

DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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In Search of SOUND

By Pat Metheny

**Stephane Grappelli's
Final Bow**

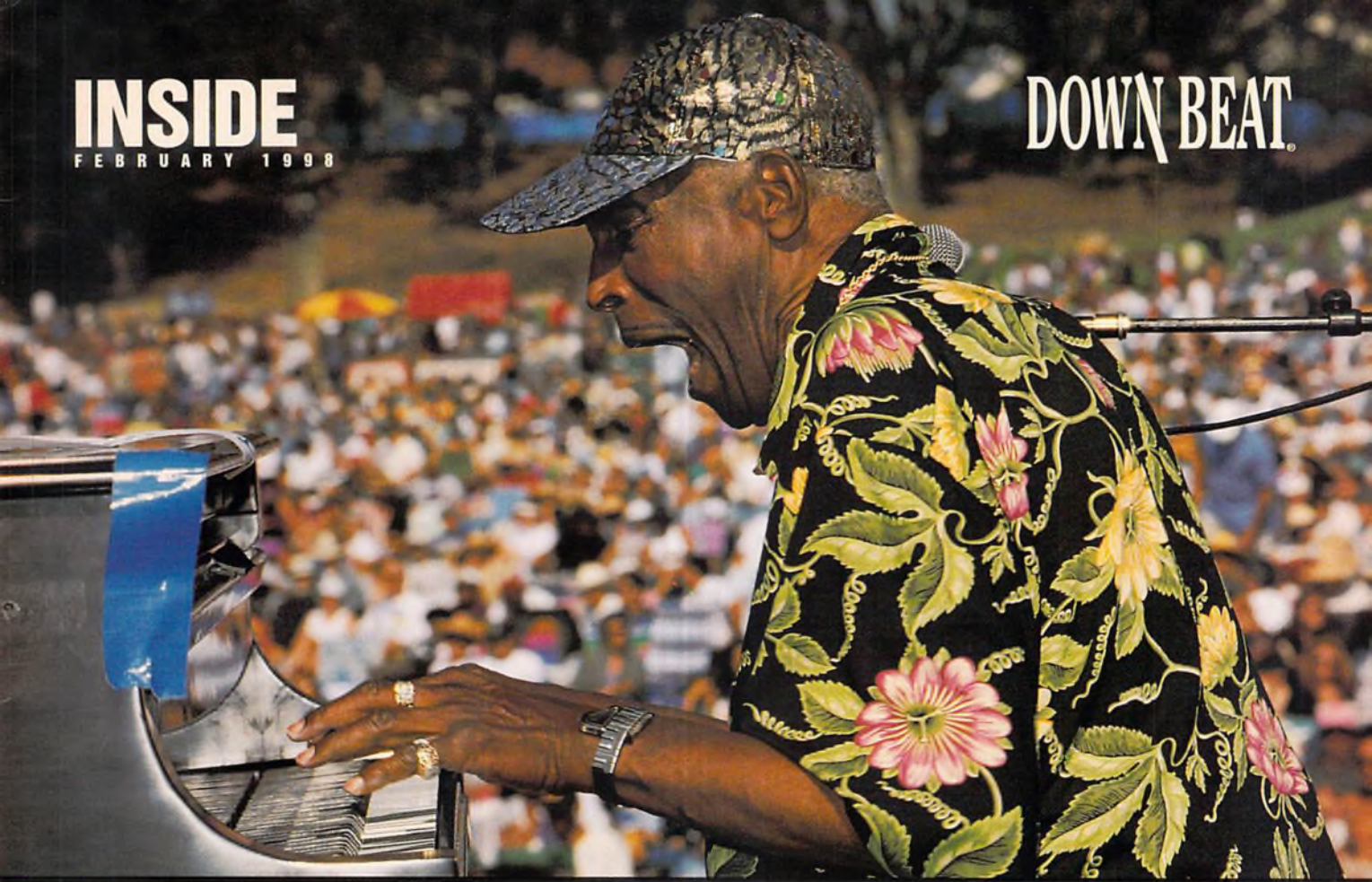
Charles Brown

**Ernie Watts &
Pete Christlieb**

**CLASSIC INTERVIEW:
Paul Desmond**

**BLINDFOLD TEST:
'Gatemouth' Brown**





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In Search Of Sound

The celebrated guitarist/composer/bandleader has something that all jazz musicians strive for: a personal "sound" that's instantly identifiable in any musical setting. We asked Pat to say in his own words what it means to have a sound, and what it takes to get one.

By Pat Metheny
Cover photograph by Jeff Sacks.

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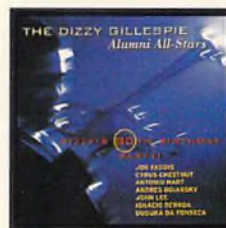
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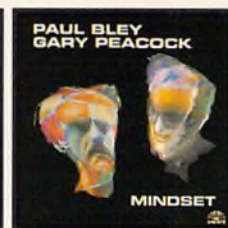
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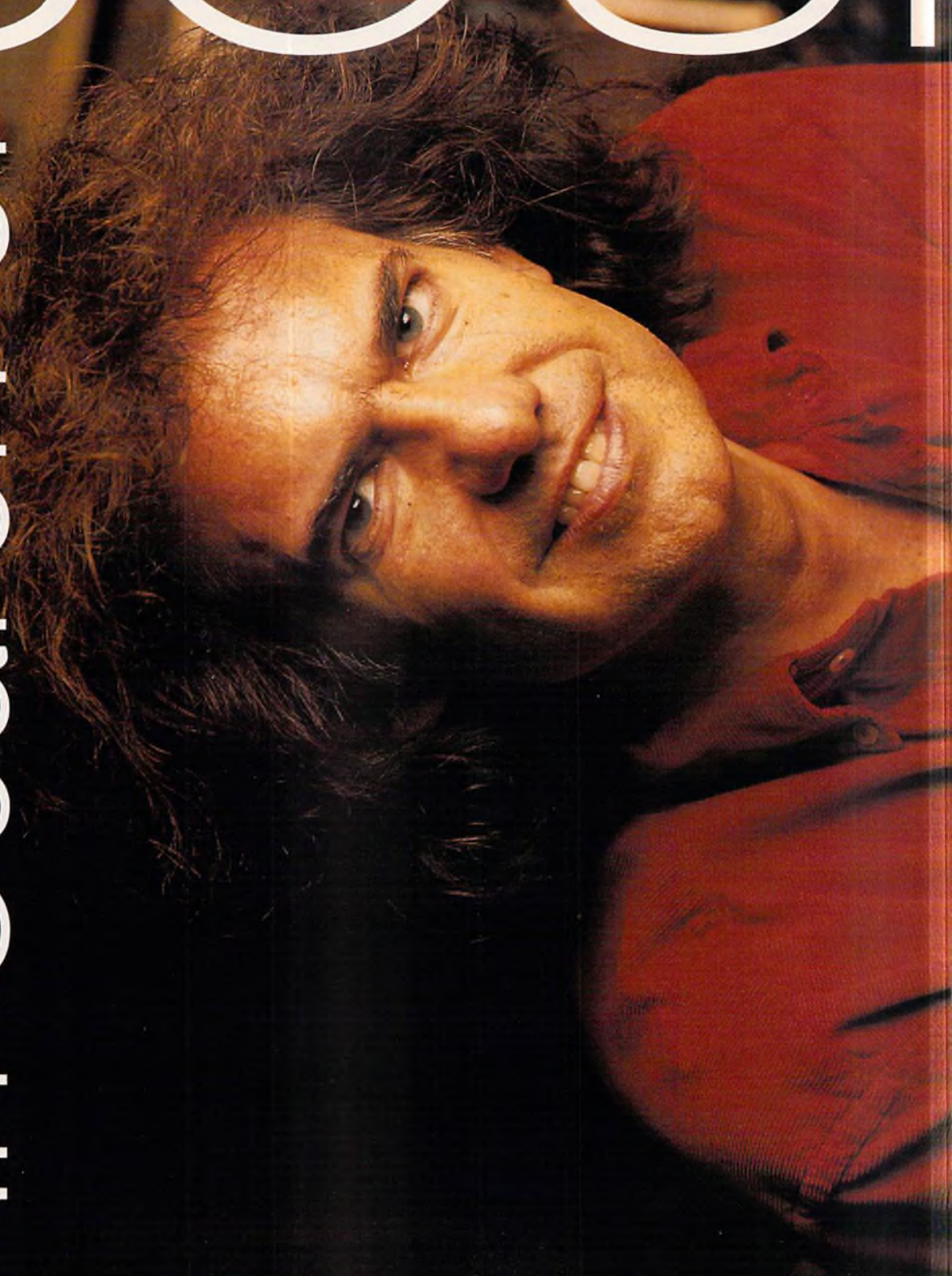



Paul Bley & Gary Peacock



Marlon Jordan

In Search of SOUND





*Editor's Note: Pat Metheny has been one of the most consistently featured artists in *Down Beat*, dating back through the early years of his career to his first mention as a *Down Beat* Scholarship winner in 1969. His story has been told and retold in countless profiles and interviews, his albums and collaborative projects routinely reviewed by our critics, his art celebrated by our readers in numerous polls. So this time around, we decided to take a different approach and give him the chance to write something himself. One quality that has shone through everything Pat has touched over the years, no matter what the setting, is his unmistakable sound. So we asked him to tell us what it means to have a sound, a true musical identity, and what it takes to get one. What follows is Pat's response, in his own words.*

NO



BY PAT METHENY

PHOTO BY JEFF SACKS

When I think of all my favorite musicians, the thing that they all seem to have in common—in fact, maybe the only identifiable characteristic that they share—is that they are all true individuals. They're all originals. When we think of Miles Davis, Wes Montgomery, Bill Evans, Freddie Hubbard, Keith Jarrett, Charlie Haden, Ornette Coleman, Stevie Wonder, Paul Bley, Milton Nascimento, Milt Jackson, Roy Haynes and so many others, with a mere mention of their names, we can instantly "hear" their sound in our heads.

For me, as a young musician growing up, even though this abstract idea of having one's own "sound" was a beautiful ideal, the reality of working toward that goal has been, and continues to be, a life-long process. In my case, I intuitively knew from an early age (about 12) that improvisation was going to be the most important of musical languages for me, and that the study of it would be all-consuming.

I've always loved all kinds of music, from the country music that was everywhere around my hometown (Lee's Summit, Mo.) to the amazing variety of music that fed the rich mainstream cultural lifeblood of that era—rock & roll (especially the Beatles) and the soul music and rhythm & blues of the day as well as clas-

sical music. But it took exactly one listen to a Miles Davis record ("*Four*" & *More*, brought home by my older brother, Mike) to start me on the road that all serious improvisational musicians must journey: to understand the history, form and structure of this most beautiful and complex language.

From age 13 till 19, I was absolutely obsessed with trying to learn as much as I could about music: those Sonny Rollins trio records at the Village Vanguard; all the Miles records, but especially the quintet with Wayne Shorter; Gary Burton's great quartet of the late '60s; Monk; the profound advancements of the guitar's role in jazz made by Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell and Jim Hall; Bill Evans' voicings and touch; Herbie Hancock's incredible overall musicality; the depth, spirituality and innovation that is John Coltrane's music; Ornette Coleman's melodic beauty; and, of course, everything about Charlie Parker. I practiced constantly, between six and 12 hours a day. But where I really learned about music was on the bandstands of Kansas City with many of the best players in town (Gary Sivils, Paul Smith, Tommy Ruskin, Russ Long and many others). It was the picture of on-the-job training. All I wanted to do during those years was to play in bebop and post-bop settings, organ trios and the occasional freer jazz settings.

Yet, having grown up as a musician in one of the most exciting and turbulent periods in music history (the '60s and '70s), one of the biggest challenges for



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my (and subsequent) generation of musicians was to reconcile elements of that tradition with the particular realities of the world we lived in and the changing terrain that identified the musical fabric of our era. Ultimately, playing standards and blues forms alone, as much as I loved (and still love) doing it, just wasn't enough for me to feel like I was living up to the responsibility of what the deeper message of that tradition implied. As I really looked at all of my heroes, I realized that there was far more than simply an "idiom" at work here: These were improvising musicians literally manifesting into sound the ideas and feelings that not only evoked, but defined, their living culture.

I will always be working on ways of playing better in settings where there are clear markers and signposts left by the masters. But to focus exclusively on that ultimately felt like a way out from the more difficult and essential task of finding my own musical syntax based on the language that I learned from playing in those environments. I felt I needed to venture beyond the theoretical ideals that I may have gleaned from stepping into someone else's shoes through emulation or transcription, and explore things that were true to me, that were resonant to me and had meaning to the time I found myself living in. I made a commitment to focus on and bring into sound the ideas I heard in my head that might not have existed until my time, to try to represent in music the things that were particular to the spiritual,

cultural and technological potentials that seemed to be actively available to me in the shaping of my own personal aesthetic values.

In many ways, it was very hard to make that break. Having dedicated practically every waking hour for years trying to figure out how to understand and play bebop, when faced with the opportunity in 1973 to make my own first recording (in retrospect, what could have ended up being *Bright Size Life*), my first temptation was to make a record of all standards. It was the music that I had been playing the longest, that I knew the best and that I felt would give me the best chance to sound as good as I could. I wrestled with that for a long time: Did I really think I could offer something more to the world on those tunes than had already been played so many times before? Was it really my job to come up with yet another version of "Autumn Leaves," no



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matter how hip the arrangement or how much I loved trying to find different ways of improvising on that tune?

Around that same time (by then I was playing in Gary Burton's band), I realized there was a way I wanted to play and write that had almost nothing to do with what would be immediately obvious if I were playing or writing in more traditional, idiomatic ways. In

some ways, this was scary: There was almost no road map for this at all. As time went on, especially with the encouragement of Steve Swallow, I tried to write tunes and set up playing situations that would feature the kinds of harmonic and melodic zones that I was becoming interested in so that whatever emerging "voice" I had as an improviser might develop in those areas. I was very lucky to be around a few other musicians close to my own age, especially Jaco Pastorius, who had the same kinds of goals—to attempt to realize a new way of thinking about the sound and role of our instruments and the way we wanted to change things, to expand the role of what our instruments could be in improvised, yet structured, environments. I always felt lucky to strike a balance between playing with much older and more experienced musicians and playing with people of my own generation, like Jaco.

After making a few records and continued touring for several years with Gary Burton, I felt I was making a lot of progress toward refining many of the conceptual goals I had set. But when it was time to leave Gary, in 1977, as I looked around the musical landscape, I realized there were very few other settings for me to play the way I wanted to play. With the exception of a few great bands that used guitar but already had great players holding down the chairs (like Jack DeJohnette's New Directions with John Abercrombie), the few other guitar-playing gigs out there were either totally straightahead or "post-Mahavishnu"—neither of which seemed right for me to continue my research. I had no choice but to form my own band.

Lucky for me, I found in Lyle Mays a playing partner and composer whose interests paralleled my own in an uncanny way. In the 20 years we've been playing together, we (along with Steve Rodby and Paul Wertico) have tried to develop a group sound that reflects our shared interests and experiences as well as our near-constant travel. One of the greatest pleasures of our work as a band has been to grow together as we work out the sometimes thorny issues of how to reconcile the potentials of new instruments that have evolved over the course of our group's history with the standards that have been set by our favorite music.

As the years have passed, one of the most consistently notable and exciting things to me is the diversity at work within the world of improvising musicians. The range of musical approaches, instrumentations, philosophies and personalities that make up the fab-

ric of this community is a cause for celebration and wonder. It should serve as an example to the rest of the world in many ways. (If we could only get rid of, or at least reduce, some of the needless infighting that is so out of character with the music itself.) One of the primary beauties of this music is its inclusive nature, the way that its best and brightest practitioners have historically been excellent musicians capable of hearing deep inside a wide range of personal styles informed and inspired by the living culture of their time (or sometimes the rejection thereof) and finding a resonant voice through improvisation. It demands that each musician bring to the table a deep sense of history and discipline yet at the same time have the courage to leave all that behind in order to discover new angles and new views.

