

Winners—62nd Annual Readers Poll

# DOWN BEAT

*Jazz, Blues & Beyond*

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Wayne &  
Herbie's

Major

Discovery

**Horace Silver**

HALL OF FAME:

**Nat 'King' Cole**

JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR:

**Wynton Marsalis**

**Charlie Haden Blindfolded**





## 20 Wayne Shorter & Herbie Hancock

### *Discovery Channeling*

Shorter and Hancock, who share a linkage that dates back more than three decades, view their recent duo project not only as a new and revelatory creative effort, but as a path leading in directions that neither had really anticipated.

By Don Heckman

Cover photograph by Jeff Sedlik, grooming by Leisa Welsh, wardrobe styling by Sandra Bojin Sedlik.

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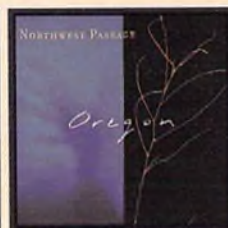
ALAN NAHIGIAN

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# Discovery

## Wayne Shorter & Herbie Hancock

**H**erbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter share a linkage that reaches well beyond their long-term musical connections. They are, first of all, close friends who spend a great deal of time with each other, viewing films (both are inveterate movie buffs with elaborate home screening rooms), partying and occasionally vacationing together. Both are practicing Buddhists, and both have elected to settle in Los Angeles, a continent away from the heartbeat of the New York jazz scene.

But there are differences, as well. Pianist Hancock is voluble and outgoing, ready with a laugh, quick to organize his thoughts on virtually any subject. Saxophonist Shorter is more reserved, and slower to respond. He rarely comments about anything without careful rumination, and his responses usually come in the form of epigrammatic phrases, incomplete sentences and abruptly shifting ideas. The differences, in some respects, reflect their playing styles. And it is those differences—Hancock's musical loquaciousness and Shorter's ruminative excursions—that make their current partnership so fascinating. Their critically praised recording *1+1*, in which they perform as a duo, free of repetitious rhythms and structural harmonies, is a breakthrough achievement, a fascinating opening into a potentially fertile new musical landscape.

In a conversation held while Shorter and Hancock were taking a brief break from touring in support of the album (a tour that will continue into 1998), the connections, the differences and the friendship between these two veteran jazz artists were fully apparent.

The conversation took place at Hancock's house, appropriately, since most of the recording of *1+1* was done in Hancock's home studio. Both Shorter and Hancock had experienced a busy day and were obliged to participate in a lengthy photo shoot prior to the conversation. So, when we retired to a quiet room upstairs, the duo asked for a few moments to spend before Hancock's Buddhist altar, chanting. The brief, repetitious intonations seemed to invigorate both musicians, and they embarked on the conversation with a surprising amount of vigor.

It was clear from the beginning that their duo musical partnership was at the core of their current thinking, despite plans that each has in mind for independent musical projects. They seemed to view the *1+1* experience not only as a new and revelatory creative effort, but as a path leading in directions that neither had really anticipated, but which both were eager to explore.

BY DON HECKMAN

JEFF SEDLIK





# Channeling





"We take off from a certain section of a tune, or part of a tune, and expand on that. That's something that I hadn't done before." —Herbie

**DON HECKMAN:** *Does working in the duo format allow you to do more than, say, working with a larger group?*

**HERBIE HANCOCK:** My feeling is that what happens between Wayne and myself depends primarily on our relationship and who we are to each other, and who we are to ourselves, I guess, too. I don't think the format has anything to do with it.

**DH:** *Does the format do anything?*

**HH:** Yeah, there is an intimacy. It's kind of automatic, in a sense. But not exactly automatic: I mean, if we succumb to the reality of what the situation is, the intimacy will be there. It gives a chance to explore spontaneous rhythmic variations that we would not necessarily be afforded with a larger group; harmonic variations, too. As a matter of fact, before we did the record, we talked about what the advantages would be. We could have looked at it as a disadvantage, where we felt we had to compensate somehow for the lack of the bass and the drums. But we decided to look at it like, "What can we do in this format that would be more difficult or impossible to do in another format?" And, actually, we've been making some discoveries on our own about what, for me, is a new way to approach jazz. We can take certain sections of a tune and improvise off of that section, or that chord, or that bar or two bars, extend it or expand it, before we go on to the next section. And this can happen at any time.

**WAYNE SHORTER:** On records, Art Tatum did a lot alone, like solo piano. I imagine that Art Tatum must have had a lot of fun playing by himself, imagining he was 10 different people: Here come the strings, here come the violins. So, I imagine that Art Tatum would have enjoyed listening to something like this, as a duet. If five people are trying to tell a story in a quintet, there is something about that. There are five relay stations. So, by yourself, you're one guy stopping at a red light and another going on the green. You can be three places at once.

**HH:** I was thinking about how we talked about the idea of creating a musical script for a movie. We said that the notes would be the characters, that is, symbolically speaking. But it goes hand in hand with what you were saying. Even though there is a dialog between the two of us, it is more



Herbie Hancock: musical loquaciousness and quick thought-organization

than that. There are several characters that come out in the course of one composition.

**WS:** It happened in the first set the other night. Herbie did something. Instead of soloing with the left hand comping and the right doing the melody and improvisation, he took both hands and was doing something that had a tremolo to it. And then it had colors that were moving around, and then it went beyond the recognized chords—like the V chord, the II chord, the dominant, sub-dominant chord, the super tonic—the tremolo was still going. It was moving and moving. It was like Picasso or Salvadore Dali. And then he arrived at some kind of place. But every time he arrived, there was more and more. [The audience] knew it wasn't over, but they all went, "Yeah." You don't hear people respond to someone who's hit chords on the piano when it's just comped. But Herbie did it in a way that never disconnected with the audience.

**HH:** I remember, I think it was in the middle of "Memories Of Enchantment." I remember that I was doing tremolo with both hands, and then I played some single notes with my left hand that had some space between them. That gave it another kind of dimension.

**DH:** *I think the cinematic references are interesting given that both of you love film and Herbie has obviously spent a lot of time writing for film. So it kind of makes sense in a way that it would have that kind of flow to it.*

**HH:** Also, speaking of Art Tatum and how perhaps he was thinking like, OK, here come the strings, here's the flute, here is the cello line: When I was younger, I played with the orchestra in school and I listened to lots of classical music. Quite often I think in terms of individual instruments coming in and playing some kind

of melody to something else I'm doing. I think orchestrally. Not all of the time—well, I do pretty much all the time, but in different ways.

**DH:** *Is that true for you, Wayne, as well? You play a single-line instrument.*

**WS:** Yeah. I make believe the saxophone is a violin sometimes. I make believe it's a trumpet. And sometimes I hear people say, "You got a lot of different sounds or tones out of that thing." And people who don't know, they will say, "That's a nice flute you're playing, nice flute, nice clarinet." Even "nice alto sax" when I play down on the low end. I had one lady from Cleveland say she didn't miss the baritone, tenor or anything, because the way I was playing the soprano represented all of the family. And it mixes easily with the piano.

**DH:** *When you are touring with this duo, since the sound of the piano is so important, are the different pianos making a difference?*

**HH:** Oh, yeah. If the piano gets out of tune, it becomes much more apparent to me in this context. It makes it impossible to really sing because the sympathetic vibrations aren't happening, and the strings and the body of the piano are not matching. They are not supporting each other. Tone makes a big difference, too. Because I am able to hear all of the piano, because there is no bass or drums to mask any of the sound of the piano. And I'm thinking about something else. You asked Wayne about playing a single-note instrument, and about not having the ability to accompany yourself. In fact, Wayne does that on occasion. He may play a line or a series of notes—a statement—and then sometimes he can answer it. Or sometimes he can create an atmosphere following that statement in another register of the horn that's quite different from





Wayne Shorter: careful rumination and abruptly shifting ideas

"Horace Silver said, 'Are you and Herbie going out there by yourself?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And he said, 'Well, you've got a lot of nerve. You can't hide nowhere.'" —Wayne

that statement. And it creates a sense that he's accompanying himself. And it works. It's another device. You know, when we're actually playing, we're not thinking. "Let's take device number 3 or device number 5." We just open the door for whatever palette we have and whatever colors we might sense to add to that palette. We let things come out that we think are appropriate for that moment.

**DH:** Let me ask you a paradoxical question: Is this kind of freedom ever restricting?

**WS:** There's a responsibility that goes along with it. When you are playing, you have to have the ability to recognize when you are on to something. When we had Weather Report, sometimes somebody was playing a rhythm that was original and hot. They would play it for maybe six-and-one-half measures and drop it and go onto something else. Later on, I'd say, "Do you know when you're cooking, when you've really got something going? Because I was going to do something on top of that or accompany that, to really surround it, to do some ornament. And

you stopped doing it. Do you know when you have something moving?" And a lot of times, musicians don't know when they have something very moving. That's what Miles used to say to the bass players and drummers. Miles would say, [imitates Miles] "You should have stayed there." They'd think that staying somewhere meant being handcuffed. But he meant to keep something in particular to share. He meant, "Share this, share this." When Miles said stay there, some guys [would cop an attitude], "Oh, you don't tell me what to do." So, when you talk about restrictions and the possibilities and freedom and stuff like that, these things come into play.

**DH:** I guess the other side of the question is, when you have an infinite number of things to choose from, how difficult is it to choose?

**WS:** It is still a matter of taste. Or from

moment to moment.

**HH:** We opened this door. I think there is a lot more to be explored. I don't expect to cover everything. I don't mean it in that way. But there are a lot more things to be discovered before we move on to adding that kind of complexity. We recently embarked on this kind of new improvisational structure, or new improvisational technique on the structure of jazz improvisation. Normally you play the melody and you improvise off the chords as they go by. You keep repeating the chords and substitutes and so forth. But in this case, we take off from a certain section of a tune, or part of a tune, and expand that. That's something that I hadn't done before.

**WS:** You make a soundtrack for the song, for the tune.

**HH:** Yeah. I could relate it to classical music in that they might make a statement and then develop that. And then make up a second statement and develop that. But this is improvised.

**WS:** We know it's developing because

people are following it. The response we've been getting over in Europe, I would say it's sincere. And it's not that kind of response that, you know, when they applaud, we feel, "OK, let's do the rock 'em, sock 'em. Let's leave them with a chaser." It's not that at all.

**HH:** I think that the audience may even be surprised at their own response. It is a different reaction.

**DH:** Did it surprise you that this happened on this project? It seems to me that you guys took it up another level.

**WS:** We've heard that several times in the short time we have been touring.

**HH:** People have been telling us that. [to Wayne] The first gig was Munich, remember? And, the promoter, he was the first guy to say it. He said, "This is something that's totally new." And that was just the first gig, you know? We're just embarking on this trip of discovery. As we continue through the tour, slowly we've taken more risks as we felt comfortable with physical steps in this development. Then we'd take more risks and try this and try that. Some things didn't work so well because we are both improvising and we're not necessarily sticking to the chord structure of the piece. When we do the development of a certain section, we may move away from that chord structure and create a whole new atmosphere out of it. So, there is no way for me to know specifically where Wayne's going to go within the notes or where I am going.

It's like stepping off the diving board and not knowing how deep the water is, you

## EQUIPMENT

When playing acoustic piano, Herbie Hancock uses a Steinway & Sons nine-foot concert grand or a Baldwin seven-foot grand.

Wayne Shorter plays a Yamaha soprano sax with an Otto Link mouthpiece and Vandoren reeds. His tenor is a Selmer Mark VI outfitted with an RIA #10 mouthpiece and Vandoren reeds.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

1+1—Verve 537 564  
A TRIBUTE TO MILES DAVIS—Qwest/Warner Bros. 45059

### with Miles Davis

THE COMPLETE LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL—Columbia/Legacy 8-66055  
THE COMPLETE CONCERT. 1964—Columbia/Legacy 2-48821  
E. S. P.—Columbia/Legacy 46863  
NEFERTITI—Columbia/Legacy 46113  
MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia/Legacy 48954

### Herbie Hancock

THE NEW STANDARD—Verve 529 584  
CANTALOUPE ISLAND—Blue Note 29331  
DIS IS DA DRUM—Mercury 522681  
HEADHUNTERS—Columbia/Legacy 47478  
MWANDISHI—Warner Bros. 45732  
SPEAK LIKE A CHILD—Blue Note 46136  
EMPYREAN ISLES—Blue Note 84175  
MAIDEN VOYAGE—Blue Note 46339

### Wayne Shorter

HIGH LIFE—Verve 529 224  
THE ALL SEEING EYE—Blue Note 29100  
NATIVE DANCER—Columbia 46159  
SCHIZOPHRENIA—Blue Note 32096  
ADAM'S APPLE—Blue Note 46403  
THE SOOTHSAYER—Blue Note 84443  
SPEAK NO EVIL—Blue Note 46509  
SUPER NOVA—Blue Note 84332



know. There is a lot of risk-taking going on, but when the empathy is there between us, it weaves together. People use that word to describe what we are doing. It's almost like a weave that's happening. And it feels like that when I'm playing. I reach for some things. I just reach for a note down there and hope that it fits with what I have up here. And I hope that it fits somehow into that weave that Wayne and I have constructed together.

**WS:** I don't know where his hand is going, and he goes like that [to get the right note]. [to Herbie] You reach and you know the area. You know the piano. You know if there's a C or a B or something there. Since you're moving and moving, you're not going to stop and say, "Ah, I want that C." You're not going to stop and make it agree with this. There's something that crosses and a tension that happens inside a person's body. It's like a beautiful woman. You see a beautiful woman, and your reach exceeds the grasp of it because it's so elusive. It's not right or wrong. It's elusive. And I got the chills. And people come and say, "We went on a faith ride with you."

**DH:** How much of your history together, your compatibility as friends, your long acquaintance, is a part of it? How much of it is an extension of Miles Davis?

**HH:** For me, it's part of the foundation that had to be laid in order for us to approach the music this way. That was the main foundation.

**WS:** You didn't have many bandleaders at that time who would say, [imitates Miles] "Break it up, break it up." He didn't talk much, but suddenly he said, "Break it up." Something would be happening that you hear all the time. Something would be going on a few times, and then he said break it up. Then later on, sittin' around in conversation, somebody would get something going, and then he'd say the same thing related to something else, "Now, you got to break that shit up." He'd make it real interesting. So there were not any other bands in existence at that time where you could do that. There were bands coming around called avant garde, but even avant garde had its rigidness and an allegiance going. They didn't go beyond the bounds of what sounded avant garde.

**DH:** So there's an example of freedom really being restrictive.

**HH:** Yeah, you'd rarely hear a triad. [laughs]

**DH:** Are you doing anything in the live performance completely spontaneous without a structure of any kind?

**HH:** We did that once, remember, Wayne?

**WS:** You started it.

**HH:** Actually, I wasn't sure about where I was going, you know. Where I was going to end at and just go into one of the tunes. But then Wayne came in and we just started to go into things. We did a lot

more of it during the rehearsals than we do on the gigs. [laughs]

**DH:** You guys have become legendary figures, when you think about it. At this point in your lives, at this point in your careers, you are certainly among the best known jazz musicians living in the world. There are some artists who at this point in their careers, given that status, would not be taking risks.

**HH:** What did Horace Silver say?

**WS:** He said, "Are you and Herbie going out there by yourself?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, you got a lot of nerve. You can't hide nowhere."

**HH:** If I ever get to the point where I am

resting anywhere, on any kind of laurels or any kind of musical idea or single way or narrow way ... slap me. I don't want to do that. Just as I want to approach living my life to the fullest. Music isn't any different. I want to live that to the fullest. That means the more I learn and the more I am able to experience, the more tools I have to create possibilities of expression that, perhaps, I haven't experienced before. That's what makes me want to go on living and go on striving. That's the best of what life has to offer—musically, but also in life, continuing for what we call creative life. Or striving to live a creative life. **DB**

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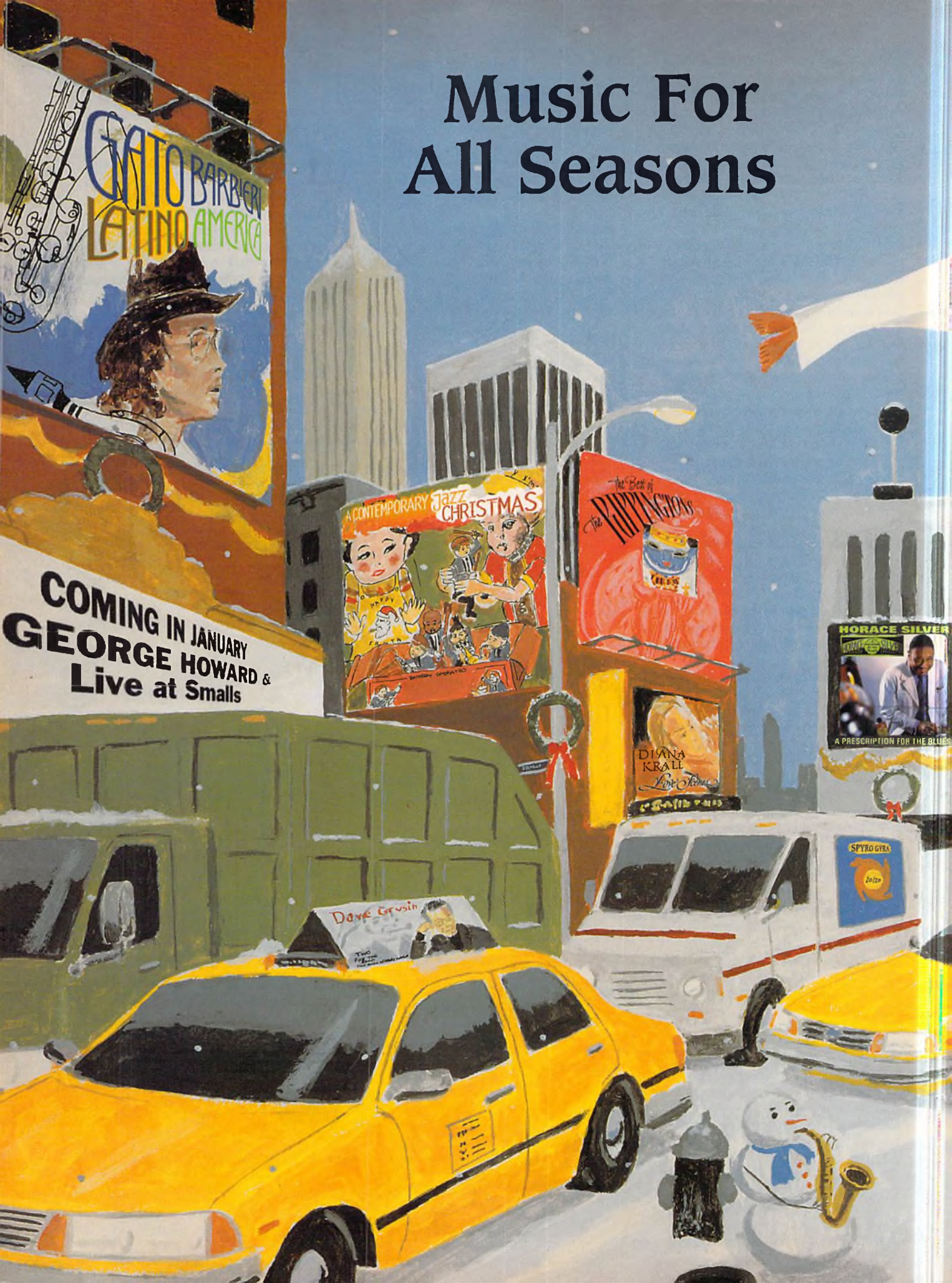


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# PICKS TO CLICK



JERRY ABBOTT

The Down Beat Readers Poll is more than just a year-in-review for the jazz world. It's an indication of great things to come, the true jazz fan's picks to click, so to speak. More than just an annual musical "election" of sorts, the poll provides a chance for lifelong listeners to get behind and cheer on their heroes, give them the recognition they deserve.

This year's big winner has to be Kenny Garrett, who aces the Jazz Album of the Year and Alto Saxophone categories. At 36, Garrett has grown beyond his place as a leading instrumental talent. He's beginning to make important, hard-hitting albums, demonstrating his composing chops as well as his production abilities and grasp of album concept. Garrett appears to be the latest and perhaps last of Miles Davis' former sidemen to rise to stardom, following a long tradition that includes this month's cover subjects, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock.

Another musician in his 30s to score with the readers is Wynton Marsalis, long the subject of a critical debate that seemed to peak with the 1997 CD release, tour and Pulitzer-win of *Blood On The Fields*. Despite the power of critics divided on the importance of Marsalis' latest work, the readers continue to call the tune. And they've sided with Marsalis, naming him not only Jazz Musician of the Year, but also top Composer.

Speaking of tunes, Nat "King" Cole has finally made his way into the Down Beat Hall of Fame, a criminally overdue recognition. Perhaps in the past, voters thought of Cole more as a pop crooner than a skilled jazz pianist and innovative trio leader. Whatever the reason, there's no denying that Cole deserves to be in the Hall of Fame for the beauty of his melodic phrasings alone.

Of the poll's first-time winners, Baritone Saxophone monster Nick Brignola is the most noteworthy, coming out of nowhere to fill the void left by the late, great Gerry Mulligan.

In the following pages, we present the results of the 62nd Annual Down Beat Readers Poll in their entirety. Congratulations to the winners and all the runners-up. May things keep clicking for you all well into next year.

—Ed Enright





ALAN HANCOCK



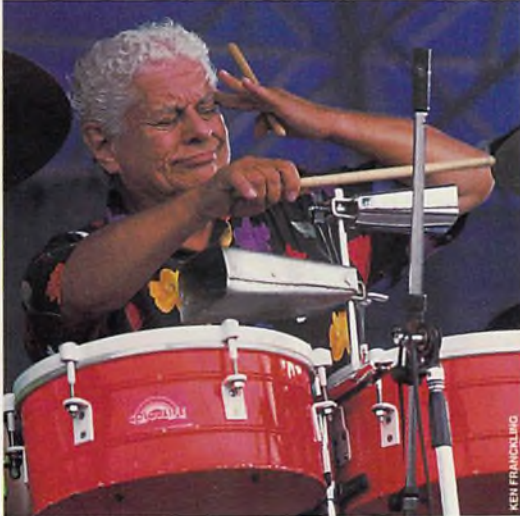
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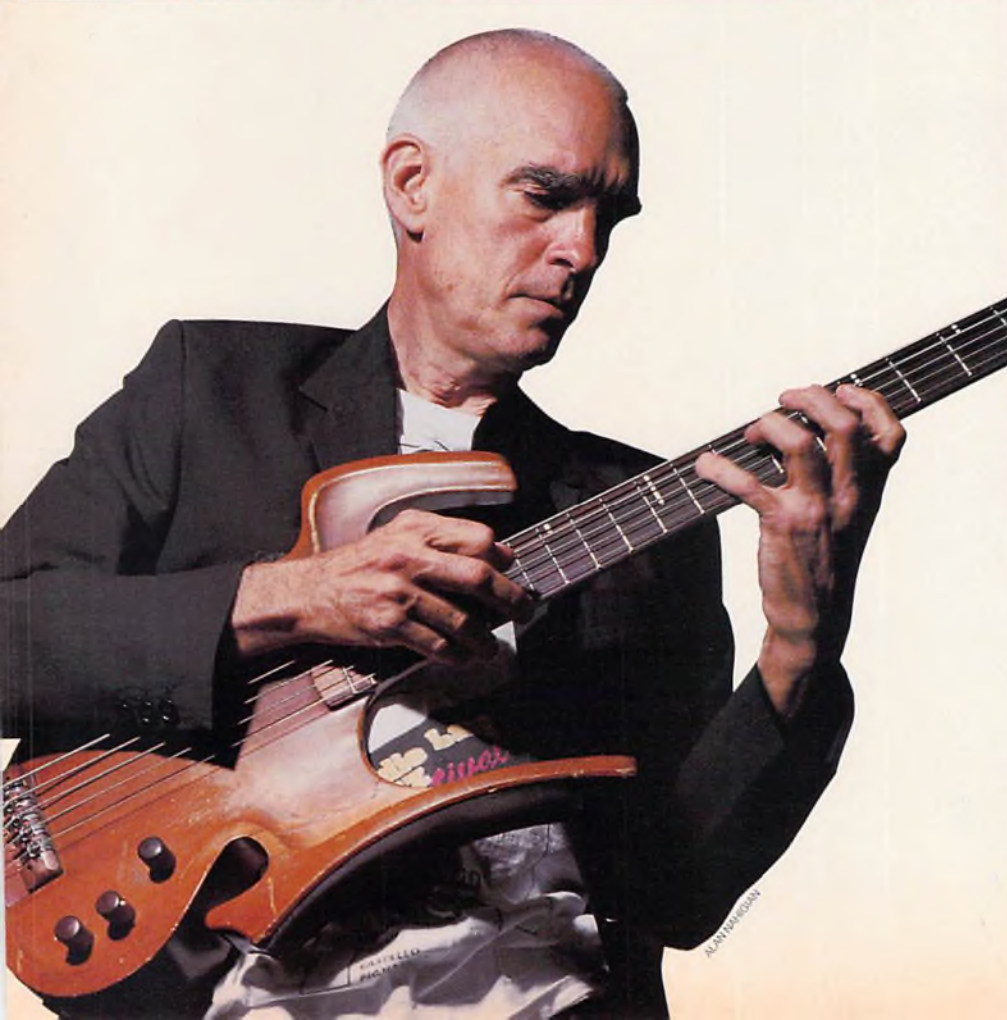
ALAN HANCOCK



KEN FRANKELING



RONALD HEARD



MONTY BRUNAN



EBET ROBERTS

A smattering of this year's Down Beat Readers Poll winners. Clockwise, from top left: Charlie Haden, B.B. King, Kenny Garrett, Mark Murphy, Elvin Jones, Steve Swallow, Cassandra Wilson and (center) Tito Puente. Opposite page: Wynton Marsalis.



