories I'd heard about Miles in the studio, I figured, OK, I'm going to get a chance to witness this, finally. We were doing tunes by Prince, and I remember Miles wanted the drummer to play a certain way, going back to



PHOTOS BY ALAN NAHQIAN

"Like 'The House That Nat Built.' I just had a sketch. There was another bridge, but I didn't like the way it was laying. So I said, 'Give me five minutes,' and I went to the piano, started adding things, arranging. After five minutes, I called the guys back and said, 'We'll run it from the top, play the melody over and gradually build every time.' I didn't have to transpose everything; I just said, 'When we get here we go up a half step.' I ran the music like that.

"Sometimes that's the best way—at least for me. It's the way I keep myself challenged. Sometimes, you're at the soundcheck and you play beautiful stuff, but you get to the gig and it's gone. You try to hold on to it as long as you can: that's what I learned playing with Miles. Miles always said, 'Save it.' That makes sense, you know.

"Being with him was a great experience: First of all, I got to hear Miles Davis every day for five years—every day, good or bad, and some days he was just killin'. People would say to me, 'We know you can play— why are you still with Miles?' And I'd say, 'I'm just a sponge.' I'd stay as long as I could and soak up as much music as I could from him. And when he passed away, it was time to move on. But I felt that through Miles I could pick up some Sonny Rollins, some Bird, some Coltrane. Think of the lineage of musicians who played with him!

"I didn't have to ask him questions," Garrett scoffs. "I had this thing where if I played some bebop songs, he'd call, 'Kenny!'"—Garrett's got Miles' rasp down cold—"and he'd start telling me stories. Oh, I knew how to get his attention.

"Miles didn't want to talk about music, he wanted to talk about other things—cars, stuff like that. When he talked about Bird, he talked about mostly of Bird's presence. When Bird walked in a

shuffle. He'd look at me and say, 'Kenny, you understand— explain it to him.' But I'd say, 'Naw, I don't know,' 'cause I wanted to hear him explain it, see what he would do. And Miles just took the music apart, put something in, took something out, and by the time it was finished, the song was completely different. I learned so much from him, from then on, about how he took different things from guys and told them what to play.

"I played 'Human Nature' with him for five years, but Miles always wanted his musicians to push the envelope. He wanted you to find your own way, but if you didn't, he'd do it for you— come in and change chords, fix a different rhythm, find a way to make you play differently than you had before. If you played something he'd heard before, it was boring to him, a yawning kind of vibe. He'd push me to think about another way to play the song—that's what he'd done, playing 'Green Dolphin Street' a dozen different ways with different bands. So we did 'Human Nature' a thousand different ways, and I had fun, 'cause there was always something happening and I always had to be on my toes."

Garrett sighs. "I think Miles and Trane, they were able to be such innovators because they had bands they could work with, develop some music with. It's harder to do that today. But I'm very happy with my band, because it seems like everybody's in the same space. The guys are hearing some of the same things I'm hearing. I've got this theory of music I've been working on—I can't really discuss it yet, though as the years progress I hope I'll be able to articulate it a bit more—but I've been sharing it a little with my band in order to get the music to a certain level, because I feel we have the opportunity to develop some music. Miles and Trane and Bird and all those cats set some incredible

precedents. I know for myself I can't play like Trane, I can't play like Bird—but I respect these guys and love them, so I want to find my own thing and try to put it on their same level.

"I haven't really analyzed what I'm doing, except to know I'm trying to tell a story in a different way with the same jazz language my heroes employed—express Kenny Garrett through my own voice in this music. The average person may not be aware of each difference, every development, or even the differences between my versions of 'Giant Steps' on *Triology* and *Pursuance*, but I think the musicians understand what we're doing.

"That's why I try to mix my music up, play something for everybody to relate to. That's part of my personality, anyway—that's how I hear music. When I go to a club, I want to be entertained, so when people come to hear me in a club, I try to entertain them. But at the same time I want them to know this is serious. So I play some music. I catch people off-guard, and they look up, like, How did that happen? And then I think they understand something profound is going on. They can't articulate, but they can feel it. As long as that's the case, I don't have a problem.

"Maybe further down the line I might do something electric, something like what Miles was doing," Garrett muses. "That's part of where I came from. I grew up listening to that music. While my father listened to jazz, my mother listened to r&b. And I've had my opportunities to play with Marcus Miller, to record with Guru on *Jazzmatazz*. But right now I'm trying to deal with the so-called straightahead.

"Its precedents are so high that the challenges keep me from getting to that

other stuff. I mean, I never tried to separate the styles; it's all music to me. But it takes years of playing this music—15, 16 years, maybe—to get to the point where you define your own voice and your own way of expressing yourself. And when you do, you start thinking, All right, let me see if I can put out something on the same level. I've got a band, I want to keep growing and moving with it, and even when I get other opportunities to do what I want to do, I feel this is my dream. I've been waiting my whole life for it, it's finally come to fruition and I don't want to turn my back on it. I want to deal with it. Later on, I can deal with the next dream.

By then, maybe, some younger people will have heard what I'm doing and say, 'OK, Kenny put it on that level.' And I'm going to keep it on that level. But I still have a ways to go," he smiles, convincingly modest.

Oh yeah? Judging by the light and heat and concentration swirling around Kenny Garrett on stage, by the fervent involvement of his bandmates, the absorption evident on the faces of his audiences, the continuing popularity of his albums and the way his calendar is filled with concert dates and club-stands in the United States, Europe and Japan—it seems like a case of "mission accomplished." **OB**

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EQUIPMENT

Kenny Garrett plays a Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone, a Selmer E (middle-gauge) mouthpiece and H&Mke #3 reeds.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

SONGBOOK—Warner Bros. 46551
PURSUANCE—Warner Bros. 46209
TRIOLOGY—Warner Bros. 45731
BLACK HOPE—Warner Bros. 45017
AFRICAN EXCHANGE STUDENT—Atlantic Jazz 82156

with Miles Davis
LIVE AROUND THE WORLD—Warner Bros. 46032
MILES IN PARIS—Four Aces Records 006

with Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw
THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE—Blue Note 48017
DOUBLE TAKE—Blue Note 48294

with Art Blakey
HARD CHAMPION—Evidence 22025

with Branford Marsalis
THE DARK KEYS—Columbia 67876

with Geri Allen
THE NURTURER—Blue Note 95139
GENERAL MUSIC PROJECT—Evidence 22173

with various others
WARNERS JAMS VOL. 1—Warner Bros. 45919
JAZZMATAZZ VOL. 2—Chrysalis 34290 (Guru)

MONK

It's not easy coming of age as a musician in the shadow of a legendary father. For a while, T.S. Monk didn't even bother trying.

Although he gigged with his dad in the early '70s and flirted with a successful career as an r&b funkster in the early '80s, Thelonious Sphere Monk II shelved his drumsticks for several years and in 1986 focused his attention on founding and running the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, an education-

oriented organization dedicated to the memory of the iconoclastic pianist/composer. In conjunction with institute events, Monk Jr. began to pull his kit out of storage with more frequency and six years ago started to seriously consider pursuing the jazz life. But instead of riding his dad's coattails and banking on his gene pool, T.S. proceeded with caution and made his re-entry into the jazz world without fanfare.

"People said that with my

pedigree I could get people to believe I was the best thing to come along since roast beef," says Monk, who converses in a tone of voice that's an unusual mix of gruffness and amiability. "Everyone said, yeah, get big names to play with you and it'll be a natural. But that didn't feel right. To get people to take me seriously as a jazz artist, I decided to put together a band of relatively unknown musicians and kick ass all over the world for a couple of years. If that



On

worked, then maybe I'd have enough credibility to invite some all-stars to join the core group on some project."

After three well-received Blue Note recordings—*Take One*, *Changing Of The Guard* and *The Charm*—Monk felt the time was right to launch phase two of his jazz career: paying homage to his father with a tribute album featuring a 10-piece ensemble (see Page 44). While he had already covered such Monk compositions as "Monk's Dream," "Ba-Lu Bolivar Ba-

Lues Are" and "Skippy" on his earlier CDs, T.S. decided to take the full Thelonious plunge even though he and Blue Note had parted paths. "It seemed the world was ripe for a tribute to my dad, and I was dead serious about doing it right, even if I had to do it myself."

That's exactly what he did. With the help of his manager, Ed Keane, and trumpeter/arranger Don Sickler, Monk came up with a theme (focusing on tunes his father wrote for family members and friends),

By Dan Ouellette

enlisted the support of several marquee jazz musicians (including former Monk sideman Clark Terry, a range of fellow pianists including Herbie Hancock, Geri Allen and Danilo Perez and vocalists Nnenna Freelon, Dianne Reeves and Kevin Mahogany) and produced the remarkable *Monk On Monk*, released by N2K Encoded Music as an enhanced CD (which includes 15 minutes of video interviews and session rehearsals that can be viewed on a CD-ROM drive).

Even though his father eventually achieved a certain degree of fame in his lifetime, T.S. insists the music Monk Sr. composed and recorded was so complex and pioneering that it was well ahead of its time. He recounts a story he heard from both his mother and aunt. When his dad was in his early 20s and just beginning to turn heads with his unorthodox piano tinklings, he informed a small gathering of friends that only after his death would he truly be recognized. His revelation proved to be prophetic.

"Before he left this life, Thelonious wasn't confident that people really understood his music," says Monk Jr. "He led a rough life. He was a guy who started below the bottom rung of the ladder when it came to recognition. When he first laid his tunes out, people complained that what he was doing wasn't music. Then they conceded it was music, but it was so strange it wasn't normal. Then they said it was normal, but no one could play it. Thelonious' music has had to deal with rejection at every possible level before it's reached the championship round."

"Nine times out of 10, arrangers respect Thelonious' original arrangements, but they leave Monk out."

In the 80th-anniversary year of his birth and 15 years after his death, it appears that the dawning of the golden age of Thelonious Sphere Monk II has finally arrived. The spirit of Monk is definitely in the air. In addition to *Monk On Monk*, the Bill Holman Band recently recorded an album of Monk tunes, *Brilliant Corners* (see Page 47); guitarist Joshua Breakstone released a collection of his interpretations entitled *Let's Call This Monk!*; guitarist Charlie Hunter's T.J. Kirk project, which concocts a high-octane cocktail of material by Thelonious, James Brown and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, was nominated for a jazz instrumental Grammy earlier this year; and Joel Dorn produced a compilation of various artists' covers, *For The Love Of Monk*. A birthday

concert salute to Monk at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall is slated for this September, and then there's a proliferation of recently published Monk biographies, including Leslie Gourse's *Straight, No Chaser: The Life And Genius Of Thelonious Monk* (Macmillan).

"I'm absolutely stunned at how his impact continues to grow," says the proud son. "This really is justice to a guy who dedicated himself to his work. There was a time when his music was underground. It was played by the heaviest of the heavies on the rarest of occa-

a classic composer. The tribute was right on time and right in sync with where I thought Thelonious belonged. It came out two years after his death and was the beginning of his music seeping into the collective psyche of the recording industry, the establishment stronghold that Thelonious had essentially been barred from since he was a young musician."

Other Monk tributes that T.S. singles out as important are Jerry Gonzalez's 1988 album *Rumba Para Monk* and Danilo Perez's 1996 CD *PanaMonk*. "Jerry's Latin treatment of Thelonious'



R. ANDREW LEPLEY

music is brilliant. He's not just applying a samba or Latin beat. Jerry addresses the elements of the compositions and rearranges them. He gets so inside rhythmically. He sets Monk's music down in clave."

As for Perez, Monk is blown away by how perceptive and free the young pianist approached his dad's tunes. "Danilo hit the motherlode. He goes for the throat. He plays with reckless abandon, which is what you have to do with Thelonious' compositions. My dad was always reaching, but he also designed his music in such a way that it could be pulled, pushed, squeezed and stretched in every direction. That's how Danilo played it."

For *Monk On Monk*, T.S. set out to "jam up Thelonious' tunes," but do so in a fashion that retained the essence of his music. He concedes that's not as easy as it sounds. He criticizes arrangers who either treat Monk's music superficially (e.g., give it a bossa nova spin) or monkey with "key" notes, replacing them with "ordinary" notes. "Nine times out of 10, arrangers respect Thelonious' original arrangements, but somehow they leave Monk out. The challenge is to take the

sions. Now there's a diverse number of artists who are attacking his music from so many different angles."

T.S. remembers well when the first Thelonious tribute was released: producer Hal Willner's seminal 2-LP collection *That's The Way I Feel Now* (1984), the mother of all tribute recordings. "I thought that album was a watershed event in terms of acknowledging Thelonious' genius," says Monk, who was 34 and playing funk at the time. "I thought it's about goddamn time. I always felt there was a pop element to Thelonious' music because his melodies had a hypnotic effect on people. Hal's project illustrated how well his tunes could be translated comfortably into absolutely any idiom. That, to me, is the hallmark of

elements Monk put into his compositions and rearrange them."

Don Sickler, who has been studying and transcribing Monk's compositions over the last several years, was instrumental in translating piano parts into horn charts. He paid special attention to the piano timbres Monk used. "When arranging these pieces for a big band, you can't rely on standard instrumentation," explains Monk, who was committed to the large ensemble, a setting in which his father rarely had the opportunity to record. "For example, you need a soprano saxophone for the high piano voicings and a tuba for those low notes that Thelonious played down below the bass."

A self-described child of the '60s, Monk says he aimed to make a theme-oriented CD. "I'm a theme guy. I loved albums like the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. So, I concentrated on Monk tunes written for friends and family. When Thelonious liked you, he wrote a tune for you." T.S. cites several examples: Monk wrote "Crepuscule With Nellie" for

his wife, "Boo Boo's Birthday" for his daughter, "Ruby, My Dear" for a girlfriend, "Jackie-ing" for a favorite niece and "Little Rootie Tootie" for his son when he was a kid of three or four.

Because he was without a record company when he launched the project, Monk took personal charge of rounding up the troops. "I knew everyone when I was a kid," T.S. notes. "Since I've been running the institute for 10 years and touring with my own band the last several years, I know everyone again. When I called people, I told them this wasn't going to be a T.S. Monk record, but a loving tribute to my dad. I picked up the phone personally and made the connections. I didn't want this to be just another record company cattle call to do an all-star album that could pump up CD sales."

He pauses, and with a swelling of satisfaction in his voice, adds, "I can't tell you how perfect it worked. Everyone responded. There were no stars in the studio. They were all paying their respect to him."