This, to me, is the tradition that I have always responded to most and used as a guide in the search for sound. Of course, having the basic fundamentals of what it takes to become a good player, a good musician and (in our dialect) a fluent improviser is a given. In order to do anything musically worthwhile, those elements must first be covered. But this tradition also demands at its highest level, and just as importantly, that the player bring his/her own set of conceptions and ideas to the bandstand that are based on his/her own particular cultural experiences and personal love for music. The best musicians I know, and the ones whom I admire and seem to listen to the most, are capable of hearing deep into the musical moment and responding quickly and with meaning to give that moment an immediacy that represents the spirit of the time they are living in. In many ways, this is literally about making the folk music of our time, even though it may be hard for us to see without the benefit of hindsight. Sometimes it seems there is a magical and indelible watermark time-stamped onto the music we make as improvisers that imparts to future listeners a rare and special message about who we are as a people. To me, that process of illumination and clarification through sound is what it means for a musician to have "a voice."

DB

EQUIPMENT

When playing electric guitar, Pat Metheny uses an Ibanez PM-100 (his signature model), a Roland VG-8 guitar system, an Axon MIDI controller, Roland GR-300 guitar synthesizer and a Gibson Les Paul fitted with a Transperformance automatic tuning system. For acoustic guitars, he uses instruments made by Canadian luthier Linda Manzer, including the 42-string pikasso guitar, a fretless classical guitar, a sitar guitar and a 12-string. For amplification, Metheny uses a DigiTech GSP 2101 preamp/processor, two Lexicon 95 digital delays through Crest 6001 and Ashly MOSFET 200 power amps into two Tiel cabinets, an Oakes 2x10 cabinet and an Acoustic 134 4x10 cabinet. He uses D'Addario strings (.011-gauge flatwounds).

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(see April 1995 for additional recordings)

IMAGINARY DAY—Warner Bros. 46791

"QUARTET"—Geffen 24978

WE LIVE HERE—Geffen 24729

THE ROAD TO YOU—Geffen 24601

with various others

THE SOUND OF SUMMER RUNNING—Verve 539 299

(Marc Johnson and Bill Frisell)

TALES FROM THE HUDSON—Impulse! 191 (Michael Brecker)

BEYOND THE MISSOURI SKY—Verve 537 130 (Charlie Haden)

WILDERNESS—Ark 21 54571 (Tony Williams)

THE SIGN OF FOUR—Knitting Factory Works 197 (Derek Bailey)

PURSUANCE—Warner Bros. 46209 (Kenny Garrett)

PARALLEL REALITIES—MCA 42313 (Jack DeJohnette

and Herbie Hancock)

TILL WE HAVE FACES—JMT 514000 (Gary Thomas)

JACO—I.A.I. 123846 (Jaco Pastorius)

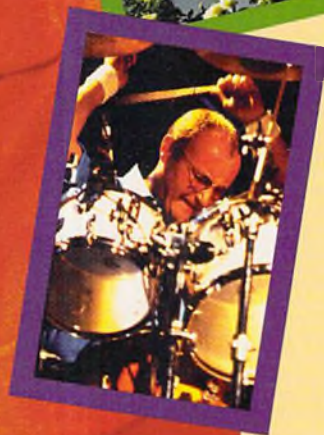
DREAMS SO REAL—ECM 21072 (Gary Burton)

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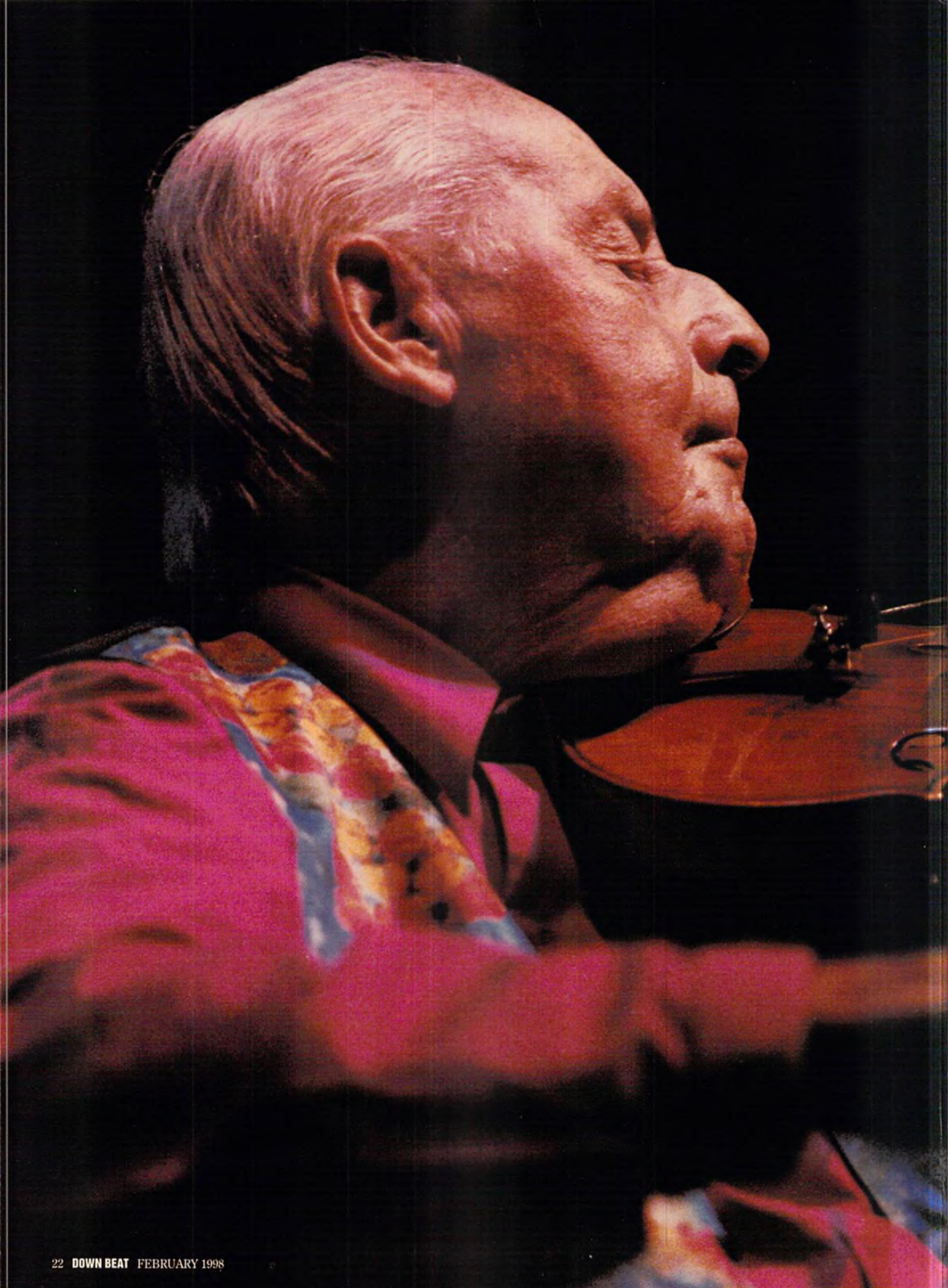


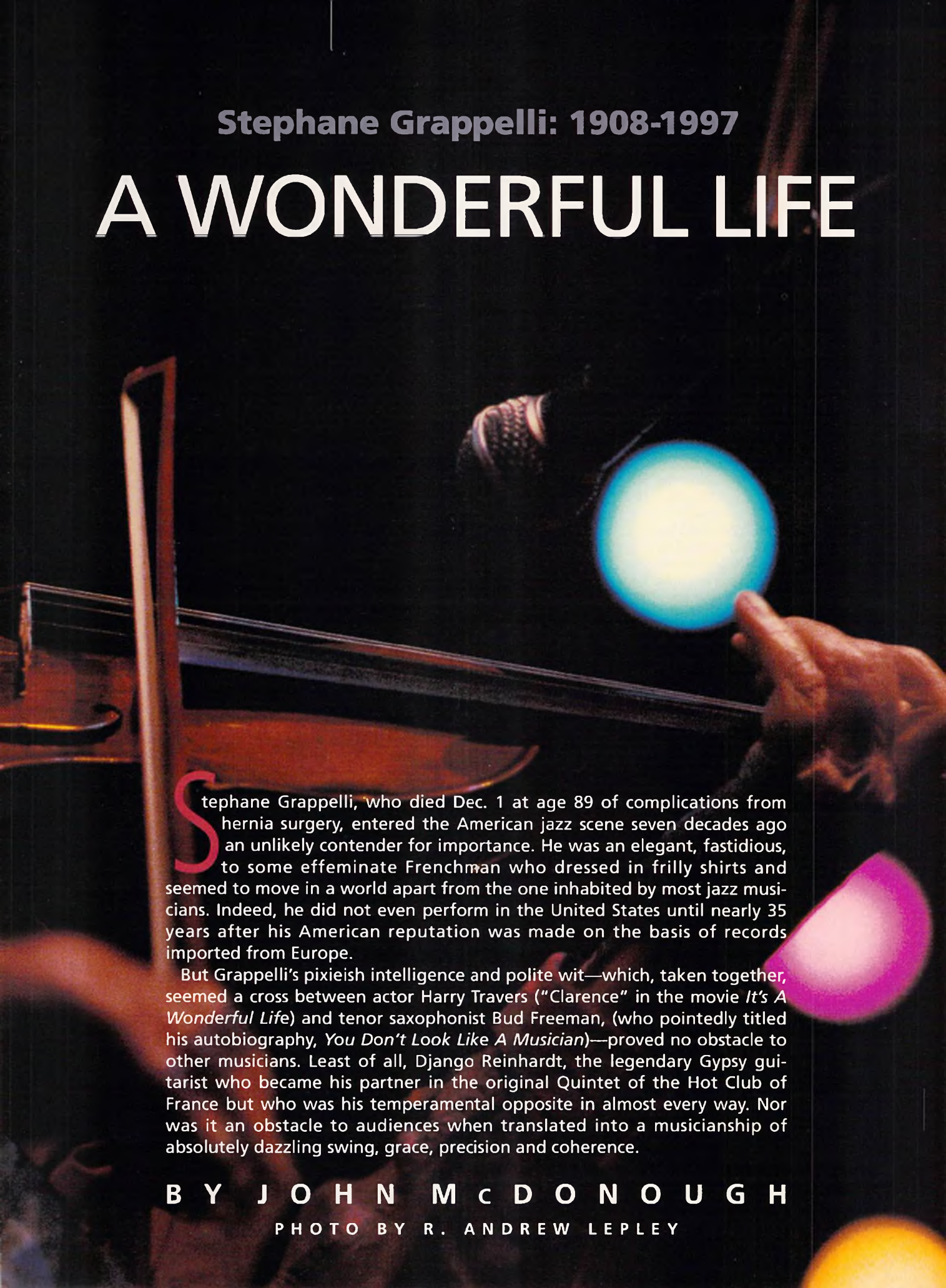
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Stephane Grappelli: 1908-1997

A WONDERFUL LIFE

Stephane Grappelli, who died Dec. 1 at age 89 of complications from hernia surgery, entered the American jazz scene seven decades ago as an unlikely contender for importance. He was an elegant, fastidious, to some effeminate Frenchman who dressed in frilly shirts and seemed to move in a world apart from the one inhabited by most jazz musicians. Indeed, he did not even perform in the United States until nearly 35 years after his American reputation was made on the basis of records imported from Europe.

But Grappelli's pixieish intelligence and polite wit—which, taken together, seemed a cross between actor Harry Travers (“Clarence” in the movie *It’s A Wonderful Life*) and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, (who pointedly titled his autobiography, *You Don’t Look Like A Musician*)—proved no obstacle to other musicians. Least of all, Django Reinhardt, the legendary Gypsy guitarist who became his partner in the original Quintet of the Hot Club of France but who was his temperamental opposite in almost every way. Nor was it an obstacle to audiences when translated into a musicianship of absolutely dazzling swing, grace, precision and coherence.

BY JOHN MCDONOUGH

PHOTO BY R. ANDREW LEPLEY

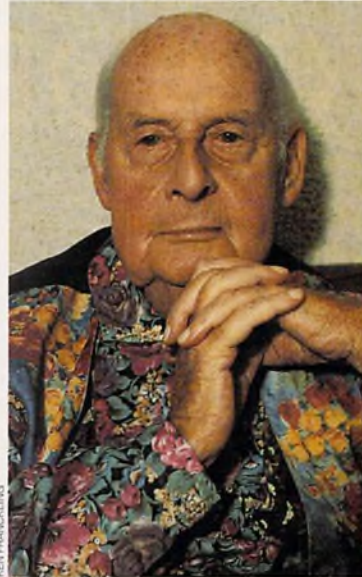
Though he never had the privilege of standard training, Grappelli managed to achieve a highly refined sound, intonation and attack that never ebbed. As an improviser, he had a somewhat shallow ear for imagining intricate harmonies, but a quick one for conjuring alert and responsive variations. He preferred to follow relatively simple and familiar chord changes, while focusing the main weight of his concentration on bringing rhythmic lilt, drive, surprise and even sting to his lines. He could invariably see a cliché coming from around a blind corner and always had an ingenious dodge up his sleeve. The violin, like the clarinet, has great potential for high velocity exactitude on top of intense emotion. Grappelli balanced them with ease.

As a violinist he came to transcend the niche he occupied in jazz, one that has not only been traditionally tiny but had, by the mid-'30s, already been defined and framed almost exclusively by Joe Venuti. But this transcendence didn't occur until after a period of relative obscurity for Grappelli in the '50s and '60s, when he completely dropped off Down Beat's Critics and Readers polls and rarely recorded. It was finally reversed in the '70s when the old Hot Club recordings were reissued in complete form and he began touring and recording more than ever. Long life served him well.

Grappelli was born Jan. 26, 1908, in Paris. It was his father, whom Grappelli would later refer affectionately to as the "first hippie I ever met," who sparked his interest in music. They would go to Sunday concerts where Grappelli became fascinated by the combinations and colors of the music. His father even managed to buy him a 3/4-size violin by his early teens. Grappelli practiced relentlessly and carefully watched other violinists perform, mostly street players. By 1922 he was playing the pit band of a Paris movie theater and perfecting his sight-reading skills.

By 1925 he had moved up to dance bands and was listening to a steady flow of jazz records from America, which included some of Joe Venuti's precedent-setting sides with guitarist Eddie Lang, who with Venuti founded the traditions

on their respective instruments. But even more important in terms of giving Grappelli a fundamental feel for the essence of jazz was Louis Armstrong. He also heard Bix Beiderbecke on "In A



"Start very well,
finish very well,
and in between
is nobody's
business."

Mist" and "For No Reason At All In C," and they inspired him to turn to the piano, which would provide him with the bulk of his work into the early '30s.

He resumed playing violin when he

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joined the Gregorians and was asked during a long engagement in Nice to work up some duets with classically trained violinist Michel Warlop. After a year he returned to Paris, where he doubled on saxophone in a club called the LaCroix de Sud. It was there, around 1933, that he met Django Reinhardt.

The music they made was a powerful bond. It had to be. It had to overcome vast personal differences in temperament, background and behavior. Reinhardt, who couldn't read, was irresponsible, reckless and often crude. Grappelli had an aristocratic air about him, always appropriate, highly cultivated and amusing—an unmitigated bourgeois. They were not the first odd couple in jazz, though, and they would not be the last. There would soon be Teddy Wilson/Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker and others.

In November, bassist Lou Viola joined the group, which by then included Django's brother Joseph, and the quartet played a concert that attracted the attention of Hughes Panassie, the influential French critic, producer and author. He urged the addition of a second guitar and arranged for the group's first recordings for Ultraphone a month later. Four titles were recorded ("Dinah," "Tiger Rag," "Lady Be Good" and "I Saw Stars") and established the group's sound and the reputations of Grappelli and Reinhardt forever. Soon, word started to move.