**266 Nat "King" Cole**

- 128 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 106 Milt Jackson
- 106 Elvin Jones
- 76 Wayne Shorter
- 70 Mark Murphy
- 62 Frank Sinatra
- 56 Joe Henderson
- 42 Erroll Garner
- 42 McCoy Tyner
- 40 Sonny Stitt
- 40 Clark Terry
- 36 Don Cherry
- 28 Bunny Berigan







## HALL OF FAME

# NAT “King” COLE

BY WILL FRIEDWALD

While on tour with the Mingus Dynasty band a few years ago, drummer Kenny Washington was relaxing in his hotel room with a tape of his favorite trio playing “I’m In The Mood For Love.” A knock sounded on the door, and there was the Mingus Dynasty’s pianist, the eminent Sir Roland Hanna. “Who’s that on piano?” Hanna demanded to know. When Washington told him it was Nat “King” Cole, Hanna mumbled to himself, “Damn! That is one hip modulation.” He then repeated it for emphasis, “a real hip modulation.”

It has long been taken for granted that Cole—our latest inductee into the Down Beat Hall of Fame—was one of the greatest figures in jazz and pop. Since his untimely death in 1965, however, it has come to seem that Nat “King” Cole was actually two of the most important musicians that the American idiom has ever known. If you could combine Oscar Peterson and Frank Sinatra into a single entity, you would get Nat Cole. Far from being a great singer who merely accompanied himself on piano or a keyboard wizard who occasionally sang, Cole is virtually the only major musician who achieved what amounts to separate careers on both instruments.

While Cole was still performing, which he did right up two months before he was felled by his addiction to cigarettes, audi-

ences never had a problem with Cole’s bipolar talents. He may have played more than he sang in 1940 and sang more than he played in 1960, but he always did plenty of both. Cole thought of himself as an entertainer, regardless of whether he was fronting a trio or a string orchestra, or facing an audience over a keyboard or a mic.

Although he downplayed his skills in this area, Cole, fortunately for us, was also a supreme jazzman. He recorded many “art” instrumentals for the jazz audience, both with his trio and in the company of such compatible heavyweights as Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins. His rich harmonies anticipated bebop and he bequeathed the new music with its national anthem, “How High The Moon.” Still, even though he had the distinction of inaugurating “hot music”’s greatest concert series, Jazz at the Philharmonic, and won many a magazine poll on piano, these were all strictly sideline activities. When later accused of “forsaking jazz” for commercialism, Cole pointed out that he had always made his living performing ballads and novelties.

As Sammy Davis later observed, it was easier for a black performer than to be accepted by a mainstream audience if he came on singing rather than talking, which is why the first black humorists to “cross over” were musical acts. In the ‘40s, both Louis Jordan and Cole were

considered comedians as much as musicians, and a goodly share of Cole’s repertoire, like his own “Straighten Up And Fly Right” and “Frim Fram Sauce,” were strictly designed to make people laugh. Yet more than Jordan, Cole, from the beginning, could break your heart with a love song.

In the very beginning, Nat Cole was strictly a pianist who, if we believe the written evidence and not our ears, rarely, if ever, sang. Born in Montgomery, Ala., Cole grew up in Chicago and cut his teeth at the Windy City’s monstrosly fierce jam sessions. He studied at the feet of Chi-town’s jazz legends, particularly piano great Earl Hines. When he made his first recording session, at age 17, Cole was so far removed from contemplating a career as a crooner that his older brother Eddie (the date’s bassist and leader) sang Nat’s own lyrics.

Cole’s may have been the only career in history to benefit from making the wrong move at the wrong time. In 1936, the brothers Cole and Nat’s future wife, dancer Nadine Robinson, took to the road with an all-black revue, which left them stranded and broke in Los Angeles. The King Cole Trio was born when the Swanee Inn in Los Angeles hired Cole to assemble a four-piece band of piano, bass, guitar and drums. Supposedly Cole con-





The classic trio: Johnny Miller (left), Oscar Moore and Cole

tacted Lee Young, but he missed the opening night (Cole later also said that there just wasn't room for a trap kit in the miniscule nightclub). "I always wanted to have a big band, never thought of a trio, particularly as there were no small groups playing on the coast," Cole remembered in 1945. "It was Bob Lewis of the Swanee Inn who suggested that I add guitar and bass and bring the trio into his place. I figured it would last just a few weeks, and look what happened."

The King Cole Trio employed at least eight other master musicians from 1937 to 1951, the years in which it served as Cole's primary vehicle, among them bassists Wesley Prince, Johnny Miller and Joe Comfort, guitarist Irving Ashby, Latin percussionist Jack Costanzo, and, most crucially, the group's co-star for a decade, guitarist Oscar Moore. The group began

recording radio transcriptions as early as 1938, and by 1940 made its first records for a national firm (Decca), although its sides for both that label and the fledgling Capitol Records (beginning in 1943) were initially aimed at "race" or black audiences. "For seven years we each knocked ourselves out," Cole later said, "until something happened."

Cole had gone on to conquer the entire market, black and white, long before he abandoned the trio format. Thus, the major schism in Cole's career isn't art vs. commercialism or jazz vs. pop, but Cole the leader vs. Cole the star. During the 15 years in which he led the most enduring small group of its day, Cole was chiefly concerned with the remarkable level of empathy he developed with such long-standing sidemen as, in the classic edition of the trio, Moore and Miller. Loaded with a surplus of harmony and a shortage of rhythm instruments, the threesome brought the art of interplay to a whole new level.

**F**or the final 15 years of his career (1951-1965), Cole concentrated less on musician-to-musician dynamics that he did on employing larger ensembles as a canvas, which could be even more valuable in his lifelong cause of communicating a story to an audience. In the '50s, Cole and longtime friend Frank Sinatra were both labelmates (on Capitol) and stablemates: Using the same orchestrators (Nelson Riddle, Billy May and Gordon Jenkins), both helped

pioneer the long-playing pop album.

Both as pianist/combo leader and singer, Cole found a perfect midway point between jazz and pop. Cole could create pure jazz of the highest caliber—which he did both with and without the rest of his trio. Sometimes, as on the *Metronome All Stars* date of 1946, he appeared as visiting royalty (there's even one radio date from that same year where he backs Charlie Parker). Yet it could be even more rewarding when Cole performed simply as a session pianist (billed under such pseudonyms as "Aye Guy," "Shorty Nadine" and "Lord Calvert") as on another 1946 session by the Keynoters with saxist Willie Smith.

On the other hand, much of Cole's work was pure pop—he wasn't afraid to tackle the most inane novelty song. The trio was the perfect inbetween, it was jazz and it was pop, it was standards and it was blues, it was a small combo, yet it was an essential part of the big-band era.

Sixty years ago, Cole became one of the first African-Americans to have his own radio series, and 20 years later he did the same for television. While Cole, in his own subtle way, was also a campaigner in the cause of civil rights, such activities always took a back seat to his music. Whether playing or singing or even writing, Nat King Cole was the best friend a song ever had.

DB

## The Hall of Fame: Heavy Company

Legends in jazz, blues and beyond can be elected into the Down Beat Hall of Fame by way of the annual Readers Poll (designated by "R") or Critics Poll ("C"). It all started in 1952 with the readers; the critics got into the game later, in 1961. With this month's addition of Nat "King" Cole, there are currently 87 Down Beat Hall-of-Famers, listed below in chronological order of their induction.

1952	Louis Armstrong (R)	1968	Bessie Smith (C)	1977	Paul Desmond (R)
1953	Glenn Miller (R)	1968	Wes Montgomery (R)		Benny Carter (C)
1954	Stan Kenton (R)		Sidney Bechet (C)	1978	Joe Venuti (R)
1955	Charlie Parker (R)		Fats Waller (C)		Rahsaan Roland Kirk (C)
1956	Duke Ellington (R)	1969	Ornette Coleman (R)	1979	Ella Fitzgerald (R)
1957	Benny Goodman (R)		Pee Wee Russell (C)		Lennie Tristano (C)
1958	Count Basie (R)		Jack Teagarden (C)	1980	Dexter Gordon (R)
1959	Lester Young (R)	1970	Jimi Hendrix (R)		Max Roach (C)
1960	Dizzy Gillespie (R)		Johnny Hodges (C)	1981	Art Blakey (R)
1961	Billie Holiday (R)	1971	Charles Mingus (R)		Bill Evans (C)
	Coleman Hawkins (C)		Roy Eldridge (C)	1982	Art Pepper (R)
1962	Miles Davis (R)		Django Reinhardt (C)		Fats Navarro (C)
	Bix Beiderbecke (C)	1972	Gene Krupa (R)	1983	Stephane Grappelli (R)
1963	Thelonious Monk (R)		Clifford Brown (C)		Albert Ayler (C)
	Jelly Roll Morton (C)	1973	Sonny Rollins (R)	1984	Oscar Peterson (R)
1964	Eric Dolphy (R)		Fletcher Henderson (C)		Sun Ra (C)
	Art Tatum (C)	1974	Buddy Rich (R)	1985	Sarah Vaughan (R)
1965	John Coltrane (R)		Ben Webster (C)		Zoot Sims (C)
	Earl Hines (C)	1975	Cannonball Adderley (R)	1986	Stan Getz (R)
1966	Bud Powell (R)		Cecil Taylor (C)		Gil Evans (C)
	Charlie Christian (R)	1976	Woody Herman (R)	1987	Lionel Hampton (R)
1967	Billy Strayhorn (R)		Kling Oliver (C)		Johnny Dodds (C)
					Thad Jones (C)
					Teddy Wilson (C)
					Jaco Pastorius (R)
					Kenny Clarke (C)
					Woody Shaw (R)
					Chet Baker (C)
					Red Rodney (R)
					Mary Lou Williams (C)
					Lee Morgan (R)
					John Carter (C)
					Maynard Ferguson (R)
					James P. Johnson (C)
					Gerry Mulligan (R)
					Edward Blackwell (C)
					Dave Brubeck (R)
					Frank Zappa (C)
					J.J. Johnson (R)
					Julius Hemphill (C)
					Horace Silver (R)
					Artie Shaw (C)
					Nat "King" Cole (R)
					Tony Williams (C)

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

The top 10 best of Nat "King" Cole on CD:

- 1) *Nat King Cole*—Capitol 99777 (4 CDs): As good a survey of the entire Cole career as is possible in a mere four discs.
- 2) *The Complete Capitol Recordings Of The Nat King Cole Trio*—Mosaic 18D-138 (18 CDs): A towering achievement and Grammy winner, this Wagner-sized box includes all of Cole's own trio and small-group sessions from 1942 onward.
- 3) *The Best Of The Nat King Cole Trio, Instrumental Classics*—Blue Note 98288; *Vocal Classics*—Blue Note 33572: For those unwilling to plunge into the big boxes listed above, here are two individual volumes.
- 4) *The MacGregor Years 1941-45*—Music & Arts 911 (4 CDs): Here are an additional five hours or so from the World War II era.
- 5) *Two In Love*—Capitol 46650: Cole's greatest post-trio collaborator was orchestrator Nelson Riddle, and the two never did better than this.
- 6) *St. Louis Blues* (aka *Nat King Cole Sings The Blues*)—Capitol 32162: Cole and Riddle's finest work in a jazz vein was also the one positive result of Cole's only movie role.
- 7) *Love Is The Thing*—Capitol CDP7-46648; *The Very Thought Of You*—Capitol 46649: When Cole wanted the most overtly sentimental sound imaginable, he turned to the master of the heavy string section, Gordon Jenkins.
- 8) *The Billy May Sessions*—Capitol/EMI 89545 (2 CDs): Inspired by Ellington and Lunceford, the whimsically jazzy May brought more of a swing-band sensibility to his charts for Cole.
- 9) *The Complete "After Midnight" Sessions*—Capitol 48328: The most celebrated of Cole's later small-group outings contains some of the most remarkable piano he ever laid down.
- 10) *Nat King Cole At The Sands*—Capitol 93786: His only officially released live album and the most tangible document extant of Cole's spellbinding success as a consummate entertainer and showman. —Will Friedwald





## JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

# Marsalis

WYNTON

If everything had gone according to plan, Wynton Marsalis would have taken a long, deep breath in 1997, stepping out of the public eye for a sorely needed sabbatical.

Having spent at least the past decade touring and recording incessantly, having presided over the Jazz at Lincoln Center program—as well as a 26-part National Public Radio series (*Making The Music*) and a four-part public television series (*Marsalis On Music*)—the man was ready for a break. “I was tired, and I needed to assess what I was doing,” says Marsalis, 36. “And the cats in the band had gotten tired, too. But things didn’t work out exactly as I had planned.” That’s putting it mildly, for the past year turns out to have been one of the more momentous in Marsalis’ life, and not only because he became the first jazz composer to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music, for his epic vocal-instrumental work *Blood On The Fields*.

The subsequent release of *Blood* in a three-CD boxed set (on Columbia; see “CD Reviews” Sept. ’97), the national television broadcast of highlights of the piece (on PBS’ *Sessions At West 54th Street*) and the perpetual expansion of his schedule of concerts and student workshops (with Marsalis apparently unable to say “no” to

appearances that interest him) set the stage for another important development: The readers of Down Beat magazine have conferred a double honor on Marsalis, selecting him Jazz Musician and Composer of the Year. Coupled with his double win last August in the Critics Poll (in the Composer and Trumpet categories), Marsalis clearly has enjoyed a remarkably high profile for a man who wanted to kick back and relax (though he may be constitutionally incapable of doing so).

The critical element in all this activity is not so much Marsalis’ accumulation of awards but his emergence as a major American composer working in jazz and blues idioms. For if Marsalis first captured the world’s attention in the mid-1980s as a trumpet virtuoso equally conversant with jazz and classical languages, his impact appears to have shifted to his role as a composer who brings elements of jazz improvisation and blues melody and harmony to increasingly ambitious, classically tinged scores.

To Marsalis, the transformation began exactly a decade ago, though it was so subtle and discreet most listeners didn’t notice it. “I think it goes back to the first time I ever wrote a song really with chord

changes on it—I mean, with a lot of changes,” says Marsalis. “The song was called ‘In The Afterglow,’” from the 1987 album *Marsalis Standard Time, Vol. 1*. “That was the first time I wrote something with a certain type of traditional [chord] progression. Before that, I would write stuff that was modal, with chords on it.

“But ‘In The Afterglow’ got me to try to break out of writing the typical type of New York-scene tune and trying to experiment with form, with modulations, with developing themes in different keys, with different grooves. And once I had [drummer] Herlin [Riley] with me, Herlin would start working on the grooves and interpreting the themes, and that’s when my [composed] music really started to evolve.”

Like Duke Ellington, his primary inspiration as composer, Marsalis was beginning to build formal compositions through spontaneous interplay with his instrumentalists, most notably Riley and Marsalis’ pianist at the time, Marcus Roberts. But that process, and Marsalis’ nascent voice as composer, didn’t really become apparent until his breakthrough, 1989 recording *The Majesty Of The Blues*. Here, Marsalis finally broke free of a somewhat slick and impersonal post-

BY HOWARD REICH



## **432 Wynton Marsalis**

- 291 Sonny Rollins
- 114 Joe Lovano
- 110 Ornette Coleman
- 108 Charlie Haden
- 103 Kenny Garrett
- 103 Herbie Hancock
- 87 Wayne Shorter
- 75 Eliane Elias
- 60 Benny Carter
- 54 James Carter
- 51 Joe Henderson
- 48 Pat Metheny
- 45 Chick Corea

## **Composer**

### **151 Wynton Marsalis**

- 102 Benny Carter
- 97 Maria Schneider
- 94 Ornette Coleman
- 90 Horace Silver
- 87 Eliane Elias
- 37 Henry Threadgill
- 32 Wayne Shorter
- 30 Carla Bley
- 20 Tom Harrell
- 20 Joe Lovano
- 19 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 16 Charlie Haden







bebop musical vocabulary, finding a more autobiographical sound in the bluesy chords, rhythmic backbeats and plunger-muted phrases one associates with the South in general, Marsalis' native New Orleans in particular.

In works such as the 1991, three-CD *Soul Gestures In Southern Blue* (which Marsalis had conceived as part of a four-CD set to have included *The Majesty Of The Blues*), the 1992 CD *Blue Interlude* (with its spoken narrative) and the 1994 *In This House, On This Morning* (an instrumental evocation of a Sunday church service), Marsalis had managed to create extended jazz compositions that combined traditional musical forms with modern, bracing dissonance.

*Blood On The Fields* simply upped the ante on Marsalis' ventures in composition, the gorgeous voicing of his septet on the aforementioned recordings now extended to the full palette of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. That *Blood On The Fields* addressed nothing less than the horrific passage of African slaves to the shores of America, and the terrors and triumphs that were to follow, made the piece the most ambitious and audacious of Marsalis' career as composer.

"The subject matter was something that I had thought about, basically, since I could think," says Marsalis.

"I remember reading a book on Frederick Douglass when I was five or six. But before *Blood On The Fields*, I never had written for a large ensemble, and also I never had written that many words," adds Marsalis, whose poetic libretto recalls the more lyrical passages of his book *Sweet Swing Blues On The Road* (W. W. Norton & Co.).

"With the range and the amount of music in *Blood On The Fields*, and the different styles and grooves, I had to try to unify all this material. So I wrote—and rewrote—the overall form of the piece, figuring out how the key-schemes and how the themes were going to relate to each other, how certain themes were going to appear and later reappear, when to use certain grooves and tempos. All that was written down on paper long before I started [to compose]."

Though the work's ascent on the Billboard jazz chart (where *Blood On The Fields* placed in the Top 10 for several weeks) and its appearance on the PBS

television broadcast probably bolstered Marsalis' self-confidence as writer of libretto and score, the Pulitzer Prize was historic.

"I'm very happy about Wynton getting the Pulitzer—he's a magnificent musician—especially since they didn't give it to Duke [Ellington]," says trumpeter Clark Terry, an Ellington alum who remembers well the Pulitzer board's decision not to give Ellington a prize that the music jury had recommended in 1965. "Ellington didn't say a great deal about it at the time, but I'm sure he was hurt by it. Things were a little different in those days, and I'm glad that Wynton has shown how times finally have changed."

To Marsalis, the Pulitzer "says some-



ALAN TANIGUCHI

thing about the changing recognition of the esthetic achievements of jazz music, which in turn helps the entire nation, because jazz is an American art form. I mean, it may be that a certain group of people at one time in this country may not have liked who the music came from—but the time for that is over."

The Pulitzer board has acknowledged as much, explicitly changing the rules for next year's competition, presumably to include jazz and other non-classical idioms. Though the award previously honored "distinguished musical composition by an American in any of the larger forms, including chamber, orchestral, choral, opera, song, dance or other forms of musical theater," the new wording eliminates the classical buzzwords, giving the award simply "for distinguished musical composition of significant dimension."

And while the instructions previously required that "all entries should include ... a score or manuscript and a recording of the work," the new instructions ask

simply for "a score of the non-improvisational elements of the work and recording of the entire work." Improvisation—an element integral not only to jazz but to other non-classical musics—now explicitly has become part and parcel of the Pulitzer Prize in Music.

The world of music clearly is changing in radical and previously unexpected ways, with Marsalis' award symbolizing important shifts in American culture. Yet Marsalis' triumph, like his previous ones, has sparked some criticism from particular writers and musicians, who bemoaned this turn of events.

"Once you get to really know the musicians, it's obvious that we're all striving for the same thing," says Marsalis. "When

we're growing up, we have different upbringings, but we all have a common bond: music. Now, once jobs start to be distributed and articles start to be written, all these things take place that drive musicians into different camps and into different ways of thinking. But deep down in the heart of those musicians, they're all basically the same person who went to those Saturday morning lessons.

"And every time the status quo is challenged [as it was with the Pulitzer], we have to go through a growing process that's painful. But that pain is just a part of what being out here in the world is about."

Like his father, jazz pianist and educator Ellis Marsalis, Wynton clearly brings a missionary's fer-

vor to a music that tends to be marginalized in American culture. For those who find this facet of the trumpeter's work a bit zealous, perhaps it's worth noting, as veteran Chicago composer/bandleader William Russo does, that "at this point in his life, Wynton could be spending his time with a golf pro, a masseuse and all the rest of the entourage. Instead, he wakes up early in the morning to go teach kids in school, then plays concerts at night."

Why does he do it?

"You'll come into a school, and you'll be talking with kids who've got your album, and you've seen these kids since they were 12 or 14," explains Marsalis. "And they're playing, working so hard, and you're playing with them, and then you play a bunch of hard music together in concert, and their parents are in the audience, smiling.

"Then you finish, and everyone feels this incredible rush of emotion.

"And those vibrations you feel afterwards, those are very, very hip."



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

MISSION  
Accomplished



**Jazz Album**

**354 Pursuance, Kenny Garrett (Warner Bros.)**

- 260 *Joe Henderson Big Band*, Joe Henderson (Verve)
- 257 *Bug Music*, Don Byron (Nonesuch)
- 240 *Remembering Bud Powell*, Chick Corea & Friends (Stretch)
- 239 *The Three Americas*, Eliane Elias (Blue Note)
- 126 *Turn Out The Stars*, Bill Evans (Warner Bros.)
- 97 *Songbook*, Kenny Garrett (Warner Bros.)
- 87 *Sound Musuem*, Ornette Coleman (Harmolodic/Nerve)
- 87 *Celebrating Sinatra*, Joe Lovano (Blue Note)
- 72 *Blood On The Fields*, Wynton Marsalis (Columbia)
- 71 *Freedom In The Groove*, Joshua Redman (Warner Bros.)
- 66 *Angel Song*, Kenny Wheeler (ECM)
- 63 *Live In Time*, Mingus Big Band (Dreyfus)
- 54 *Beyond The Missouri Sky*, Charlie Haden & Pat Metheny (Verve)
- 52 *The Messenger*, Kurt Elling (Blue Note)

**Beyond Album**

**136 Oceano, Sergio Mendes (Verve Forecast)**

- 103 *Peace Beyond Passion*, Me'Shell Ndegeocello (Warner Bros.)
- 83 *52nd & Broadway*, Us3 (Blue Note)

Who would have guessed a year ago that Kenny Garrett would be the talk of the town? The confusion stops with the music, as it should. Lay down and listen to *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane*, the readers' choice for Jazz Album of the Year, and you will hear more of what started this young alto player's vital curriculum vitae.

It's a list that includes his *Trilogy* (Warner Bros.) album of last year as well as 1992's *Black Hope* (Warner Bros.) with saxophonist Joe Henderson and *African Exchange Student* (1990, Atlantic Jazz). Throw in the most recent album, *Songbook* (Warner Bros.; an album that technically qualified but had little room to breathe for our readers, given the release date and our poll deadline), and you've got a substantial catalogue for a leader of only 36. And, when you think about it, it didn't hurt him one bit to plant all those seeds in the '80s as a sideman with Miles Davis. You may have noticed that Garrett also won Alto Saxophonist of the Year as well. Methinks there's a connection.

As for the music on *Pursuance*, consider his time spent with Davis as time spent with Coltrane, too. Garrett thought of Trane constantly as an outgrowth of Davis, having been a sideman for the trumpeter. Talking to Down Beat writer Howard Mandel, he said, "I think Miles and Trane, they were able to be such innovators because they had bands they could work with, develop some music with" (Sept. '97). Such is the case with Garrett's band on *Pursuance*, an album wherein he re-revisits a classic Coltrane composition first recorded on *Trilogy*, namely, "Giant Steps."

And what of the band on *Pursuance*? How 'bout guitarist Pat Metheny, along with Garrett regular Brian Blade on drums

and bassist Rodney Whitaker. No slouches here, part of the strength of the program stems not only from the material, including the group-composed closer, but the approach: It's an alto album, music played on an instrument Coltrane rarely, rarely played; add to it the consummate electric guitar of one who takes his star quality with a large grain of salt and the balance of a mucho sympatico rhythm section. Garrett and Co. kick ass, but with a smile. Which may be part of the appeal, part of what makes Kenny Garrett a hot item in jazz these days. Sunglasses and attitude are fine, but don't forget your audience in the process. And, oh yes, don't forget to play great music.

Honorable mention should go to other Down Beat poll placers as well: Joe Henderson's significant big-band outing this year, the always engaging Don Byron for *Bug Music* and Chick Corea's all-star, bare-knuckled bebop band playing Bud Powell music, *Remembering Bud Powell*.

Proving that comebacks can happen just about everyday, Sergio Mendes showed us this year that his new album, *Oceano*, was a hit. Offering an updated sound straight out of Brasil '66, his original trailblazing band that put adult, jazz-influenced Brazilian pop on the map, the album featured Latin stalwarts Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso and Hermeto Pascoal, Mendes demonstrating that he hasn't lost touch with ongoing vital forces in contemporary music.

