

# DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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## Elvin Jones **Sweat!**

**Nicholas Payton**

**Diana Krall**

**CLASSIC INTERVIEW:**  
**Shelly Manne**

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*Sweat!*

Jones might be best known as John Coltrane's thundering sideman, but in jazz circles he's recognized as a leader, a true innovator and one of drumming's greatest inspirations. We hooked him up with one of the most in-demand trapezoids on the jazz scene today to discuss what makes a drummer more than just an accompanist.

By Lewis Nash

Cover photograph of Elvin Jones by John Abbott.

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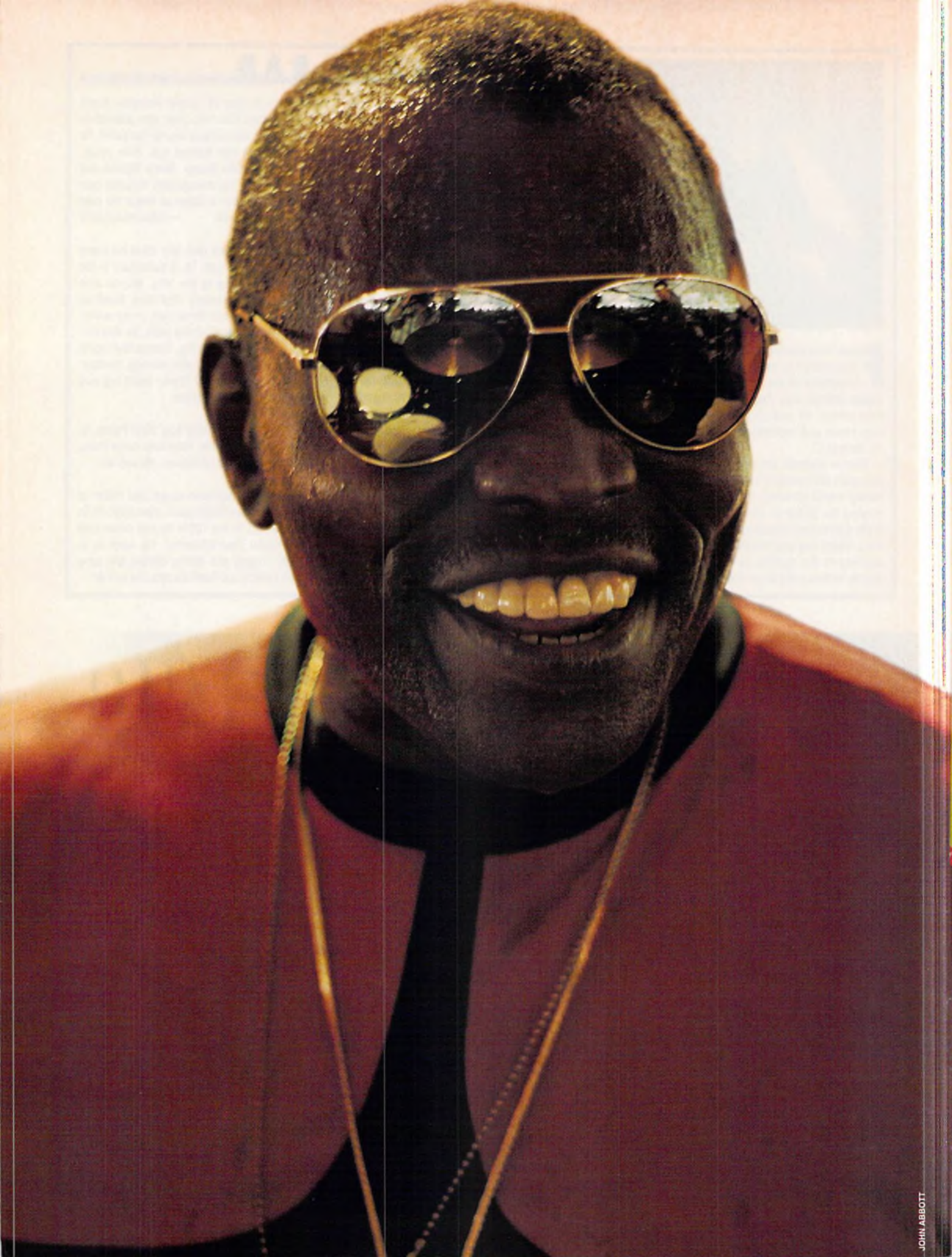
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Chris Potter

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BY LEWIS NASH

# Elvin Jones Sweat!

If someone were to conduct a poll of active jazz drummers, Elvin Jones would top the list of the most influential. Instantly recognizable by his rumbling feel, his free-form solos, the signature touch of his brushes or the sheer force with which he hits the drum, the sweaty heavyweight has been knocking out drummers for more than 40 years.

At 70 years old, Jones has topped *Down Beat's* Readers and Critics polls consistently for the past two years. Since 1990, he's taken the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine on numerous tours of the United States, Europe and Japan—but his work as a bandleader dates back to the 1962 recording sessions for *Elvin!*,

an album made with brothers Hank and Thad. Jones might be best known as John Coltrane's thundering sideman, but in jazz circles he's recognized as a true innovator and one of jazz drumming's greatest inspirations. Perhaps more than anyone else in the history of jazz, he has proven that the drummer can be more than just an accompanist.

We hooked up Elvin with Lewis Nash, at 38 one of the most versatile and reliable drummers on the jazz scene today. In an extended visit that included a surprise pop-in by tubist/baritone saxophonist Howard Johnson, Nash led Jones through an interview that covered everything from personal growth to Coltrane to the late Tony Williams to the potentially sensitive issue of drummers as bandleaders.

**LEWIS NASH:** *You are still going strong, still vibrant in the music. Are there any things that you feel you can express and articulate more clearly on the drums now than you could 10, 20, 30 or 40 years ago?*

**ELVIN JONES:** Absolutely. It is a learning process. I suppose that if I were a painter I would assume that I would know a little bit more, not particularly about painting, but about myself than I did 20 or 30 years ago. So that in itself is evolution in a way, improvement, any word you want to use to describe how you can be a better person, a better musician, a better artist. You learn more about how to comport yourself, and you know more about how to address the instrument.

**LN:** *You have been leading your own groups for many years. And those of us who play music for a living understand that the qualities of leadership transcend any particular instrument. But still we hear from various people, whether it be venue owners or critics or recording company people, about the difficulty in promoting or selling or presenting a group in which the drummer is the leader. What defines a bandleader, regardless of instrument?*

**EJ:** It's self explanatory: It is leadership fundamentally that defines it, and the

example that the leader presents to his men, this gives motivation to the band or orchestra. They respond to that. It is the same as a soldier or the captain or general in the army: You have to lead your men. You have to set an example of your own qualities, your own integrity, your own understanding and interpretation of composition, the way you address the music, as well as the way you treat people, the rapport that you establish with the people that you work with. Examples of that throughout the development of this great art form: Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Benny Goodman, all these guys, and that is just a few.

**LN:** *What you are saying is that ...*

**EJ:** ... they are all great leaders ...

**LN:** ... no matter what instrument.

**EJ:** Illinois Jacquet, who had this great band through the '50s and '60s, he was a great leader. Lionel Hampton, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, all these guys, great leaders. Art Blakey, coming back toward



this part of the century, Max Roach and Roy Haynes, guys like that, Shelly Manne, these are the guys that gave me my motivation.

**LN:** *Why do you feel that we often hear people express some reservations about the drummer as the leader? Where does that come from?*

**EJ:** Probably because they never learned how to play drums. [laughs] When I was a young man going to school, I was very fortunate. The teacher had a masters degree from University of Michigan, and he was one of the great drum majors. I thought he was one of the greatest musicians I had ever seen. So I learned how to be a drum major through him. I learned how to twirl the baton and lead the marching bands. And he said, "Listen, Jones, I know you can play the field drums, but we need a bass drummer." So I played the bass drum. In a marching band or in a symphony orchestra or anything else, it is just as essential, a musical instrument equivalent to the violin or cello, to any instrument in the orchestra.



**"You have to lead your men. You have to set an example of your own qualities, your own integrity, your own understanding and interpretation of composition, the way you address the music, as well as the way you treat people."**

I played a job in a bar once as a young man. One of the customers came up to me and said, "Hey, make some noise." What he really meant was that he wanted me to play a drum solo. So that is a general perception, and that way of thinking still exists. And probably among recording executives as well as anyone else. So you know the thing is that people never understood that the drum is a musical instrument.

**LN:** *It is unfortunate that some people feel that way, but I agree with you totally, and if we could actually help people to hear the drums the way we hear them, we might be able to make some headway.*

**EJ:** I don't know. I don't think it is important to make people hear drums the way we hear them. The thing is that they need to hear an orchestra, they have to hear the music in itself. And when you hear the music, then

you hear all of it, including the drums in that context. That is what I believe.

**LN:** *Now, do you currently have a recording contract with any major record company?*

**EJ:** No, I don't.

**LN:** *Is that by choice?*

**EJ:** Not necessarily. I don't think that it is a necessity, not that I don't want a recording contract. But I always thought that if you do have a recording contract

with a certain company, then a doctrine of mutual consent comes into play. You could record all day long for years and years, but it also needs to be put into the marketing process in order for it to be sold, so that it is beneficial to the company, the artist, to everyone. And I think that is also part of the contract; it may be written or unwritten, that that should be observed. And I haven't seen much observance of that, especially in jazz music.

**LN:** *Still, you have been able to continue to lead your groups, working and playing the music you wanted to play, and making several recordings as a leader.*

**EJ:** Max Roach asked me once, "How are you doing?" and I said, "Well, I am eating three squares a day." [laughs]

**LN:** *You've used a variety of instrumentations through the years, guitar and/or piano, no chordal instruments, two sax-*

*ophones out front, or maybe three horns. I think recently you had trombone and trumpet. In all of these experimentations, do you have a favorite instrumentation for your particular group?*

**EJ:** No, I don't. Let's go back a little ways. When I was first confronted with this kind of thinking, I was called to do a recording with Lee Konitz, with just alto saxophone and bass. And that was my first real experience as a professional doing anything. It was interesting to me because it was almost like hearing an organ, just with those three instruments: bass, drum and saxophone. So I didn't feel anything different, like I was doing anything unusual. It was just music. That's another thing: It isn't what it is, it's what you do, how you do it. That's a challenge to a musician if you put them in that particular context and say, "All right, here's the music, play this." And so you go ahead and play it and make it just as interesting and full and gracious and beautiful as if you were playing with a symphony orchestra. There isn't any difference.

**LN:** *Did you say at one point, "I want to lead my own group and be out there as a bandleader"? Did this evolve, or did you make a conscious decision that this is what you wanted to do because there were some things that you wanted to express that you couldn't express in other people's groups? How did it come about?*

**EJ:** It wasn't that. Sometimes you go as far as you can as a sideman. I just ran out of options being a sideman. I had a brief stint with Duke Ellington's





Jazz drumming bretheren: Elvin Jones and Lewis Nash

orchestra, and after that I stayed in Paris for a while. And Kenny Clarke, he was going to go on his vacation, and he asked if I could take his job at the Blue Note club (and that was actually one of the first Blue Note clubs around). I said OK. So there was an organ, [laughs] and French guys would come in. So it was just organ and drums, basically.

**LN:** Was it Lou Bennett?

**EJ:** Lou Bennett, yeah.

**LN:** How long did you do that?

**“People never understood that the drum is a musical instrument equivalent to the violin or cello or any instrument in the orchestra.”**

**EJ:** Probably about a month, two months. The thing is that Lou Bennett was looking to me to be the leader, and I was looking at him to be the leader! [laughs] I didn't know who was the leader. So that's how things evolve. You don't plan things like that; it just happens. And I just happened to be at that point in my life that it made sense.

**LN:** During your tenure as a leader, you've had musicians of various ages and levels of experience in your bands. Is there any difference in terms of your role as the leader when you take a group of young musicians out on tour or in the studio, as opposed to when you have a more experienced group?

**EJ:** Aside from the experienced musicians wanting more money, it is an opportunity for younger musicians that have made the commitment to play and to learn and to gain experience. So I always try to be as fair as I possibly can with the expenses involved in traveling and all of that. You know, the

thing is, it's the work itself. To me, it has never been about a lot of money. It has always been, what are you going to do, what are you playing, what is the music, how does it sound, how does it make me feel, that kind of thing. That is my primary concern.

**LN:** Obviously you enjoy working with these young talented musicians.

**EJ:** Of course, it's refreshing. I think school teachers must feel that way sometimes. They have a real bright kid, and they get so depressed when they pass on to another grade.

But while they are there, it is an enlightening, refreshing, uplifting spiritual experience.

**LN:** Tell me a bit about your current group.

**EJ:** My group at this time consists of a gentleman from Detroit, most people know him as Carlos McKinney. He is a very fine pianist, one of the lights of the day. We will hear a lot about Carlos McKinney in the future. Right at the moment, a man who worked with me previously, David Williams,

he is a fine bassist. He had been working with Ornette Coleman. And he might not be as aggressive as Charlie Mingus, but he has that sort of quality. He

is a virtuoso in his own way. So I am fortunate in that respect. Also there is someone who was in one of my first groups: Sonny Fortune. When he first came from Philadelphia, I had a job at a place called Pookie's Pub, and Sonny came in there. It was right after I left Coltrane. So he said, "John told me if I came to New York to come and see you." I said, "Come on up on the stand and take out your horn." So we just started like that. It was just a trio then: Sonny, Richard Davis and myself. So that's how long I have known Sonny Fortune, and now he is playing with me again, and that is a plus.

**LN:** Let's backtrack and talk a little about your association with John Coltrane. At this point in your life and career, are there any insights or reflections on that association that you maybe haven't expressed before?

**EJ:** He is one of the great innovators. I can quote Cannonball [Adderley], who worked with him for a long time

with Miles Davis. He said, "I can't believe this guy. We were working on the stage, and he would play for maybe two hours, and an hour of that would be his solo. He would go off when the set was finished, he would go back to the dressing room and practice until it was time to go back. He would never take that horn out of his mouth!"

He was constantly practicing. So for six years, I saw this same thing happen day after day. We would be driving, and he would have his horn open and he would be fingering the horn and handling the wheel with one hand. We drove all over the United States, back and forth to California and all the places in between. He had that kind of dedication. He was a monk or a priest, an angel, a pure human being committed to the development of music, to spiritual understanding of the commitment of one. There is only one race on earth; that is the homo sapien. That is what I got. Some people pay lip service to things like that; he lived his life like that.

**LN:** One of my favorite quotes of John Coltrane was something that was written in the liner notes to the recording that you participated in, Coltrane's Sound, which has "Liberia" and those tunes on there. In the liner notes of the recording, he said, "The main thing a musician would like to do is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe." To me, this quote is just another example of the things that you have just said. And I'm sure that you feel the same way in terms of the musician and what he wants to get across to the listener. I'd like you to talk a little about that, what you may feel while you're playing, and the types of things you would like a listener to experience along with you.

**EJ:** Well, you always hope that the listener will hear what you are doing. If they hear what you are doing, then they also hear what you feel. If these two things exist ... the insight that occurs when one human being meets another would be realized, and they would come back from the experience more enlightened, a better person, perhaps, or have more tolerance to whatever goes on and exists around them. I don't think that you can force anything on the listener.

**LN:** Jazz drummers have always had a bit of a brotherhood going on. We're competitive in a healthy way, and we hang out together. Recently, we lost one of our own at a young age: Tony Williams. Do you have anything to say about Tony?

**EJ:** He started working with Miles Davis right after Philly Joe Jones. He was 16, I think, and just monstrous. I



didn't see him till after he had been playing with Miles for a couple of years. I had jobs, he had jobs; you really don't cross paths all that often. But I really appreciated what he was doing. I don't think he ever reached his potential. We can only imagine.

**HOWARD JOHNSON:** In the years before Tony went with Miles, I rented a room in Tony's house up in Boston. And when *Africa/Brass* came out [in 1961], he used to spend hours playing along with it. He'd turn it up real loud. That record put his whole playing into another space. That one tune had a figure that recurred every

four bars. It was like the figure and the big fill, and nobody previously played like that. [to Elvin] You'd play that figure and then fill all that space up going up to the next one. The way it propelled everything else that was going on, all this brass and Coltrane and everything, that really knocked Tony out. He would spend hours playing that track over and over again. I'd wake up in the morning and he'd be doing that.

So Tony also said, "I got to see this cat." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Listen to this passage here. Now listen to what he's playing on the drums, and kind of pic-

ture a guy playing that." And I'd say, "OK," and he'd say, "OK, who's playing the cymbals?" Elvin was playing all the drums with one hand, and all the cymbal stuff with another hand. At that time, that wasn't happening anywhere, nobody else was doing that. Art Blakey was the loudest, freest drummer, and when we started hearing Elvin with the quartet, it was like a whole different thing.

**LN:** As a player, sometimes you have an innovative idea, you hear something a certain way. So you follow that direction. Once you start to follow what you hear musically, especially if it's something completely new, what are the things that keep you focused, even if maybe you get discouraged?