When T.S. gets on a roll, it's hard to stop him. For several minutes, he rattles off a sampling of *Monk On Monk* session highlights: Geri Allen and Wallace Roney teaming to deliver a sensitive reading of Monk's odd waltz "Ugly Beauty"; Wayne Shorter playing a haunting soprano solo on "Crepuscule With Nellie"; Grover Washington Jr. driving from Philadelphia

to Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio one night to rehearse "Little Rootie Tootie," returning home and again hitting the road back to Van Gelder's the next morning to record.

The real treat of *Monk On Monk* is the debut of a new Monk composition, "Two Timer," which, T.S. explains, is one of a dozen "solid" tunes his dad never got around to recording. "I thought that the proper way to premiere the piece would be to get one of the finest piano players in the world," Monk explains. "So I called Herbie Hancock, and he jumped on it. He played his ass off. He makes it swing." T.S. speculates that the tune, similar in motion to "Bemsha Swing," was written in the late '50s/early '60s.

Would dad have been proud of his son cooking up such an impressive tribute package? "Oh, yeah, I think he would have felt validated as an artist," T.S. responds. But what about on a more personal father-to-son level? "Well, I suspect he would have been proud of me for just pulling it off. Like any father, Thelonious was just looking for his son to be successful and happy doing what he wanted. He was pleased with my r&b music. But he was also proud of me for just being myself rather than for any individual accomplishments. When I was really young, I remember Thelonious telling Coltrane, 'Here's my son. Dig him? He's a hip cat.'" **DB**

EQUIPMENT

T.S. Monk uses a Yamaha Custom kit with an 18-inch bass drum, a 14-inch floor tom, 8-, 10- and 12-inch rack toms and a 6 1/2-inch snare. He uses several Zildjian cymbals, including a 20-inch medium-ride K and a 20-inch thin-ride riveted A. The rest of his cymbals are Zildjian A's: 16-inch custom crash, 17-inch custom crash, 12-inch splash, 17-inch China and 14-inch hi-hats thin.

Monk uses Yamaha pedals and Pro-Mark sticks (737-S jazz stick model).

T.S. MONK DISCOGRAPHY

MONK ON MONK—N2K 10017
THE CHARM—Blue Note 89575
CHANGING OF THE GUARD—Blue Note 89050
TAKE ONE—Blue Note 99614

MONK TRIBUTE ALBUMS

Bill Holman
BRILLIANT CORNERS: THE MUSIC OF THELONIOUS MONK—JVC 2066

Steve Lacy
FIVE BY MONK, FIVE BY LACY—Silkheart 144
WE SEE—hat Art 6127
MORE MONK—Soul Note 121210
ONLY MONK—Soul Note 121160
SCHOOLDAYS—hat Art 6140
REFLECTIONS—Fantasy/OJC 063

Joshua Breakstone
LET'S CALL THIS MONK!—Double-Time 121

Danilo Perez
PANAMONK—Impulse! 190

T. J. Kirk
IF FOUR WAS ONE—Warner Bros. 46262
T.J. KIRK—Warner Bros. 45885

Jerry Gonzalez
RUMBA PARA MONK—Sunnyside 1036

Various Artists
FOR THE LOVE OF MONK—32 Records 32008
 (compilation of tracks from Muse and Landmark w/ Charles Brown, Ron Carter, Houston Person, Charlie Rouse, Hank Jones, Cedar Walton, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Kronos Quartet and others)
THAT'S THE WAY I FEEL NOW: A TRIBUTE TO THELONIOUS MONK—A&M 6600 (produced by Hal Willner, w/ Steve Lacy, Charlie Rouse, Gil Evans, Carla Bley, Randy Weston, John Zorn, Elvin Jones, Mars Williams, NRBO, Was Not Was and others)

BEN WEBSTER COTTON TAIL

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brightest moments
with the orchestras
of Duke Ellington,
Bennie Moten,
Willie Bryant,
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and Benny Carter and
his Chocolate Dandies.

All Tracks Recorded between 1932 and 1946
Total Playing Time—69:12

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Bassists
Bob
Cranshaw
& Steve
Swallow
Celebrate
Their
Plugged-In
Ways

Flashback

By
Larry
Birnbaum



It's odd to think that the electric bass has been around so long that some of its practitioners can now be considered old masters. Two of the most masterly are Bob Cranshaw, 64, best known for his three-decade tenure with Sonny Rollins, and Steve Swallow, 56, a perennial Down Beat poll winner who's been recording his own albums for ECM since the 1970s. Despite their plugged-in predilections, neither indulges in guitaristic pyrotechnics; instead, both favor their instrument's lower register, with supple, virtuosic techniques firmly grounded in the jazz tradition.

Swallow, born in New York City and raised in New Jersey, dropped out of Yale University to pursue a jazz career. He played acoustic bass with Paul Bley, Jimmy Giuffre, Art Farmer, Stan Getz and Gary Burton in New York before going electric and eventually moving to California in 1970. Returning to the East Coast a few years later, he began an ongoing musical and personal association with Carla Bley. He has performed and recorded with Paul and Carla Bley, John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Ernie Watts, Pat Metheny, Paul Motian, Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen, Steve Kuhn, Michael Franks, Rabih Abou-Khalil and Mike Gibbs, among others. His latest album, *Deconstructed* (Watt Works/ECM), is an offbeat take on jazz standards featuring Ryan Kisor, Chris Potter, Mick Goodrick and Adam Nussbaum.



Cranshaw, born in Evanston, Ill., came to New York from Chicago in 1959 with the MJT+3, featuring Walter Perkins, Harold Mabern, Frank Strozier and Willie Thomas. Soon he was working with Carmen McRae, Junior Mance and Sonny Rollins, with whom he's maintained an on-and-off association ever since. He also became a regular studio player for Blue Note, recording classic sessions with Lee Morgan, Joe Henderson, Donald Byrd and many others. Besides jazz, Cranshaw played rock, pop, folk and r&b dates, and worked theater and television shows, including a 27-year stint with *Sesame Street*. Today—playing acoustic bass, bass guitar and now, electric upright bass—he

continues to gig with Rollins and with Milt Jackson while playing occasional funk sessions and Broadway shows like *Bring Da Noise, Bring Da Funk*.

In their first extended conversation, Cranshaw and Swallow swapped stories and exchanged insights at the executive conference room of BMG headquarters in midtown Manhattan.

LARRY BIRNBAUM: *How did you start playing electric bass?*

BOB CRANSHAW: Because of an accident. I had played the instrument once in Chicago, like maybe '49.

STEVE SWALLOW: '49! The instrument just barely existed.

BC: Not many people played it, especially in a jazz context. But I got this job in Chicago with an organ, guitar and tenor sax. The club owner saw me walk in with my string bass, and he said, "They're never going to hear that." We didn't amplify the basses at that time, so I didn't know what to say. And he said, "I have a bass guitar and an amplifier in the back. Can you play it?" And I said, "Sure," because I needed the money. So I played it, but I didn't think about it, because it was a one-night situation.

And years later in New York when I was playing for the David Frost TV show, I was getting ready to get out of a cab to go do the show, and a truck hit the cab. Luckily, I paid the driver in the cab rather than get out and pay him, because it would have been all over. After that I couldn't carry my string bass around for a while, so I just started to play the electric bass, and I never looked back. But I didn't make a big deal about playing it. It was the same to me as playing the string bass. I didn't think of it in any other way, and that was how I got into it.

SS: What happened to me was, after years of resisting *touching* an electric bass—I didn't want to dirty my hands with one—I finally picked one up just out of boredom one day, and my hands fell in love. It just happened in an instant, and there was nothing I could do about it. My hands just loved touching that instrument. All of a sudden I was stuck with an intense physical love for the electric bass. But it never occurred to me that I had to play some other kind of music—rock & roll or rhythm & blues. Paul Chambers was still my idol. Nothing had changed except that this curious object walked into my life.

I played it in the closet for a while and brought it out when I was playing in Gary Burton's band with Larry Coryell and Roy Haynes. I said, "Gary, what would you think if I played a tune or two with this?" And he said, "Try it." So I tried playing it and found that the guys were handling it pretty well, and I finally got to where it had grown from a couple of tunes to most of the tunes, and the acoustic bass had become the odd instrument. I was still uneasy about playing the electric bass in a jazz context, so I asked Roy Haynes if it was OK with him, because I considered him the essence of jazz. And without hesitation he said, "Yeah, sure." Just a two-word answer, and that was the last I saw of the acoustic bass. I stopped playing it shortly thereafter, in '71.

BC: Everybody was trying to make the transition around that time, when the electric bass started to become popular. The string bass players started to lose work, because people wanted the electric sound. All the guys gave it a try, but it just wasn't comfortable. I tried to help a guy design something where the neck felt more like a string bass, but it



PHOTOS BY ALAN HARRIDIAN

"My bass is better than yours ..."

didn't work. Jazz musicians are not into electronics to begin with, and they didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to muddy it up with new-fangled things. And the musicians hated amplifiers. I used to walk into a club, and as soon as they saw the amplifier, it was like, "Here comes the noise."

SS: That was an adjustment that took me some time to make, too. I had an immediate physical affinity for the instrument itself, but it did take me some time to love the amplifier. For a long time I saw the amplifier as the box across the room where the noise came out. It took me years to realize that it was as much the instrument as the thing

I was touching, and I needed to develop the same kind of relationship to the amplifier that I had to the bass itself.

LB: Was there much of an adjustment in the technique?

BC: I didn't even think about it. A bass is a bass. I didn't get into the bass guitar; it was still like a string bass for me—I mean, I made it my string bass. There's a difference, but when I started to play electric, I was playing the same tunes, so it was just a different feel. All I knew how to do was play bebop, so how could I play anything else with the instrument? But after I started to get into other things, like funk and so forth, I knew I had to make some changes.

SS: In my case, there just weren't enough hours in the day to play them both. And during the time I was playing them both, I was constantly suffering from guilt. If I was playing one, I felt the other one kind of looking over my shoulder with a pathetic expression on its face. It's like having a wife and a mistress. I finally had to make a choice, and there were tears in my eyes as I waved goodbye to my bass when a friend of mine took it away. I missed it terribly, but I felt it was something I had to do.

LB: You changed the way electric bass was played.

SS: I think I found an idiosyncratic way of playing it. I don't know that I had an appreciable effect on the way most people play the instrument. One of the things that attracted me to the electric bass was that it was a kind of clean slate when I first encountered it. There were a few jazz people who had been interested in it, most notably Monk Montgomery.

BC: He was one of the pioneers.

SS: But basically, you had to fashion your own way of playing. I was 30 when I began playing the electric bass, and I found it liberating to all of a sudden not be in the line of Paul Chambers, Percy Heath, Doug Watkins and all of those great players, but to be off to the side somewhere with a new mechanism to learn and the necessity of creating a new set of tactics.

LB: When did you start using a pick?

SS: A couple of years after I started playing the electric bass. Initially I played with my fingers, but my Gibson was an exceptionally muddy-sounding bass, and I was playing it through an Ampeg B-15, which is a beautifully round-sounding amplifier. I was having trouble getting sufficient clarity out of the Gibson, and I found that with the pick, I could. I was playing with Gary Burton's band, and Jerry Hahn, the guitar player, would often come by my room after the gig and say, "Hey, Swallow, let me try that thing." And he would pull out his pick and play about 10 times as fast and clear as I could possibly play. I think it was his goading that made me take up the pick, and after a while I stopped playing with fingers altogether.

LB: The electric sound does have a different quality.

BC: Yes and no. When I listen to Ron Carter play string bass, his notes are long and kind of electric. And then there's the more percussive school of Ray Brown, which I came out of, because we were not amplified. It's what I call "thump and peck." When I came up, I used to listen to Chubby Jackson, and it was cooking, but you didn't hear clarity in the notes. So to bridge that gap, I was trying to get in between the thump-and-peck and what

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NOVEMBER 16	Outpost Productions	Albuquerque, NM
NOVEMBER 22	Philadelphia Clef Club	Philadelphia, PA

*Non-Network site supported by satellite tour funding

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Ron was doing, which was a cleaner sound.

SS: The irony is that the sound and technique of the acoustic bass changed radically with the advent of amplification. Bob and I both came out of an era when there was no amplification. The action on the instruments was extremely high, and your technique was directed toward projection and clarity. You had to do anything you could to register. Now the acoustic instruments have very low actions, and the sound is an amplified sound. It's an entirely different ball game.

BC: I feel the same way. When I heard the amplified thing, it was a gas to me, because I could hear it. I like the bottom. Now the string bass is becoming more prominent in sound, but it still leaves a lot to be desired. When I walk into a club, if I don't hear the bass, I'm not hearing the band, and

I'm really turned off. Usually you don't hear the bass or the piano; you hear drums and saxophone. When I came up, there were no mics, and you could hear everybody. We used dynamics, so the music was played differently.

LB: A lot of jazz purists resented the use of electric bass, and some still do.

BC: The people who were complaining were not really listening to the music to begin with. I played the same notes as on the string bass. I didn't try to change the way I played and the feel that I have, so none of that really bothered me. They just don't want to accept what the instrument looks like. The musicians I've worked with would say,

"I almost can't tell the difference." I'm mainly a time player—I like to groove, I like a pocket—so that means low and solid, because that's what I do. I like to support other people, so none of the guys I played with ever complained. It's the critics, because they want to dictate what the music should sound like.

SS: My primary focus is the same as Bob's. When I work as a sideman, I'm inevitably listed as an electric bassist, but on my own albums I'm a bassist, and that's it. I think it's absurd not to be able to get past the physical fact of the instrument. Every time I play, I try to transcend the instrument. Ultimately, it's not even bass, it's just music. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Bob Cranshaw plays a bass guitar custom-made by Roger Sadowsky. He also has a new collapsible upright electric bass made by David Gage. His acoustic upright bass is a very old Italian model whose maker he can't identify.

Steve Swallow plays a five-string bass guitar custom-made by guitar-maker Ken Parker, with a high-C string on top rather than the more common extra bottom string.

Swallow owns a Mesa Boogie 15-inch speaker but usually uses speakers provided by whatever venue he's playing. Cranshaw uses SWR speakers—four 10-inch speakers with his bass guitar and two 10-inch speakers with his electric upright.