In December 1936, Down Beat ran a brief article on Grappelli and Reinhardt by Madeleine Gautier, evidently picked up from the French magazine Jazz Hot. Headlined "French Joe Venuti & 2 Fingered Gypsy Guitarist Play Brilliant Hot Music," she wrote that "the amazing little band is so full of swing! ... Grappelli is certainly one of the greatest hot musicians." She said that his style was warmer than Venuti's and his phrasing smoother and composed of longer melodic lines. But she was also struck by its hot buzz as well. "His solo on 'I Found A New Baby,'" she wrote, "is as hot as can be. His vibrato is most moving and he finds so perfect and so natural phrases that it shows him as one of the greatest jazz musicians."

In the same Down Beat issue, the first Grappelli records were reviewed by John Hammond, who pronounced him "a delightful and talented violinist from Paris who is a great artist in his own right." He correctly found his taste superior to that of other fiddle players, "and for this reason he is less highly thought of in jazz circles than the flashy and amazing Django Reinhardt."

Hammond's point was demonstrated when Down Beat's Paul Edward Miller reviewed the next batch of Hot Club records, "St. Louis Blues" and "Moonglow," in May 1937. He focused almost entirely on Reinhardt.

The country got its first chance to hear

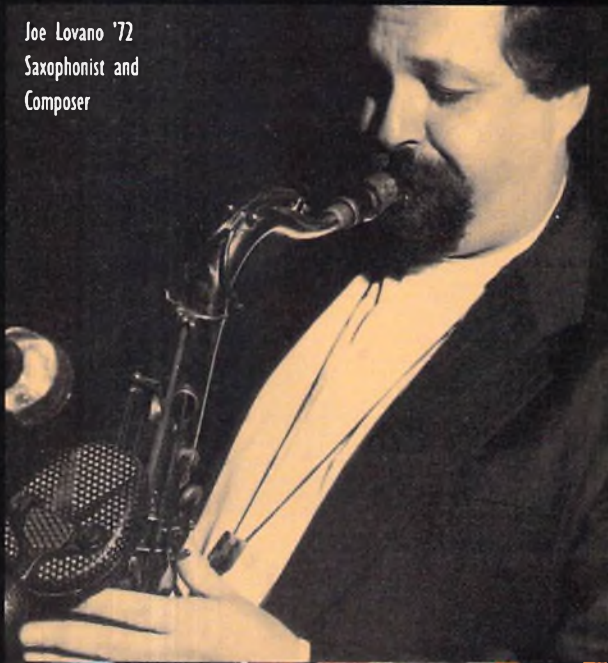
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Stéphane Grappelli in 1958

risk going back to Paris. He joined with a local London pianist named George Shearing, and sat out the war in relative safety. Reinhardt was not as wise and was in Paris when France collapsed the following June. As the Nazis marched in, thousands fled south to Bordeaux. For months, not even Grappelli knew his whereabouts. A Dec. 15, 1940, *Down Beat* story suggested he might be dead. But while jazz was officially verboten in the 1,000 Year Reich, lower-level authorities winked at it and he continued to perform and even record in occupied France until liberation in August 1944.

After the war, Grappelli remained in London, though there were various reunions and records with Reinhardt. But

when the guitarist died in 1953, Grappelli was working in Italy and unable to attend his funeral. With the partnership at an end, he continued to work and prosper in Europe, using standard rhythm sections and avoiding guitar combinations that might be compared to the quintet. But his reputation faded in America along with that of the violin. His name dropped out of *Down Beat* Critics and Readers polls for years. Norman Granz recorded him with Oscar Peterson and Stuff Smith in 1957, but the tapes remained unreleased until the '80s. With even Venuti in eclipse, the only violinist with consistent visibility was Ray Nance with Duke Ellington, who incidentally recorded with Grappelli in 1963 at his own expense but was unable to find a label to release the date until 13 years later.

One man who hadn't forgotten, however, was the redoubtable George Wein. In 1969, 35 years after the first quintet records, Grappelli finally came to America for the first time to play the Newport Jazz Festival. While it was not the big bang of sudden comeback, people started paying attention again and enormous recording opportunities began opening up. Later that year, Wein recorded him with Venuti in their only issued encounter—no losers in this faceoff. There would be a series of five elegant albums with classical prodigy Yehudi Menuhin, one of which was a collection of Fred Astaire songs with orchestrations by Nelson Riddle. And astute pro-

ducers matched him with other contemporaries before it was too late: Bill Coleman, Earl Hines, Stuff Smith and George Shearing in their first and only recordings together.

But it was the opportunities to record with young players that excited Grappelli even more. And the feeling was returned. Violinist Jean-Luc Ponty became a protege. There have been recordings with Gary Burton, Larry Coryell, Martin Taylor, Michel Petrucciani and Martial Solal. "You know," he told Lee Jeske in a wide-ranging 1981 *Down Beat* interview, "Martial Solal is not my kind of music. As a matter of fact, I'm so pleased that I did the record with him because he's such a genius that he made me play differently than I usually do, and that's what I'm looking for—that's the only amusement I've got in this life."

As recently as 1990, he recorded an unexpected album of duets with McCoy Tyner. Joe Pass joined him at the Tivoli Gardens in 1980. And Claude Bolling backed him in driving 1992 big band date. But some of the most intense Grappelli performances of the later period were reserved for a series of live 1979 recordings with David Grisman. They are inspired.

In 1983, *Down Beat* readers voted Grappelli to the *Down Beat* Hall of Fame.

The remarkable thing about the depth and utter persistence of the Grappelli discography is that between the 1934 quintet "Tiger Rag" and the one with Grisman 45 years later, there was no softening of technique or spirit. No need to play to certain strengths in order to camouflage certain weaknesses. It was all there, as it always had been. The energy still flowed from his fingers with the same urgency when he sat on the stage of Orchestra Hall just last year with guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli during what would be his final concert tour across America.

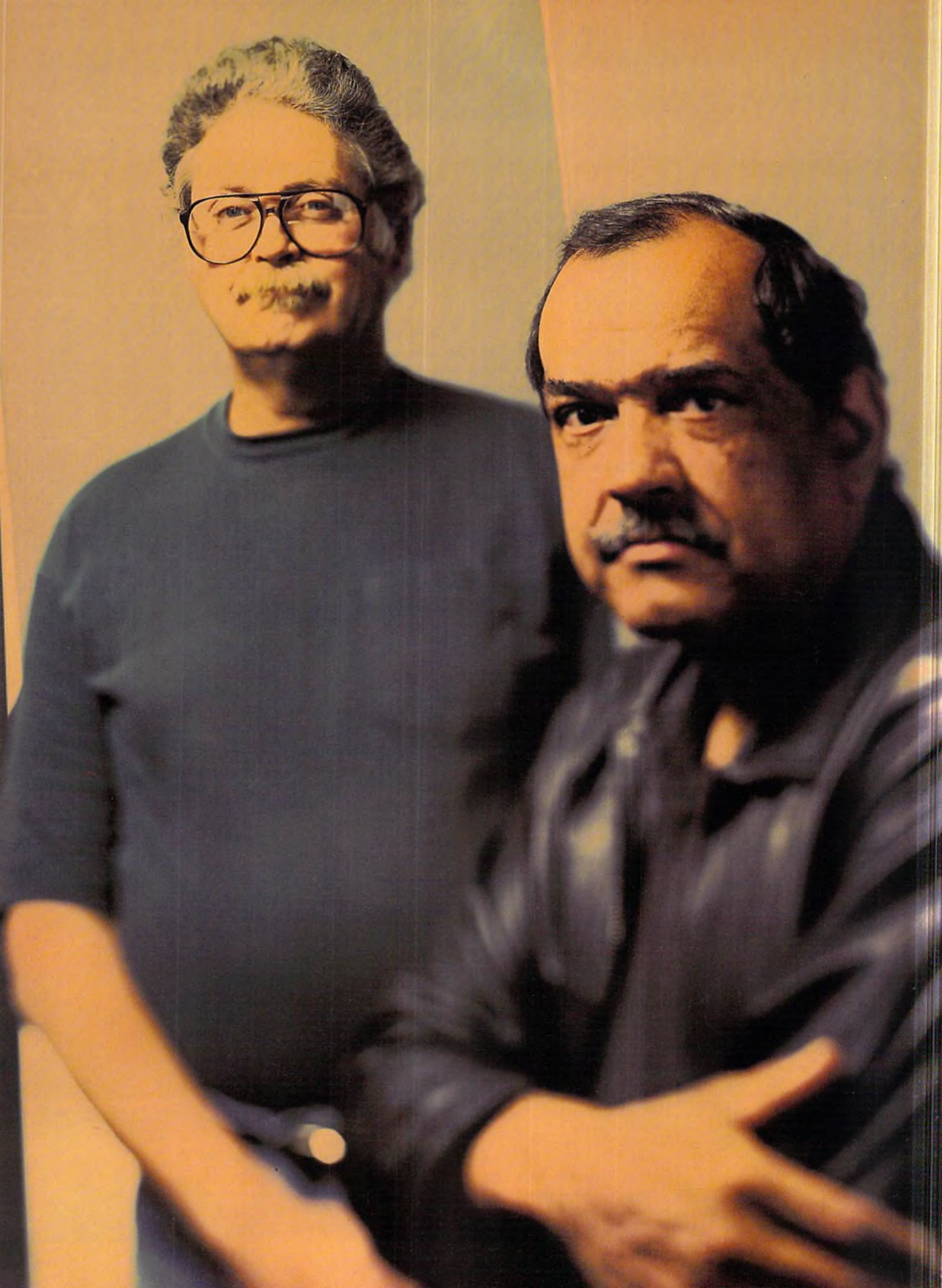
In 1981, he passed on to *Down Beat* some advice he once got from Maurice Chevalier: "Start very well, finish very well, and in between is nobody's business." **DB**

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

AT THE WINERY—Concord Jazz 4139
VINTAGE 1981—Concord Jazz 4169
STEPHANOVA—Concord Jazz 225
TIVOLI GARDENS—Fantasy/OJC 441
LIVE 1992—Verve 517 392

with various others

CELEBRATING GRAPPELLI—Honest/Linn 5058
 (Martin Taylor & the Spirit of Django Band)
REUNION—Honest 5022 (Martin Taylor)
FLAMINGO—Dreyfus 36580 (Michel Petrucciani)
ONE ON ONE—Milestone 9181 (with McCoy Tyner)
DJANGOLOGY—Blue Note 10-80659 (Django Reinhardt)
NUAGES—Arkadia Jazz 71431 (Django Reinhardt, Coleman Hawkins)
VIOLINS NO END—Pablo 2310-907 (Stuff Smith, Oscar Peterson)
JAZZ VIOLIN (Duke Ellington, Ray Nance, Svend Asmussen, Billy Strayhorn)—EPM 158002
MENUHIN & GRAPPELLI PLAY BERLIN, KERN, PORTER AND RODGERS & HART—Angel 69219 (Yehudi Menuhin)
MENUHIN & GRAPPELLI PLAY JEALOUSY AND OTHER GREAT STANDARDS—Angel 69220
LIVE—Warner Bros. 3550 (David Grisman)
SKOL—Fantasy/OJC 496 (Oscar Peterson)
FIRST CLASS—Milan 35633 (Claude Bolling Orchestra)



Tenors

Pete Christlieb & Ernie Watts

WEST

IT'S HARD TO RESIST THE RAW EXCITEMENT OF A TENOR SAX BATTLE.

Through the years, we've been treated to such delicious two-tenor toss-ups as Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt, Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. Each pair made memorable music that has lasted right up until today.

Larry Hathaway, a producer for Los Angeles-based JVC Records, thought it was time for another tenor clamor album, but decided to go one step further and make it a three-tenor conclave. In L.A., while there were plenty of solid players available, Hathaway's short list eventually included just Pete Christlieb, Ernie Watts and Rickey Woodard, three of the most rousing tenormen anywhere.

Having played and/or recorded collectively with Doc Severinsen's Tonight Show Orchestra, Ray Charles, Horace Silver, Bill Holman, Charlie Haden, Louie Bellson and Buddy Rich, these guys knew what heat was all about. The three made an ideal triad for *The Tenor Trio*, now out on the JVC affiliate JMI Records.

This is swinging stuff, with hardball arrangements by the participants of such time-tested classics as "Blues Up And Down," "The Eternal Triangle," "Love For Sale," "Groovin' High" and "Fried Bananas." Accompanying the frontline is the ace threesome of pianist Gerry Wiggins, bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Frank Capp.

On a recent Monday, L.A. native Christlieb and Watts, originally from Norfolk, Va., relaxed in a sideroom at the JVC offices (Woodard was out of town on the road). The pair talked about their musical lives (Pete also dropped in asides about his life as a builder of drag racers; last year he won the World Championship in the Nostalgia Eliminator class), the fun of teaming up as tenors, and more.

ZAN STEWART: *Since there weren't many tenor trios, which duos do you guys remember hearing on record?*

PETE CHRISTLIEB: I remember Lockjaw Davis and John Griffin.

ERNIE WATTS: Then Red Hollaway did one with Sonny Stitt.

PC: Then Sonny Stitt and everybody else. In those days it was like, "In this corner we have—ding ding!—Sonny Stitt, and then Sonny Rollins or Gene Ammons. Of course, Gene Ammons outweighed him by about 85 pounds, so it wasn't a fair fight, really. Ernie and I did an album with Jug once, with the Bobby Bryant band. We got to hang with him, and he was so cool. We had so much fun.

ZS: *So what was he like?*

PC: He was wonderful. This man had been through everything, mostly self-inflicted. He drank. I mean, I can drink with the best of them, but I could never hang with this cat. Remember, [Ernie], he had a quart? Every night we did two, three sessions. He was in a booth, and we would do the horns outside the booth, and right on the ledge would be a quart of J&B scotch. By the end of the three hours, it would be gone. And I know he would never let anybody get a hit off him, either. He wasn't sharing. I guess being a terrible junkie, that's the way they substitute. You gotta get really drunk to get the same feeling. A quart would kill me. Eventually, it ended up killing him. And Zoot and Al, that went on forever.

ZS: *Pete, did you ever see any of these cats live?*

PC: I never saw Zoot and Al together live. I worked with Al a couple times. It was just the thrill of a lifetime. When we were doing the *Tonight Show*, Louie Bellson was playing over at Dante's a lot. Remember that place? [laughs] You walk in that parking lot where it used to be, and the smell is still there. Zoot came in a couple times and sat in with the band. Zoot and Oscar Peterson on piano, and I got to play with them, talk with them.

ZS: *Ernie, how about you?*

EW: Well, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Frank Wess, he's a good friend. I saw John Coltrane live. Lockjaw was a good friend, a wonderful man.

By Zan Stewart

ZS: On the Tonight Show, did any charts feature you two guys?

EW: There was one we played a lot that John Bainbridge wrote. It was called "B-flat City." We did that quite often.

ZS: When you got together to make this record, did any of this past stuff influence how to put it together?

EW: What happened was, we got a list, and I picked three tunes I thought would work.

PC: [Producer] Larry [Hathaway] called and said, "We want to stay kind of happy and groove right along." I would have liked to see maybe three ballads in there. It would have been nice to break the mood. But Ernie submitted three, I submitted three, Rickey submitted three.

ZS: The record has a real big-band sound. Is that something you thought of as you were putting things together?

EW: That was something Larry mentioned in passing, that he wanted it to have that sort of feeling. Then, when you start using more than a couple of horns, when you start voicing the stuff, it works that way. It expands that way.

ZS: How did you go about voicing?

EW: I like fourth voicings. I went over to my friend Bruce Escovitz's house, and he's got a home studio. We put some stuff on tape so we could work with the bass line. We spent a lot of time moving sounds around to make sure the voicings were going to be right for three horns.

ZS: Pete, how did you work your stuff out?

