

# DOWNBEAT

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Joe Lovano  
making  
**History**

Clint Eastwood  
The Heath Brothers  
20 Players Pick  
Their Favorite CDs







ALAN NAHIGIAN

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*Making History*

Joe Lovano knows his history—and not just the history of jazz. He also recognizes the value of personal history in his inspired quest to develop *his* ideas and to create something completely different. For Lovano, making jazz history happen is a way of life.

By Howard Mandel

Cover photograph of Joe Lovano by John Abbott.

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# Joe Lovano

## making History

By Howard Mandel

Joe Lovano, the very epitome of the '90s professional jazzman, knows his history. Not just the history of the music—to which his vigorous yet sensitive blowing on winds and reeds and even gongs, his sturdy compositions, most memorable recordings and creative associations constantly refer. Joe also recognizes the value of *personal* history. He believes, as Charlie Parker said, “If you don’t *live* it, it can’t come out of your horn.”

“When you’re a young cat on the scene trying to play, of course you’re going to be coming out of your heroes,” Lovano knows. “It takes time to develop your own sound, your own concepts and recognition of what music really is. To develop your ideas within an ensemble, man, that takes experience, too.

“If you have no history except for the records you listened to and the solos you transcribed that somebody else played, there’s not much happening there. It’s kind of thin, and a trap that a lot of young kids could fall into that would keep them from ever developing their potentials in a creative way. But each musician has a very unique history, and if you can draw from your history, then you’re going to be able to put some things together.

“Now, sometimes people ask me during interviews, ‘What’s the future of jazz?’ Usually I answer, ‘What kind of question is that?’ But I’ll tell you: The future of jazz is about the passion of the players to develop this music. The future of jazz is *not* to play the way someone played before; the future is to explore and study what’s been played before *and* to have your own ideas. To put things together, to develop your own sound, try to play some music—together with other people, so the different combinations of people *really* create some different music.”

Putting things together, with different combinations of people, shaping music, making jazz history happen—to Lovano, that’s a way of life, rewarding in itself. Consider his satisfactions in drummer Paul Motian’s trio with guitarist Bill Frisell; the three have been together since 1981. “The music we play is fresh *every* time we play,” the saxophonist stresses—as if he had to tell anyone who’s ever heard them. “We’re three completely different people—different personalities, different concepts. But when we play together, we listen to each other and react to each other, trying to shape the music, whether we’re playing Monk or standards or something Billie Holiday did or Paul’s music or one of my tunes or Bill’s. We’re listening to each other, trying to



shape it from our personalities, *together*. Another trio with different people, the same tune wouldn't be the same. And it *shouldn't* be the same."

Lovano's confidence appraising such jazz matters is so comprehensive and mature that you have to suppose the wisdom was passed down to him by at least one experienced elder, before it was validated in his own life.

"Oh yeah, I was really lucky," Lovano says. "My dad was a great player, had fun with music and just loved to play. I learned from him that jazz expression is vast. He never told me, '*This is good and that's sad*'—he let me explore it all. And he taught me about each instrument—which, I have to say, taught me how to play. He taught me to check out piano players and drummers and bass players and trumpeters. He'd say, 'If you're going to play with them, you have to know what's happening. You're going to play with drummers—you have to know how to fit in your ideas with their rhythms.'

"This really opened me up. From an early age I used to listen to records from the inside of what was happening, and not just on the basis of what the soloist was playing. That was great, and as I remember it now, I think it was really generous of him.



# Pure Heart.

## HANK JONES FAVORS

*Favors* documents the Hank Jones Trio in concert with the Winds Jazz Orchestra of the Osaka College of Music, where Jones has been a guest professor since 1992. Original compositions, re-harmonized standards, and a highly energized big-band provide fertile ground for Hank's superb artistry. "The dean of jazz pianists." — *New York Times*

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## BILL COSBY HELLO, FRIEND: TO ENNIS WITH LOVE

The world's number one jazz fan produces his fourth album for Verve. On *Hello, Friend* a stellar group of veterans and young guns revisit some of Cosby's favorite standards by Horace Silver, Eddie Harris, Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, and others. The result is a cool and refreshing set, dedicated to the memory of Bill's late son, Ennis.

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Photographs: Cheung Ching Ming, Howard Bingham, Barron Claiborne, Philippe Pierangeli





JOHN ABBOTT

"The future of jazz is about the passion of players to develop this music."

"Everybody's at a different level, but if you keep an open mind, you're always studying something and trying to get yourself together. Right now, I'm trying to study composition and orchestration for my groups, trying to put ideas together. I'm still trying to develop myself on my horns, too. I don't think there are any limits on how deep I can get into the saxes, clarinets, flutes, drums. For a long time I concentrated on the tenor—I had to. Now more and more I'm trying to study clarinet and exercise my ideas—not to play a Mozart concerto or to play it from the jazz past, but to develop *my* technique and be able to execute *my* ideas."

His ideas aren't ignorant of the music of Mozart, though—or of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, Ellington and Basie, bebop and beyond. What's fascinating about Lovano's music is how readily it embraces and spans all of that. "Joe's a very *current* musician, one of the contemporary vanguard, and he's very knowledgeable about jazz from a historic point of view, too," attests Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, who collaborated with Lovano to record their soon-to-be released duet CD *Flying Colors*. "He's inclined to bring to the forefront some of the music from the past that he feels is

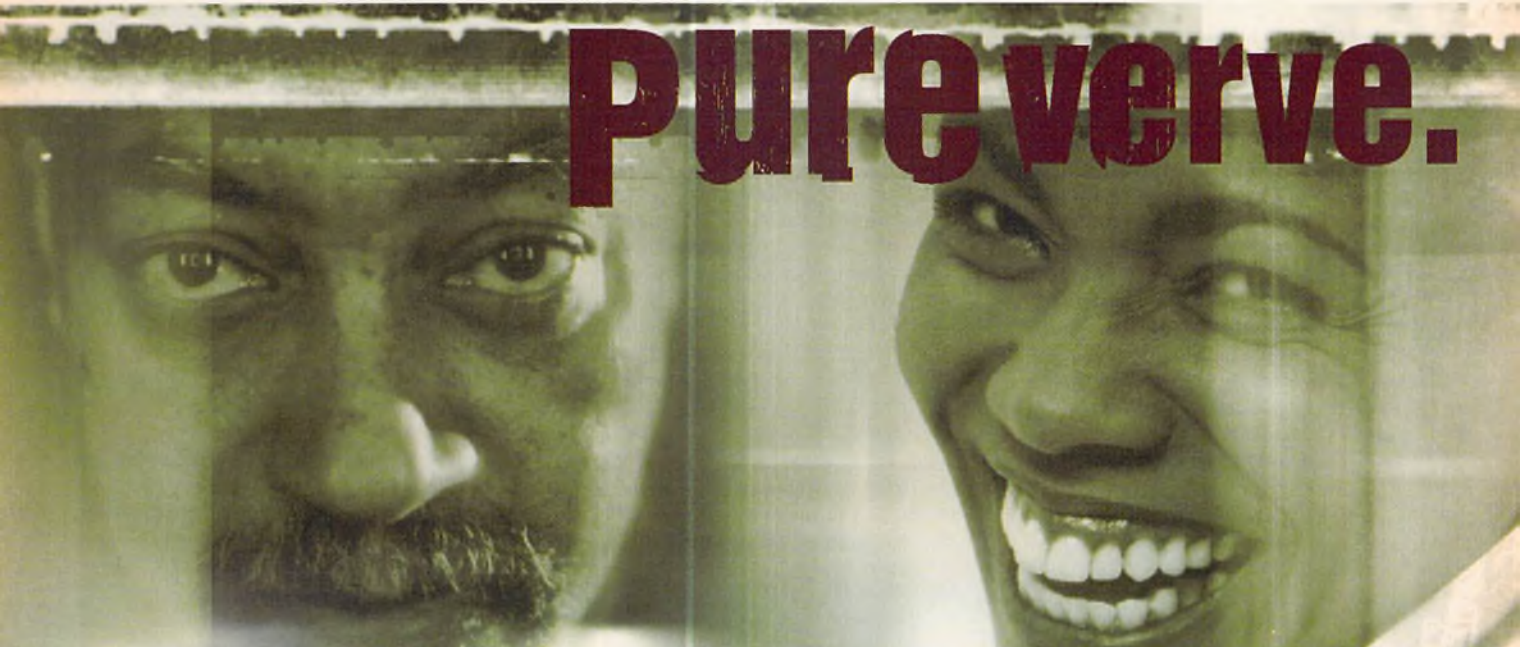
valuable, music that's worth quite a lot." To which Lovano adds, "My tunes, my concepts, have been developed around the classic music: standard songs, my study of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, among others. I'm just beginning to put some things together.

"And I've been working on this variety of instruments my whole life," he adds. "I've been playing gongs and tenor sax simultaneously since the mid-'80s; I recorded that way first on *Tones, Shapes And Colors* in '85. I'd acquired a lot of instruments by then during my travels, and had tried to develop a concept of accompanying myself on solo sax with gongs. I got into exploring that concept in the *Flying Colors* project because we had space for it.

"To search out and find the contrasting sounds on our different instruments was a fantastic, fascinating process. You know, duets are like completely focused dialogues. To explore music that way is very beautiful."

Rubalcaba and Lovano first played together at Yoshi's, the Oakland-based jazz spot, in March 1995.

"On the gig that first night, we played some of my tunes, some of his tunes, and put a repertoire together. Over the



### KENNY BARRON THINGS UNSEEN



One listen to this gem will explain why Kenny Barron was named #1 Pianist in the 1997 *Down Beat* Critics Poll. *Things Unseen* also reveals Barron's compositional genius, in his most eclectic outing to date. Helping push the envelope are John Stubblefield, Eddie Henderson, David Williams, Victor Lewis, and special guest John Scofield.

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### DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER DEAR ELLA



With this swingin' tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, Dee Dee takes her place among today's premier jazz divas. *Dear Ella* displays Bridgewater's complete vocal artistry, in settings from intimate duets and trios to a radiant string orchestra and a powerhouse big band. A true labor of love, featuring Kenny Burrell, Milt Jackson, Lou Levy, and Ray Brown.

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ALAN HARRIGAN

Lovano with Bill Frisell (left) and trio leader Paul Molian (right), backstage at the Village Vanguard during a recent engagement.

rest of the stand, we really *explored* the music. More than the tunes we played, it was the *way* we played together, the communication, the freedom within the beat and the concept of trying to *shape* the music, rather than just call a tune and play on it, that made it seem right. When we recorded, we drew on repertoire from our gig, but I also wrote a couple pieces, and we improvised open, free concept things as well."

The album was cut in a single seven-hour session, and like two tumblers having fun while working out some new routines, the two men try every imaginable position, taking turns in leading and supportive roles.

"The duet sound changed every time I picked up a different instrument. I was trying for the complete pallet of my possibilities—like the range of Gonzalo's piano. There's a world of music in his instrument. I wanted to have a lot of different sounds, colors, timbres and registers, too."

**A**s we speak, *Flying Colors* is not exactly Lovano's most recent collaboration: He's still aglow from mixing tracks of his upcoming trio album with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Elvin Jones. But Rubalcaba is in many respects Lovano's equal, his peer, and the two are planning to tour widely in '98.

Given the bounty of duet albums this season—from long-time playmates like Steve Lacy and Mal Waldron, Paul Bley and Gary Peacock, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, and also new couples such as Cassandra Wilson and Jacky Terrasson—one might think the intimacies of musical partnering have just suddenly come in style. In fact, the improvisational nature of jazz has historically pro-

moted close interaction even when there's *more* than one other person to pair off with on the bandstand. Lovano's personality seems close to the surface even when he's surrounded by a raft of pals.

"Jazz music has that in it," he agrees. "If you go for that kind of interaction, you'll be creating—improvising and *creating* music—rather than recreating something you've practiced or rehearsed. But it's all a matter of concept. If you play from that warm place, you can trust the music's going to be creative and expressive."

But might some audiences have difficulty with his and Gonzalo's freely improvised, loosely structured approach? Joe shrugs, philosophical but not indifferent. "There's so much music called jazz that's not really improvised music," he acknowledges, "that's party music or dance music, which the audience doesn't have to listen to the same way. A duet requires different listening: You have to relax and be carried by the music you're hearing. Sometimes audiences have other expectations. ..."

"For instance, my ensemble playing tunes associated with Frank Sinatra," he continues. Lovano's last album, *Celebrating Sinatra*, featured extended instrumentation arranged around him with intriguing variety by Manny Albam. "I've been doing that with four woodwinds, violin, cello, voice, two drummers and bass. Sometimes with piano, too. Plus myself. Now, within that whole structure I find many combos. Duets and trios, different quartets and quintets can emerge.

"But I find that half of my audience, the young crowd, never heard these standards played at all, by anybody. The other half of my audience never heard any original music—they've *only* heard

standards, done in fairly conventional ways. Both audiences are scratching their heads whatever we're playing—especially considering the charts Manny Albam wrote that don't try to copy Nelson Riddle's arrangements for Sinatra at all.

"Manny's charts are written in a very open way, for maximum expression by each player. There's no doubling of the parts; each instrumentalist has a single part to play, as they feel it. So even though from night to night we play the same arrangements, it's always going to be different. Which is fun."

And when the musicians are having fun, the music, even though it may be unfamiliar, gets over. So spontaneous expression, serious fun, are basic characteristics of Lovano's music, whether he's performing in duet (with Rubalcaba, or with drummer Al Foster on "Chicago" from 1996's *Celebrating Sinatra*, or with exemplary vocalist Judi Silvano, his wife, amid the charmed circle of colleagues on 1993's *Universal Language*), in the large, mixed ensemble convened by Gunther Schuller for 1995's *Rush Hour*, or with the friends and relatives (including his dad, the late tenor saxist Tony "Big T" Lovano) on his rare 1986 CD *Hometown Sessions*.

Spontaneity and fun are values Joe encouraged in his students (Dave Douglas, Bill Stewart, Eric Alexander, among others) while he served as faculty for nearly a decade at both New Jersey's William Paterson College and New York University. Furthermore, the improvisational immediacy that Lovano revels in is part and parcel of a jazz repertoire that's as firmly established as it is ever expanding. "I want a book for my band that's vast and open," he maintains, "featuring some Mingus music, Monk music, Ornette Coleman music, Ellington music, some of my favorite tunes from the American songbook, and some of my originals, too."

**L**uckily, Lovano's originality was recognized and nurtured from an early age. He absorbed the music lessons of his father and uncles the better to polish his skills at the Berklee School of Music, to temper his young strengths during stints with Woody Herman's Herd, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, the Motian Trio, the John Scofield Quartet and drummer Edward Blackwell's trio, and to build on musical relationships begun in his teens, ripening today.

"It's a trip," he enthuses, "to have created a situation as a sax player to hire other sax players to come on the road with me! It's fun! It's different! Financially—well, I'm not going to get rich doing it, but to present an ensemble like that every once in a while is fabu-



lous. It's an investment in my development, for sure, and an opportunity for audiences to experience something new. It would be easy for me to always go out with a quartet, but these other situations are really challenging! I learn from them! It's fantastic!"

He sounds too happy for reality—but hear Lovano on any of his dozen or so albums as a leader, fall into one of his gigs (these days in the best clubs and concert venues of the world; he's scheduled to play an entire week at New York's Village Vanguard in January, with a different ensemble each night), meet him out and about, or sit in conversation in the comfortably refurbished loft on New York City's 23rd Street he's called home for 20 years, and it's crystal clear: What he utters rings true.