Both Cranshaw and Swallow endorse LaBella strings and use Walter Woods amps.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Steve Swallow

DECONSTRUCTED—ECM/XtraWatt 23209

REAL BOOK—ECM/XtraWatt 521 637

(this # on CD, but Schwann says 23207)

SWALLOW—ECM/XtraWatt 23206

HOME—ECM 21160

CARLA—ECM 23202

HOTEL HELLO—ECM 21055

with Carla Bley

GO TOGETHER—ECM 23124

DUETS—ECM 23120

SEXTET—ECM/Watt 23117

NIGHT-GLO—ECM/Watt 23116

with John Scofield

OUT LIKE A LIGHT—enja 4038

SHINOLA—enja 4004

Bob Cranshaw

(Cranshaw has recorded exclusively as a sideman)

with Sonny Rollins

SILVER CITY—Milestone 2501

OLD FLAMES—Milestone 9215

HERE'S TO THE PEOPLE—Milestone 9194

G-MAN—Milestone 9150

WITHOUT A SONG—Four Star 40088

THE QUARTETS FEATURING JIM HALL—

Bluebird 5643

with Lee Morgan

TOM CAT—Blue Note 84446

THE GIGOLO—Blue Note 84212

TAKE TWELVE—Fantasy/OJC 310

with various others

KOFL—Blue Note 31875 (Donald Byrd)

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(Hank Mobley)

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ALAN NAHIGIAN: *How did you get interested in jazz in the first place?*

BILL GOTTLIEB: Well, my favorite story is that I was served some improperly cooked pork the last day of my sophomore year at college, and when I got home I got trichinosis—a pretty serious ailment. I was in bed for most of the summer, and the person that visited me most often was a pianist of no particular skill named “Doc” Bartle. He played Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong records for me while I was in bed. By the time I was cured, I was a jazz nut.

I was scheduled to become editor of the college magazine, and one of the perks was reviewing records. When I got back to college and began to take over the magazine, I saw to it that there was jazz coverage in almost every issue. That’s how I got involved in jazz.

AN: *Around what year was this?*

BG: 1936 or '37. When I got my first job after college, it was with the Washington Post, but it was in advertising. I decided I really didn’t like that too much, but I kept going, and I went back to the managing editor and said, “How about in addition to my regular job you let me do a weekly jazz column?” He agreed. It was probably the oldest jazz regular jazz column in a

Beat for 2 1/2 years or so. And then the jazz field took a nosedive. Fifty-Second Street practically closed up partly because of the recession in the music business, and it was taken over by the boppers, which alienated all of the old audience that had been built up.

From that point on I became a filmstrip producer and eventually established my own company, which was purchased by McGraw Hill, and I became president of a division of McGraw Hill and stayed there for 10 years. In 1979 I retired and dug up my old negatives and had the *Golden Age Of Jazz* published. It’s been revised somewhat, and it’s much better printed now than it had been.

AN: *And in this whole period of time you did not take any photos of any jazz performances?*

BG: I quit cold turkey.

AN: *Let’s discuss some of your favorite shots. We are looking at a picture of Sidney Bechet.*

BG: I knew I wanted to get that avuncular face, but mostly I wanted emphasize the soprano saxophone because he was virtually the only musician that played it. So I used the wide-angle lens. I knew pretty much in advance what I wanted. He was actually playing at the time. He wasn’t posing for me.

This shot here [Lead Belly]: He had been in jail for murder. But I had never seen him, and he was on tour. He was playing at the National Press Club in Washington. I did not have time to interview him beforehand in his dressing room. So I got into what amounts to the orchestra pit. I expected some big burly guy to come out. He was very compact, very mild-mannered mild looking guy. So this is where I cheated. Usually I took pride in capturing personality, but occasionally I would do the opposite. I deliberately low-lit him to make him look more sinister.

AN: *How did you know exactly when you were going to take the picture? Did you watch the person?*

BG: First of all, chances are I had already seen them. I knew their music because I knew their records and I may have even interviewed them on the radio. In the case of the Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt, I couldn’t figure his personality because he couldn’t speak any English and I didn’t speak enough French. I said to myself, there’s a guy that’s the first non-American to become a jazz giant. He, in a way, revolutionized guitar playing; and he did this in spite of or possibly because of the fact that the fingers on his fingering hand were largely destroyed when he was a young man. That to me was highly significant. He was warming up in a dressing room at the time. I made sure you could see the mutilated hand.

I knew in advance when I shot Billie Holiday I wanted to get her eyes closed so that you could get some feeling of the

“I DID NOT MOVE THE MUSICIANS. I MOVED MYSELF INTO POSITION, AND I WAITED.”

major newspaper in the world. This was in 1938 or maybe the beginning of '39. I also asked him for the use of a photographer, and he said he’d try it. So for two weeks I had a photographer come with me when I covered the clubs and hotels. Then he said, “I’m sorry, kid, it’s too expensive.” I was determined to have photos to go with my column, so I went out and bought a Speed Graphic—that’s what all the press photographers had back then—and I learned to use it. From that point on I became a writer/photographer. I quit my main job at the Post and went back to school to do a masters and to teach economics at the University of Maryland, but I kept my weekly column. By that time I had three interview shows a week on the local radio station and I had a one-a-week on the NBC outlet.

Then the army finally got me. But when I got out of the army, I searched for a job and the first job I got was with Down Beat as an assistant editor and writer. I also illustrated my own stories, but as with the Post, I never got paid for my photographs. I just threw that in. I stayed with Down



Top to bottom: Billie Holiday, Buddy Rich, Django Reinhardt and Duke Ellington

anguish in her voice. I had these things preconceived. I did not move the musicians. I moved myself in to position, and I waited. I knew: not now, wait until he plays such and such, and in the third chorus, he'll be more emotional. Occasionally, when I'd have somebody like Dizzy Gillespie, I would sometimes move him. On one occasion, I had him come out and lean against a street sign that said 52nd Street, because at that moment he had become the dominant person on 52nd Street. He is such a natural. He knew exactly just what to do. Another very famous shot I have is Dizzy looking at Ella Fitzgerald. I went to the club that day to cover Gillespie, and Ella came in. She was not on the act, but her boyfriend there was Ray Brown, who was playing bass for Dizzy. Of course, the audience said, "Hey Ella, sing for us!" So she got up to sing with that dizzy hat on. I moved into position so you could see Ray Brown in the background and Ella in the foreground, but Dizzy wasn't in it. So I [nudged] Dizzy and he knew exactly what to do. He moved in and looked up at her, and I got that shot. It's been reproduced a million times.

[Mel Tormé] Here's another gimmick shot. He was playing at the Paramount or some theater, and I was to do a story about him. I thought, gee, I don't know much about this kid except that he's got a terrific range. I knew he had this husky voice. He got the term "Velvet Fog," so I thought, what could I do that's special for him? My objective was to take a picture that would go beyond what I could say in words.

AN: *Symbolic picture.*
BG: So I thought maybe I should seize on this Velvet Fog business. So while he was in the shower, I ran downstairs to the delicatessen and bought some dry ice. I put the dry ice in the sink, and I said, "Mel, get to the side of the sink, and after I turn on the water, start singing." So the water hit the dry ice, and when the smoke came



Dizzy Gillespie

up, I shot him.

AN: *Great! What was it like shooting Charlie Parker?*

BG: Well, I knew this was a great man. I shot him two or three times. In this particular instance, he had just come out of a sanitarium. He had a bad mental breakdown. I noticed his eyes were real starry, and I don't know if it was because of his mental state, if he was that way normally or not, I didn't know. But it looked right.

AN: *Yeah, you took all the originators, all of the classic musicians.*

BG: And I'm a good photographer, although I didn't know that. The thing that helped me was that I always had an intellectual purpose. I'd think, What can I do that will either be striking or that will illustrate something?

AN: *Like this Buddy Rich picture.*

BG: Buddy already had a reputation of being a real rough character. I said, what can I do to suggest his brashness? I didn't come up with anything.

Out he comes from the shower with a leopard-skin bathrobe. I said, "Jesus, that does it!"

AN: *Here's Cab Calloway.*

BG: This is one of the few times I permitting mugging. He was a performer and entertainer. With him, I went along with the mugging. Here's the suave, elegant guy [Ellington] with all of these extra suits and the fan letters and so on. I didn't do it consciously, but I liked to take

shots in mirrors, cause it permitted me to show the environment.

AN: *What do you listen to now?*

BG: I still listen to Duke's stuff and the boppers. But Miles Davis is sort of the cutoff point with me. I never could really dig Miles Davis. It sounds to me half of the time that he's fumbling around looking for the right note.

AN: *Do you remember who was the last jazz musician you photographed?*

BG: Well, this photo of James P. Johnson was taken when I quit the jazz business and started to do the filmstrips. I rented



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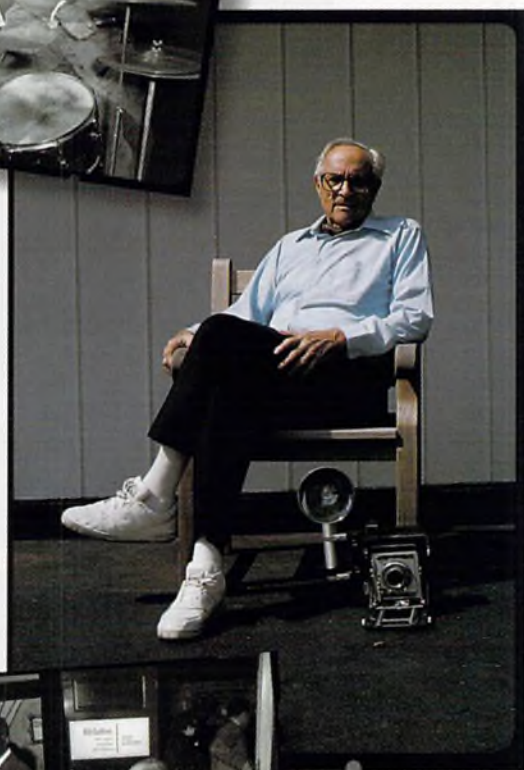
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Top to bottom: Charlie Parker with Tommy Potter, Ray McKinley, Bill Gottlieb, James P. Johnson (left) with Fess Williams and Freddie Moore, and Mel Tormé



an office to start my new business, and I had him get some musicians together to play for the opening. Just prior to that, I went on tour for a week with Stan Kenton, and in a way those were just about my last photographs.

AN: *Didn't you do some double-exposures?*

BG: Ray McKinley, I did. He took over the Glenn Miller Orchestra when Glenn Miller was lost during the war. He came back to the United States still as the leader of what had been the Glenn Miller Orchestra. They opened up at the Hotel Pennsylvania, I think, on Seventh Avenue. He was playing in front of a black backdrop. I had him in two different positions to suggest action—I could do that

because of that black background. When the story ran, it was the cover story of *Down Beat*.

AN: *And how was it shooting Monk? That must have been interesting.*

created, is still in business. Let's jump in a cab and go there, and I'll interview you later. He liked that fine, and we got into a cab. He offered me a marijuana cigarette to calm me down, but I was perfectly calm, and we got up to Minton's Playhouse. That's the same piano he had used when he was the house pianist. And I interviewed him. And I got stories in *Down Beat*, *Record Changer*, the *Saturday Review*.

When it came to people like Monk, I'm pretty square. They liked me because I was respectful, I was good for them. But we couldn't develop any kind of a warm relationship. My experiences with them were fairly limited. I was not all business, but to a certain extent I didn't want to stay out till 5 o'clock in the morning at a jam session. I had a wife and children at home, I had tennis to play. So I didn't become bosom buddies with a whole flock of musicians the way Leonard Feather did.

One of my constant frustrations was that I would follow a young musician for over a period of a year or two. He would be getting more and more attention, more

"I DIDN'T BECOME BOSOM BUDDIES WITH A WHOLE FLOCK OF MUSICIANS THE WAY LEONARD FEATHER DID."

BG: Monk? The story is in the book but it's certainly worth repeating. Now, everybody in the jazz field knew of

Thelonious Monk. He, with Dizzy and Bird, were the creators more than anybody else of bop, of modern jazz. But at that moment for 10 months, nobody seemed to know where he was. I thought that would be an interesting story.

AN: *And what year was this?*

BG: It was 1947 or 1948. So I then mentioned this to Mary Lou Williams—I had a very good relationship with her. She said, "If you want Thelonious, I'll get you Thelonious." And sure enough, a week later he shows up at my office in Rockefeller Center, nervous as could be, shaking worse than I'm shaking. I started to interview him, and I wasn't getting anywhere much. So I said that Minton's Playhouse, where you used to be the house pianist and where bop was more or less

recognition. I would say, "Hey, I'd like to do a story about you in *Down Beat*. Let's arrange for a day and I'll bring my camera along. Who knows, maybe I can even get a cover for you." You would think a young, struggling musician would say, "Oh, terrific!" Fifty percent of the time they wouldn't show up because the ethics of the young musicians dictated that they shouldn't conform too much. They would show up when they had a gig, but otherwise. ... In a way it kept me further apart from people like Bird and Monk. But I did what I had to do and I made a difference, in my writing and in my photography. **DB**

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

1981	John Hammond	1990	Rudy Van Gelder
1982	George Wein	1991	Bill Cosby
1983	Leonard Feather	1992	Rich Matteson
1984	Dr. Billy Taylor	1993	Gunther Schuller
1985	Dr. Lawrence Berk	1994	Marian McPartland
1986	Orrin Keepnews	1995	Willis Conover
1987	David Baker	1996	Chuck Suber
1988	John Conyers Jr.	1997	Bill Gottlieb
1989	Norman Granz		

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



Marty Ehrlich & Ben Goldberg

Light At The Crossroads
Songlines 1511

★★★★½

The clarinet's recent renaissance has seen it, in many cases, transformed into a saxophonic instrument, perfect for honking, screeching and booting. It's rare, for instance, in the post-Eric Dolphy period to hear a bass clarinet played without constant extensions into altissimo, and Jimmy Giuffre's free forays opened up now-standard new musical domains on the shorter stick. The number of players exploring the instrument's natural register and other clarinet-specific topics is remarkably small. *Light At The Crossroads* doesn't make a pedantic point of this; it's simply a smart session of original tunes played beautifully. But in the process, co-leaders Ehrlich and Goldberg suggest other potentialities stowed away in the black horn.