PC: I don't know if I thought about it in those strict of terms. I've



Pete Christlieb (left) and Ernie Watts

ZS: Is it boring to you, Ernie?

EW: There's always ways to go at it. There's always ways to look at "I Got Rhythm." The only thing about all of it is the traditional tenor battle. I mean, there's absolutely no way that it's a battle. Because both of us play totally different. We're totally different people. Plus, we're 50-year-old men. We're done trying to impress people. We've got families, we have homes.

ZS: What do you think of Pete's playing?

EW: Well, he's my hero. Because when I came to L.A., I was playing alto with Buddy Rich. I was practicing tenor. I learned a lot about playing the saxophone from Pete. Just playing together and sitting together all those years, I learned about sound, playing the instrument in tune. Sitting next to Pete for 20 years, listening to [trumpeter] Conte Candoli, hearing people like that play, it's like going to school. So he's my bro.

PC: When Ernie and I met years ago, I had been working with Bill Green and Bobby Bryant at the old Marty's at

48th and Broadway near downtown Los Angeles. In those days, you did things a certain way. You'd play that tune, and you'd growl and you'd honk, and you'd just keep burning it in there until people started screaming and dancing on tables. You worked the crowd. Bobby Bryant was the master. I learned from him.

EW: A great blues player. We were very fortunate to get what we did with those guys. It was a very special time.

PC: There's a certain etiquette you learn when you play, too.

"There's absolutely no way that it's a battle. Because both of us play totally different. Plus, we're 50-year-old men. We're done trying to impress people." —Ernie Watts

played in bands all my life, so you get the voicing thing in your head. You've got the lead and what's under it, then you've got the root, the third, depending on where you're going. It's ever changing. I'm used to a saxophone section. If you have three guys, you can pretty well cover it. Another thing I would have in mind is sextet-type groups like Art Farmer's or Art Blakey's.

ZS: What do you two like about each other's playing?

PC: I don't know anybody who plays like Ernie Watts. All these years, I've known how he practiced all the time and he works out all these things. He put in the time. Me, I just kind of do what I can do while I'm working, playing. I'd like to be playing all the time, but there's so much going on in my life right now, I wish I had more time. But duty calls me to race cars, and it takes a lot of time to do that. People say, "Hell, what's he doing that for?" Well, it's in my blood! I've won a couple big races, and I've never forgotten it. I want to do that again before I'm too old. Then I'll go play some blues, ballads, not play fast tunes anymore.

EW: [laughing] Yeah, right!

PC: [to an imaginary bandleader] Take the edge off it, will ya? Why is it that wherever we go, they're like, "All right! Now the two tenor players are going to sword fight to the death! On 'I Got Rhythm'?" Well, I've played "I Got Rhythm" so fuckin' much, I can't find anything more to play on it! It's boring!

Sooner or later, somebody's going to say, "Do you know how many choruses you played, you motherfucker? You wore out the rhythm section before I ever got a chance. You do that again, and I'm going to take the battery out of your car!" Or if you're in other places, "I'll cut you a new ass." So learning how to be one of a group, if you want to play with people, one of the worst things you can do is get up there and try to learn a tune by just playing it over and over again and wearing the band out. You do your best, get out and listen to other people play with it, and the next time you play it you'll have a little more ammo to throw in there. When we do clinics, that's what we're trying to teach.

ZS: You were both big in the studios at one time. How has that changed, and what have you done to make it work another way?

EW: For me, I changed. I did a lot of studio work, a lot of sessions. And I got to a point where I wanted to get more selective about what I did. I wanted to play more, improvise more. I wanted to play the saxophone more. So I made a conscious decision in about 1986 to get back to playing more. I bought a house in Colorado, and I started doing more things on my own. The music business was changing and evolving, too. By the time the *Tonight Show* was over, I was pretty busy doing other things, so I made a sort of natural bridge that way. Now, I do my own things, I work with Charlie Haden's Quartet West, I do clinics and mas-

ter classes, and I travel regularly to Europe and the Far East. I turned that page for myself. And I do sessions now and then for Dave Grusin, or Michelle Colombier, or some kind of isolated film or record project.

ZS: *Pete, what about you?*

PC: I'd like to have his frequent-flyer miles! [laughs] I've occasionally been getting out as a single, including some travel to Europe, but not as much as I should. I do 15 to 20 gigs a year in Seattle because I've grown fond of those people and they haven't gotten tired of me yet! [laughs] They are wonderful people, and I worked with Bud Shank up there. It's one of my gigs. Every year I go up and do Bud Shank's workshop. In the studios I do the *Star Trek* series with Dennis McCarthy. It's one of the last ties I really do have in the studios. In the past, I did a couple movies with Clint Eastwood. And I do the occasional casual. So it's a couple hundred bucks here and a couple hundred bucks there. You put a whole bunch of that stuff together, and you pay the rent and hope you have a little left over to have a little fun. But, it's not a great life for financial security.

ZS: *But it does have its other rewards.*

EW: It's very simple. It's what we do. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Pete Christlieb plays Selmer tenor saxophones (either a Balanced Action or a Mark VI), with a hand-finished Berg Larsen mouthpiece ("130/0 SMS was the size stamped on it, but it's smaller, maybe 122-123") and Rico #2 Plasticover reeds. Ernie Watts plays a Julius Keilwerth tenor saxophone with "an old Otto Link mouthpiece that I custom-made years ago. It's very wide, about 160, which would make it a 13 in the Otto Link number series. I play a Fibercane soft reed on it, which they stopped making six or seven years ago, so I bought all I could find when I heard they were going out of business."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE TENOR TRIO—JMI 7501 (with Rickey Woodard)

Pete Christlieb

MOSAIC—Capri 74026 (co-led with Bob Cooper)

with Bill Holman

BRILLIANT CORNERS—JVC 2066

A VIEW FROM THE SIDE—JVC 2019

with Frank Capp Juggernaut

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM—Concord Jazz 4747

IN A HEFTY BAG—Concord Jazz 4655

with various others

AIR BELLSON—Concord Jazz 4742 (Louie Bellson)

ANTHONY WILSON—MAMA F1018

BASSET HOUND BLUES—d'Note 1021 (Jim Self)

Ernie Watts

THE LONG ROAD HOME—JVC 2059

UNITY—JVC 2046

REACHING UP—JVC 2031

AFOXÉ—CTI 79479

with Charlie Haden's Quartet West

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AND EVIL—Malpaso 2-46829

NOW IS THE HOUR—Verve 529 827

HAUNTED HEART—Verve 513 078

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A TWIST OF JOBIM—i.e. 538 893

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STUART BRANN

CHARLES BROWN

evening star

Charles Brown is eager to talk about his recent trip to Washington, D.C., where he was recognized for his lifelong contribution to American popular music by the National Endowment for the Arts. But he wasn't always so ecstatic over receiving the agency's prestigious Heritage Award. Reclining on his living room couch, the tall blues balladeer laughs about how cynical he was when he first heard he had been chosen.

"This is what I wanna tell ya," Brown says in his deep, sweet Texas drawl. "This fellow calls me and says, 'Charles, you have won \$10,000 from your peers who say that you are a living legend.' So I said, 'Oh, yeah, what do I have to buy?' I didn't believe him, so I told him to put everything in writing, then I hung up in his face. Well, this guy called his friend who lives here and asked him to come see me. But I wouldn't let him in. Finally the guy calls me back and says, 'Charles, this is no fluke. This is the truth. You have won.' And I asked why. He says, 'Because you're so creative. In all the years you've been playing, you've never changed your style. You've improved it.'"

It's true that Brown, who turned 75 on Sept. 13, has gotten better with age. After breaking into the music biz in the mid-'40s playing Hollywood lounges, he went on to pioneer the sophisticated West Coast urban-blues sound with his mellow, laid-back vocals. He became one of the seminal rhythm & blues artists playing "race" music (songs recorded for and sold to black audiences) in the late '40s/early '50s and helped

pave the way for rock & roll's market dominance. He largely disappeared from the scene for years, but made a comeback in the late 1980s that's put him back in the spotlight and in the company of a tremendously appreciative "family" of fellow blues and r&b musicians.

Brown celebrated his 75th birthday during last fall's San Francisco Jazz Festival in a concert at Oakland's Paramount Theater, just a few miles from his one-bedroom apartment in a Berkeley senior housing complex. A bevy of his friends—including roots popster Bonnie Raitt, r&b queen Ruth Brown, vocalist Jimmy Scott and fellow blues elder John Lee Hooker—showed up to play with the brandy-with-honey-voiced r&b pioneer.

One by one the marquee names joined Brown on stage. Hooker boogied, Raitt romanced, Ruth Brown teased and Scott, with his clipped syllables and delayed phrasing, nailed "I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good" while Brown backed him on piano.

Commenting on the upscale, tuxedoed affair, Scott quipped, "Charles, this sure ain't like those after-hours joints we used to play."

"You can have all those Grammys," shouted the spunky Raitt, who's won a few since her career resurrection in the '90s. "I'll take Charles Brown."

Ruth Brown (no relation) recalled when the two of them shared bills and were called the B's. She joked, "But I can remember my mama taking me to see Charles when I was little."

BY DAN OUELLETTE

"Now I don't have to beg for nothing."



Charles Brown (seated), backstage at his 75th birthday party with Bonnie Raitt (left), Jimmy Scott and Ruth Brown.

"I was a little star way before Bonnie was born," Charles said, referring to his early successes. Then, alluding to his career resuscitation, he added, "Ruth became my morning star and Bonnie my evening star."

Brown sprinkled the piano and ooh-cooed his way through such blues ballads as "Driftin' Blues," the tune he wrote when he was 12 years old and scored a number-one hit with in 1945. He also pranced across the keys with a feisty two-fisted attack on the r&b numbers, including the swinging "Money's Gettin' Cheaper" and a rousing rendition of "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby." Accompaniment was supplied by a big band that included tenor saxophonists Clifford Solomon (a longtime Brown band member) and Teddy Edwards (both appear on Brown's upcoming release *So Goes Love*, a big band/territory band collection of tunes, several of which were arranged by John Clayton and Gerald Wilson).

The star-laden concert turned out to be a well-deserved tribute to an artist who first caught the public's ear in the mid-'40s as a member of the r&b trio the Three Blazers, which became the top "race" band of the time. Brown began his solo career in 1948 and chalked up several hits—including "Trouble Blues," "Black Night" and "Merry Christmas, Baby"—that influenced numerous r&b and pop artists, including Ray Charles. "I

was riding the top of the wave back then," Brown recalls. "I had limos waiting for me, and I was one of the best-dressed entertainers in the business."

Brown's luck changed in the '50s. Some of his setbacks he blames on the vagaries of the music industry (record labels cheating him of his songwriting publishing royalties), others to the rise of rock & roll. But some of Brown's shortfalls were self-inflicted, most prominently his penchant for betting at the race track.

Brown continued touring, but the dates declined in prestige. In the '60s he performed in Kentucky gangster joints; in the '70s and early '80s he played in obscure piano bars as far away as Anchorage, Alaska. During this time, about the only place to hear Brown was on black radio stations at Christmas, when his classics "Merry Christmas, Baby" and "Please Come Home For Christmas" received regular airplay.

In the early '80s, Brown decided to retire from the music world. "I figured that at my age, I should give it up because most of the people who knew me and my music were dead and gone," he says. "Why should I try to push my music down the throats of a new generation of listeners who didn't know Charles Brown?"

In 1986, Brown was lured from inactive status long enough to play at Tramps in New York City for three months and even record the album *One More For The Road*. But by the time guitarist Danny Caron was enlisted to play with Brown for a Christmas show at Concepts Cultural Gallery in Oakland in 1987, the extended hiatus had taken its course. "Charles was very rusty on the piano, and his voice was hoarse and cracking," remembers Caron, now Brown's musical director. "He couldn't sing an entire song all the way through."

Caron helped Brown write new charts, insisting that the blues patriarch dust off his old hits like "Driftin' Blues" and "Black Night" instead of playing schmaltzy piano-bar tunes like "Just The Way You Are." With Caron's guidance, in early 1988 Brown got a gig at the Blue Note in New York (with David "Fathead" Newman on sax), which started a buzz that eventually led to the Vine Street Bar & Grill show in Hollywood that Bonnie Raitt attended. At the time poised to

undergo her own career revitalization with her *Nick Of Time* album, Raitt was so excited to see one of her heroes in the flesh that she invited the r&b legend to tour with her.

"I credit Bonnie for giving me the opportunity to come back to life again," says Brown. "Bonnie saw the good in me, and I'm thankful for that. She's done a lot of good things for me so that now I don't have to beg for nothing."

Meanwhile, Brown's recording career was revitalized with his rousing 1990 comeback album, *All My Life*. In 1994, Brown finally scored a major-label deal, recording with his top-notch band that includes Caron, Clifford Solomon and bassist Ruth Davies (his longtime drummer Gaylord Birch died last year).

Today Brown, smiling and talkative, basks in all the attention being given to him. It's obvious he's enjoying life. Not too long ago he wouldn't have been caught dead without one of his wigs. But these days his array of scruffy black rugs stays hidden away in a closet.

Even though his career has taken a successful turn in his septuagenarian years, Brown still has his hurdles. During the past two years he's had to come to grips with hypertension and poor circulation in his legs. Ulcers on his feet didn't help matters. "It felt like I had red hot ants crawling all over me," winces Brown. An operation on his leg a year ago hobbled him and forced him to spend time in a wheelchair, but Brown reports that he's on the mend. Even so, Brown says his fans worry that perhaps his performing days are numbered. He laughs. "Hey, I don't play with my feet, and my voice is still in great shape."

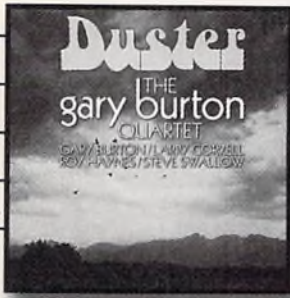
"A lot of great people don't live to be 75. But the Lord spared me to still be here." He pauses and with a twinkle in his eyes says, "They tell me that everything you get after 70 years is grace." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Charles Brown has no strong piano preferences, but he likes newer Yamahas and Steinways "that have good action."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

SO GOES LOVE—Verve (catalog number to come)
THESE BLUES—Verve 523 022
ALL MY LIFE—Bullseye Blues 9501
ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD—Alligator 4771
THE COMPLETE ALLADIN RECORDINGS OF CHARLES BROWN—Mosaic 5-153
BOSS OF THE BLUES—Mainstream 53624
DRIFTING AND DREAMING—Ace 589
 (with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers)
LEGEND!—Oil-Beat 22112
HONEY DRIPPER—Verve 529 848
COOL CHRISTMAS BLUES—Bullseye Blues 9561
JUST A LUCKY SO AND SO—Bullseye Blues 9521
SOMEONE TO LOVE—Bullseye Blues 9514



Gary Burton Quartet

Duster

Koch Jazz 3-7846

★★★★½

The late '60s saw vibist Gary Burton's true emergence as a leader in the wake of significant stints with George Shearing and Stan Getz. Joining him for *Duster*, from 1967, was the veteran Roy Haynes on drums (replacing Bob Moses). True to form, Haynes displays his incredible adaptability, sensitivity and originality. Burton's find in electric guitarist Larry Coryell was perhaps the jewel in the vibist's crown. Coryell plays with warmth, a great textural sound, adding his youthful spunk next to more trad leanings. Finally, for anyone unfamiliar with Steve Swallow the acoustic bassist, *Duster* is a marvelous place to start. For one, check out his playful, swinging solo on Mike Gibbs' "Ballet."