**EJ:** I always put it in these terms: It is commitment. When you are committed, then the only thing that is important is that commitment. And your knowledge and your experiences, whether they be great or small, how they can best apply that to that particular present. I never thought about how important it may have been, all I knew was that I was there. And I told myself, you are the one that has to do it. This is hindsight; we've got a lot of knowledge now. But all you know now is that you are with this group, you hear this music and you have to respond, because you are the one behind the drumset. That is where the commitment comes in. That is where you have to be absolutely honest with yourself, with what you are hearing, with what you are doing. That is what it all boils down to. That is the kind of commitment that I suppose after a few years has some significance. **DB**

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### EQUIPMENT

Elvin Jones plays a Yamaha drum set with an 18" bass drum. His floor toms are 18"x18" and 16"x16", the mounted toms are 9"x13" and 8"x12" and his snare is 14"x5 1/2".

Jones uses Zildjian cymbals. His two ride cymbals (both with rivets) and one crash are all 20", and he uses 14" hi-hats. His sticks are Pro-Mark's Elvin Jones signature line, and he uses Remo heads.

### DISCOGRAPHY

(For a more thorough listing, see *Down Beat* Nov. '92)

*LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD*—enja 2036  
*IT DON'T MEAN A THING ...*—enja 8066  
*ON THE MOUNTAIN*—One Way 30328  
*GOING HOME*—enja 7095  
*INTRODUCES TAKEHISA TANAKA*—enja 7081  
*IN EUROPE*—enja 7009  
*LIVE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE, VOLS. I & II*—  
Blue Note 84447, 84448  
*ELVIN!*—Fantasy/OJC 259

### with John Coltrane

*THE COMPLETE 1961 VILLAGE VANGUARD RECORDINGS*—Impulse! 90086  
*MEDITATIONS*—MCA 39139  
*THE MAJOR WORKS OF*—GRP/Impulse! 2-113  
*A LOVE SUPREME*—GRP/Impulse! 155  
*IMPRESSIONS*—MCA/Impulse! 5887  
*DUKE ELLINGTON & JOHN COLTRANE*—  
MCA/Impulse! 39103  
*BALLADS*—Impulse! 156  
*AFRICA/BRASS & THE AFRICA/BRASS SESSIONS VOL. II*—MCA/Impulse! 42001  
*OLE*—Atlantic Jazz 1373  
*COLTRANE'S SOUND*—Atlantic 1419





N

icholas Payton, who turned 24 on Sept. 26, is the best young trumpeter in jazz. Informed playing, leadership skills and a humble personality reveal in Payton “the knowledge of a man 20 years older,” according to pianist Hank Jones, his senior by more than 50 years.

From the time as a teenager that Payton entered the consciousness of the jazz world, it was obvious that he was a prodigy. His big sound, fluid technique and lyrical approach to melody made listening to him not an exercise in observation, but an easy pleasure. The enjoyment did not abate as Payton continued to grow through a variety of groups, including the Jazz Futures, Carl Allen’s Manhattan Projects and, most pointedly, Elvin Jones’ Jazz Machine. In addition, there was his recent alliance with the late Doc Cheatham. And it came as no surprise when Payton modulated comfortably into the role of bandleader and began performing at major events like this July’s San Sebastian Jazz Festival in Spain’s Basque country.

San Sebastian’s main stage, squeezed among buildings at the Plaza de la Trinidad in the city’s old quarter, has an open backstage area that allows visitors to hear and see the musicians. That’s where Milt Jackson and his quartet members Hank Jones, Ray Drummond and Mickey Roker sat and listened as

*By Ira Gitler*

*Photo By Alan Nahigian*





Peers *beyond*

His Years

Nicholas  
Payton



*"Some people place too much emphasis in developing their own voice. That's something that's in you; there's nothing you can do about it. It sort of comes to you. You must take your time."*

the Payton band—Jesse Davis, Anthony Wonsey, Reuben Rogers and Adonis Rose—played the evening's opening set. The sense of joy and concurrent verbal approval expressed by the Jacksonians, most overtly by Milt, enhanced the overall enjoyment of the quintet's performance.

This feeling carried over into Jackson's set, which climaxed when Payton and Davis joined the quartet for Jimmy Heath's "Bop Again," Mike Le Donne's "Soul Mates" and the *de rigueur* "Bags' Groove."

Later, Payton happened to hook up with Jones as a duo in San Sebastian. It

turned out that Tete Montoliu, the great Catalonian pianist, was supposed to perform in a duo setting but was too ill to make it. (Eventually, Montoliu succumbed to lung cancer on Aug. 24 in his native city of Barcelona at age 64; see Page 15.) So Jordy Sunol, who was managing the tours of both the Jackson and Payton groups, came up with the idea of substituting the budding trumpet giant and the piano master.

Payton and Jones interacted magically on tunes like the standard "Star Eyes," Monk's "Ask Me Now" and Joe Henderson's "Recorda Me." Every number flowed as pure give-and-take, the two musicians listening intently to one another. The audience drank it in like a band of Foreign Legionnaires who had found an oasis after days in the Sahara. Their thirst seemed unslakeable, but after the second encore, "Sweet Lorraine," they had to let go.

On that last number, Payton's Louis Armstrong heritage glowed. Although also greatly influenced by Clifford Brown, Payton is one of the few who have also listened closely to Clifford's inspiration, Fats Navarro, as evidenced by the marvelous interpretation that he, Mark Whitfield and Christian McBride gave Herbie Hancock's music on the CD *Fingerpainting*. On mention of it, Nicholas' eyes smile. "I listen to Fats a lot," he says. "He's been severely overlooked. Influenced by Dizzy, but sonically: that warm, fat sound."

Payton has other trumpet loves. In talking about the trumpet-guitar-bass configuration of *Fingerpainting*, he reminisces, "Some of my favorite Chet Baker records are with this instrumentation—the trios on SteepleChase with Doug Raney and Niels Henning. I dig Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis. I was 11 when I heard *Four & More* by Miles, and it was then I knew that I wanted to play this music.

"You have all these influences, but you have to be natural about expressing them. Some people place too much emphasis in developing their own voice. That's something that's in you; there's nothing you can do about it. It sort of comes to you. You must take your time."

**P**ayton, whose classical tastes run to Ravel, Debussy and Satie, has not just listened to records. "I have tried to surround myself with as many of the masters as I could," he says. "I met Clark [Terry] when I was playing trombone on the *Norway* with trumpeter James Andrews. I tried to get to Clark, but Al Grey was the one who was trying to give me lessons. I got to know Clark later when he heard me play trumpet."

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Then there was Cheatham. "Doc was one of the most beautiful human beings I've ever met," Payton flatly states. "He served as a walking model of humility and diligence. He didn't step out as a soloist until his 70s, but he was still hungry about learning and playing at a time when a guy gets settled and complacent. And he remained that way until the end. I have a lot of admiration for him."

In August, Payton and altoist Davis played as sidemen with Hank Jones' quintet at New York's Sweet Basil. When asked how playing with different musicians affects him, he responds, "It depends on the context," without missing a beat. "With Hank, I think of what I can play that is fitting into the context. Some might think this stifling, but to me it opens you up."

Payton plays more than just trumpet, thanks to the availability of numerous instruments around the house as a kid and hours spent at rehearsals of father/bassist Walter Payton's band in New Orleans. He said he feels that his knowledge of all the instruments is invaluable to him in his own quintet. "When I bring in a new tune, I know all the capabilities and limitations of the instruments—an insider's view," he explains. "It's helpful to me in that I can demonstrate what I want."

His central focus now is developing a group sound for his band. "You want to get to the point where it's *that* group. You still hear the individual soloists, but it's the group feeling. It's a different force than what you get from individuals. I also want to make the distance between what I'm thinking or feeling and what comes out of my horn a lot shorter, a smoother transition."

Payton has written most of the material for his forthcoming CD, recorded in September. The album features his regular quintet plus special guests Roy Hargrove, Wynton Marsalis and Joshua Redman.

#### EQUIPMENT

Nicholas Payton plays a Bach Mount Vernon trumpet (circa 1953) with a Bach Mt. Vernon 1 1/4C mouthpiece.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*FINGERPAINTING*—Verve 537 856 (with Christian McBride and Mark Whitfield)  
*DOC CHEATHAM/NICHOLAS PAYTON*—Verve 537 062  
*GUMBO NOUVEAU*—Verve 531 199  
*FROM THIS MOMENT*—Verve 527 073

with various others  
*JOE HENDERSON BIG BAND*—Verve 533 451  
*KANSAS CITY*—Verve 529 554  
*IT DON'T MEAN A THING ...* —enja 8066 (Elvin Jones)  
*GOING HOME*—enja 7095 (Elvin Jones)  
*TESTIMONIAL*—Atlantic 82755 (Carl Allen)  
*THE DARK SIDE OF DEWEY*—Evidence 22138 (Carl Allen)  
*THEY CAME TO SWING*—Columbia 66379 (Jazz At Lincoln Center)  
*HIGH STANDARDS*—Concord Jazz 4624 (Jesse Davis)

There were plenty of opportunities to hear Payton blow his horn at the 32nd edition of Donostiako Jazzaldia (Donostia is the San Sebastian's Basque name, and Jazzaldia means jazz festival). His group, essentially, was in residence. In addition to their main-stage set, they played several nights in the cramped, smoky clubs that are part of the festival's after-hours scene. At the opposite end of the pole was the outdoor stage at the Plaza de Oquendo, which happened to face the

side of the elegant Maria Cristina Hotel. When Payton's group played a 6:30 p.m. concert, I was able to take a chair over to the abbreviated balcony and take in the concert and the sun at the same time. It got even better. Since the sun and sound of the band were filling up the room, after a couple of numbers I repaired to the total relaxation of my bed, where the rays seemed to be a conduit for the refulgent sound of Payton's trumpet.

Before leaving San Sebastian, I was able to visit the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. It has been called the building for the 21st century. It is that. And Nicholas Payton is a trumpeter for the millennium. **DB**

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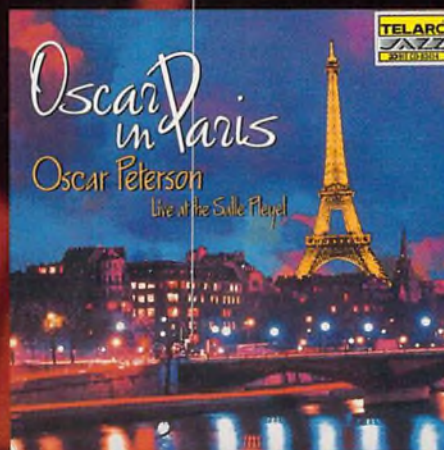


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# All *or* **Nothing**

## Diana Krall

and her bandmates have just completed the first tune of their first set at a late-summer engagement in the Oak Room of New York's Algonquin Hotel, when a voice rings out from a table in the corner. "Mr. Bass Player, can you move back about six inches?" some guy bellows. "We can't see the pretty girl."

The trio looks momentarily piqued, then Krall nods to bassist Ben Wolfe, who launches into the intro of a familiar song. Krall then leans over the piano, glaring in the direction of the heckler, and forcefully intones, "Alllllll ... or nothing at all," effectively parodying the sightlines of the club. Her stern expression seems to say, "Look, Bub, it's the music—not the pretty girl—that matters."

And that *is* Krall's attitude. Although she's been ticketed for crossover stardom since her first American recording, *Only Trust Your Heart*, in 1995, she seems completely unaffected by it. "What is my public image?" she asks in response to a question about it the next day, on the phone from her Manhattan apartment. "I mean, I read my clips now and then, but I really don't devote a lot of time to worrying about it."

Which is just as well. She'd be hard pressed to have a better image if she did devote a lot of time and energy to creating it. She's tall, thin and blonde, traits that have earned her overheated comparisons to Sharon Stone from *Time* magazine. She recently played on CNN's



ALAN NAHIGIAN

*By Martin Johnson*





*Showbiz Today*, and this fall she'll appear on TV in an episode of *Melrose Place* performing at a club that Heather Locklear's Amanda Woodward character (another tall, thin blonde) and her pals frequent. It's almost impossible for any young North American woman with that tall, thin blonde trifecta to be oblivious to the demands of glamour, but Krall has kept those demands at a distance. She isn't a clotheshorse, and if she's obsessed about makeup, it doesn't show. When she talks, all subjects lead back to the music.

With all she has going for her, Krall would be on the fast track to fame even if she made mediocre records. But, perhaps owing to her devotion to music, she's made two excellent discs in the last 18 months. Her new recording, *Love Scenes*, is a collection of cannily chosen, exquisitely delivered songs that touch on—if not revolve around—love (see "CD Reviews" Oct. '97). "Tommy [LiPuma, Krall's producer] and I came up with about 15 songs, and they all centered on love themes," she explained.



Her previous recording, *All For You*, was a highly effective dedication to the music of Nat King Cole. The recording resulted from a tour of Canadian summer jazz festivals in which she shared a bill with pianist Benny Green and both played music from the Cole repertoire. "We didn't want to replicate the music of that trio," says Krall. "Instead, we wanted to show the influence that Cole's approach had on pianists like Monty Alexander and Ahmad Jamal and their groups."

# Youth,

sophistication, artistic integrity and accessibility: It's a marketing department's wet dream, especially when it comes to retail mass-merchandising of the recorded product, which you can definitely expect for *Love Scenes*. Yet, such types seem not to have had an iota of creative input on Krall's overall presentation.

Part of Krall's appeal is that she is utterly exotic, but very much the girl next door. Unlike other young jazz stars, there is no lineage to place her in comfortably. We've had many hot young trumpeters—most notably Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard—who function as the template for Roy Hargrove, but you need only one hand to count the renowned jazz musicians who could sing and play piano with equally affecting facility.

But Krall's directness cuts right through the haze that a lack of antecedents may cause. Although Nanaimo, a city just across the Strait of Georgia from Vancouver, is not well known outside the Pacific Northwest, its favorite daughter has many easily recognizable traits. She's a strong woman with square shoulders and a sturdy sense of pragmatism. Were it not for the hardcore Canadian accent (most vowels

"I don't look at things as being from one tradition or another. I think it's the passion in the music, it's how it makes me feel that makes me want to perform it."

flatten into short "e"s) that is still prominent when she speaks, New Englanders, Midwesterners and Southerners all might claim her as their own.

She began studying classical piano at the age of four and grew up in a musical household. She sang in the choir at her Lutheran church. And she credits her father, an avid collector of records, with helping her develop an eclectic taste in music. "We had all kinds of early Americana and cylinders, and we listened to all the current stuff—Peter Dinklage, Sting—too." Even now, her tastes go zigzagging all over the map. Current faves range from Cedar Walton to Alanis Morissette with stops at Joni Mitchell, Ella Fitzgerald and many others along the way. And for those who want to dismiss Krall as a traditionalist response to Cassandra Wilson's homegirl jazz/blues/pop fusion, consider that Krall says all pop influences are present in her music.

So given this diverse taste, what attracts Diana Krall to a song? "Well, it's a hard question. I don't look at things as being from one tradition or another," she says. "I think it's the passion in the music, it's how it makes me feel that makes me want to perform it." The material she chooses



articulates her strength. She's feisty but not combative; when she's at her best, her music has a swashbuckling air. In addition, she's devoutly pragmatic. Even when she loses her head to love, she keeps her feet on the ground.

There's kind of a post-feminist air to all of Krall's attributes, especially as she switches the gender on many songs that were originally sung by men. While some of the guys at the Algonquin are there to see "the pretty girl," a soft chorus of "yes" amens through the women in the crowd when, during the Cole novelty "Frim Fram Sauce," Krall sings, "I'm gonna feed myself right tonight." Krall does not look like the sort of woman who binges on rice cakes.

While Krall's singing is more jocular and flamboyant in concert, the real revelation is her piano playing. Her fluid style recalls Jamal's influence, and the trio's empathy makes them one of the best young working groups in jazz. "Russell Malone really kicks my ass," she says the day after the guitarist's ringing blues chords exaggerated their "Lost Mind" to cartoonish proportions. Krall, however, doesn't return the favor on Malone's records. Indeed, don't look for much sidework from her. Although she appears on Geoff Keezer's upcoming *Turn Up The Quiet*, a Sony/Japan release that will hit domestic shores in early '98, Krall eschews piano-playing gigs where she keeps her mouth shut. "Enh," she sighs, "there are a lot of good piano players."

Such modesty is characteristic of a woman who spent almost 10 years paying dues living in L.A., Toronto and Boston in between return trips to Nanaimo. The last three years must seem like a dream: three well-regarded recordings and accolades from legends like Tony Bennett, Abbey Lincoln, Nancy Wilson and Betty Carter. "Well, I don't like to use the word success, but I'm happy—and, yes, surprised—to have been given the opportunities I've been given."

What's next?

"Well, we've been touring pretty consistently for nine months now. We get home in December. I think I'd like to buy a plant."

DB

## EQUIPMENT

Diana Krall plays Steinway pianos.

## DISCOGRAPHY

LOVE SCENES—Impulse! 233  
 ALL FOR YOU—Impulse! 182  
 ONLY TRUST YOUR HEART—GRP 9810  
 STEPPIN' OUT—Justin Time M12207



# The Biz Meets

## Fanfare For The Working Band, Part IV

*Editor's note: The following article is the fourth in a series on the "working band" in jazz. This final installment lets members of the jazz industry give a business perspective on the feasibility and viability of groups who perform together over extended periods of time.*

**T**he notion of the working band has business implications as well as musical consequences. To make the music commercially feasible, salable, even profitable, a whole antfarm infrastructure of folks is busy strategizing, scheming, examining demographics and scrutinizing sales figures in search of the perfect jazz vehicle. Jazz is an art form, of course, but like all artistic endeavors, it has its own bureaucracy, its administrators, specialists and mediators. The jazz biz.