Relaxed and loose, the rhythm team of Trevor Dunn and Kenny Wollesen imbues the record with open swing, a stone groove sometimes tugging at the twin clarinets' hem. The arrangement of many pieces contrasts clarinet and bass clarinet, to great effect on Goldberg's "What I Lost." Aside from the free-jazzy first cut, there's rarely any strain to the reeds—instead, they emphasize forthright melodic content (generally melancholic or bittersweet) and the dark sonorities and emotional complexity of the unadorned clarinet. On "Ask Me Later" (the only non-original, writ by Wayne Horvitz) the horns switch to an ostinato behind Dunn's limber solo. Ehrlich's "Twos" features Wollesen on "bug," a bongo-like electroacoustic instrument invented by Californian Tom Nunn. Otherwise, the front-line/support functions in a conventional manner, spotlighting the inventive powers of the hornmen.

Ehrlich and Goldberg each contribute four compositions. The latter's "Hopeless" and the former's "I Don't Know This World Without Don Cherry" both bubble with an Omertish bounce. New Yorker Ehrlich should garner much more attention than he's received in recent years, but perhaps he's too subtle for easy ears; he excels on somber, slow-burners like his "Dark Sestina," which mutates into a skewed blues, or feistier tunes like Goldberg's "April 4," a communicative

duet for bass clarinets. Goldberg is best known as a member of the New Klezmer Trio, which included Wollesen in its ranks. But now that that group has disbanded, the Oakland-based clarinetist is quite active on his own. His sound and sensitivity are impressive throughout *A Light At The Crossroads*, confirming him as a great addition to the collation of contemporary creative clarinetists. —John Corbett

Light At The Crossroads—Texas; *I Don't Know This World Without Don Cherry*; *What I Lost*; *Ask Me Later*; *Dark Sestina*; *Hopeless*; *Twos*; *April 4*; *Light At The Crossroads*. (52:14)

Personnel—Ehrlich, Goldberg, clarinets, bass clarinets; Trevor Dunn, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums, bug.



Louis Armstrong

The Great Chicago Concert
1956

Columbia Legacy 65119

★★★★½

This is a frustrating recording, understandably unreleasable in its time, but a valued if flawed document by the time Columbia first put it out on LP in 1980, nine years after Louis Armstrong's death. Flaws lose their

importance when a great artist dies.

It's the second CD of Armstrong's 1950s work Columbia has released this year, both restored by their redoubtable original producer, George Avakian. The first was his *Plays W.C. Handy*, and after 43 years it remains not only an unmitigated masterpiece but probably one of the 10 greatest jazz works of the post-war era. But that's been said and need not be restated here.

This two-CD package captures a less singular event, namely a public Armstrong performance at Chicago's Medina Temple, June 1, 1956, one not unlike others of the period, though the chance to see Armstrong in person was indeed an event for anyone lucky enough to be around then. (I first saw him at 13, about six weeks after this concert, at Ravinia Park.)

It was a time when Armstrong seemed incapable of sounding bad. High body and intonation on trumpet here are generally superb, wavering only a millisecond here and there, as in the final solo on "West End Blues." And the band functioned with him and behind him like a perfect piece of human musical machinery. Ed Hall's slashing attack is electric and enlivens every performance, even set pieces like "Indiana." He was the finest clarinetist Louis ever worked with, Johnny Dodds withstanding. Billy Kyle swung with a jaunty, uncluttered precision (working "Pretty Little Missy" into "Perdido"). And Barrett Deems was the most fluid, propulsive drummer he ever played with, save for Sid Catlett.

What frustrates, and what made the concerts mostly unreleasable, are the staging "gremlins" that placed Armstrong far off-mic during crucial portions of many pieces. With virtually no late-Armstrong performances on "West End Blues" extant outside of the 1955 *Ambassador Satch* version, for instance, it is with a sinking feeling that one hears Armstrong's clarion cadenza and first chorus as a ghostly echo, as if it were coming from out on Wabash Avenue.

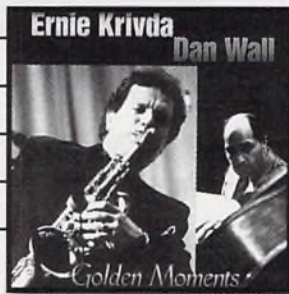
THE HOT BOX					
CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
MARTY EHRLICH & BEN GOLDBERG <i>Light At The Crossroads</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★½	★★★★
LOUIS ARMSTRONG <i>The Great Chicago Concert 1956</i>		★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★½
ERNIE KRIVDA <i>Golden Moments</i>		★★★	★★★	★★	★★★
J.J. JOHNSON <i>The Brass Orchestra</i>		★★★	★★★	★★½	★★★½

But the performance and energy level is still high. And there are enough minor variations on concert staples like "Faithful Hussar" and even "When The Saints Go Marchin' In" (previously unreleased) to be of interest to Armstrong devotees. Those seeking more of an introduction to this magisterial figure are referred to the W.C. Handy album.

—John McDonough

The Great Chicago Concert 1956—*Medley: Flee As A Bird; Oh Didn't He Ramble; Do You Know What It Means; Basin Street Blues; Black And Blue; West End Blues; Sunny Side Of The Street; Struttin' With Some Barbecue; Sleepy Time Down South; Medley: Manhattan, Sleepy Time Down South; Indiana; The Gypsy; Faithful Hussar; Rocking Chair; Bucket's Got A Hole In It; Perdido; Clarinet Marmalade; Mack The Knife; Medley: Tenderly, You'll Never Walk Alone; Stompin' At The Savoy; Margie; Big Mama's Back In Town; That's My Desire; Ko Ko Mo; When The Saints Go Marchin' In; Start Spangled Banner.* (55:35/57:12)

Personnel—Armstrong, trumpet, vocals; Trummy Young, trombone; Ed Hall, clarinet; Billy Kyle, piano; Dale Jones, bass; Barrett Deems, drums; Velma Middleton, vocals.



Ernie Krivda & Dan Wall

Golden Moments
Koch Jazz 7831

★★

Steve Lacy recently told critic Ben Ratliff that "there are an awful lot of local duos that you'll never hear about—a clarinet player and a piano player who have been playing together for years in some small town, and they play very well. ..." Though it has given us Jim Hall and Joe Lovano among other giants, Cleveland is a small enough town as far jazz and the world at large goes. And though they haven't worked together "for years," reed player Ernie Krivda and keyboardist Dan Wall play pretty well together, sure. Middle-agers, they've both filled their lives with countless gigs in the no-spotlight trenches, and the shared language of improv flows naturally from each. But the deep rapport that Lacy's likely alluding to, the kind of creative synergy needed to turn a mildly interesting exchange of ideas into one that's filled with crackling dialogue, isn't what *Golden Moments* is about. The sharp sections are weighted by long stretches of merely adequate playing, rendering it a jazz commonplace: the mediocre record.

The problem stems from empathy, not chops. Both players are technically efficient, and each gives his work an authoritative posture. But as they move through a batch of standards and two Krivda originals, the pair sel-

dom find themselves in deep accord. An inch or two shy of sharing a unified mindset on any given parcel of sound, they seem in a steady process of recalibrating themselves to each other. Krivda's liner notes tell us that "on four of the pieces improvised episodes evolve into the actual melody which is not heard until the last chorus"—a daring way to operate. Perhaps it got the best of them. It's not as if they're in a debate—the negotiation of and extrapolation on the thematic material definitely places them in close proximity. It's just that genuine intricacy is never fully attained.

Wall is something of a rhythm maven (one way or another, you've gotta be in duets), and he often lets his left hand go for walks. It offers a sleek linearity below his partner's spree on "How Deep Is The Ocean," but overall it gets a bit repetitious. Krivda's the owner of a tart, demonstrative sound that tells you he'll take Rollins over Coltrane. The pithy phrases he hooks together at the start of "The Best Thing For You" (a spot where the pair's approach is a golden moment of hip communion) are initially playful and provocative, but by the end of his stretch they seem so wrapped up in themselves, they forget to breathe.

Perhaps that's the overall downfall of the disc. A lot of it sounds like chatter, the gabbing of those who have so much to say that it's blurted out instead of judiciously paced. Their camaraderie is obvious, but Krivda and Wall are just a few conversations shy of attaining the level of eloquence that their intricate ideas demand.

—Jim Macnie

Golden Moments—*Golden Moments; The Best Thing For You; Angel Eyes; Get Out Of Town; A Time For Love; Pacific Echoes; How Deep Is The Ocean.* (59:43)

Personnel—Krivda, tenor saxophone; Wall, piano.



J.J. Johnson

The Brass Orchestra
Verve 537 321

★★★½

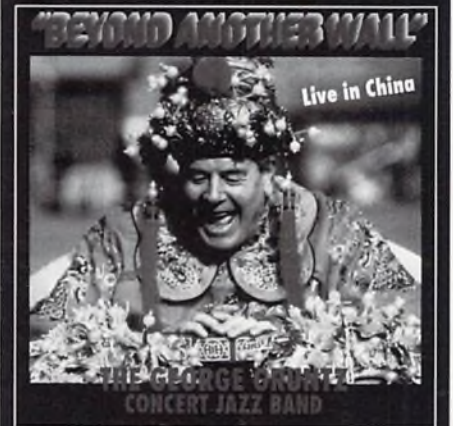
Yes, indeed, this is one brassy album. Of course, not everybody plays on every cut, but a nod to the collective personnel listed at the end of this review should say at least one thing: J.J. Johnson has today's top session players in his pocket, his *hip* pocket.

The Brass Orchestra is made up of compositions by Johnson, Miles Davis, Robin Eubanks, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton and Dmitri Tiomkin. Given the number of composers, arrangers (besides Johnson, Eubanks, Robert Farnon and Hampton contribute), producers (Johnson, Don Sickler and Richard Seidel) and

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conductors (Hampton and Tom Everett), Johnson's work as a leader with a signature is cut out for him. When the album works, it's because the music gets away from sounding like a jumble of charts running into each other and instead plays like a screenplay to a great story.

Johnson has a solid background in TV and movie writing, which may explain why the album comes off like a recital, with overture-like tendencies. A substantial (and welcome) part of this effect creates a lushness, a sweet mood music. Or, to paraphrase liner notician Stanley Crouch when speaking elsewhere of the Miles Davis/Gil Evans collaborations, *The Brass Orchestra* sometimes sounds like sophisticated TV music. Consider, for example, the moods created for Johnson's "Enigma." Deft trombone colors and sensitive harp help to highlight a

music whose beauty shines in an almost classical sense. (Think of Kenton minus the octane.) Arranged and conducted by Hampton, this is music that takes a very large ensemble and gives it a fresh intimacy, breathing through formidable structures with nary a solo (listed soloists Johnson and tenor saxophonist Dan Faulk provide theme statements).

Apart from his playful blues "If I Hit The Lottery" and the out-and-out blower "Why Indianapolis, Why Not Indianapolis?" Johnson's compositions are clearly more symphonic—and less "jazzy"—in nature. Movie writer Tiomkin's lovely ballad "Wild Is The Wind" (featuring Johnson's best solo work here, this time on muted horn) is the best addition to the Johnson canon here. Nothing against the other writers, all of whom add great music, but an album full of Johnson compositions would have been better (and enough!—his "Lament," for example, is missed).

One of the true highlights on *The Brass Orchestra* is Johnson's pretty "Ballad For Joe," featuring veteran trumpeter Joe Wilder. Derived from 1956's *Poem For Brass*, Johnson's first attempt at writing an extended piece for large ensemble that wasn't a jazz group, it's economical even as it's potent, Wilder's playing quiet and majestic. The haunting beauty of the original versions of Johnson's "Horn Of Plenty" and "Ballade" (both from Dizzy Gillespie's *Perceptions*) is relived through *The Brass Orchestra's* great section work. Unfortunately, Jon Faddis' soloing is overripe and heavy-handed, especially on "Horn Of Plenty." Johnson's arrangement of the stormy swinger "Horn Of Plenty" serves up an ending very much like Gil Evans' for *Miles Ahead's* "I Don't Wanna Be Kissed" (a nod to Evans?).

Perceptions' deep colors are followed by bright ones, courtesy of Miles Davis' "Swing Spring," closing the album on an up note—as if the credits to a movie were being scrolled before our eyes. *The Brass Orchestra* scores most often as cinematic material, particularly Johnson material. Maybe it's simply an artistic analogy, but Crouch inadvertently refers to visuals when talking of this album when he says it "parallels the very best teamwork of today's independent films." J.J. Johnson the composer for large ensembles stirs us to create our own movies right alongside him. In this regard, he is a master of multimedia proportions.

—John Ephland

The Brass Orchestra—El Camino Real; Enigma; Gingerbread Boy; Canon For Bela; Comfort Zone; Wild Is The

Wind; If I Hit The Lottery; Cross Currents; Ballad For Joe; Cadenza; Why Indianapolis; Horn Of Plenty; Ballade; Swing Spring. (70:52)

Collective personnel—Johnson, Robin Eubanks, Jim Pugh, Steve Turre, Dave Taylor, Douglas Purviance, Joe Alessi, trombones; Jon Faddis, Eddie Henderson, Joe Wilder, Lew Soloff, Earl Gardner, Byron Stripling, Danny Cahn, Joe Shepley, trumpets; John Clark, Bob Carlisle, Chris Komer, Marshall Sealy, trench horns; Bruce Bonvissuto, Alan Raph, euphoniums; Howard Johnson, Andy Rodgers, tubas; Dan Faulk, tenor and soprano saxophones; Francesca Corsi, harp; Renee Rosnes, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Victor Lewis, drums; Freddie Santiago, Milton Cardona, Kevin Johnson, percussion.



Steve Million

Thanks A Million

Palmetto 2026

★★★★½

Wlodek Pawlik Quartet

Turtles

Polonia 068

★★★★

With Randy Brecker's no-nonsense jazz trumpet as the common denominator between sessions made thousands of miles apart, Steve Million and Wlodek Pawlik each serve up an impressive album that demands to be heard by larger audiences than these two pianists enjoy at present.

Million's second effort, recorded live to two-track in a New York studio, proves his ★★★★★ debut (see *Down Beat*, March '96), *Million To One*, was no fluke. In the company of the same stellar musicians as last time, the Chicagoan brings discipline, personality, imagination, talent and quiet passion to his playing and songwriting. He values swinging both in common time (the majority of his originals) as well as in more rhythmically challenging meters (e.g., the simmering Afro-Latin piece "Seven A.M.," in 7/4). Million's compositions harbor harmonic complexities, but tension gets resolved like a flash of lightning from key soloists Chris Potter or Brecker. These two are up to the demands of keeping their probes of creative musical minds related to the moods of the songs, and Million gets outstanding service, also, from bassist Michael Moore and drummer Ron Vincent, formerly of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet. The album provides a bevy of aural delights: the carefully articulated sound of Million's piano notes on "My Explanation," the lovely precision

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of the melody played in unison by Potter and Brecker on "Waltz For Yadda," the dignified composure of the ensemble agreement in "Mis'ry Waltz," tenorman Potter's earnest intensity in his feature spot on "Situation," the exquisite tone Brecker gets playing flugelhorn on "Page Six," the perfect fit everywhere of improvisations within preordained song structures, the pervasive freshness and immediacy of the music at all times.