Duster offers something for everyone without sounding like a recital. It reflects that in-between period in jazz where elements of rock, free and even hints of country are mixed genuinely and freely against the tapestry of a more mainstream jazz. The tunes flow one after another in a genuine way, suggesting an inherent wisdom to the song selection and order. The opener, "Ballet," is an infectious, uptempo blues that sets the stage for "Sweet Rain," Gibbs' mournful, eloquent ballad that features memorable solos from Burton and Coryell. Swallow's "Portsmouth Figurations" is one of two uptempo swingers. Short though it is, it's the occasion for Haynes to strut his stuff here. Following the bassist's hoedown, "General Mojo's Well Laid Plan," a modest little ditty driven by the composer's single lines and framing another nice Swallow solo, we get what comes off as the album's centerpiece, the slightly frenetic and "free" "One, Two, 1-2-3-4." While it maintains a swing pulse of sorts, it also allows composers Coryell and Burton to roam in and out of the song's harmonic structure at will. Both solo effectively, not as dilettantes "playing around" with the "New Thing" (referring to the then-current terminology for music played by free-jazzers).

Carla Bley's "Sing Me Softly Of The Blues" is the other outstanding ballad here. Coming right after "One, Two," it shows once again how these guys could go from nervous energy to lilt-

ing beauty and still be the same band. *Duster's* "Sweet Rain" and "Sing Me Softly" serve as definitive versions of these two jazz staples. "Liturgy" and "Response" continue the contrast of styles, and once again showcase Burton's knack for song selection and pacing. Mention should also be made of the leader's talent as a formidable, dextrous double-mallet vibist, chock full of ideas, quick on his feet.

Despite the album's skimpy length, there is a completeness to *Duster*, from start to finish, suggesting anything more might be too much.

—John Ephland

Duster—Ballet; Sweet Rain, Portsmouth Figurations; General Mojo's Well Laid Plan; One, Two, 1-2-3-4; Sing Me Softly Of The Blues; Liturgy; Response. (33:22)

Personnel—Burton, vibes; Larry Coryell, guitar; Steve Swallow, acoustic bass; Roy Haynes, drums.



Kansas City Band

KC After Dark

Verve 537 322

★★★★★

Verve offers a second helping of the sessions that in '96 gave us the soundtrack to Robert Altman's movie *Kansas City*. I'll tell you a secret about those of us who peddle

our opinions for a few pieces of silver: A lot of music drops into our mailboxes, and most of it, even the stuff we make nice to in print, ends up resting in peace on our shelves, rarely to be heard again. The longer we're at it, it seems, the less of it makes it into our private inner sanctum of recreational listening. I mention this because after writing about *Kansas City* in this column previously (see "CD Reviews" Sept. '96), I've found myself wallowing in its heated pleasures longer than I would have imagined. That's about the highest test any music can pass before a jaded journalist.

What it did then, and does again, is to take a group of top young players and turn them into actors. If that seems a false artistic premise, you're entitled to that prejudice. But hearing is believing. Altman not only believes the '30s to be jazz's golden age. He evidently convinced his young cast of it, too, then let them tear into a pre-modern repertoire and sensibility with abandon and passion. The result comes as close as anything in memory to the frantic Savoy Sultans LP or the kick delivered by the 1957 reunion LP of Fletcher Henderson sidemen. Plain and simple, this is one terrific CD.

The music was recorded as the cameras rolled on the set. The scene is a jam session, circa 1934, complete with club ambiance and crowd dynamics that rise and fall with the solo rabble-raising. If you've ever heard a real jam session (as opposed to a club or concert performance that pretends to be one), you know it's inherently sloppy. It flows unpredictably between boldness and doubt. It snaps into register one minute, melts the next. At its best, it's an inspired mess.

Either by design or happenstance, they got it right here, both parts. "Cherokee" has solos that explode with energy. Nicholas Payton's imperial sound and punchy phrasing are true to both himself and the period. And James Carter riles the crowd in the great Illinois Jacquet tradition. Yet, it has no ending. It simply stops, almost peters out, as if everyone

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
GARY BURTON <i>Duster</i>		★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
KANSAS CITY BAND <i>KC After Dark</i>		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½
VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA <i>Lickety Split</i>		★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
KEN MCINTYRE <i>Complete United Artists Sessions</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½

suddenly lost interest in the last tune. The first "Indiana," after a fabulous entry by Carter, ends with a limp ensemble led by Don Byron, whose playing is a catalogue of quirks and ticks. But in his small role here, he fits in perfectly.

Cyrus Chestnut and Geri Allen romp solo through "Piano Boogie" until the horns start probing for a riff in the fifth chorus. Then the full rhythm section bursts in with a spine-tingling jolt and the build starts. But it's over by seven choruses, with the real climax still a couple of choruses beyond the horizon.

All those "problems" would be repaired, camouflaged or scrapped on any other album. But this is a jam session, convincing at every turn, warts and all. The ensemble is held together with spit and sealing wax but is magnificently virile and lyrical. We get a blood-thirsty tenor encounter between Joshua Redman and Carter, both in ferocious form, on "Prince Of Wails" (a 1929 twist on England's then-Prince of Wales) and "Tickle Toe," some warm and savory alto from David "Fathead" Newman on "St. Louis Blues" and a second "Indiana," and a gorgeous rhythm section with rhythm guitar that barrels through it all like a locomotive.

—John McDonough

KC After Dark—*St. Louis Blues; Cherokee; Indiana; Harvard Blues; Prince Of Wails; Froggy Bottom; Piano Boogie; King Porter Stomp; Tickle Toe; Indiana.* (47:18)
Personnel—*Olu Dara, Nicholas Payton, James Zolar, trumpet; Curtis Fowlkes, Clark Clayton, trombones; Don Byron, clarinet; Byron, James Carter, Jesse Davis, Craig Handy, David "Fathead" Newman, Joshua Redman, saxophones; Geri Allen, Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Russell Malone, Mark Whitfield, guitar; Ron Carter, Tyrone Clark, Christian McBride, bass; Victor Lewis, drums; Kevin Mahogany, vocal (4).*



Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

Lickety Split: The Music Of Jim McNeely
 New World 80534

★★★★

Those who have recently spent a Monday night at the Village Vanguard, or caught one of Carnegie Hall's inventive repertory showcases, know Jim McNeely's imagination is boundless. I recall a program where the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band galloped through his rewrite of "Rockin' In Rhythm." The results were florid and kaleidoscopic enough to border on psychedelia, prompting Ellington's gem to

display many previously hidden traits. Equally engrossing, the music on *Lickety Split* teems with myriad attitudes. As it unfolds, it details the synchronicity between McNeely's arranging talent and his prowess as a composer.

An alumnus of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, McNeely has been providing the VJO's Monday night sessions with original charts for years. This ongoing relationship has a great payoff here: The band's grasp of the material is thorough. That's crucial, because the pianist's pieces are intricate. Turns come quickly, emotions shift restlessly; in lesser hands, some of these works might seem a mere smorgasbord of fragmented passages. Yet the first thing that impresses about the album is the ensemble's composure. Whether they're stomp-

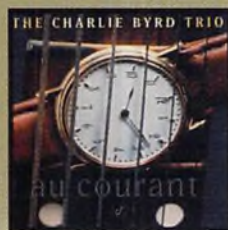
ing through a storm of counterlines, or breathing in place for a few bars, there's an equilibrium at work. Many of McNeely's tunes are peppered with elaborate calculations, but a prevailing sense of balance gives the most contrived passages a natural flow that turns the black-and-white notes into full-blooded art.

When I say contrived, I don't mean phony. Well-considered is more like it. Maybe even obsessive. At some points, that becomes a detriment. Each piece has a point or two of informational overload. A bit more breathing room, as well as some melodic clarification, would enhance the motion of the entire program. The jousting rise-and-fall lines between the reeds and brass on the opening "Extra Credit" hint of what we're in for. Rhythms vary, asking ques-

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4779-2

Au Courant

The jazz world's legendary acoustic guitarist, Charlie Byrd, is back with his first new solo recording in over two years! Joined by long-time side mates **Joe Byrd** on bass and **Chuck Redd** on vibraphone, Charlie and company update a handful of classic jazz standards with a perfect blend of artistry and musicianship. "While *Au Courant* certainly reflects the current state of one of the instrument's most distinguished figures, it also exhibits a quality shared by all great music - it's timeless." — Jim Ferguson

Allen Farnham

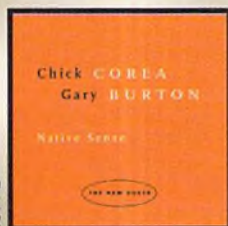


4789-2

Meets the RIAS Big Band

Standout pianist and arranger Allen Farnham teams up with one of the top contemporary big bands in Europe the **RIAS** (Radio In America Sector) **Big Band** applying the classical concerto grosso concept (small group within the orchestra) to the jazz big band setting. Farnham's creative and daring arrangements highlight the interplay between his all-star quintet - featuring saxophonist **Chris Potter** and harmonica virtuoso **Hendrik Meurkens** - and the RIAS Big Band.

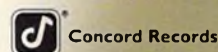
Chick Corea/Gary Burton



9014-2

Native Sense - The New Duets

Revered as one of the jazz world's most enduring duos, master musicians Chick Corea and Gary Burton celebrate their 25-year collaboration with their long-anticipated new studio recording *Native Sense* — *The New Duets* - their first recorded collaboration since 1983 - featuring eleven inspired additions to their continually evolving duet repertoire.



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tions and getting unexpected answers. Later, on the title cut, chunks of the ensemble are momentarily sequestered, then startlingly dropped back into the action. Even valentines to Thad and Mel contain provocative moves and abstract voicings. McNeely may be pushing 50, but this is a thick music full of precociousness as well as notes.

It's full of cunning, too. Attempting to forward a bit of wistfulness during "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning" (the disc's only non-original), the band conjures hazy strains of "Old Folks" and "Old Kentucky Home" without concretely stating their themes. McNeely knows how to squeeze emotional significance out of a chart. That skill, plus scads of rousing soloists and the elan of intragroup rapport, make *Lickety*

Split eloquent enough to be considered profound. —Jim Macnie

Lickety Split—*Extra Credit; Thad; In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning; Lickety Split; Absolution; Sticks; Reflection; Mel.* (69:46)

Personnel—Earl Gardner, Joe Mosello, Glenn Drewes, Scott Wendholt, trumpet; John Mosca, Ed Neumeister, trombone; Douglas Purviance, Earl McIntyre, bass trombone; Dick Oatts, Billy Drewes, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Rich Perry, Ralph LaLama, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Jim McNeely, piano; John Riley, bass; Dennis Irvin, bass; John Riley, drums.



Ken McIntyre

The Complete United Artists Sessions

Blue Note 8 57200

★★★★

A delightful, if rather surprising, choice for Blue Note to reissue, *The Complete United Artists Sessions* culls all the material Ken McIntyre recorded during his short stint with UA. The compilation comes as a surprise because, while he's remained marginally on the scene, playing with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and recording sporadically for SteepleChase, McIntyre has been sequestered away in academia for much of his career and isn't especially well-known to a broader audience.

When he first appeared in the early '60s, McIntyre had the earmarks of an Eric Dolphy protégé: a multiple-reed player with alto sax as his main ax, a melodist with puckered tone and an inclination toward disjunct lines, and an outward-bound vanguardist with an innate connection to the bop lineage. The fact that McIntyre's 1960 debut, *Looking Ahead* (Prestige/New Jazz), had Dolphy on it no doubt helped establish the connection. But McIntyre was only three years younger than his counterpart, and for anyone comparing closely, it was clear that he was his own man.

The United Artists recordings, made in '62 and '63, confirm this impression. McIntyre's extended battery of instruments not only features alto and flute, like Dolphy's did, but it expands to include the rarer double-reeds. Buoyant, at times trilling giddily or soaring into the upper register, his playing is always thoughtfully organized, rarely woolly or raging; he's even capable of making the obstinate oboe sing and swing, as he does on his own composition "Sendai." One need only listen to his searching, rhythmically charged solo on Kurt Weill's "Speak Low" to hear his individual take

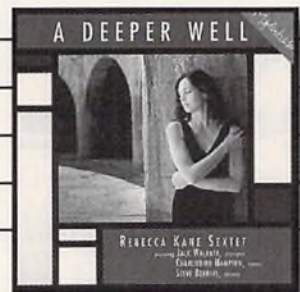
on the nascent "New Thing" (interesting to consider this sound-conscious solo in light of Roscoe Mitchell's music of six years later). That track is one of eight pieces released here that languished for more than three decades in UA's warehouses; the other seven are McIntyre originals, and they're testament to a fascinating, unacknowledged writer.

Along with the generous unreleased material, the compilation contains six small-group cuts that were issued as *Year Of The Iron Sheep*, a long-out-of-print (now quite valuable) LP. The solid, hard-bopping rhythm sections include Ron Carter on bass, and the undeservedly forgotten trombonist John Mancebo Lewis joins McIntyre out front on six tracks. Pianist Jaki Byard, who graces all of the quartets, is an ideal partner for McIntyre—check out the densely voiced, funky but dissonant piano solo on "Say What." "Way, Way Out, the other record generated in these sessions, has been one of my favorite rare-vinyl oddities for years. Designed to show off the windman's composing skills, it sports some extremely unusual string arrangements. Clunky and somewhat naive-seeming, they're also intriguingly unorthodox: "Miss Ann," "Reflections" and "Tip Top" treat the string orchestra more like a single voice in a jazz group than as a backdrop or couch for the band, while "Permanently" has the strings swinging (or trying to swing) three-note chunks behind McIntyre's roving alto.

This set offers yet another perspective on the key, transitional period of the early '60s. In the process, it suggests that the most interesting names in jazz are not always the most oft repeated. —John Corbett

The Complete United Artists Sessions—*Miss Ann; Lois Marie; Chittlin's And Cavyah; Permanently; Tip Top; Kaijée; Reflections; Say What; 96.5; Arisin'; Laura; Speak Low; Cosmos; Sendai; Undulation; Turbospacey; Bootsie; New Time; Naomi; Someday; Mercedes.* (69:17/66:02)

Personnel—McIntyre, alto saxophone, oboe, flute; John Mancebo Lewis, trombone (15-19, 21); Jaki Byard (8-14), Ed Stoute (15-21), piano; Bob Cunningham (1-7), Ron Carter (8-14), Ahmad Abdul-Malik (15-21), bass; Edgar Bateman (1-7), Ben Riley (8-12), Louis Hayes (12, 14), Warren Smith (15-21), drums; 12 unidentified string players, led by violinist Selwart Clark (1-7).



Rebecca Kane

A Deeper Well Mapleshade 4932

★★★½

Pianist Rebecca Kane makes her recording debut with *A Deeper Well*. On her first time out, she displays a light touch on the key-

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board and a consistent, if understated, blues feeling.

Much of the CD is given to her original compositions, which feature some interesting shifts in mood and tempo as well as a penchant for slowly unfolding melodies. It's good to hear Jack Walrath on trumpet, and Kane's style-changing "Just For Fun" puts him through his paces, requiring him to downshift from his soaring, straightahead solo into a slow blues. On the same track, Kane comps with a ringing, gospel quality behind Charliebird Hampton's blues-inflected alto solo, and contributes her own bright, rippling solo. Bassist Steve Novosel establishes the solid groove underlying "A Deeper Well," and he's particularly strong on "Summertime," where he hints at "A Night In Tunisia."

There's considerable stylistic diversity in the tunes selected for this CD, including originals ranging from the Latin rhythms of "No Habla Ingles Aqui" to the quirky bounce of the Monk-like "Just For Fun." "Outside Michael's Window" creates a quiet, introspective mood, enhanced by Kane's bluesy piano lines, and "One Equals One Thousand" phases from its darkly brooding introduction into an exotic, dancing rhythm emphasizing the percussion section of Steve Berrios and Gila Dobrecki.

—Jon Andrews

A Deeper Well—*Just For Fun; Outside Michael's Window; No Habla Ingles Aqui; I'm Old Fashioned; A Deeper Well; Summertime; Rome In A Day; New Life; One Equals One Thousand.* (63:24)

Personnel—Kane, piano; Jack Walrath, trumpet; Charliebird Hampton, saxophones, flute; Steve Novosel, bass; Steve Berrios, drums; Gila Dobrecki, percussion.