Lovano may be the most straight-ahead jazz man on the scene today. He uses his arsenal of instruments as mediums of direct address. His personal

sound is big, gutsy and gusty, usually warm, more often enveloping than overwhelming. His pace is often driving, but he sure knows his way around a ballad. His statements are genuine, candid, devoid of cant or pretense. No, there's no nonsense, nothing phony, self-conscious or evidently calculated about anything Lovano does. He's one down-to-earth yet consistently upbeat, prolific, energetic guy.

Yet his career has been a long time in gestation; did he every question whether he was making the right moves? "I've got to say I never had any doubts about my love to play music," Lovano avows,

"or my passion to develop myself. I've always believed the true, honest music of jazz always comes through.

"The music keeps you going—not only playing the music yourself, but also sharing this music, feeling the response when you're in a creative environment. I remember certain concerts I've been to and how much they've meant to me.

"As a player, as a performer, you hope you're going to go out there and touch someone the way you were touched." That is the impulse underlying all Joe Lovano's intimate expression, the motto that could well be emblazoned on his flying colors. **DB**

"Our goal must be to inspire musical ideas with which to communicate."

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### EQUIPMENT

Joe Lovano is an instrument collector who keeps his axes close at hand. His gongs hang in the spacious living area of his Manhattan loft, his piano stands open and inviting, well-worn saxes and unusual woodwinds from around the world wait on stands, sit on shelves and hang from the walls. On *Flying Colors*, Lovano plays a Selmer soprano sax and alto clarinet, drums, gongs, and makes his recording debut on a straight tenor saxophone developed for him by L.A. Sax, an instrument-maker based in the Chicago area. "It's a great horn," he says of the instrument, which stretches from his lips to his shins, "a very powerful horn with a deep, rich bottom register and a lot of darkness in its tone." So it is, when Joe Lovano plays it. He uses wooden mouthpieces handmade by Francois Louis for the tenor and soprano, with Alexander Superial reeds.

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*FLYING COLORS*—Blue Note 56092 (with Gonzalo Rubalcaba)

*CELEBRATING SINATRA*—Blue Note 37718

*RUSH HOUR*—Blue Note 29269

*QUARTETS: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD*—Blue Note 29125

*TENOR LEGACY*—Blue Note 27014

*UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE*—Blue Note 99830

*FROM THE SOUL*—Blue Note 98636

*LANDMARKS*—Blue Note 96108

*VILLAGE RHYTHM*—Soul Note 121182

*WORLDS*—Evidence 22132

*TONES SHAPES & COLORS*—Soul Note 121132

*HOMETOWN SESSIONS*—Nimbus 0001

*SOUNDS OF JOY*—enja 7013

with Paul Motian Trio

*IN TOKYO*—JMT 849154

*ONE TIME OUT*—Soul Note 121224

*TRIOISM*—JMT 514012

*ON BROADWAY, VOLS. 1-3*—JMT 834430/B34440/849157

with the Village Vanguard Orchestra

*THE DEFINITIVE THAD JONES, VOLS. 1-2*—

MusicMasters 5024/5046

*MEL LEWIS AND THE JAZZ ORCHESTRA*—

Red Baron 53752

with various others

*VOCALISE*—Blue Note 52390 (Judi Silvano)

*WHAT WE DO*—Blue Note 99586 (John Scofield)

*TIME ON MY HANDS*—Blue Note 92894 (John Scofield)

*DARK KEYS*—Columbia 67876 (Branford Marsalis)

*ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE*—Warner Bros.

9466-9 (Kevin Mahogany)

*MEETS THE SAXOPHONE PLAYERS*—Telarc 83388

(Ray Brown)

*DREAM KEEPER*—Blue Note 95474 (Charlie Haden)

*DANILO PEREZ*—RCA/Novus 63148 (Danilo Perez)

*UPSWING*—Chesky 103 (Tom Harrell)

*FORM*—Contemporary 14059 (Tom Harrell)

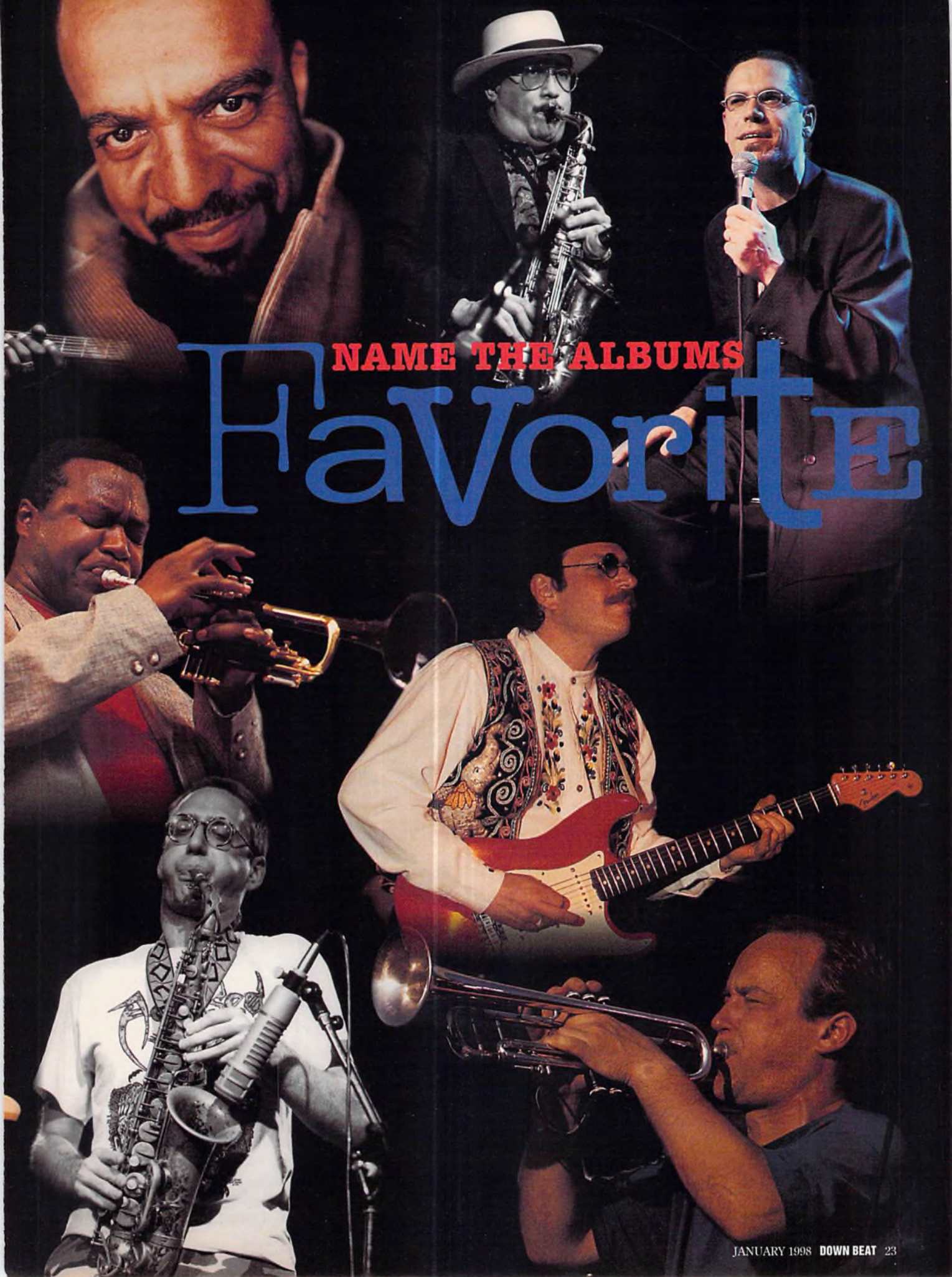


20 MUSICIANS

# my THEY dig MOST things

Clockwise, from top left: Joshua Redman (by Alan Nahigian), Koko Taylor (Sandro Miller), Joe Louis Walker (Carol Friedman), Grover Washington Jr. (Norman Jean Roy), Paquito D'Rivera (Hyou Vielz), Kurt Elling (Alan Nahigian), Ronnie Earl (Aldn Nahigian), Dave Douglas (Alan Nahigian), John Zorn (Hyou Vielz), John Abercrombie (R. Andrew Lepley) and Dave Brubeck (Hyou Vielz). Center left: Don Braden (Teri Bloom); center right: Wallace Roney (Alan Nahigian).





NAME THE ALBUMS

# Favorite



Everybody has a favorite album. It might be a record of sentimental value, or a collection of songs that were particularly inspiring during their formative years. It could be a CD they've just been turned on to, music that's fresh to their ears or that's changed the way they listen.

The notion of a single favorite recording of all time might seem a bit unrealistic, especially in this day of back catalogues and seemingly endless reissues. Still, we thought we'd throw the question at a collection of jazz and blues musicians, stoking them to talk about their favorite albums, their heroes and their influences.

The musicians here all seemed game to trumpet their faves. As you'll see, some had trouble narrowing it down to a single album, but all had something special to say about albums they wore out as a kid or CDs they always pack into their travel case. Perhaps the best answers came from the most unlikely sources, like when ... better yet, read on and see for yourself. The surprises abound.

—John Ephland

## daveBRUBECK

Duke Ellington: *Black, Brown And Beige*, original recording, from *The Carnegie Hall Concerts* (Prestige)

Brubeck's earliest most-treasured recordings were avidly collected singles by Art Tatum and Duke Ellington, particularly the latter's "Cottontail," "Jack The Bear," "Blue Serge," "Warm Valley" and "Jumpin' Pumpkins." A long-standing cherished album is the 1943 full-length concert version of Ellington's *Black, Brown And Beige* suite. "'Come Sunday' is the piece I really liked, with Johnny Hodges," Brubeck says. "I was impressed by the way that he treated a melody with such emotion. [The album] showed a new direction in jazz—the beginning of a longer form. That was something different. There weren't many people doing it. It was very important to me. It was dealing in what would become a new approach in jazz. Later, Duke got into all those other extended pieces. I think his thinking [on that kind of work] would have started back there."



## donBRADEN

John Coltrane Quartet: *Crescent* (Impulse!)

*Crescent*, recorded in 1964 by Coltrane's classic quartet with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison, is a disc that saxophonist Braden keeps nearby, at home and on tour. "The first time I heard it, the vibe struck me immediately. I had to sit down and say, 'Damn.' The swing is so serious, the tunes are so

serious, the vibe is so serious, and the passion and the spontaneity is so serious. They have a complete empathy with one another. Beyond the technique, you have to have another level of spirituality that you have to be unabashed about expressing. Spiritually, they're all in tune with each other. It goes way beyond anything that you can compare it to."

## johnABERCROMBIE

Sonny Rollins: *The Bridge* (RCA Victor)

*The Bridge*, Sonny Rollins' first disc after a three-year retirement in the early '60s, proved vastly influential on John Abercrombie's approach to improvisation, ensemble playing and guitar sonics. "I found their [Rollins' and Jim Hall's] improvising on it so thematic and so compositional," he recounts. "It didn't sound like a lot of the things I was used to hearing. That's what drew me in, as well as the way they worked together. The sound of the guitar and the tenor together was a very contemporary sound. I hadn't heard a guitar player sound that way before."



## kokotAYLOR

Muddy Waters: *Real Folk Blues* (MCA/Chess)

Koko Taylor's bold and brassy blues approach has its roots firmly planted in the bedrock of modern blues, paying tribute to an ongoing influence she reprises each time she takes the stage. "I don't feel right just picking one because I respect so many musicians and what they've done. I mean, how can you not pick a B.B. King album?"

But Muddy was my idol and his music still sounds new to me. This one has a lot of his great songs on it, and I even wrote an answer, 'I'm A Woman,' to his 'Mannish Boy.'"

## joshuaREDMAN

John Coltrane: *A Love Supreme* (Impulse!)

Stevie Wonder: *Songs In The Key Of Life* (Motown)

The Beatles: *The Beatles* (*The White Album*) (Capitol) and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Capitol)

Joshua Redman refuses to name favorites, but it's clear that a select handful of CDs offer him special musical, emotional and spiritual sustenance. "In terms of dedication, passion and spirituality," says Redman, *A Love Supreme* is unparalleled, perhaps the purest and humblest record I've heard." The saxophonist reflects, "It's been part of my musical and life experience since the beginning, and probably in the womb, and it's just a great record." He values Stevie Wonder's *Songs In The Key Of Life* for its "celebration of peace, love, unity, brotherhood and all the things that make humanity great." Redman explains, "It sounds trite, but that's what I believe in and what Stevie stands for in the music and lyrics." The Beatles' *White Album* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* draw Redman's praise for the songwriting, arrangements and "endless creativity" of Lennon and McCartney. "These records," concludes Redman, "will never be far from my CD carrying case."



## kennyBARRON

Shirley Horn: *Here's To Life* (Verve)

"It's not mind-shattering or anything like that," pianist Barron says of Horn's 1991 album, on which she was joined by a string orchestra and Wynton Marsalis. "It's just beautiful music. It's not just her voice. It's the way she phrases, and the way she lingers over phrases. The way she voices chords. She's a beautiful player. She chooses great material, songs that you don't necessarily hear all the time."

## reneerosNES

Chick Corea: *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* (Blue Note)

Pianist Renee Rosnes highly recommends Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now*



He Sobs for the group's interplay and for Corea's compositions, commenting that even at this early stage, "Chick really had a developed voice." She notes that, although the players (including Miroslav Vitous and Roy Haynes) had never played as a trio before, "They just hit it!" "It sounds like they had been together for a long time," says Rosnes, "and they had such a personal sound." She acknowledges Corea as one of many influences, and detects a subtle similarity between *Now He Sings* and her own work. In her recordings, the pianist wants the listener to hear "a continuum of concept from the beginning until the end." She maintains, "I give a lot of thought to the sequencing of material, which Chick did well on that CD. One piece flows to another, and it sounds like a natural evolution."

## carl ALLEN

Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: *Free For All* (Blue Note)

John Coltrane: *Ballads* (Impulse!)

Miles Davis: *Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel 1965*, disc 3 (Columbia/Legacy)

Sixties recordings by Art Blakey, John Coltrane and Miles Davis are on Carl Allen's list of all-time favorites. "It exemplifies what jazz is all about: intel-



lect, spirit, spontaneity, communication," he says about *Free For All*, which has Blakey joined by a Jazz Messengers lineup of future all-stars—Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Wayne Shorter, Cedar Walton and Reggie Workman. Coltrane's *Ballads* always elicits an emotional reaction from the drummer. "Every time I listen to this recording my moods change from joy, sadness, anger, jubilation to pensive, aggressive, passive as well as a few other emotions. As a musician, I can relate to situations whereby the music just plays itself. This seems like one of those sessions." The Miles disc contains something like "magic," Allen says. "There isn't much more that can be said about this session. The band caught live ... playing at an incredibly high level. Swing, tenacity—ingenious!"

## marty EHRlich

Charles Mingus: *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (Candid)

Julius Hemphill: *Dogon A.D.* (Freedom)

John Coltrane: *A Love Supreme* (Impulse!)

*Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, with a stripped-down pianoless quartet featuring Eric Dolphy, Ted Curson and

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Dannie Richmond, represents "the pinnacle of ensemble playing combined with great soloing and composition," according to Ehrlich. The reed player praises Julius Hemphill's *Dogon A.D.* as "one of the most singular, passionate and revelatory recordings ever." He also continues to find inspiration in what he terms the "simple complexity" and "complex simplicity" of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. Says Ehrlich: "[It's] surely everyone's favorite, but still one of the most complete records ever made, any way you look at it."

## JOE LOUIS WALKER

Son House: *Father Of The Delta Blues: The Complete 1965 Sessions* (Columbia/Legacy)  
B.B. King: *Live At The Regal* (MCA)

West Coast bluesman Joe Louis Walker's career has included extensive work in both the sacred and secular realms, so it's little surprise the recording he holds most dear is one with special spiritual significance. "Son House came out of church like I did to play the devil's music, and I don't think anyone has done it better. Robert Johnson was great, but Son House was deeper. He was so stately, and there was such dignity and intense emotion to everything he played. A lot of people can play Johnson, but no one can do justice to Son House. And I've always loved B.B. King's *Live At The Regal*. It's a classic, a sort of textbook example of how to play the blues. It's B.B. at his best, and it's devastating all the way through."