Pawlik's *Turtles* is marked by the collective assurance of the musicians, the mix of Americans (Brecker, tenor saxophonist Trent Kynaston, bassist Thomas Knific) and Poles (the pianist, drummer Cezary Konrad) having benefited from working together in Polish clubs just before their Warsaw record date. On a program of originals, Brecker gets ample feature space: His creative impulses are decisive and his commitment to the music total (as on *Thanks A Million*). Soloist Kynaston injects surprise into some of his lines, especially effective when revealing an edgy desperation on "Not Samba." Pawlik is an intelligent pianist who listens carefully to his colleagues; he shares a tough sort of sensitivity with Brecker on their duet "...Sailing," and he quietly and skillfully conjures complex feelings on "Moontide." Worthy of note, also, is the bracing, alert manner in which Konrad breaks up the time on "Not Samba" and the title track.

A large part of the two albums' appeal comes from the way the players' considerable facility and complicated turns of thought are so readily translated into high-quality modern jazz. (Polonia Distribution Co.: 48 (22) 24 32 13/fax)

—Frank-John Hadley

Thanks A Million—*Seven A.M.*; *Page Six*; *Lagoa*; *Waltz For Yadda*; *Toe/Knee/ My Explanation*; *Thanks A Million*; *March Of The Sycophants-Minions*; *Mis'ry Waltz*; *Situations In And Out Of Mind*. (58:34)

Personnel—*Million*, piano; Randy Brecker, flugelhorn, trumpet (1, 5, 7); Chris Potter, tenor and soprano (2, 3) saxophones; Michael Moore, acoustic bass; Ron Vincent, drums; Mark Walker, congas (1), shaker (3); Mark Patterson, trombone (1).

Turtles—*Bricolage*; *Turtles*; *Not Samba*; *Moontide*; *There's A Mingus A Monk Us*; ...*Sailing With You*, Randy; *You Gotta Believe*. (56:24)

Personnel—Pawlik, piano; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Trent Kynaston, tenor saxophone; Thomas Knific, bass; Cezary Konrad, drums.



Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown

Gate Swings
Verve 537 617

★★★★

In the late '40s, Brown was one of the pioneers who first played electric guitar with a roaring big band. He's been partial to brass and saxophones ever since, though fiscal practicality most always dictates he record or tour with but a couple horn players. Brown's latest Verve album honors his 50th year as a recording artist by placing him in front of more horns than usual (count 'em: 11) and having him reexamine classic material from the big-band era when he was a lanky young Texas firebrand packing a Gibson L-5 guitar hotter than a Colt .45.

Brown is fortunate to have John Snyder and Jim Bateman (his manager) as co-producers of *Gate Swings*. (They also worked together on Brown's earlier Verve sessions, *Long Way Home* and *The Man*.) The two are on the ball and chose to record in musically vibrant New Orleans, where the honorable Wardell Quezergue was hired to write the charts and the jazz-blues neighborhood boasts good horn players. The main man, now a few months past his 73rd birthday and always the boss, isn't asked to be anybody but himself, and he combines the weight of experience with the immediacy of self-rejuvenation. Brown's vocal chords are put to the test, and they're shown to be in good working order—not especially strong, mind you, but by no means timeworn. On almost every number, his guitar lines and chorded riffs resonate with a measured sort of dramatic flair or playfulness. Brown the guitar storyteller really outdoes himself on Percy Mayfield's "The River's Invitation," mingling optimism and sensuality marvelously in the

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Liner notes by associate producer
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face of the adversity expressed by his singing of the lyric.

For sure, the album title is apropos. Brown regulates the pulse and sustains tension on "Take The 'A' Train," "One O' Clock Jump," the remake of his 1954 Peacock side "Midnight Hour" and all the rest, whether old flag-wavers or the rare new song like Portland guitarist Lloyd Jones' "Toughen Up." The big band and his regular rhythm team swing with him all the while, with the only liability being the r&b boilerplate supplied by soloist Eric Demmer's alto sax. One big plus is the featured playing of Tony Dagradi: What jumps out of the bell of his tenor on five numbers is both exciting and unpredictable.

At a time when many blues septuagenarians with recording contracts coast on gas fumes, Brown shows he still has lots of fuel in his tank. He's not ready to rest on his laurels, and he's no sentimentalist. His backward glance over traveled roads, *Gate Swings*, is a fresh treat for the ears. —Frank-John Hadley

Gate Swings—Midnight Hour; Honey Dew; Toughen Up; Take The "A" Train; Too Late Baby; Gate's Blue Waltz; Caldonia; Bits & Pieces; The River's Invitation; One O' Clock Jump; Take Me Back Baby; Since I Fell For You; Flying Home. (56:46)

Personnel—Brown, guitar, vocals; Joe Crown, piano, organ; Harold Floyd, bass; David Peters, drums; Bernard Floyd, Bobby Campo, Jamil Sharif, trumpet; Rick Trolsen, John Touchy, Brian O'Neill, trombone; Richard Erb, bass trombone; Ray Moore, Eric Demmer, Warren Bell, alto saxophone; Tony Dagradi, tenor saxophone.



T.S. Monk
Monk On Monk
N2K 10017

★★★★½

There have been a number of notable sons who have followed their fathers into the jazz arena—Mercer Ellington, Joshua Redman, Denardo Coleman, Graham Haynes and the Marsalises. Some have faltered, some have excelled. With his *Monk On Monk* we can bring the jury in on T.S. The verdict is no longer in doubt—he makes the grade.

If you were among those hesitant to give T.S. his props, his certified jazz credentials, then high-fives are in order—and almost 5 stars. The guests alone that augment Monk's regular unit virtually command the highest rating, and each of them has his or her opportunity to propel this date into the stratosphere where the elder Monk always resided.

T.S. drops his awesome chops right from the git-go. "Little Rootie Tootie" was written for him and he clearly understands the meter and motion of the tune, pulling on its humorous parts and pushing its dramatic potential. He possesses an exciting technique and, like his father, a unique sense of rhythm. It's a gorgeous arrangement, nicely shaped to envelope but not confine Grover Washington's lovely tenor sax solo. There is a youthful insouciance here, and Hargrove's flugelhorn casts additional nonchalance.

There is not enough room to highlight all the brilliant corners to this session. But a few must be noted: Wayne Shorter's challenging soprano sax excursion on "Crepuscule With Nellie," the Johnny Hartman-like richness of Kevin Mahogany's voice on "Dear Ruby," Herbie Hancock's dazzling deconstruction of "Two Timer," the deft interplay between Jimmy Heath and Christian McBride on "Bright Mississippi," the duo virtuoso of Dianne Reeves and Nnenna Freelon as well as Howard Johnson's MVP effort on "Suddenly" and Geri Allen's sparkling keyboard conversation on "Ugly Beauty."

Long John Silver did not find these gems at Treasure Island. Monk Sr. was wise to keep the best interpreters of his music nearby. Monk Jr. has this lesson down pat—and some.

—Herb Boyd

Monk On Monk—Little Rootie Tootie; Crepuscule With Nellie; Boo Boo's Birthday; Dear Ruby; Two Timer; Bright Mississippi; Suddenly; Ugly Beauty; Jackie-ing. (52:34)

Personnel—Monk, drums; Willie Williams, Wayne Shorter (2), soprano and tenor saxophones; Bobby Porcelli, alto and baritone saxophones; Roger Rosenberg, tenor and baritone saxophones; Howard Johnson, baritone saxophone, tuba; John Clark (5), David Amram (3, 9), french

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horn; Jimmy Heath, tenor saxophone (6); Bobby Watson, alto saxophone (9); Grover Washington, Jr., tenor saxophone solo (1); Roy Hargrove, flugelhorn (1, 4); Don Sickler, Laurie Frink (2); Virgil Jones (1, 4, 8); Arturo Sandoval (6); Clark Terry (7); Wallace Roney (8, 9), trumpet; Eddie Bert, trombone; Danilo Perez (1); Ronnie Matthews (2-4, 6, 7, 9); Herbie Hancock (5); Geri Allen (8), piano; Ron Carter (1, 5); Dave Holland (3, 9); Christian McBride (6); bass; Gary Wang, bass (4, 7, 8); Kevin Mahogany (4); Dianne Reeves (7); Nnenna Freelon (7), vocals.



Wynton Marsalis & The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

Blood On The Fields
Columbia 57694

★★★★½

This Pulitzer Prize-winning jazz oratorio, premiered in 1994 and recorded in 1995 but not released on CD until this year, is Marsalis' most grandiose work to date. A sprawling epic about slavery featuring vocalists Jon Hendricks, Cassandra Wilson and Miles Griffith, it fills three discs, clocking in at nearly three hours. But for all its lofty intentions, it succeeds mainly as a showcase for Marsalis' masterly arranging skills. As a composer, Marsalis is remarkably tuneless, with none of his idol Duke Ellington's gift for catchy melody; as a librettist, he's ludicrously pompous and preachy ("O brown doom," indeed), seldom stooping to mere entertainment.

Besides Ellington, Marsalis draws on Charles Mingus, Igor Stravinsky and Leonard Bernstein, plus blues, spirituals and New Orleans funk and brass-band music, to produce richly sonorous, carefully nuanced, finely detailed orchestral textures that hold the listener's attention through even the driest thematic stretches. To underscore the travails of slavery, he makes much greater use of dissonance than usual, but keeps it under tight control; on "Move Over," for example, he hooks Ellingtonian hoots and whinnies to Stravinsky's "Rite Of Spring," avoiding the freedom of free-jazz. But the music is oddly out of sync with its subject matter, evoking railroads rather than slave ships, the Cotton Club instead of the cotton fields.

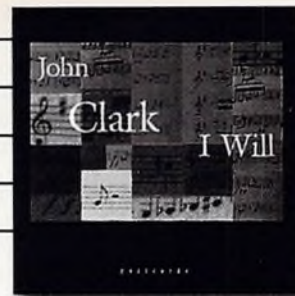
Griffith and Wilson, in the roles of the rebellious slave Jesse and his stoic woman Leona, make the best of a bad situation, struggling to invest their stilted, hookless songs with bluesy dignity, most successfully on "Work Song." Unfortunately, they share the same range, creating a certain gender confusion. Hendricks has a smaller but juicier part, playing both the slave

buyer on the jaunty "Soul For Sale," and the slave sage Juba, who dispenses advice over a second-line parade beat on "Juba And A O'Brown Squaw."

Only after feeling the master's lash does Jesse accept Juba's counsel to adopt soul, humility and love of country as his credo; then, following Michael Ward's fiddle hoedown on "Calling The Indians Out," Jesse and Leona escape to the North and freedom. It's a curious moral, and one that Marsalis himself ought to consider, especially the part about soul and humility. Here, he keeps his emotions so closely under control, and his ego so prominently on display, that the music scarcely swings. And that, if you accept the gospel according to Wynton, is jazz's cardinal sin.—Larry Birnbaum

Blood On The Fields—*Calling The Indians Out; Move Over; You Don't Hear No Drums; The Market Place; Soul For Sale; Plantation Coflee March; Work Song (Blood On The Fields); Lady's Lament; Flying High; Oh We Have A Friend In Jesus; God Don't Like Ugly; Juba And A O'Brown Squaw; Follow The Drinking Gourd; My Soul Fell Down; Forty Lashes; What A Fool I've Been; Back To Basics; I Hold Out My Hand; Look And See; The Sun Is Going To Shine; Will The Sun Come Out?; The Sun Is Going To Shine; Chant To Call The Indians Out; Calling The Indians Out; Follow The Drinking Gourd; Freedom Is In The Trying; Due North.* (58:45/52:55/50:49)

Personnel—Marsalis, conductor, trumpet; Jon Hendricks, Cassandra Wilson, Miles Griffith, vocals; Wess Anderson, alto saxophone; James Carter, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet; Victor Goines, tenor and soprano saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Robert Stewart, tenor saxophone; Walter Blanding, soprano saxophone (7); Russell Gunn, Roger Ingram, Marcus Printup, trumpet; Wayne Goodman, Ron Westray, trombone; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone, tuba; Michael Ward, violin; Eric Reed, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums, tambourine.



John Clark

I Will
Postcards 1016

★★★★

I Will starts with "India," and long-dormant synapses fire to hear it again. It is from John Coltrane's *Impressions* (1963), and it is puzzling that more players don't use it today. If the call to action in the two-note refrain of "India" doesn't sit you up straight, it's too late for you.

In 1997, John Clark whirls "India" through the densities of an atypical 11-piece ensemble (sitar, bass clarinet, synth, the leader's own french horn). Clark has recorded only three albums under his own name prior to *I Will*. Given this command of a forbidding instrument that speaks a solo language rarely heard in jazz, a thoroughly differentiated recording could result from Clark and a hot rhythm section playing a program of standards. But he



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4. NO SMOKING; 5. YOU'VE CHANGED;
6. DON'T WANT NOTHIN'

Dreyfus Records is pleased to present for the first time in North America this rare and classic session by three giants of modern jazz: Eddy Louiss, Kenny Clarke & René Thomas.

This legendary session might never have been documented, had it not been for the respected sound engineer, Yves Chamberland, whose passion for the music led him to record this date despite the lean times that jazz was experiencing at the time.

The musicians, KENNY CLARKE, who led the legendary sessions at Minton's, and has been hailed as the father of modern jazz drumming, RENÉ THOMAS, the Belgian guitarist, who in 1958 was described by Sonny Rollins as "better than any of the American guitarists on the scene today", and finally EDDY LOUISS, who Stan Getz has called "a genius".

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sets more ambitious goals here. He draws from 12 players and configures little big bands but also slims down to odd trios (french horn/tuba/drums on "Airegin") and duos (french horn/keyboards on "Sister E.M.C."). He showcases his gifts as soloist, composer, orchestrator and instigator.