You may have noticed that critics' choice Superharp James Cotton's *Deep In The Blues*, this year's Blues Album of the Year, landed a piece on both him and the album (see Page 45). Needless to say, Cotton feels, "To win both the Critics and Readers polls lets me know that we hit a chord with the listeners. Now comes the hard part: I want to do it all over again!" We'll be waiting, James. —John Ephland



## ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

# Pat Metheny GROUP

This year's best Electric Jazz Group has now been together for 15 years, a meaningful point that is not lost on the bandleader. "We have to be one of the longer ongoing rhythm-section bands since the MJQ [Modern Jazz Quartet]," muses Pat Metheny. "Can you think of anybody else, where it's really been the same four guys? *That's cool.*"

Steve Rodby, Paul Wertico and Lyle Mays have been the supportive, perpetually restless core of the group. And the bandleader may be the great iconoclast of the jazz scene. "It's so satisfying that the band has existed for 20 years now [including the years with drummer Danny Gottlieb and bassist Mark Egan], and that

we've still found so much to talk about musically amongst ourselves. And there's sort of no end in sight," Metheny says.

Mays and Metheny proved on 1996's "*Quartet*" and again on *Imaginary Day* (see "CD Reviews" Feb. '97, Nov. '97, respectively), that their musical kinship is still strong. "The writing relationship with Lyle has been working better than ever," says the guitarist. "I think that we value the collaborative process and enjoy it in a way that maybe we never have before."

As for Metheny, just when you have him pegged as a smooth-jazz guitarist



### 337 Pat Metheny

- 209 John Scofield
- 161 Yellowjackets
- 144 Bill Frisell
- 131 Ornette Coleman & Prime Time
- 130 Medeski Martin & Wood
- 98 Charlie Hunter
- 97 Joe Zawinul
- 90 Steve Coleman
- 90 Joe Lovano
- 63 Chico Hamilton
- 49 Bela Fleck & The Flecktones

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with a slight edge, he turns in a year like the last one. Following up an album and tour with alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, he took a free-jazz romp with avant guitarist Derek Bailey (*The Sign Of 4*; "CD Reviews" Aug. '97), then recorded a duet album with bassist Charlie Haden (*Beyond The Missouri Sky*; "CD Reviews" April '97). While introducing Metheny at a gig in Colorado, Joshua Redman said, "Pat has the *sound*, and the sound can go anywhere, in any direction. It transcends all styles. He can play the most cutting-edge, raucous music, or the sweetest, prettiest melodies you've ever heard, and still keep that sound and that identity."

The provocative *Imaginary Day* (the Pat Metheny Group's Warner Bros. debut) finds them back in the "American Garage," so to speak, and Metheny proves, maybe once and for all, that there are no categories anymore. "We're pressed with that same dilemma that many musicians are faced with," he says, "of reconciling improvisation with composition. And on the new record, which was an extension of the '*Quartet*' record, we found an interesting new balance of writing to improvisation that's real satisfying." —Robin Tolleson





CLARINET

**DON**  
Byron

**D**on Byron won the Down Beat Readers Poll three years in a row before slipping to second place last year behind perennial poll fixture Eddie Daniels. This year he beat out Daniels for the top spot again, but Byron, ever the iconoclast, dismisses their rivalry as creatively irrelevant: "These polls give people the idea that to have a career in jazz is to compete with people who play your instrument, which is not where I'm coming from. A lot of clarinet players are in competition with other clarinet players, but I think that's a destructive impulse that doesn't lead anyone to try to do anything different."

Byron, a Critics Poll winner six years straight, tries to do everything different, reaching out to diverse audiences with a host of multi-stylistic projects. This year he released *Bug Music* (Nonesuch; see "CD Reviews" Jan. '97), an antic set of transcriptions by Duke Ellington, John Kirby and Raymond Scott, and *No-Vibe Zone* (Knitting Factory Works), a live session with his relatively straightforward quintet. He continues to tour with the quintet and the *Bug Music* ensemble as well as the sextet from his 1995 album *Music For Six Musicians* (Nonesuch). He's also working on a feature film soundtrack and a live performance of his score for

**390 Don Byron**

- 272 Eddie Daniels
- 231 Buddy DeFranco
- 196 Ken Peplowski
- 173 Phil Woods
- 91 Kenny Davern
- 87 Paquito D'Rivera
- 70 Marty Ehrlich
- 68 Alvin Batiste

ACOUSTIC PIANO

**KEITH**  
Jarrett

**K**eith Jarrett believes fervently in the transforming power of music. He maintains, "It's one of the only art forms that can rearrange your molecules against your will." Pre-eminent among pianists, he's worked his chemistry on Down Beat readers for a second consecutive year.

Jarrett will inevitably provoke strong reactions from the listener and critical communities, but he's rarely the subject of indifference. He's achieved the rare freedom to perform and record as dictated by his artistic needs and preferences. That freedom enables him to perform in

three distinct roles, often for different audiences. This year's *La Scala* (see "CD Reviews" Oct. '97) finds him in search of deep solo improvisations, while Jarrett's recent recordings of *Mozart Piano Concertos* confirm his skill as an interpreter of classical repertoire. The "jazz" side of the triangle is represented by his sublime Standards Trio with Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock, whose *Live At The Blue Note* boxed set undoubtedly influenced this year's voters (all titles ECM).

Jarrett's philosophy unifies these seemingly dis-

**237 Keith Jarrett**

- 222 McCoy Tyner
- 196 Kenny Barron
- 193 Herbie Hancock
- 191 Tommy Flanagan
- 189 Chick Corea
- 188 Cyrus Chestnut
- 187 Eliane Elias
- 156 Benny Green
- 140 Geri Allen
- 138 Hank Jones
- 131 Cecil Taylor
- 111 Mulgrew Miller



parate roles. He's committed to playing music with meaning, music capable of deeply affecting performer and listener alike without regard for categories. "I am interested more in rearranging molecules," says the pianist, "than I am in presenting neat music." In a solo performance, he acts as a sort of conduit, playing



the silent movie *Scar Of Shame* in addition to playing with a classical chamber group and preparing to record his new funk-rock band, Existential Dread.

The 39-year-old clarinetist is perhaps best known for the album *Don Byron Plays The Music Of Mickey Katz* (Nonesuch), a tribute to the satirical clarinetist known as the Jewish Spike Jones. Lately, however, Byron has soft-pedaled his klezmer prowess. "I don't feel like it's behind me," he says. "I just didn't like the way people deal with it. The fact that I'm black and playing that music becomes this sensational, exploitive thing. It's so sensational that my other projects end up competing with it."

Defying categorization, Byron has restored the clarinet to jazz's front line. While he's all over the stylistic map, he has yet to spread himself too thin; whatever genre he's tackled, he's had the chops and savvy to handle it. "My purpose is to expose people to music," he says, "and usually I try to expose them to underexposed music. At the time I made *Bug Music*, no one was really thinking about John Kirby; when I made the Mickey Katz album, nobody was thinking about him.

"It's really about exposing underexposed things. If I have to play repertory music, it won't be what everyone else is playing."

—Larry Birnbaum

in response to conscious and unconscious stimuli. "What I'm trying to do is let it all *mean* something," explains Jarrett. "My job is to be transparent, not an editor of energy." The same paramount concern for personal expression carries over into his view of the jazz world. According to the pianist, many younger players need to develop and adhere to their own personal standards, rather than play to satisfy some external criteria. As a result, he fears that much of today's jazz has the generic sound of a "category," when just a few meaningful notes would communicate more to the listener.

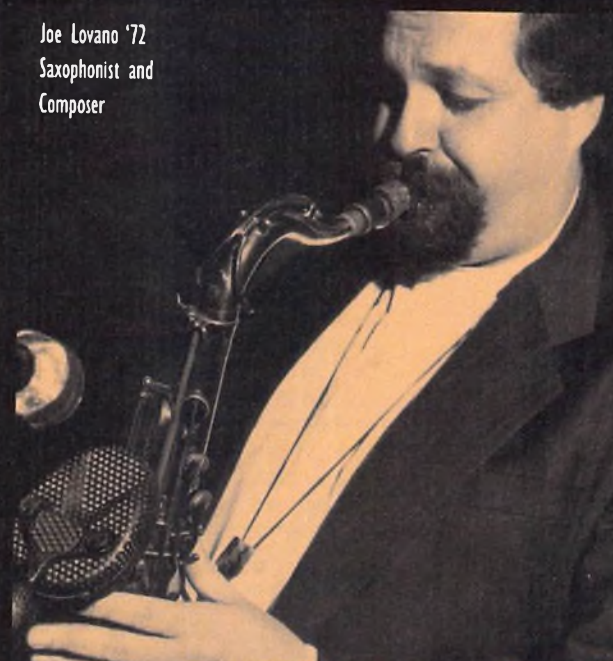
Jarrett is scheduled to return to touring in 1998 for a series of U.S. concerts with the Standards Trio, and his recording of C.P.E. Bach piano sonatas will be released next spring. Other plans are much more fluid. Insisting that he doesn't think about the future, the pianist muses that, right now, he'd like to record more Mozart, a solo standards session, a studio recording of solo improvisation and/or a performance of J. S. Bach's Goldberg variations on piano. To Jarrett, the listener's response is more important than the category. He sums up, "If you walk out

and say, 'I don't know what that was, but I know about it' ... that's good!"

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# BARITONE SAXOPHONE

# NICK Brignola



KEITH FRINGS/CALIFORNIA

## 274 Nick Brignola

- 260 James Carter
- 197 Ronnie Cuber
- 187 Hamiet Bluiett
- 90 Cecil Payne
- 79 John Surman

**M**ilt Hinton told me, 'If you hang in here long enough, they'll find you,'" laughs Nick Brignola. He's been playing baritone saxophone for more than 40 years and, at long last, he's been voted #1 by Down Beat readers.

"Recognition comes late in my career," he says on the phone from his home in Troy, N.Y. "I do what I do. I haven't compromised much. I just go straight ahead."

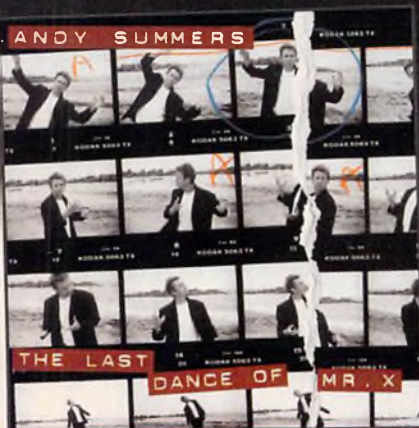
These days, 61-year-old Brignola keeps busy playing his big bari and other saxes on the road. "I do get some gigs where I can bring my group," he says, "but those are isolated concert situations. Most of the time, I'm a wandering soloist." Every so often, he ambles into the studio to record for Mark and Kayla Feldman's Reservoir Music: Brignola has seven fine albums in the label catalog (including *The Flight Of The Eagle*; see "CD Reviews" July '97) and a brand new one titled *Poinciana*.

Over the years, he's gigged with Ted Curson, Woody Herman, Phil Woods and countless more, including Harry Carney. "Carney came down to the Cafe Bohemia with Gerry Mulligan," Brignola recalls about a defining moment in his long career. "They heard there was some young baritone player down there that they wanted to check out. That's how I met him. From there on in, he would call my house when he came through town with Duke Ellington's band. We were very tight, and he was the guy. There were times when I really didn't want to play baritone because alto was my original saxophone, and he kept encouraging me, saying, 'You're going to be a great baritone player someday. You don't play like everyone else.' I thought that was a compliment coming from him."

Now Down Beat readers have paid Brignola another big compliment.

—Frank-John Hadley

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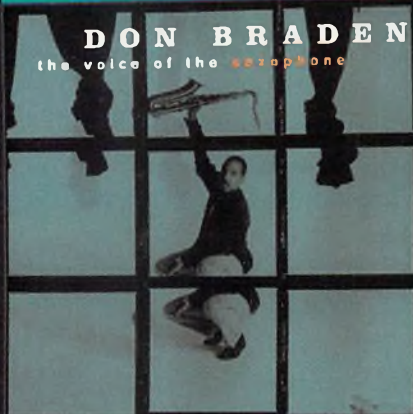
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# BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR

# JAMES Cotton

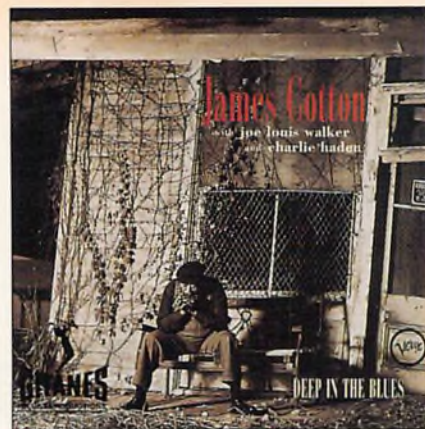
**B**lues harmonica master James Cotton, aka Superharp, is on a roll. Big-time. The past year just may have been his grandest since leaving the Muddy Waters Band for a solo career in 1966, with his triumph in the Down Beat Readers Poll with *Deep In The Blues* coming on the heels of winning the Critics Poll, a Grammy and two W.C. Handy Blues Awards.

Cotton's harmonica playing and singing on *Deep In The Blues*, an all-acoustic studio date with bassist Charlie Haden and guitarist Joe Louis Walker in support, has all the rawbone pain and mysterious grandeur of a committed blues man from Arkansas who earned his stripes accompanying Howlin' Wolf for two years and Muddy Waters for a dozen. His harmonica work establishes stylistic and emotional links with Sonny Boy Williamson II and Little Walter. His raspy vocals sound like no one else. As Cotton says, "My collabo-

ration with Charlie Haden really showed me what I had known for some time: If you can get great musicians together in the studio, and everyone has an open mind, the results can be wonderful.

"*Deep In The Blues* has reaffirmed that people will still recognize, support and come back to real music, played by real musicians," Cotton continues. "There is nothing glossy or high-tech about this record. We simply put together a great group of songs and played them with conviction. We made a blues album—pure and simple."

Still spry at 62, Superharp plans to carry on in the Memphis and Chicago blues traditions by making an album this winter for the new label started up by the Gibson Guitar Corp. He'll be right at home with Howlin' Wolf's longtime guitarist Hubert Sumlin, freelance pianist Dave Maxwell, and the Muddy Waters rhythm section of



## 206 *Deep In The Blues*, James Cotton (Verve)

- 118 *Eye To Eye*, Ronnie Earl (AudioQuest)
- 110 *An Evening Of Acoustic Music*, Taj Mahal (Ruf)
- 40 *Don't Look Back*, John Lee Hooker (Pointblank)
- 36 *One Foot In The Blues*, Johnny Adams (Rounder)
- 36 *Fish Ain't Bitin'*, Corey Harris (Alligator)

Calvin Jones and Willie Smith.

"My manager has informed me," Cotton beams, "that when we close the books on this year, we will have completed our most successful year in my career." Here's to an even grander '98. —Frank-John Hadley

LA SCALA

Keith Jarrett

Solo Concert

featuring the encore  
"Over the Rainbow"

Recorded Live at Teatro Alla Scala, Milano

Keith Jarrett

1997

Down Beat Readers Poll  
Acoustic Pianist of  
the Year

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-Down Beat

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kinetic energy tinged with  
quiet serenity and  
gentle romanticism"

-LA Times

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DOWN BEAT'S 62ND ANNUAL

# Readers Poll

## RESULTS

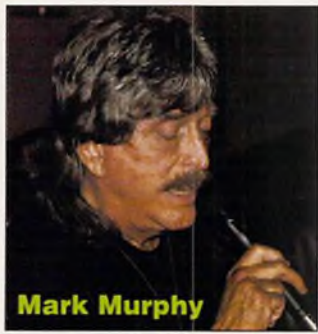


Sonny Rollins

### Arranger

#### 263 Maria Schneider

- 122 Bill Holman
- 120 John Fedchock
- 86 Benny Carter
- 86 Carla Bley
- 80 Wynton Marsalis
- 78 Bob Belden
- 70 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 66 Slide Hampton
- 54 Melba Liston
- 46 Bob Brookmeyer
- 34 Frank Foster



Mark Murphy

### Acoustic Jazz Group

#### 484 Charlie Haden Quartet West

- 408 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio
- 268 Joshua Redman
- 252 Phil Woods
- 240 Chick Corea
- 240 Joe Lovano
- 112 Roy Hargrove
- 100 John Zorn
- 88 Herbie Hancock
- 76 Ornette Coleman
- 76 Joe Henderson

### Big Band

#### 450 Mingus Big Band

- 182 Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra
- 180 Joe Henderson Big Band
- 100 Count Basie Orchestra
- 90 John Fedchock
- 64 Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra
- 60 McCoy Tyner Big Band

- 58 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra
- 38 Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra
- 36 Kansas City Jazz Band

### Trumpet

#### 304 Tom Harrell

- 291 Roy Hargrove
- 248 Wynton Marsalis
- 177 Nicholas Payton
- 174 Randy Brecker
- 89 Dave Douglas
- 87 Clark Terry
- 73 Wallace Roney
- 73 Kenny Wheeler
- 65 Art Farmer
- 40 Arturo Sandoval
- 36 Jon Faddis
- 30 Terence Blanchard

### Soprano Saxophone

#### 422 Wayne Shorter

- 394 Steve Lacy
- 263 Branford Marsalis
- 190 Jane Ira Bloom
- 103 Dave Liebman
- 60 Bob Wilber
- 59 James Carter
- 37 Jane Bunnett
- 35 Kenny Garrett



Don Byron



Stephane Grappelli

### Alto Saxophone

#### 287 Kenny Garrett

- 236 Phil Woods
- 159 Ornette Coleman
- 140 Jackie McLean
- 88 Lee Konitz
- 80 Benny Carter
- 80 Steve Coleman
- 64 Gary Bartz
- 60 James Carter
- 19 Paquito D'Rivera



## Tenor Saxophone

### 373 Sonny Rollins

- 350 Joe Lovano
- 327 Joe Henderson
- 319 Joshua Redman
- 309 James Carter
- 294 Michael Brecker
- 263 David Murray
- 163 Scott Hamilton
- 161 Wayne Shorter

## Organ

### 328 Jimmy Smith

- 196 Larry Goldings
- 191 Joey DeFrancesco
- 83 Barbara Dennerlein
- 83 John Medeski
- 72 Jack McDuff
- 61 Jimmy McGriff
- 40 Lonnie Smith
- 22 Dan Wall

## Electric Keyboard

### 328 Herbie Hancock

- 292 Joe Zawinul
- 214 Chick Corea
- 179 Lyle Mays
- 145 John Medeski
- 136 Wayne Horvitz

## Guitar

### 278 Bill Frisell

- 251 John Scofield
- 238 Pat Metheny
- 185 Kenny Burrell
- 172 Jim Hall
- 163 Mark Whitfield
- 135 Charlie Hunter
- 133 John McLaughlin
- 130 Pat Martino
- 126 John Abercrombie
- 88 George Benson
- 33 Rudy Linka

## Acoustic Bass

### 316 Charlie Haden

- 237 Christian McBride
- 180 Dave Holland
- 170 Ray Brown
- 146 Ron Carter
- 46 George Mraz
- 46 Reggie Workman
- 26 Anthony Cox

## Electric Bass

### 239 Steve Swallow

- 178 Marcus Miller
- 90 Bob Cranshaw
- 83 John Patitucci
- 65 Stanley Clarke
- 40 Christian McBride
- 23 Victor Wooten
- 19 Bill Laswell

## Drums

### 346 Elvin Jones

- 216 Roy Haynes

202 Jack DeJohnette

134 Max Roach

108 Tony Williams

80 Joey Baron

64 Bill Stewart

62 Paul Motian

61 Lewis Nash

56 Billy Higgins

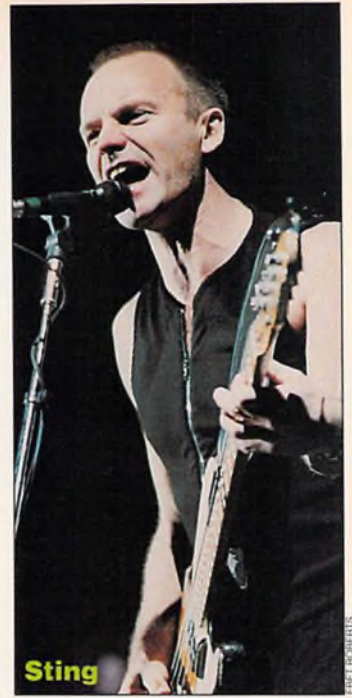
52 Victor Lewis

36 Louie Bellson

## Percussion

### 350 Tito Puente

- 174 Airtio Moreira
- 164 Don Alias
- 78 Jerry Gonzalez
- 68 Trilok Gurtu
- 64 Ray Barretto
- 60 Famoudou Don Moye
- 56 Pancho Sanchez
- 56 Nana Vasconcelos
- 44 Mino Cinelu
- 40 Cafe
- 30 Marilyn Mazur
- 30 Giovanni Hidalgo



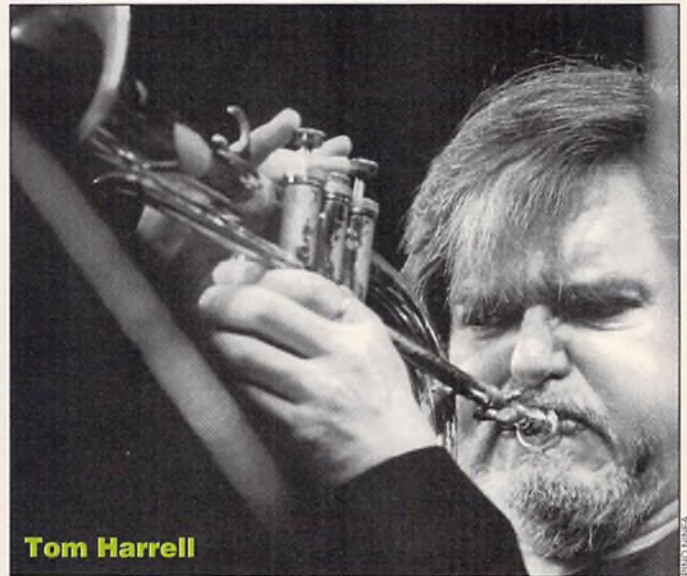
Sting

EBET PHOTOGRAPHS



Tito Puente

KEN FRANKLING



Tom Harrell

PHOTO NINA



Herbie Hancock



Kenny Garrett

FRANCIS LEVLEY





**Elvin Jones**



**James Cotton**

**Trombone**

**462 J.J. Johnson**

- 290 Steve Turre
- 130 Ray Anderson
- 98 John Fedchock
- 98 Curtis Fuller
- 80 Robin Eubanks
- 66 Frank Lacy
- 60 Al Grey
- 32 Bob Brookmeyer
- 32 Conrad Herwig

**Flute**

**326 James Newton**

- 200 James Moody
- 192 Lew Tabackin
- 140 Hubert Laws
- 138 Dave Valentin
- 108 Herbie Mann
- 64 Sonny Fortune
- 64 Frank Wess
- 54 Henry Threadgill
- 28 Jane Bunnett
- 18 Kent Jordon

**Vibes**

**306 Milt Jackson**

- 187 Bobby Hutcherson
- 171 Gary Burton
- 140 Steve Nelson
- 66 Lionel Hampton
- 40 Joe Locke
- 40 Michael Mainieri

**Violin**

**223 Stephane Grappelli**

- 121 Mark Feldman
- 85 Regina Carter
- 77 Jean-Luc Ponty
- 55 Billy Bang
- 32 John Blake
- 18 Leroy Jenkins
- 15 Johnny Frigo

**Misc. Instrument**

**164 Steve Turre (shells)**

- 143 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)
- 83 Bela Fleck (banjo)
- 73 Howard Johnson (tuba)
- 48 David Murray (bass clarinet)
- 21 Bob Stewart (tuba)
- 20 James Carter (bass clarinet)
- 20 Dino Saluzzi (bandoneon)
- 17 Marty Ehrlich (bass clarinet)

**Male Singer**

**290 Mark Murphy**

- 121 Joe Williams
- 92 Kevin Mahogany
- 60 Kurt Elling
- 60 Bobby McFerrin
- 52 Tony Bennett
- 47 Jon Hendricks
- 46 Mel Torme
- 17 Andy Bey

**Female Singer**

**307 Cassandra Wilson**

- 127 Diana Krall
- 126 Betty Carter

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- 73 Shirley Horn
- 72 Nancy Wilson
- 69 Abbey Lincoln
- 45 Eliane Elias
- 36 Sheila Jordan
- 33 Dianne Reeves
- 29 Dee Dee Bridgewater
- 16 Carol Sloane

- 93 Roomful of Blues
- 83 Ronnie Earl
- 77 John Lee Hooker
- 68 Charles Brown
- 68 Taj Mahal

- 18 Stevie Wonder
- 17 Lyle Lovett
- 15 Milton Nascimento

**Beyond Group of the Year**

- 163 Los Lobos**
- 139 Jerry Gonzalez Fort Apache Band
- 103 Kronos Quartet
- 97 Neville Bros.
- 90 Sting
- 87 Morphine
- 44 Tower of Power

**Beyond Musician of the Year**

- 175 Sting**
- 160 Van Morrison
- 130 Dr. John
- 52 Eliane Elias
- 21 Joni Mitchell
- 18 Prince

**Vocal Jazz Group**

**242 Take 6**

- 231 Manhattan Transfer
- 168 New York Voices
- 66 Four Freshman
- 30 Jackie & Roy

**Blues Musician of the Year**

**312 B.B. King**

- 285 Buddy Guy
- 98 John Lee Hooker
- 94 Ronnie Earl
- 66 Taj Mahal
- 64 Luther Allison
- 46 Charles Brown
- 44 James Cotton

**Blues Group of the Year**

**179 B.B. King**

- 102 Buddy Guy



Wayne Shorter

ALAN TRINGMAN



Mingus Big Band



Steve Turre

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**T**he trumpet is the prince of horns. It's a very sacred instrument. So, I find that at times I have to go back in my history to find new things." So said trumpeter Woody Shaw in this month's "Classic Interview" from January 1983. Shaw was exploring both the tradition and innovations with his hot young band featuring trombonist Steve Turre, among others. Nowadays, this *Down Beat* Hall of Famer can be heard on recent reissues by his former employer, Dexter Gordon (*Sophisticated Giant*, Columbia/Legacy), as well as *The Freddie Hubbard/Woody Shaw Sessions* and *Bemsha Swing*, featuring Geri Allen (both double CDs from Blue Note).