## DAVE DOUGLAS

Miles Davis Quintet: *No Blues* (JMY)

*No Blues*, a hard-to-find live recording that had Miles joined by his classic late-'60s rhythm section of Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams along with Wayne Shorter, struck Douglas with the vitality of the musicians' approach to overly familiar standards. "They're still playing 'Round Midnight' and 'I Fall In Love Too Easily' and 'Green Dolphin Street,' but it's deconstructed about as far as you can go and be playing the tunes," the trumpeter says. "That's what I found fascinating about it. Everyone's at their apex—Tony's kicking the shit out of the drums, and there are sections where Wayne drops out and plays an eight-minute solo on F blues. It's some of the best playing and it's really well-recorded, and, for me, it seems to be kind of like an encyclopedia of things that you can do with rhythm and harmony and melody. There's a lot of exploration, and I feel like I could listen to that forever and keep learning."

## PAQUITO D'RIVERA

Benny Goodman Orchestra: *The Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert—1938* (Columbia/Legacy)

Dave Brubeck & Paul Desmond: *Brubeck—Desmond* (Fantasy)

Charlie Parker & Dizzy Gillespie: *Jazz At Massey Hall* (Fantasy/OJC)

"*The Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* was probably my first jazz record," so says reedman D'Rivera, "and my father Tito, a classical saxophonist who loved mainly big band jazz, played it for me when I was six or seven years old. That was also my first encounter with the wonderful improvisations of great masters of the genre like Teddy Wilson, Harry James, Lionel Hampton and Gene Krupa. Goodman, and this particular recording, is still today among my main musical inspirations."

"The *Brubeck-Desmond* disc was the original name of that transparent red vinyl live recording, containing the most sophisticated rendition of 'Stardust' I ever heard. And, to quote Bobby Watson, 'To better understand the nature of the alto saxophone, you must know the work of Paul Desmond.' Which I absolutely agree with! *Jazz At Massey Hall* is, in my opinion, one of the best performances of Diz, Max, Powell, Mingus and especially Bird, who achieved in this recording the almost-impossible task of outdoing himself."



## WALLACE RONEY

John Coltrane: *A Love Supreme* (Impulse!)

Miles Davis: *Filles de Kilimanjaro* (Columbia)

From the time he was eight years old, trumpeter Wallace Roney knew which two albums would guide him. While exploring the family record collection, he encountered John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and Miles Davis' *Filles de Kilimanjaro*. He's emphatic, and he spares no superlatives. "Those are the greatest musicians of all time playing on those records!" exclaims Roney. For Roney, the two records are inseparable, and each is part of an historical continuum. He explains, "Those records represent Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Charlie Parker's Quintet, and they influenced rock musicians and world musicians." He finds that Coltrane and Davis each combined intellect, emotion and spirituality, though with a different emphasis. "To me, there's been nothing greater," states the trumpeter. He feels that the inspiration of the two CDs pervades every note he plays. According to

Roney, his listeners should hear "the feeling, the sound, what it represents to me, and my take on it."

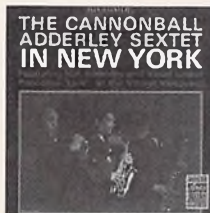
## GROVER WASHINGTON JR.

Miles Davis: *Kind Of Blue* (Columbia/Legacy)

Cannonball Adderley: *Live In New York* (Riverside/OJC)

Oliver Nelson: *Blues And The Abstract Truth* (Impulse!)

Confounding expectations, crossover saxophonist Washington took real delight in sharing some of his "roots" music. "*Kind Of Blue* illustrates the importance of silence in the music. Cannonball's *Live In New York* showed me he can play many different styles of music within one set to satisfy everyone. As for Oliver Nelson, the innovator whose work speaks for itself! In regard to all three releases, they all swing!"



## KURT TELLING

Miles Davis: *The Complete Concert 1964: My Funny Valentine And Four & More* (Columbia/Legacy)

Vocalist Elling lately has been soaking up the sound of Miles Davis' early '60s groups, particularly the quintet with George Coleman, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams heard on *The Complete Concert 1964*, recorded at the Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall). "I just feel like it's the perfect crystallization of a way of thinking about standard tunes that is liberated," says the 30-year-old former theology and philosophy student. "It's whenever that approach was moved to the next level, whether by the anger of that mythic story of Miles saying he wasn't going to be able to pay the cats or something else. It's a perfect flowering of that specimen. Part of the perfection of it is that it's still fresh. They hadn't grown tired of those tunes yet. It all fits exactly right. Everybody was happening at that Carnegie Hall concert, and George Coleman was probably at his best, too."



## MILT HINTON

George Russell: *New York, N.Y.* (Decca/MCA)

Though his career spans six decades, Milt Hinton doesn't hesitate to single out



George Russell's *New York, N.Y.* as a personal favorite. "It's got Coltrane and Bill Evans and so many great musicians, not as well known then as they are now, all working together," observes Hinton. On "A Helluva Town," he notes, "There's a drum solo by Max Roach—and Jon Hendricks sets words to it." Apart from the stellar cast, the record holds special significance for Hinton. At the time, Russell struggled to have his compositions performed and regularly held rehearsals in the Hinton home. Hinton observes that Russell's compositions were too hard for most musicians. "We liked to be challenged," recalls the bassist, "so every Saturday we'd come to my house to rehearse." Almost 40 years later, Hinton still laughs as he recalls Evans playing piano on the first floor, while Russell conducted the rest of the band in the basement.

## terellSTAFFORD

Freddie Hubbard: *Ready For Freddie* (Blue Note)

Miles Davis: *Bags Groove* (Prestige)

Nancy Wilson & Cannonball Adderley (Capitol Jazz)

"A good impression always leaves a lasting impression," according to trumpeter Stafford. "*Ready For Freddie* was my introduction to Freddie Hubbard. His playing is phenomenal. I will always love this album. I am also a big fan of *Bags Groove*, by Miles Davis. In my opinion, this album features Miles' purest melodic sound and beautiful tone. Nancy Wilson and Cannonball Adderley swing on their album like you wouldn't believe. I love the arrangements. I have always been a big fan of Cannonball and Nat Adderley, and, of course, Nancy Wilson."



## myraMELFORD

Andrew Hill: *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Mosaic)

Herbie Nichols: *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Blue Note)

Ornette Coleman and Joachim Kuhn: *Colors* (Harmolodic/Verve)

Early on, Hill inspired pianist Melford to "take my own approach to playing the piano, playing changes and constructing vehicles for improvisation. There's a very open feeling to the improvisation," comments Melford. "You can hear how

it's related to the thematic material," she continues, "but it really has nothing to do with playing over chord changes." On Ornette Coleman and Joachim Kuhn's *Colors*, Kuhn impresses Melford with his ability to handle Coleman's music. She notes, "Joachim seems to be the most empathetic pianist I've heard him play with. He gets right in there on the spirit level with Ornette." Melford admires Herbie Nichols' *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* for Nichols' quirky sense of tunes and idiosyncratic playing. "I love how the forms of the pieces are odd," says Melford, "and his playing has a lot of energy and is very bright."



## johnZORN

Herbie Nichols: *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Blue Note)

Sonny Rollins: *Sonny Meets Hawk!* (RCA Victor)

Jimmy Giuffre 3: *Free Fall* (Columbia)

Kim So-Hee: *P'ansori Il Saeng* (Jigu)

Frank Sinatra: *The Reprise Years* (Wamer/Reprise)

Les Baxter: *The Exotic Moods Of Les Baxter* (Capitol)

Mauricio Kagel: *Exotica* (Deutsche Grammophon)

Masaru Sato: *The Film Music Of Masaru Sato, Vol. 11* (Soundtrack Listeners Communication)

Drawing from several genres that inform his work, John Zorn advocates his picks with a missionary's zeal. Among jazz albums, he singles out Herbie Nichols' *The Complete Blue Note Recordings*, which compiles "some of the best compositions in jazz." Zorn also enthuses over Nichols' sense of orchestration and unconventional playing. "Nichols does not solo the way a jazz pianist is supposed to solo," says Zorn, "I would call them pieces, not solos." He also recommends Sonny Rollins' underappreciated *Sonny Meets Hawk!*, where Rollins, supposedly nervous during his encounter with Coleman Hawkins, plays "some of the most out shit I've heard from any saxophonist." Zorn considers *Free Fall* by the Jimmy Giuffre 3 that trio's most extreme statement, marveling at Giuffre's squeaking solo clarinet and the unprecedented free group interplay. For Zorn, *Free Fall* is a precursor of the AACM. "It's a peak of the avant-garde approach," says the saxophonist, "and it kicks ass."



Among world music artists, Zorn prizes Kim So-Hee, a Korean p'ansori singer, whose operatic performances would continue for hours with minimal accompaniment. He explains, "She's considered a cultural treasure, and has an unbelievably intense voice." Zorn compares Kim's presence and consistency over six decades to Frank Sinatra. Zorn sounds passionate in his defense of Sinatra's music, pointing to the singer's expression and phrasing as well as his grasp of orchestration detail. According to Zorn, "No one talks about what an amazing musician this guy is!"

Zorn reserves his highest acclaim for composers who create a unique, personal world of sound. *The Exotic Moods Of Les Baxter* samples the work of the man Zorn hails as "the orchestration genius who invented mood music." He urges consideration of the singularity and difficulty of Baxter's pieces and their sometimes subliminal influence on popular music, marveling that anyone could have considered Baxter's miniatures "easy listening." Mauricio Kagel's work is equally important to Zorn for the composer's ability to create a distinctive personal music played by a working band with unconventional instrumentation. Zorn confesses, "You can definitely hear Kagel in my stuff." He wishes more people would hear the film scores of Masaru Sato, whose *The Film Music Of Masaru Sato, Vol. 11* utilizes orchestra, harpsichord and shamisen to create strikingly original soundtracks, which, according to Zorn, function beautifully within films, but can also be enjoyed independently.

## ronnieEARL

Junior Wells: *Southside Blues Jam* (Delmark)

Buddy Guy: *This Is Buddy Guy!* (Vanguard)

For guitarist Ronnie Earl, it was love at first sound as he formed a long and lasting relationship with a classic slice of Chicago blues-making and a particular blues Buddy. "It was my first blues album, and it's still my all-time favorite. Junior and Buddy Guy and Otis Spann just rip it up, and it all sounds so real. You can tell it was a relaxed session, but it's still so intense. They just don't make records like that any more. And *This Is Buddy Guy!* is as good a blues album as anybody has ever made." **DB**



*Jon Andrews, Philip Booth and Michael Point contributed to this story.*







# 'you can't buy Experience'

There are few families in jazz as accomplished and storied as the Heaths of Philadelphia. Percy (74), Jimmy (71) and youngest brother Albert "Tootie" Heath (62) were involved in key moments of jazz history, when most of the innovators of the music were still performing at the top of their abilities.

Though they grew up in a musical household known for incessant jamming and a strong family bond, the threesome didn't perform in public as the Heath Brothers until the 1970s. But before and since then, they've made several albums together in addition to the hundreds of projects they've performed and recorded as individual sidemen: Percy as the longtime member of the Modern Jazz Quartet and bassist for Fats Navarro, Thelonious Monk, J.J. Johnson and a million others; saxophonist Jimmy leading his own bands after working with the likes of Miles Davis, Howard McGhee and Dizzy Gillespie; and drummer Tootie backing up everyone from Herbie Hancock and Dexter Gordon to George Russell and Yusef Lateef.

The Heaths continue to stay in touch, at home, onstage and in the studio. The fruit of their latest recording session is the new CD *As We Were Saying*, which, not surprisingly, finds these three super-experienced pros playing at the top of their game. And the individual projects keep rolling in. Tootie recently received a grant from the California Arts Council to perform and teach a cultural enrichment program for abused children. Having just come back from a tour of Japan, Jimmy is performing and lecturing at black colleges through the auspices of AT&T through the Southern Arts Federation (see "Jazz On Campus" July '97). Fishing is what Percy is working on right now out by his home in Montauk, Long Island. The fact that these siblings share a special rapport was made obvious when they gathered on a cool October day at New York's Blue Note club to put their accomplishments into perspective, tell stories over some historic photos and take some fresh ones for posterity's sake.

The Heath Brothers will perform together next in a big band concert led by Jimmy, one of the finest com-

posers and arrangers of modern big bands, on Dec. 31 at New York's Grand Hyatt. The show will be broadcast nationwide on National Public Radio as part of WBGO's *New Year's Eve Coast To Coast* program.

**ALAN NAHIGIAN:** *Let's take a look at some of these pictures [historic shots from the Heath family photo archives on the back of the album *Passing Through*].*

**PERCY HEATH:** Oh, this is way back. We were with Dizzy [Gillespie] then.

**TOOTIE HEATH:** That's Bop City, isn't it?

**PH:** Yeah. Let's see. Kenny Dorham, Miles [Davis], Dizzy and somebody else. Some of the greatest trumpeters in the world in that picture. Dexter [Gordon], and [my brother] James. That's a great shot!

**AN:** *I wanted to ask about this picture, here.*

**PH:** This is a good one, Jimmy with Bird [Charlie Parker], and [John] Coltrane is in there, too. Coltrane was in Jimmy's band at that time. We have a lot of history, man. And Tootie, even though he's 12 years behind me, he got right in it.

**TH:** That's the same thing I say about Percy. I remember when Percy came home from the Air Force in 1946. The next thing I knew, he was playing bass with Miles Davis, Max Roach and all my heroes!

**AN:** *Did they ever come by the house?*

**PH:** Oh, yeah. Everybody must have been by our house on Federal Street.

**TH:** Jimmy and Percy used to invite a lot of people down to our parent's house, and my mother would cook dinner and my father would be the host.

**AN:** *I heard Bird came over.*

**TH:** Oh, yeah! Bird and my father had a wonderful relationship. Our father had a relationship with a lot of special people like Miles Davis and Kenny Clarke.

**PH:** Kenny Clarke, boy he loved Klook!

**TH:** Dizzy, Nancy Wilson, Gloria Lynn, Vernel Fournier, Sonny Rollins, John Lewis. They had long conversations. Lester Young ...

**AN:** *This picture really is something: [to Jimmy] you conducting with Bird soloing, and there's Coltrane.*

**PH:** Bird was playing your horn!

**JIMMY HEATH:** I had this band I put together for a

## the heath brothers

BY ALAN NAHIGIAN





Brothers Percy (left), Tootie and Jimmy Heath



benefit concert, and Coltrane and Charlie Parker were playing in it. At the time, Charlie Parker was playing at the Downbeat regularly, and he was borrowing my horn nightly; he would leave it with me and leave his mouthpiece on and commute back to New York. So I'd just take it down in the cellar and see what Charlie Parker left in there. I tried to play it, and my stuff would still sound sad.

**PH:** No, they called you "Little Bird," man.

**JH:** He was my main influence at that time, having been early influenced by Benny Carter and Johnny Hodges. But after I heard Bird, then I was on that. This occasion was something I always bring up to my students. They think the saxophone started with Trane. I say to them, "I don't think so, not the way he was looking at Bird and all of us on that night. I don't think it started with Trane. I think it started way before all of us, including Bird."

**AN:** What was Coltrane's playing like then?

**JH:** Like all of us, scuffling, trying to play.

**PH:** No, actually, I liked what he was doing at that time. When Trane was first playing alto, he had little soulful licks of his own.