Ron Overton's liner notes claim that Clark's personnel represents "a lost generation of players ... at the top of their creative powers, too seldom featured on recordings." The music makes his case. The group improvisation on "96th Street Sonata" could only come from individuals capable of fulfilling the most challenging collective cacophonous purposes. And when voices like Stanton Davies (trumpet) and Alex Foster (reeds) break out on their own, they are riveting.

I Will, in fact, contains some of Alex Foster's finest recorded work. On the title track (inspired by the words from a Baha'i prayer), the burnished colors of the full ensemble (reminiscent of Clark's former boss Gil Evans) are a shifting, complex backdrop for Foster's passionate tenor saxophone avowal. He holds back nothing, and his long tones break like sobs of the spirit.

But *I Will* is John Clark's album. He sets every stage, and his solos are revelatory—like the lingering, deeply felt reading of "My One And Only Love," with its buttery, smeary sonorities.

I Will is not quite as sonically incisive as most recordings by engineer Joe Barbaria. The horns and Ryo Kawasaki's guitar are too far down in the mix. But the other virtues associated with the new Postcards label are here: outside-the-box ensemble concepts and edgy soloists "too seldom featured on recordings."

—Thomas Conrad

I Will—India; 96th Street Sonata; Casilda/Mellow Max/King Bert; My One And Only Love; Bad Attitude; Now You Start; Airegin; I Will; Sister E.M.C. (54:29)

Personnel—Clark, french horn; Alex Foster, tenor, soprano saxophones (1-4, 6, 9); Stanton Davies, trumpet (1, 6, 7, 9); Dave Taylor, trombone, bass trombone (1, 6, 7, 9); Howard Johnson, bass clarinet (1, 9); Chris Hunter, flute, alto saxophone (1, 9); Ryo Kawasaki, guitar (1, 5, 6, 9); Trevor Clark, sitar (1); Bob Stewart, tuba (8); Pete Levin, keyboards (1, 2, 4-6, 8, 9, 10); Mike Richmond, bass (1, 2, 4-6, 9); Bruce Ditmas, drums (1, 2, 4-6, 8, 9).



Donald Harrison

Nouveau Swing
Impulse! 209

★★★

Donald Harrison's plan for his first album on the revived Impulse! label is to make a straightahead jazz record that insinuates

"the rhythms of the '90s" into a mainstream context.

Every aspect of this project reflects work and care. Harrison's alto saxophone flows with polished, orderly ideas. The supporting players are solid. (As an accompanist, if not yet as soloist, Christian McBride has few peers among jazz bassists, and Anthony Wonsey is a fresh thinker on piano.)

Many a jazz album has trivialized and/or emasculated itself by pursuing purposes similar to Harrison's. He seeks "a music of inclusion" by incorporating rhythmic elements from reggae, hip-hop, soca, calypso and funk. What saves *Nouveau Swing* is its musicianship and subtlety. The reggae reference in Reuben Rodgers' bass line on "Bob Marley" are almost subliminal. The syncopated accents in "Come Back Jack," a funk tune by the Meters, are laid on with discretion. "Sincerely Yours" is a ballad with a Motown beat "disguised" by drummer Carl Allen's use of brushes.

Still, Harrison's strategy for making his album approachable, combined with his determination to keep things light and relaxed, results in music that stays on the surface. Despite (or perhaps because of) the self-conscious rhythmic variety, there is a problematic sameness of tone and texture, a narrow range of intensity. Tempos pulse and glide, Harrison's variations brightly proceed with a saxophone sound just slightly too sweet, and not a single spark flies.

Nouveau Swing could serve well as an introduction to jazz for the intimidated neophyte. It is jazz, and it is a pretty package, eminently listenable, devoid of sharp edges and challenges.

—Thomas Conrad



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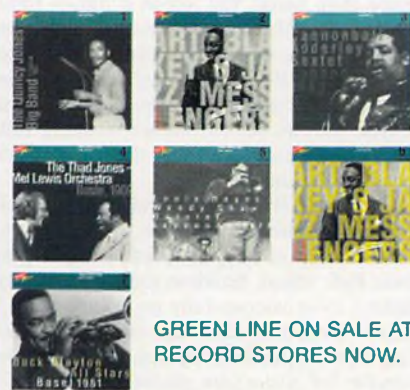
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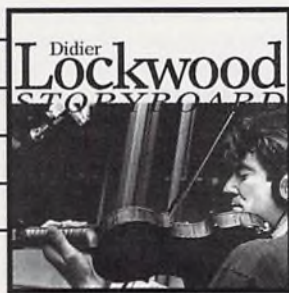
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Personnel—Harrison, alto saxophone; Anthony Wonsay; piano; Christian McBride (1, 3, 5-8, 10), Reuben Rodgers (2, 4, 9, 11-13), bass; Carl Allen (1, 3, 5-8, 10, 11, 13), Dio Parson (2, 4, 9, 12), drums.



Didier Lockwood

Storyboard

Dreyfus Jazz 36582

★★★

It seems everybody's going straight ahead these days, and for French fusion fiddler Didier Lockwood, this session, recorded in New York, is as straight as it gets. When Lockwood drops out of the mix, his American sidemen often fall into a mainstream groove—blues, funk or modal—but when his violin joins the fray, the music jumps out of the pocket, the rhythm comes unglued and the tonic key becomes a matter of conjecture. That's just as well, for it's precisely Lockwood's predilection for fusion, free-jazz, ethnic and classical musics—moreso than his usual ax—that sets him apart from the back-to-bebop herd.

The opening "Thought Of A First Spring Day," a takeoff on John Coltrane's version of "My Favorite Things," waltzes along conventionally, with saxophonist Steve Wilson adroitly sidestepping clichés, until Lockwood, stepping smack into one Trane-ish cliché after another, wails out into the stratosphere. Similarly, on "En Quittant Kidonk," Joey DeFrancesco grinds out some flashy but fairly routine organ licks before Lockwood whirls off into an emotional maelstrom, complete with his trademark rubber-band portamentos. On "Tableau D'Une Exposition," Lockwood breaks into a lively hoedown, while on the title track he plays schmaltzy Romanian Gypsy airs through a wah-wah pedal.

Both as composer and improviser, Lockwood tends to settle for the tried and true, but his eclecticism, virtuosity and passion elevate him above the ranks of banal tradition worshippers. Here, he sometimes seems out of stylistic sync with the other soloists; but bassist James Genus and drummer Steve Gadd, who share his bent for fusion, stay right on his fluctuating wavelength. —Larry Birnbaum

Storyboard—*Thought Of A First Spring Day*; *Back To Big Apple*; *En Quittant Kidonk*; *Mathilde*; *Tableau D'Une Exposition*; "Serie B"; *Storyboard*; *Irremediablement*; *Spirits Of The Forest*. (54:55)

Personnel—Lockwood, violin, alto saxophone (6); Joey

DeFrancesco, organ, trumpet; James Genus, bass; Steve Gadd, drums; Steve Wilson, soprano and alto saxophones (1-3); Denis Benarroch, percussion.



Bill Holman

Brilliant Corners: The Music Of Thelonious Monk

JVC 2066

★★★★½

This is not Bill Holman's best album only because none of his remarkable compositions grace it; otherwise, it doubtless would be. Hard to imagine that an elder statesman, ensconced on the West Coast at that, would deliver such a singular take of Monk, sounding at once like the great writer and himself; hard, that is, unless you are a fan of

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Holman's and know of his breadth and scope. To many ears, he is *the* modern master of the large ensemble. But the sad truth of the matter is that much of his fine writing is heard only in Europe, where he regularly composes and arranges for various radio bands. In the United States, only indie JVC will acknowledge him.

On *Brilliant Corners*, each arrangement is chock full of Holman staples: grand walls of sound, short repeating figures that lead to energetic crescendos, deft counterpoint, brass and reeds playing contrasting figures to create tension, a swinging underpinning and more. These are clearly his charts, yet Monk's personality is strong enough to remain in view.

The writing is stunning. The oft-rendered "Midnight" is immediately distinctive, as Bob Efford's bass clarinet whispers out from amidst

a crush of dissonant brass and winds. Altoist Lanny Morgan offers some emotive statements. "Misterioso" is likewise wild, as the ascending sixths that compose the theme are heard from saxes alongside steady and decidedly contrasting eighth notes from trumpets and others.

"Bemsha Swing" is outfitted with a dance beat derived by Holman from Max Roach's tympani playing on the original Riverside recording. That groove sets up Rich Eames' prancing piano and Bill Perkins' edgy alto sax, among others; it also underscores the rollicking trumpets in the closing shout chorus. "Straight, No Chaser" is gnarly, with countermelodies flying all around, save one single statement of the wears-well theme. Here, tenorman Ray Hermann and valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen deliver sturdy blues choruses. The title track is

all over the place: a thunderous ensemble passage at first, a gleeful cacophony of horns toward the end, then a pure-Monk, crisp close.

On a few of the tunes, Holman defers to Monk's individuality. "Thelonious" has several moments where the composer's spare piano work is mimicked perfectly with the brass and wind writing, though there are also moments of quiet madness à la Holman. Andy Martin plays some sublime trombone statements. "Ruby, My Dear" also hews to Monk's approach with a reverence for his theme and written passages that sound like what Monk would play in accompaniment to, say, a soloist like Charlie Rouse. Pete Christlieb is the warm-toned improviser, and he also tears up "Rhythm-A-Ning," where Holman adds band asides that again bring to mind Thelonious' backups. —Zan Stewart

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Brilliant Corners: The Music Of Thelonious Monk—*Straight, No Chaser, Bemsha Swing, Thelonious, Round Midnight, Bye Ya, Misterioso, Friday The 13th, Rhythm-A-Ning, Ruby, My Dear, Brilliant Corners.* (69:09)

Personnel—Holman, leader, arranger; Lanny Morgan, Bill Perkins, Pete Christlieb, Ray Hermann, Bob Efford, saxes and woodwinds; Carl Saunders, Frank Szabo, Ron Stout, Bob Summers, trumpets, flugelhorn; Jack Redmond, Bob Enevoldsen, Andy Marin, Kenny Shroyer, trombones; Rich Eames, piano; Dave Carpenter, bass; Bob Leatherbarrow, drums.



Ron Seaman & The T.C. Jazzcartel

Trifecta
Seajazz 861

★★★

It's reasonable to say the organ resurgence is fueled by a fair number of talented pianists who know their way around the keyboards of the ol' Hammond B-3. Ron Seaman is hailed by jazz buffs in his native southeast Minnesota for his piano playing with the Dixieland Ramblers, but it is his organ on the new album from his straightahead sextet the T.C. (Twin Cities) Jazzcartel that stands out and suggests he deserves to be discovered by the national audience supportive of Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff and acid-jazz.

Seaman and the rest of Jazzcartel (plus a great trombonist) work hand in glove on the arrangements of his songs and a remake of the Duke Pearson classic identified with Cannonball Adderley, "Jeannine"—the arrangements are outfitted with solos and unison figures that usually conjure sunny, soulful moods. Seaman stretches out on the '3 with personality and swinging panache on "Bluestreet" and "Chasin' The Money" (it's a good guess the title refers to his day gig as a graphic designer). And

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he's dead-on effective when supplying shadings or turbulent flow under decent solos from, among others, saxophonist Russ Peterson and guitarist Loren Walstad.

Seaman's no slouch at the piano either, as attested to by his playing on "Boplitude," "Samba De Bop" and "Pointblank," the latter agitated by Peterson's take-no-prisoners baritone. His use of electric piano during "Nicole's Dream" adds to the gentle, textured mood established by acoustic guitar. The reason, though, to track down this album is to hear that organ of his swell, sing, swing, stutter, flutter, grumble and rumble. —Frank-John Hadley

Trifecta—*Wire To Wire; Boplitude; Chasin' The Money; Jeannine; Sailn'; Nicole's Dream; Pointblank; Bluestreet; Samba De Bop.* (49:23)

Personnel—Ron Seaman, organ, pianos; Russ Peterson, tenor and baritone saxophones; Greg Lewis, trumpet, flugelhorn; Loren Walstad, guitar; Bruce Calin, bass; Dick Bortolussi, drums; Dave Graff, trombone.



Randy Weston

Earth Birth

Verve 537 088

★★★½

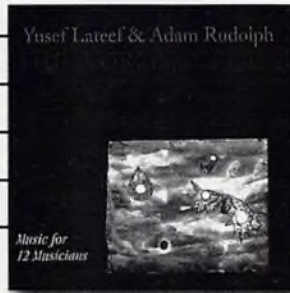
Because Randy Weston so often explores African themes, it's surprising to hear the pianist record with the most European of vehicles, a 24-piece string section. *Earth Birth* works as a kind of piano concerto, with Weston's trio supported by Melba Liston's string arrangements of his most memorable tunes. Weston's notes accurately describe the agenda as "love, romance and the beauty of life," and the CD opens with four jazz waltzes, including "Little Niles." Melba Liston's arrangements are generally lean and functional, not ripe or overblown. On "Pam's Waltz" and "Hi-Fly," Liston achieves the auditory illusion that the strings act as a single player capable of participating in call-and-response and other interactions with the trio.

Weston is the center of attention, displaying appropriate sensitivity, particularly on Liston's ballad treatment of "Hi-Fly." He effortlessly shifts moods from tender and wistful ("Portrait Of Billie Holiday") to sprightly and cheerful ("Berkshire Blues"), and he sounds particularly quirky and Monkish on "Babe's Blues." There's a nagging suspicion that Weston could play these familiar songs beautifully in his sleep. Except for a soulful trio version of "Where," the A-list rhythm section of drummer Billy Higgins and bassist Christian McBride doesn't get enough to do here, with Higgins submerged in the mix. Engaging and tastefully executed, *Earth Birth* should provide a good introduction

for newcomers, though Weston devotees may find it superfluous. —Jon Andrews

Earth Birth—*Earth Birth; Pam's Waltz; Little Niles; Babe's Blues; Where; Hi-Fly; Portrait Of Billie Holiday; Berkshire Blues; Portrait Of Vivian.* (54:17)

Personnel—Weston, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Billy Higgins, drums; Melba Liston, arrangements (1-4, 6-9); members of the Orchestra du Festival de Jazz de Montreal (1-4, 6-9).



Yusef Lateef & Adam Rudolph

The World At Peace

YAL/Meta 753

★★½

On paper, a collaboration between Yusef Lateef and Adam Rudolph seems promising. Their shared interest in world musics should lead to fascinating combinations of

Lateef's conventional and ethnic reeds with Rudolph's array of percussion instruments. Despite their affinities, this two-CD document of a 1995 concert by Lateef and Rudolph's 12-piece ensemble fails to live up to expectations.