## Woody Shaw Linked to a Legacy

By Linda Reitman

**LINDA REITMAN:** By what criteria did you choose your present band members?

**WOODY SHAW:** I chose each member on the basis that I heard their potential, the fact that they believed in me and respected me as a leader, and the fact that I could learn from them as well. That was the key to the success of musicians like Art Blakey and Horace Silver. As a leader, you acquire and use the knowledge that you've experienced. So I go on the basis that I can teach a musician, if he lets me, but I also have to get something in return and learn from him. That's one of the keys to being a bandleader. You surround yourself with musicians who inspire you. Many people have mentioned that each member of my band is uniquely qualified to distinguish himself. Now that's something that I also demand of my musicians. I have found that the acceptance of my quintet has been overwhelming, and I believe that's partly due to the blend of trumpet and trombone. It's a very unique and innovative sound for today.

**LR:** Your trombonist, Steve Turre, appeared on several of your past albums before becoming a member of your present quintet. How did you find him?

**WS:** I met Steve in 1972, when I was residing in San Francisco, and we struck up an immediate rapport. Although he wasn't quite the player he is now, I could see it happening. Steve has been very instrumental and influential in the music that I write and record, and he's one of the few people whom I will allow to arrange my music. Steve will be one of the innovators on the instrument. I've watched this band grow during the two years it's been in existence. My pianist Mulgrew Miller is growing into a very brilliant player; Stafford James is one of the major voices of the contrabass; and I've watched Tony Reedus grow to become a phenomenal drummer. One of the characteristics of my band is that we play in many varied styles. We play in the mainstream tradition, the avant-garde tradition, and we play in the bebop tradition—which is the basis of modern jazz. What I'm doing now is a culmination of all the experiences I acquired during my 10 years as a sideman. I try to use whatever I feel at the time, as well as what is apropos to the audience before me. The audience plays an important part in a

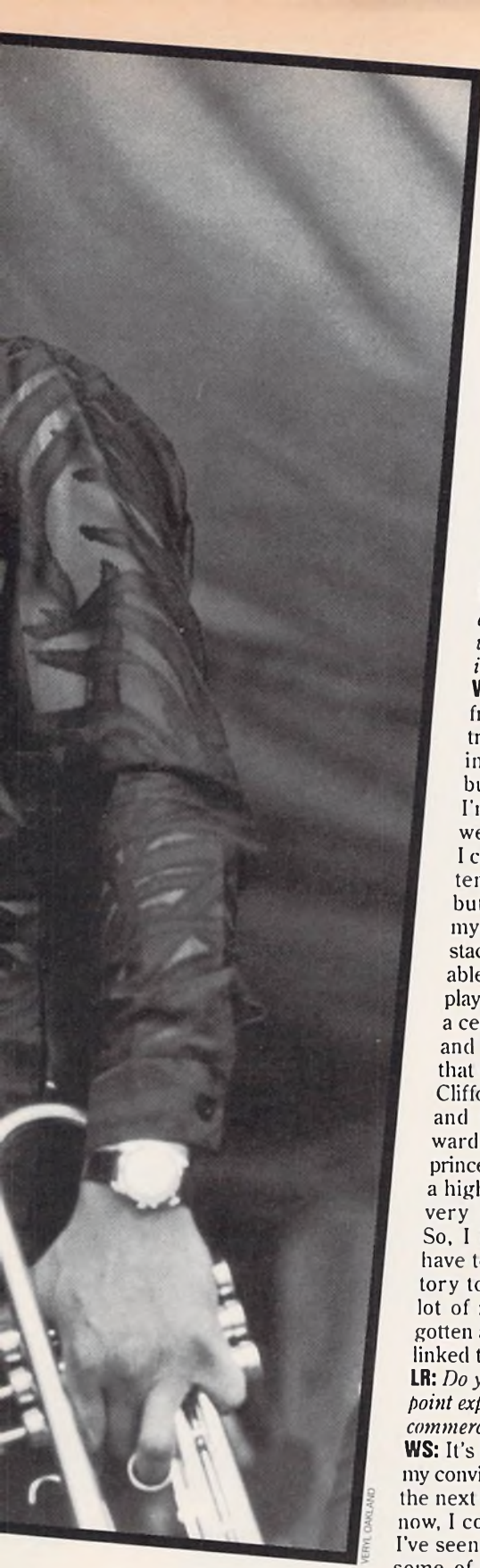
musician's development, and after a while he's able to develop a rapport with them.

**LR:** Many people are of the opinion that bebop is old-fashioned. Do you think that your association with bebop is preventing you from being accepted by a larger audience?

**WS:** No, I don't, because bebop is the foundation of modern jazz. Dizzy Gillespie is still here, alive and well, to attest to that. And many of his innovations that went on with Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Max Roach are still being practiced today, but in a different form. The music still lives. Although I'm not a







VERVE DALLARD

bebop musician, per se, I respect *all* of the transitions that modern jazz has gone through. And the catalyst for my whole conception was Louis Armstrong, because he was one of the pioneers of jazz—period! I draw my needs and inspiration from the music that has happened before me, as well as what's happening now.

**LR:** *How do you manage to keep coming up with fresh musical ideas?*

**WS:** Again, it comes from my respect for tradition. I admire the innovations of today, but at the same time, I'm aware that there were others before us. I consider myself a contemporary musician, but many times I find myself running into obstacles, whereby I'm unable to compose and my playing seems stymied to a certain level. I go back and listen to the music that came before me, like Clifford Brown and Louis, and I'm able to go forward. The trumpet is the prince of horns, and I have a high esteem for it. It's a very sacred instrument. So, I find that at times I have to go back in my history to find new things. A lot of musicians have forgotten about that. We are all linked to a legacy.

**LR:** *Do you anticipate at some point experimenting with more commercial forms of music?*

**WS:** It's like this: If I stick to my convictions, I can work for the next 20 years. If I change now, I could ruin my career. I've seen it happen to others, some of my contemporaries who are just a little older than

me. By sticking to my beliefs, I'm even more strongly convinced I'm going in the right direction. As I see it, the position of jazz in the record industry is a position of longevity. It's not something you can make a quick profit from.

**LR:** *Are you of the opinion that today's younger musicians would learn more from listening to the early innovators than they would by reading the various technical books that have gained popularity recently?*

**WS:** Jazz, to me, is an expression of what the American black man has experienced. In recent years jazz has acquired the academic respect that it lacked some 20 years ago, but it was developed from experience. Jazz is a lifestyle—you have to live jazz. Some of the jazz clinics that I've been involved with, with David Baker and Jamey Aebersold, have helped to introduce jazz to the layman, and it has probably been very helpful to him. But a lot of musicians find that after they've left the various institutions—Berklee or whatever—they're very frustrated. This music is based on paying dues; there's more to it than just going and acquiring knowledge academically. When young musicians ask me, "Where did you learn to play jazz?" I answer, "I grew up with it." A musician is very fortunate to be able to go to some of these institutions to learn the music from a technical standpoint, but it's not all based on technical and theoretical knowledge. It's value is also very esoteric, and deals with the development of American culture. Jazz is a very highly developed form of classical music.

**LR:** *It's interesting that you use the term "classical music" to connote jazz, because many young people are critical of the intellectualism usually associated with classical music. I've heard some of them, in fact, pass jazz off as "chamber music."*

**WS:** When you sit down and listen to a Beethoven symphony, you're listening in an intellectual capacity, yes? And it takes a certain amount of intellect to listen to what I'm talking about, the classical jazz, which may be contemporary or traditional. It takes a certain amount of intellect to listen to jazz, but at the same time it's highly emotional and expressive of various moods. It draws from the Afro-European experience—and that's what makes it unique—yet it's an American art form. My concern now is with promoting the legacy of the trumpet. I've tried to pass on my experiences to young musicians, like Wynton Marsalis. And this young man has greatly inspired *me*, by combining the experience of New Orleans with his academic background of Juilliard. I have a need for a young man like that, because there's a certain rivalry that goes with playing the trumpet; somewhere out there, there's always a challenger. It's a very difficult instrument to play, and it takes a certain personality to play the trumpet. I always keep my ear open for new trumpet players.

**LR:** *Would you elaborate on what this "certain personality" is?*

**WS:** Check out the personalities of the better trumpet players. There has to be a certain amount of confidence that goes with playing that instrument. In general, good trumpet players usually have fiery personalities, and they're usually in good physical condition, 'cause it takes a lot of physical prowess to play the instrument. I've been studying a form of Chinese exercise called Tai Chi for the past two years, and I've found that it helps enhance my physiological power on the instrument, and it also gives me better concentration. You need certain mental characteristics to play the trumpet. It takes a strong constitution, because there are many physical handicaps to playing the trumpet. You have to have both mental *and* physical prowess to play this instrument.


**LR:** *Do you view the trumpet as more of a physical instrument or a mental instrument? Do your experiences with Tai Chi allow you a greater freedom and flexibility on the trumpet?*

**WS:** It's a very physical instrument. It has only three valves, as opposed to 88 keys on the piano, and 22 keys on the saxophone. So, it takes a great deal of mental concentration to play it, and to play in all of the chromatic keys, in the 12-tone theories. After practicing Tai Chi, I have found that I'm able to apply different methods for concentrating mentally and physically. I'm always searching for different venues to express myself. And you have to have a certain amount of discipline to reach that, a certain peace of mind. I haven't found it yet, but I'm looking for it. Each time that I come across it, however briefly, my creative output increases. **DB**









HORACE SILVER

# Treasure Chest Of Tunes

Horace Silver's got a treasure chest of tunes. "I have so many tunes, a backlog of tunes," says Silver a few days after his 69th birthday. "I've got a closet full of cassettes with songs I've written but never recorded. I can't even remember when I wrote them. But I dug through the tapes and compiled a bunch of tunes that were compatible with each other. Most of *A Prescription For The Blues* came from that box of cassettes."

*A Prescription For The Blues* is Silver's latest CD, a handful of jewels from that musical treasure chest. By his own estimation, over the last decade he's amassed what would amount to several boxed sets of material. Indeed, the pianist is one of jazz's most respected composers.

Elected into the Down Beat Hall of Fame in last year's Readers Poll (Dec. '96), Silver's resume as a sideman and leader encompasses work with nearly all the jazz titans of the last four decades. From his entree into the jazz world in 1950 as a member of Stan Getz's band and his co-founding of the Jazz Messengers with Art Blakey in 1954 to his associations with such colossals as Lester Young and Miles Davis and once-upstarts-now-stars the Brecker Brothers and Tom Harrell, Silver has consistently served up a good-humored, funk-grooving brand of hard-bop.

"I have respect for fusion and the avant-garde, but I'm straightahead all the way," says Silver, sitting in the spacious living room of his pink and blue ranch-styled Malibu house, which boasts a spectacular panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean. "I have no qualms with people experimenting as long as the jazz doesn't get so diluted and so far out that the tradition gets lost. I feel it's important to be dedicated to keeping the music pure so that all the great contributions of Pres, Diz, Miles and Monk can continue to be vibrant and alive."

Silver, one of most cordial and cheerful jazz musicians in the business, gives a quick tour of his house, showing off several pieces of art painted by friends, fans and family. On one wall above the couch,

there's a mahogany-framed photo by Chuck Stewart of Silver next to a handwritten copy of the music to "A Song For My Father." On another wall, there are framed LPs. A coffee table is piled with music trade magazines; another table sports several birthday cards. In his practice room, next to a small trampoline and exercise bicycle, stands a Steinway piano covered with photos of Silver's heroes, including Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and Eubie Blake. "I've got all my mentors watching me when I sit here," he says, then laughs. "So I better play well."

Silver speaks quickly, with a slight nervous quiver in his voice. He bubbles over with enthusiasm when talking about his music. He's hard-working, gracious and optimistic—winning personality traits for the jazz scene, where today's hero can quickly turn into tomorrow's has-been. Careerwise, he's had his share of hard knocks, especially during the '80s when his 25-year association with Blue Note ended and he was without a major-label deal. It was then that he formed Silveto Productions so that he could release albums on his homegrown Silveto and Emerald imprints. It wasn't easy, he admits. Because of distribution hassles, business was a lot less than brisk.

However, since he was rediscovered by Columbia in 1992 and subsequently signed by Impulse!, Silver's been riding high in the saddle and continuing to deliver engaging, exuberant jazz. He's not only an accentuate-the-positive kind of guy, but he's still excited, an essential for jazz longevity. "It's the music that's keeping me young. Thank god I haven't lost my enthusiasm. OK, I'm 69, and I've got my aches and pains, but writing, practicing, performing and recording is what's making me happy and keeping me going."

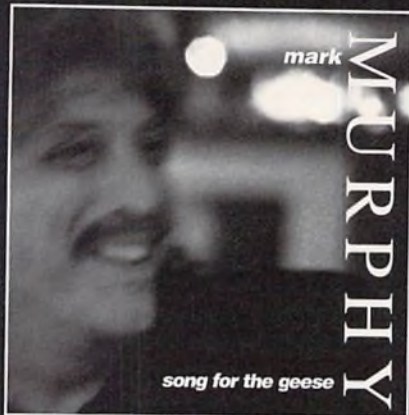
As for those blues always lurking around the next corner, well, Silver's got a

BY DAN OUELLETTE



# MARK MURPHY

1997 Down Beat  
Readers Poll  
Male Singer of the Year



## Song For The Geese

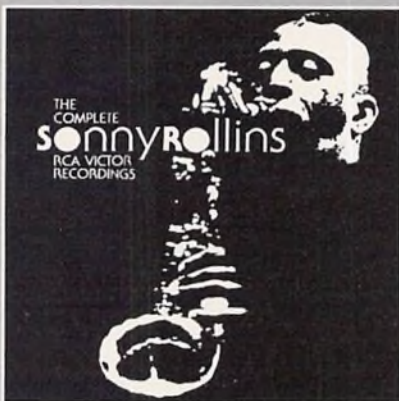
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Male Singer of the Year - 2 years running  
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-Jazz Times

# Sonny Rollins

1997 Down Beat  
Readers Poll  
Tenor Saxophonist  
of the Year



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potent Rx for chasing them away. In the liner notes to *A Prescription For The Blues*, he offers sure-fire remedies, many of which derive from his strong spiritual convictions.

While Silver's hard-boppin' health plan tends to drift into the esoteric zone, also consider that the Groove Doc recommends a good measure of laughter. "I'm a down-to-earth, nitty-gritty person, and I've written lots of serious lyrics over the years, but I like injecting humor into my music," says Silver, whose video cabinet includes classic comedy films by the Marx Brothers and the Three Stooges. "I remember reading an interview with Duke Ellington once where he was asked if music should have a sense of humor. He said, most definitely, otherwise it's nothing. I think music can be like watching a good comedian tell a joke. Laughing can take your mind off problems for a while. That's what I was thinking about when I wrote two of my best known songs, 'Filthy McNasty' and 'Sister Sadie.'"

For the new album, Silver fronts a quintet, the first time he's led a fivesome on a major label recording since his 1980 Blue Note finale, *Silver 'N' Strings Play The Music Of The Spheres*. This disc also finds Silver reunited with the tenor sax/trumpet team of Michael and Randy Brecker, who toured with him for two years in the early '70s and appeared on half of his 1973 recording *In Pursuit Of The 27th Man*. In addition, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Louis Hayes, both veterans of past dates, rejoin Silver on this outing.

Throughout his own hard-bopping career, Silver has had many compositional triumphs, including his classic number "Song For My Father," which '60s pop music fans may not be able to identify but would certainly recognize. When did it dawn on Silver that he had the knack for composing memorable tunes? "I've been writing songs since I was 14. I had my idols like Duke Ellington and W.C. Handy, and later I checked out Scott Joplin and some of the more contemporary guys like Tadd Dameron, Bird [Charlie Parker] and of course Monk. I loved Monk. But I never dreamed when I wrote songs like 'Señor Blues,' 'Nica's Dream' and 'The Preacher' that they'd become popular. I guess I've just been fortunate."

On *A Prescription For The Blues*, Silver offers another batch of catchy, spirited

tunes, some of which, like "You Gotta Shake That Thing," literally had him up and movin' when he wrote them. "I'm always elated when I finish writing a song and I know it's good," he explains. "Sometimes I get so excited, I'll play back the tape and dance around the room while I'm listening to it."

When pressed on where exactly his songs come from, Silver says, "Music is everywhere. You just have to listen for it. For example, 'Serenade To A Tea Kettle,' from one of my previous albums, came from the tea kettle. It was whistling. I picked it up off the gas and the tone changed. I got three or four different notes. I wondered what those notes were. So I went to the piano and picked those notes out. I fooled around with 'em a bit, and I made a tune."

Silver talks about another number he hasn't recorded yet that was inspired by the crickets in his backyard. Another tune derived from a bluejay's song. "If you're adventuresome, you can make a tune out of damn near anything you hear. Drop a



ALAN WARD/RETNA

glass on the floor, listen to the noise of it breaking and write a song. But these common sounds escape the average person. Car horns blow, church bells ring, birds chirp and you pay it no mind. But if you have the musical mind of a composer, you pay attention to those sounds that hit you."

Silver also grabs songs from his sleep. "I'll be dreaming about a tune just before I wake up. If I jump up and go to the piano and play out the phrase, I get a new tune to work on. If I roll over and go back to sleep, I lose it. It's like another one of my older songs, 'Diggin' On Dexter.' I dreamt Dexter Gordon was doing a gig. I woke up and wrote down the first eight bars of the melody he was playing. Later I worked on the harmonies and I wrote a bridge of my own."

One of his new songs, "Yodel Lady Blues," comes straight from his love of cowboy films. The shout chorus is written to sound like a cowboy, or in this case, a cowgirl yodeling. Silver demonstrates by warbling his best yodel. "I'm not into country music, but I love Westerns," he says. Again, he points to his videocassette library crammed with classic cowboy flicks. "Hopalong Cassidy is my favorite. I have almost all his films on video. Watching them reminds me of when I was eight, nine years old and going to Saturday afternoon matinees in Norwalk, Conn. There was Hoppy, Randolph Scott,



John Wayne. Watching these films now makes me feel like a kid again. I lean back in my reclining chair, pop in a Hoppy movie and I'm back in Norwalk."

Another dance-groove number, "Whenever Lester Plays The Blues," finds Silver paying homage to Lester Young. "I love Pres. He's my mentor. Has been and still is. I used to play tenor sax, and Pres was my idol. I bought every Count Basie record that he was on when I was a kid and practiced every day to get his sound. When Pres had his own quintet, I bought all those records and played along with them. I got him down pretty good. Today his music still inspires me. I play his records, and he turns me on. It was a great blessing to play with him for six months in the early '50s. I had to pinch myself. It was a dream come true."

For many of his compositions, Silver also supplies the lyrics, which he includes in his CD liner notes even though no vocalists are invited for the date. "In the formative years of my career, I wasn't thinking about lyrics, just horn lines so the cats could blow on 'em and have some fun," Silver explains. "But one day, when 'Senor Blues' became popular, I thought I could get the tune more coverage if I gave it some lyrics. Soon after, I did the same with 'Sister Sadie.' Little by little, I began writing lyrics. Now I don't want anyone writing the words to my songs. I want to do it myself."

Speaking of composing, the only gripe the easygoing, good-natured Silver expresses is his disappointment in many of the younger jazz stars who exhibit brilliant musicianship but lack compelling music to blow on. "I've been listening to a lot of the new releases lately. The players are strong, but the tunes are weak. They need good material. You can get the best musicians in the world to support you, but if the compositions are sub-par, the recording won't be very good. The problem is that not everyone is a composer. There are lots of dynamite musicians, but they should link up with a great composer or play some standards."

Silver's only selectively critical of the younger jazz generation. In fact, the jazz elder singles out pianists Jacky Terrasson, Benny Green and Cyrus Chestnut as the torchbearers of jazz's future. "I hope they'll be dedicated to the music," he says. "I know they are at the moment. I'm hoping they'll continue to be as dedicated. That's the way it's been with me. You know, till death do us part."

DB

#### EQUIPMENT

Horace Silver plays Steinway pianos.

#### DISCOGRAPHY

(For as more complete selection, see Down Beat Dec. '96.)

A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE BLUES—Impulse! 238  
 THE HARDBOP GRANDPOP—Impulse! 192  
 PENCIL PACKIN' PAPA—Columbia 64210  
 IT'S GOT TO BE FUNKY—Columbia 53812  
 SILVER'S BLUE—Columbia/Portrait 45138  
 SONG FOR MY FATHER—Blue Note 84185

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# SWING



RONALD HEARD

**I**t's Sunday night at the Aragon Ballroom on Chicago's North Side, and all the hep cats in their black-and-white spectator shoes and reave-sleeved zoot suits have slipped onto the dance floor to swirl, twirl and rub up close against their bobby-socked dates. Stars twinkle on the domed ceiling and the balcony that surrounds the majestic hall's enormous, round dance floor.

On stage, a young man from Detroit prances like Cab Calloway and sings like Wynonie Harris. With a watch chain drooping almost to his heels and a conductor's baton in his hand, he jukes and jives with the energy of a Kansas City swing tornado, and the crowd is hopelessly swept up in his storm. The couples dance so

**BY JONATHAN EIG**

Above: Big Time Operator plays at the Derby in Los Angeles. Below: The Atomic Fireballs heat things up for dancers at the Aragon in Chicago. At left: Indigo Swing tenor player Baron Shul stretches out.













Left: The Atomic Fireballs' John Bunkley prances like Cab Calloway. Right: bassist Chuck Zayas and (below) the horn section of Rocket 88.

manically that the men soak all the way through their suits and the women give up worrying about their hair and makeup.

Like any good jazz fan, I have sometimes dreamed of being tossed back in time to such a scene, back to an age when the big bands played the most popular music of the day, when unairconditioned dance halls overflowed with overheated young men and women who enjoyed their first tastes of sex and romance dancing to the deep hormonal beats of a thumping acoustic bass and the ripping roar of a dozen horns.

But the scene I'm describing is set in the present—Sept. 14, 1997—and the music the bands are playing is not exactly my Basie big-band dream. It falls more in the 1940s Louis Jordan era, when band-leaders were saving money with smaller groups and building a soulful bridge for rock & roll pioneers like Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis to cross. The twenty-and thirty-something musicians in these new swing bands are listening to the sounds of the 1940s, but they are listening with pierced ears (not to mention noses, eyebrows and navels) that suggest they have also absorbed the culture and music of the '90s. Still, the groove is good, the instruments are acoustic and the dancing is more fun than anything else you can do with so many clothes on.

Call it swing, jump-blues or early rock & roll, it's staging a comeback. All over the country (but especially in California; see related story), the same kids who celebrated flannel-shirted grunge a few years ago are turning to the music of their grandparents. They are influenced not just by jazz but also by punk, ska, rockabilly and a lot of testosterone. But what's most important is that they're swinging.

"It's coming back so big," says Disa Steiber, 16, of Chicago. "I went to California, and it was huge there. Maybe it's because it's so much fun. Most music nowadays, you don't really dance to it."

Her dance partner at the Aragon, 23-year-old Pat Connolly, followed Disa's lead: "I think people are getting sick of going to a bar and playing darts or pool. It's more fun to dance, and it's easy to learn. It's interesting, too, because you



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HEARD

**"Not all the bands out there are young people posing in cool clothes."** —Little David, *Indigo Swing*

learn about the music and the history of what was going on when the music was being made."

It remains to be seen whether people leaping on the jump-jive bandwagon are merely in it because it's the latest thing and because the clothing is cool and freely available in their uncles' closets. Only a handful of the dancers I talked to at the Aragon knew about Louis Jordan or Big Joe Turner, and fewer still knew about the big bands that came before the arrival of jump-blues. But as youthful fads go, this one still beats mosh pits by a mile.

"After I started dancing, I went out and bought a bunch of CDs," says Rozanne Provenza, 22. "I got Duke Ellington, Count Basie and that guy who plays the trombone ... Glenn Miller. Before that I only listened to country music."

The bands making this music today are a mixed bag. Some of them are devotees of jazz and blues who were playing swing for years before its recent resurgence. Others are skin-deep entertainers who place a higher premium on high-energy

performances than musicianship.