**JH:** I agree with you in that Trane had good time. He would miss changes, but his licks would always fall in place.

**PH:** I think that's what I had at that time that people saw in me, Miles and other people that brought me along. I didn't know many notes. I must have had good time; that's what Monk told me.

**TH:** I think to have good sense of time is paramount. And a lot of us don't have it, and we have to assimilate it. Later, I started practicing with a metronome. I found out my time wasn't great, and I'm from the same source as Percy. Percy always had good time. I had to work on that.

**PH:** My baby brother has it.

**TH:** I know one person that I think both of you would agree has perfect time, and this was Eddie Harris. Eddie Harris could

play slow and in time. Slow! I mean every note. If you count with him, he could play whole notes, not just *dedle dedle de da*. He could play slow stuff, right in time.

[At this point, the conversation turns toward the present as we discuss how beautiful and different Joe Wilder's solo play while playing with Jimmy's big band at the 1996 Charlie Parker Festival.]

**PH:** Melodies, man, that comes with time.

**JH:** Joe Wilder comes from a different time where every note means something. We've gotten into the high-tech era of music where people just fly over all the notes they got. They think the only technique is speed. But there's another technique, and that is expression and emphasis on each note being something special. Ben Webster, to me, and Johnny Hodges are two of the most exciting performers ever, because of the fact that they love each note. And Joe Wilder falls in that category, where every note means something when you're taking a solo. It's like singing and talking to the people, as opposed to fighting and arguing.

**PH:** Back then, there was a little more love involved. And melody, as opposed to running through chords and scales. Young people have to learn what to leave out after they learn how to put it in.

**TH:** One thing that we can't forget is that the student can never become better than the teacher, as long as the teacher is still alive. When you get to be 70 years old, nobody 19 can come along and play better than you or play past you. We have the tendency to put youth before experience. This is backwards; the ancestor and the old people belong in the forefront.

**PH:** But if the youth has disassociated himself with what the other person left or gave, then he's disconnected. My feelings are if you are not connected to the past, you are not playing this music.

**JH:** You speak your own language, once you learn the language, then you become able to talk. You have to refer to the elders to get the way the language is supposed to be spoken.

**PH:** With music, you get better with age. That's the way music goes! Experience!

**JH:** Experience, you can't buy! That's the expression: You can't buy experience!

**PH:** And you can't rush it, either.

**JH:** No. It's time. Experience is time and application. You have to have a good foundation and that comes from your predecessors. Then you build from that.

**TH:** Yeah. From the history.

**AN:** The Heath brothers' experiences cover quite a bit of that history.

**JH:** Besides maybe the Jones family, I can't think of another family that has the experience of so many great talents.

**AN:** Percy played with Ornette Coleman.

**PH:** That's right. It's not too well-known, but I first heard Ornette and Don Cherry in Hollywood through a bass player named Don Payne. And I couldn't follow the changes. Later, they came to get me to make an album. I questioned why they wanted me. Ornette said, "Percy, I want you to do what you do." I said, "Well, man, when the change comes, I'm going to make that change." He said, "That's what I want you to do." It took me about a year to get John Lewis to listen to these guys. I had been telling him. "This guy is great." Finally, he listened to Ornette and he took him to Nesuhi Ertegun [at Atlantic Records]. So they say John Lewis introduced Ornette Coleman to the world, but Percy Heath spent a long time trying to introduce Ornette to John Lewis.

**JH:** In May of 1948, we were on the First International Jazz Festival with Coleman Hawkins. Erroll Garner was with the Slam Stewart trio, and on one of those things Howard [McGhee] was playing "I Surrender Dear." And I took eight bars or 16 bars with Erroll Garner. We were on a show with Dizzy at the Hollywood Palladium, and it was Ray Anthony and Helen Forrest and Art Tatum solo piano. That's the kind of company that we've been with all of our lives. Each one of us. We all played with J.J., and with Miles.



**TH:** I got a chance to sit in with Miles, but I didn't really play with Miles.

**JH:** [to Tootie] I was just in Japan with Keter Betts. He asked me to ask you about the time at the Earl Theater when you went up and played with Bird!

**TH:** Wait a minute. I know it. The only two people who know this are Jimmy Cobb and Keter. That's the only two people left.

**JH:** You played with Yard up there?!

**TH:** In the dressing room. I took the brushes, and he said, "Here, take the telephone book." And he told Jimmy Cobb, "Give him your brushes!" I put them down and did like this [makes superfast brush strokes]. I was so nervous!

**AN:** How old were you when that happened?

**TH:** Maybe 12, 13 or 14.

**AN:** What did Bird say?

**TH:** Oh, he just played as if I was Max Roach over there! He didn't care!

**JH:** All three of us played with Dizzy.

**AN:** When you play together, do different things come out in the music as opposed to playing with other people?

**PH:** People feel the family thing, the brotherhood in our music.

**JH:** I think it's a confidence and a relaxing effect that takes over. There's a certain atmosphere that comes into play that's just natural from being brothers.

**TH:** We take more chances, more risks.

**JH:** I think we're freer!

**PH:** Not only that, we have the same recollections of experiences. And one thing triggers it—that's the beauty of jazz. **DB**

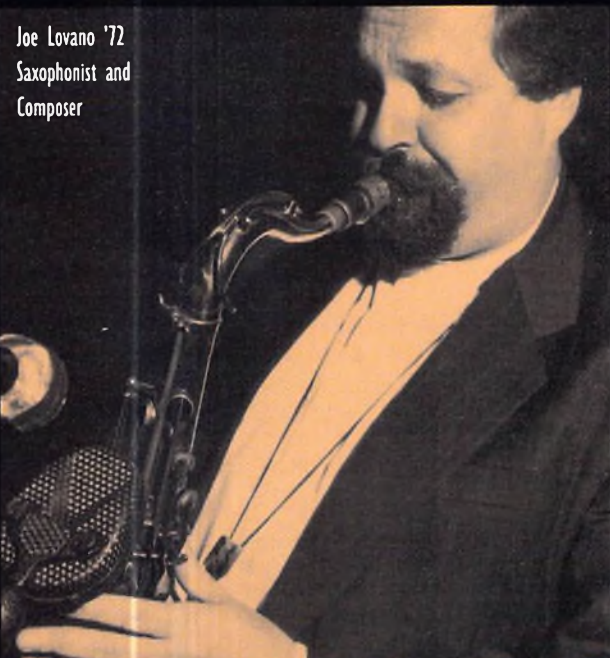
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**AS WE WERE SAYING**—Concord Jazz 4777  
**BROTHERS & OTHERS**—Antilles 848815  
**BROTHERLY LOVE**—Antilles 846089

**Jimmy Heath**  
**LITTLE MAN, BIG BAND**—Verve 513956  
**PEER PLEASURE**—Landmark 1514  
**NEW PICTURE**—Landmark 1506

**with various others**  
**MILES DAVIS, VOLS. 1-2**—Blue Note 81501/81502  
**MAGGIE: THE SAVOY SESSIONS**—Savoy Jazz 269 (Howard McGhee)  
**THE EMINENT J.J. JOHNSON, VOL. 1**—Blue Note 81505

**Tootie Heath**  
**with John Coltrane**  
**COLTRANE**—Fantasy/OJC 020  
**LUSH LIFE**—Fantasy/OJC 131

**with various others**  
**COME RAIN OR COME SHINE**—Jazz Hour 166-73508 (Dexter Gordon)  
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## Clint Eastwood

**Eastwood After Hours  
 Live At Carnegie Hall**  
 Malpas/Warner Bros. 8728

★★★★

Not many movie stars have used their power or celebrity more wisely or to better purpose than Clint Eastwood. And not long ago he used both to fill Carnegie Hall with a night of music organized by George Wein and directed by Lennie Niehaus and Jon Faddis. The result is *Eastwood After Hours*, a live double-CD anthology recorded on Oct. 17, 1996, much of it reprising music the director has used in his movies. Naturally, it all opens with Eastwood's anthem, "Misty," performed in a thoughtful duet by Barry Harris and Kenny Barron, neither of whom sluff it off.

If there's any insight here into Eastwood's musical character and sensibility, it's that he is a very hip sentimentalist. He is also a product of Charlie Parker's 1940s, and without making a big deal about it or sounding dated, the music captures the essential spirit of that period in the best sense of the word. Meaning it's grown-up music for grown-up people like Eastwood.

The first of the two CDs focuses on several singers and a series of pieces by Niehaus conducting the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. Jimmie Scott's high alto voice sounds a bit strained on the demanding sustained notes of "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." And Jay McShann offers a fairly routine "Hootie Blues," the tune on which Parker first recorded in 1941. McShann is then joined by violinist Claude Williams, who goes back to Count Basie before he left Kansas City. They rip through an anomalous but fiery "San Antonio Rose" (from Eastwood's film *Honky Tonk Man*), making one wonder why no one but Sonny Rollins seems to touch country tunes. The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band takes over the rest of CD for a bright set arranged by Niehaus, who even makes "The Good, The Bad And The Ugly" swing.

Most critics harbor a secret, opinions-I-lived-to-regret file of ill-considered judgments we prefer to blame on deadlines. Among the whoppers in mine are a few snide words I once committed to these pages about the Parker-with-strings-and-oboe recordings. Happily, the Man With No Name paid no mind. They inspire a good part of

disc two, which is dominated by Parker memories. James Carter ("Laura"), Joshua Redman ("These Foolish Things") and Barry Harris ("I Didn't Know What Time It Was") each lay down fine solos proving that strings are no enemy of good jazz. Charles McPherson delivers a stellar "Cherokee" with the big band. And James Moody, whose special relationship to the era pays moving dividends, plays a wonderful "Parker's Mood" with the strings.

As much as it is to Bird, the set is also a salute to Norman Granz, whose concerts first made a fan of Eastwood in 1946. For the closer, all hands are on deck for a crackling, JATP-style "Lester Leaps In." Carter's powerful overblowing echoes Illinois Jacquet, and it all comes to a happy cartharsis as that master of all classic tenor masters, Flip Phillips, who's been heard recently on some wonderful Chiaroscuro CDs, comes in to outswing them all. Eastwood (on piano) and company oblige with a two-tempo "After Hours," which doubles the pleasure.

—John McDonough

**Eastwood After Hours**—*Misty*; *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*; *Hootie's Blues*; *San Antonio Rose*; *Satin Doll*; *Doe Eyes/Jitterbug Waltz*; *Take Five*; *Claudia's Theme*; *Tightrope*; *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*; *Misty*; *Straight No Chaser/Now's The Time*. Disc two: *Straight No Chaser*; *Round Midnight*; *I See Your Face Before Me*; *Cherokee*; *Laura*; *I Didn't Know What Time It Was*; *Parker's Mood*; *These Foolish Things*; *Lester Leaps In*; *After Hours*. (51:16/49:28)

**Personnel**—Carnegie Hall Jazz Band (7-13, 17, 22, 23); Jon Faddis, Earl Gardner, Byron Stripling, Scott Wendthol, Greg Gisbert, trumpet; Slide Hampton, Steve Turre, Dennis Wilson, Douglas Purviance, trombones; Dick Oatts, Jerry Dodgion, Frank Wess, Frank Lalama, Gary Smulyan, saxophones; Renee Rosnes, piano; Peter Washington, bass (also 18-21); Kenny Washington (also 2, 4, 5, 18-21), drums; Guest Artists: Roy Hargrove (16, 22, 23), trumpet; Flip Phillips (22, 23), Joshua Redman (21-23), James Moody (20, 22, 23), Charles McPherson (17, 22, 23), James Carter (18, 22, 23), Doug Webb (3), saxophones; Claude Williams, violin (5); Barry Harris (1, 14-16, 20-23), Kenny Barron (1, 2, 14, 15, 22, 23), Jay McShann (4, 5), Matt McGuire (3), Clint Eastwood (23), piano; Christian McBride (2, 4, 5, 14-16), Kyle Eastwood (3), bass; T. S. Monk (14-16), Kendal Kay (3), drums; Jimmie Scott (2), Jay McShann (4), Gary LeMel (15), Kevin Mahogany (6, 16), vocals; 20 strings and oboe (18-21).



## Dizzy Gillespie

**Perceptions**  
 Verve 537 748

★★★★

To anyone familiar with Dizzy Gillespie's large-ensemble work, *Perceptions* may appear an anomaly. To everyone else, it may just be a tangent to what was one of the greatest careers in jazz.

In the liner notes to both the original release of *Perceptions* as well as the new ones with this reissue, Gillespie's struggles with J.J. Johnson's six-part work here are addressed. And this, despite the fact that Gillespie asked Johnson to write him an album's worth of music. Indeed, Gillespie is, as *Perceptions* conductor Gunther Schuller says, "a little bit like a fish out of water."

What is so unusual about this music? To begin with, this material is reminiscent of Johnson's "Poem For Brass," from 1956. Heavy on the brass, obviously, the door was left open for more serious composition, with less reliance on traditional large-ensemble jazz strategies. Except for one part, the out-and-out swinger "Horn Of Plenty," *Perceptions* prefers to steer a course more toward Europe than Storyville, let alone Africa. From the opening bars of "The Sword Of Orion"—flush with, as Johnson says, "textures and colors and controlled dissonances"—we get two harps, six carefully voiced trumpets, kettle drums and the lushness of five french horns.

The music relies only incidentally on rhythm

THE HOT BOX					
CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
CLINT EASTWOOD <i>After Hours</i>		★★★★	★★1/2	★★1/2	★★★1/2
DIZZY GILLESPIE <i>Perceptions</i>		★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★
DAVE DOUGLAS <i>Stargazer</i>		★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
MARILYN CRISPELL <i>Nothing Ever Was, Anyway</i>		★★	★★★★★	★★★1/2	★★★★



(the uptempo, Latinized "Blue Mist" does feature a 7/4 vamp with a 6/4 bridge) to create its forward momentum. Instead, this almost-seamless piece of music is carried by Johnson's self-professed rambling, a compositional openness to form that allowed him to address his passions for Stavinsky, Bartok, Ravel, Hindemith, Strauss, Britten and Debussy more fully than he's ever done. Without the usual jazz props, *Perceptions* is not just about Gillespie the virtuoso but Johnson's pen, Schuller's conducting and this extremely well-played 21-piece orchestra. Yes, this is a fusion of sorts, classical with jazz, with hints of the so-called Third Stream championed by Schuller.

When it was originally released in 1961, *Down Beat's* 3 1/2-star review lamented *Perceptions'* lack

of compositional coherence, that Gillespie was "not shown to his best advantage," that the listener was left out in the cold with no "good melodies." Perhaps the reviewer was looking for some nice big-band charts, a little cha cha, more bebop à la Lalo Schiffrin if not Tadd Dameron, Quincy Jones or Ernie Wilkins.

Well, in retrospect, and ironically, this "uneven" music is everything great jazz stands for: risk, risk and more risk. That Gillespie had the guts to play this music, to be put in a setting as challenging as any of the soundscapes offered to Miles Davis by Gil Evans, playing in and around Johnson's music (devoid of clichés, redundancies or obvious musical ripoffs) speaks volumes on the potential for ecstasy in jazz, not

to mention the humanity embedded in Gillespie and Johnson. Hear the mournful, solemn "Ballade" as it follows the brightness of "Horn Of Plenty," ending the album with those now-altogether familiar shouting trumpet choruses, amidst Gillespie's strained single lines. This beautiful music, reissued with great sonic clarity, is unconventional, certainly not easy-listening, the black sheep in both the trumpeter's as well as the trombonist's catalogues.