The instrumentation reflects the expansive worldview one would expect from the leaders, aligning horns and strings with a percussion section anchored by Rudolph's hand drums. Embracing so broad a range of sounds seems to diffuse the overall effect of the music. On the best tracks, like "Ourobouros," the drums generate intensity and excitement, the strings enhance strong solos including David Johnson on vibes, and the entire presentation sounds tight and focused. With quieter tracks like "Coltrane Remembered" and "Dreaming Of The Skyway," Lateef's work on flute adds sensitivity and an airy, meditative quality.

Elsewhere, the quality of the soloing and the development of ideas aren't enough to support the longer, meandering compositions, and the listener's attention may wander. A smaller ensemble might have given the date a more intimate, cohesive sound. —Jon Andrews

The World At Peace—*Ramifications; Coltrane Remembered; Africa 35; Chaos #3; Beloved; Like A Secret Argosy; Masara #2; A Feather In The Bright Sky; Ourobouros; Beyond Futility; Dreaming Of The Skyway; Peace & Love; Overlay; Wheel Of Life; Encore.* (53:57/50:44)

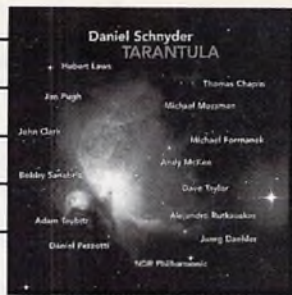
Personnel—Lateef, tenor saxophone, flutes, vocals; Rudolph, drums, percussion; Ralph Jones, soprano and tenor saxophones, flutes, bass clarinet, musette; Charles Moore, trumpet, percussion; Bill Roper, tuba; Eric Von Essen, bass; David Johnson, vibes, marimba, percussion; Jose Luis Perez, drums, percussion; Federico Ramos, electric, acoustic and MIDI guitars; Jeff Gauthier, violin; Susan Allen, harp; Marcie Brown, cello.

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Daniel Schnyder

Tarantula
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Joel Harrison Octet

Range Of Motion
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★★★

Daniel Schnyder and Joel Harrison both bring original solutions to the always-challenging task of jazz composed for large ensemble, though they share a weakness for world-music snapshots that border on caricature. Swiss-born Schnyder is the more accomplished arranger, a cool and studied craftsman whose

immaculate voicings and brief, evocative sketches are sometimes reminiscent of movie cues. Harrison is grittier, more sentimental, and closer to the bone of the jazz tradition.

Schnyder presents himself as an ensemble saxophonist in a brass-centered septet, using only walking bass for rhythm, and as an accomplished soloist, à la Stan Getz, in front of string quartet (five cuts) and full orchestra (two cuts). His compositions create pictures with great economy, racing along with few wasted notes. In the septet cut, "Water," the influence of Henry Mancini and Lalo Schiffrin is immediately apparent a dreamy, french horn-topped brass passage and a sweetly dissonant fermata of flute and harmon-muted trumpet. Beyond Hollywood, however, one can hear the brightness, celerity and angularity of Stravinsky on "Cairo Cadenza," as well as nods to the jazz avant garde in the multiphonic saxophone solo of "Angst" and leaping intervals of "Dolphy's Dance." Schnyder's range is impressive. However, notwithstanding Hubert Laws', Thomas Chapin's and Michael Mossman's soaring solo lines over suspenseful, walking bass, Schnyder's references sound less like they come from jazz than from jazz-at-the-movies, which makes for few emotional direct hits.

Harrison, by contrast, wears his heart on his sleeve. And he swings, too, when he feels like it. Rooted (though not slavishly) in Charles Mingus, and also influenced by the overeager fusions of Don Ellis (and the mellower ones of Oregon), the San Francisco-based guitarist wields a jazz octet with standard rhythm section and an unusual horn section that includes bassoonist Paul Hanson and oboist Paul McCandless. The double-reeders greatly enhance the session, not only as celestial addi-

tions to the ensemble sound, but as vigorous and facile soloists, especially on two free-improvised fragments, "Golem" and "Dybbuk." "Head Pebbles" bristles with Mingus-like excitement, as Harrison scores squalling solos over in-your-face riffs. Harrison's own erotic, Santana-like sustains on electric guitar, soaring over the double-time Balkan rhythms of "Stones of the Sky" and McCandless' impassioned oboe on the run-on, 6/4, East Indian-inspired "Takahassanu" are highlights. Less successful are the geographical impressionism of "Jerusalem" and "Walking Sky Burial," which poke dangerously close to the new age horizon.

Harrison's voicings are occasionally muddy, but there are a lot of good ideas here. It's a good bet he'll get them all together, soon. —Paul de Barros

Tarantula—With *The Devil On The Backseat*; *Water*; *Samiel*; *Angst*; *Cairo*; *Cairo Cadenza*; *Mister M*; *Wedding Song*; *No Smoking*; *Short Life*; *Memoires*; *Tarantula*; *Cool Sweets*; *Dolphy's Dance*; *Homunculus*; *El Cigaro*. (59:04)

Personnel—Schnyder, tenor and soprano saxophones; Hubert Laws (1-4), Thomas Chapin (12-16), flute; Michael Mossman, trumpet, flugelhorn (1-4, 12-16); Jim Pugh, trombone (1-4, 12-16); Dave Taylor, bass trombone (1-4, 12-16); John Clark, french horn (1-4, 12-16); Michael Formanek (1-4), Andy McKee (12-16), bass; Alejandro Rutkauskas, Adam Taubitz, violins (5-9); Akiko Hasegawa or Juerg Daehler, viola (5-9); Daniel Pezzotti, cello (5-9); NDR Philharmonic Radio Orchestra, dir. by George Gruntz (10, 11); Bobby Sanabria, conga, percussion (12-15).

Range Of Motion—Takahassanu; Border Patrol; Stones Of The Sky; Jerusalem; Golem; Gevurah; Dybbuk; Counter-punch; Traveling Blues; Head Pebbles; Bark; Walking Sky Burial; Coda (Tabla). (56:37)

Personnel—Harrison, guitar; Paul McCandless, oboe, english horn, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone; Paul Hanson, bassoon; Eric Crystal, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones; Marty Wehner, trombone; Dred Scott, piano; Derek Jones, bass and electric basses; John Shiftlet, bass (6, 10, 11); Eliot Kavee, drums; Julian Gerstein (1, 2), Russ Gold (6), percussion.

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- Alex Henderson, *Jazziz*



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Multi-talented tenor saxophonist and clarinetist Ken Peplowski showcases his remarkable versatility in settings that range from quartet to quintet to jazz orchestra (with the Loren Schoenberg Big Band) in his new Concord Jazz recording, *A GOOD REED*. Whether blowing freely his trademark full-bodied tenor saxophone with the small combos or maneuvering magical melodic lines on clarinet with the big band, Peplowski's music always retains the key ingredient to great jazz - it swings like mad!



JAZZ

Chanteuses Face The Music

by Dan Ouellette

While jazz fans lament the loss of the seminal jazz divas, there's no dearth of chanteuses who are willing to carry the vocal torch. Some recreate the tradition in significant ways while others dare to push the envelope and explore a range of music new to jazz, from Rachmaninoff to David Bowie, with varying degrees of success.

Kitty Margolis: *Straight Up With A Twist* (Mad-Kat 1006; 68:16; ★★★★★) As the title of her superb new CD implies, Margolis takes the straight-ahead jazz route but applies enough pleasing twist-and-turn variations on the theme to come up with one of the most compelling vocal jazz collections of the year. Margolis delivers the music with caressive passion, sparkling elegance and breezy lyricism, embracing various textures, colors and grooves to recast old tunes in a new light. She offers an upbeat, Coltrane-inspired arrangement of "All Or Nothing At All," undergirds "Getting To Know You" with African polyrhythms and immerses herself into a funk-simmering, reggae-tinged rendition of "Fever." Instrumental stars include tenor saxophonist Kenny Brooks and guest Roy Hargrove on muted trumpet. Margolis also invites Charles Brown to the party for two tunes, including a hip soul-jazz jaunt through "The 'In' Crowd," that's the hands-down highlight of the show.

Diane Schuur: *Blues For Schuur* (GRP 9863; 50:40; ★★½) On her latest CD, Schuur dips into the blues zone for her unifying theme. She also opts for strong cover tunes. Only problem is, she pleads an unconvincing case. Schuur just doesn't hit the mark with enough guts, grit and, most importantly, soul. This is most apparent on her renditions of Charles Brown numbers (five in all), which pale mightily when compared to the composer's recorded versions. Where Schuur's vocal magic does succeed is on such swinging r&b cookers as "Stormy Monday Blues" and "Toodle Loo On Down," where she loosens up and lets her glee fly.

Barbara Morrison: *I'm Getting 'Long All Right* (Chartmaker 14430; 48:06; ★★½) Veteran Morrison fuels this vocal outing with high-octane blues. She leans back and belts right from the get-go, opening with a vibrant swing into Jay McShann's "Confessin' The Blues." There are no snoozers in sight even though the Latin jazz-inflected spin on "My Funny Valentine" isn't entirely satisfying. Morrison's gets rousing support from a fine 19-piece orchestra conducted by tenor saxophonist Bill Liston, but her

dynamic vocal performance commands center stage. She testifies with soul and sass, swings with a bright exuberance and even tosses a dollop of humor into the mix on the title track. High-lights include a funky burn through Bill Withers' "Use Me," a striking read of "This Bitter Earth" and a supple caress of "Tenderly."

Mary Stallings: *Manhattan Moods* (Concord Jazz 4750; 64:40; ★★½) On her third Concord Jazz release, Stallings delivers a sumptuous collection of standards. She's got a gorgeous voice, a spontaneous, heartfelt approach and a refined, relaxed delivery. She swings with mellow ease through "Sweet And Lovely," recreates "How High The Moon" as a stunning ballad, steepes "Willow Weep For Me" with the blues and takes a radiant jaunt through "Surrey With The Fringe On Top." There's potent chemistry between Stallings and pianist Monty Alexander, especially on their sprightly pas de deux through Ellington's "I Love You Madly." Stallings also premieres an exceptional new Carroll Coates number, "I Have A Feeling," which she renders with deeply touching emotion.

Caecilie Norby: *My Corner Of The Sky* (Blue Note 53422; 50:42; ★★★★★) Plaudits to Norby for taking chances with new standards on her sophomore Blue Note CD. She gives a stark interpretation of David Bowie's "Life On Mars" (with Randy Brecker's haunting flugelhorn lines), which breathes new life into the early '70s pop tune, and she concludes her smooth-jazz take on Bacharach's "The Look Of Love" with an impassioned scat. But not all the Danish diva's vocal adventures are successes. Her pop-infused recreations of Blood, Sweat & Tears' "Spinning Wheel," Sting's "Set Them Free" and Leon Russell's "A Song For You" lack originality. However, Norby captivates with a deeply moving interpretation of Irving Berlin's "Supper Time," and she also gets high grades for writing lyrics to Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" (redrafted as "African Fairytale") and giving the tune an intoxicating read.

Susannah McCorkle: *Let's Face The Music—The Songs Of Irving Berlin* (Concord Jazz 4759; 61:06; ★★½) McCorkle is such an excellent interpretative vocalist, she could have played it safe with these Irving Berlin chestnuts and still come up with a decent disc. But she deserves congratulations for recording a splendid, thoroughly entertaining album that takes some wonderful liberties with this chapter of the Great American Song Book. With impeccable vocal phrasing and timing, McCorkle delivers "I'd Rather Lead A Band" with swinging zest, gives "Heat Wave" a sensuous read and stops the show with a hushed take



STUART BRINEN

Kitty Margolis: a caressive passion drives the music

on "Supper Time." Highlights include a cha cha/waltz/swing rendition of "Cheek To Cheek" and a remarkable interpretation of "There's No Business Like Show Business," sung as a sober ballad.

Judi Silvano: *Vocalise* (Blue Note 52390; 62:54; ★★★★★) Silvano launches into the most adventurous disc of the batch with a buoyant flight through Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise." While her so-so versions of tunes by Strayhorn, Ellington, Mingus and Ravel are disappointing, her eerie take on the Ives-Whittier's "Solitude" is a beauty. Silvano also shines on such inspired originals as "Bass Space," "Heuchera Americana" and "At Home (Sweet Home)." Other pluses are her compelling arrangements and her free-flying improvisational interplay with such instrumentalists as tenor saxist Joe Lovano and guitarist Vic Juris. Silvano's soprano vocals, full of operatic trills, embellished phrasings and wordless syllabizing, take an acquired taste.

Dena DeRose: *Amosaya* 2527; 61:05; ★★★★★) DeRose makes an impressive debut with a standards-dominated collection that showcases her velvety vocals and fine piano tinklings. She swings into Benny Carter's "When Lights Are Low" with a mellow touch, skips through Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye" and caresses the lovely melody of Johnny Burke's "What's New." CD highlights include DeRose's passionate rendition of Irving Berlin's "How Deep Is The Ocean" and the gorgeous ballad "The Ruby And The Pearl." DeRose includes two of her own compositions, including the low-lights, late-night romantic plea, "Be My Love." Saxophonist Steve Wilson, bassist Michael Zisman and drummer Tootie Heath make a strong showing in support. **DB**

BEYOND

Great American Roots

by Frank-John Hadley

Hauling stereo recording equipment around the rural South in 1959-'60 with all the fervent zeal of an itinerant Bible-clutching preacher, folklorist Alan Lomax taped many black and white "common people" who made music as a forceful means of communicating the joy and sadness of their everyday life. Just recently, the huge treasure chest of musical riches known as the *Lomax Collection* has been sprung open by Lomax's assistants Matthew Barton and Andrew L. Kaye for the 13-volume CD series *Southern Journey*, six of which surfaced earlier this year. Two discs merit special praise, though the remaining four in the first batch of releases also are worth owning by anyone the least bit interested in valuable African- and European-derived American folksong. Reviewed below, too, are a couple albums unconnected to Lomax that brim over with splendid American vernacular music as well.