In Chicago, the Mighty Blue Kings get credit for igniting the local scene with a weekly gig at the art deco-style Green Mill. Several members of the Kings have departed to form the tighter and more firmly grooving Big Swing, fronted by a terrific new singer. Dance instructors in Chicago say there's been a rush for lessons, but Chicago still remains something of a two-band town. In Detroit, the Atomic Fireballs are led by 32-year-old John Bunkley, who left a ska band to begin performing his Cab Calloway imitations. In San Francisco, Indigo Swing is one of several strong groups making the rounds. Rocket 88, based in Orlando, is a new band trying to introduce the music to its hometown. So far, they say, no other swing bands have joined the Florida fray. The Big Swing, the Atomic Fireballs, Indigo Swing and Rocket 88 all played the same September evening at the Aragon.

Missing were several important groups that have received national attention. The Royal Crown Revue, which provided



some of the music for Jim Carrey's movie *The Mask*, is considered one of the best in its class among musicians. The Big Six, a British group, also tours the United States. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy is one of the best known outfits, thanks in large part to its work on the soundtrack for the more recent movie *Swingers*. Scotty Morris, the band's singer, has told interviewers he grew up listening to 1940s swing, but he was also influenced by X, Blasters and Los Lobos, Los Angeles-based rock bands that came to prominence in the 1980s. Now, he says, young music fans are looking for something more glamorous.

## WEST COAST RETRO

What better place to seek glamour than California, where clubs and dancehalls from San Diego to San Francisco are experiencing the biggest push of this swing-revival scene.

Within the L.A. club circuit, the Derby, L.A.'s premiere swing room since 1993, features bands that jump and jive and offers free swing lessons for dancers. This is where *Swingers* was shot last year. Co-owner Tammi Gower says the venue's 1930s environment "is like going through the looking glass" back in time. "I was fascinated by that whole era," recalls Gower, whose dad was into swing. "The music is contagious." Bands that play the room include the Royal Crown Revue; Big Bad Voodoo Daddy; Jimmy and the Gigolos; Lavay Smith and the Red Hot Skillet Lickers; Jumpin' Jimes; Mora's Modern Rhythmists; Zoot, Red and the Red Hots; and Big Time Operator.

Nathan Mills is lead trumpeter/arranger with Big Time Operator, a 10-piece San Diego band. He says the group's '90s-style music leans toward modern improvisations that are harmonically adventurous. "But we strive to stay true to the ensemble sound of the swing bands." The band performs at such San Diego venues as Croce's, Humphrey's and the Viejas Casino, the Las Vegas Hard Rock Hotel, plus Hollywood venues like the Atlas Supper Club, the Viper Room, Hollywood Athletic Club and El Rey Theater.

San Francisco has been having its own good time undulating to the swing beat for the past several years. The Art Deco Society has promoted swing and ballroom dancing in the Bay Area, and Bimbo's 365 Club in the North Beach area has served as a key staging ground for swing groups and folks dancing their nights away. Other Bay Area swing venues include the Hi-Ball Lounge and 330 Ritch; Lavay Smith and her Red Hot Skillet Lickers and the Martini Brothers both started out at the Cafe du Nord.

The Moonlight in Sherman Oaks has been spotlighting new swing bands for the past 2 1/2 years, along with more

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## Steps From A Bygone Era

Swing music devotees today are adapting the dance steps and colorful clothing as they make their night out trips into a bygone era, which is receiving new attention by the growing number of '90s style swing bands.

The swing era big bands played blues-rooted charts, jump tunes and Tin Pan Alley ditties that drew Lindy Hop/Jitterbug dancers. Late-night radio remotes carried the excitement of jazz-flavored music to avid nationwide listeners of all ages. Devotees had their own attire and insider's language.

Charts by Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Fletcher Henderson, Sy Oliver, and Eddie Sauter, for example, focused on specific sections of the band, while allowing open space for improvised solos. By the 1930s, the two-beat music of the Charleston Era had evolved into a more fluid, constant rhythmic pulse, with call-and-response riffs pitting one section against another, and setting up the frenzied mood for the often explosive dancing of the Jitterbugers.

The name Lindy Hop, developed in the spring of 1927, evolved from its Harlem roots and a tribute to Charles Lindberg, who flew the first solo transatlantic flight from New York to Paris that May. The Jitterbug term emerged in 1938 when Benny Goodman supposedly labelled the jittery antics of the fans dancing in the aisles at the New York Paramount with that description. The Lindy Hop and Jitterbug became interchangeable expressions.

Remnants of the swing era: bobby socks, saddle shoes, sweaters, zoot suits with pegged pants, along with a vocabulary of slang terms often puzzling to outsiders like hep, hip, hepcat, jive, square, bread, chops, solid and killer-diller. **DB**

BY ELIOT TIEGEL



Above: blaring horns from Big Time Operator. Below: close dancing and retro clothing at the Aragon.



mainstream jazz and blues artists. Two regular bands, the Step Sisters Band and Art Deco, led by Vincent Hauser, have been house regulars, with an array of younger ensembles including Zoot, Flat Top Tom and his Jump Cats, Swing Kings, Speakeasy Spies, the Late Show Swing Band featuring Mark Winkler and Big Town 7.

The Atlas Supper Club in midtown L.A. has been featuring swing bands on Saturday nights since 1991. Johnny Tamayo, whose family owns the room, says the groups play "West Coast swing," which he notes has a rockabilly feel. Groups include the Eddie Reed Swing Quartet, Russell Scott and his Red Hots, Rob Rio and the Revolvers, plus the bands that circulate among the other top L.A. clubs. "Kids like the music because they can dance in a faster style," Tamayo notes.

### HEP TO THE ORIGINALS

Perhaps the most popular group of the elusive genre is Squirrel Nut Zippers, a three-year-old band from North Carolina. The band's new album, *Hot*, was closing in on platinum-level sales when Down Beat went to press. Members don't claim that their retro sound is something new, and they don't pretend to be the musical equals of their legendary jazz influences, but they do believe that some of their young listeners are getting hip to Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives and Sevens.

"I've been playing this music for 25 years, and all of a sudden it's a hot thing," says Scott Hammer, who hosts *Hambone's Blues Hour* on WCBR in suburban

Chicago. "It's a reaction, a cycling. People are getting dressed up and dancing with a partner, looking good and feeling good. It's a reaction to what's been happening in the music for 25 years. Some people are more into it for the show than the music, but some people are getting into the music. It's easy music to like. It's got a real strong beat, it's easy to dance to, and you can understand the lyrics. I hope it outlives the fad, because the music these bands are making is genuine."

The music is usually straight from the jump school, drawing from both big-band swing and early 1950s r&b, with blues elements, hip chord changes and a shuffle beat. The bass is beefed up and the drums slap extra hard on the two and four beats. Most of the groups feature strong instrumentalists, tight arrangements and choreographed stage moves. Their weaknesses, most often, come in the vocals and the improvisations.

Modern jump singers know how to dance and preen. They know how to shake their hips like Little Richard and slick their hair like Elvis. They can duck-walk like Chuck Berry and wriggle on the floor like a fish. But many of them lack the distinctive voices and serious musicianship that gave lasting value to the music of the '40s. They try to compensate





Vocals are an essential element of the new swing movement. Left: Rocket 88; right: Indigo Swing.



PHOTOS BY RONALD HEARD

with hypercaffeinated performances that make Richard Simmons look lethargic. That might be why people turn out in droves to hear the bands and dance but don't often buy the new CDs: because the music's energy level drops dramatically when you take it home.

Most swing band members still work day jobs, but members of Indigo Swing have done well enough to dedicate them-

selves to the music full-time. They gig at traditional jazz festivals, swing-dance parties and hipster bars.

"As musicians, once you're older than 25, it's kind of hard to make a living in this business," says Little David, the group's leader. "For us, this is terrific. We travel with our own piano and a vintage drum kit, and we hit the road every night we can. Not all the bands out there are



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young people posing in cool clothes. The one thing I'd like to say to the readers of Down Beat is that there's work out there for real musicians."

Jason Harden, the 27-year-old trumpeter for Rocket 88, says that's no jive. He took his horn out of mothballs when the band called to offer him a job. "It's the kind of music I always wanted to play, but I didn't think I'd get the chance," he says.

For Vincent Hauser, leader of the 11-piece Art Deco Orchestra, playing music from the '20s, '30s and '40s has been his

study to their forefathers. They may be dressing the music up and giving it several shots of adrenaline, but they take the craft very seriously. The Big Swing, like most of these groups, plays an even mix of originals and standards (including Louis Prima's "Jump, Jive And Wail," Big Jay McNeely's "Deacon's Hop" and Amos Milburn's "Chicken Shack Boogie").

"I think we have a real respect and love for the music, but it translates differently, as anything must, taken into a new generation," Nichilo says. "There's

trio Stray Cats. "I didn't want a retro swing band, I wanted something new, and that meant putting my guitar in the front of the band." Musicians are attracted to swing, Setzer believes, "because this is the ultimate musicians' music. They get to play solos over great charts and chord changes."

James Achor, guitarist with the eight-year-old Royal Crown Revue, offers similar reasons for adding elements of swing to the septet's act. "It was something new to us, the nice big chords, real strong melodies. There's also the raw energy of Louis Jordan, which was the same as in rock & roll, but there was a lot more to his music. Jazz lost the party atmosphere it started out in, and we're trying to bring back that intensity of having a good time."

Eric "Shoutin'" Sheridan, the Big Swing's lead singer, quit singing road-house blues to try this music. "I think people here in Chicago are sick of Chicago blues, and a lot of people who listen to rock are tired of the angst. This is good-time music. In these songs, you're driving a car or you're in a bar or you're trying to get laid. These are good things. And if you dance to this music, you have to touch the other person. That's a plus. It's like an old-fashioned date. All you need is the malt shop." **DB**

—West Coast reporting by Eliot Tiegel

**"This is the ultimate musicians' music. They get to play solos over great charts and chord changes."**

—Brian Setzer

18-year "night job." His day job, as chairman of performing arts and orchestra teacher at the Buckley School, keeps him in touch with his students' musical attitudes. "I'm surprised when I hear students whistling 'Chattanooga Choo Choo,'" he says.

Danny Nichilo, who founded the Mighty Blue Kings and now leads the eight-piece Big Swing, says the new-age swing musicians have given serious

more amplification and exaggerated exuberance, and those are '90s push. There are some differences, but we're trying to carry the spirit."

A number of elements are fusing to add vitality to the swing resurgence, believes Brian Setzer, whose 17-piece rock/swing orchestra was one of the first 1990s groups to swing back in time. "Basically, I come from rock & roll," says the former guitarist with the '80s

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## Dizzy Gillespie

**Bird Songs**  
Telarc 83421

★★★½

The 75th-birthday celebrations for Dizzy Gillespie began aboard the S.S. Norway's Floating Jazz Festival in October 1991 and reached an early but, it turned out, timely climax in January and February at New York's Blue Note. Telarc took the opportunity to record him nightly with two sympathetic all-star bands intended to let Gillespie reflect and relax in the comfort of his original bebop repertoire.

*Bird Songs* is the third CD to come from those nights and more or less the second volume of *To Bird With Love*, the date that matched Diz with six saxes and was issued in October 1992. Though *Bird Songs* claims to represent his "final recordings," that's not, strictly speaking, so. Telarc recorded Gillespie with seven trumpeters the following weekend and issued a CD in April 1992 (*To Diz With Love*). He was hospitalized in November and died Jan. 6. None of this was foreseen during these evenings.

His playing is relatively nimble, thoughtful and generally on target. He had long since learned to camouflage an eroding virtuosity by playing to his creative strengths. The brassy bravado and explosive bursts are traded for a far softer, almost whispered attack that permits him a tart, hard-edged intonation in miniature and enough residual accuracy to maneuver with aplomb the knotty double-time runs and arpeggios that carry him through most of his solos. His second solo on "Ornithology" is solid, responsive trumpet playing, and the slow, muted and open work on "Con Alma," in duet with Danilo Perez on piano, is appropriately sullen, expressive and fluent. He walks a skillful line on "Confirmation" between spare, airy sequences and alternating clusters of dense boilerplate; and offers some stately, if brief, blues playing on "Diamond Jubilee."

Gillespie wisely surrounded himself with the cream of jazz's saxophone royalty, and they are largely responsible for making this more than just another bebop retrospective. Dizzy meets them all, a pair at a time, on three extended tunes. The two altos, D'Rivera and McLean, are elegantly Parkeresque to the hilt on "Ornithology," bright and dark in their contrasting sounds. Jordan and Hart square off on "Confir-

mation," and Golson and a big-toned Sanchez pull "Tunisia" into some post-bop modes.

Through it all, Gillespie holds his own in blue-ribbon company. Nothing heroic or unexpectedly surpassing here. But plenty of solid music by players who know what they're doing.

—John McDonough

**Bird Songs**—Ornithology; Con Alma; Confirmation; A Night In Tunisia; Diamond Jubilee Blues; Theme. (63:12)

**Personnel**—Gillespie, trumpet; Paquito D'Rivera, Benny Golson, Antonio Hart, Clifford Jordan, Jackie McLean, David Sanchez, saxophones; Danilo Perez, piano; George Mraz, bass; Lewis Nash, Kenny Washington, drums; Bobby McFerrin, vocal (1).



## Wallace Roney

**Village**

Warner Bros. 9 46649

★★★★

Wallace Roney may be onto something. His trumpet tone sounds assured, his playing chock full of tasty 16th-note runs. Contributing four numbers, Roney's ideas bridge a variety of moods and styles (including, according to the trumpeter, a decidedly African approach to rhythm). Perhaps more significant, though, *Village* is Roney's first successful integration of grand

idea with personnel, suggesting he has truly arrived as a leader.

Not surprisingly, the vibe is straight out of Miles Davis, circa 1967-'68, a period when Davis consolidated his ideas of post-bebop harmony and rhythms along with the gradual incorporation of electronics. What's so remarkable with Roney's self-professed "Nefertiti approach" is the way he has taken name players into the fold alongside regulars such as reedist Antoine Roney, pianist Geri Allen and bassist Clarence Seay. Sounding like a real band, we also hear considerable playing from Chick Corea, Michael Brecker and Pharoah Sanders. And listening to drummer Lenny White—who, along with Wallace and Matt Pierson, produced an album with just a hint of reverb and much warmth—is a revelation: The multi-directional fusion drummer hooks up with former employer Corea, among others, in the spirit of acoustic Tony Williams, swinging like crazy, driving the band, really listening.

Listen to Corea's solo work on "The Pharoah" and you hear a piano voice fully integrated into Roney's sound, a sound that drags slightly behind the beat yet maintains a forward momentum and tension ... and swings. Corea's solo is remarkable in its modesty; lacking fireworks, it energizes nonetheless. Speaking of the Pharoah, Sanders' tenor here and on "EBO" offers the only overt cries, most everyone else playing their instruments closer to the vest. And while most of *Village* is not only an uptempo affair but polyrhythmic as well, "The Pharoah" and Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge" are uniquely straight-ahead, four-to-the-bar blowing vehicles, the latter featuring unison tenor lines and strong solos from Antoine and Brecker.

Speaking of polyrhythms, Cole Porter's "I Love You" is given a fierce overhaul, the melody laced into a halting, at times distracting, rhythmic excursion that recalls Roney inspiration/former employer Williams' "Black Comedy" (a tune from the Davis band of '67).

Steve Berrios' percussion links between and after songs appear as an afterthought. Still, his

## THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
DIZZY GILLESPIE <i>Bird Songs</i>		★★★½	★★★½	★★	★★★½
WALLACE RONEY <i>Village</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
JAVON JACKSON <i>Good Friends</i>		★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
BILLY HART <i>Oceans Of Time</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★★



playing helps to spice up what is the strongest material from the album, namely cuts 6-8, especially *Village's* tour de force, White's "EBO." Hear these three songs as a kind of suite, evoking images of rural as well as urban "villages," their playfulness, melancholy and down-home feel bringing people of all ages into the fold. Mention should be made here of the tasteful, intelligent use of electronics. Robert Irving's synthesizers and Corea's Fender Rhodes (on "EBO"), next to Allen's acoustic piano, recall Davis' introduction of multiple keyboards during the late '60s. Roney's "Eternal One" is the first return to the quiet mood set on the opener, Corea's "Affinity." Again, we hear traces of the Davis band, this time Herbie Hancock's "Little One" (from Davis' *E.S.P.*, '65), "Eternal One" setting the stage for "EBO," where Roney's simmering "Bitches Brew" meets a new, swinging synthesis.

The solos could've been stronger, and the tune inexplicably sort of drops off at the end, but "EBO" suggests that sometimes structure is more important. Roney's schematic for now telling us to stay tuned. And thanks, Mr. Roney, for giving us the setting for Chick Corea's strongest work since his *Children's Songs* from 1984.

—John Ephland

**Village**—*Affinity*; *Inner Urge*; *I Love You*; *The Pharoah*; *Aknaaba*; *Village*; *Eternal One*; *EBO*; *Oshirike*. (60-18)  
**Personnel**—Roney, trumpet; Chick Corea, piano (1-4), Fender Rhodes (8); Geri Allen, piano (5-9); Antoine Roney, tenor (2, 5-7, 9) and soprano (7, 9) saxophones, bass clarinet (8); Michael Brecker (2,3), Pharoah Sanders (4,8), tenor saxophone; Robert "Baabe" Irving III, synths (6-9); Clarence Seay, bass; Lenny White, drums; Steve Berrios, percussion (3, 6, 7, interludes).



## Javon Jackson

**Good Friends**  
 Blue Note 7243 8

★★★★

One pal writes and says that as a leader, Javon Jackson is somewhat inconsistent. That's not exactly wrong. A subsequent cornerside chat prompts the notion that the saxophonist's work is defined by a resolute sense of daring. That's pretty much correct. It's the way these two characters coalesce that keeps the music of this unquestionably persuasive improviser in a steady state of flux. The upside is he proves himself a thoughtful insurgent; the liability lies in the fact that his experiments have so far yielded sketchy results. Me, I'm an optimist. Jackson has yet to make his masterwork. But the courageous anything-goes attitude of *Good Friends* has enough logic, craft and inspiration to suggest his reveries are much closer to becoming reality.

Fareed Haque has helped put some of Jackson's creative girders in place. Producer Street constantly nudges his confreres off cliffs to see how often they opt for a new flight trajectory. String player Haque has 14 or 15 various identities in his instrument. Jackson's last disc opened with a shimmering sitar, that when blended with the leader's earnest sermon, gave us a chance to imagine what Trane would have sounded like if that proposed collaboration with Ravi Shankar had materialized. You could almost hear Street cackling in the background. *Good Friends* welcomes such far-afield thoughts and tacks.

Leaping all over the map is often the preference of a schizo jazz traveler. But from the Newkian side of Brazil to the sultry section of Funkytown, Jackson and his associates never fail to underscore the attractions of their layovers. More times than not, it's done with the use of creative tension. Billy Drummond, Peter Washington, Haque and Jackson merge well, but they know there's usually friction to be mined. Haque throws some spuzz into the lilt on the opener, and the percussionists have their own little ping-pong game taking place. A fly invited making the ointment a bit more pungent is guitarist Vernon Reid. On Carlos Santana's "Flor de Canela," every flap of his colorful electronic wings blows an inspiring breeze on the others. What starts as anxiety turns into a siren's song. Destination: out. As with the frenzied reading that the quartet gives to Tony Williams' "Emergency," there's plenty of lyricism in the alarm.

The best case for that lyricism waxing unadulterated comes on "Diane." Jackson's tenor tone is different from anyone else working these days. It's wooden, in a good sense—ancient and staunch. His reflection on a pal who recently died comes in



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the form of a demure melody and some potent melancholy. Its simple authority reminds us that he doesn't enter a room before he knows all about the emotions in play. Ultimately, that's what sustains the "when in Rome" vibe that dominates *Good Friends*. These guys may be throwing ideas against the wall, but a whole lot of them stick, and each sounds pretty damn cool. —Jim Maemie

**Good Friends**—*E'd oxum/la aguiba oxum aura da adupe; Emergency; Exotica; Good People; Diane; Flor de Canela; Naaman.*  
**Personnel**—Jackson, tenor saxophone; Peter Washington, bass; Billy Drummond, drums; Fareed Haque, Vernon Reid (4,6), guitar; John Medeski, organ (4,6,7); Cyro Baptista, percussion (1,5,6).



## Billy Hart

**Oceans Of Time**  
 Arabesque Jazz 129

★★★ ½

**B**illy Hart is the kind of sure-footed, post-hard-bop drummer that can adapt to almost any situation. Adept at straight times of all varieties, he can move into textural territory, dip into free time, accent and color without sounding like a dilettante. Along the way, Hart has worked in every jazz subgenre, supporting leaders from Stan Getz to Johnny Dyani. In the relatively rare case that he takes a break from sessioning and steps out to front a band of his own, he integrates that vast experience into a single outing.

*Oceans Of Time* is Hart's fifth record as a leader. Hart's band is nearly the same as on the record's predecessor, *Amethyst* (Arabesque Jazz), released five years ago. Where that record doubled the keyboards, adding Marc Copland's electric to David Kikoski's acoustic piano, in this case the saxophone finds its doppelganger with the ubiquitous, very fine Chris Potter joining elder statesman John Stubblefield on soprano and tenor. The results are stylistically diverse, drawing democratically on the writing abilities of the band's constituents and utilizing the rather unusual timbral mix of two horns, violin, guitar and piano.

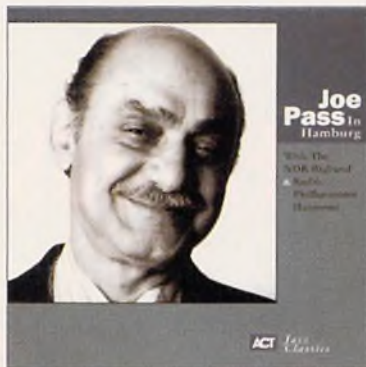
The possibilities of that instrumentation are most interestingly explored when they're not bunched up, but are instead allowed to breathe. Violinist Mark Feldman contributes "Father Demo Square," which starts with Potter playing a crooked bass clarinet through-line, around which the strings swirl, gradually gathering into a gentle waltz. Though the recording doesn't reflect his warm sound very well (particularly in multi-part arrangements, like on Stubblefield's "One For Carter"), Feldman is the most consistently intriguing soloist on the disc, turning to classical Indian

sources for the swooping glisses on Potter's "Tosh" and digging into double-stops before Stubblefield's volcanic tenor solo on Hart's late-Trane-ish brooder, "Téulé's Redemption." Hart's other piece, the title track, is built on contrasting riffs taken from his mom's and dad's "family whistles"—a very nifty idea that serves as a jump off for his own impeccable drum work and a round of solos, including a manic Feldman scramble.

Bassist Santi Debriano's two compositions allow the instruments to overlap without dousing one another's flames. His staccato "Mindreader" provides a minefield of rhythms for everyone to trod on, and Hart clearly relishes the trip onto dangerous ground; in his solo round in the spotlight, Debriano's gruff bass tone is just the tonic. Guitarist David Fiuczynski is clearly a whiz, as he displays by impressively shifting gears on the mixed tempi of "Offering." His chops may not be a question, but his taste sometimes is; on "Téulé's Redemption" his processing and delay tactics move from the profound to the goofy, detracting from the gravity of the overall picture. Pianist Kikoski's "Shadow" is another drab point on the disc, perhaps reflecting the down side of Hart's democraticism—trite and lite, it seems like a cynical stab at getting some airplay. As such, it's out of step with most of the musical substance of *Oceans Of Time*. —John Corbett

**Oceans Of Time**—*One For Carter; Téulé's Redemption; Shadow; Oceans Of Time; Tosh; Mindreader; Father Demo Square; Offering.* (71:58)

**Personnel**—Hart, drums; Chris Potter, soprano and tenor saxophones, bass clarinet (7); John Stubblefield, soprano and tenor saxophones; Mark Feldman, violin; David Fiuczynski, guitar; David Kikoski, piano; Santi Debriano, bass.



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**Tom Varner**  
**Martian Heartache**  
 Soul Note 121286

★★★★

If a young Duke Ellington were writing "Harlem Airshaft" today, it might sound something like this disjunctive, spirited and humorous, 15-part mental soundtrack of urban living by the brilliant french horn player, composer and arranger Tom Varner. What a complex, delicious suite! Using a front line of french horn, alto and tenor saxophone, Varner expands on the Ornette Coleman technique of presenting two or three motifs of contrasting rhythm, harmony, tempo or even meter, all at the same time. On the lengthy "Small Cry Big Laugh," a slow-drag, Mingus-y horn line underpins Ed Jackson's cascading alto solo; on "Tough Luck," Varner solos headlong over a sad, three-note figure, with a walking bass going full-

steam in at yet another tempo.

And does Varner solo! The french horn is devilishly difficult ("Like trying to do a beautiful ballet dancing with only your socks on, on ice," says Varner), but somehow he navigates from the basement to the attic with well-articulated, shapely melodies of great invention, throwing in some extra-curricular chattering and octave trills here and there. Varner's tone is huge, like a trombone's, blurred and blatty around the edges (when he wants it to be), not that faraway horn sound you expect. The other soloists shine as well. "Eva Etc." highlights Ellery Eskelin's blowsy post-bop tenor saxophone and Pete McCann's rock guitar, over a misterioso movie-theme.