Jim Hall Panorama Telarc 83408

★★★★

Hall's association with Telarc the past few years has been a fruitful one, yielding *Dedications & Inspirations*, *Dialogues*, *Textures* and now *Panorama*. The acclaimed guitarist, recently turned 67, continues to follow an implacable musical logic and bring fresh insight to his careful appraisals of songs, a number self-penned these days, including eight of nine on *Panorama*.

Recorded at the Village Vanguard in late '96, the new album takes one or two songs from each of five nights Hall and his rhythm section spent performing with a different special guest. The main man is among equals, more or less, and these invitees—Geoff Keezer, Kenny

Barron, Art Farmer, Slide Hampton and Greg Osby—show their stuff without upstaging him. No one showboats, either. The music isn't just about all-stars turning up to crank out a solo; no sir, there's strong rapport between new or old friends here, a shared joy in listening hard to each other.

Hall wrote the breezily melodic "Pan-O-Rama" for steel drum, and the sonic properties of his amped guitar simulate those of the metal percussion instrument; the song also features one of the best pianists to emerge in the '90s, Keezer, who jacks up the level of drama with probing ideas and vitality to spare. Hall and Keezer combine, too, on "Here Comes Jane," displaying phrases of clarity and immediacy. The guitarist's dialogue with Barron, "Something To Wish For," strikes low sparks of a reflective sort, and their collaboration on "The Answer Is Yes," a composition by Hall's wife, Jane, finds them swinging with finesse and glad-some spirit.

If the album consisted wholly of Hall and the aforementioned pianists, that'd be enough. But there's more to savor. Hampton's rich trombone glides through "Entre Nous," with the guitar a lyrical textural complement, and, on "No You Don't" the 'bone does its part in conjuring a finger-snappin' "crime jazz"-like mood. Flugelhorn player Farmer knows what phrases to use when warming up "Little Blues," though Hall and bassist Scott Colley have more to say than Farmer in their feature spots. Osby's alto expresses a special sort of jubilation when his lines spew unusual harmonies over the blues landscape of "Furnished Flats," and, on

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"Painted Pig," his horn teams up with Hall's guitar to create an unsettling tension. It's to Hall's credit that his encounters with the superb young saxophonist crackle with such inquisitiveness.

Often albums that are stitched together from several nights of live recording leave much to be desired, no more so when guest musicians are paraded forth, but *Panorama* is the welcome exception. —Frank-John Hadley

Panorama—Pan-O-Rama; *Little Blues; The Answer Is Yes; Entre Nous; Furnished Flats; Something To Watch For; No You Don't!; Painted Pig; Here Comes Jane.* (65:17)

Personnel—Hall, guitar; Geoff Keezer (1, 9), Kenny Barron (3, 6), piano; Art Farmer, flugelhorn (2); Slide Hampton, trombone (4,7); Greg Osby, alto saxophone (5, 8); Scott Colley, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.



Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars Dizzy's 80th Birthday Party!

Shanachie 5040

★★★★½

Paquito D'Rivera & The United Nation Orchestra

Live At Manchester
Craftsmen's Guild
Jazz MCG 1003

★★★

These two albums share a Dizzy Gillespie connection. One presents an ensemble dominated by Gillespie alumni, and a program with 11 pieces composed by Gillespie and two written for him. The other features the United Nation Orchestra, the last big band organized by Gillespie. In 1988, he brought together musicians from the Americas and the Caribbean to express his vision of the oneness of music's universal language. Paquito D'Rivera was chosen by Gillespie to be his successor as the band's musical director.

These two albums celebrate the legacy of one of America's most important artists, and they also provide opportunities to examine two interesting ancillary issues: the "ghost band" genre, and the relationship between content and sonic quality in recorded music.

It is popular in some quarters to dismiss

ghost bands—ensembles pledged to carry on in the footsteps of their late great leaders—as groups that look backward rather than breaking new ground. But there is no nostalgia in the way Jon Faddis kicks off *Dizzy's 80th Birthday Party!* by lashing "Salt Peanuts" with the lethal whip of his horn. Incited by Ignacio Berroa's cymbals, Faddis' trumpet, Antonio Hart's alto saxophone and Cyrus Chestnut's piano tattoo, "Salt Peanuts" hollers and yelps.

Every one of the 13 tunes is fired off with a passionate urgency that sounds barely contained. "A Night In Tunisia" teeters, gathers and races away, Faddis spitting white flames. The three drummers pound "Manteca" to a frenzy. Even pretty, medium-tempo pieces like "Con Alma" sound like they are being thrust ever-forward by powerful cravings to communicate. And Faddis makes you laugh out loud. He takes impossible risks and wins every time, with shattering 16th notes from the top of the world and maniacal, flawless smears.

80th Birthday Party! would be a very different album without the superb sonic quality made possible by engineer Paul Wickliffe. When Faddis' trumpet knives into the air of your listening room and John Lee's electric bass slams your chest, and every collision within Ignacio Berroa's drum kit is rendered in precisely placed detail, you are not fretting about whether ghost bands are a viable format.

There are no "ghost band issues" surrounding *Live At Manchester Craftsmen's Guild*. Under Paquito D'Rivera's leadership, the United Nation Orchestra has continued evolving since Dizzy Gillespie's death in 1993. The current book, which comes mostly from members of the band and other contemporary Latin American composers, integrates the modern jazz idiom with a huge span of Latin and Caribbean rhythmic influences, from the Puerto Rican bomba to the Argentinean tango and the Uruguayan condoble. There are hot players in the band, like D'Rivera himself and Scott Robinson and Fareed Haque and Conrad Herwig.

It sounds fun, and often it is—like D'Rivera's tribute to Mario Bauza, "Memories," where Diego Urcola on trumpet and the composer on alto and soprano saxophones pour their hearts out over Cuba's national dance rhythm, danzon. Or like Marshall McDonald's wild, rolling tenor saxophone ride through "A Night In Tunisia" (the only Dizzy piece here).

The problem with this album is that the pale, vague audio quality makes it impossible to get fully involved in the music. Granted, recording large jazz ensembles in a live setting is a daunting engineering challenge. But there is no excuse for dynamic range this limited, and for this lack of discrimination among instruments. Even the audience sounds like it is in the hall next door.

In recorded music, sonic quality and esthetic content are never entirely separable. Does Ignacio Berroa's drumming possess a visceral edge that is absent from Mark Walker's, or is it just that we can hear him so much better? Does Jon Faddis' trumpet voice contain whole worlds of timbral complexity missing from Diego Urcola's? If these two recordings were the only evidence, we would never know for sure. Perhaps an answer is found in the solos of Andres Boiarsky, the only player to appear on both albums. On *Live At MCG* he is a generic tenor saxophone; on *80th Birthday Party*, he is all blood and guts. —Thomas Conrad

Dizzy's 80th Birthday Party!—Salt Peanuts; Fiesta Mojo; Birks' Works; A Night In Tunisia; Brother K; Poor Joe; Manteca; Con Alma; Dizzy Atmosphere; Oop-Pop-Pa-Da; And Then She Stopped; Blues From Gillespiana; Bebop. (71:49)

Personnel—Jon Faddis, trumpet, vocals; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone (1, 4, 8, 9); Andres Boiarsky, tenor saxophone, vocals (2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13); Cyrus Chestnut, piano, vocals; John Lee, electric bass, vocals; Ignacio Berroa, drums, vocals; Duduka Da Fonesca, percussion; Gabriel Machado, congas.

Live At Manchester Craftsmen's Guild—Tocache; King Of Cancun; Puerto Padre; Recife's Blues; Memories; Andalucia Medley; Quasi Modal; Groove For Diz; Despojo; A Night In Tunisia. (68:57)

Personnel—D'Rivera, musical director, alto and soprano saxophones, clarinet; Mike Ponella, Diego Urcola, trumpet; Scott Robinson, alto saxophone; Andres Boiarsky, tenor and soprano saxophones; Marshall McDonald, baritone and tenor saxophones; Conrad Herwig, trombone; William Cepeda, trombone, shells; Fareed Haque, guitar; Dario Eskenazi, piano; Oscar Stagnaro, bass; Mark Walker, drums; Pernell Saturnino, percussion.



Mark Murphy

Song For The Geese

RCA Victor 74321-44865

★★½

Stolen ... And Other Moments
32 Jazz 32036

★★★★

Mark Murphy's back to back Down Beat Readers Poll victories (Dec. '96, '97) have given his career a smack, prodding the major label release of this two-year-old Seattle project, *Song For The Geese*, as well as a twofer reissue of selections from his Muse catalog, recently purchased by 32 Jazz. (Riverside and Blue Note reissues are reportedly on the way.)

Good. Murphy is great jazz singer; he deserves as wide an audience as possible. That said, I don't much care for *Song*, a pop project that shouts "let's go for it" with winning abandon, yet can't disguise the fact that Murphy doesn't do this sort of thing well. Oddly, in a crossover environment of airy synthesizers, thwacking backbeats (or Latin rhythms), frenzied tempos and silvery choir backdrops, Murphy chooses to improvise with an even wilder vocal palette than usual, drawing on pure sound more than traditional scat. The result is tension, but little release.

On ballads, Murphy shines. The confessional "Song For The Geese," sardonic "Everybody Loves Me," vulnerable "Lament" (J.J. Johnson's) and the absolutely touching "I

Remember," by Stephen Sondheim, shimmer with bittersweet longing. Milton Nascimento's "We Two" is off-hand, clear and unmannered, as well. But two thumbs down for the percussive, r&b sneering on Steely Dan's "Do It Again" and the slurring, lounge-crooner diction ("I sincerely wanna zay ...") on "I Wish You Love." Why turn "Baltimore Oriole" into breathless acid-jazz? Or "You Go To My Head" into suburban smooth jazz? It makes you wish Murphy had stuck to the nostalgic, adult premise of the title tune, and left youth-pandering behind.

But then I've always found Murphy's autumnal moods more plausible than his exuberant, show-biz side, even when his foggy baritone is as velvety as his cummerbund. That contradiction—or complexity—in persona runs persistently through *Stolen ... And Other Moments*, which showcases 31 tracks selected by Down Beat contributor Michael Bourne from the 19 (count 'em) albums Murphy recorded for Muse between 1972 and 1994. Perhaps because Jack Kerouac combined exuberance and loss so convincingly, my favorite tracks remain those from the Kerouac albums (1981, 1986). Bourne apparently agrees. Nine of the tracks are here, including the classic "Boplicity," bravado "Parker's Mood" amusing "Bongo Beep" and "Ballad Of The Sad Young Men," which gave me chills when I put it on, even after all these years. Bourne also favors *Mark Murphy Sings*, and rightly so, with its Brecker brothers and David Sanborn solos and durable vocalese lyrics on Freddie

Hubbard's "Red Clay" and Herbie Hancock's "Canteloupe Island," both good reminders of the vibrancy and excitement one felt when fusion was young and new, not to mention Murphy's impeccable ear for the drummer. Perhaps it is the complex coexistence of opposites in the bittersweet love songs of Brazil that also gives Murphy such a natural feel for Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Two Kites" and "Waters Of March," two exquisite tracks.

But whether he's singing bossa or bebop, scat or vocalese, brooding over a ballad, or belting out a luxuriously happy high note, Mark Murphy is one of our best. This compilation is a fine introduction to his work. (A caveat: Where the notes indicate the tune "Don't Let Your Eyes Go Shopping," "More Than You Know" is there, instead.)

—Paul de Barros

Song For The Geese—*You Go To My Head; Sugar; Baltimore Oriole; Do It Again; (Baby) It's Judy Talk; You're Blase; Song For The Geese; Everybody Loves Me; Lament; I Remember; We Two (Nos Dois); I Wish You Love.* (63:14)
Personnel—Murphy, vocals; Marc Seales, piano; Doug Miller, bass; John Bishop, drums; Rick Mandyck, tenor and soprano saxophones (3, 4, 7, 8); Larry Barilleau, percussion; Full Voice (Roger Treece, Sandra Anderson, Lincoln Briney), background vocals (5, 7-9).

Stolen ... And Other Moments—*I'm Glad There Is You; Lookin' For Another Pure Love; Empty Faces; Young And Foolish; Waters Of March; Like A Lover (O Cantador); Satisfaction Guaranteed; Medley: Long Ago And Far Away; I Don't Want To Cry Anymore; Two Kites; Someone To Light Up My Life; Until The Real Thing Comes Along/Baby, Baby All The Time; More Than You Know; Lord Buckley; Ding Walls; Where You At?; Time On My*

Hands; Moody's Mood; On The Red Clay; Stolen Moments; Beauty And The Beast; Canteloupe Island; The Odd Child; Be-Bop Lives (Boplicity); Bongo Beep; Parker's Mood; Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; San Francisco; November In The Snow; Blood Count; Medley: Eddie Jefferson/Take The 'A' Train. (75:04/73:49)

Personnel—Murphy, Sheila Jordan (16), vocals; with the following personnel: Randy Brecker (1, 3, 4, 19, 22), Warren Gale (5, 5, 20), Tom Harrell (7-9, 18, 23), Claudio Roditi (17), Brian Lynch (21), trumpet; Tom Harrell (8, 9, 18, 23), Brian Lynch (20), flugelhorn; David Sanborn (3, 19, 22), Richie Cole (5-7, 20, 24-27), Gerry Niewood (8, 9, 18, 23), alto saxophone; Michael Brecker (1, 3, 4, 19, 22), Danny Wilensky (15), Richie Cole (24-27), tenor saxophone; Ronnie Cuber, baritone saxophone (7); Mark Levine (5, 6, 20), Slide Hampton (7), trombone; Pat Rebillot (1, 15, 17), Smith Dobson (5, 6, 20), Mike Renzi (7), Michael Austin-Boe (10, 11), Bill Mays (14, 16, 21, 29-31), Kenny Barron (16), acoustic piano; Pat Rebillot (1), organ; Ken Ascher (2), Don Grolnick (3, 4, 18, 22), Ben Aronov (8, 9, 18, 23), Jay Wagner (10, 11), Bill Mays (14, 16, 24-27, 29-31), John Cobert (15), Larry Fallon (15), Cliff Carter (17), keyboards; Sam Brown (1, 2), John Tropea (2), Joe Puma (3, 4, 19, 22), Jim Nichols (5, 20), Gene Bertonecini (7, 8, 9, 18, 23), Claudio Amaral (10, 11), Joe LoDuca (13), David Spinozza (15), John Basile (17), Bruce Forman (24-27), guitar; Ron Carter (1), Mike Moore (2), Harvey Swartz (3, 4, 16, 18, 22), Chuck Metcalf (5, 6, 20), Mark Egan (7-9), Bob Magnusson (12, 26, 27), John Goldsby (14, 30), Francisco Centeno (15), Dave Fink (17), George Mraz (18, 23), Steve LaSpina (21, 29, 31), Luther Hughes (26, 27), bass; Jimmy Madison (1-4, 7-9, 18, 19, 22, 23), Vince Lateano (5, 6, 20), Rubens Moura (11), Adam Nussbaum (14, 29-31), Alan Schwartzberg (15), Chris Parker (15), Ben Riley (16), Peter Grant (17), Joey Baron (21), Roy McCurdy (26, 27), Jeff Hamilton (27), drums; Jimmy Madison (1), Susan Evans (2-4, 8-9, 18, 19, 22, 23), Jack Gobetti (5, 6, 20), Michael Spiro (10, 24-27), Chalo Eduardo (11), John Kaye (15), Sammy Figueroa (15, 17), percussion; Lou Lausche, violin (21).

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Marlon Jordan

Marlon's Mode Arabesque 127

★★★★½

On the surface, it's curious that Jordan has remained in his hometown when many of his colleagues have headed for New York, a city that's benefited greatly of late from the New Orleans trumpet-drain. But hearing Jordan and his Louisiana cohorts blaze tune after tune, it's obvious he can render the music of his heroes Miles Davis and John Coltrane his way and eat his jambalaya, too.