Speaking of catalogues, this release is, alas, a limited edition. And so, what was once an extremely hard-to-find L.P will now become a very tough CD to find. —John Ephland

**Perceptions**—*The Sword Of Orion; Jubelo; Blue Mist; Fantasia; Horn Of Plenty; Ballade.* (34:20)

**Personnel**—Gillespie, lead trumpet; Bernie Glow, Robert Nagel, Ernie Royal, Doc Severinsen, Nick Travis, Joe Wilder, trumpet; Urbie Green, Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Paul Faulise, bass trombone; Dick Hixson, John Barrows, Jimmy Buffington, Paul Ingraham, Robert Northern, french horn; Harvey Phillips, Bill Stanley, tuba; Gloria Agostini, Laura Newell, harp; George Duvivier, bass; Charli Persip, drums; Michael Colgrass, percussion; Gunther Schuller, conductor.

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## Dave Douglas

**Stargazer**  
Arabesque 132

★★★★

They actually put "Got Milk?" stickers on bananas these days. I guess the assumption is that one without the other is some kind of half-assed deal, and to be candid, I'll take my potassium soaked in moo juice any time. Same with my improv. Some of the best jazz records of late make their point by stressing pluralism. Take Rodney Kendrick's *We Don't Die We Multiply*: The pianist romps as if he's hammering out a peace treaty between Mary Lou Williams' boogie and Cecil Taylor's astronomy—both sides are addressed equally.

*Stargazer*, the second disc by Dave Douglas' reeds & brass ensemble, is a program that takes its cues from Wayne Shorter's songbook. A record of conjunctions, its accomplishments are similar to those of Kendrick's disc. Here, a set of rigorously composed pieces radiates an impromptu feel. To a large degree, that's been Shorter's forte as a composer. His tunes can be labyrinths, fretted over by students involved in transcription homework. But when sidewalk chats turn to Wayne's world, you seldom hear the math being discussed. Emotionally charged expressions stressing the imagination and caprice of his pen usually take precedent.

Douglas takes those expressions and gives them a backbone. *Stargazer* suggests both the



trumpeter and the saxophonist enjoy finding a balance between the concrete and the ineffable. On the surface, "Four Sleepers" seems a futuristic lament; yet the long tones that are usually the foundation of such pomo ballads are relentlessly pummeled by drummer Joey Baron. His jabs are mildly orchestral and wondrously disorienting. The music's flexibility is even more acute during the aptly titled "Intuitive Science," a swingfest whose design allows for myriad soloing options. Hats off to Chris Speed for choosing the path of most resistance; the tension he generates is memorable.

As "Intuitive Science" and "Spring Ahead" indicate, Shorter puts Douglas in a more exuberant mood than did Booker Little. The late trumpeter's inherent melancholy—an expression of the blues he was masterful at interpreting—steered Douglas toward a dangerously ponderous territory on this band's 1995 debut, *In Our Lifetime*. Here, the intrigue of the interaction is geared to showcase elation. That's obvious in "On The Milky Way Express." Douglas has done Wayne-bashers a service by providing an example of what a funk & synth tune from the somewhat maligned *High Life* record would sound like performed by a spirited acoustic band. With back beats removed and glistening façade reduced a gleam or three, it's easier to hear the piece's humanity. Easy, too, to hear Douglas' immense horn prowess.

By the time *Stargazer* has completed its rounds, the trumpeter has realigned one of jazz's great oevres to fit his personal schematic. Evidently, proper guiding of disparate elements can enhance a music's scope. Through a series of intricacies,

Douglas reminds us that Wayne's cheer is expressed intellectually; in doing so, he also exposes the fact that his own arrangements are among contemporary jazz's most vivid. He titled one of his records *Parallel Worlds*. This one could have been called *Overlapping Galaxies*. —Jim Macnie

**Stargazer**—Spring Ahead; Goldfish; Stargazer; Four Sleepers; On The Milky Way Express; Pug Nose; Dark Sky; Intuitive Science; Diana. (60:33)

**Personnel**—Douglas, trumpet; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Joshua Roseman, trombone; Uri Caine, piano; James Genus, bass; Joey Baron, drums



## Marilyn Crispell

### Nothing Ever Was, Anyway: The Music Of Annette Peacock

ECM 21626

★★★★★

This is one of the loveliest records of piano music ever released on ECM. That's saying something, since they've made so much of their reputation with pianists. But Marilyn Crispell's first project for the German label succeeds at every level: It is a great concept, stunningly played and breathtakingly recorded.

Crispell's work has been undergoing quite a radical rethinking over the last few years. Where she was once pegged as an energy-oriented post-Cecil Taylor firebrand—albeit one with a highly personal vision—in recent times she's moved into much more overtly lyrical turf, not exactly leaving the favorably brutal aspects of her playing behind, but tempering them with a deep drink from the well of Bill Evans and even Keith Jarrett. Fortunately, over the course of this turn to impressionism, Crispell has avoided the indulgent, deadening self-seriousness of the latter player, retaining a sense of play and beauty that doesn't feel egomaniacal or overly precious.

One can hear just how playful she is on "Cartoon"—leaping, darting lines cavort with one another like characters in a *Merrie Melodies* shortie. In fact, generally speaking, the idea of playing Annette Peacock's compositions was a stroke of genius for Crispell and company; Peacock's pieces intersect sentimentality and tenderness with Weill-ish ironic distance and humor in a way that keeps the most bittersweet moments from lapsing into moroseness, but also keeps the fun from getting too light or wacky. "Albert's Love Theme," written for Albert Ayler back in the free-jazz heyday, eloquently demonstrates Peacock's subtle compo-

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sitional strategy: translucent, skeletal melody with parallel left and right hand lines, laid out with pregnant pauses (which Motian handles delectably on cymbals and brushes). Crispell approaches "Both" lushly, pedalling heavily.

Gary Peacock, Annette's one-time husband, plays magnificently, majestically. His rich sound and superior pitch choice make him perfect for the record's many open sections, to which he lends a strong structural feel. From the sound of it, the bassist seems to have these tunes in his blood. That makes sense, since he's been working with Annette's music for decades; in fact, he and pianist Paul Bley (also once married to Annette) recorded a version of "Albert's Love Theme" on an early ECM date. Peacock might well have been writing about Motian's dreamy drumming when she scribed the lyric "time is not an absolute in dreams, say in the sense that our master is time" (a line Peacock herself sings on her one cameo on the set). Rhythm section partner with Gary Peacock for eons, Motian moves together with his bandmates, never imposing time or dynamics on them, but fitting into the rubato ballads like a glove. On "You've Left Me," Motian's busy stirring a frothy broth underneath the others, who are stately and measured, but the sum is something wonderful. As is everything on these two outstanding discs.

—John Corbett

**Nothing Ever Was, Anyway**—*Nothing Ever Was, Anyway* (version 1); *Butterflies That I Feel Inside Me*; *Open, To Love*; *Cartoon*; *Albert's Love Theme*; *Dreams (If Time Weren't)*; *Touching*; *Both*; *You've Left Me*; *Miracles*; *Ending*; *Blood*; *Nothing Ever Was, Anyway* (version 2). (46:56/40:45)  
**Personnel**—Crispell, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Paul Motian, drums; Annette Peacock, voice (6).



## Horace Silver

**A Prescription For The Blues**  
 Impulse! 238

★★★★

One thing that throws you off about Horace Silver's *A Prescription For The Blues* is that each composition comes with lyrics that are listed in the jacket, but there is no vocalist. Taking the bait, I put my untutored voice to "Whenever Lester Plays The Blues," and, well, it's a good thing the band didn't catch my act. Where's Andy Bey, Allen Harris or even Dee Dee Bridgewater when you need them?

Lyrics have nothing whatsoever to do with being lyrical, though, and Silver has oodles of this as well as his usual dosage of vitamins b(ues) and f(unk). In fact, the first four tunes come perilously close to being an overdose of the blues. For a moment it's like hearing varia-

tions of "Señor Blues," which in no way could disparage a project with the formidable Brecker brothers up front and Louis Hayes and Ron Carter covering your back.

On "Brother John And Brother Gene," a tune Silver composed (and all the tunes, lyrics and arrangements are his) for his deceased siblings, the blues motif has a reduced presence, and Silver's ability to play pretty occupies the moment. He is less successful on "Yodel Lady Blues" and "You Gotta Shake That Thing," which possesses a playful tincture of Ray Charles.

The latter portion of the CD, particularly "Free At Last" and "Doctor Jazz," are swell arrangements, and when the Breckers calibrate their harmonic pitch, as they do on both these tunes, they are unsurpassed. Silver's solo on "Sunrise In Malibu"—the one tune without accompanying lyrics—has a lovely projection, and you wonder why this delightful melody didn't inspire a few words.

There is a little tarnish here and there, but for the most part this is precious Silver and we await the vocalist who can add that other dimension to this singular blues man's art.

Meanwhile, as Silver recommends, "Take two listenings of the CD and call him in the morning."  
 —Herb Boyd

**A Prescription For The Blues**—*A Prescription For The Blues*; *Whenever Lester Plays The Blues*; *You Gotta Shake That Thing*; *Yodel Lady Blues*; *Brother John And Brother Gene*; *Free At Last*; *Walk On*; *Sunrise In Malibu*; *Doctor Jazz*. (53:47)

**Personnel**—Silver, piano; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Ron Carter, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.



## Bob Wilber

**Bufadora Blow-Up**  
 Arbors Jazz

★★★★

## Jack Maheu

**Jack Maheu In New Orleans**  
 Jazzology 278

★★½

Traditional jazz has become as much an underground, it seems, as the avant garde.

More so, probably. It doesn't speak to our time. In New Orleans, for example, clarinetist Jack Maheu has been tilling the trad soil since he joined the first edition of the Dukes of Dixieland back in the early 1950s. But unless you read the Mississippi Rag or attend any of

the traditional festivals in various Holiday Inns and Marriotts in the hinterlands, his name, which I find in no basic jazz reference, is probably not familiar.

So I wish the present CD provided a bit more of an enterprising and imaginative showcase for this fine player, whose bountiful Delta sound and pliant fluency show abundant craft and musicality but modest inspiration or old-fashioned wantonness. He builds "Closer Walk With Thee" into a rich performance that gives a wider range to his sound. But, for the most part, there are few other breakout moments.

The material is an admitted "potpourri" of this and that, from quartet and quintets to 10-piece band numbers, with old-style arrangements on tunes like "Runnin' Wild" that seem to cramp more possibilities than they ignite. While it seems arbitrary to scold old-fashioned music for being old-fashioned, these set-in-their-ways ensembles fall into the kind of formalism that hovers somewhere between Lu Waters and the Dukes. The standard dixie front-line pieces are spirited ("Birth Of The Blues") but not exceptional. It should all pass muster with traditional fans, it's not for outsiders.

Bob Wilber, on the other hand, is more a man of the mainstream and a pioneer of repertoire jazz than a card-carrying traditionalist. On *Bufadora Blow-Up* he delivers a first-rate big-band set of his own work (mostly) recorded during a live performance in Florida. The music never confuses feeling with volume, creativity with complexity. Wilber's writing mingles brass and reeds in a smartly balanced interplay of the sort Buck Clayton used to spin. He even takes time to goad soloists with prodding ensemble counterpoint. Listen behind Wendell Brunious' trumpet on the title track.

The reeds have a bright, cohesive buoyancy, much of it probably centering on Chuck Wilson's strong lead voice, and are filled out with splendid solos from, among others, Jerry Jerome, still in top form here at age 83. He and Wilber strike some sweet dialog on "Early Morning Blues."

The overall feeling is mid swing era, and Wilber writes well in the genre because he knows the sources. Eddie Sauter's "Benny Rises Again" lurks briefly within "Patterns." You'll hear a bit of Artie Shaw's "Concerto for Clarinet" in "Tango Royale." And "Jumpin' At The Woodside" is loaded with quotes from the original Basic record, including a bit of Earle Warren's clarinet solo, much improved in Wilber's hands. It's nice to finally hear it at the right tempo, too, since the Basic band always plays it as if it couldn't get it over fast enough.

Only rarely does the music get musty—"Ridin' On A Rainbow" must have had NRA Blue Eagles on the score sheets. And the chatter between tunes might have been snipped. For the most part, though, Wilber has made big-band swing at home in the '90s.

—John McDonough

**Bufadora Blow-up**—*Bufadora Blow-Up*; *Dancing On A Rainbow*; *Patterns Of Ecstasy*; *It's Been So Long*; *Early Morning Blues*; *I'm Checking Out*; *Goom Bye*; *Clarion Song*; *Goodnight, My Love*; *Mostly Mozart*; *In A Melancholy Mood*; *Movin' n' Groovin'*; *Tango Royale*; *The Big Pearl*; *Mdina*; *We'll All Go Ridin' On A Rainbow*; *Jumpin' At The Woodside*. (70:54)

**Personnel**—Wilber, clarinet, soprano and alto saxophones; Charlie Bertine, Wendell Brunious, Jon-Erik Kellso, Bob Merrill, trumpet; Dan Barrett, George Masso, Paul O'Connor, trombones; "Sholess Henry Aaron," Jerry Jerome, Brian Ogilvie, Scott Robinson, Chuck Wilson,



saxophones; Dick Hyman, piano; Howard Alden, Phil Flanigan, guitar; Ed Metz, drums; Joanne Horton, vocals (4, 6, 8, 10, 15).

**Jack Maheu In New Orleans**—Runnin' Wild; Bourbon Moon; Cakewalkin' Babbies From Home; Just A Closer Walk With Thee; Clarinet Marmalade; Birth Of The Blues; There's Something In The Water; When You're Smiling; Emaline; Do You Ever Think Of Me; Sweet And Lovely; Russian Lullaby; Choppin' Sticks. (54:05)  
**Personnel**—Maheu, clarinet, xylophone (13); Kevin Clark (1-6, 13), Duke Heitger (6-8, 10), trumpet; Charles Fardella (1, 2, 4), cornet; Al Bathlow (1-8, 10), trombone; Tom Fischer, Tom Saunders, saxophones; Steve Blailock, guitar; Tom McDermott (1-5, 11, 13), John Royen (6-10, 12), piano; Matt Perrine, bass, sousaphone (13); Richard Taylor, drums; Al Carson, vocals.



## Arthur Blythe

**Night Song**  
Clarity 1016

★★★★

Arthur Blythe's accomplishments have always come through balancing contrasts. He received widespread accolades when his lustrous, seemingly ageless vibrato found equilibrium with his electric free-jazz/rock/funk amalgamation *In The Tradition* band in the early '80s. For *Night Song*, Blythe enlisted some longtime colleagues alongside new associates on a disc that draws on international folk idioms while avoiding world-music clichés.

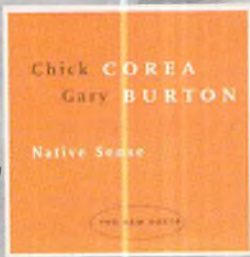
The only other breath instruments on *Night Song* belong to Blythe's longtime partner/tuba-player Bob Stewart and Chico Freeman—who does quadruple duty on bass clarinet and percussion as well as producer and interviewer on the disc's liner notes. Everyone else in the septet is a percussionist. While Arto Tunçboyacıyan, Gust Tsillis, Josh Jones and David Frazier draw from Armenian, Caribbean and African American rhythmic sources, none of these individual derivations are too obvious. Ellington/Strayhorn geographic suites and James Newton's musical expeditions are clear precedents. The blend of instrumental ranges and layers of accurately stated percussion enhances Blythe's compelling presence. He soars on the title track and makes great tonal leaps on "Ransom." The heavy percussion/tuba mixture makes the music gracefully coalesce into diminuendo as much as it serves as a launching pad, especially on "Cause Of It All."

*Night Song* also presents Blythe's uncanny lighthearted approach to jazz standards. He and Stewart sound boisterous on Thelonious Monk's "We See"; it's a perspective the composer would probably have welcomed. The group also keeps Strayhorn's "Blood Count" from becoming too ponderous.