The biz meets the working band. If we buy the premise that working bands have had a central (not exclusive, but extremely significant) role in the historical development of jazz, then where does the concept stand today? More specifically, where do the gatekeepers of the jazz industry—those shadowy figures who make decisions about presenting, producing and promoting the music—position the working band in their current endeavors? Is it still a relevant idea, a tenant pivotal to the ongoing life of the music, or is it just another marketing variable, open to being dispensed with when the economic winds blow the other way? Are the marquee value of supergroups and the economy of pickup bands considered more expedient than the longterm group, and at what cost to the jazz community?

The following is a collection of thoughts from people in various corners of the jazz biz, covering a spectrum from small and large record labels, live-music presenters, and the ideas of a few publicists. It offers a cross section of concerns and perspectives, some contradictory and some complementary. Each area has its own considerations; the record industry clearly has a different relation to the working group ideology than live concert production, and smaller labels may have less desire to concoct supergroup amalgamations because there's less money at stake if a particular record comes up stale (though in relative terms, a dud record can certainly be quite a setback for an indie). But few of the respondents expressed disinterest or detachment from the idea of the working band, and for some it obviously remains a primary concern.

**By John Corbett**

### **Bruce Lundvall** **President** **Blue Note Records**

"The problem is that there aren't as many opportunities for bands to tour behind their records as there once were. You can do it if you're John Scofield or Lovano, someone who can book a major club circuit as well as concert halls. But it's hard for some of the young players.

"We've found that there's a measurable increase in sales for a group that performs behind their record. Start with Joe Lovano, who's been out all summer doing the Sinatra record. He's carrying 10 or 11 players, doing JVC in New York, then the circuit in Europe. For Lovano it's different, because he's got four or five different bands. The other extreme would be Jacky Terrasson, going out behind his last record touring with his trio; that certainly had an effect on sales.

"I think what's happening with Charlie Hunter—he's embraced by a younger audience just discovering jazz, playing venues that aren't really jazz venues. He's playing clubs and festivals, and his sales are picking up as he tours. The same is true of Medeski Martin & Wood, who have sold their records by touring. I would love to see some of our young straightahead players play at these venues, take their cue from T. J. Kirk and Charlie Hunter, playing before non-traditional jazz audiences. Another really good example is Kurt Elling, who played something like 28 venues in 30 days in New York City. He did the same thing in L.A. and San Francisco, and it had a very definite impact on his sales. He was playing in front of alternative-rock audiences. He and his manager came up with the idea, and I would have to give an artist willing to do that a lot of praise.

"The other thing is Cassandra Wilson. All of her sales have come from press and touring—she hasn't gotten that much airplay. She's had

*Bill Stewart (top right) and Joe Lovano (bottom right) each experienced tremendous artistic growth as members of John Scofield's regular combo, says Blue Note Records President Bruce Lundvall.*

*Jacky Terrasson's (top left) Trio with Leon Parker had a tightness characteristic of jazz's more cohesive working bands.*

*The Charlie Hunter (bottom left) Quartet's recent tours and gigs before non-traditional jazz audiences have led to a noticeable pick-up in CD sales.*



# ets The Band





**Lundvall** from previous page

two working bands: the one with Cindy Blackman, then the other band that supported the first two records. Lonnie Plaxico and Graham Haynes were in both. What happened was that I signed Cassandra. I went to see her at B. Smith's with her M-Base band and you couldn't hear her over the band. It was democratic, too loud and too electric. It wasn't focused on her. I called her in for a meeting and told her I thought she should form an acoustic band. We didn't dictate to her—she found [producer] Craig Street and picked her own bandmembers.

"I think back to the days when Weather Report and Return to Forever were the biggest things in jazz, and I don't think there are as many working bands in the music these days. When Gonzalo Rubalcaba plays, he's got to pick up a bass player and drummer. The very young players, there aren't that many places that'll book them. We did something last year by putting together Blue Spirit, a band of all young players, each with their own records on Blue Note. By doing this, making a record, putting them on tour, we thought we'd raise their visibility, and that we'd have a working all-star band. They did all the summer festivals. We haven't done volume two because they were too wrapped up in their own bands, but we probably will. We had OK sales, but it was an inconclusive experiment. It's awfully hard for these talented young people to be leaders and go out and play with their bands."

### **Chuck Mitchell** President Verve Records

"The more a band has a chance to maintain a tight working relationship over a period of time, the greater positive effect they're going to have on their audience—which is to say they're going to develop the tightness and the sense of possibilities that's really germane to making great jazz. It's much harder to do this with constantly shifting personnel or with individual leaders traveling from town to town and picking up local rhythm sections.

"In this kind of a marketplace, you have to identify yourself to an audience not once, but on a multiple series of impressions over an extended period of time. And if you get the rep of having a great working band that really delivers, not just from the leader chair but throughout its entire configuration, then you're going to be way ahead of the game.

"I think Nicholas Payton has an awesome working band; they've hung together, with Jesse Davis, Adonis Rose, Reuben Rogers and Anthony Wonsey. They're a terrific group. Another great group was Jacky Terrasson's group with Leon Parker on drums, that early trio that made the first couple of Jacky's records for Blue Note. And they had an interplay and a tightness and a cohesion that I think was truly impressive. And it set Jacky's talents off, but I also think it certainly spread the word on Leon.

"Those are two that spring to mind immediately, as younger players. But I also think there's a relevance when you consider bands like Herbie Hancock's New Standard band. Those are among the highest-echelon players of the day: Michael Brecker, Jack DeJohnnet, Dave Holland, Hancock, John Scofield and Don Alias, master musicians who very rarely get the opportunity to perform with their peers because of the economics of jazz and because of everybody's own solo trips. And yet, the more these guys played live together, the more astonishing the music became. And from the business standpoint, when audiences are aware that they can get that group on a record, I think that's more likely to translate from the club or concert stage into the record store.

"So I think if it can be managed, it's very, very powerful."



Wynton Marsalis has worked 150 to 200 gigs a year with his septet for several years in a row, notes Rob Gibson, executive producer and director of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

### **Bob Koester** Owner/Operator Delmark Records

"Like any other record company, Delmark would like to only record working bands. This is good business; there's still the phenomenon of people hearing a band at a concert and wanting the exact same personnel on a record. So a working band coming to Delmark wanting to record has a definite advantage over a single player. Rob Mazurek's group, we've got a tape from his working band. Mike Smith's, Malachi Thompson's and Barrett Deems' bands, too. But I don't think there are too many.

"It's the job of a record company to record people who don't work too often, but that's not what you're trying for. Live performance promotes the record, promotes that particular record; a working band is working and has a higher profile with the public. But since Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, some of the greatest bands in jazz have not been working bands. Jelly Roll Morton, for instance. But these records are harder to find than the Duke Ellingtons. I think some of our best records are pickup things—Cecil Payne's new one, for instance."

### **Donald Elfman** Director of Jazz Koch International

"Maybe I'm old, but I prefer a band that works together. Most of what I do doesn't involve working bands, but I wish it did. I don't know of many these days; most of them are recording bands. People Like Us, Joel Forrester's group, is the only real working band I deal with. I would love to have regular working bands who record and toured.

"I do publicity for records, not bands. The next time someone records, the band is usually not the same people as it was the first. A working band would be a band with a focus, with a concept and the same personnel. That's easier to market than a recording band with guest stars. When I worked at PolyGram, the Harper Brothers were a working band, and they got a lot of attention. Almost nothing translates into record sales in jazz now, but to at least get attention, to get people out to see them play, a working band like that is easier to market. I don't see much of it, but I love it when I see it. Over time, you get to see a group grow."



**Michael Cuscuna  
Producer  
Blue Note,  
Mosaic Records**

"When I was coming up, there was nothing but working bands, at least the ones that moved me the most. Working bands are essential to the growth of the music. Art Blakey's sextet, the Coltrane Quartet and later Miles' band.

"It's affected me as a producer. More often than not, I've had to work with people who can't afford to have a working band. Whenever possible, I like to build a recording off a live gig or at least off rehearsal. In New York, you can build a session off of a week of working, sort of simulating a working band, which helps. It's also affected me in terms of signings: Don Pullen/George Adams Quartet, for instance, which I consider one of the last great working bands, and Bobby Watson's Horizon.

"I signed John Scofield to Blue Note soon after he formed a group with Joe Lovano and Bill Stewart on drums, and I think that band had a lot to do with the growth of those three players. I think exceptional musicians playing together can have extraordinary results, but there's nothing like playing together night after night. Empathy and telepathy come into it; I don't think you could get what Miles did without it, deconstructing and reconstructing any given piece they're playing and trusting everybody will be there. Talk about falling backwards and knowing someone will catch you—it was unbelievable.

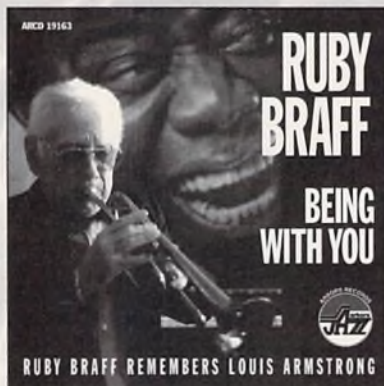
"I go to bed many nights worrying about it. In terms of booking agencies and club circuits—I mean 30 or 35 cities where you can tour—I don't see any signs of that coming back structurally or economically. I think that's a great loss to jazz. And one-nighters are one thing, but to settle into a club is quite another. Even business-wise, that review in the local paper won't help you if you're not there the second night. That erodes career-building as well. With no circuit and no all-pervasive booking agencies, all that work doesn't pay off anymore.

"That dribbles to another strata of problem: If all the leaders can make a fine living doing all-star tours, then that makes a leader drought. There are no more leaders for the young players to work under, so that erodes the whole system."

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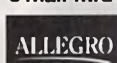
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If you'd like to explore her vocal universe, at least 18 recordings feature her, including her CD with pianist Fred Hersch, on Sunnyside and her latest CD *Circle Dancing* (SSC 1076D) recorded with her "quintet west" in Seattle.

Michael Leonhart on the making of *Glub Glub vol. 11*: "What had become more important to me than songs, grooves, or solos was the idea of making a sort of movie in headphones. So in late August of that summer I went into the studio to record with twenty or so of the most interesting people I've crossed paths with in the music world. Much like most movie shoots, it was a quiet chaotic frenzy with people pouring in and out of the studio.

Of the twenty tracks on the album, most are songs, some are interludes and a few are just little moments. Some parts of the album are like flying around the globe in a balloon hearing bits of all the music I love, while other parts are like two strangers rubbing up against one another in the subway. But from start to finish, every sound that made it past the cutting room floor and onto the cd is there to tell some small part of the story that is *Glub Glub vol. 11*."



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**Don Lucoff**  
**Publicist**  
**DL Media**

"How do you exploit a market? A working band is going to be taken more seriously, but that doesn't mean it'll be easier to publicize. Using a pickup band, the music suffers. But it's a matter of economics. Expensive concept-band records are made, and the concept band never goes on the road.

"John Scofield on Blue Note, that was his band—the band was working, so when they recorded the music was at a much higher level. But if he was working with a pickup group (which he wouldn't do), they wouldn't have really been able to play his music.

"The availability of gigs, that's why we've seen the demise of the working band; a lot of markets are reduced to one-nighters, and there are more artists than ever, so there aren't enough jobs. Joe Lovano works as much as he wants, but he creates different bands so they don't get stale. He can go into a market on successive occasions with either his quartet or Universal Language Ensemble. An expanded version of his ULE is his Sinatra ensemble, which has allowed Lovano for the first time in his career to play performing arts centers as a bandleader, a major achievement for a jazz artist."

**Jason Olaine**  
**Artistic Director**  
**Yoshi's**  
**Oakland**

"About 75 percent of what we present are working bands, bands on tour. It's tougher for artists just trying to establish themselves—trying to pull off a five- or six-night run here, they don't have the audience base. Pharoah Sanders will sell out every time, whether he has a new record out or not; Cyrus Chestnut or Nicholas Payton need a record to support in order to create the kind of excitement and attention (press and radio) to make it make financial sense.

"We've been successful putting together all-star groups, but we don't do it often. When we do, it's with people at such a high level that it'll work. But I like the sound of a band concept, not the local rhythm section. The level will be higher when people know each other. Otherwise, musically it's not that happening. Even if the tunes are the same each night, a working band is able to interact as a unit to express the subtleties and nuances—more of those moments are crystallized in working bands than in a pickup band.

"The all-star thing can be beautiful for one hit; my favorite groups are ones that stay together: Miles' quintet, Coltrane's quartet. They're like families, familiar faces from an audience perspective. But it's a financial question: to have built up enough base to be able to make enough bread to keep a band together. That's the key. At least the sidemen are getting a paycheck each week, so they aren't forced to take other gigs."

The more Herbie Hancock's New Standard band played live together, the more astonishing the music became, notes Chuck Mitchell, Verve Records president.



**Joe Segal**  
**Jazz Showcase, Joe's Bebop Cafe &**  
**Jazz Emporium**  
**Chicago**

"Maybe it's because I'm there and I see them play the same repertoire every night, but some working bands can get to be rote. For the internationally known players we bring in, I try to talk them into coming in single; it's less expensive. If we bring a single horn in, I try to get a rhythm section that's played together a lot, so at least that'll be cohesive. They may not know the tunes he brings in, but usually by mid-week they'll have it together. More and more, they want to bring their bands, but the people we put with them might in fact be better. Chicago musicians value swing and blues feel—though some groups don't actually want that these days."



**Rob Gibson**  
**Executive Producer**  
**& Director**  
**Jazz at Lincoln Center**  
**New York**

"First, the definition of a working band: In my definition, this would be a band playing no less than 80 or 100 gigs per year. Duke Ellington, Count Basie, these were working bands.

"Of the bands that formed after 1960, there have only been one or two bands that worked more than 100 gigs a year. Since 1960, there's been an enormous drop off. The only person I know who's done it is Wynton Marsalis, who's worked with the septet 150 to 200 gigs a year for seven straight years. That's an achievement that's gone almost completely unacknowledged by the media.

"Jazz at Lincoln Center doesn't book working groups, per se. We present concerts in which bands rehearse never less than 10 times. It's always all-stars. You need to get the guys who can play it with authority. We did a program last year of piano trios; of the six we used, maybe one was a working unit: Danilo Perez.

"It's difficult for musicians to financially afford to keep people together. Ellington kept people on salary; the musicians weren't paid on a gig-by-gig basis. That's almost impossible now.

"But if you like Misha Mengelberg, you know that he and Han Bennink have a kind of telepathy that's hard to achieve otherwise. The Steve Lacy Sextet did it in the '70s and '80s, but they struggled constantly. It's a tough thing.

"Personally, I think artists need management to make working bands possible. I don't think an artist can do it without a manager and a booking agent. Above and beyond the artistic success, it's a business achievement to keep a working group together.

"The worst aspect is that the number of opportunities to play is smaller than it's been in a very long time. The European jazz festival circuit has all these rock and pop groups in it these days. The big eight festivals have less of what I'd refer to as real jazz. Nothing against Eric Clapton, but I can't call him jazz. Most of the European festivals want to be as broad as possible. They shouldn't be called jazz festivals. Presenters have to build audience—it takes time, effort and commitment. The JVC Jazz Festival and most of the European festivals are not committed to building a loyal jazz audience. For them it isn't about building a jazz audience, it's about selling as many tickets as possible.

"It's very, very difficult in our times—with the lack of management, the lack of opportunities—to have a working band. And if you were 19, coming into this music, who would you model yourself on?"

**Mike Wilpizeski**  
**Publicity**  
**Verve Records**

"To me, it's not about playing together regularly, it's about touring. It's easier to get press on a band that tours in support of its new record. That's the way the PolyGram publicity machine works. But also writers are interested in performance reviews more than CD reviews. I don't get any feeling from the press that they have any special interest in the longevity of a group. It's more who's in the group and the concert performance—then the writer will reference the CD in their live review. In fact, if the touring group does not reflect the record, it can be a problem.

"The flipside is that when someone like Herbie Hancock tours with the New Standard group, we can sell the back catalogue that they played on [in addition to Hancock's newest with Wayne Shorter].

"So there's a good side to a band that works together. But we're interested in selling records, so a band that supports its latest is more desirable."

DB

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Jack DeJohnette **ONENESS**  
 Jerome Harris  
 Don Alias  
 Michael Cain



**P**erhaps best known for his once-thriving L.A. jazz club Shelly's Manne-Hole, drummer Shelly Manne epitomized the sound of the postwar session drummer. This March 5, 1959, "Classic Interview" finds the former Kenton and Herman trapsman fresh from the success of his album of Henry Mancini music, Peter Gunn (currently reissued from Contemporary). For an inside look at Shelly Manne & His Men, circa 1959, check out Live At The Black Hawk, Vols. 1-5 (Contemporary), a quintet recording from another once-famous California jazz club.

## Shelly Manne *The Modern Manne*

**S**helly Manne is at war with an attitude prevalent among many of the younger group of jazz musicians. For want of a better name, it could be called "hipsterism"—and the 38-year-old percussionist expresses very definite opinions on the damage this attitude is doing to jazz today.