This music starts and stops a lot, with quick, cinematic changes, but ultimately, it always returns to the blues—funk, rock, swing or bop—which keeps it grounded. By the way, the title refers both to Varner's occasional feeling that as an "outside" player he is from another planet, as well as to the necessity of being a "warrior" to keep doing so. The meaning of the closing, traditional melody from the British Isles escapes me, but I love the clarion voice Dominique Eade sings in it.

—Paul de Barros

**Martian Heartache**—Nuke 'Em Tony; Keep It Up; Martian Affirmation; Venus With A Syringe; Precarious Dog; Isaac Has A Vision On The Subway; The Quick And The Dead; Send Me A Probe; Tough Luck; Betsy Says Yes; Eva Etc.; Anxiety All The Time; Learn Something!; Small Cry Big Laugh; Lady Gay. (70:43)

**Personnel**—Varner, french horn; Ed Jackson, alto saxophone; Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Drew Gress, bass; Tom Rainey, drums; Pete McCann (2, 5, 11), guitar; Dominique Eade (15), vocals.



**Trilok Gurtu**  
**The Glimpse**  
 Silva America 1082

★★★★

**Badal Roy**

**One In The Pocket**

Nomad/Music of the World 50315

★★★½

With *The Glimpse*, Trilok Gurtu pays tribute to trumpeter Don Cherry. The percussionist focuses primarily on Cherry's role as an explorer of world musics, and, to a lesser extent, his contributions to Ornette Coleman's early quartet. With albums like *Eternal Now* (Sonet, 1973, reissued by Verve/Sweden),

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Cherry pioneered the "multi-kulti" approach that informs Gurtu's solo projects (including *Usfret*, 1989) on which Cherry is prominently featured. Like Cherry, Gurtu does not restrict himself to any single musical culture. Gurtu plays tabla on just two tracks, and his ensemble embraces a range of influences, including Mediterranean guitars, the Gnawa music of Morocco and Delta blues.

"Cherry Town" recalls the sound of *Eternal Now*, and exemplifies the cross-cultural approach, as Gurtu's clay-pot percussion mixes with the twitchy, metallic sound of Jaya Deva's gnaoua and the twang of Geetha Bennett's veena. Ornette's "Law Years" receives an impressive makeover, starting with Deva's 12-string bottle-neck-guitar introduction, and continuing as a

somber meditation with bluesy contributions from pianist Andy Emler. Gurtu's light percussions give this track a floating character. He's much more forceful on "Future Heat," alternating between drums and tabla, and adding a vocal over the churning rhythm bed. A consistently enjoyable melange of third-world and jazz influences, *The Glimpse* reunites the drummer with engineer Walter Quintus, who recorded Gurtu's fine, out-of-print albums for CMP.

Along with fellow percussionists Collin Walcott and Zakir Hussain, Badal Roy was an early innovator who incorporated Indian rhythms and instrumentation into jazz settings. Roy's tabla can be heard as far back as John McLaughlin's *My Goals Beyond* (Rykodisc 1970), and the recent reissue of Miles Davis' *In*

*Concert* (Columbia/Legacy, 1972) reminds one of Roy's significance in Davis' rhythmic scheme. More recently, he's been a fixture in Ornette Coleman's Prime Time. The percussionist's first date as a leader, *One In The Pocket*, showcases the tabla (usually heard in a supporting role) in a non-traditional environment with generally strong results.

Producer Bob Haddad sensibly places Roy in a variety of small-group settings where his tabla and clay-pot drums will be complemented, but not overwhelmed. Roy's collaborators include guitarist Amit Chatterjee (from the Zawinul Syndicate), frame-drum specialist Glen Velez, and Steve Gorn on bamboo flute and soprano sax. "One In The Pocket" is the standout track, a mystical excursion in which Gorn's bansuri flute weaves through the hypnotic groove laid down by Roy and embellished by Velez. Chatterjee and Roy are well-matched, sympathetic duet partners. On "Geeta's Shuffle," Chatterjee adds playful, dancing figures to Roy's infectious rhythms, while on "Endless Radiance," the guitarist lays down bluesy melodies over his partner's percolating tabla. The recording quality is very good, presenting the tone and resonance of Roy's percussion instruments with clarity. —Jon Andrews

**The Glimpse**—Cherry Town; 1-2 *Beaucoup*; Law Years; A *Iha Do Caju*; Future Heat; *Glimpse*; Don. (52:47)

**Personnel**—Gurtu, drums, tabla, percussion, voice; Andy Emler, piano, harmonium (1-3, 5-7); Jaya Deva, acoustic and electric guitars, gnaoua, voice (1-3, 5, 7); Lars Danielson, bass, cello (1-3, 5-7); Geetha Bennett, veena, voice (1, 2, 5, 6); Paolo Fresu, trumpet, flugelhorn (2, 6, 7); Nando Carneiro, guitar (4); Teodosil Spassov, kaval (5, 6).

**One In The Pocket**—Geeta's Shuffle; Roda Gigante; Island Song; Roy's Glen; Dadaism; Bombay Boogie; One In The Pocket; Madol; Rinpoche's Rag; Endless Radiance. (53:12)

**Personnel**—Roy, tabla, percussion, voice; Amit Chatterjee, electric guitar (1, 7, 8, 10); Glen Velez, frame drums, percussion (4, 7); Steve Gorn, bansuri flute (7), soprano saxophone (5); Fernando Melo (2), Luiz Bueno (2), acoustic guitar; Mike Richmond, bass (3, 5, 9); Jim Bowie, banjo (9); Bob Haddad, percussion, voice (3, 5).

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**Mike Stern**

**Give And Take**  
 Atlantic Jazz 83036

★★★★½

Mike Stern's playing has never been better—he's inquisitive, excitable as always, and focused. The dream trio at the core of *Give And Take* kicks the album off with Cole Porter's "I Love You." As Jack DeJohnette lays down brushes to pick up sticks, Stern drifts gracefully across the pulse with full confidence,



and bassist John Patitucci employs a new level of intensity.

Stern does a lot of good writing for the project, beginning with the Bo Diddley-ish bebop beat of "Hook Up." Stern gets in his own breathtaking licks, then helps shape Michael Brecker's tenor solo with some great comping, bending notes so gently on the ballad "Everything Changes." "One Liners" is always on the edge, a wise-guy head that says, "Don't get too comfortable in your chair yet." Stern picks just the right spots for his grunge jazz chords on the mellow-but-not-benign "Jones Street."

Producer/pianist Gil Goldstein hops onboard to shadow the guitarist on his Monk-ish "Lumpy," adding some great support and shade under Stern's delicate work on "Rooms." Don Alias turns Jimi Hendrix's "Who Knows" into a "Sympathy For The Devil"-type of underworld groove. Stern takes "Giant Steps" for a good ride, then picks his way through and around "Oleo," with drums and bass barely holding the action back, DeJohnette and Alias meshing masterfully.

A DeJohnette/Patitucci rhythm section holds great intrigue and promise, and these two deliver the goods. Neither backs off from a rhythmic challenge, as they turn the jets up to rock the band on Stern's blues, "That's What You Think."

—Robin Tolleson

**Give And Take**—*I Love You; Hook Up; Everything Changes; One Liners; Jones Street; Lumpy; Rooms; That's What You Think; Giant Steps; Who Knows; Oleo.* (55:49)  
**Personnel**—Stern, guitar; John Patitucci, acoustic bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Don Alias, percussion (6, 7, 10, 11); Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (2, 4, 5); David Sanborn, alto saxophone (8); Gil Goldstein, piano (6, 7).



## Dave Grusin

### Presents West Side Story

N2K 10021

★★★★½

### Two For The Road

GRP 9865

★★★★½

**G**rusin's film scoring and high profile in the New Adult Contemporary music wasteland cause many discriminating jazz fans to roll their eyes. But before assuming his two most recent CDs are only good as little Frisbees, give him a fair shake and listen. You may be glad you did.

*Two For The Road* is Grusin's salute to Henry Mancini, the jazz-loving composer who inspired him to begin orchestrating music for films in

the middle '60s. Here, he personalizes 10 Mancini songs while being conscientious of his mentor's original dramatic intent and harmonies. The old TV theme "Mr. Lucky" is a perfectly decent jazz-piano trio showcase with Grusin the musician open to the improvisatory possibilities of the piece without appearing stilted in his use of bebop language. The spirit of the Howard Hawks safari film *Hatari!* is caught by combining lightheartedness (his pianistic approach to the melody) with tension (the string-bass-and-percussion vamp, the strings and piano near song's close). With horns adding color, the catchy "Peter Gunn" theme exudes TV tough-guy suspense as Grusin and string bassist John Patitucci break a sweat; only the sax solo is antiseptic and formulaic. "Baby Elephant Walk" promenades down Bourbon Street with pleasant, quasi-funk, and Diana Krall sings effectively on fresh renditions of "Dreamsville" and "Soldier In The Rain." There are patches of weak sentiment on the album, say "Whistling Away The Dark," but, overall, Grusin's heart is in the right place and he honors the memory of Mancini admirably.

Grusin has long been a fan of *West Side Story*, and now, on the 40th anniversary of the musical's opening, with assistance from arrangers Don Sebesky, Tom Scott and Michael Abene, he has redesigned the Leonard Bernstein score for extended concert jazz band and strings. Excitement is generated without grandiosity: Grusin and helpers put together and take apart sections intelligently, the ensemble writing is warm, and the hired jazz musicians seem genuinely pleased to be asked to bop and swing, alert to every turn in the arrangements.

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Ample room has been provided for solos. Tenor player Michael Brecker conjures a sense of surprise in his tumbling notes on "Something's Coming" and Ronnie Cuber's baritone adds pointed commentary to "The Jet Song." "I Feel Pretty" has Dave Valentin bookending the feverish Latin section with flute work of lyric beauty, and the south-of-the-border show-stopper "America" benefits from Arturo Sandoval's trumpet. A cynic might expect pianist Grusin to be all happy-faced pretty in his occasional solo spots, yet he generally avoids La La Land with a clean, sprightly touch that keeps feeling and technique in balance.

Singers, of course, have a role, too. Gloria Estefan injects believable ardor into "Tonight" and Jonathan Butler shines bright as he gives

dramatic definition to "Maria," while Jon Secada, providing one of the rare album gaffes, yanks us hard into the gutter of exaggerated emotion on "Somewhere." —*Frank-John Hadley*

**Presents West Side Story—Prologue; Something's Coming; The Jet Song; Maria; Cool; Tonight; I Feel Pretty; One Hand, One Heart; Somewhere; America. (54:11)**

**Personnel—Grusin, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Dave Weckl, drums; Sammy Figueroa, percussion; George Young, flute, piccolo; Jeff Clayton, oboe, flute, clarinet; Jerry Dodgion, Lawrence Feldman, alto saxophone, clarinet, flutes; Jerome Richardson, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute, alto flute; Bill Evans, tenor and soprano saxophones; Ronnie Cuber, baritone saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Roger Rosenberg, bass saxophone, bass clarinet, E-flat contrabass clarinet; Arturo Sandoval, Greg Gisbert, Glen Drewse, trumpet, flugelhorn; Byron Stripling, Tony Kadleck, trumpet; John Clark, Bob Carlisle, Jeff Lang, trench horn; Keith O'Quinn, Jim Pugh, Birch Johnson, tenor trombone; Dave**

*Taylor, bass trombone; Elena Barere, Concert Master; Johathan Butler (4), Gloria Estefan (6), Jon Secada (9), vocals; background singers (10); strings.*

**Two For The Road—Peter Gunn; Dreamsville; Mr. Lucky; Moment To Moment; Baby Elephant Walk; Two For The Road; Days Of Wine And Roses; Hatan; Whistling Away The Dark; Soldier In The Rain. (47:40)**

**Personnel—Grusin, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Harvey Mason, drums; Russell Malone, guitar (1, 2); Diana Krall, vocals (2, 10); Paulinho DaCosta, percussion (3, 8, 9); Tollak Ollestad, harmonica (5, 9); Jerry Hey & The Hot Band (1, 5); Gary Grant, trumpet; Dan Higgins, Eric Marienthal, Tom Scott, saxophones; Andrew Martin, trombone; strings.**



## Andy Goodrich

### Motherless Child

Delmark 495

★★½

Having retired after a long tenure as a music educator, Andy Goodrich, 69, has embarked on a new career as a performer. The Memphis-bred, Chicago-based alto saxophonist recorded this debut album on Brooklyn with Eddie Henderson, Harold Mabern, James Williams, Buster Williams and Billy Hart. But as is often the case when a newcomer—even an older one—is showcased amid established stars, the comparison is not particularly flattering. Here, Goodrich's stylistic conservatism seems to hold his sidemen back, while their lapidary polish underscores his own instrumental shortcomings.

Goodrich's sound is mature and distinctive—he's neither an imitator nor a pastiche artist—but his tone is thin and brittle, with an acid edge and a marked vibrato. Even on ballads such as "You Must Believe In Spring" or "Serenade In Blue," he breaks the melodic line into staccato fragments or slithery flutters, seldom sustaining a note for long. It's a technique made for free-jazz, but Goodrich is strictly mainstream, blowing middle-of-the-road hard-bop with a bluesy lilt and a slightly offbeat—or maybe just awkward—twist.

The other musicians proceed with smooth caution, as if not to upstage the leader, but Henderson's sleek trumpet can't help but outshine Goodrich's hesitant horn. On his original "Natch'l Natch'l" or Charlie Parker's "Quasimodo," Goodrich plays with pungent urgency, finding fresh paths through familiar changes. But a 14-minute version of "Stranger In Paradise" comes across as unusually craftsman-like lounge music, with solos that drag on and elegant accompaniment that can't revitalize the hackneyed material. —*Larry Birnbaum*

**Motherless Child—Natch'l Natch'l; You Must Believe In Spring; Quasimodo; Reminiscing; Stranger In Paradise; Serenade In Blue; Stablemates; Motherless Child. (70:07)**

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**Personnel**—Goodrich, alto saxophone; Eddie Henderson, trumpet; Harold Mabern (1, 3, 5-7), James Williams (2, 4, 8), piano; Buster Williams, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



## Ralph Lalama

**Circle Line**  
Criss Cross 1132

★★★★½

## Peter Bernstein

**Brain Dance**  
Criss Cross 1130

★★★★½

**L**alama is a grand, modern-minded storyteller who knows bebop, and other stuff, too. You'd be blessed to find a guy like him working at your neighborhood jazz joint. You'd stay all night, and leave feeling full and satisfied, and you'd want to come back for more.

The veteran tenorman has been a member of many big bands—Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra—and he's active as a small-band player, too. This is his fourth, consistently rewarding date for Criss Cross.

Lalama seems more imbued by Rollins than Trane, though both show up in his playing. Here, he reveals numerous strengths. He has his own sound, husky with a bit of sparkle, going from fat, low-end belches to whispering high tones. His melodies are authoritative and warmly melodic, his time drummer-sure. In other words, a first-class jazz soloist.

The album, as the rating indicates, is almost all highlights. The leader romps through his title track (two crackling choruses with drums alone are included), "Giant Steps" and Walton's "Fiesta," issuing muscular, serpentine lines, never losing his balance. Joe Henderson's "Homestretch" is *muy rapido*; so is Lalama. The ballads are equally compelling. "My Ideal" finds him delivering statements that are dreamy, and those that have some grit.

Bernstein's efforts are commendable: clean lines, rich chords. Peter Washington offers big-noted walking, and plays several knockout solos. Kenny Washington is in his Philly Joe bag, and kicks the proceedings with elan.

The guitarist, first heard with Lou Donaldson and Larry Goldings, is getting increased exposure as a member of Josh Redman's quintet. *Brain Dance* is his third Criss Cross date, and while he's not yet in Lalama's league, with more experience he will be. He has a thick, ringing tone, plenty of technique and a penchant for picking juicy, ear-pleasing notes.

Many moods are explored. The title track and "Dual Nature," both solid lines from Bernstein's pen, have a Larry Young feel. Percy Mayfield's oozing-slow "Danger Zone" is raw blues, "Means" is a medium, uptempo cooker that's also a blues. "Lady Bug" (another original) has a jaunty rhythm; Alec Wilder's "While We're Young" is a spirited waltz; "Breathless" is a welcome ballad.

The two blues exhibit Bernstein's affection for that form, and he plays with deep feeling, his notes stretching out luxuriantly on "Danger," popping out with ardent swing on "Means." The leader is relaxed and persuasive on "While," and just fine, though a bit reserved, on "Breathless"; ballad playing is the hardest nut to crack.

The sideman get plenty of room. Goldings'

round, warbling organ sound supports the band to a tee. Alexander delivers burry-toned lines that often sing, Davis is another young man on his way up and Drummond remains a superb trapsman who can add to any date.

Typical of Criss Cross albums, the audio here has presence and is smartly detailed.

—Zan Stewart

**Circle Line**—Circle Line; My Ideal; Giant Steps; Your Are Too Beautiful; Fiesta Espagnol; Dark Chocolate; Homestretch; Without A Song. (53:43)

**Personnel**—Lalama, tenor saxophone; Peter Bernstein, guitar (1, 3-8); Peter Washington, bass; Kenny Washington, drums (1, 3-8).

**Brain Dance**—Brain Dance; Chant; Means And Ends; Dual Nature; While We're Young; You Leave Me Breathless; Lady Bug; Danger Zone. (57:46)

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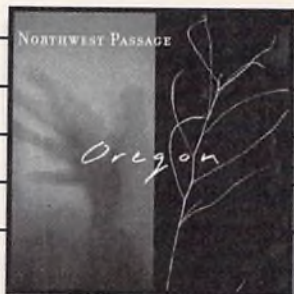
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**Personnel**—Bernstein, guitar; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; Steve Davis, trombone; Larry Goldings, organ; Billy Drummond, drums.



**Oregon**  
**Northwest Passage**  
 Intuition 3191

★★★★

The sly, 1:42 aside called "Over Your Shoulder" gives a good indication of what's up with *Northwest Passage*. After 27 years together, Oregon is as expressive as ever, and maybe even more into *playing*. There is a welcome shortage of new-age jazz noodling here in favor of pointed, focused playing. It is percussion-rich, but there's not as much insistence on East-West interplay as there is a spirit of modern jazz.

The group isn't stuck in any musical ruts. With Ralph Towner on piano for the bouyant

"Fortune Cookie" and the loose "Yet To Be," and bassist Glen Moore contributing the cool-school funk of "The Musical Assassin," they swing like Keith Jarrett's Standards Trio, and without the annoying pop sense. Wind player Paul McCandless soars beautifully on english horn on the slow, engaging 7/4 of "Claridade." He spars with the rhythm section on "Take Heart" with a stalwart, romantic soprano sax tone. Towner digs into his classical and 12-string guitars with a glorious vengeance, a passionate elegance all his own. The band this time thrives with the contrasting styles of drummer/percussionists Arto Tunçboyacıyan and Mark Walker, as well as the musical ears of producer Steve Rodby (longtime bassist with the Pat Metheny Group).

Some material doesn't sustain its intensity—the percussion-bass jam "Don't Knock On My Door" sounds a bit contrived and misplaced, Towner's jam "Nightfall" has some predictable ups and downs and "Joyful Departure" does come in on the too-smooth side. *Northwest Passage* may lose steam and direction at a few points, but that does little to dampen the musical journey.

—Robin Tolleson

**Northwest Passage**—*Take Heart; Don't Knock On My Door; Lost In The Hours; Over Your Shoulder; Claridade; Joyful Departure; Nightfall; Under A Dorian Sky; Fortune Cookie; Under The Mountain; L'Assassino Che Suona (The Musical Assassin); Intro; Yet To Be; Northwest Passage.* (56:48)

**Personnel**—Ralph Towner, classical and 12-string guitars, keyboards; Paul McCandless, soprano saxophone, english horn, soprano, oboe, bass clarinet; Glen Moore, acoustic bass; Arto Tunçboyacıyan (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11), Mark Walker (3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 14), drums, percussion.

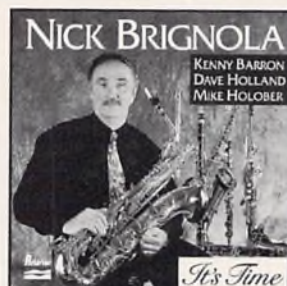
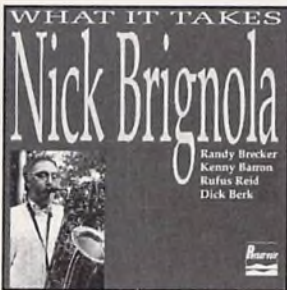


**Regina Carter**  
**Something For Grace**  
 Atlantic Jazz 82975

★★★

Since leaving Straight Ahead three years ago, violinist Carter has forged a solo recording career in the pop-jazz field. This may come as a surprise to those who know her work with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra on their recent international tour of *Blood On The Fields*. Well, Carter is her own woman and she records the kind of music that she deems suitable for honest expression of her allegiance to Almighty God.

Some of Carter's most rewarding playing on her second Atlantic Jazz effort occurs when the combination of her impressive technique and her grainy yet attractive tone lends a cheerful sincerity to the phrases of "Something For



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Grace," a Latinish original dedicated to her mother. Also notable is the sober tenderness of her bowing in "Soul Eyes," a slow ballad that benefits from the straightahead jazz inclinations of string players Kenny Davis and Lewis Nash's brush stirrings. Both songs list Carter and Yves Beauvais as producers.

No other than Arif Mardin is on hand to produce three tracks. He frames Carter's adoration of melody and modest flair for improvisation with either the classy r&b of "Downtown Underground" or the relaxed synthesizer-sweetened pop of Earth, Wind & Fire's "I'll Write A Song For You." The version of Eddie Harris' "Listen Here" generates even more excitement, her long, zesty violin lines stretched over the funk beat of her band's rhythm section.

Producers do make a difference. Two tracks supervised by Michael Bearden, "Late Night Mood" and "Hide & Seek," find the sensitive strains of Carter's stringed instruments. A woman singer cooing banalities on the former song encourages cuddling, if that's your pleasure.

—Frank-John Hadley

**Something For Grace**—*Downtown Underground*; *Listen Here*; *Day Dreamin' On The Night*; *Reflections*; *Something For Grace*; *Soul Eyes*; *Late Night Mood*; *I'll Write A Song For You*; *Hide & Seek* (*Bahjee Bahjee*); *Centro Habana*. (59:57)  
**Personnel**—Carter, violin; Jane Getter, guitar; Tracey Wormworth, electric bass; Kenny Davis, acoustic bass (6); Werner "Vana" Gierig, piano, synthesizers; Oriente Lopez, piano (10); Rocky Bryant (1-3, 7-10), Lewis Nash (5, 6), drums; Johnny Almendra (5, 10), Mayra Casales (3, 10), percussion; Nicki Richards, vocals (7); Michael Bearden, keyboards and drum programming (7, 9).



## Sonny Simmons

### American Jungle

Qwest/Warner Bros. 9-46543

★★★½

### Transcendence

CIMP 113

★★★

### Judgment Day

CIMP 118

★★★★

**T**ranscendence features mainly a trio, but Sonny Simmons also takes it out solo on "Geraldine's Dream," while two tracks pit duels between Michael Marcus and the late Charles Moffett. *Judgment Day* breaks from the quartet's configuration with "Sponge Garden," a piece that opens handsomely with Michael Marcus intoning on the manzello. Layered a strata

above Moffett's detonations is Steve Neil, his bass not only answering, but moving between melody and rhythm figures to create an additional current of momentum. The other departure, a trio treatment of "The Call For Old Sirus," pits Simmons' wildcat missive atop Moffett's percussions striated by sizzling cymbals.

One of the most pleasurable segments among the shorter tunes on *Judgment Day* is the quartet's theme statement that opens and closes "Waltz For Josette." Simmons' propensity to stretch his turns when improvising is tipped off by titles to the final cuts on these two CDs—"Augmentation" and "Cosmosmatics." Simmons definitely chooses deep-sea fishing over plunking a hook into a stocked lake.

Perhaps someone asked Simmons if he could

play Coltrane reminiscent of Trane being challenged to play ballads during his free period. Recorded in December 1995 and recently made available, *American Jungle* tributes Coltrane by quoting him throughout and rendering four original compositions in a Trane-like manner. Generally, melodies embrace Simmons' pliant probes of the sonic infinite. The blowing marathons tumbleweed over busy detonations on the low end of the Richter scale, and this allows Simmons' sound to soar the gamut between a brightness we associate with the soprano and mid-tones of the tenor. Ex-Trane bassist Reggie Workman savors his nostalgic role while Cindy Blackman goes all out à la Elvin Jones. Pianist Travis Shook's best solo occurs on "My Favorite Things," maybe

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because he resorts to the strengths of another Coltrane vet, McCoy Tyner.

Before being fully developed, "Coltrane Story" is subjected to a fade-out that leaves the listener guessing what the complete plot may have been. This amounts to more than an anti-esthetic irritation. Consider the analogy of hacking off one end of a painting to fit a wall.