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As an audiophile label, Clarity has touted the distinctive sound quality of the disc. Blythe's group recorded using dual microphones in a Berkeley, Calif., church, and the mix presents a breathing evenness. *Night Song's* sonic achievements away from a regular studio prove that these techniques should be tried more often.

—Aaron Cohen

**Night Song**—*Night Song; Sorrows Of Sonny Liston; Down San Diego Way; It's Hungry/Fulfillment; Ransom; Cause Of It All; We See; Blood Count; Slanderous; Contemplation; Hardy; Night Song (Reprise).* (59:48)

**Personnel**—Blythe, alto saxophone; Bob Stewart, tuba; Gust Tsillis, marimba and vibes; Arto Tunçboyacıyan, percussion; Chico Freeman, bass clarinet and percussion; Josh Jones, David Frazier, percussion.



## Bill Watrous Big Band

**Space Available**  
Double-Time 24

★★★

**B**ill Watrous' large ensemble is one of several highly regarded rehearsal bands on the Los Angeles scene. It usually calls itself the Refuge West Big Band, but here it is simply the Bill Watrous Big Band. The documentation for *Space Available* is so rife with grammatical, typo-

graphical and informational errors that what appears to be a name change may simply be an oversight. (From rampant sloppiness, one sample: Frank Perowsky is listed as the composer of "My Foolish Heart." Presumably, he is the arranger. These liner notes require much guess work.)

On the plus side, the amateurish packaging contains thoroughly professional music. Most of Watrous' repertoire comes from two Southern California composer/arrangers, Gordon Goodwin and Tom Kubis. We are told that Kubis' work is frequently performed by university bands and that Goodwin has composed music for many television series. Both contribute challenging charts that reflect meticulous craftsmanship. The liner notes describe Goodwin's work on "It'll Count If It Goes" and "Mama Lama Samba" as "a virtual how-to manual for big band textures."

Perhaps that is part of the problem. The musicianship of Watrous' 18 players is exceptional, yet *Space Available* often sounds like a very high level university band executing a how-to manual. Kubis and Goodwin have both mastered the traditional academic genre of big-band writing. But when so many of today's strongest composer/arrangers (such as Maria Schneider and Carla Bley and Toshiko Akiyoshi) have pushed far beyond this style, its relevance outside the university is called into question.

Another problem is Watrous himself. He is widely acknowledged as a trombone virtuoso. But his tone is unvarying, a dark, sweet, creamy flowing, like melted butterscotch. Granted, he can take it anywhere he wants on a nanosecond's notice, and his command of multiphonics even enables him to accompany himself, as on the cadenza that concludes "Village Dance." But there are many trombonists with lesser chops who could dig deeper into "My Foolish Heart." It is one of the permanent masterpieces in the American song repertoire (written by Victor Young, not Frank Perowsky), and it has provided occasions for self-revelation by artists from Bill Evans to Karrin Allyson. Watrous' version sounds flawless and technical.

To the extent that it touches emotion, it finds sentimentality rather than poignance.

—Thomas Conrad

**Space Available**—*Space Available; The Road Goes Ever Onward; It'll Count If It Goes; My Foolish Heart; Mama Lama Samba; My Romance; I Got D'ZZZs; Village Dance.* (70:38)

**Personnel**—Watrous, leader, trombone; Dennis Farias, Wayne Bergeron, Bob Summers, Darrel Gardiner, Steve Huffsteter, trumpet; Sal Lozano, Phil Feather, Bill Liston, Gene Burkurt, Bob Carr, reeds; Doug Inman, Bob McChesney, Wendell Kelly, Rich Bullock, trombones; Shelly Berg, piano; Trey Henry, bass; Randy Drake, drums.



## Ellery Eskelin With Andrea Parkins And Jim Black

**One Great Day ...**  
hatOLOGY 502

★★★★½

**W**hat is there to love about this band? So much, starting simply with the sound of Eskelin's tenor—he's mastered a fluttery, breathy delivery that looks back through Archie Shepp to Ben Webster (Eskelin has said that neither of them are conscious references), but with a harder edge to it. His unaccompanied solo on "Side Effects" gives a tour of his playing, rolling together split tones, other multiphonics, honks, whispers, muting, bent slurs and straight tones. A version of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "The Inflated Tear" shows how confidently he handles tenderness: The middle of the cut opens up into a static, held accordion drone and seed-pod/shell/bowed-cymbal percussion, while the leader softly explores a few singing overtones. Here, the tear isn't just inflated, it's zoomed in on like a dribble of water under a macro lens.

But what's remarkable about this project goes much deeper than Eskelin's playing—he's come up with a startlingly new concept, a new approach to structuring jazz work and stimulating improvisations, and with these sidekicks he's got the goods to carry it off. Recorded live in Wuppertal, Germany, in '96, *One Great Day ...* builds on the foundation Eskelin established on the trio's '95 debut, *Jazz Trash* (Songlines). Where the playing has flashes of free music's organicism, the sectional compositions are blocked together in highly constructed ways—never merely conventional—with bold, often shocking shifts in texture, dynamic and style. Parkins is key, her sampler sometimes changing into a cool jazz organ or a church organ, sometimes laying a walking bass, elsewhere

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metamorphosing into a stately piano (she uses her widest array of sampled sounds yet on "T64K37B," and her accordion at times interrupts a flow with held tones or creatively garbled clusters.

Eskelin's jump cutting isn't strictly genre-based, like John Zorn's. In the six original compositions on this record, he passes through (and grafts together) numerous different musical zones, but the trip through them never feels generic. He gives dimension to each music referenced (or invented), and doesn't get hung up on name-dropping hip musics—if it suits the purpose, he'll use it. And when he composes melodies, like the circuitous, swaggering line of "Vertical Hold" and the mysterious one on "Fallen Angel," they're memorable, even fun.

Eskelin is one of the few folks today who's truly searching in music without entrenched bias or political axes to grind. The day we can say that about more players will indeed be a great one. (Three cheers, too, to the Swiss hat ART label for having ditched the wasteful, ugly jewel box packaging concept for a thinner, sexier design.)

—John Corbett

**One Great Day ...** —*One Great Day ...*; *Vertical Hold*; *T64K37B*; *Too Much Orange*; *Fallen Angel*; *The Inflated Tear*; *Side Effects*. (58:40)

**Personnel**—Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Parkins, accordion, sampler; Black, drums, percussion.



## Gary Smulyan With Strings Criss Cross 1129

★★★

Imagine a black-and-white movie where the petite ingenue turns to her hulking, awkward boyfriend from the football team—let's say Jean Harlow and Gary Cooper—and says, "OK, ya big ape, if you really love me, let's dance, real slow and romantic." That will give you a feel for this unusual album, which features Gary Smulyan playing 10 songs on baritone saxophone, with a piano trio and nine string players backing him up. Very pretty, but funny dance partners, nonetheless.

Like most jazz listeners, I'm not a fan of string sweeteners, preferring my sugar straight. But Bob Belden's economical, silky and very present-sounding arrangements, with more than expected emphasis on the cellos, give horizon to the tunes as well as various-colored cushions for Smulyan's sound to glide against, while never sounding smothering or dippy. Still, this is writing straight out of the "goose egg" school of whole-note background music, and there is little of interest in the way of counter-lines or rhythmic zest, with the exception of one lovely,

climactic moment at the end of "Don't Follow The Crowd." When Mike LeDonne starts tinkling or rippling on the piano, it really feels like movie-theme-land.

Smulyan is a make-it-look-easy virtuoso who limns the changes like a champ. As a soloist, however, he doesn't often find the "sweet notes," as Chet Baker used to call them, nor does he stake out compelling melodies of his own. Similar ideas keep cropping up—particularly those up-the-ladder/down-the-ladder arpeggios you hear in eight-bar, big-band bari solos. Tone-wise, as Stanley Crouch points out in his notes, Smulyan comes from the Pepper Adams line—husky and brusque at the bottom and piping (though a little stuffy on a few notes) in the mids and highs, though there is a

moment in "Don't Follow The Crowd" where he teases the bouncy, doubletime aside patented by Gerry Mulligan.

The refreshing songlist, mostly ballads, is full of fresh horses, unfatigued by war (except "Lush Life"), including the beautiful "Yesterday's Gardenias" and a personal fave, "The Bad And The Beautiful." For all its merits, though, this is still an album of baritone saxophone solos with strings. Nicely done, but, unavoidably, slightly comic and sentimental, like those old movies.

—Paul de Barros

**Gary Smulyan With Strings**—*The Bad And The Beautiful*; *Lush Life*; *Thanks For You*; *It Happens Quietly*; *Don't Follow The Crowd*; *We've Got A Sure Thing*; *Beware My Heart*; *The Moment Of Truth*; *Yesterday's Gardenias*; *Two For The Seesaw*. (52:27)

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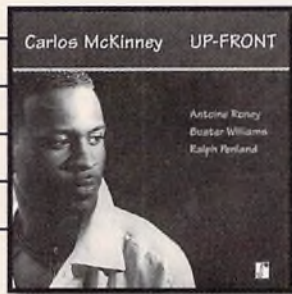


For more information: Dr. David Demsey, Coordinator of Jazz Studies  
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11/97



**Personnel**—Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Mike LeDonne, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Kenny Washington, drums; Mark Feldman, Laura Seaton, Jon Kass, Regina Carter, Cenovia Cummins, violin; Ron Lawrence, viola; Erik Friedlander, Tomas Ulrich, Clay Ruede, cello.



## Carlos McKinney

### Up-Front

Sirocco Jazz Limited 1002

★★★★

While *Up-Front* takes off and concludes in a straightahead up-tempo mode, four out of six compositions penned by McKinney reflect this pianist's fascination with the Hancock/Shorter style of '70s fusion. With electronic colorations, McKinney embellishes "Prince Of Jade," "Mademoiselle Gregoire," "Black Beauty" and "The Seer"—all memorable

and sophisticated, even as titles.

On "Prince Of Jade" McKinney provides a harmonic prism via electric keyboards through which the music sparkles. Antoine Roney on soprano intones in an Asian unwinding manner while Ralph Penland, a West Coast stalwart on drums, keeps the propulsion solid. Buster Williams takes the tune out; the bass grows pleasingly as McKinney sets off single-note chimes that evaporate into silence.

Third tune in, McKinney's prowess as a pianist becomes more apparent. His pensive approach on acoustic piano conveys the intended sense of "If I Should Lose You." Penland layers cymbal textures around billowing drum accents while Buster Williams pulls the purr from his strings to connect with the lyric phrasing that McKinney explores. The quartet boards the fast train again for "All Because Of You." Antoine Roney introduces the contours of the tune on tenor and then McKinney works out most of his thinking right-handedly. Sure to be savored is Buster Williams' own linear pulse traversing the multiple rhythmic strands.

While there's a quiet drama to "Mademoiselle Gregoire," "Black Beauty" seems most radiant especially in its theme that features dark-tone voicings from Roney's bass clarinet. By mid-tune, McKinney's solo lifts off from the synthesizer's distant-strings sound, bearing witness to just how much piano he can play.

McKinney's promise, as one might surmise, is most apparent when he plays acoustic piano, especially on "You And The Night And The Music," "Obelisk" and "Door Of No Return." Conscious of bold architecture, McKinney cre-

ates clean runs that build and build to momentary apices. The undercurrent set in motion by Williams and Penland pushes the groove to salient angles. Anyone who holds the bass in special esteem will notice that on this CD Buster Williams expands the dimensions of the music, drawing from diverse but unobtrusive techniques.

Clearly, Carlos McKinney's experience bears witness to a creative artist's emergence from major influences with a singular sensibility.

—Zoë Anglesey

**Up-Front**—*You And The Night And The Music; Prince Of Jade; If I Should Lose You; All Because Of You; Mademoiselle Gregoire; Black Beauty; Obelisk; The Seer; Door Of No Return.* (60.23)

**Personnel**—McKinney, piano, keyboards, synthesizer; Antoine Roney, tenor and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet; Buster Williams, bass; Ralph Penland, drums.



## Billy Bang

### Bang On!

Justin Time 105

★★★★

### Commandment (For the Sculpture of Alain Kirili)

No More Records No. 5

★★★

During the banter with the audience between tunes at a live concert to celebrate an exhibit of sculpture by Alain Kirili, Billy Bang reveals that he is more into Paganini than Stuff Smith. There is a certain amount of truth in the statement for his solo performance on *Commandment*, but less so *Bang On!* And we need only compare how he renders his composition "Bama Swing" on both releases.

For some reason, with all the flashy virtuosity, his penchant for a raspy blues tonality seems forced and contrived on the *Commandment* version of "Bama Swing." But the same tune in an ensemble context is suddenly a perfect fit, and Bang's rough textures and straight ahead ebullience are warmly encased in a tight rhythmic pocket. "Bama Swing" is no longer naked, and Bang zips along happier than Brer Rabbit in the briar patch.

When Bang is in his groove or grove, he can be an absolutely astonishing wizard with a bow, making his violin leap magically from lilting purrs to blood-curdling shrieks. He loves to prance on the edge of improvisation, and no matter what sound emerges from his instrument, he makes it conform to the moment's

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musical logic. A full template of this expressiveness unfolds on "Yesterdays," and the pace here is so torrid that it would take a Ronnie Burrage and D.D. Jackson to be as quick and as inventive as their furious leader.

Jackson's facility complements Bang's at full gallop attack; and his way of darting in and out of bebop formats, invoking a Pullenesque (as in Don) cluster of tones, matches the shifting dynamics Bang presents without end. Not sure what the D.D. means, but in Latin it could rightfully be *dexteriat digitalis*—gifted fingers. On Jackson's CD *Paired Down* the two offer further examples of their camaraderie.

Taken together, the CDs come close to providing a portrait of Bang, though the territory he's staked out belongs to him exclusively, beyond the land of Paganini and Stuff Smith. (No More Records: P.O. Box 334, Woodmere NY 11598)  
—Herb Boyd

**Bang On!**—'Bama Swing; Sweet Georgia Brown; Peaceful Dreams; Spirits Entering; They Plan; Three Faces Of Eve; Yesterdays; Don's Dream; Willow Weep For Me; My Symbis. (54:14)

**Personnel**—Bang, violin; D.D. Jackson, piano; Ronnie Burrage, drums; Akira Ando, bass.

**Commandment**—Pieta; 'Bama Swing; Daydream; Swing Low Sweet Chariot; 'Bama Swing Again; They Plan To Leave; Music For The Love Of It. (50:30)

**Personnel**—Billy Bang, violin.



## Eric Person

**More Tales To Tell**  
Soul Note 121307

★★★★

For his third Soul Note release, the saxophonist and composer who has gained recognition working with Chico Hamilton and Dave Holland offers a well-laid-out repertoire that should entice modern-minded fans. Using a basic horn-piano-bass-drums quartet and occasionally enhancing his voicings with flute, bass clarinet, guitar and, on one track, bassoon, Person has concocted eight originals—and arranged two by others—that show craft, intuition and feel.

Person is not a bopper; he doesn't write Tin Pan Alley, AABA tunes. He has obviously listened to Coltrane but the influence is fairly subtle. And while one can sense a certain fondness for free playing, he wisely keeps his forays into uncharted territory within reason. In the end, he gives us a bit of old and new, sweet and tart; almost anyone can get with this stuff.

One thing for sure: On *More Tales To Tell*, the leader doesn't set us up then let us down. On "Survival Instincts," he offers a compact line

over an agitated, bossa-rock-ish beat; his solo on soprano, with its high wails and smooth yet ricocheting ideas, matches the energy that's in the melody. Likewise, "Issues (Yours, Not Mine)," with a driving head that goes from medium-fast to medium and then back, leads to an intense Person improvisation where he really lets loose.