Various Artists: *Southern Journey, Volume 1: Voices From The South* (Rounder 1701; 65:44; ★★★★★) The two dozen songs found on this superlative overview of folk styles are typified by dignity of purpose and a certain vital spirit. Here is the sound of pure and natural music, unsullied by commercialism. Rev. Crenshaw and his Pentecostal church worshippers in Memphis work up a sanctified leader on "I Wonder Will We Meet Again," and North Carolinians J.E. Mainer and his band gleefully transform the old English ballad "Three Nights Drunk" into a showpiece of old-timey string-band music. Recording outdoors at night by flashlight, Delta bluesman Fred McDowell plays biting slide guitar and unleashes his gruff voice on "Wished I Was In Heaven Sitting Down." Just as stirring are performances by near-forgotten heroes like Bessie Jones, the Bright Light Quartet, Hobart Smith and the Alabama Sacred Harp Singers, all of whom pour heart and soul into their tuneful handiwork, whether spirituals, children's ditties, country dances, chants for laboring in cotton fields or on board boats.

Various Artists: *Southern Journey, Volume 3: 61 Highway Mississippi* (Rounder 1703; 60:16; ★★★★★) This collection of African-American music indigenous to the Sunflower State has one stellar performance after another, for a total of 24. Rose Hemphill sings Delta-style blues with palpable distress on "Rolled And Tumbled" and McDowell executes six deeply expressive performances. Convicts in Parchman Farm work gangs wail poignantly of freedom and wild women. The shouts and shrill-sounding quills of Sid Hemphill, accompanied by Lucius Smith's drums or oddly tuned

banjo, set vertiginous dancing moods, while the Young Brothers band supplies fife-and-drum music ideal for entertaining picnickers in the state's hill country. Enthralling, too, are songs from the guitar/fiddler duo Miles and Bob Pratcher and Baptist church services. As true of all the "Southern Journey" albums, *Volume 3* has a booklet that gives us pertinent information on the musicians and their tunes. Significantly, the CD fidelity of the remastered acetates in the series gives the music tremendous depth and clarity.

George Jones: *In A Gospel Way* (Razor & Tie 2138; 31:26; ★★★★★) The listener doesn't have to know St. Paul from Dennis Rodman or care a fig about countrified white gospel to appreciate the marvelous vocals of Jones, a true "singer's singer" and colossus of country music. The subtle, aching intensity of his voice on "Amazing Grace," "Mama Was A Preacher Man," "Why Me, Lord?" and eight more useful or nearly unfit songs stick in memory long after the syrupy production (strings, background singers) is forgotten. Originally a 1974 Epic release.

Woody Guthrie: *This Land Is Your Land* (Smithsonian Folkways 40100; 72:39; ★★★★★) Guthrie belongs right next to Alan Lomax as one of the major figures in the story of American music. Twenty-six selections recorded for Moses Ash's Folkways label in the 1940s attest to the sharp insight of his songwriting and the quiet power of his hearty, unaffected singing and guitar playing. He had his finger on the pulse



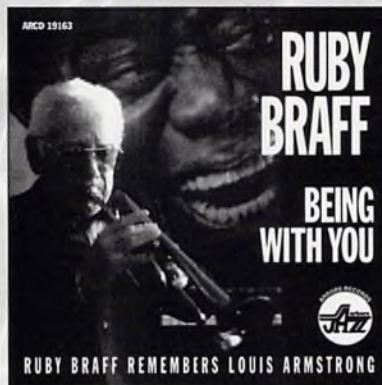
Fred McDowell: pure and natural music

of working-class life, and that's apparent everywhere here, from obscure gems like "Do-Re-Mi" and "Talking Hard Work" (how's this for a great line? "I've been disgusted, busted, and couldn't be trusted") to the alternative national anthem "This Land Is Your Land" (heard in three different versions). This first of four new collections of classic Guthrie material supervised by Folkways archivist Jeff Place has a 33-page booklet and excellent sound reproduction. **DB**

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REISSUES

(Re)Mastering The Past

by John Corbett

Music consumers are weary of being sold the same thing repeatedly under the pretense of being "new and improved." This sort of apologia seems like planned obsolescence to the buyer who shelled out once already for the CD (maybe once for the vinyl, too) and is now entreated to buy the final, authorized, "master" copy. But the situation offers the label a chance to better itself production-wise, to raise the level not only of the sound but of the entire package, so that first-time buyers will get the most bang for their buck.

In the case of Verve's "Master Edition" series, the gains far outweigh the losses, and in the final tally, Verve should be applauded for issuing a variety of great old releases, thoughtfully organized and assembled, and sounding super.

The following reviews consider music that has been evaluated, sometimes many times over, in *Down Beat*. (In fact, stickers on the outside of all but one of these releases list the *Down Beat* star rating given on initial release.) This column will concern itself as much with the care and integrity of repackaging as with the music's historical and esthetic worth, which is, in every case, exceptionally high.

Stan Getz/Joao Gilberto: *Getz/Gilberto* (Verve 414; 38:42: ★★★★★½) So what new could they add to a warhorse like *Getz/Gilberto*? Aside from the 20-bit digital remastering, which gives the breezy Brazilian lilt added warmth, this issue tacks on attenuated edits of "Corcovado" and "The Girl From Ipanema," originally issued on 45-rpm single. This provides an interesting point of comparison between the version of the latter heard by jazz fans and the pop version, which is half as long and (of course) spotlights Astrud Gilberto's English version of the lyrics. There are new liner notes (as there are with all Master Edition releases), which put the jazz-samba-bossa craze into historical perspective. But Verve also sees the value in the original 1963 notes, which are reprinted along with the original cover in the very snazzy, cardboard gatefold pack.

Stan Getz/Charlie Byrd: *Jazz Samba* (413; 35:07: ★★★★★½) From a year earlier, the record that set the bossa nova wave in motion gets the same treatment, with an edited version of "Desafinado," minus Byrd's blues-scale guitar solo (better without it, I'd say). The cheese factor is higher here; a tune like the countryish "Samba Dees Days" hasn't stood the test of time as well as other Getz vehicles. But the tenor sounds as silky and sexy as ever on "Samba Triste,"

and the record's gentle, colorful percussion arrangements are still superb. Like all these records, the original tape sources were analog, so there's audible hiss, but it's been minimized without distorting the music.

Ben Webster Meets Oscar Peterson (448; 36:25: ★★★★★) Talk about tenor, this record takes the cake. It's 1959, and Webster is riding high over the totally fluent working trio of pianist Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. (Liner notician Kevin Whitehead points out that it was the fourth Webster/Peterson record for Verve, hardly a "meeting.") This is my choice of contexts for Peterson, whose slinky lines and tendency to be florid aren't particularly my bag. Here the stakes are raised, with the breath-meister blowing such considered, passionate solos on standards like "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning" and "This Can't Be Love" that anything less than top performance wouldn't suffice. No bonus tracks, but the sound is improved from earlier issues. If it's not already part of the collection, this is one to rush out for, despite its brevity.

Oscar Peterson Trio: *Night Train* (440; 67:40: ★★★★★) With the same trio, sans Webster, 1962's *Night Train* is favored by many Peterson lovers. It's clear why: His speed and flow are spotlit and the trio fits together with unparalleled grace. The reissue augments the full 11 cuts of the original with alternates of the title track (which, as it is corrected on this issue, is a renaming of Ellington's "Happy Go-Lucky Local") and a version of "Moten Swing" in the process of being worked out, adds four tunes not included on the record. The most interesting of these is Charlie Parker's "Now's The Time," which was scrapped because it didn't fit with the rest of the pre-bop fare.

Bill Evans: *Conversations With Myself* (409; 43:30: ★★★★★) An oddball outing, but one well worth having around, this 1962 record is unusual enough for featuring three pianos, more so since all three are Bill Evans. Experimenting in overdubbed jazz, *Conversations* has the interior monologue sensibility suggested by its title—Evans put down one track, then interacted with it, and again. The accretion of pianos doesn't clutter things as one fears it might, though; the



Stan Getz: surfing the bossa nova wave

pianist's clear vision on slower tracks like "Spartacus Love Theme" and "Round Midnight" allows him to thicken the harmonies and add dissonance without clouding up excessively, while on bouncy cuts like "How About You?" and "Bemsha Swing" (which is played as a canon, following Monk's non-overdubbed lead) the key-centricity gives way to forthright swing.

Kenny Burrell: *Guitar Forms* (403; 74:40: ★★★★★½) Along with Evans, this is the biggest surprise of the batch. It's a record that was hard not to trip over in used-record bins for years, but careful listening reveals an incredible multi-stylistic foray that features not so much Burrell's polymath guitarworks, but arranger Gil Evans' genius at integrating unlike strands. Imagine soprano saxist Steve Lacy, altoman Lee Konitz, sitting alongside the tenor sax of Richie Kamuca, and on drums ... of course, Elvin Jones! (Two tunes feature a sparser, hornless quintet with Grady Tate on skins.) Five extra takes of the blues "Downstairs," four of the up original "Breadwinner" (featuring very interesting piano by Roger Kellaway) and three of bassist Joe Benjamin's soul-jazz tune "Terrace Theme" are overkill. **DB**

Initial *Down Beat* ratings:

- *Getz/Gilberto*: ★★★★★½ (5/21/64 issue)
- *Jazz Samba*: ★★★★★½ (6/21/62)
- *Ben Webster Meets Oscar Peterson*: ★★★ (9/29/60)
- *Night Train*: ★★★★★ (10/10/63)
- *Conversations With Myself*: ★★★★★ (10/24/63)
- *Guitar Forms*: ★★★★★ (11/4/65)

BLINDFOLD TEST

SEPTEMBER 1997

Joe Lovano

by Michael Bourne

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.

Down Beat readers need little or no introduction to saxophonist Joe Lovano. Readers *and* Critics polls alike over the last several years have voted Lovano #1 Tenor Saxophonist and Musician of the Year, plus the hat trick of back-to-back Albums of the Year for his orchestral magnum opus *Rush Hour* and his double-CD *Quartets*.

Celebrating Sinatra, his '96 release, also for Blue Note, features winds and strings conducted by Manny Albam, and on several tracks Lovano plays his new L.A. Sax straight tenor. "I recorded a whole album on it called *Tenor Time* for Toshiba/EMI, and on my next Blue Note release, a duet record with Gonzalo Rubalcaba, I play straight tenor on all the tenor tracks."

Shelly Manne

"Cherokee" (from 2-3-4, *Impulse!*, 1962) Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Hank Jones, piano; George Duvivier, bass; Manne, drums.

Beautiful. Coleman Hawkins. For me, his sound, the way he controls the time-feel, the way he brings the rhythm section into what he's playing, is what improvisation is. You could hear from the moment he came in, from the way he stated the theme and played the time, there was an amazing *focus* in the band. They're really listening and playing off each other. That's the magic and beauty of jazz. 5 stars. Coleman Hawkins through the years, melodically and technically he had so much control and continuous flowing ideas. He's always been a big inspiration for me.

Don Byron

"Powerhouse" (from *Bug Music*, *Nonesuch*, 1996) Byron, clarinet; Robert DeBellis, tenor saxophone; Charles Lewis, trumpet; Kenny Davis, bass; Joey Baron, drums; Raymond Scott, composer.

Is this Spike Jones? I don't have any idea who this is, and I'm not sure what to say. I'm just glad I wasn't on this record. It sounds like circus music. There's nothing wrong with circus music, if you like circus music. It's obviously a remake of something. I'd like to hear the original. This is some challenging music to play, to execute, to actually be a part of. To have it come off is incredible, I'd give it 5 stars. [later] It's like early swing music in a different way, really more like vaudeville. It's a trip, it's incredible, but that period and that music never captured my imagination. Don Byron, though, the cats he's put together, the things he's doing on his instrument, he's a monster! I never recognized him. The reason I'm glad I didn't get called is that I wouldn't be able to play my part the way it's supposed to be played!

Lennie Tristano

"Intuition" (from *Intuition*, *Capitol*, 1949) Tristano, piano; Lee Konitz, alto sax; Warne Marsh, tenor sax; Billy Bauer, guitar; Arnold Fishkin, bass; Deniz Best, drums.

Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh. Could be with Lennie Tristano. I've never heard this. Beautiful improvisations and dialogue. It really creates that chamber music, flowing sound, but with a jazz feeling of swing. 5 stars. Totally improvised, but also executed with a beautiful sense of each part, like no one just blew, closed their eyes and played whatever they wanted. They shaped the music together tonally as well as lyrically. Right away I heard Lee, and when Warne came in, their time, their sound, their execution, their flow, the incredible lines and spaces.



James Carter

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

The tenor player is someone coming out of Lockjaw Davis. Is it "Lester Leaps In"? There were some funny notes in there, not the way Lester played it, a little different. Nice ending. 4 stars. I think it was James Carter because of the little slap-tongue squawks at the end of the solo, and, also, James has a real strong knowledge and awareness of all the great saxophone players. I think it was much more modern when Lester played that tune. Lester's ideas and freedom, the imagination and purity he played with, were much more modern than somebody trying to play like somebody else. The tenor solo wasn't one consistent way of playing. It wound up like a bunch of different approaches at the same time, one phrase with an Illinois Jacquet feeling, one phrase with a Lockjaw feeling or Pharoah feeling. A lot of young cats on the scene today don't really play modern. Now someone like Dizzy Gillespie, he was exploring possibilities in the music from his knowledge and wisdom and imagination, rather than trying to play like somebody else. What improvising really means isn't just to play a solo, it's creating a solo at the moment, creating a dialogue with the musicians you're playing with. It's not just playing notes. It's telling a story. I'll still give it 4 stars, because the execution and the musicianship were at a high level.

Kansas City

"Yeah Man" (from *Kansas City*, *Verve* soundtrack of Robert Altman movie, 1996) Craig Handy, Joshua Redman, tenor saxophones; big band arranged by Steven Bernstein from a Fletcher Henderson classic recording.

Could be the *Kansas City* band from the movie. It sounds like young cats playing older, famous arrangements and themes, like in a jam-session saloon scene. This is a real "walk the bar" style. My dad played saxophone in that era, in that real get-down style of people trying to cut each other. This is a great band. I think it's Joshua Redman and Craig Handy. It's a trip to put yourself in someone else's shoes like this. 5 stars for that. [later] This is the kind of playing that a lot of people want *everybody* to play like *all the time*—getting into each other's face. People who aren't true jazz lovers, this is all they think jazz is—cutting, loud, brassy, banging around. This *is* definitely jazz, but from a period when people had fun and grooved. It's party time. Serious. I saw the movie last year in Warsaw with Polish subtitles and it was incredible. It was an amazing opportunity for all the guys, Nicholas Payton, Josh, Craig, Christian McBride, Don Byron, Victor Lewis. It was some heavy shoes for them to try and step in, but they did a beautiful job and had fun. I loved it.

DB