—Zoë Anglesey

**American Jungle**—*Land Of The Freaks; Black, Blue & Purple; Coltrane Story; My Favorite Things; American Jungle Theme.* (59:31)

**Personnel**—Simmons, alto saxophone; Travis Shook, piano; Reggie Workman, bass; Cindy Blackman, drums.

**Transcendence**—*Manhattan Rejects; Geraldine's Dream; Nuclear Fission; In The Arena; Phrazaromics; Lost Village Of Um Tombey; Cosmomatics.* (69:18)

**Personnel**—Simmons, alto saxophone; Michael Marcus, manzello, C-melody saxophone; Charles Moffett, drums.

**Judgment Day**—*Judgment Day; Monk Mania; Sponge Garden; Waltz For Josette; The Call For Old Sirius; Augmentation.* (69:58)

**Personnel**—Simmons, alto saxophone; Steve Neil, bass; Michael Marcus, manzello, C-melody saxophone; Charles Moffett, drums.



## Julian Priester & Sam Rivers

Hints On Light And Shadow  
Postcards 1017

★★½

Getting trombonist Julian Priester and multi-instrumentalist Sam Rivers together to lead a session is an inspired idea, but what could have been an exciting duet is marred by dull, and sometimes overbearing, electronic interference.

On their own and in their meetings throughout the past few decades (they're the front line on Reggie Workman's *Summit Conference* and *Cerebral Caverns* discs), both Priester and Rivers draw from their wealth of experiences across the jazz spectrum. Priester was a participant in Sun Ra's legion and worked extensively within the bop and swing traditions. Rivers has been a powerful architect of free-blowing, multi-instrumentalism since the 1960s. They share some winning moments of *Hints On Light And Shadow*. On "Desire," Priester performs determinedly lyrical hushed tones while Rivers displays a great facility on the piano before picking up the saxophone to join the trombonist. A fleet saxophone/trombone duo that shows how comfortable Priester and Rivers are in a quick-witted exchange of ideas introduces "Public Servant."

The problem with *Hints On Light* is the inclusion of Tucker Martine, who plays what is vague-



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ly described as "electronics." But while Priester's former bandleader plugged in to add a crucial random edge to the Arkestra, Martine does not seem to have any real purpose for being here—even his photo on the CD sleeve is separate from one of Priester and Rivers in the studio together. "Heads Of The People" features Martine's repetitive phrases on what sounds like heavily amplified tin foil. Elsewhere, he's so high up in the mix that he drowns out any potential for call-and-response with the disc's leaders. Annoying screams (from somebody) also subvert what could have been a spirited Rivers flute solo.

Left on their own, or with a more sympathetic rhythm section, Priester and Rivers certainly could create something truly remarkable.

—Aaron Cohen

**Hints On Light And Shadow—Heads Of The People:** *Desire; Zone; The New System; Mister Mayor And Mister Miser; Autumnal Influences: The Book Of Beauty; Public Servant; The Circumlocution Office; Chiaroscuro. (48:51)*  
**Personnel—**Priester, trombone; Rivers, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute, piano; Tucker Martine, electronics.



## Fred Anderson

**Fred: Chicago Chamber Music**

Southport 0043

★★★★

**Fred Anderson/DKV Trio**

Okkadisk 12014

★★★½

## DKV Trio

**Baraka**

Okkadisk 12012

★★½

The spirit of the '60s lives on in tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson, a Chicago free-jazz pioneer and founding member of the AACM who stuck to his guns through decades of obscurity to emerge, at 68, as an old master of the avant garde. A pair of recent releases finds his deep, brawny sound—steeped in jazz tradition yet unconstrained by conventional structures—little changed in 30 years. Still, his music is thoroughly contemporary, filled with spontaneous invention, fresh insight and wisdom born of hard-won experience. Another album, by the DKV trio, who also accompany Anderson on one of his recordings, represents a younger generation of avant gardists who've mastered the techniques of their free-blowing elders

without yet finding their own identity.

The gorgeously recorded double-disc Fred: Chicago Chamber Music captures Anderson in a trio performance with drummer Afifi Phillard and bassist Tatsu Aoki, and in a duo with Aoki where pianist/producer Bradley Parker-Sparrow sits in on two tracks. The first disc starts off with "Fred's Blues," a brilliant Sonny Rollins-like excursion over Aoki's asphalt-thick vamp and Phillard's off-kilter backbeat. As straightforward as anything Anderson has recorded, it nevertheless heads quickly for the cosmos, and the remainder of the set grows steadily more abstract and convoluted, with Anderson honking, sighing, chortling and fluttering through a variety of tempo-less textures. Even though he often sounds as if he's talking to himself, Anderson keeps up a lively conver-

sation, intense and articulate, as Phillard and Aoki supply throbbing, sizzling commentary.

Without Phillard, Anderson has trouble maintaining momentum on the second, duo disc. Aoki uses a variety of techniques—rubber-band pizzicatos, eerie arco chords, even drumming on the body of the bass—to create a range of backdrops for Anderson's introspective ruminations. But the music, while stimulating, remains dry and abstruse, coming fully to life only on "North Avenue," where Parker-Sparrow, playing his piano's strings and pedals as much as its keyboard, adds depth and atmosphere.


The DKV Trio consists of drummer Hamid Drake, who's been playing with Anderson since the '70s, bassist Kent Kessler and multi-reedist Ken Vandermark. Accompanying Anderson, they

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recreate the ambience of the AACM a quarter-century ago, with Vandermark echoing Anderson so closely that when he's not playing clarinet, it's sometimes hard to tell who's who. The rhythms are more agitated than on Fred, and there's more raw Albert Ayler-style squealing, with mellower interludes on "Black Woman" and "Lady's In Love," where Drake largely lays out. But while Vandermark is a perfect foil for Anderson, neither the sound quality nor the level of inspiration here can match those of the Southport sessions.

On their own album, the DKV trio skillfully rehash every free-jazz cliché from barnyard squalling to ethereal puzzlement. But where Anderson's style is firmly grounded in blues, bop and swing, Vandermark's roots don't seem to extend much further than early Roscoe Mitchell and Anthony Braxton. The results, as on the 36-minute title track, are technically impressive but often artistically numbing. Like bebop, free-jazz remains more vital in the hands of its original creators than its latter-day imitators. —Larry Birnbaum

**Fred: Chicago Chamber Music**—*Fred's Blues; Grasshopper Greens; Indiana; Grizzle; Afro Asia; Twice As Good; Reward; Instantaneous Hot Water Heater; Sand; Bi-Pack; Rusty Swing; Ring; Duet Version; North Avenue; Steady Things Are...; Ice Bucket.* (70:40/66:39)

**Personnel**—Anderson, tenor saxophone; Tatsu Aoki, bass; Afifi Phillard, drums (1-5), Bradley Parker-Sparrow (13, 15), piano.

**Fred Anderson/DKV Trio**—*Planet E; Aaron's Tune; Black Woman; Our Theme; Dark Day; Lady's In Love.* (47:54)

**Personnel**—Anderson, tenor saxophone; Ken Vandermark, reeds; Kent Kessler, bass; Hamid Drake, drums.

**Baraka**—*Double Holiday; Soft Gamma Ray Repeater; Baraka; Figure It Out; Consequence.* (71:41)

**Personnel**—Ken Vandermark, reeds; Kent Kessler, bass; Hamid Drake, drums.



## Pat Martino

All Sides Now  
Blue Note 37627

★★½

**P**at Martino's Blue Note debut comes out of admirable intentions, and was a lot of work to put together. There is no pleasure in reporting that it mostly doesn't work.

Martino traveled coast to coast to go *mano a mano* with seven fellow guitarists from diverse genres and generations. Tuck Andress, Kevin Eubanks, Michael Hedges, Charlie Hunter, Mike Stern, Joe Satriani and Les Paul cover the waterfront, from jazz to pop to folk to rock. Martino's round-robin sounds like a fun idea, but taken collectively, the outcome is a crazy quilt, and taken individually, the tracks vary widely in effectiveness.

Charlie Hunter's decision to pump his 8-string

through a Leslie speaker cabinet on Stevie Wonder's "Too High" creates an ensemble with the ponderousness of a Hammond B-3 organ trio but with none of the power. The duets with Andress and Eubanks on "Two Of A Kind" and "Progression" are curiously static. The lackluster audio quality of most tracks, combined with the disparate sonic imprints of the various recording studios, is especially detrimental to an album that is about microcosms.

The sweet nostalgia of "I'm Confessin'" has genuine charm because of the unmistakable affection between Martino and his childhood idol, 81-year-old Les Paul. But it is followed by Joe Satriani's slash-and-burn guitar on "Ellipsis"—a jarring dislocation in mood and tone that Martino, the precise and articulate voice of reason in the right channel, cannot overcome.

Cassandra Wilson makes an appearance in the midst of all these acoustic and electric stringed instruments. The prospect of Wilson and Martino alone together on Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" is promising, but it doesn't come off. Wilson turns this lilting song turgid, and an odd recorded mix lays Martino's guitar right on top of Wilson's voice, obscuring both.

Hopefully, his second outing on Blue Note will be a real Pat Martino album.

—Thomas Conrad

**All Sides Now**—*Too High; Two Of A Kind; Progression; I'm Confessin' (That I Love You); Ellipsis; Both Sides Now; Ayako; Two Days Old; Outrider; Never And After.* (52:09)

**Personnel**—Martino, electric guitar, nylon-string guitar; Charlie Hunter, 8-string electric guitar (1); Tuck Andress (2); Les Paul (4); Joe Satriani (5, 10); Mike Stern (7, 9); Kevin Eubanks, acoustic guitar (3); Lou

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Pollo, rhythm guitar (4); Michael Hedges, drums and shakers (5); acoustic guitar (8); Cassandra Wilson, vocal (6); Scott Colley (7, 9), Paul Nowinski (4), bass; Ben Perowsky (7, 9), Jeff Hirschfield (10), drums.



## One For All, featuring Eric Alexander

Too Soon To Tell  
Sharp Nine 1006

★★★½

## Eric Alexander, featuring Cecil Payne

Two Of A Kind  
Criss Cross 1133 CD

★★

Eric Alexander is an aggressive young tenor saxophonist in the revivalist mode who plays so well, and so personally, that even if you don't like the concept of a 29-year-old kid playing in an amalgam of 40-year-old styles, you'll be hard-pressed not to like him. His tone is piping, hollow, vibratoless and slightly melancholy, without the mandatory metallic edge of Coltrane—a bit like Hank Mobley or George Coleman. His solos are logical, fluid, transparent and unaffected, though occasionally his practicing shows.

*Too Soon To Tell*, played with a sextet that performs weekly in Manhattan, features thoughtful, crisply executed arrangements in a variety of meters, tempos and "feels," with thick, closely written horn lines and cowbell-and-cymbal-heavy drums à la Blakey. Rudy Van Gelder's bristling, up-front production values fit hand-in-glove. Trumpet and flugelhorn player Jim Rotondi, with go-get-'em, Freddie Hubbard chops, wrote the opening, title tune, which establishes the album's tone of warmth, clarity and open-hearted blowing. A rhythmically clever "Alfie" is treated to mellow, Golson/Farmer harmonies. A Lestorian plainness of tone on "Dedicated To You" spells vulnerability and romance; "Betcha By Golly Wow" is so relaxed and in control you can't believe Alexander is under 30.

The tenor man breaks out of hard-bop into smoldering modal heat on "Visionary," squalling false fingerings and alluding to phrases from "A Love Supreme." The rhythm section is ace—full swing and never too busy. David Hazeltine's piano solo on "Stranger Than

Fiction" is a gem. Though the album flags here and there, it's further proof there's good music to be mined from mainstream shafts.

*Two Of A Kind*, Alexander's fourth effort on Criss Cross, is a sad outing, mostly because baritone saxophonist Cecil Payne, who is sounding so good these days, otherwise, clearly wasn't up for the session. He's got a chirpy reed, a mouthpiece full of spit and is so woefully out of tune on some of the high notes it makes you shiver. Too bad, because this relaxed and freewheeling quintet date—with the same drummer (Joe Farnsworth) and pianist (Hazeltine), plus John Webber (bass)—highlights Alexander's occasional fondness for pleasantly "worrying" a phrase to its roots (like

Sonny Rollins) and features one of the best cuts on either disc, Alexander's original ballad, "Beautiful Things." —Paul de Barros

**Too Soon To Tell**—*Too Soon To Tell*; *Alfie*; *Stranger Than Fiction*; *Dedicated To You*; *Blues For All*; *Betcha By Golly Wow*; *Visionary*; *Captain's Song*. (60:02)

**Personnel**—Alexander, tenor saxophone; Jim Rotondi, trumpet, flugelhorn; Steve Davis, trombone; David Hazeltine, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

**Two Of A Kind**—*Happy Song*; *Pentimento*; *Mr. Harris*; *I Can't Get Started*; *Cecil's Slide*; *Angel Eyes*; *Beautiful Things*; *Kick-a-Poo*. (56:36)

**Personnel**—Alexander, tenor saxophone; Cecil Payne, baritone saxophone (4,5,8); David Hazeltine, piano; John Webber, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

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## Stephane Grappelli & Martin Taylor

**Reunion**  
Honest 5022

★★★½

For about a quarter century, the meeting of virtuosos in duo settings has been commonplace in the recording of jazz. Grappelli, whose penchant for twosomes dates back to a wondrous session with Django Reinhardt in 1939, has done his share by collaborating on albums with pianists Earl Hines, Martial Solal, Alan Clare, McCoy Tyner and guitarists Diz Disley and Martin Taylor, respectively.

It was in 1993 that the estimable French violinist joined up with Englishman Taylor, a former collaborator on many world tours and

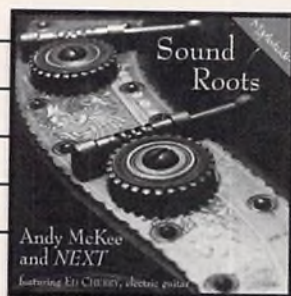
recordings in the '80s, to make *Reunion*, a U.K. album release now getting major-league distribution in the States after its near-secret debut two years ago.

With a combination of impeccable instrumental control and quiet ardor, the duo plays a program divided between standards and Taylor songs. The fingerstyle guitarist offers expert rhythm playing as the violinist peppers the familiar thematic motifs of "It's Only A Paper Moon" and "Jive At Five" with enough jaunty harmonic derring-do to keep listeners alert and involved. At 84, almost a half century older than Taylor, Grappelli shows remarkably little diminution in power and authority, swinging with the deliberation of a master. The title piece impresses when they proceed as if musically weaving a warm, colorful, magnificent rug. "Jenna" shines for the pristine loveliness of his violin sound, and much of the tender feeling of "La Dame Du Lac" derives from the stringed instrument's grainy but handsome tonal properties.

Taylor has numerous opportunities in the material to solo and follow his own melodic paths. Sometimes, as on "Willow Weep For Me," he uses blues phrases to toughen sentiment. He goes it alone on his song "Miraval" (named for the French recording studio) and the evergreen "Emily" (recorded several months after the rest). One of the best jazz guitarists, he simultaneously provides melody, chords and bass lines with self-confident assurance. As a songwriter, Taylor leans toward sweetness and light. —*Frank-John Hadley*

**Reunion**—*Jive At Five; Willow Weep For Me; Drop Me Off At Harlem; Miraval; Jenna; Reunion; Emily; Hotel Splendid; La Dame Du Lac; I Thought About You; It's Only A Paper Moon.* (45:45)

**Personnel**—Grappelli, violin; Taylor, guitar.



## Andy McKee

**Sound Roots**  
Mapleshade 04432

★★★★½

Andy McKee plays the devil out of the bass, as his performances with the Mingus Big Band, Elvin Jones and others have proved. His walking lines are wrist-thick, filled with limber notes; his intonation is spot-on; and he might as well be sitting behind



CD 1007-2

## Brian Lynch

### Spheres of Influence

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Essiet Okon Essiet, bass    Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums  
John Benitez, bass    Adam Cruz, drums  
Conrad Herwig, trombone    Milton Cardona, congas

Still underrated after all these years, trumpeter Brian Lynch explores a wide range of musical interests on *Spheres of Influence*; from hard bop to Latin, with some reggae and hip hop stops along the way. Is there a trumpeter on the scene who can cover this vast musical landscape with as much technical command and musical authority?

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*The Unheard Herbie Nichols Vol. 1* is a rinky-dink affair stuffed with more filler than an off-brand frankfurter. Rudd relinquishes one of Nichols' more interesting unheard compositions, "Freudian Frolics," to a gratuitous drum solo. In "Jamaica," an endless vamp, Rudd tinkers with various percussion instruments before finally picking up his trombone. "One Twilight" and the aptly titled "Passing Thoughts" are indistinguishable; it's just 15 minutes of rambling, unaccompanied trombone in which Rudd repeats the same dreary motif over and over. Not that Rudd's solos are devoid of charm. Amid his ballsy blurts and blats, there lies an unmistakable stamp of individuality. But it takes more than a unique voice to sustain a CD.

"Out And About" holds up better due to a more artful rhythm section, the trombone of Steve Swell and dashes of humor ("Start Up," for example, sounds like a parody of legendary trombone duo Jay and Kai). Rudd is in his element here, as a featured improviser rather than a leader, and Swell solos with a wide range of expression. But like Rudd's project, "Out And About" comes across largely as an offhand indulgence. The trombonists are clearly having a ball—we can almost see the veins popping out of their foreheads—but they're like a pair of eccentric guests who speak at length and overstay their welcome. And while Swell's songs are provocative, especially the heraldic "Fruition," Rudd mars them with cracked notes and faulty intonation. (Or should we call it microtonal dissonance?)

Beepers may ring because of these sides,

but mainly from other avant-garde trombonists hearing what Rudd and Swell are up to.

—John Janowiak

**The Unheard Herbie Nichols Vol. 1**—*Freudian Frolics; Valse Macabre; Jamaica; Prancin' Pretty Woman; Karna Kanji; One Twilight; Passing Thoughts.* (44:20)  
**Personnel**—Rudd, trombone, mellophone, trumpet, percussion; Greg Millar, guitar; John Bacon Jr., drums, vibes.

**Out And About**—*Fruition; Moves; Out And About; Start Up; Walking The Dog; A Painting; Diesel Dots (for Ryan & Kelcey).* (73:51)

**Personnel**—Swell, trombone; Roswell Rudd, trombone; Ken Filiano, bass; Lou Grassi, drums.



## Bobby Zankel Quintet

### Prayer And Action

CIMP 131

★★★

Saxophonist Bobby Zankel envisions an updated hard-bop for the next millennium. He favors long, twisting melodies, like the Wayne Shorter-inspired "The Next Time I See You," along with hints of African and other world music influences. Zankel's compositions allow plenty of solo space to his quintet, a talented group of players with strong Philadelphia connections, including drummer Ralph Peterson Jr. and vibraphonist Bryan Carrott, who make up half of Peterson's Fo'tet. The most effective tracks on *Prayer And Action* tend to be the most focused and concise, such as, "Lotus On The Nile," an exotic, atmospheric piece featuring Zankel on soprano sax, and "The Quest."

Alternating alto and soprano horns, Zankel is a fleet, agile player bearing a strong Coltrane influence, with hints of Ornette Coleman and Jimmy Lyons. He does not benefit from CIMP's "no-mixing" esthetic, under which the saxophonist is "first among equals," and which leaves his tone sounding somewhat dry. Vibraphonist Carrott, on the other hand, sounds great. His vibes have a ripe, full sound, reminiscent of Bobby Hutcherson, and he's a focal point of this quintet. Along with Peterson, he constantly shifts and adjusts his approach to respond to the other players. He's particularly effective on "The Quest," a bright, upbeat tune which clearly echoes Coltrane's "India." After Carrott's inventive work with the Fo'tet and with Muhal Richard Abrams, I can't understand why he hasn't received broader recognition. Peterson plays effectively, but with considerable restraint until "Where The Sky



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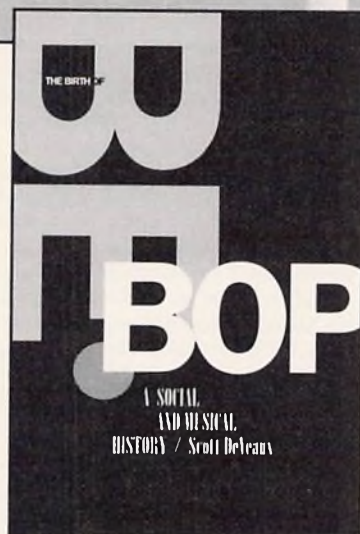
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Meets The Earth," a diffuse 20-minute suite in which the drummer finally lets loose.

—Jon Andrews

**Prayer And Action**—*The Next Time I See You; Prayer And Action; Lotus On The Nile; The Quest; Where The Sky Meets The Earth; Flash Of The Spirit.* (69:52)  
**Personnel**—Zankel, alto and soprano saxophones; John Swana, trumpet; Bryan Carrott, vibraphone; Tyrone Brown, bass; Ralph Peterson Jr., drums.



**Greg Osby**  
**Further Ado**  
Blue Note 56543

★★★½

**G**reg Osby seems bent on being the subtlest of saxophonists. With an ice-cool tone that rarely peaks to a yelp, his alto solos wind their way toward lofty, cerebral statements.

But there can be too much of a good thing, even too much subtlety. Of the 10 songs here, made up of nine originals and a reading of "Tenderly," most are slow- to mid-tempo ruminations. In his melodies, Osby alternates moody, lyrical phrases with odd-metered bursts of movement, offbeat accents and startling pauses—cunning techniques, indeed. Applied liberally, though, they wear thin, and the slower numbers

start to blur together. The best of them are "Of Sound Mind," with a moving piano solo by Jason Moran, and "Transparency," a peaceful flute-and-sax line that ends with a glimpse of passion amid all of Osby's circumspect technique. Less memorable, in context, are "The 13th Floor" and "Mentor's Prose."

The faster songs stand out in relief. As meaty blowing vehicles for Osby and company, they offer a refreshingly skewed attitude that many of the slower tunes lack. "Heard," an homage to Eddie Harris, jumps out like a jagged Picasso amid a stack of airy watercolors. Over an hypnotic groove and based loosely on Harris' "Listen Here," Osby and trumpeter Tim Hagans blurt out a schizophrenic unison horn line that steadily layers one disjointed idea after another. In the head, Hagans' trumpet sounds not exactly muted, but somehow muffled, as if a hockey puck were jammed into his bell. The effect is positively devilish.

"Soldan" is another strong cut, both compositionally and soloistically. Osby and tenorist Mark Shim trade phrases over drummer Eric Harland's engaging pulse, and their interaction generates some real sparks. Similar horseplay occurs on "Vixen's Vance," a sort of tripped-out dixieland jungle jam with Hagans, Shim and Osby trading licks over an intense percussive vibe.

Enjoyable moments and praise go to the fine musicians playing demanding charts. If nothing else, this CD is a showcase for some young musicians to watch for—like Harland, Shim and especially Moran, whose piano solos add warmth to a somewhat chilly outing. But if last year's *Art Forum* was Osby's tour de force, *Further Ado* is, at best, a transition to his next masterwork.

—John Janowiak

**Further Ado**—*Six Of One; Transparency; Mentor's Prose; Heard; 13th Floor; Soldan; Of Sound Mind; The Mental; Tenderly; Vixen's Vance.* (53:45)  
**Personnel**—Osby, alto saxophone; Tim Hagans, trumpet; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Cleave Guyton, flute, alto flute, clarinet; Jason Moran, piano; Lonnie Plaxico, Calvin Jones (8), bass; Eric Harland, drums; Jelf Haynes, percussion.

**To Whom It May Concern:**

The liner notes of the LL Cool J album "Mr. Smith," released by Def Jam Records in 1995 identify Mr. Hubert Laws as a co-writer of the song "Mr. Smith," which appears on the album. This is to confirm that Mr. Laws' contribution to the song was only with respect to its music. Mr. Laws had no part in creating or approving the lyrics of the song "Mr. Smith."

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# JAZZ

## Throng Of 3s

by Thomas Conrad

**W**ithin the microcosm of the minimum complete jazz orchestra, namely, the jazz trio, the beauty of three instrumental voices and their intricate interactions can be experienced with an intimacy provided like no other jazz group. In particular, piano trios seem to be the most popular these days, as evidenced by the number of releases offered up.

**Monty Alexander: *Echoes Of Jilly's* (Concord Jazz 4769; 60:46: ★★★½)**

The subtitle of this album is "trio performances of songs popularized by Frank Sinatra." Monty Alexander, with his headlong ecstatic style, might seem like an unlikely interpreter of Sinatra's existential tensions. But in the '60s, Alexander played at Jilly's on 52nd Street when it was a hang-out for Sinatra and his entourage. He approaches "All The Way" with an obvious awareness of Sinatra's version on *The Joker Is Wild*, withholding the last three notes of the first line. Bassist John Patitucci broods over "Angel Eyes" with some of Sinatra's shading and nuance. Alexander's trio takes 13 great songs of the Sinatra canon and celebrates a time, place and spirit.

**Makoto Ozone: *The Trio* (Verve 537 503; 60:04: ★★★)** Ozone was born in Kobe, Japan, studied at Berklee and sounds like he has absorbed the entire jazz-piano tradition. The complex, elegance surface of his music is intellectually but not emotionally involving. The program consists of 10 Ozone originals. They are successful exercises in musical problem-solving, but there is not a single familiar reference point. (Some of the truest pleasures of the piano trio format come when a shimmer of cymbal and a quaking of Kiyoshi Kitagawa's bass and a right-hand run suddenly cohere into a favorite song.) Three strong points of this album are the pristine recorded sound of engineer James Farber, the dramatic entrances of John Scofield's guitar on three tunes, and drummer Clarence Penn's delicate brush work.