The leader plays with plenty of non-cloying sweetness, too. His two covers—Miles' "Little Church" and Terence Trent D'Arby's "If You Should Go Before Me"—are both simply lovely, with Person delivering a singing sound on soprano. Neither wildly intense nor ballad slow are the punchy altered blues "On The Verge" and the comely "Mr. More Or Less," with its bird call-like leaps in the melody. Here, Person swings easily, employing cascading descents,

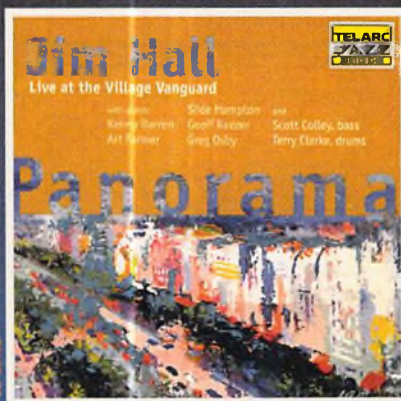
chords turned inside out and complementary ideas to hold our attention.

A good crew is on hand. Jackson plays behind Person like Elvin did with Trane, pushing and prodding where necessary, supporting with élan elsewhere. Esposito is a fine pianist who has his own sound and a deft way of playing locked-hands chords; you can tell he digs McCoy Tyner. Jones is a solid bassist, Holland is his usual ace self, and DeNigris adds a quiet sparkle when he appears, as does Finn.

In the notes, Person says he wants to break through to a new level of public awareness. *More Tales To Tell* should help. —Zan Stewart

**More Tales To Tell**—*Undercurrents; Mr. More Or Less; Little Church; On The Verge; Knee Deep (In The Gene Pool); Survival Instincts; Issues (Yours, Not Mine); If You*

# Live and Kickin'

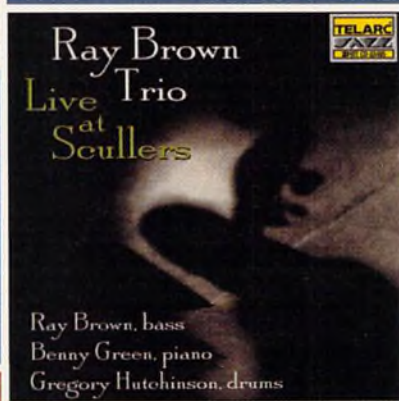


## JIM HALL

Guitarist Jim Hall and friends deliver a "panoramic" performance recorded live at New York's Village Vanguard. Hall and his special guests explore nine messages of intrigue, lively south-of-the-border rhythms, and judicious swingers, to make for scintillating listening.

## RAY BROWN TRIO

Recorded live at Boston's famed club, Scullers, the Ray Brown Trio performs seven popular standards, including *Bye, Bye, Blackbird, But Not for Me*, and *You're My Everything*, with a mixture of swinging verve and crystalline elegance.



Ray Brown, bass  
Benny Green, piano  
Gregory Hutchinson, drums



## HARRY "SWEETS" EDISON

The master of hard-swinging jazz leads an all-star team at the Iridium that includes the incomparable Frank Wess, pianist Junior Mance, and legend Clark Terry. Keeping the tradition alive, they perform an appealing set of classic tunes, including *Doggin' Around*, "Sweets" *Bossa*, and *I Wish I Knew*.



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*Should Go Before Me; Friends Again; Perfection.* (61:02)  
**Personnel**—Person, soprano and alto saxophones; John Esposito, piano; Calvin Jones (1, 3, 5–10), Dave Holland (2, 4), bass; Gene Jackson, drums, percussion; Jim Finn, bass clarinet, flute; Cary DeNigris, acoustic guitar; Michael Rabinowitz, bassoon (10).



## David Murray

**Fo Deuk Revue**  
 Justin Time 94

★★★★

**D**avid Murray has said on more than one occasion that he believes he is some sort of a musical conduit, a vessel that connects antiquity with modernity. With "Fo Deuk Revue"—and Fo Deuk is a Wolof phrase that means "Where do you come from?"—Murray can rest his case.

"Blue Muse" is the first piece of powerfully admissible evidence, and Murray unleashes a torrent of sound on tenor sax, an unbroken roar that

is ballasted by a raging wave of rhythm that has as much density and darkness as an African night. Jamaaladeen Tacuma's bass marks time and place, underscoring the incessant beat of the multicultural project and helping Murray blend his timeless terrain of Western urban intensity with the insurgent pulse of the Motherland.

Another formidable witness, whose message is far more literal, is poet/writer Amiri Baraka. His testimony is a relentless screed on "Evidence," citing chapter and verse about the rape and plunder of Africa during the slave trade. "Nigger computers duly reporting ghosts ahead, ghosts ahead," is his way of summarizing the treacherous duplicity of indigenous Africans who facilitated the selling of their sisters and brothers. His chant is riveting and his words are annealed in the brassy fire stoked by trumpeter Hugh Ragin and Craig Harris' trombone. Pushed along by furious drums of passion, Ragin and Harris punctuate Baraka's panic, and what soon emerges is a kind of musical background to the African holocaust—make the Holy Ghost.

Then comes a succession of griots, giving the enterprise even more authenticity with their Senegalese rap, particularly the elemental ululations of Tidiane Gaye and Hamet Maal. On the back of the CD there is a File Under prompt, indicating "world/rap/jazz"; there is no better way to define this endeavor. Perhaps it was not meant to be a concept CD, but that impression is hard to ignore. It's like having a musical version of an Afrocentric textbook with its "back to Black" lessons, though there is much here for even the melanin-challenged among us.

And a little more Murray in the mix would have made the gumbo much richer.—*Herb Boyd*

**Fo Deuk Revue**—*Blue Muse; Evidence; One World Family; Too Many Hungry People; Chant African; Abdoul Aziz Sy; Village Urban; Thilo.* (56:00)

**Personnel**—Murray, tenor saxophone and bass clarinet; Robert Irving III, piano; Hugh Ragin, trumpet; Craig Harris, trombone; Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Abdou Karim Mane, bass; Darryl Burgee, Ousseynou Diop drums; Douadou N'Daye Rose, sabar/vocals; Amadou Barry aka Doug E. Tee, Didier Awadi (*Positive Black Soul*), vocals/rap; Oumar Mboup, Djembe/percussion; El Hadji Gnaniou Sembene, keyboard; Assane Diop, xalam/guitar; Hamet Maal, Tidiane Gaye (*Dieuf Dieul*), Moussa Sene (*Dieuf Dieul*), Junior Soul, Amiri Baraka Jr., vocals; and Amiri Baraka, poetry reading.

stated premise: to find out how many liberties he can take with the 12-bar blues form and still remain faithful to its cultural meaning.

"Anytime, Any Place," for example, enlarges the piano trio with a second bassist and drummer and sets up call-and-response between the two drummers over a 12-bar structure that modulates through all 12 keys. Robert Johnson's "Cross Road Blues" (one of only two non-originals in the 14-piece program) replaces the tragic implications of Johnson's recording with exuberant New Orleans-style breaks and ostinatos. In "Express Mail Delivery," major and minor chords alternate in five-bar phrases over drummer Jason Marsalis' shifting time signatures. "Whales From The Orient" shows that the blues can even wait with an Asian accent.

By the third time, through, blues progressions and precedents have become a unifying common tide that flows beneath the surface of the album's real subject: 14 varied personal musical statements.

Most of Roberts' ensembles contain eight to 12 pieces. Several use two drummers and sometimes two bassists to create a multifaceted sense of "forward motion" (one of Roberts' goals). The little/big-band configuration is small enough to be fluid, and big enough to hit hard. Roberts subdues his own piano voice within his broader compositional purposes. His writing is often brilliant in its juxtaposition of distant musical eras ("That Was Then, And This Is Now"), its believable evocation of mood (autumnal on "Late Rehearsal," aspiring on "Early Rehearsal," joyfully fulfilled on "It's Maria's Dance") and the way solos are made to emerge organically from the ensembles.

Almost all of the album's accomplished soloists are remarkably young, providing promise for the new millennium. Tenor saxophonist Stephen Riley (who turned heads last year as a 19-year-old on Marcus Printup's *UNveiled*) continues to refine his post-hip, ultra-dry world view on pieces like "Heart Of The Blues." Marcus Printup himself offers some of his strongest recorded work here, with his muted, riveting whisper on "Jade" and the silky elegance of his open horn on "Late Rehearsal." A new name to remember is Ron Westray. He is impressive and different on every moment he is given—especially on "Whales From The Orient," where he slips and skids over the trombone's full range with bent wit and audacity.

The few details mentioned above only hint at the scope of this album's creativity and richness. *Blues For The New Millennium* is Marcus Roberts' most ambitious, most fully realized and most important work to date.

—*Thomas Conrad*

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## Marcus Roberts

### Blues For The New Millennium

Columbia 68637

★★★★½

**T**he first time through *Blues For The New Millennium*, there is a natural tendency to become fascinated with Marcus Roberts'

**Blues For The New Millennium**—*Cross Road Blues; Jungle Blues; Anytime, Any Place; That Was Then, And This Is Now; Jade; When The Mornin' Comes; Heart Of The Blues; Whales From The Orient; A Servant Of The People; Late Rehearsal; Express Mail Delivery; Early Rehearsal; I'll See You At One; It's Maria's Dance.* (76:33)

**Personnel**—Roberts, piano; Marcus Printup (1, 2, 4–8, 10–14), trumpet; Ronald Westry (2, 4–8, 10–12, 14), Vincent Gardner (1, 2, 4, 6–8, 10, 12–14), trombone; Isa Abdul-Hamid (Richard Brown), tenor and soprano saxophones (2, 4–8, 10–14); Stephen Riley, tenor saxophone (2, 4–8, 10–14); Ted Nash, clarinet, flute, baritone saxophone (1, 2, 4–8, 10–14); Sherman Irby, alto saxophone (2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14); Thaddeus Joseph (3, 5–10, 14), Roland Guerin (2–4, 7, 8, 10–13), bass; Ali Jackson (2–9, 13, 14), Jason Marsalis (1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10–13), drums.



# JAZZ

## A New Chicago 7

by Aaron Cohen

**W**hile Kurt Elling has been barnstorming across Manhattan and two great Midwestern heavy tenors, saxophonists Von Freeman and Fred Anderson, have continued to solidify their reputations, other Chicagoans have been actively expressing and recording their ideas throughout the past few months. These seven representative discs show how much is resonating from all corners of the jazz spectrum in the Windy City.

**Steam: *Real Time* (Eighth Day Music 80010; 62:47; ★★★★★)** Multi-reedist Ken Vandermark has been a mainstay in the rapidly expanding free-improv end of Chicago jazz. His ubiquitous presence may cause listeners to overlook his dynamic Steam quartet. What makes this group stand out is the inclusion of inventive pianist Jim Baker, who also composed a third of the tunes on the disc. Try to imagine Eric Dolphy with a more audible sense of humor combined with a more beat-heavy Herbie Nichols, and the resulting blend would approximate Steam. And anyone who has the notion that this would all just be soulless squanking must hear "A Memory Of No Thoughts," an endearing ballad straight from Vandermark's heart.

**Rex Richardson: *Pandora's Pocket* (IGMOD 49709; 72:02; ★★★½)** Trumpeter Rex Richardson is another inventive young Chicago musician who is making inroads into the national jazz consciousness. Richardson has a strong command of his instrument's range, but he's especially forceful in the middle register. And, as his name implies, his growling attacks reflect an Ellingtonian inspiration. He's also a clever composer, as he does interesting manipulations of march time on "The Claim Of The Idea." Pianist Sam Stuyk also writes well, especially the forlorn "While I Wait."

**Malachi Thompson: *47th Street* (Delmark 497; 70:47; ★★★½)** For the past few years, it's been trumpeter Malachi Thompson's mission to restore the Sutherland Hotel, a South Side jazz mecca, to its former glory. Recently he scored a play that pays tribute to the establishment, and the resulting music makes up his new disc. Since the great years of the Sutherland were the 1950s, the score is a reverential homage to the legendary artists who appeared on its stage (Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Gene Ammons, to name a few). Thompson is in great form with a partially muted approach, and the band, featuring pianist Kirk Brown and too-seldom-heard saxophonists Billy Harper and the late Carter Jefferson, is impeccably sharp.



Ken Vandermark: Eric Dolphy with a sense of humor you can hear

**Famoudou Don Moye: *Jam For Your Life* (AECO 3007; 56:55; ★★★½)** Although his tenure in the Art Ensemble of Chicago would make percussionist Famoudou Don Moye one of the more well-known musicians in this overview, he often uses his disc (recorded between 1983 and 1991) as a showcase for his colleagues' talents. While Moye remains in the background, the multi-woodwind player and pianist Ari Brown soars on "One For Skip" and "Richard's Tune." Vocalist Luba Raashiek also steps into the forefront to add interesting apocalyptic lyrics to "Miles Mode." Not that Moye uses this shift in focus as an excuse to slack—his "Two City Suite" is a fine example of his own dexterity and continued ability to put together engaging collective improvisation.

**Hamid Drake–Michael Zerang Duo: *Ask The Sun* (Okkadisk 12008; 72:76; ★★★½)** One of the few joys in Chicago's seasonal changes are the ritual solstice performances of percussionists Hamid Drake and Michael Zerang. Both of them are proficient on a wide array of African, Western and Middle Eastern rhythmic instruments, and there's a clear sense of deep intuitive dialogue when they work together. What makes their universalist interactions fall so well into a jazz ideal is a quick-thinking sense of improvisation ("The Black Basement" stands out) and that they swing like mad right from the first track. There's also a driving call-and-response

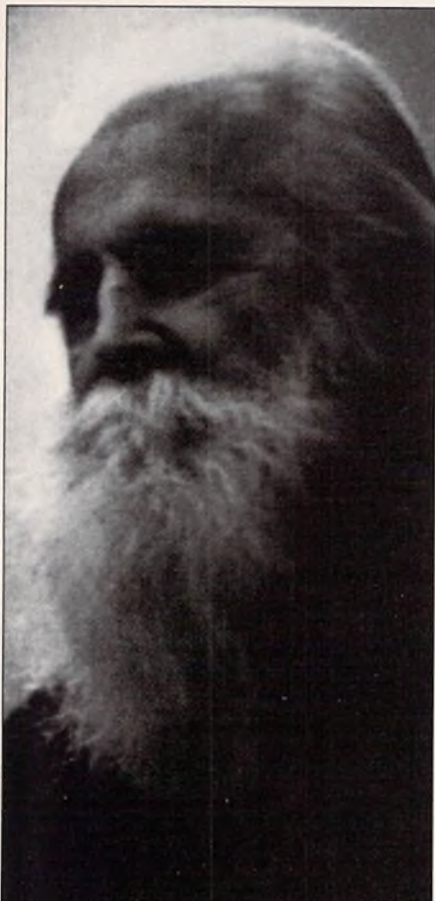
with Ashik Altany's zurma on "Ararat Mountain Two-Step."

**Laurence Hobgood/Brian Torff/Paul Wertico: *Union* (Naim 015; 62:52; ★★★)** Drummer Paul Wertico, a fixture in Pat Metheny's fusion outfits, has taken a much different direction as part of the affectionately traditional Union with pianist Laurence Hobgood and electric bassist Brian Torff. The trio delivers sensitive renditions of such classics as Ellington & Strayhorn's "Star Crossed Lovers" and the standard "My One And Only Love." Wertico does an impressive job of redirecting the tempo on "The Late, Late Blues," but the most inventive idea on the disc is Torff finding the improvisational possibilities in the Appalachian hymn "Wondrous Love."

**Tatsu Aoki: *Live At Blue Rider Theatre* (IEL 004; 65:46; ★★★)** On this live recording, Tatsu Aoki explores the road that Peter Kowald, William Parker and Chicagoan Malachi Favors Maghostut paved for the solo bass. If Aoki's hour-plus excursion of instrumental solitude contains moments of slightly jarring repetitive dissonances, his trip is worth taking. Aoki makes fine use out of sudden stops, starts and transitional shifts. The improvisational mixture includes such accessories as chopsticks and electronics, often to enhance such jazz techniques as slaps and walking lines—styles that go way, way back in this town.