Just what is Jordan's mode compared to—"Miles' Mode," literally, or as Coltrane wrote it? Yes, Jordan plays the same blues of elongated tempos, but with a Creole tinge. Assuredly, a close listen reveals a certain edge is missing from the recitation of "Miles' Mode," "Resolution" and "Equinox." However, on

Miles' "Agitation" as well as on a number of other solos, Marlon's mode sets spectacular eighth notes free at quasar speeds. Though he's been off the scene, he makes up for it, willing and able as he is, to perform extravagant and satisfying sets with a like-minded band.

Jordan's loyalties are steadfast for his favorite musicians—Ellington, Miles and Trane. On *Learnor's Return*, his 1991 recording for Columbia, he paid tribute to them. His album *The Undaunted* opens with Jordan's version of Coltrane's "Village Blues." On *Marlon's Mode*, our under-30 trumpeter assigns Alvin Batiste with his splendid clarinet voicings—sturdy, voluminous, woody—to moments on "Freddie Freeloader" and "Ballad For Trane," penned by his father Edward "Kidd" Jordan.

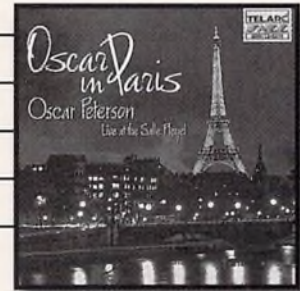
Democratically, every composition intros with the spotlight on a different sideman. The unsparing bassmanship of David Pulphus provides a ubiquitous pulse, but for "Equinox," Pulphus pulls a somber tolling figure that collides against Jason Marsalis' dramatic drumroll. This youngest of the Marsalis brothers favors the tumid undertones of drums, which on Trane's tunes frees up the stratosphere for the horn section. Driving the first and the final two tunes, Troy Davis mobilizes a lindy-hop, hard-bop groove, and with a sound somewhat reminiscent of a young Sonny Greer. Victor Atkins has an arranger's sense of how music should move. His fulminating chords tend to mushroom then subside, which often signals in the full powers of the band. Far from Coltrane's austere questings, Victor Goines provides ample musicianship that individualizes his own style.

Really, this is Jordan's date. When he spills

his quivering eighth notes in the highest registers and then swoops to a breathy range above the pulsing tidal wave of rhythms, he's earned his comeback. We deserve it. —Zoë Anglesey

Marlon's Mode—*Miles' Mode; Freddie Freeloader; Agitation; Resolution; Equinox; Ballad For Trane; Caravan.* (64.47)

Personnel—Jordan, trumpet; Alvin Batiste, clarinet; Victor Goines, soprano and tenor saxophones; Victor Atkins, piano; David Pulphus, bass; Jason Marsalis, drums (2-5); Troy Davis, drums (1, 6, 7).



Oscar Peterson

Oscar In Paris: Live At The Salle Pleyel Telarc 83414

★★★★

It was grand news in 1995 that Peterson, after suffering a partially paralyzing stroke (his left side was affected) in 1993, had worked like a devil in rehab and had emerged darn near good as new. Maybe even better, in that he was forced to deal with health issues, particularly his weight; by the looks of the album cover here, he has, appearing much trimmer than in past annus.

Perhaps that stroke also was a tiny blessing in disguise, for it left Peterson not quite as nimble technically as before, and as a result he can't play as fast for as long. What that means to a listener like me, who always leaned toward the piano giant's less speedy work, is that Peterson gives me more music now, and a lot less flash.

This package, recorded a year and half ago at the famed Parisian concert hall, is cause for pleasure. It presents Peterson, now 72, delivering a finely balanced program. To be sure, there are a couple of scampers—including a tidy arrangement of the warhorse "Sweet Georgia Brown" that begins with the pianist and guitarist Lofsky trading jackrabbit choruses unaccompanied. But most of the numbers are in the medium- and slow-tempo range, and Oscar seems to delight in the setting.

For example, there's the steaming slow blues, "Peace"; some play this blues tempo as well as Peterson, but none better. Working with deep feeling, he moves the listener with locked chords, boisterous tremolos and deft, spinning brief ideas. There's a wondrous flow to the solo, and OP is in complete control. Lofsky, who has a lighter sound than Herb Ellis but possesses that ace's hard-driving swing and downhome blues approach, follows and tells a feeling-filled story.



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It's nice when OP doesn't double-time a ballad, and he includes a pair here that don't increase in tempo from their calming starts: "Love Ballade," which has classic references in its melody, and the tender, evocative "She Has Gone." Both are ear-pleasing.

For foot-tapping swing, you know you can count on Peterson, and among the guaranteed-to-get-you-tapping tunes are the medium groove of "Kelly's Blues," the upbeat "Falling In Love With Love" and "Smudge," another blues. On these, the pianist delivers some of his patentable stock-in-trade: robust, bluesy ideas, flashy lines, short phrases repeated several times leading to dancing arpeggios, high-end tinkles. Through it all he swings like mad.

While Lofsky is the other featured soloist and is never a letdown, Ørsted Pedersen gets lots of room. Like Dave Holland, he has a firm yet resilient tone; like Scott LaFaro, he can solo with a guitarist's dexterity. His outing on "Falling" is typical, full of long, fluid lines that reveal good swing and exquisite taste. Drew is a solid fourth who keeps the fires burning, and supports with aplomb when things are cooler.

—Zan Stewart

Oscar In Paris: Live At The Salle Pleyel—*Falling In Love With Love; Nighttime; Tranquille; Smudge; Love Ballade; Sushi; Kelly's Blues; She Has Gone; You Look Good To Me; Peace; Sweet Georgia Brown; Here's That Rainy Day/We Will Love Again.* (56:38/51:48)

Personnel—Peterson, piano; Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, bass; Lorne Lofsky, guitar; Martin Drew, drums.



**Jeroen de Rijk
Dado Moroni
Joris Teepe**

Speak Low

A Records 73085

★★★

What distinguishes *Speak Low* from any number of engaging piano trio recordings is the drumming. Jeroen de Rijk substitutes his congas in the role typically occupied by a full drum set in this straightforward (non-Latin) session. It's an intriguing experiment that achieves mixed results. This is a balanced, if little-known, trio, with de Rijk's hand-drumming sharing the limelight with pianist Dado Moroni's bright rounded tones and deft phrasing, and Joris Teepe's supple accompaniment on bass.

Brought together during de Rijk's visit to the

United States, they work their way through a tastefully selected program that includes Oscar Peterson's "Nigerian Marketplace" and Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap," maintaining a gently swinging, upbeat mood. Moroni's playing impresses with a buoyant, infectious quality, which, on Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma," recalls Chick Corea. Teepe contributes melodic solos, particularly on Kurt Weill's "Speak Low," and assumes responsibility for establishing a "bottom" in the absence of a bass drum.

De Rijk's use of congas gives this amiable session a light, almost weightless feeling, but he hasn't convinced me that hand drums alone provide sufficient support in this context. Over the course of an hour, I needed to hear more variety and subtlety from the percussionist.

—Jon Andrews

Speak Low—*Eighty One; Speak Low; One Finger Snap; Work Song; Nigerian Marketplace; A Long Stroll With Micky; Con Alma; Dado's Blues.* (56:24)

Personnel—de Rijk, congas; Moroni, piano; Teepe, bass.



**Steve Beresford, His
Piano And Orchestra**

Signals For Tea

Avant 039

★★★★

**Ned Sublette/
Lawrence Weiner
Monsters From The Deep**

Excellent 8902

★★★½

One of the smartest things I ever read on the topic of parody was that a good parodist always has a secret love of the thing he or she ridicules. To make successful kitsch, it's necessary to know your source material very well, so well that the line between love and hate grows infinitesimally small. These two records are both drenched in camp, drawing on different song-form predecessors from cocktail lounge crooning to cowpoke country balladry, but their producers approach the music with genuineness—a funny mixture of care and irony—that makes them far more durable listening than the average one-joke pastichery. One never has the sense, on either *Monsters*

From The Deep or *Signals For Tea*, that the musicians are looking down on the music they're making.

Each record utilizes a conventional songwriting team methodology, pitting a lyricist with a composer. Beresford and his writer Andrew Brenner have been working together for years, and theirs is a stellar combination; Brenner's quirky humor gets the perfect delivery from Beresford, whose casual, vulnerable voice gives credence even to a line as silly as: "a hairy scar/a clean jam jar/unremarkable," from the records most magical song, "Unremarkable." Beresford—who is, by day, a super-free improviser—turns out to be a master hook huckster; he handles difficult lyrical twists, like "all that is pending/that feels so up pent/oh how I long for some lending/some help with the rent" ("Rent"), turning them into unforgettable little melodies. Behind him, alto saxist John Zorn, trumpeter Dave Douglas and crew riff and rock, sometimes breaking into joyful squeals; when Beresford mentions dancing the hora at the end of "All My Fibres," Douglas responds with a touch of klezmokum. Great new songs in a genre that never quite existed.

Lawrence Weiner was one of the originators of conceptual art, the idea-over-object movement of the '60s for which he provides a veritable anthem with the line, "The artist may construct the work/The work may be fabricated/The work need not be built," which is repeated in both "As It Stands" and "Steel Pennies." He and Ned Sublette have made one previous record together, 1993's *Ships At Sea, Sailors And Shoes*. Sublette sets Weiner's lyrics in an eclectic variety of contexts. Soul survivor Kim Weston purrs through the stilted text on "As It Stands," sexily slinking into "Spiritus Et Materia," backed up persuasively by the Persuasions on "What's A Girl To Do When She Can't," Junior Mance's boogying piano right in the mix. On "Rome Was Built For A Day," Red Fox's roughneck dancehall reggae talkover leads the way, while "Oil And Water" is a redneck country song, sung convincingly by Sublette. Other highlights include Joaquin Oliveros' charanga flute and Persuasion Jayotis Washington's lead stint on "From The Egg To The Apple."

Like the best of Kip Hanrahan and Hal Wilner's records, *Monsters From The Deep* beautifully integrates conceptual self-consciousness and a potpourri of flowing sounds.

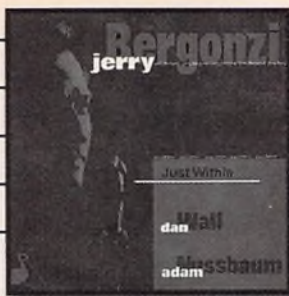
—John Corbett

Signals For Tea—*All My Fibres; Rent; Unremarkable; Signals For Tea; Approximate Song; Let's Get Cynical; Good Morning; The 3 Doors; Elephants; Little Window; The Agony Of You; Good Morning (solo version); Speed Limit; Unremarkable (solo version).* (66:41)

Personnel—Beresford, voice, piano; John Zorn, alto saxophone, voice (9); Dave Douglas, trumpet, voice (9); Greg Cohen, bass, voice (9); Kenny Wollesen, drums, voice (9).

Monsters From The Deep—*As It Stands; Rome Was Built For A Day; Wind And The Willows; Spiritus Et Materia; From The Egg To The Apple; Steel Pennies; Where Is The Sundown; What's A Girl To Do When She Can't; Oil And Water; Show And Tell; Flatlands.* (42:50)

Personnel—Sublette, voice (2, 3, 6, 7, 9-11), guitar (3, 4, 11); Kim Weston (1, 8), Jayotis Washington (5), the Persuasions (2, 4, 6, 8, 10), Red Fox (2, 6), voices; Junior Mance, piano (1, 3, 5, 8); Joaquin Oliveros, flute (7, 4, 11); Tony Gardiner, Victor Venegas (7, 11), bass; Mike Clark, Steve Meador (9), drums; Lennie Pickett, baritone saxophone (5), tenor saxophone (8); Lloyd Maines, pedal steel guitar (6, 9); Milton Cardona (7), Jimmy Delgado (4, 11), Robbig Argen (4, 10), percussion.



Jerry Bergonzi

Just Within
Double-Time 127

★★★

Alex Riel

Unriel
Stunt 19707

★★★½

Tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi first made his mark in the early '70s when he was enlisted to play in the Two Generations of Brubeck. Later in that decade he joined Brubeck's band for a three-year stint. As a leader, the Boston native has recorded several discs, the most noteworthy being his 1990 Blue

Note CD *Standard Gonz*.

His latest, *Just Within*, finds him delivering a fine collection of originals and two reworked covers with a solid trio made up of Hammond B-3 player Dan Wall and drummer Adam Nussbaum. Bergonzi also plays a prominent role on Danish drummer Alex Riel's latest recording *Unriel*, contributing five of the nine tracks and blowing with gusto on all but one tune. In fact, Gonz makes a better showing for himself as a supporting musician, working alongside tenorman Michael Brecker, guitarist Mike Stern and bassist Eddie Gomez in the commendable band Riel and producer Niels Lan Doky assembled for the date.

While the fervent saxman blows his horn with passion and power, Bergonzi does not fit into the lofty category of original voice. Impressive, yes. Singular, no. Overlooking his at times too blatant allusions to John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, Bergonzi gives a satisfying performance of impassioned sax yearnings and melodicism as well as some hoarse honks on *Just Within*. He bookends the set with inventive interpretations of standards, opening with a spirited spin through his reharmonized version of George and Ira Gershwin's "Our Love Is Here To Stay" and closing the show with a winning treatment of Trane's "Giant Steps."

With the exception of "Hank," his rather bland tribute to Hank Mobley, and "Optimum Propensity," which, again, sounds too Rollins-ish, Bergonzi's own tunes hold up well. The best of the pack include "Before It Happens," a romantic slow dance in waltz time, the fast and swinging "Out House," and a cooker called "The Ray," which also features appealing

ensemble playing. Gonz wrestles notes from his sax, Wall gurgles them out on the B-3 and Nussbaum exclaims on his kit. Another hot tune taken at spanking fast tempo is "Solar Return." However, while Bergonzi's fiery exhilarations are a highlight, like on other numbers here, he basks in the solo spotlight too long.

That's not the case on Riel's engaging *Unriel*, where Bergonzi's propensity to overdo it is held in check. While his solos, for the most part, are concisely trimmed, Gonz's strongest blowing on *Unriel* comes when he's faced off with another band member. Brecker sits in on two tracks, both written by Bergonzi and both of which shine with tenor sax dialogues. The opening track "Gecko Plex" is a jaunty outing with the two tenors spiraling and sparring in a lengthy excursion, while Riel keeps the rhythm cooking. Likewise, Brecker and Bergonzi bounce along together on "On Again Off Again," trading fours in a dancing scurry at the close. In addition, several other tunes feature inspired instrumental dialogues (a distinguishing—and pleasing—characteristic of the entire album), with Bergonzi leading the charge. Stern and Gonz sound especially good together on the ensemble's energetic launch into Coltrane's "Moment's Notice" and another catchy original by the tenor saxist, "Channeling."

Unriel on the whole works better than *Just Within*. There's more variety in the tunes (Stern, Gomez and Doky each contributed a fine number to the outing) and much better ensemble interplay (no doubt thanks to wise calls by producer Doky and Riel). Bergonzi doesn't have to carry the whole date, allowing him to be more selective in exhibiting his tenor

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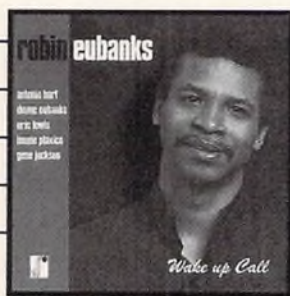
saxophone range, from screeching highs to fat, round lows.
—Dan Ouellette

Just Within—*Our Love Is Here To Stay; Optimum Propensity; Out House; Reds Blues; Before It Happens; The Ray; Hank; Solar Return; Giant Steps.* (65:14)

Personnel—Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Dan Wall, Hammond B-3; Adam Nussbaum, drums

Unriel—*Gecko Plex; He's Dead Too; On Again Off Again; Amethyst; Bruze; Moment's Notice; Channeling; Invisible Light; Unriel.* (65:39)

Personnel—Riel, drums; Jerry Bergonzi, Michael Brecker (1, 3), tenor saxophone; Mike Stern, guitar; Niels Lan Doky, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass.