When Down Beat called on Shelly, he was relaxing in the living room of the contemporary ranch style house he occupies with his wife, Florence (nicknamed "Flip"), their two dogs and a brace of cats. Out in back, in a stable behind the year-old swimming pool, live three other members of the Manne family, Rose O'Dae, Charlie Brown and Struttin' Sam—as fine a trio of horseflesh as can be found in the San Fernando Valley community of Northridge, where the drummer has been living for the past 11 years.

Settling into a modern armchair by the glass wall curtained against the hot afternoon sun, Shelly shrugged, "I hate analyzing jazz. Far as I'm concerned, it should be played, not talked about. I mean, this talking about what good the critics are, or who's blowing the most, that kind of thing. A real jazz musician plays for the sheer love of it. He doesn't play to impress anybody or to be told how good he is. He does it in the hope that somebody will hear him and dig what he's doing."

He knocked his pipe bowl against the side of a large stone ashtray and continued. "Here's what I have in mind, though, about this bad attitude among some of the young guys and the way they seem to regard jazz. It seems to me that most musicians, like critics, are very prejudiced in their likes. They get to be too ironclad and bound in their ideas, and this leads to a situation I don't think is healthy."

Tamping some tobacco into his pipe bowl, Shelly asked animatedly, "Why should there be such division of taste among musicians? Sometimes it seems to me that jazz is becoming divided into little knots of individuals, all pushing their own tastes." The pipestem stabbed the air. "Here you have the guys who see only Miles. Over here are the followers of Monk. And over there are those drummers who only dig Philly Joe [Jones]. Now, you know darn well that Miles and Monk and Philly Joe don't feel that way about themselves—or about anybody, for that matter.

"You're missing the whole point and joy of the music if you close your eyes. Why, you can enjoy *all* types of jazz. Oh, I don't mean some dumb record, but a person can—and should—dig anything, if it's good."

Because of the prevalence of this closed-minded attitude, Shelly concluded, there is much bitterness surrounding playing today. "I didn't feel any bitterness in the old days when I was playing along 52nd Street," he earnestly declared. "Why, I used to have guys like

Sid Catlett and Davey Tough come up to me after a number and ask, 'How did you do that?' about some little thing I might have played. Now, this was real encouragement for me then. There I was, a young drummer coming up who lacked a whole lot of things. To have guys like those express interest was really a warm thing."

Shelly stood up abruptly, strode across the living room toward the kitchen and dining area, then paused. "Thought I'd go look for a certain photo in my room," he explained. "Think you'd dig it. Come on in, and let's see if we can find it." The reporter followed Shelly into his study, a rather small room taken up principally with a set of drums and chromatically tuned boobams. Adorning one wall were 10 Down Beat plaques, a photograph of the late Dave Tough and a framed certificate presented to him by another magazine.

While the drummer searched through an envelope of photos, he nodded to 11 silk rosettes festooning the edge of a protruding ledge. "Struttin' Sam won all those in the past year," he explained. "Not bad for a year, huh? My wife is showing Sam now. He's a five-gaited American saddle-bred horse. Really a beauty." Shelly finally located the picture. Not surprisingly, it showed a grinning Mr. Manne astride a bareback nag. "That's me in my Sitting Bull role," he grinned.

**T**he current excitement at Contemporary Records over Manne's new album of Henry Mancini's music from the television cops-and-robbers series *Peter Gunn* naturally recalled the drummer's first big record success, *My Fair Lady*. Despite the obviously surefire commercial peg of interpreting in modern jazz the score of a hit Broadway show, Shelly insisted that the commercial aspect of the album came by sheer accident.

"I had the idea of doing a *few* show tunes in the album," he confessed, "but it was [producer] Les Koenig's idea to record the entire show. Besides, we had fun making the album. Now, I don't say it's the greatest jazz album of all time, but we *did* have fun making it.

"Also," he continued, "it was important that the album was







DOON BERGSTEIN

modern-jazz treatment, Shelly summed up, "The vital thing is to do these things without sacrificing integrity."

Why doesn't Manne take his quintet on the road more frequently? With only the barest indication of exasperation, Shelly replied that it was not only the fact of his own heavy studio activity, but that the other musicians in the band all have their homes in the Los Angeles area.

"Within a six or seven-week period," he declared, "I'm perfectly willing to play a string of club dates back East; make cities like Boston, Philly, Detroit and so on. But the office can't always book a string of clubs one after the other. I can't afford to lay off for a week or two on the road with my guys on weekly salaries. And," he emphasized with pointed finger, "I will not take my musicians on the road and not have them on weekly salaries. Another factor is that we always fly to other cities. I don't believe in driving all those miles. It's too dangerous. When a tour is set up in good order, I'm perfectly willing to go. Usually this happens once a year, and it's fine with me. It fits in with my studio schedule here. Otherwise—that is, if MCA can't line up a satisfactory string of dates—it's just not financially feasible."

As Manne reasons it, it is silly to go out on the road and sacrifice the steady money from his studio activity. And that activity is, as Damon Runyon put it, more than somewhat.

Impulsively, Shelly pulled out his date book. He chose at random an average week's work. "Here," he said, indicating the week of Jan. 5. "Look at this. Monday—a date at Contemporary with Helen Humes and Benny Carter. Tuesday—a vocal background date with Jack Marshall at Capitol. Not jazz, but OK; good musically. Tuesday night I went on the Larry Finley television show in connection with my new album. Wednesday I had off. Thursday—an 11 a.m. jazz concert at San Bernardino Valley College followed by a 3 p.m. date at Republic to do a TV film score. Friday—a 9 a.m. studio call on the Al Capone picture and a 1 p.m. date at Master Recorders for Dot. Then, at 8 that same evening, I had a Max Factor jingle at MacGregor studios. Saturday—an afternoon date for the second session of the Dot thing at Master. Sunday I had off."

Admittedly this constituted a better-than-average week for Shelly, but he'd made his point. Moreover, he was quick to emphasize that in between all this he's still playing jazz

with the group. On the four days immediately preceding Down Beat's visit, for example, he'd been out on a quickie tour with Irving Granz's *Jazz A La Carte* package, which included Anita O'Day, the Kingston Trio and others.

Unexpectedly reverting to the subject of drumming, Manne remarked with an amused expression, "You know, drummers have a way of judging each other's work by observing little things another does that they can't figure out. Davey Tough brought this to mind," he explained in reference to Tough's picture in the other room.

"I remember once a drummer told me he'd been to some club to dig Davey, but, he said, 'Davey didn't *do* anything.' He meant that there were no fireworks on the stand that he could see. Well, I told this guy, 'But, man, that's what's beautiful about Davey. How does he make it move without doing anything?'"

And that, to judge from Shelly's expression after he had told the anecdote, appeared to probe to the bone and marrow of good jazz drumming.

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successful because it started the whole show-tune trend for jazz groups. It gave other jazz groups a chance to get across to the public, and it gave the public a chance to form a nodding acquaintance with jazz."

As an example of the latter benefit, he offered the example of night-club customers across the nation approaching him for advice on what other jazz albums they should buy.

"They tell me," Shelly amplified, "that the *Fair Lady* album appealed to them although they never considered buying jazz before. And they want to know where they should go from there. So I tell them to buy Charlie Parker and Miles Davis." He chuckled. "They're becoming educated."

As to his record on the *Peter Gunn* music, the drummer explained that when he replaced Jack Sperling on the show's band (Sperling went on NBC staff), the thought occurred to him that it would adapt perfectly to his own small group, with the addition of vibist Vic Feldman.

Regarding the practice of giving specialized material a



<b>KEY</b>	Excellent	★★★★★
	Very Good	★★★★
	Good	★★★
	Fair	★★
	Poor	★



## Horace Tapscott

**Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam**  
Arabesque 0128

★★★★

Though he's kept close to the local Los Angeles scene over the last several decades, Horace Tapscott's rep abounds. The reason for his stature is twofold: The 63-year-old pianist is adamant in his dedication to music, and canny about blending novel improv ideas with long-standing jazz precepts. A composer with catholic interests, Tapscott's been pegged as one dedicated to the arcane. But his last record for Arabesque, the two-horn /rhythm section date *aie!* *The Phantom*, had as many hard-bop sources as it did freebop inclinations—not to mention plenty of old-school polish. On the surface, this graceful trio disc is just as courteous. But study its contours and you'll find that Tapscott's a wily bandleader.

Having absorbed the Central Avenue scene while growing up in SoCal during the early '40s (working as a trombonist and playing reeds as well), there's little reason for being surprised at Tapscott's fluency in old-school anything. He's masterful at blues, peppering saucy phrases into places where you'd never guess they had a natural position. His blowing section of "Sandy & Niles" is jumpy, manic even. But as Tapscott rides the resolute groove created by Ray Drummond and Billy Hart, his sideways Basie licks find many ways to help explain their purpose. "Willetta's Walk" is an even better example of a modernist hearkening to simplicity without dumbing down. It's catchy, bouncy and vivid enough to be the theme for a Saturday morning cartoon. But as Mr. T. opens up some elbow room for himself, the phrases get sliced and diced—when they're not boiling over the bar line, that is.

Though Tapscott has his splashy moments, *Dar Es Salaam* makes a case for him being a precisionist. Each section of a solo is taken as new terrain to sculpt. And the scrutiny he applies isn't minor. "Social Call" begins with a breezy statement of the theme, and moves into an intricate tinkling of notes. But after a bit you realize that not only is his choice of notes eccentric, the calibration of the lines they form is odd. Like two other undervalued piano masters, Stanley Cowell and Misha Mengelberg, Tapscott's phrasing can be simultaneously

whimsical and memorable. Using ever-adamant maneuvers, he has a way of making the impromptu sound like something from the Bible.

That persistence is most striking on the bop staples found herein. Driven by Hart's frolicsome snare, "Oleo" has a vigor that belies any genuflection to formula. And the attack on "Now's The Time" generates a glowing euphoria the most spirited jazz strives for. Acknowledged sensai to many young players, on *Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam*, Tapscott comes off as a sage whippersnapper himself—flamboyant, clever and discriminating. —*Jim Macnie*

**Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam**—As A Child; Bib Mkuu; The Great Black Lady; Lullaby In Black; Sandy & Niles; Willetta's Walk; Social Call; Oleo; Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam; Now's The Time. (59:40)  
**Personnel**—Tapscott, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



## Bill Dixon

**Vade Mecum II**  
Soul Note 121211

★★★★½

A pivotal figure in mid-'60s New York, Bill Dixon has continued the development of his art largely out of public earshot. But

along with Don Cherry's, Dixon's was the most original trumpet concept to emerge in the initial free-jazz era, and the scant material commercially available in that period (none of it reissued since) showed his completely individual attitude towards orchestration, timbre and space. Until retiring in '96, he'd spent three decades of professorship at Bennington College in Vermont, issuing a small catalog of great records on Soul Note and performing elsewhere all too rarely.

Dixon was sometimes chastised in the '60s for being "too European," but his 1993 *Vade Mecum* sessions demonstrate how little he cares about meaningless tags. With two of Europe's most important voices in free improvisation, bassist Barry Guy and drummer Tony Oxley, and the premier free-music bassist in America, William Parker, Dixon assembled a veritable dream band, bursting with ideas like Fibber McGee's explosive closet. The leader originally designed *Vade Mecum I* and *II* to be a two-disc set, but his Italian record company decided to release them separately, issuing the first volume in 1995 and now following up with the second. Suffice to say, you should make them a set by having them both.

In fact, Guy and Oxley have worked together in another intimate context, as the rhythm section of the Howard Riley Trio in the early '70s, and they maintain a tremendous sense of empathy and clear-channel communication. Oxley's extremely colorful kit—augmented by a huge cowbell and a fizz cymbal that must have a 30-second decay—and Guy's devastating agility and energy allow them to tangle in myriad ways; at the outset of "Ebonite," Guy's aggressive string percussion matches Oxley's rolling rimshots spot-on. "Reflections" finds Oxley returning to a closed hi-hat for a full investigation. Guy and Parker make interesting contrast as a double-double-bass amalgam, Guy's low-action zippy mobility set against Parker's high-action palpable throb. On "Tableau," Parker provides a subconscious anchor by hanging back on subtending bowed drones, over which

# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>HORACE TAPSCOTT</b> <i>Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam</i>		★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
<b>BILL DIXON</b> <i>Vade Mecum II</i>		★ ½	★★★★ ½	★★★	★★★★½
<b>CASSANDRA WILSON/ JACKY TERRASSON</b> <i>Rendezvous</i>		★★★★½	★★ ½	★★★★	★★★★½
<b>JOE HENDERSON</b> <i>Porgy And Bess</i>		★★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★

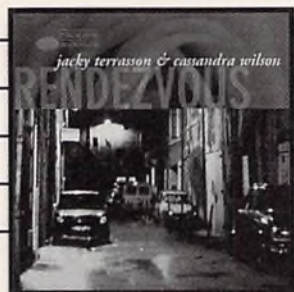


Dixon flies like a balloon with the air let out.

Though made by a band of dogged individualists, *Vade Mecum II* obtains its overwhelming character from Dixon. In places, he exploits radiant tone on flugelhorn ("Valentina Di Sera," at three minutes the only short track), but his vocabulary is largely made up of an array of slurs, wipes, shrieks, blurts and other devices not standardized in conventional musical lexicon. Dixon plays at the limit of the instrument; his brutal, wheezing lines on "Reflections," for instance, could give the listener whiplash. In terms of acoustics, Dixon clearly prefers a big, echoey sound; in concert recently, I heard him use two mics, one outfitted with reverb, the other with slap-back delay. But the 72-year-old's use of sonic treatment never blurs his acute attention to detail and lavish sense of texture. The disc's final piece, "Octette #1," multiplies the strength of the quartet by overdubbing them a second time over the first pass; only Dixon listened back while playing again, which gives the still-spacious 12-minute track an uncanny combination of pre-plannedness (Dixon playing along with himself) and chance procedures, and of jazz and experimental tape music.

This music won't appeal to everyone. But it's not aimed at "everyone," it's aimed at people willing to wipe away their preconceptions and come to listening afresh. For that select audience, there's a treasure trove waiting on both volumes of *Vade Mecum*. —John Corbett

**Vade Mecum II**—Valentina Di Sera; Tableau; Ebonite; Reflections; Incunabula; Octette #1. (70:10)  
**Personnel**—Dixon, trumpet, flugelhorn; Barry Guy, William Parker, bass; Tony Oxley, percussion.



## Cassandra Wilson/ Jacky Terrasson

**Rendezvous**  
Blue Note 55484

★★★★½

**T**he nerve—performing a set of mostly standards with no regard to so-called pacing. You know, start with an uptempo number followed by something delicate followed by a catchy little Latin tune followed by ... Singer Wilson and keyboardist Terrasson will have none of that sort of thing, thank you very much. Instead, *Rendezvous* simmers with a slow boil throughout, the two musicians revisiting familiar songs only to do them in. As Terrasson puts it, "There's really no point in covering standards if you're not going to make them sound fresh or new, and [this part is telling for both Terrasson and Wilson] I get a kick out of disguising them."

Terrasson arranged all the music, and shows his knack for organizing these songs as an extension of his keyboard work. Reminiscent of Keith Jarrett's early work especially, Terrasson plays with tempo, keys and emotion like a musical jester with the utmost seriousness. A great example of their "disguising" occurs on "Tea For Two." Hear how he takes a slow, lightly grinding funk feel—featuring nice rim work from drummer/percussionist Mino Cinelu—and combines it with Wilson's natural drawl. Tea time was never this suggestive (or misleading!). Like "Tea For Two" (perhaps, an even better title to this collection), Terrasson and Wilson turn another standard on its ear, "If Ever I Would Leave You." Here, the melody and chord changes hang in the air while the two

seemingly make up their own song en route to restating the theme.

*Rendezvous* is not an album of novelty takes designed to showcase how clever two musicians can be. There is, rather, a genuine and consistent vibe from song to song. (*Rendezvous* can be heard as adjunct material to each artist's catalogues.) The arrangements are relatively simple, the effect on most numbers being a feeling of songs played within songs. By and large, the basic forms remain, those lovely melodies are here, you can sing along with Wilson if you know the words. Rather, it's those inversions, the sly substitutions, alterations, reharmonizations and the emphatic gentleness throughout that tell you real art is at work here. Maybe the most "disguised" take is

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on "It Might As Well Be Spring," which follows on the heels of a short, rubato "Autumn Leaves" by Terrasson. There's enough room to this "Spring" for you to get lost, forget what song is at hand, make you wonder if these two are even playing the same tune. This "Spring" is cool, it cooks and it's fun.

Like another singer the pianist has worked with, namely, Betty Carter, Wilson's penchant for taking a song apart (and putting it back together) works so well with Terrasson's sneaky inventiveness. Producer Bob Belden's close, dry sound keeps things intimate without suffocating the music. And, on the heels of recent work by other pianists like Kenny Barron, a welcome bonus to *Rendezvous* is Terrasson's tasty electric pianism. His scampering behind Wilson on

"Tennessee Waltz" shows he's not afraid to plug in, and that he's done his homework on the instrument, echoing Herbie Hancock, Jarrett and a host of soul-driven '60s plectrists.

As my colleague Jim Macnie says of Horace Tapscott in an accompanying review, likewise with Wilson and Terrasson. These kindred spirits have the "vigor that belies any genuflection to formula." With all due respect to the material at hand, they do not genuflect. —John Ephland

**Rendezvous**—*Old Devil Moon; Chan's Song; Tennessee Waltz; Little Boy Lost; Autumn Leaves; It Might As Well Be Spring; My Ship; I Remember You; Tea For Two; If Ever I Would Leave You; Chicago 1987.*

**Personnel**—Wilson, vocals (except cut 11); Terrasson, piano, electric piano, Wurlitzer electric piano; Lonnie Plaxico (1, 3, 6-10), Kenny Davis (2), bass; Mino Cinelu, percussion (1-3, 6-10).