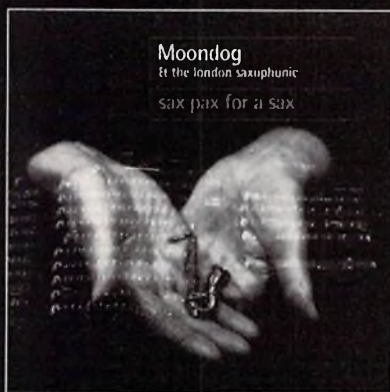
DB





## Moondog Lives!

The legendary composer, hailed by both Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus, is alive and well and has released his first U.S. album in twenty-five years. Perhaps best known for standing on the streets of midtown New York dressed in full Viking regalia, Moondog has recorded a tribute to the saxophone featuring an all saxophone ensemble. He salutes the music of both Lester Young and Charlie Parker in an album that is sublimely accessible yet musically sophisticated.



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## BEYOND

### Brother Ray's Silver

by Frank Alkyer

**B**ack in my college days, so long ago and far away, one of my favorite pieces of campus graffiti went something like this: "God is love. Love is blind. Ray Charles is blind. Ray Charles is God." A philosophy professor teaching a course in logic told me it didn't make any sense. He was wrong then and he's wrong today, as proven on a terrific new five-CD boxed set celebrating 50 years of Ray Charles' music.

**Ray Charles: *Genius & Soul, The 50th Anniversary Collection* (Rhino R272859; 74:33/74:10/76:49/76:39/74:52:★★★★)**

This package stands as a testament to one of the great voices of American song. The Ray Charles legacy ranks with the likes of Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Nat "King" Cole. Like those artists, Charles became more than just another singer due, in large part, to musician-ship—working with great musicians, understanding great music and being a great musician himself. And like those artists, he developed his own version of soul so deep you can't touch bottom.

The material in this set is Ray Charles at his best and includes all the hits. The packaging is first-rate, including a great interview with Charles conducted by David Ritz, who co-wrote Charles' autobiography *Brother Ray*. In addition, the liner notes include quotes and remembrances from Ahmet Ertegun, David "Fathead" Newman, Hank Crawford, Etta James, Stevie Wonder and a host of others. And the sound overall is warm, rich and wonderful. Compilation producers James Austin, Ritz and Billy Vera arranged the box chronologically, and listening to Charles' musical development from track to track is a real treat.

From the first tune, it's obvious that Charles always knew how to groove, but his voice was developing. His early work employed a trio, which helped draw comparisons to the classic Nat "King" Cole trio. In fact, Cole's longtime guitarist, Oscar Moore, collaborated with Charles on some early sides. But Charles' style in those days came directly out of the Charles Brown school of cool West Coast r&b. "Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand," a 1951 single, grooves slowly in that vein, but with a twist. During the tune's first verse, Charles plays blues licks on the celeste. The keyboard's sweet bell-like tone gives the tune an innocence, but Charles shifts to piano, playing counterpoint to Moore's guitar thereafter. The subtle change takes the tune from schoolyard romance to pillow talk. Even at a young age, working in a stripped-down setting, *Brother Ray's* arranging went beyond the conventional.

Charles is known for his work on piano and organ, but the big band has always been his instrument. He hit his stride as a performer with larger ensembles backing him. And what bands they've been. While most



COURTESY OF ATLANTIC RECORDS

**Ray Charles: developing his own version of soul**

folks know of his longtime relationship with Hank Crawford and David "Fathead" Newman, the player rosters on a Ray Charles record always read like a who's who of jazz greats working as session men. Take Stanley Turrentine, who plays a strictly back-up role on "Kissa Me Baby" from 1952; or Connie Kay playing drums on "It Should've Been Me" from '54; Roy Haynes drumming on "One Mint Julep" from '61; or Charles' collaborations with everyone from Milt Jackson to the highly underrated tenorman Donald Wilkerson to a very understated Betty Carter.

Like any great musical legacy, Charles' discography is built on great composers, arrangers and musicians. Nowhere is this more evident than on the Charles gem "Let The Good Times Roll." Quincy Jones' arrangement of the Sam Theard/Fleecie Moore tune slaps you silly from the opening chord. That fierce big band included Clark Terry and Snooky Young on trumpets; Al Grey and Melba Liston on trombone; Newman, Crawford, Frank Wess, Paul Gonsalves and Zoot Sims in the saxophone section; and Freddie Greene on guitar.

So, why 4 stars instead of 5? Some of the material on discs three, four and five is so campy, it can't be taken seriously. His take on the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" or "Yesterday" are flat-out cheesy; his version of "America The Beautiful," pure schmaltz. And while I personally love his foray into country music, I've never been keen on the generic backing vocals of the Jack Halloran Singers. Give me the grit and soul of the Raeletts any day.

But as Charles himself has said, "My music's not about pleasing critics; it's about pleasing me." Who can argue?

While not every tune appeals, I wouldn't remove a single cut from the package. Every artist has high points and lows. Warts and all, *The 50th Anniversary Collection* illustrates the breadth and vastness of Charles' career. And while those warts offer a glimpse and deeper appreciation into how difficult, and fickle, the artistic process can be, the collection overall impresses a deeper appreciation for the true genius of Ray Charles. **DB**



## REISSUES

# Coltrane At The Crossroads

by Zan Stewart

When John Coltrane died on July 27, 1967, he was at the forefront of the jazz avant garde, and was its most financially successful proponent. How many could have predicted this situation in the late '50s, following the tenor giant's superb work on Prestige Records and with Miles and Monk? Or in January 1960, when his harmonic obstacle course, "Giant Steps," was first heard; or even a year later, when "My Favorite Things" was issued? But in 1962, when the first of this groundbreaking music came out, many might well have guessed the Hamlet, N.C., native's final esthetic destination.

**John Coltrane: *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* (Impulse! 4-232: 60:11/69:30/69:25/70:20:★★★★)** Here, on these Vanguard dates, Trane was in transition, paying only slight heed to the densely harmonic constructs that underpinned "Giant Steps" and "Countdown." Instead, he favored a looser, modal type of song—"Impressions," like "So What," is based on two adjacent minor seventh chords, "Spiritual" on a similar platform—which allowed for more uninhibited improvisation.

Happily, the set is done properly. Initially, this material was issued scattershot: the LPs *Live At The Village Vanguard and Impressions* (the latter abetted by two studio tracks) in 1962 and 1963, respectively, followed by the 1977 two-LP set *The Other Village Vanguard Tapes*, 1979's two-LP *Trane's Modes* and, finally, a 1985 CD set, *From The Original Master Tapes*. Here, for the first time, the nine songs Trane chose to record at the Vanguard are presented in the order recorded, from Wednesday through Sunday—Saturday was skipped. ("Chasin' Another Trane," which would make the 10th selection, is not counted, as it is quite a different blues than "Chasin' The Trane," perhaps due to the fact that Roy Haynes is sitting in on drums.) With 22 tracks (including three previously unreleased), there are repetitions: "Impressions" appears three times, "Spiritual" and "India" four each, etc.

The band was fairly constant, though the leader varied the personnel from track to track. The core unit is Coltrane, Eric Dolphy on alto saxophone and bass clarinet, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassists Jimmy Garrison and Reggie Workman (who both alternate and play together) and drummer Elvin Jones; as noted, Haynes appears on one number. Trane slightly fattens the ensemble on some versions of "India," adding Ahmed Abdul-Malik on oud and Garvin Bushell on oboe, and includes Bushell on contra bassoon on two takes of "Spiritual."

These sessions reveal a stunningly emotional and energized Coltrane, a musician playing with a seething power on a tune such as "Impressions," and with a compelling depth and telling lyricism on the beatific "Spiritual" or "Naima." The recordings again reaffirm the synergistic relationship between the leader and Jones; it is as if the drummer and the tenor man share the same heartbeat, feel the music's pulse identically, and thus push each other on constantly. Finally, most of these selections showcase Coltrane's idiosyncratic way with melody, a manner that offers a raw brand of lyricism, an often edgy and dissonant style that draws as many as it pushes away.

A very thin line separates these pieces as to quality. On Disc One, the medium-tempoed "India" finds Trane on soprano, offering high, wailing tones contrasted by bursts of abstract phrasing; Dolphy, a strong influence on the leader, builds his solo with the latter. The blues in F, "Chasin'," and "Impressions," both taken at roiling uptempo, are exercises in unfettered blowing, while "Spiritual" and "Naima," with a slightly shifted melody, are calming forces. Disc Two contains "Brasilia," a medium number with an exploratory Trane issuing hard-edged lines and squirts of notes, while "Chasin' Another Trane," with Haynes, has a sweetness in both melody and the leader's improvisa-



John Coltrane: a new music both beautiful and harsh

tion. "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise" is also somewhat tame, with the leader following the chordal grounding; Tyner's solo is lilting, even pretty. Disc Three contains the classic, initially released, versions of "Chasin'" and "Impressions." The former, free playing par excellence, finds the leader's ideas flowing from one to the next almost as if he were playing a written composition. "Impressions" also makes remarkable sense; this is one of the most influential solos in jazz as Trane swings incredibly hard, playing both short bursts and longer lines, rarely repeating himself over the course of 14-plus minutes. Jones' popping drum accents and shifting cymbal statements are an ideal foil. Disc Four contains a gentle version of "Greensleeves," the rigorous "Miles Mode" and two takes of "India" and one of "Spiritual."

Of course, Coltrane's importance to the history of jazz remains primary, specifically through his "Giant Steps/Countdown" chordal formulae, which are embraced and investigated by scores of today's players. But the Vanguard sessions have also had a lasting, and not completely beneficent, impact. These performances demonstrated on record for the first time Trane's new mix of raw emotion and unbridled power, his desire to play with utter intensity and still swing, his growing lack of interest in continuing the delightful and difficult mating of melody, harmony and rhythm that was at the core of bebop and its evolutions. He essentially made a new music that was both beautiful and harsh, a music built on spontaneous, often dissonant, melody and freely chosen harmony—like Ornette Coleman's style in a way, but with much more rhythmic charge. Hearing this music anew reminds the listener that while Coltrane was certainly compelling, his art could also be arduous, indeed for some impossible, to take in. This duality, heard in both his work and in his adherents of yesterday and today, has been this artist's legacy. **DB**

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- *Live At The Village Vanguard*: ★★½ (4/26/62 issue)
- *Impressions*: ★★★★★ (8/29/63)
- *The Other Village Vanguard Tapes*: ★★★★★ (9/8/77)



# BLINDFOLD TEST

JANUARY 1998

## Bill Holman

by Zan Stewart

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.

**Y**ou might call Bill Holman—easily one of today's most original and adventuresome composers and arrangers for jazz orchestra—a late bloomer. Though the Southern California native/lifelong resident started writing for Stan Kenton in the early '50s and went on to compose and/or arrange prolifically for Kenton (see Stan Kenton: *The Complete Holman And Russo Charts*; Mosaic), Woody Herman, Gerry Mulligan, Buddy Rich, Doc Severinsen and so many others, it's only since 1980 that he's really come into his own.

That year, Holman began to write regularly in Europe, primarily for the West German Radio Orchestra (NDR), then later for the Metropole Orchestra in Holland, composing showcase pieces for such ace soloists as Phil Woods and Lee Konitz. "That's saved my ass," he says with candor. Then in 1988, Holman made his first JVC album with the superb big band he formed in 1975. Seven years later came the subsequent *A View From The Side*, an outstanding work that garnered Holman his second Grammy. His latest, *Brilliant Corners: The Music Of Thelonious Monk* (see "CD Reviews" Sept. '97) is a wondrously fresh look at that jazz giant. "Writing charts on other people's tunes is a chance to have some fun," says Holman, who has also written for Natalie Cole and Tony Bennett of late.

Things keep getting better for Holman, a vital 70. He recently won the ASCAP/IAJE Dizzy Gillespie Commission, and will debut that piece at the IAJE conference in New York in January. In May, he'll record his "A Personal Voice," written for Konitz, with the Metropole Orchestra, and things are in the works for new JVC date.

This is his first Blindfold Test.

### Mingus Big Band

"Moanin' Mambo, a.k.a. Nostalgia In Times Square" (from *Live In Time*, Dreyfus, rec. circa 1995) Charles Mingus, composer; Sy Johnson, Mingus Big Band, arrangers; Ronnie Cuber, baritone saxophone.

The Mingus band. Love that flavor. His things that came off really came off. Harmonically, he was very daring sometimes: all kinds of wrong notes that are there on purpose, I assume. Sounds like the soloists were communicating with the audience rather than concentrating on form and shape, but that's what jazz is about, too. Jazz has its own form that goes against all of the rules that we learn about form. It can go from one chorus to another without necessarily having a structure to it; it's going on the energy. Baritone was great; lot of energy. The roughness appeals to me. I wish I had more of that in my thing. That'll be my next project: get loose [*laughs*]. 4 stars.

### Joe Lovano

"All The Way" (from *Celebrating Sinatra*, Blue Note, rec. 1996) Lovano, tenor saxophone; Judi Silvano, soprano voice; Manny Albam, orchestrator, conductor.

Joe Lovano and the Sinatra album. Think Manny outdid himself. I don't know how much he and Joe worked together as far as the concept goes, taking the piece apart and re-assembling it like that, but it's really a work of art. I liked Judi coming with a few lyrics and a few wordless notes. Joe, regardless of what he gets into, he never loses sight of the music, it's always pure music with him. 5 stars.



WILLIAM CLAYTON

### Michael Gibbs

"Country Roads" (from *Bravissimo: 50 Years NDR Big Band*, ACT, rec. 1995) Gibbs, arranger; Gary Burton, vibes, composer.

I love the flavor of that. I really liked the head and the out chorus. I liked the whole thing, that camp meetin' kind of feeling. Can't guess who it is unless it's Carla Bley, but I never heard her with vibes. So who is it? [*looks at the album jacket*] NDR band ... Mike Gibbs is one of my favorites. I love him. 4 stars.

### Carla Bley

"Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" (from *Big Band Theory*, Watt, rec. 1993) Mingus, composer, Bley, arranger, piano; Gary Valente, trombone.

That's Carla Bley. That's a great idea to have the trombone player do the melody all by himself in the intro. He's got a lot of power. Again, he doesn't pay attention to the form, not too worried about the changes; he just says what he says and it fits fine. Again, a little bit of humor, and very loose. I really like that kind of stuff. She lays out that mood very strongly. 4 stars.

### Phil Woods & The Festival Orchestra

"Reel's Neet" (from *Celebration!*, Concord Jazz, rec. 1997) Woods, alto saxophone, composer, arranger; Bill Charlap, piano; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Lew Delgado, tenor saxophone.

Phil Woods, right? The chart sounds like it's from another era: a little bit of Thad [Jones], some standard dance band kind of language. It didn't sound like he wrote it yesterday. The band sounded pretty good, though the soloists could have been stronger. 3 stars. It should have been 4 for Phil, but the chart brought it down a little. He's a good writer, but the lines here didn't sound like the way he plays today. I wanted to hear something adventurous, the way he plays when he's on it.

### J.J. Johnson

"Enigma" (from *The Brass Orchestra*, Verve, rec. 1996) Johnson, trombone; Slide Hampton, arranger.

That's a great band, with french horns and everything. It must not be a working band. The name that comes to mind was Ian McDougall: I figured it was a trombone player. The guy has great writing chops, though in the middle, the rhythm pattern with the melody got kind of tiresome. Very pretty, but not especially jazzy. It could have been a lot simpler, and more effective, but it wouldn't have been as much fun. 3 stars.

DB