**Jessica Williams: *Higher Standards* (Candid 79736; 65:33: ★★★)** Jessica Williams' album is the polar opposite of Ozone's. Her trio (with Dave Caplein on bass and Mel Brown on drums) plays standards exclusively, with honest, orderly competence rather than technical virtuosity. Despite the recording's mediocre sonic quality, the clarity of Williams' musical thought provides genuine rewards. "Don't Take Your Love From Me" proceeds from its source with dignified but persuasive insistence. "A Night In Tunisia" is quite transformed with twists and fly-by quotations. "When Your Lover Has Gone" just cruises, a few feet off the ground.



Abdullah Ibrahim: passing the jazz language back through its roots

**Dick Hyman: *Cheek To Cheek* (Arbors Jazz 19155; 66:02: ★★★½)** A cruel irony of the jazz art form, which can forgive a lapse in technique but not an absence of passion, is that too much technique can obscure passion. Dick Hyman possesses the most technically skilled hands here. On *Cheek To Cheek* he applies his clever eclecticism to Kern, Berlin, Monk, Porter, John Lewis and Strayhorn, and it is admirable and fun. But the ornate surface of "Lotus Blossom" never touches Billy Strayhorn's ineffable wistfulness. "Django" is fussy, and "Misterioso" is Monk without the mystery.

**Abdullah Ibrahim: *Cape Town Flowers* (Tiptoe/enja 888 826; 50:58: ★★★½)** South African Abdullah Ibrahim shares the art form derived from Africa and transposed to another continent. But he passes the jazz language back through its roots to express a deeply African viewpoint on music as a spiritual healing force. Most of the 11 original compositions here are performed in less than four minutes. The power of songs like "Eleventh Hour" and "The Call" is cumulative. They are elemental and unadorned, but not simple. Like the formulas of African sound scientists, they resonate with a place where joy and sorrow are not separate. Bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer George Gray—tapping, returning, whispering rituals—selflessly serve Ibrahim's cause.

**Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen: *Friends Forever* (Milestone 9269; 53:09: ★★★)** This album, subtitled "In Memory Of Kenny Drew," is the only one here led by the bass player. It is a bass player whose very initials are synonymous with a particularly dark, fluid, evocative tonal universe (beautifully captured by engineer Henrik Lund in a Copenhagen studio).

NHØP also generates compelling time and takes poetic four-fingered, upper-register solos. The choice of Renee Rosnes for the piano chair in this tribute to a pianist is apt. She plays with unsentimental sensitivity, always lyrical but not always gentle. She unfolds "Hushaby," a traditional Danish lullaby favored by Drew, with reflective solemnity. But the waltz of "Someday My Prince Will Come" ascends to swirling intensities around a brief, epic statement from NHØP. "The Shadow Of Your Smile," with its skipping bass solo, throbs like a samba, much more a celebration than lament.

**Bill Charlap: *Distant Star* (Criss Cross 1131; 53:16: ★★★★★½)** Bill Charlap is probably the least-known pianist in this grouping, but his trio is the best at casting spells. There is a magic peculiar to piano trios: the coming into being of an inner-directed world within a triangle upon which the listener eavesdrops, an atmosphere so rapt that even up tempo pieces feel like ballads. Bill Evans could create that hush, and Keith Jarrett, and Michael Petrucciani once, and a few others, including Bill Charlap. You hear it on "Last Night When We Were Young": Bill Stewart's brushes softly sweeping and Sean Smith's huge bass notes suspended in space and Charlap slowing almost to a stop to pick out the message with infinite care. Charlap also goes outside of time with a revelatory solo meditation on "The Heather On The Hill." Like all the best piano trio recordings, *Distant Star* is a collaborative achievement. Smith is the pulse of a self-sufficient, organic whole and Stewart is an intelligent energy, never still. Max Bolleman recorded this session at Systems Two in Brooklyn and is a fourth collaborator, providing a tactile sonic portrait of three instruments.

DB



# BEYOND

## Sweet Soul Music

by Frank-John Hadley

It's soul-time! For the first time in recent memory, American record companies are giving classic soul music its due. Archival champs Rhino have really outdone themselves. Don't delay, lend an ear.

**Various Artists: *Beg, Scream & SHOUT!* (Rhino R2 72815;72:32/73:09/63:09/59:32/68:06/70:38:★★★★★)** "The Big Ol' Box of '60s Soul" is happenin', baby, with 144 songs on six CDs packaged like 45s in cardboard jackets that fit into a carrying box similar to the ones used to hold singles in the decade when soul music was in its supreme glory. Also in the box are 146 trading cards with photos, trivia questions and effusive blurbs on the artists and their songs. Big guns Sam Cooke and Sly Stone get cards but licensing problems excluded use of their music.

David Gorman and three fellow compilers give us one superlative number after another for almost seven hours. They've selected singles that brim over with gut-wrenching feeling suggestive of the black gospel church, where, in fact, virtually all the singers had spent time. Lyrics on the anxiety caused by tainted love, on dance steps or on hormones gone wild may have nothing to do with Sunday morning services but the astonishingly expressive manner in which these mostly black artists beg, scream, shout, cry and moan does!

The Rhino compilers decided to present just a single track each from their favorite soul people. No exceptions, not even for super beings James Brown, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding. It's a smart move not loading up on familiar hits: We get to hear and savor many, many little-known classics by forgotten heroes like Don Covay, Sir Mack Rice, the Esquires, Dyke & the Blazers, Shirley Ellis and Barbara Mason, one and all grooving with that special you-know-it-when-you-hear-it quality called *soul*.

Detroit was one of the soul paradises with Berry Gordy's Tamla Motown kingdom, and the compilers have searched "The Sound of Young America" catalog for splendid gospel-oriented numbers such as Brenda Holloway's ballad "Every Little Bit Hurts" and Marvin Gaye's dance-sermon "Can I Get A Witness." Crucial to the Motown Sound were the Funk Brothers sessionmen, including keyboardist Earl Van Dyke. Also from the Motor City, but not the domain of Gordy, was Edwin Starr's "Agent Double-O-Soul," a cat who dances the Jerk better than James Bond. Down in Philadelphia, the production team of Gamble and Huff had their breakthrough hit with the Intruders' "Cowboys To Girls," and those paragons of dazzling falsetto harmony, the Delfonics, cut the pop chart smash "La La



Brimming gut-wrencher: Aretha Franklin

Means I Love You."

Still another soul high heaven, Memphis, had the world-famous Stax-Volt label, and the Rhino box is liberally sprinkled with blasts of three-minute ecstacy from, among others, Carla Thomas ("B-A-B-Y"), Eddie Floyd ("Big Bird," *heavy metal* soul) and Mr. Redding ("I've Been Loving You Too Long")—the remarkable Booker T. & the MGs show why they're the premier backup group on planet earth. Over in Muscle Shoals at Rick Hall's Fame recording studio, Atlantic Records recorded Aretha's "(Sweet Sweet Baby) Since You've Been Gone," with Tommy Cogbill supplying the great bass guitar, while Chess captured for all time on tape Etta James belting out "Tell Mama." How soulful was New Orleans r&b? Check out the Meters, Robert Parker, a few more. The fertile soul scene of New York in the early '60s spawned, to name one gem, Chuck Jackson's Latin-spiced "I Don't Want To Cry." Chicago, too, buzzed with activity: Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions waxed their brilliant statement on racial equality, "Choice Of Colors," and the Radiants mirrored their style on "Voice Your Choice." Rodger Collins' lustful "She's Looking Good" got noticed in black L.A., and over in London 285-pound J. J. Jackson made the heart-stopping "But It's Alright." And on and on ....

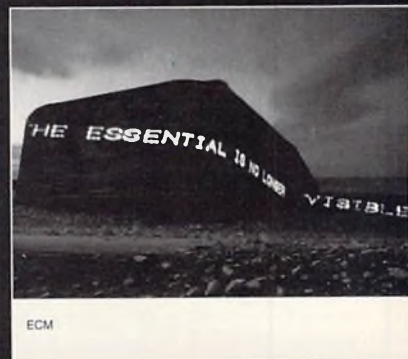
It's fun to bark at the absence of a favorite artist or song. Why'd the Righteous Brothers get passed over in favor of less mighty blue-eyed soul guys? Where's the delightful Darlene Love? Syl Johnson? Jimmy McCracklin? Tammi Terrell? It's not right Percy Sledge's "It Tears Me Up" gets picked over "When A Man Loves A Woman" or "Take Time To Know Her." But, hey, no problem, *Beg, Scream & SHOUT!* is, to cop a Soul Brothers Six song title, some kind of wonderful.

DB

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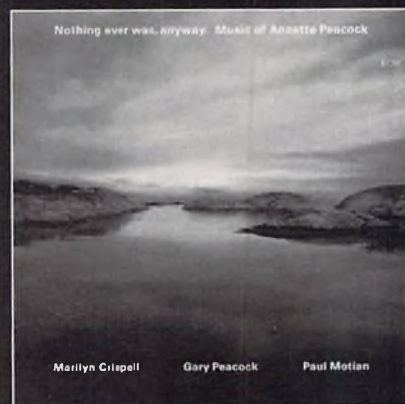
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# REISSUES

## CTI-fied Jazz

by Robin Tolleson

**C**TI, producer Creed Taylor's custom-label creation from the early '70s, dished up a slew of taut grooves that, to some extent, foreshadowed today's acid-jazz movement. With a never-ending, always slightly customized parade of stars and stars-to-be, its dated drum sounds, emphasis on classy cover art, and occasional cheesy synths and fluff pieces were also a feature. Bonus tracks and alternate takes of good quality are included on many of Epic/Legacy's first batch.

**Freddie Hubbard: *Straight Life* (Epic/Legacy 65125; 36:26; ★★★★★)** Following on the heels of *Red Clay*, Hubbard's *Straight Life* was a much-awaited jazz-funk foray, and sounds as ferocious today as it did in 1970. Saxman Joe Henderson immerses himself in his first solo, then Hubbard comes in and blows the doors off with his horn. It's Jack DeJohnette's album as well. He throws out one barrage of rhythmic ideas after another on the lengthy "Straight Life," pushed on by the congas of Richie Landrum. "Mr. Clean," another extended jam, benefits from the steady pulse of bassist Ron Carter and the constant probing of keyboardist Herbie Hancock. After the chaos, a gorgeous album-closing version of "Here's That Rainy Day" sparkles even more.

**Milt Jackson: *Sunflower* (65131; 45:47; ★★★★★)** Jackson's *Sunflower* featured several of the top young sidemen of the day and arrangements by Don Sebesky. Jackson's lush, low tones are gorgeous, framing a dizzying Freddie Hubbard solo at one point, shadowing the trumpeter with a clever harmony at another. He takes off on a spiraling vibes solo on their acid-jazz-like version of "People Make The World Go Round," and drummer Billy Cobham slices through the tempo changes on this classic version of Hubbard's "Sunflower." Hancock and Hubbard show their depth on "For Someone I Love" with beautiful, uncluttered playing, but Sebesky's string arrangements at times sound forced against the carefree rhythm tracks.

**Patti Austin: *Havana Candy* (65124; 36:01; ★★★★★)** *Havana Candy* was the soulful 1977 release by the former backup singer Austin. This one was produced by Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen, and represents Austin's appreciation of the jazz legacy as well as her love of various pop styles. They rely on members of the group Stuff and Michael Brecker, Dave Valentin, hornmen Marvin Stamm and Wayne Andre, reedmen Lou Marini and Ronnie Cuber, drummer Steve Jordan and percussionist Ralph MacDonald to navigate the beautifully restrained soul beat on "Little Baby," the high gospel ground of "I Need Somebody" and kick up a funky samba on "Havana Candy."

**Stanley Turrentine: *Salt Song* (65126; 42:41; ★★★★★½)** From his first notes on "Gibraltar," Turrentine is in full command, confident and in his prime. Producer Taylor builds the harmonic foundation with keyboardists Deodato, Richard Tee and Horace Parlan, the rhythm with Cobham, Carter and Airtio along with guitarist Eric Gale. In his counterpoint on "Storm" and elsewhere, Gale shows a great affinity for



Stanley Turrentine: confident and in his prime

Turrentine's emotional playing. The tenorist guides the Milton Nascimento compositions "Salt Song" and "Vera Cruz" (a breathtaking and hypnotic bonus track) with great flair.

**Paul Desmond: *Skylark* (65133; 55:55; ★★★★★½)** The beautiful tone of Desmond's alto is featured on *Skylark*, first on the saxman's "Take Five" revisit, "Take Ten." This album features Bob James on electric piano, the tonally adventurous guitarist Gabor Szabo and the multidirectional DeJohnette. Desmond plays with a pure, simple warmth as DeJohnette stirs the breeze with his brushes on "Skylark." He eases gracefully into a medium swing on the album version of Henry Purcell's "Music For Awhile," while on the alternate take the saxman suddenly bursts into high gear with bassist Carter in hot pursuit. The album's high points are balanced by an uninspired reading of Paul Simon's "Was A Sunny Day" and an ambitious but slightly out-of-focus "Romance de Amor."

**George Benson: *Beyond The Blue Horizon* (65130; 54:23; ★★★★★½)** Guitarists should be pleased about the re-release of this classic by George Benson.

*Beyond The Blue Horizon* is pre-vocal Benson from 1971. The guitarist lays into Miles Davis' "So What" with a controlled vengeance, and Luis Bonfá's "The Gentle Rain" becomes a torrent of notes with Carter and DeJohnette just waiting for a chance to spring off the beat. "Ode To A Kudu" displays Benson's lyrical playing, while "Somewhere In The East" is a daring piece with Benson's re-tuned guitar, heavy percussion and droning organ. The alternate take of "All Clear" out-swings the original (without Carter's ill-advised bowing), and Benson's solo is a hint of what we'd soon be hearing on *Breezin'*.

**Jim Hall: *Concierto* (65132; 55:59; ★★★★★)** This is a landmark recording, where we hear a totally dedicated Ron Carter, a supremely romantic Chet Baker, an engaging-but-coy Roland Hanna on piano, and the lilting alto sax of Paul Desmond as well as guitarist Hall's melodic mastery. It's also one of the first glimpses of Steve Gadd's slightly-more-on-top-of-the-beat swing, his independence and interplay sparking much of this session. The combination of melodic voices—Hall, Baker and Desmond—on Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" has a rare, sweet beauty. *Concierto* has a timeless quality, a blend of beautiful melodic playing and bravado that speaks from the first comfortable, swinging notes of "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To." With several choice alternate takes and an unfinished Desmond/Hall snippet added, there's even more glow to this gem.

**Hubert Laws: *In The Beginning* (65127; 55:34; ★★★★★)** *In The Beginning* showcased flutist Laws' well-rounded musical seasonings crossing all borders, including jazz (a stunning duet with Steve Gadd on a samba-ized "Airegin" and Ronnie Laws on "Moment's Notice"), r&b (David Friedman's soulful vibes on "Mean Lene"), gospel ("Come Ye Disconsolate") and classical (Erik Satie's "Gymnopédie #1"). "Reconciliation" showcases Gadd on brushes, a superb Bob James and bassist Carter, the backbone of the label, swinging broadly.

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- Paul Desmond: *Sylark*: ★★★★★ (7/10/74 issue)
- George Benson: *Beyond The Blue Horizon*: ★★★★★ (4/13/72)
- Jim Hall: *Concierto*: ★★★★★ (12/4/75)



# Reordering Baron Mingus

by John Corbett

In the half-decade that slipped by from 1956 to 1961, Charles Mingus recorded a series of albums for the major/minor label Atlantic Records. In fact, the bassist, bandleader and composer wasn't working exclusively for Atlantic's Ertegun brothers at the time; during that period he recorded as a leader for RCA Victor, Bethlehem, United Artists, Columbia, Mercury, Jubilee and Candid, and as a sideman for other companies including his own proto-indie, Debut. But those precious Atlantic LPs—especially *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *Blues & Roots* and *Oh Yeah*—constitute the apex of Mingus' career for a considerable contingent of his fans.

**Passions Of A Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings (1956-1961) Rhino/Atlantic 72871; 61:38/56:21/70:20/71:40/67:34/75:00: ★★★★★** In a deluxe boxed set designed to sit alongside their market-cornering John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman compilations, Rhino Records has collected the records referred to above. Though the six albums that constitute the backbone of the collection have been available singly on CD, this gathering treats them as a whole, proceeding one session at a time, adding a few previously unissued takes and throwing in four tracks Mingus recorded for the label as a sideman with vibraphonist Teddy Charles. That pleasant outing, which musically has nothing to do with the rest of the material here, was released in '58 as *Word From Bird* (with two tracks minus Mingus not included in the set) and has never before appeared on disc. The box also includes a 75-minute interview, circa '61 or '62, that Nesuhi Ertegun conducted in his office with Mingus; it's a fascinating, funny, informative discussion, part of which was already issued on the CD version of *Oh Yeah*, but perhaps not the kind of thing listeners will go back to repeatedly. It should be noted that the date-specificity of the box is necessitated by Mingus' return to the label in the '70s, 12 years after the last note here; his later Atlantic material is not included in this set.

On these sides, one can hear the mature Mingus driving various classic bands, including the chilling two-horn interplay between Jackie McLean and J.R. Monterose on "Pithecanthropus Erectus," the intense jazz-gospel shouts of "Moanin'" and twisted contrapuntal bebopery of "E's Flat, Ah's Flat Too" (with the expanded horn section on *Blues & Roots*), Mingus' piano preaching with Roland Kirk on *Oh Yeah*, comedian Jean Shepherd's improvised monologue on "The Clown" alongside Curtis Porter (later Shafi Hadi)'s rolling sax fillips, and the outrageous live concert at Antibes with a luminescent Eric Dolphy and slightly dimming guest Bud Powell (a record first released in '79). And through most of it, Mingus' Godzilla-like bass, slapping, thumping and pumping out infallible grooves.

The music on these records has been the object of constant analy-

sis, review, critique and ponderment since it was waxed. I'll concentrate on the construction and production of the reissue rather than the original tuneage, though my enthusiasm for these recordings really knows no bounds. If there was a sixth star, I can think of no music more deserving of it—the star rating thus applies to the repackaging and not Mingus.

Like many, I came to Mingus' Atlantic records as life-changing slabs of vinyl, and I suspect that other listeners who know the records as such will find the track order on this collection to be a point of contention. In the manner of session-oriented reissue projects like those by Mosaic, producer Patrick Milligan chose to program the discs according to the master track numbers, laying them out in purely chronological order rather than according to the order they appeared on the original release. Milligan reasons in his notes: "This affords us an opportunity to hear the development of Mingus' art during this period." But how much more can we glean about his "development" from reordering the recordings made on a single given day? With Mosaic, and even with Rhino's Coltrane box, the numerous unissued



Charles Mingus: for many, the apex of his career

tracks and alternate takes make disinterring and reorganizing by session a sensible strategy, but here it seems an arbitrary decision. And the producers aren't even consistent about it: Straying from their purism, they (thankfully) group the previously unissued alternate takes—four of them, all extremely interesting and drawn from the tremendous Jazz Workshop session that produced *Blues & Roots*—at the end of the disc, "making for a more enjoyable listening experience," as Milligan explains.

At the time of their creation, great effort went into choosing a running order for these albums, and that original order has arguably become part of the history of each record, an integral aspect of the legacy of the music as a cultural artifact. From this angle, each record is a kind of composition, and new listeners should at least be given a chance to hear how it was initially organized (although the original liner notes are reprinted, as they should be, original track orders aren't available anywhere in the set). To arbitrarily revert to studio time, switching "Love Chant" and "Profile Of Jackie" on *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, for instance, or reversing the running order of all tracks on *Blues & Roots*, doesn't reveal anything about Mingus' working methods

or the development of his concept; those concepts and methods were well in place when he entered the studio to record and their evolution is better understood record-by-record than track-by-track.

It is a package absolutely packed with brilliant music, so one can't help but highly recommend this box. But if, as Stefano Zenni suggests in his liner text, Mingus was compelled to tell stories with his music, *Passions Of A Man's* new unfurled order tells a somewhat different tale than Mingus and Atlantic originally spun. **DB**

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- *Pithecanthropus Erectus*: ★★★★★½ (10/3/56 issue)
- *The Clown*: ★★★★★½ (11/28/57)
- Teddy Charles: *Word From Bird*: ★★★ (7/10/58)
- *Blues & Roots*: ★★★★★ (5/26/60)
- *Oh Yeah*: ★★★★★½ (7/5/62)
- *Tonight At Noon*: ★★★★★ (12/3/64)
- *Mingus At Antibes*: ★★★★★ (3/80)



# BLINDFOLD TEST

DECEMBER 1997

## Charlie Haden

by Dan Ouellette

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information about the recordings is given to the artist prior to the test.

Charlie Haden is one of the most prolific and in-demand bass players in jazz. A lifelong performer, he broke into show business at the age of five as a member of his parents' country & western radio show group. But it wasn't until he began playing in Ornette Coleman's late-'50s free-jazz ensembles that Haden made his mark in the jazz world. Haden has continued his association with Coleman over the years (most recently when he played with the alto saxophonist and drummer Billy Higgins at Lincoln Center in July) and has formed his own bands, including the Liberation Music Orchestra and Quartet West. He continues to record with both groups and dominates both the Down Beat Critics and Readers polls as top bassist (see Page 47).

In the last couple of years Haden has recorded with a wide range of musicians, including two CDs with the Ginger Baker Trio and duet albums with pianist Hank Jones and guitarist Pat Metheny. His most recent studio collaborations include two other duet dates with pianists Chris Anderson and Kenny Barron as well as contributions to albums by vocalist Rosemary Clooney, bluegrass singer/fiddler Alison Krauss, country crooner k.d. lang and folk-rock singer David Crosby.

This Blindfold Test, Haden's third, took place in front of an audience at the 40th-annual Monterey Jazz Festival, where the bassist performed with Quartet West and strings.

## Charles Mingus

"Il B.S." (from *Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus*, Impulse!, rec. 1963/1995) Mingus, bass; Jaki Byard, piano; Eddie Preston, Richard Williams, trumpet; Britt Woodman, trombone; Don Butterfield, tuba; Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone, flute; Jerome Richardson, Dick Hafer, Booker Ervin, saxophones; Walter Perkins, drums.

[After four notes] That's Charlie Mingus. I love listening to musicians I love and respect. Mingus was a great composer and musician and a very strong human being. I think this piece is beautiful. It's worth more than 5 stars. More like 100. I played in the first Mingus Dynasty band. Susan Mingus asked me to play, and it was an honor. The first rehearsal was at Mingus' apartment at the Manhattan Plaza. As I took my bass out of its case, I felt this presence. I turned around and there was this portrait of Charlie on the wall. Mingus used to call me "Bass." We were both playing in Miami once and he called me in my hotel room. He said, "Bass, they've got a terrible instrument here for me to play. Can I borrow yours?" I said, "Man, you can *have* my instrument."

## Dave Holland

"Mr. P.C." (from *Ones All, Intuition*, 1995) Holland, bass.

Oh, my goodness. I'm not going to attempt to say who this is. I really don't listen to that many bass players. But this person is a great musician with great intonation, great sound, great ideas, imagination and creativity. I really loved it. Stars? 5. And a half. I know the tune, but I can't think of its name. I've played it before, but it's been a long time. The way this is rendered shows the dedication and devotion of this bassist to playing beautiful music.



## Paul Chambers

"Eastbound" (from *Chambers Music*, Blue Note, rec. 1956/1989) Chambers, bass; Kenny Drew, piano; John Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Philly Joe Jones, drums.

There's not much of a tune here. It's more like an exercise to improvise on. I couldn't hear the bass well enough to tell who that was. I really liked the improvising. I think that was John Coltrane. The drummer sounded like Art Blakey, but it wasn't him. Someone like him. Maybe Philly Joe. On piano, maybe it was Sonny Clark or Elmo Hope. Kenny Drew? Ah, man.

DO: As for the bass player, I'll give you a clue: He's the leader.

Is it Paul Chambers? If I had heard the bass clearer, I would have known that. Or if there was a solo, I know I would have recognized Paul. I first heard him in person in Los Angeles when I was 19. I saw him in a club with Miles, Coltrane, Red Garland and Philly Joe. I sat in the front row and watched every movement Paul Chambers made. He was a hero, an original musician and a wonderful guy. 5 stars and another half for Paul Chambers.

## Milt Hinton

"Indiana (Back Home Again In Indiana)" (from *Laughing At Life*, Columbia, 1995) Hinton, bass; Richard Wyands, piano; Dave Ratajczak, drums.

There are probably only two bass players that this could be. One is Milt Hinton. I think that's who it is. His intonation on the bass is very deep and recognizable to me. Plus, no one slaps the bass the way he does. Milt is the only person I could tolerate hearing this tune, "Back Home Again In Indiana." This melody has been played straight so many times. I like to play a standard without playing the melody. Sometimes I'll just improvise on a piece and maybe play the melody at the end, if at all. But Milt can do whatever he wants to. We were judging the bass competition at the Thelonious Monk Institute in Washington, D.C., a few years ago. We were in a limo on the way to the competition, and I guess I was staring at him. It was embarrassing. Milt said, "Charlie, what are you staring at?" And I said, "Man, I want to do everything you do. I want to take the vitamins you take, the food you eat. Whatever you do, I want to do." Milt cracked up. Oh, yeah, stars: easily 105. **DB**