## Joe Henderson

**Porgy And Bess**  
Verve 539 046

★★★½

**P**orgy And Bess may not be the most imaginative vehicle on which to extend Joe Henderson's string of theme albums, but the Gershwin musical/opera is such a natural, it would be hard to imagine Verve not asking him to tackle it sooner or later.

The material comes from a time long enough ago that it requires something of the soul and sound of a romantic to express. And there's enough of the residual romantic in Henderson that he manages to bridge the spirit of the music with the more contemporary sensibilities of most of his sidemen. His tendency to mark time with tremolos does not seriously diminish his confident performance here (Ella, Louis, Miles and Gil need not fret over the renown of their *Porgys*).

The ensemble arrangements are well-crafted in a commonplace sort of way and seem to entertain no wider ambitions than to offer guideposts and transitions. So it's to the smaller moments that we turn our most absorbing attention. The first of several gems comes with "Bess, You Is My Woman Now," which gives us Henderson and prime Tommy Flanagan in a wonderfully unhurried jazz-duet performance. On "I Loves You Porgy," Henderson and John Scofield, playing acoustic guitar, achieve a similarly effective intimacy, even as the rhythm section tiptoes softly in after the first chorus, carefully avoiding any disruptive conceits or flourishes.

Henderson, backed by Scofield, strikes a very moving note of somber simplicity on "Honeyman." But the rendering, combined with another snippet, is so brief, he gives himself no chance to explore the lean and sullen mood he has conjured. "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York" is born out of a simple bass line and proceeds to ratchet up logically to a closing ensemble, with fine solos from all.

Chaka Khan, as is often her way, cranks "Summertime" into an overwrought, sometimes screeching, soul piece in which the interpretation moves in an emotionally opposing direction from the lyric—it's a lullaby, you'll recall. Sting, essaying a mock vernacular accent, is sardonic on "Ain't Necessarily So," a smart essay on opportunism and skepticism.

—John McDonough

**Porgy And Bess**—Jasbo Brown Blues; Summertime; Here Come Da Honeyman/They Pass By Singin'; My Man's Gone Now; I Got Plenty Of Nuttin'; Bess, You Is My Woman Now; It Ain't Necessarily So; I Loves You Porgy; There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York; Bess, Oh

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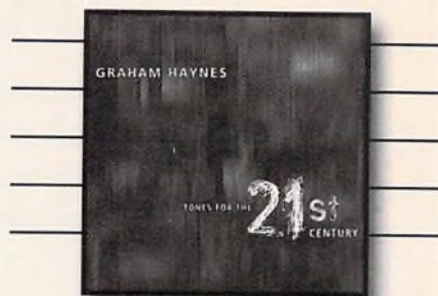
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*Where's My Bess? (53:56)*  
**Personnel**—Henderson, tenor saxophone; Conrad Herwig, trombone; Stefan Harris, vibraphone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; John Scofield, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Chaka Khan (2), Sting (7), vocals.



## Graham Haynes

**Tones For The 21st Century**  
 Antilles 537 692

★★½

**P**erhaps cornetist Graham Haynes' latest CD should be retitled *Monotony For The 21st Century*, because most of the swirling ambient soundscapes he imagines for the new millennium prove to be tediously unvarying and largely uneventful. Essentially, Haynes, who plays several brass instruments (cornet, flugelhorn and Tibetan trumpet) and mans the mothership's synthesizers, goes it alone on this computer-driven project, enlisting programmer Joseph Briggs to be his primary "bandmate" and inviting a few select guests to help in the construction of this ill-fated, hypnotic experiment. What springs to mind regarding Haynes' philosophy in searching for musical adventure is John Lennon's advice on his future-bent song "Tomorrow Never Knows" on the Beatles' *Revolver* album: "Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream." Only problem: Lennon's tune, recorded over 30 years ago, is musically light years ahead of most of the futuristic tones Haynes proposes on this beyond (*way beyond*) jazz release.

Even though electro-textural (a.k.a. electronica) is in vogue these days on the fickle pop music scene, much of Haynes' electronically derived music sounds dated. The trance-dance "Millennia" includes '60s sci-fi beep-and-peep sound effects, Laurie Anderson-ish synth vocal alterations, Philip Glass-like minimalism repetitions (à la *Koyaanisqatsi*) and an abundance of old-fashioned orbiting keyboard loops, circa the '90s. Then there are more gyrating sonics and spoken-word tapes played in reverse to sound like glossolalia-like mantras on "Out Of Phaze/Spirit World." Even the sitar-like effects that serve as a quivering drone on "Sadguru" are hardly pioneering.

The CD does have its moments. It is an ear-phone treat listening to the multi-layered, mind-altering sound prints. Plus, some of Haynes' instrumental explorations are intriguing, especially when he wafts a solo line above the polyrhythmic mix on "Nameless River" (which also features Steve Neil on African harp) and contributes echoing brass rhythms on "Out Of Phaze." Haynes breaks the cerebral spell on "Sadguru" with fascinating horn



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lyricism. This is where the soul finally emerges from the machines. Plus, there's the fleeting end track, "Solo," where Haynes puts a digital delay to exquisite use.

But, overall, if Haynes' vision is indeed prophetic and this is what the music of the 21st century is destined to sound like, well, all is not lost. There will always be the oldies.

—Dan Ouellette

**Tones For The 21st Century**—*Millennia; Nameless River; Out Of Phase/Spirit World; Sadguru; Simplicity; Solo.* (52:42)

**Personnel**—Haynes, flugelhorn, cornet, keyboards. Tibetan trumpet; Tracie Morris, spoken word; DJ Spazecraft, spoken word, digeridoo; Steve Neil, African harp (2); Joseph Briggs, programming.



## Milt Jackson

**Sa Va Bella**  
**(For Lady Legends)**  
Qwest/Warner Bros. 46607

★★★★

## Cecilia Smith Quartet

**High Standards**  
Brownstone 9609

★★★½

While this is ostensibly Jackson's tribute to such divas as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan—and Etta Jones is most effective in her portrait of Billie—it is also a luscious platform for the pre-eminent vibist to sketch his warm, impressionistic soundscapes.

Those bluesy passages, which are more than incidental to Jackson's palette, are colorfully arrayed on "Send In The Clowns," the Divine One's signature tune, and "Don't Go To Strangers." After Jones' spirited renditions of "Oh, Lady Be Good," Jackson plumbs the depths of "Strangers," leaving such a lyrical smear of pastels that you can almost hear the lingering echo of Jones' voice.

Clinging, too, is the piano solo from Michael LeDonne, and his rhythm and blues tendencies—the snatches of "Mint Julep" that occur on "Strangers" and "Clowns"—invest these moments with earthy, "mo' greens please" authority. When he grafts his brilliant tonal clusters to Jackson's thoughtful meanderings on "Good Morning Heartache," there isn't enough canvas to hold their flurries of imagination. It is not exactly Jackson and John Lewis, but you'll get the point.

Jackson is equally precise and chatty on "What A Difference A Day Made," and behind, underneath and around "You've Changed," where he and Jones are master and mistress of nuance. Jones is almost as slow as Shirley Horn, and Jackson long ago learned the magic of extending a note without annoying. They team to perfection on Dinah Washington's "This Bitter Earth," exchanging impressions on the essence of hurt and souls all at sea. Each of them, like the best of artists, knows intuitively how to arrive at the core of a work, expose its beauty, and then step quickly aside as though they were but a lucky conduit.

No so lucky is Cecilia Smith, who like every other vibist worth his or her mallets, must invariably be compared to the master. Using an

easy calculation and an effortless attack, Smith more than holds her own "high standards," even when the pace is pepped up, as on "Rhythm And Groove." Still, her forte is the ballad, and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" and Ellington's rarely heard "Melancholia" are perfect opportunities for her to display her interpretive skills. Such is particularly the case in the latter instance, where she reveals her way of stretching the tune's dense moodiness. And she is ably abetted on this foray by pianist Frank Wilkins, who knows how to bend or blend a chord to complement Smith's web-like configurations. To think of Kenny Barron is a fair approximation.

While there are other moments of sheer gracefulness, without the presence of guests Billy Pierce and Javon Jackson, things would

## David Murray

### Fo deuk Revue

"Fo deuk" is a question in wolof meaning, "where are you from?" It's also the name of David Murray's intoxicating new recording, recorded in Senegal. From jazz to world to rap, Murray's unique project aims to provide musical answers to questions of cultural identity, tradition, roots and history.

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Craig Harris  
Hugh Ragin  
Darryl Burgee  
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Amiri Baraka

"Every accomplishment I have made in music throughout my life has been a stairway to what I believe to be my most significant achievement: to be the leader of the Fo deuk Revue."  
— David Murray



## Hilario Durán

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Durán is one of the finest Cuban pianists working today. For this, his second Justin Time session, he is joined by percussion legends **Changuito** (timbales) and **Tata Guines** (congas), as well as **Jane Bunnnett** (flute, saxophone) and ten other musicians. If you like real latin jazz, check out this great session, recorded in Havana.

## Billy Bang "Bang On!"

This is the first Billy Bang recording in some time. Joining the violinist are pianist **D.D. Jackson**, drummer **Ronnie Burrage** and bassist **Akira Ando**. In all, a great new session from the master of haunting melodies, always executed with deep, soulful feeling and a bluesy tone.



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never have gotten beyond smooth-but-bland curd, though Smith's heap of gratitude on Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove" shows she can run the metal bars and make a bold statement. "Coming Forth" is a useful springboard for Pierce's saucy insinuations that move in a seamless fashion against a vibrant tempo. His tone has a nice happy quality and he negotiates the intervals with surprising ease and agility. On Bobby Hutcherson's "Highway One," Pierce and Jackson take the curves with lusty abandon, as if they know every sudden turn. Jackson is the most daring, speeding right to the edge of the melodic precipice.

Wish there had been more intensity of the sort drummer Ron Savage brought to the title tune. It's Smith's tribute to one of her mentors, the late Alan Dawson, and Savage's solo is a bristling homage to the master. —Herb Boyd

**Sa Va Bella**—Oh, Lady Be Good; Don't Go To Strangers; Blues For Queen D; You've Changed; What A Difference A Day Made; This Bitter Earth; A-Tisket, A-Tasket; Good Morning Heartache; Send In The Clowns; Sa Va Bella (For Lady Legends). (58:44)

**Personnel**—Jackson, vibraphone; Michael LeDonne, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Mickey Roker, drums; Etta Jones, vocals (1, 4, 6).

**High Standards**—Coming Forth; Soul Eyes; Mourning Before Grace; Destination Home (Goin' Home/Flying Home); Bags' Groove; Highway One; Falling Grace; Rhythm And Groove; I Can't Make You Love Me; Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair; Melancholia; High Standards. (64:05)

**Personnel**—Smith, vibraphone; Frank Wilkins, piano; Steve Kirby, bass; Ron Savage, drums; Billy Pierce (1, 6, 11), Javon Jackson (4, 6), saxophones; Freddie Bryant, guitar (3); Carla Anita Cook, vocalist (3); Mark "Led" Ledford, vocals (3).



## Pat Metheny Group

**Imaginary Day**  
Warner Bros. 46791

★★★★

Even though stretching the boundaries has been only partially successful on the Pat Metheny Group's last couple of albums, the group's latest and 12th CD, *Imaginary Day*, unequivocally triumphs. PMG's distinctive contemporary sound is intact, Metheny and his cohorts—including percussionists Dave Samuels, Mino Cinelu, Don Alias and Glen Velez in addition to Mark Ledford and David Blamires on wordless vocals and various miscellaneous instruments—explore a fresh compositional soundscape flavored with a variety of musical influences ranging from Indonesian gamelan to Iranian folk. Metheny and Mays teamed up to write the bulk of these compelling pieces. They range in style from the enchanting suite-like title

track that evokes the images of an awakening city to "The Roots Of Coincidence," which rocks with a techno throb. This number also features Metheny's serrated guitar work on his new electronic gizmo, the guitar audio workstation VG-8.

Metheny's patented soft-toned electric guitar voicing appears on a couple tracks (including the melodic beauty "A Story Within The Story"), but most of the time he's experimenting with sonics on his acoustic sitar guitar, ukelele-like tiple and guitar synth. Plus, on "Imaginary Day" he unveils his fretless classical guitar, which he plays with bluesy allure. On the gently cascading "Into The Dream" he takes the solo route with his chiming 42-string pikasso guitar, sounding like the inside of a piano being fingerpicked. His guitar versatility also extends to the nylon-string classical, where he applies the light touch to the serene and melancholic ballad "Too Soon Tomorrow."

Other highlights: the invigorating "The Heat Of The Day," a tune that bursts with a flamenco flurry, and the jubilant endsong "The Awakening," rich with a sprightly Irish jig feel. Both numbers exhibit the most developed compositional work of the Metheny/Mays songwriting team. —Dan Ouellette

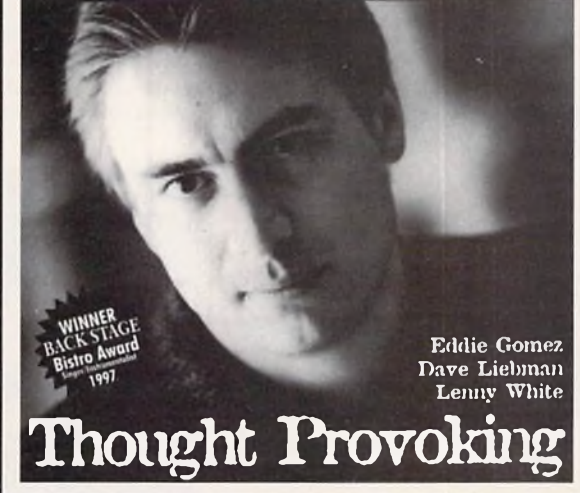
**Imaginary Day**—*Imaginary Day; Follow Me; Into The Dream; A Story Within The Story; The Heat Of The Day; Across The Sky; The Roots Of Coincidence; Too Soon Tomorrow; The Awakening.* (64:37)

**Personnel**—Metheny, acoustic, electric and synth guitars; Lyle Mays, acoustic piano, keyboards; Steve Rodby, acoustic and electric bass, cello; Paul Wertico, drums; Mark Ledford, vocals, trumpet, flugelhorn, megaphone; David Blamires, vocals, melodica, mellophone, violin, megaphone, acoustic-baritone guitar, electric guitar, trumpet; Dave Samuels, Mino Cinelu, Glen Velez, Don Alias, percussion.

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## Ed Palermo Big Band

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## Frank Zappa

Strictly Genteel

Rykodisc 10578

★★★★

**O**n his first Mothers of Invention album, *Freak Out!*, released in 1965, Frank Zappa quoted musical visionary Edgard Varese: "The present day composer refuses to die." Little did FZ know then how prophetic that statement would be after his own death. During his life, Zappa insisted that the rock & roll side of his multifaceted musical career gave him enough economic security to pursue his true love: composing complex postmodern classical music. Shortly before he passed away in 1993, he insisted that he wanted to be remembered most for his "serious" music. Three and a half years later, while some of his pop-music catalog—which is safe in the hands of Rykodisc—feels dated, musically Zappa's instrumental works continue to sound fresh, challenging and intriguingly adventurous.

Shortly before his death, there was a scattering of attention to his oddly titled contemporary orchestral works. Zappa was pleased to report that the president's own U.S. Marine Corps Band in Fairfax, Va., had requested the score of "Dog Breath Variations" and the Connecticut-based dance group Iso was granted permission to choreograph a performance based on *The Grand Wazoo*. Two new CDs foster further recognition and celebration of FZ's prowess as a composer. Big band leader Ed Palermo applies his remarkable arranging touch to the iconoclastic maestro's instrumentals on the appropriately titled *Big Band Zappa*, and *Strictly Genteel*, a superb collection of his works for orchestra.

In the liner notes to his project, Palermo thanks his cohorts (an orchestra with full woodwinds, brass and rhythm sections as well as several special guest soloists) for their talent and enthusiasm by noting, "Folks, this Zappa stuff ain't easy, but my band mastered all of it." Palermo takes on the FZ challenge as he leads his orchestra through the twists and turns of such well-known works as "Peaches In Regalia," "King Kong" and "Heavy Duty Judy."

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Palermo's arrangements do justice to FZ's compositions, accentuating their musical sophistication as well as amplifying their humor, grace, whimsy and passion. While Zappa's music is characterized in stretches by dense polyrhythms, atonal melodic lines and odd time signatures, Palermo and crew sail through without sinking. Guitarist Mike Stern and tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer turn in noteworthy solo performances on the spirited, funk- and reggae-inflected "We Are Not Alone" and the swinging "Toads Of The Short Forest," respectively. A couple short non-Zappa works, including the fun "Finale From Carnival Of The Animals" (written by Camille Saint Saens) and Palermo's own quirky coda, "wai, fu?" fill out the collection well.

*Strictly Genteel* is anything but. Sure, it's

devoid of Zappa's oftentimes crass lyrics, but the composer is not offering tunes for polite parlour parties. Once a rebel, always a rebel. There are surprises around every bend as FZ's dissonant, whimsical and haunting music gets taken for a spin by the Synclavier-wielding composer himself as well as such renowned classical institutions as the London Symphony Orchestra and Ensemble Modern. While the material is angular in stretches (e.g., "Pedro's Dowry"), Zappa also wrote with a lyrical flair ("Outrage At Valdez"). Several pieces here, including "Regyptian Strut" and the title track, have an orchestral majesty about them. Then, to break the musical flow, there's the bizarre outer-space radio-signal noise of "Dwarf Nebula Processional March & Dwarf Nebula." The whirlwind fusion tune "G-Spot Tornado"

(from Zappa's Grammy-winning, Synclavier-driven *Jazz From Hell* album) sounds a little dated, but his most fully realized works (including "Dupree's Paradise," "Bob In Dacron" and "Dog Breath Variations") as heard here are destined to be classics. This CD introduction to the classical FZ will help to usher in a wider appreciation of how important and gifted Zappa the composer truly was.

—Dan Ouellette

**Big Band Zappa**—*Peaches En Raglia; Toads Of The Short Forest; Who Are The Brain Police?/Holiday In Berlin (Excerpt); Twenty Small Cigars; King Kong; Aybe Sea/Inca Roads (Excerpt); Waka Jawaka/Son Of Orange County (Excerpt); Heavy Duty Judy/Grand Wazoo (Excerpt); Finale From Carnival Of The Animals; We Are Not Alone; wai, fu? (60:49)*

**Personnel**—Palermo, alto sax, guitar; Mike Keneally, Mike Stern, electric guitars; Dave Samuels, vibes; Bob Mintzer, Chris Potter, tenor saxophones; Cliff Lyons, flute, clarinet, alto sax; Phil Chester, piccolo, flute, soprano sax, alto sax; Chuck Fisher, flute, clarinet, tenor sax; Jeff Lederer, flute, tenor sax; Al Hunt, piccolo, flute, oboe, soprano sax, baritone sax, bass clarinet; Liesl Whitaker, Jami Dauber, Ronny Buttacavoli, trumpets; Jeff Holmes, trumpet, piccolo trumpet; Dan Levine, Dale Kirkland, trombones; Jack Schatz, bass trombone; Bob Quaranta, piano; Ted Kooshian, harpsichord, organ, synthesizer; Paul Adamy, electric bass; Ray Marchica, drums.

**Strictly Genteel**—*Uncle Meat; Main Title Theme; Regyptian Strut; Pedro's Dowry; Outrage At Valdez; Little Umbrellas; Run Home Slow Theme; Dwarf Nebula Processional March & Dwarf Nebula; Dupree's Paradise; Opus 1, No. 3, 2nd Movement, PRESTO; Duke Of Prunes; Aybe Sea; Naval Aviation In Art?; G-Spot Tornado; Bob In Dacron, First Movement; Opus 1, No. 4, 2nd Movement ALLEGRO; Dog Breath Variations; Uncle Meat; Strictly Genteel. (67:05)*

**Personnel**—Various artists, including Zappa. London Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Modern.

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## Michael Mason

Exploration  
Southport 0042

★★★½

Aside from multi-reedists who've incorporated the instrument in their arsenal, there have been surprisingly few jazz flutists to emerge since the ascendancy of James Newton. Chicagoan Michael Mason has stepped into this void, and his cool *Exploration* disc is an encouraging sign for the future of this woodwind.

Like Newton, Mason has an affinity for deep breaths that ostensibly convey gentleness, but gradually build into a real feeling of force. He also does not shy away from challenging multiphonics. These effects allow Mason to take on, and then rise above, the beat on "Rain Forest" without sailing off into a listless new-age ether. And with two basses, a percussionist and a

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drummer, on "Thought," there are some pronounced beats to engage. Mason is also an effective composer who graciously credits his collaborators for turning works of collective improvisation, "Jah" and "Peace For Any Nation," into finely structured tunes.

Mason chooses his colleagues exceptionally well, as he has recruited many of the impressive, but under-recorded, members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians for *Exploration*. Pianist Kirk Brown, who appears on almost every track, is an especially suitable accompanist for Mason. Brown's rolling figures match the flutist's leap on "Oppression," and he also sets up a provocative contrast with the leader using just a few carefully chosen notes from the lower register of the keyboard on "Rain Forest." Steve Berry, who also plays trombone in the AACM-band New Horizons Ensemble, provides a welcome brass/wood counterweight. Percussionist Aras Biskis adds Afrocentric syncopation, which is a sound that Newton has also investigated.

While Mason's environmental consciousness is admirable, I could have lived quite contentedly without having gazed at the close up of his bare feet on the disc's back-cover photo.

—Aaron Cohen

**Exploration**—*Oppression; Jah; Your Love; Peace For Any Nation; Twilight; Interlude #5; Thought; Rain Forest.* (66:33)

**Personnel**—Mason, flute; Harrison Bankhead (1, 3, 7), Yosef Ben Israel (3, 7), Thaddeus Expose (5, 8), bass; Avreeayl Ra, drums (1, 3, 7); Aras Biskis, percussion; Kirk Brown, piano; Steve Berry, trombone; Michael Raynor, drums, percussion (4-6, 8).



## Billy Taylor Trio

### Music Keeps Us Young

Arkadia Jazz 71601

★★★★

With spring training in baseball and new labels in jazz, hope springs eternal. Arkadia is a brand new name on the street, and on the evidence of *Music Keeps Us Young*, it could become an impact player. The presentation is first-class, with a four-color fold-out insert full of photos and documentation including insightful liner notes by Ira Gitler. The sound by engineer David Baker beautifully recreates the space in which the recording was made: Emelin Theatre in Mamaroneck, N.Y., well-chosen for its "acoustics and feeling of intimacy."

The civilized, articulate music of Billy Taylor deserves all of Arkadia's T.L.C. Taylor is one of America's best-known, most-respected ambas-

sadors for jazz through his work as an educator, deejay, author and television/radio commentator. But, for over half a century, his numerous day gigs have never interfered with his primary occupation of pianism.

*Music Keeps Us Young* features his synchronized working trio with Chip Jackson and Steve Johns. Taylor says, "I just called some tunes and we recorded them," but the album possesses a careful balance, a finished quality, that belies this modest description. There are five Taylor originals, three jazz staples and three standards. Taylor's own pieces are mostly decades old but they still work, especially the stately "Ballade" and the finely spun "Interlude."

The surface of Taylor's music is so sophisti-

cated, with its closely voiced chord sonorities and its fleet, elegantly shaped right-hand lines, that at first you might miss the underlying substance. His ideas about these 11 songs are always intriguing. "Body And Soul" opens with a dark *a capella* chorus played entirely with the left hand and then opens up to address all of the song's corporal and spiritual implications. Jackson, an underappreciated bassist, takes an ultra-quick solo held within the slow tempo by Taylor's measured comping. Jackson's role on Coltrane's "Naima" is also unexpected, his insistent, dancing figures pushing the song past its usual pensiveness to a Latinist thrust.

—Thomas Conrad

**Music Keeps Us Young**—*Wouldn't It Be Lovely; Lover Come Back To Me; I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be*

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Free; Body And Soul; One For The Woofer; Ballade; Naima; Up Jumped Spring; Caravan; Interlude; Arkadia Blues. (66:51)

**Personnel**—Taylor, piano; Chip Jackson, bass; Steve Johns, drums.



## James Blood Ulmer

### Music Speaks Louder Than Words

Koch Jazz 3-7833

★★★★

**F**orty years ago Ornette Coleman included "The Sphinx" on his *Something Else!* album, noting that the tune "stood for something which has been here for a long time." On guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer's own dauntless rendition, the "The" from the title is dropped to focus on the timelessness, seemingly, of the

Prime Time master's music. Six compositions tribute Coleman.

Ulmer leads off with Coleman's signature tune, "Lonely Woman." Ulmer's lyrical cast to the melody recalls its residual beauty. At an early juncture, bassist Calvin Jones bows extending the chords, then, advancing into the tune, echoes the syllabic notes in Ulmer's phrases. Throughout, drummer Rashied Ali ably rarefies the rhythms with a cymbal patter sounding pleasingly more wooden than brassy. Among other Coleman compositions are "Elizabeth," "Street News" and "Cherry Cherry." For "Skies Of America," Ulmer washes the anthem-like tonalities with his own somber soulfulness by striking bluesy single-note figures that hover over the scouring brushwork of Ali.

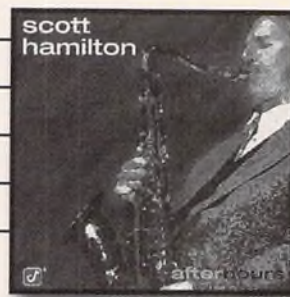
Three other compositions written by Ulmer feature youngbloods and even progeny—Ali's son Amin on electric bass locks into the bigfoot sock hefted by Aubrey Dayle on drums. On keyboards, Ulmer's son Michael Mustafa adds to the rockin' blues clip that's basic to "Dance In The Dark—Music Is My Life" and "I Can't Take It Anymore." Then there's the almost indecipherable rap. The younger Ulmer and Dayle lob a heavy funk beat against Ulmer's dusky voice. The "hip-hop bebop harmolodic" ad gets further shortchanged since there are no transcriptions for the liners—on this album, nothing more than credits and a wide angle of the cover photo. Well, the name of the album says it in this tribute to Ulmer's harmolodic roots.

—Zoë Anglesey

**Music Speaks Louder Than Words**—*Lonely Woman; Elizabeth; Sphinx; Dance In The Dark*—*Music Is My Life;*

*Cherry Cherry; I Can't Take Anymore; Street News; Skies Of America; Rap Man.* (58:38)

**Personnel**—Ulmer, guitar, vocals; Michael Mustafa Ulmer, keyboards; Calvin Jones, acoustic bass; Amin Ali, electric bass; Aubrey Dayle, Rashied Ali, drums.



## Scott Hamilton

After Hours

Concord Jazz 4755

★★★★

**S**cott Hamilton's first Concord recording appeared in 1977, when he was 22. Over the past 20 years, his music has grown deeper and more confident within his destined milieu, but he has mostly played with second-echelon sidemen. The rhythm section on *After Hours* is news because it is the strongest of Hamilton's career. The presence of Tommy Flanagan's piano elevates the level

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of discourse, completing the space around Hamilton's flowing lines with clusters of lyrical intelligence. The upright electric bass of Bob Cranshaw and the drums of Lewis Nash subtly interact to hone an urgent edge to this mellow music.

Occasionally his material is dated beyond reach ("Bye Bye Blues"). But more often Hamilton's reason for choosing a song makes itself apparent in the elegant logic with which he extends it. "Some Other Spring" arrives at its resolutions with graceful inevitability. "What's New" starts with Hamilton's voluptuous, lingering whisper, and then Flanagan's slow ascent provides a dignified summation. "How Am I To Know" and Benny Carter's "Blues In My Heart" are persuasive, fully realized wholes that transcend narrow issues of style.

The sonic quality of *After Hours* is appropriate for an artist who can be enjoyed on one level purely as sensual stimulus. The human intimacy of Hamilton's tenor saxophone sound contains strong assurances that life is worth living.

The continuity and consistency of Scott Hamilton's unusual career has made it too easy to take him for granted. *After Hours* is an excellent place to rediscover that he is one of the most reliable improvisers in jazz.

—Thomas Conrad

**After Hours**—*Beyond The Bluebird; Woody 'n You; Blues In My Heart; Bye Bye Blues; What's New; You're Not The Kind; Black Velvet (Don' Cha Go Away Mad); How Am I To Know; Some Other Spring; Steeplechase.* (65:03)

**Personnel**—Hamilton, tenor saxophone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.



## Chris Potter

**Unspoken**  
Concord Jazz 4775

★★★★

## Renee Rosnes

**As We Are Now**  
EMI Music Canada/Blue Note  
56810

★★★★

**T**hese recordings contain the latest, strongest work from two of the brightest lights in jazz. On Renee Rosnes' *As We Are Now*, Chris Potter appears in his familiar role of featured sideman. *Unspoken* displays Potter's growth as a leader and composer.

At least since 1992, when Potter made a record with Red Rodney called *Then and Now*, it has been apparent that he is something special. His revisitation of Stan Getz's famous 1948 solo on "Early Autumn," with his confident command over both the song's sophisticated harmonic movement and its wounded postwar spirit, was a startling achievement for a 21-year-old.

Potter, now 26, plays saxophones (mostly tenor) with a forthright, dead-center tone, and always sounds like he is inventing. His work is remarkably free of chichés and default licks, and his boundless chops let the listener just sit back and relax. These virtues have made him a popular sideman (Marian McPartland, Mingus Big Band, Steve Millon, Bill Warfield, et al.). He has also recorded five albums on Concord Jazz under his own name.

But he has never before led a band as powerful as the one on *Unspoken*. John Scofield's guitar sound keeps evolving (there's now less hazy rasp, more snap and twang), and he pushes Potter hard. Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette are as proactive as rhythm sections get and still leave spaces. Their synergy makes loose, roiling, implacable momentum. For the first time, the tunes are all Potter's, and they are like his improvisations: daring yet precise, with clean edges and unexpected implications. "Amsterdam Blues" is a snaking line, atypical for the 12-bar genre yet authentic. "Seven Eleven" is based on uncommon rhythmic patterns, but it smokes. "Time Zone" provokes a wild out-of-tempo tenor/guitar duo and a monumental essay on time from DeJohnette. The title track is the most person-

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al piece, a slow rumination about the wordless emotional language of music.

Rosnes has worked for major people like Wynton Marsalis, J.J. Johnson, Joe Henderson and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. Like Potter's session, *As We Are Now* is her fifth recording as a leader; also like *Unspoken*, it presents her most formidable supporting cast ever. The differences between the two albums are the substitution of the Rosnes piano for the Scofield guitar, Christian McBride for Dave Holland on bass and Rosnes' tunes for Potter's. The changes create lush, denser textures, but with comparable high levels of interactive ensemble intelligence, and a similar sense of hardness and freshness in the ideas.

For all her erudite musical independence

and her assertive touch at the keyboard, Rosnes is first a romantic impressionist. Like one of her inspirations, Georgia O'Keefe (for whom she wrote the in-depth exploration of tonal color, "Abstraction Blue"), she often evolves form through repetitions that are really finely shaded, harmonious variations.

So many players want Chris Potter with them on their projects because of the consistency of his creativity in the studio and because of his intuitive grasp of the leader's concepts. His contributions to *As We Are Now* are crisp and telling every time. On "The Land Of Five Rivers," his streaming soprano saxophone is perfect for the theme: the yearlong flow of five rivers in the northern province of Punjab from which Rosnes' ancestors emigrat-

ed to Canada. Potter's improvisations add entire new rooms onto Rosnes' elaborate compositional architectures (e.g., "Black Holes").

Potter lays out on three songs, and the fact that the transitions in and out of them feel seamless shows that Rosnes' sensibility sets the tone of *As We Are Now*, Potter's high-profile presence notwithstanding. The title track is one of the trio pieces, a finely spun meditation about improvised music. (Life in the moment is not less valuable because it is transitory.) Another memorable trio performance is Tony Williams' "Pee Wee." Williams died two weeks before her album was recorded, and Rosnes felt compelled to pay homage. The tensile strength of her lines is a fitting tribute to a towering drummer.

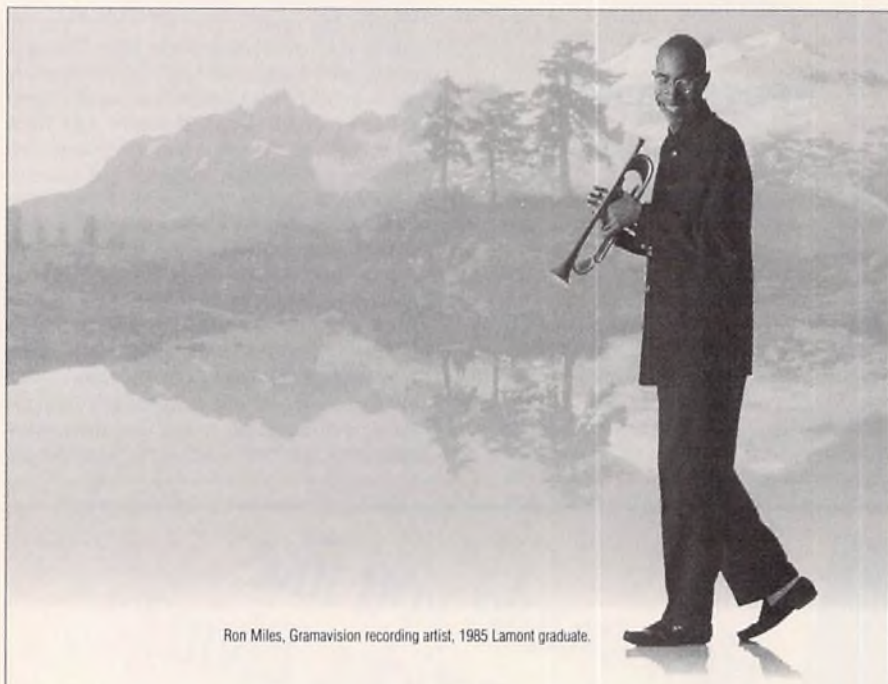
Chris Potter and Renee Rosnes are not merely "promising." Their music must be heard now. —Thomas Conrad

**Unspoken**—Wistful; Seven Eleven; Hieroglyph; Amsterdam Blues; Et Tu, Bruté; Unspoken; No Cigar; Time Zone; New Vision. (65:16)

**Personnel**—Potter, tenor and soprano (3) saxophones; John Scofield, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

**As We Are Now**—Black Holes; The Land Of Five Rivers; Abstraction Blue; Mizmahta; Non-Fiction; Bulldog's Chicken Run; As We Are Now; Absinthe; Pee Wee. (60:09)

**Personnel**—Rosnes, piano; Chris Potter, tenor and soprano (2) saxophones; Christian McBride, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.



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## Dino Saluzzi

Cité De La Musique  
ECM 21616

★★★★

**A**rgentine bandoneon master Dino Saluzzi gives voice to the mystery of passion on his latest (and sixth) ECM recording, *Cité De La Musique*. The mood overall is quiet and pensive, but what keeps Saluzzi's music from drifting into the realm of soothing background music are his no-doze swells of rapture. On this outing, Saluzzi commands attentive listening with a collection of pieces that strike deep emotional chords. With simpatico and subservient trio mates acoustic guitarist José M. Saluzzi, his son, and acoustic bassist Marc Johnson, Saluzzi wends his way into a reflective and celebrative musical landscape informed by jazz, classical, nuevo tango and South American folk music influences.

The bandoneon, a diatonic button accordion invented in Germany, was imported into Argentina in the late 19th century and became closely associated with the rise of tango

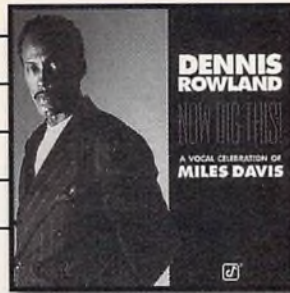


Argentino. However, the instrument's original function was to serve as an organ substitute in small churches. In Saluzzi's hands, the bandoneon oftentimes takes on the harmonic qualities of a cathedral pipe organ, most notably on the moving "Introducción Y Milonga Del Ausente" and the nostalgic "Coral Para Mi Pequeño Y Lejano Pueblo," which both include sections of rich sustained chords played with a drone-like sensibility. But with his bandoneon Saluzzi also sings lyrical melody lines (on the voluptuous "How My Heart Sings," the only cover on the CD), conjures up ebb-and-flow rhythms (the brisk and playful "El Río Y El Abuelo"), paints abstract soundscapes (the desolate, solemn and eventually joyous "Winter") and tells evocative stories (the beautiful title cut with its dawn-to-dusk images of a sleeping, then bustling, metropolis).

Other highlights include "Gorrión," Saluzzi's stunning solo tribute to French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, and "Zurdo," which opens on an ominous note with Johnson's dark arco playing, then lightens with the younger Saluzzi's uplifting finger-picked melody. But it's the elder Saluzzi's intuitive genius for playing with impeccable integrity of emotion that recommends *Cité De La Musique*, which should be required listening for lite jazz cats aspiring to break through superficialities and play truly enrapturing music. —Dan Ouellette

**Cité De La Musique**—*Cité De La Musique; Introducción Y Milonga Del Ausente; El Río Y El Abuelo; Zurdo; Romance; Winter; How My Heart Sings; Gorrión; Coral Para Mi Pequeño Y Lejano Pueblo.* (60:26)

**Personnel**—Saluzzi, bandoneon; Marc Johnson, double-bass; José M. Saluzzi, acoustic guitar.



## Dennis Rowland

**Now Dig This!—  
A Vocal Celebration  
Of Miles Davis**  
Concord Jazz 4751

★★★★

**T**ributes to the music of Miles Davis have become almost common in recent years. What is surprising, though—and quite remarkable—is that the famed trumpeter is now celebrated by a vocalist. Unlike the other nods to the greats, where the musicians' compositions are dutifully reprised, Dennis Rowland's

approach is more interpretative than actually performing Davis' music—only "All Blues" and "Pfrancing (No Blues)" are his tunes on *Now Dig This!* And this interpretative mode works exceedingly well. Rowland's renditions of tunes associated with the trumpeter, "Round Midnight," "My Ship" and "I Could Write A Book" are warmly evocative, capturing Davis' dark, brooding romanticism.

Rowland, we should also note, has plenty of competent help in this task, most rewardingly from trumpeters Wallace Roney and Sal Marquez, and pianist Joe Sample. Even bassist Chuck Berghofer deserves more than passing praise. Notice that large, luscious opening note he drops on "My Ship," which Rowland follows flawlessly, enriching the tone with deeper layers of his own special brand of velvet and honey.

Since he emerged years ago in Detroit with a voice bold and bluesy enough to grab the baton from Joe Williams, Rowland has grown in several distinct ways. He has refined his articulation, improved his timing and, more than anything, acquired the confidence that comes with maturity. These attributes are finely wrought on Bobby Troup's "The Meaning Of The Blues," and this could very well be Rowland's signature song.

There is nary a misstep on this project. The selection of tunes are perfect for Rowland's increasingly expansive vocal range, one that reaches an incredible depth on "I Could Write A Book." Moreover, Rowland's venture here is bouyed beautifully throughout by the sensitive interplay he enjoys with Sample. On "Easy

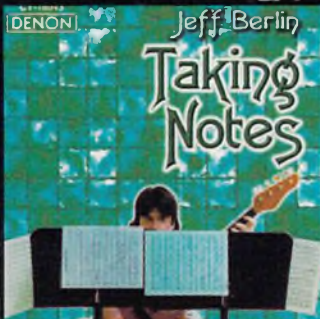


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COMPOSITION

Denon Records/Savoy Jazz  
Fall 1997

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### Ann Hampton Callaway

A survey with Singer Ann Hampton Callaway, the legendary Kenny

Barron on piano, bassist Jay Leonhart & friends on the art of classically intimate vocal Jazz improvisation. Examples include standards "My Funny Valentine" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me" and contemporary hits "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and "Time After Time". Ann's vocal tribute to Miles Davis' ("All Blues"), a personal and timeless interpretation, exemplifies her distinct musicianship.

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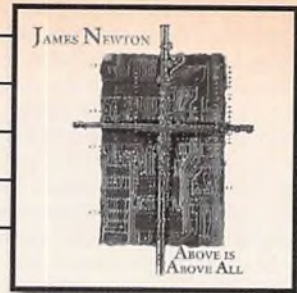
Living," Sample at first suggests melodic paths and then trails behind Rowland, extending the singer's "you," making the living seem even easier.

"With jam and spice there's a paradise in the hold," Rowland croons on "My Ship." *Now Dig This!* is laden throughout with some of the same precious cargo.

—Herb Boyd

**Now Dig This!**—All Blues; My Ship; I Could Write A Book; Easy Living; Someday My Prince Will Come; Round Midnight; You Don't Know What Love Is; Pfrancing (No Blues); The Meaning Of The Blues/Lament. (58:57)

**Personnel**—Rowland, vocals; Joe Sample, piano; Wallace Roney, Sal Marquez, trumpet; Terry Harrington, tenor saxophone; Chuck Berghofer, bass; Gregg Field, drums.



## James Newton

**Above Is Above All**  
Contour 926

★★★

## Andrew Cyrille Trio

**Good To Go**  
Soul Note 121292

★★★★

## Anthony Davis/ James Newton Quartet

**Hidden Voices**  
India Navigation 1041

★★★★½

**A**bove Is Above All breaks away from Newton's entire discography to explore carefully crafted electronic orchestrations with rhythm very much in the forefront. Apart from flute solos on just four tracks, samplers and synthesizers generate all of the sounds heard on the album. The closest parallels might be Herbie Hancock's electronic work, Marcus Miller's synth arrangements for Miles Davis' *Tutu* and *Siesta* projects, or, perhaps, Frank Zappa's synthesizer compositions on *Jazz From Hell*.

Describing this risky, ambitious project in *Down Beat* (see "Tradin' Fours" June '97), Newton fully expected to shock listeners with these detailed, rhythm-oriented electronic soundscapes. "African Cyborg" and "Jeannelle's Dream" offer choppy, hip-hop influenced beats and complex rhythms, but little melodic development. Newton's five-part "Gumbo Ya Ya" dance suite features many of the CD's highlights, with aggressive polyrhythms on the complex, somewhat turbulent "Senegalese Dance" in addition to a contemplative flute solo over rippling electronics on "Safe Harbor."

Newton's liner notes describe inspirations as diverse as Hendrix, Fillmore-era Miles and Salif Keita, and refer to attempting an African approach to the synthesizer. *Above Is Above All* rates high marks for its ambitions and conception, but lesser grades for its ability to engage the listener. Newton hasn't solved the problem of making electronic drums sound human, much less African. The cold digital sounds and robotic beats of Newton's synthesizers can be inaccessible and off-putting, and more integra-

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tion of acoustic instruments, particularly percussion, would surely have helped. (Contour Records: P.O. Box 59057, Philadelphia PA 19102)

Andrew Cyrille's only recorded with Newton for a short time, including their work in the fine quintet co-led by Newton and David Murray, and on Cyrille's *X-Man* (Soul Note, 1995). But the flutist is well-suited to the drummer's democratic, no-nonsense trio. Striking the ideal balance between structure and freedom, Cyrille offers Newton and bassist Lisle Atkinson plenty of opportunities to shine. Newton is in peak form, deploying his full array of "extended technique" devices, including multiphonics and vocalizing through the flute. Atkinson is a pleasant surprise on this CD. I'd sooner expect to hear him with the likes of Benny Carter, but he meshes beautifully with Cyrille and solos very effectively.

Two takes of "A Tribute To Bu" bookend Cyrille's *Good To Go*. I've never before thought of Cyrille as a Blakey-influenced drummer, but his intros to "Tribute" in particular are exhilarating, polyrhythmic showpieces. He shifts into overdrive here, packing his solos with rolls, fills and constant action, but retaining a highly musical, African sensibility. Newton's "Oblong" evokes the sound of Mingus and Dolph, with "shouting," exuberant soloing by the flutist and cheerfully swinging accompaniment by Atkinson. Newton plays with great tenderness on "Enter From The East," performed as a slow, graceful elegy for its composer, clarinetist John Carter. The CD is another well-crafted, very enjoyable "sleeper" from Andrew Cyrille.

*Hidden Voices* reissues a long-lost 1980 session from a quartet co-led by Newton and pianist Anthony Davis. This is among the earliest recordings by either man, and the date offers an interesting preview of things to come. Newton's "Forever Charles" is a joyful Mingus tribute, with some fine interplay between Newton and guest trombonist George Lewis, an unusually romantic, decorative piano solo by Davis and solid bass work by the nearly forgotten Rick Rozie. The track looks ahead to Newton's later, Mingus-inspired *Rhythm And Revolution* album for Blue Note. Davis' "Past Lives" has an open structure, with Newton demonstrating his distinctive, post-Dolph approach to the flute before joining in conversation with piano, cymbals and arco bass. The piece suggests the improvisatory jazz/new-music hybrids Davis and Newton would later explore in their trio with cellist Abdul Wadud. Other tracks take shape slowly (if at all) and there's a sense of experimentation throughout the album.

*Hidden Voices* is an intriguing reminder of a period when a cadre of young, creative players emerged together, only to be inundated by the '80s wave of neotraditionalism. —Jon Andrews

**Above Is Above All**—*Entre La Mascara Y El Cielo*; *Jeannelle's Dream*; *Above Is Above All*; *African Cyborg*; *Gumbo Ya Ya*; *Prelude*; *Senegalese Dance*; *Safe Harbor*; *Finale (Part 1)*; *Finale (Part 2)*; *The Floor On Up From Where?*; *Baboyé (Part 1)*. (57:53)  
**Personnel**—Newton, flute (3, 7-9), synthesizers, programming; Pedro Eustache, flute (3), synthesizers (11); Les Coulter, guitar synthesizer (2, 4); Thomas Stones III, programming (6-9).

**Good To Go**—*A Tribute To Bu (take 1)*; *Oblong*; *Enter From The East*; *Inch Worm*; *Nicodemus*; *Aftermath*; *Hit It*; *Olmecas*; *Good To Go*; *A Tribute To Bu (take 2)*. (67:45)  
**Personnel**—Cyrille, drums; James Newton, flute; Lisle Atkinson, bass.

**Hidden Voices**—*Forever Charles*; *Past Lives*; *Crystal Texts Set 1*. *Pre-a Reflection*; *Hocket In The Pocket*; *Sudden Death*. (40:58)  
**Personnel**—Davis, piano; Newton, flute; Rick Rozie, bass; Pheeroan AkLaff, drums; George Lewis, trombone (1, 3, 5).

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# JAZZ

## Jazz Tributaries

by Dan Ouellette

**T**he time-honored jazz tradition of paying homage to elders and mentors continues to account for a hefty load of new releases. It's always risky business, especially if the interpretations fall short of the mark, but the potential for success is greatly enhanced if the spirit of the tributee can be tapped. This batch celebrates a range of artists from jazz titans to the relatively obscure.

**James Moody: *Moody Plays Mancini* (Warner Bros. 46626; 53:46; ★★★)**

Compared to more adventurous covers of Henry Mancini music in recent years, Moody's mainstream jazz collection honoring the film composer is pretty tame. But he sounds in great shape swinging on flute through the indelible "The Pink Panther" theme and blowing gleeful soprano saxophone lines on "Charade." On the catchy, funk-tinged rendition of "Silver Streak," Gil Goldstein, who arranged the numbers and co-produced the CD, stars on organ. Most intriguing arrangement of the pack: the flute-and-accordion take on "Soldier In The Rain." Moody's soulfully delivered but flat vocals recharge "(I Love You And) Don't You Forget It" but blemish "Moon River."

**John Basile Quartet: *The Desmond Project* (Chesky 156; 58:42; ★★★½)**

Smooth-toned electric guitarist Basile helms this pleasing straightahead outing that not only pays tribute to alto saxophonist Paul Desmond but also to his guitar collaborators Jim Hall and Ed Bickert. Playing in perfect sync with alto saxophonist Allen Mezquida, Basile delivers this relaxed, coolly swinging, drum-brushed set of lyrical beauties that Desmond played in the '60s and '70s. Basile tweaks the tunes to regenerate them. "Darn That Dream" becomes an alluring waltz, "My Funny Valentine" is polished with a new arrangement and a tango-inflected, sax-less spin on "Take Five" blooms as a guitar treat.

**Dee Dee Bridgewater: *Dear Ella* (Verve 537 896; 59:09; ★★★)**

Using veteran Ella Fitzgerald sidemen bassist Ray Brown and pianist Lou Levy as the musical backbone of this tribute, expatriate Bridgewater heralds the First Lady of Song with an, at turns, exquisite and exuberant collection of her hits. Included are a feisty big-band charge into "Undecided," a lush rendition of "Mr. Paganini" that blossoms into a swinging fete, and sumptuous readings of "My Heat Belongs To Daddy" and "Stairway To The Stars." The arrangements throughout are top-notch, the support team excellent

and Bridgewater sings and scats with a rhapsodic gusto that lovingly gives Fitzgerald her due. The CD's only weakness: the too-precious Kenny Burrell title track.

**Dominique Eade: *When The Wind Was Cool: The Songs Of Chris Connor & June Christy* (RCA Victor 8858; 54:51; ★★★½)**

Eade celebrates '40s and '50s Stan Kenton vocalists June Christy and Chris Connor with her impressive debut RCA Victor disc (and third overall). With a satisfying mix of touching ballads and rippling upbeat tunes covered by the two female singers, Eade turns in an exceptional performance that displays her fluid, full-bodied voice, appealing phrasing and ebullient scatting. She scores with an exotic swing through the catchy "Moon Rays," an invigorating romp through "Riding High" and the gem of the package, "Goodbye," with Benny Golson caressing Eade's impassioned vocal lines with tenor sax beauty.

**Muhai Richard Abrams/Barry Harris: *Interpretations Of Monk, Vol. 1* (Koch Jazz 7838; 50:21/52:24; ★★★)**

In the midst of the proliferation of Monk tributes celebrating his 80th birthday, this excellent double CD, recorded in 1981 at Columbia University's Wollman Auditorium while the iconoclastic genius composer was still alive, finally gets its belated domestic release. The lineup alone is worth the price of admission: Monk's tenor saxophone cohort Charlie Rouse, Thelonious scholar/soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, trumpeter Don Cherry, trombonist Roswell Rudd, bassist Richard Davis and drummers Ben Riley and Ed Blackwell. The piano chairs are ably filled by Abrams in the first set and Harris in the second. Each contributes superb solo pieces, "Crepuscle With Nellie" and "Ruby, My Dear," respectively. Showstopper is Lacy's delightful solo rendition of "Gallop's Gallop." The sets (the first is stronger overall) are festive, jubilant and reverent with ample evidence of Monk's whimsy.

**Andy LaVerne Quartet: *Four Miles* (Triloka 314 536 186; 70:13; ★★★)**

Pianist LaVerne takes liberties with the tribute concept on his fine outing in remembrance of Miles Davis. He and his impressive quartet (his longtime rhythm team George Mraz and Al Foster augmented by trumpet/flugelhorn ace Randy Brecker) render repertoire associated with Davis (including a sprightly rendition of "On Green Dolphin Street" but, inexplicably, only one of his originals, "All Blues"). They also perform tunes written by personnel associated with him (e.g., Herbie Hancock and Horace Silver). The biggest conceptual stretch, "When You Wish Upon A Star"



"The Pink Panther" swings again, thanks to James Moody

(included, according to LaVerne, because "one could easily imagine a Miles and Bill [Evans] collaboration on this tune"), also proves to be a highlight. LaVerne plays with relaxed lyricism and expressive elegance throughout.

**Jean-Yves Thibaudet: *Conversations With Bill Evans* (London 455 512; 60:40; ★★★)**

With the market saturated with Bill Evans boxed sets, it would be easy to overlook classical pianist Thibaudet's remarkable solo homage to him. A longtime Evans fan, Thibaudet gracefully delivers an intimate and passionate performance. The overall tone is hushed reverence and lowlights reverie as Thibaudet blends the romantic with the reflective and subtle majesty with stark simplicity. He plays into the soul of these tunes, musing through "Here's That Rainy Day" with shades of melancholy and glimmers of frolic and dazzle, and deepening "Your Story" with dramatic dynamics. Evans' original "Turn Out The Stars," which Thibaudet regularly performs as an encore at his classical recitals, is treated to an exquisite read.

**Roseanna Vitro: *Catchin' Some Rays: The Music Of Ray Charles* (Telarc 83419; 61:00; ★★★½)**

Can't touch Ray Charles if there's no soul in the delivery. That's nothing vocalist Vitro has to worry about as she dips deeply into the bluesy zone to triumphantly hail Brother Ray. His classic tunes provide the vehicle for Vitro to showcase her superb vocal talent on this ambitious, well-conceived project. Along for the ride are several excellent sidemen, including pianist/arranger Ken Werner, percussionist Mino Cinelu, trumpeter Eddie Henderson and tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman. Thumbs up for Vitro enlisting a string section instead of settling for synth shimmers on two ballads and for dishing up tasty servings of "One Mint Julep" and "Lonely Avenue." **DB**



# REISSUES

## The Lennie Line

by John Corbett

Half a decade after the Lennie Tristano Sextet recorded a small batch of groundbreaking tracks for Capitol in 1949, Lennie's penies rained down from heaven onto Atlantic Records during an exciting run from 1955 to 1958. In his initial Capitol recordings, which included the mind-melded frontline of saxophonists Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz, Tristano put forth an absolutely personal, dazzlingly virtuosic, outrageously rich new take on the bebop tradition, especially as epitomized by Charlie Parker. Present were Bird's blitzy speed and monstrously creative linearity, two elements coupled in bop's hallmark reductive elegance. But what gave Lennie and the Tristanoites their special sound was an intensification of contrapuntalism, above and beyond the monophonic or unison tendencies of straight bebop, as well as a deep look back into the phraseology of Lester Young—the subtle, gentile but oh-so-rhythmically advanced force pursued by many leading lights of the later so-called “cool” and West Coast movements.

**The Complete Atlantic Recordings Of Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz & Warne Marsh (Mosaic 174; 66:37/68:13/53:33/61:05/67:06/68:16: ★★★★★)**

A much-anticipated release, this six-CD package includes some recently available material, some that's been out of print or available only in Japan for many years as well as four previously unreleased tracks. The coupling of Tristano's work for Atlantic with the work that Konitz and Marsh did independent of him is simply a great idea. Sure, it's label-specific, so there's a selection process that's not exclusively musical. For the full picture, it's advisable to augment the box with items like the recently reissued *Intuition* (Capitol)—which includes both the '49 Tristano sides and Warne Marsh's *Jazz Of Two Cities*, a '56 date featuring the unfairly underacknowledged tenor Ted Brown—and, from a bit later, the excellent Konitz/Marsh outing *Live At The Half Note*, issued complete as a two-disc set by Verve three years ago. But over the course of Mosaic's six discs, a great deal is revealed about the mature version of the intricate working concept that Tristano developed and his devotees promoted and personalized.

Two full discs are dedicated to five sets from one 1955 live concert in the Sing Song Room of New York's Confucius Restaurant. The band is a quartet with Tristano and Konitz accompanied by Gene Ramey on bass and Art Taylor on drums. All but three of the tracks (alternate takes of Tristano's “April,” Marsh's “Background Music” and Bird's “Donna Lee”) have been issued before. Five cuts appeared on *Tristano*, the remaining 13 first appearing in 1981, three years after Tristano died, as a two-LP set, *The Lennie Tristano Quartet*. As Larry Kart (who contributes particularly crude, critical notes to the box) suggests, the quartet's music isn't an unqualified success. The rhythm section plays rather uninspiredly in places, especially on the heretofore unreleased tracks. On the other hand, Konitz's alto and Tristano's piano are a joy to hear (try holding your breath through the snaking run-on melodies that slip past bar lines like mercury from a broken thermometer), the core similarities and subtle rhythmic difference making fascinating comparisons. And this sustained observation of a band at work—warming up, building as the evening sets in, getting hotter, reiterating a few tunes, then winding down—functions as an interesting contrast with the less in-situ studio recordings that make up the other Tristano disc in the set.

Those pieces, which were released as *The New Tristano* and four tracks on *Tristano*, are commonly regarded as the pianist's pinnacle achievement. Originally recorded at Tristano's home studio (which accounts for their not-so-stellar sound), they have been available for some time on Rhino, and appear with no additional material. But if

they're not already part of your collection, they are absolute necessities, whether or not you're part of what one critic recently referred to as the “Tristano cult.” Tristano's solo-piano piece “Requiem” and the multi-level overdub experiment “Turkish Mambo” are utter genius—music so holistic and integrated in approach that to isolate his outrageously complex rhythmic concept as paramount is to miss the frightening melodic acuity and everpresent attention to harmonic issues. Seven more solo tracks that made up *The New Tristano*, including “G-Minor Complex,” with its unswerving quarter-note bass line and breathless, soaring, boogie-ing right, are among the most original keyboard music ever recorded.

The box's three other discs contain four records by Tristano's two top execs, Konitz and Marsh. *Lee Konitz & Warne Marsh* was in fact released before either of the original Tristano sides, in '55; it's a thrilling record with Sal Mosca on piano, Tristano regular Billy Bauer on guitar, and a dynamite rhythm team of Oscar Pettiford on bass and Kenny Clarke on drums. The alto/tenor sax hairpinning on Tristano's “Two Not One” is heartstoppingly beautiful, and the band has depth to



Pianist Lennie Tristano & band, featuring saxophonists Warne Marsh (left) and Lee Konitz

spare—Pettiford steps out front on “Don't Squawk” (the bassist's comment on two-horn saxophonitis?).

Konitz turns to tenor for six tracks, four of which made up side one of 1956's *Lee Konitz Inside Hi-Fi*; and while he's beautiful regardless of ax, I miss the brilliant motion of his alto, which is featured alongside some startling guitar from Bauer on the second side of that LP. Bassist Peter Ind, a key part of the Tristano puzzle (who appears on two pieces with fellow great Jeff Morton on drums on *Tristano*), is the heartbeat of the band that recorded *The Real Lee Konitz* in '57, a deep, refreshing dip into the altman's well. Konitz's melancholy “Straightaway,” with drummer Dick Scott on triangle and textural percussion, kicks the session off.

Marsh leads two sessions that were collated to make *Warne Marsh*—one from '57 with pianist Ronnie Ball, Paul Chambers on bass and Philly Joe Jones on drums; the other, from early in '58, an interesting pianoless setting with Paul Motian replacing Jones. The hard-bop Chambers/Jones team on “Too Close For Comfort” and “It's All Right With Me” may be a stylistic mismatch for the soft-cornered Marsh, whose extremely subtle phrasing variations are all but eaten up in their carnivorous chomp, but it's a very interesting juxtaposition nonetheless. With the more forgiving Motian (gauzier ride cymbal) and no piano comping, there's a great sense of openness and relaxation.

Tristano's profound music continues to be a presence in today's music, as evidenced by pianist like Georg Gräwe and Pandelis Karyorgis. In this outstanding box, one can hear him directly and hear his most immediate progeny in the prime of their time. **DB**

### Initial Down Beat ratings:

- *Lee Konitz & Warne Marsh*: ★★★★★ (1/11/56 issue)
- *Tristano*: ★★★★★ (4/18/56)
- *Lee Konitz Inside Hi-Fi*: ★★★★★½ (7/11/57)
- *The Real Lee Konitz*: ★★★★★½ (8/7/58)
- *Warne Marsh*: ★★½ (1/8/59)
- *The New Tristano*: ★★★★★ (6/7/62)
- *The Lennie Tristano Quartet*: ★★★★★ (7/82)



# BEYOND

## Latin-Jazz Conundrums

by Larry Birnbaum

Latin jazz is now popular enough to inspire its own crossover dreams, bringing veterans back into the limelight and luring non-Hispanic artists into the movement. But, as with all musical genres, getting anywhere near the music's cutting edge is no easy task, especially when musicians (no matter how big) lack the bicultural depth to pull it off.

**Gato Barbieri: *Que Pasa*** (Columbia 67855; 59:41: ★★) On his first new recording in 15 years, the huge-toned Argentinian tenor saxophonist sounds much as he did in his commercial heyday, at least on the surface. The lush string arrangements of the '70s, however, have been replaced by producer Philippe Saisse's lean, synth-heavy textures, and Barbieri's hyper-romantic horn sounds more assured than ever before. This is smooth jazz at its sleekest, but the music is smothered in funky, Latin-tinged (mostly Brazilian) clichés. Possessed of one of the most distinctive instrumental voices in jazz, Barbieri manages to transcend the radio-ready formula on tunes like "Guadaloupe" and "Indonesia," but his surging passion mostly just turns to schmaltz.

**Herbie Mann: *Celebration*** (Lightyear 54185; 64:49: ★★) Recorded with various star-studded ensembles during a week-long 65th-birthday engagement at New York's Blue Note, this career tribute is half given over to Latin rhythms, a token of Mann's long affection for Brazilian and Afro-Cuban music. A flutist who has always traded on his musical associations, Mann affably lets himself be outshined by such soloists as Romero Lubambo, Paquito D'Rivera, Edward Simon and Claudio Roditi. Despite top-caliber musicianship, much of the material, including Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker classics and Mann's own funky hits, gets fairly routine treatment. A pair of Ivan Lins tunes are perkier, but the real highlight is "Jungle Fantasy," a vintage mambo that builds to a psychedelic climax.

**Herb Alpert: *Passion Dance*** (Almo Sounds 80014; 44:23: ★★) Best known for his mariachi dabblings with the Tijuana Brass, the middle-of-the-road trumpet star has assembled a crack team of mostly Los Angeles-based Afro-Caribbean players for this foray into Latin jazz. The arrangements sparkle and the rhythms crackle, but the tunes, mostly by Alpert, lack the catchy hooks of his mega-hits. Alpert's playing is jazzier than usual, but he



Gato Barbieri: able to transcend sleek formulas, but mostly a music of schmaltz

frequently falls back on the vanilla licks that made his reputation. Despite moments of incongruity, Alpert and co-producer Oskar Cartaya integrate Afro-Cuban and easy-listening musics with surprising smoothness, as on "Route 101," where Alpert's horn floats like whipped cream over the steamy espresso of Francisco Aguabella's and Francisco "Nenge" Hernandez's *bata* drumming.

**Marshall Vente: *Tropicale*** (Southport 0031; 75:41: ★★) This veteran Chicago keyboardist/arranger has put together a new band to perform mainly Brazilian music, but the largely non-Hispanic ensemble plays with such a strong American accent that, aside from the samba beats and occasional Portuguese vocals, its sound is scarcely distinguishable from mainstream jazz. Vente's charts are crisp and bright, often nodding to Gil Evans, but his deconstructions of bossa standards like "How Insensitive," "The Girl From Ipanema" and "Morning Of The Carnival" leach the Brazilian flavor from the originals without substituting much spice.

**Steve Coleman & The Mystic Rhythm Society: *The Sign And The Seal*** (RCA/BMG 74321-40727; 73:36: ★★) For his venture into Cuban/American fusion, alto saxophonist Coleman has gone straight to the source, taking his group to Cuba to record with the folkloric troupe AfroCuba de Matanzas. Together with such band mates as tenor saxophonist Ravi Coltrane and trumpeter Ralph Alessi, Coleman plays his own brand of funky free-jazz right on top of AfroCuba's ritual chants and percussion. The beats mesh remarkably well—even Kokoyi's English raps flow easily over a *bata* groove, but the two genres never quite blend. Still, the sound is intriguing enough to suggest further explorations along similar lines. **DB**

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# BLINDFOLD TEST

NOVEMBER 1997

## Ed Thigpen

by Mike Zwerin

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.

**E**dmond Leonard Thigpen reaches beyond drumming and percussion; he is no mere technocrat. Call him a drummer's drummer.

"Mr. Taste" makes all the right moves, and then some. His mastery is evident primarily in piano trios and behind singers. Known for his soft intensity and the discretion of his timekeeping, Thigpen has played with Dr. Billy Taylor, Bud Powell, Oscar Peterson (six years), Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald (four years), Lennie Tristano and Peggy Lee.

He's well integrated into the European music scene, having lived in Copenhagen since 1972. In addition, he teaches at the Aarhus Conservatory in Denmark.

Now that his children are grown up, Thigpen, 66, has the time once more to learn new things. He is writing songs, for example, and studying various types of folkloric percussion. You come away feeling the man's modesty and generosity.

This is his first Blindfold Test.

## Lucky Thompson

"Strike Up The Band" (from *Lucky Sessions*, *Vogue*, Paris, 1964) Thompson, tenor saxophone; Peter Trunk, bass; Daniel Humair, drums.

My guess is Max Roach on drums. If not Max, then somebody influenced by him. But I was primarily occupied with this tenor player. He made me think about guys who came out early—Don Byas, Lucky Thompson. It is Lucky? Well, I'm glad I got one right to begin with! [laughs] But I'd never have guessed Daniel. I'll be darned. Daniel's bad. He's extremely intelligent, a good painter, an unusual human being. He's totally ambidextrous, you know, everything he does he can do either right- or left-handed. He really nailed it with that hi-hat. Fantastic technique. These are intelligent musicians playing at the top of their game. 5 stars. Can I have a tape of that?

## Jacky Terrasson

"The Rat Pack" (from *Reach*, *Blue Note* 1995) Terrasson, piano; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Leon Parker, drums.

The pianist has a great deal of facility, but it doesn't do much to me. Sounded like somebody classically trained. I would say he's influenced by 20th-century composers.

And as far as the drummer is concerned, I hear the sort of fusion-type splashes that come from people like Dave Weckl. Taken all together, the playing is a little hectic for me. Oh, I know! It's Jacky Terrasson.

He's just a wonderful piano player. The problem is that the way things are in the record business now, they put these guys on tape real young. It's almost like, "It's my time. I've got to do it. *Now*." But he hasn't had time to really develop. It would have been better if he'd waited a few years until he was more mature musically; but, of course, by then he might very well have been too old to get the contract. There's something wrong about all that.

Back to the drummer, I don't hear the swing element enough. You know, the 12. His cymbal is great, his time is excellent. And very complimentary to what Jacky is playing. But the swing doesn't give me that finger-popping thing. It's more of an eighth-note feel than a swing feel. It's just not for me in this context. Let's say 3 stars. Jacky wasn't really ready yet.



## Tommy Flanagan

"Relaxin' At Camarillo" (from *Sea Changes*, *Alfa Jazz*, Tokyo, 1996) Flanagan, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

That's got to be Tommy Flanagan. He's never less than perfect. The swing, the touch, the humor. You can't do better than that. I might be wrong, but I'm going to take a fling on the other guys: George Mraz and Kenny Washington? Or maybe Smiling Billy [Higgins]?

MZ: It was Lewis Nash.

Well, then; if it's Lewis then it must be Peter Washington on bass. These are just wonderful, wonderful players. They're unique. Lewis plays in a linear style. He's just flowing. 5 stars.

You know, the feeling Lewis gets makes me think about drum choirs. A lot of things I want to do now are with other drummers. I once said to Billy, "Man, I just got to play with you." And he said, "But you're a drummer." I said, "It doesn't matter. I got to get a piece of this." Drum choirs are something Kenny Clarke was very much interested in years ago. Tootie Heath has this thing with a bunch of kids playing hi-hats. It's a coming thing.

## Art Blakey

"Split Skins" (from *Orgy In Rhythm*, 1957, *Blue Note*) featuring Blakey, Arthur Taylor and Jo Jones drums, percussion.

This makes me think of a piece Art Blakey once did. But you know what? I'm going to take a wild guess. I'm thinking of Kenny Clarke and Kenny Clare with Klook's big band.

MZ: You were right the first time.

You can hear a lot of things that in hindsight are really clear. Now that we know who it is, I can certainly hear Jo, but you don't hear Jo doing a lot of solos. Jo's symphonic approach to the drums always gets me more than the technical aspect. But that's a masterful technique any way you look at it.

Even though Jo was in many ways my mentor, I never had this record. I never had any Shadow [Wilson], either. My listening was not directed at drummers a lot of the time. I was listening to the overall approach to music.

When I was a kid in L.A., I heard a drummer play a fill on Dizzy's "Ow!" I went back and heard that over and over. It was just one bar, but it impressed me so much. Because it affected what was going on melodically. I always thought it was Klook. But many years later, I was living in Europe and Joe Harris came by my house and we were talking about influences. I told him about Klook's drum fill, and Joe said, "That wasn't Klook, it was me." Here, we'd known each other all this time, and I never knew that.

I like drummers who give impetus to the melody. You know, when the drummer's rhythmic approach actually changes the melody. There's a beautiful oneness there. For sure, 5 stars. **DB**