Robin Eubanks

Wake Up Call

Sirocco Jazz Limited 1001

★★★★★

Something exhilarating transpires on *Wake Up Call*. Trombonist Robin Eubanks creates the most favorable ambiance for his instrument's sound. This is due, in part, to having spent time with Slide Hampton and Art Blakey, wherein he learned to write arrangements that do the same for his band as well. For this date, Eubanks has assembled fiercely ambitious musicians on the rise. Except for bassist Lonnie Plaxico and altoist Antonio Hart, they all share the "Philly thing," exuding an intense rapport throughout.

Eubanks wisely chooses Wayne Shorter's "United" for his opener. Besides Eubanks and Hart trading improvisatory takes, drummer Gene Jackson kicks in with a sassy polyrhythmic pace that's so multidimensional it's hard to believe he's not playing a double kit. Then Eric Lewis, the man with extraordinary chops who's in demand on all fronts, declares his pianistic presence. Each of his solos are distinctive, as he works sequentially with scalar concepts that defy ordinary trajectories. On this cut he piles up flattened notes on the piano's high end that suddenly cascade into tolling chords.

Within the arc of Lee Morgan's "Ceora," Eubanks establishes the range of his trombone's voicings. He's not into brassy or flamboyant mannerisms. Instead, the trombonist applies his horn's bluesy colors in pastel modulations that resemble those of a flugelhorn. Eubank's own "Soliloquy" also features commodious harmonies. Hart, firing up his alto to its molten incandescence, for the sake of contrast, blows parallel to the trombone's baritone tone. Another stunning composition, Wayne Shorter's "Oriental Folk Song," provides the spaciousness for each bandmember to turn in

captivating solos. Joining the ranks of the front line is trumpeter Duane Eubanks, another of the Philadelphia-based Eubanks/Bryant clan who has taken up residence in New York to stake a claim among emerging talents. At first he's a little reticent, but then he leans into his horn and swings.

On the title tune, Plaxico's insistent pulse is in sync with Jackson's rustling mesh of cymbals. Lewis squanders runs, arpeggios, octaves, quotes, ringing notes and thunderous crescendos. Eubanks marathons as if the trombone was the easiest instrument to play at mercurial speeds. "Scrapple From The Apple," and "Rush Hour," arranged by Lewis, also are also played at breakneck tempos. Both the horn and rhythm section kick in with fire, never letting up until the end of the last cut. —Zoe Anglesey

Wake Up Call—United; Ceora; Soliloquy; Oriental Folk Song; Wake Up Call; You Are Too Beautiful; Scrapple From The Apple; Rush Hour. (60:59)

Personnel—Eubanks, trombone; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone; Duane Eubanks, trumpet; Eric Lewis, piano; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Gene Jackson, drums.



Jack DeJohnette

Oneness

ECM 21637

★★★★★

Oneness introduces a new Jack DeJohnette quartet with an unusual lineup emphasizing flexibility. DeJohnette and his mainstay, pianist Michael Cain, have fixed responsibilities, while the new recruits, guitarist Jerome Harris and percussionist Don Alias, act as versatile role players.

Often emphasizing the cymbals, DeJohnette creates tension throughout, and defines the sketchier compositions through his use of space and percussive accents. Cain is responsible for contrast and melody, with his bright, lyrical piano lines splashing some color against the darker workings of the rhythm section. Harris alternates between electric guitar and acoustic-bass guitar. He only occasionally plays a conventional bass line, preferring to explore the higher-pitched, guitar-like sound of his instrument. In the absence of a full-time bass player, Alias' hand drums fill out the group's rhythmic scheme. As one might expect, percussive encounters between Alias and DeJohnette on "Jack In" and "Welcome Blessing" are among the CD's highlights. More of this interplay would have been welcome.

Longer tracks like "Priestesses Of The Mist" and "From The Heart" develop slowly, as

though DeJohnette allowed the group's interactions to establish the direction and pace of each piece. DeJohnette's new arrangement of "Priestesses Of The Mist" (previously heard on his *Earth Walk* CD) follows a solemn pace suggesting ritual and mystery. The track is ethereal and spacious, tethered only by DeJohnette's cymbals and Alias' processional drumming. The propulsive "Jack In" receives a more upbeat reworking, as Cain and Harris embellish the insinuating melody, with Harris adding a tart solo on electric guitar. —Jon Andrews

Oneness—Welcome Blessing; Free Above Sea; Priestesses Of The Mist; Jack In; From The Heart; C.M.A. (63:24)

Personnel—DeJohnette, drums; percussion; Jerome Harris, electric guitar, bass guitar; Don Alias, percussion; Michael Cain, piano.



Misha Mengelberg

The Root Of the Problem

hatOLOGY 504

★★★★★

As far as record dates go, venerable Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg can be insular and tedious (*Mix*) or frisky and swinging (*Who's Bridge*). *The Root Of The Problem* reminds that improv is a steady source of amusement to the 63-year-old bandleader, even when its brokering all sorts of less frivolous emotions.

This nine-track series of duets and trios is an encounter between Mengelberg's conservatory roots and jazz inclinations. For almost 67 minutes, the friction between the two is assuaged by a momentous rapport between the disc's participants. Their accord can't be overstated. Clunkiness exists only when it has received its invitation, and even then its general abstraction begets an uncommon sense of poise. The longest piece, the concluding "IC Root No. 9," is a shifting topography at ease with its own flinty facade.

Quite often the grace at work implies that the players aren't dueling, but dancing. Mengelberg's romp with the nimble mind of saxophonist Steve Potts creates all sorts of tense communication. And "IC Root No. 8," with percussionist Achim Kramer, is a miniature of accord—tapped strings and toms caressing each other. The disc's breadth of textures and tempos keeps each piece sparkling while conclusions are evaded, crumbs become a banquet and messes are never completely wiped up.

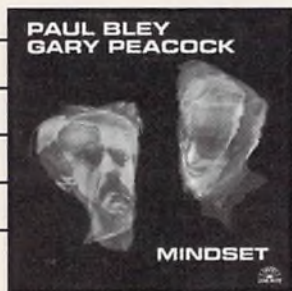
This past summer, a New York trio gig full of Monk tunes illustrated just how naturally clever Mengelberg is when the chosen material has an inherent sense of merriment. This entic-

ing sequence of musical interludes suggests that even working a much more sober turf, he has the cunning to keep things vital.

—Jim Macnie

The Root Of The Problem—IC Root No. 1; IC Root No. 2; IC Root No. 3; IC Root No. 4; IC Root No. 5; IC Root No. 6; IC Root No. 7; IC Root No. 8; IC Root No. 9. (66:51)

Personnel—Mengelberg, piano; Steve Potts, saxophones; Thomas Heberer, trumpet; Michel Godar, tuba, serpent; Achim Kremer, percussion.



Paul Bley & Gary Peacock

Mindset

Soul Note 121213

★★★★★

Mark Copland Trio

Paradiso

Soul Note 121283

★★★½

The title "Mindset" prepares the listener in advance for the kind of spare artistry to be encountered on this disc. The title suggests singlemindedness—and after years of association, pianist Paul Bley and bassist Gary Peacock do share an esthetic that values the brief sonic existence of each note. This accounts for part of the pristine aura of this music. Impeccable conditions in the studio also benefit the recording greatly. For example, when Bley concludes a composition, the piano is allowed to reach its own state of natural silence.

Listeners are sure to be swayed by *Mindset* tune by tune, composed by one or the other player until the final homage—"Circle With The Hole In The Middle," written by Ornette Coleman. Bley and Peacock submerge thought within the uncharted course of a melody of dual design regardless of authorship. This profound musical trust results in mellow beauty. Mellow beauty challenges Peacock as he harbors Bley's songs or when he himself seeks the soul of lyricism. That common cause commits them equally.

To single out the most superb selections becomes an obverse exercise, but "Sunrise Sunlight" pulls the listener into its orb of light. Peacock on his own "E.D.T.," as elsewhere, creates a solo that commands wonder at both his technique and magic at suspending the linear motion of a tune's segments. His bass solos throughout truly engage attentiveness. "Melt-

down," a Bley tune, sparks notice by its own consummate sheen, its bluesy bridge its turn of song. "Heyday" begins almost ominously with minglings of both instruments that approach call-response, but theirs is provocative and obtuse.

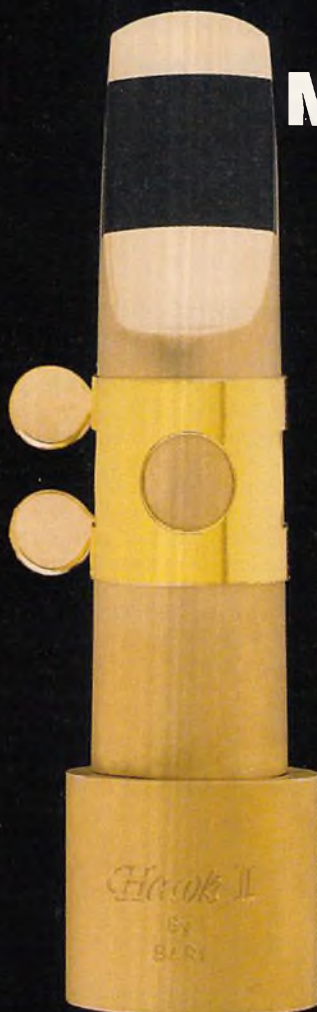
Each composition seems frameable. Elegance shifts from one artist to the other, and salient emphasis creates drama but not for drama's sake. As Bley's "Duality" exemplifies, these two artists really explore polarities to achieve the solace of equilibrium.

Copland's trio on *Paradiso* opens on his own "Hiding Place," which brings up the question of depending on long solos or a string of them. Even though this trend indicates slack primarily on the part of the leader, it also wears out the

integrity of a composition. Fortunately, the second cut, "But Not Forgotten," assumes the dynamics of a trio for this handsome ballad. Noticeably, drummer Billy Hart's exquisite brushwork conveys the illusion that each single wire is audible. Copland's "Billy's Bounce" gives Hart even more room to indulge in punctuations and shimmer made to order for the three-note figure that tolls throughout the piece. "Paradiso" projects wide-angle sweeps, soundscapes that let the piano and bass sing. Hart's splashes of cymbals, the cupping sound of the high-hat and mallet work in between the swishes of brass distinguish this title tune. Bebop blooms on Charlie Parker's "Bloomdido" before the solos take over.

Gary Peacock swathes "Dark Territory" in

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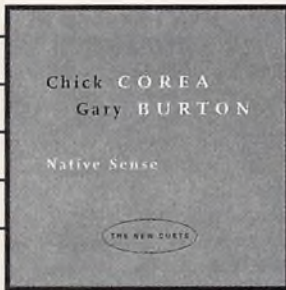
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umbra hues, then when Copland displays the tune's horizontal reaches, Peacock enters in again and again with single plucked notes that spire upwards in accent. The recognizable melody of "Taking A Chance On Love" promises pleasures with its upbeat tempo. As a final statement, "Taking A Chance" offers each musician and the trio as a whole to do just that in a genial kind of way.

—Zoë Anglesey

Mindset—*Random Mist; Sunrise Sunlight; How Long; E.D.T.; Back Lash; Duality; Juniper Blue; Meltdown; Heyday; Touching Bass; Mindset; Where Can UB; Circle With The Hole In The Middle.* (76:47)
Personnel—Bley, piano; Peacock, bass.

Paradiso—*Hiding Place; ...But Not Forgotten; Billy's Bounce; Paradiso; Bloomido; Lovers And Other Strangers; Lover Man; Dark Territory; Taking A Chance On Love.* (58:07)
Personnel—Copland, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



Chick Corea Gary Burton

Native Sense
Stretch 9014

★★★★

Native Sense renews a longstanding, very durable partnership. This is the fourth duo recording for Chick Corea and Gary Burton. Where albums like *Crystal Silence* (ECM, 1971) offered shimmering atmospheres and nimble interplay, *Native Sense* shifts the focus to Latin dance rhythms. During a long hiatus in recording, the duo has performed with some frequency, and *Native Sense* presents road-tested material sequenced as a representative performance. The canny set list combines new tunes, familiar Corea compositions, and dance-themed compositions (like "Tango '92" and "Rhumbata"), with splashes of Bartok and Monk added for contrast. Throughout, vibes and piano deftly support each other and smoothly exchange roles, carrying on a dance of their own.

Corea's infectious arrangements of "No Mystery," "Love Castle" and "Armando's Rhumba" (the latter two from *My Spanish Heart*) sound instantly familiar, serving as a reminder of Corea's highly distinctive signature sound. "Duende" illustrates a contrast in musical personalities with Corea displaying the romantic flourishes and bravura of flamenco, while Burton conveys a deeper, bluer sensibility. "Native Sense" presents an ideal vehicle for the duo, with percolating rhythms underlying call-and-response between vibes and piano. The interplay between Corea and Burton culminates in their high-energy exchanges on "Love Castle"

and "Four In One." Corea's "Post Script" serves as an elegant, inventive transition from Bela Bartok's "Bagatelle #6" to the manic energy of "Bagatelle #2." The resulting sequence offers the most ambitious music on this charming, but risk-averse CD.

—Jon Andrews

Native Sense—*Native Sense; Love Castle; Duende; No Mystery; Armando's Rhumba; Bagatelle #6; Post Script; Bagatelle #2; Tango '92; Rhumbata; Four In One.* (64:50)
Personnel—Corea, piano; Burton, vibraphone, marimba (2, 4).



Bill Cosby

Hello, Friend:
To Ennis With Love
Verve 539 171

★★★

Bill Cosby produced this album several years ago but decided to release it only recently as a tribute to his son, Ennis, who was tragically murdered in Los Angeles. It seems safe to presume, however, that this collection of hard-bop's greatest hits represents the tastes of the father rather than the son. The stellar octet, including trumpeter Lester Bowie, alto saxophonist Bobby Watson, pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins, tackles every familiar theme head on, with the soloists quoting a few more chestnuts for good measure. Still, the caliber of musicianship is such that even such hackneyed tunes as "Laura" and "Stella By Starlight" sound lively and spirited. Like day-old bread, the music is hardly fresh, yet not quite stale.

The only original composition is the opener, Cosby's own "Wide Open." It's basically just a collage of hard-bop standards similar in character to the album's other material, which includes Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie" and "Senor Blues" and Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder." There are a few mild twists, such as Steve Kroon's conga intro on Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'"—a reflection of Cosby's penchant for Latin sounds—but the performances generally follow a straightforward head-solo-head format.

Bowie, the session's token outsider, plays his customary jester's role, snorting and whinnying on Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance," but Philip Harper handles the bulk of trumpet work in mainstream fashion. Watson and tenor saxist Craig Handy play with polished wit; Higgins and bassist Peter Washington make the rhythms sparkle, and Walton is unflappably inventive.

All in all, this would have made a memorable club set, but as an album, *Hello, Friend* is simply superfluous.

—Larry Birnbaum

Hello, Friend: To Ennis With Love—*Wide Open; Moanin'; Sister Sadie; Laura; Freedom Jazz Dance; Stella By*

Starlight; Sidewinder; Senor Blues. (48:00)

Personnel—Lester Bowie, Philip Harper, trumpet; Bobby Watson, alto saxophone; Craig Handy, tenor saxophone; Cedar Walton, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Billy Higgins, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion.



Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen

Those Who Were
Verve 533 232

★★★½

It's hard to believe that bassist Pedersen, the Danish former teen prodigy and longtime Oscar Peterson accompanist, is only 51; his old-mastership is already so well established that for some time now he's billed himself under the corporate-sounding acronym NHØP. He's recorded far more often as a leader than most bass players, but unlike, say, Charles Mingus, he likes to put his instrument out front as the lead melodic voice.

Here, he teams up with drummer Billy Higgins, a regular Pedersen collaborator for the past two decades. Also on board is guitarist Ulf Wakenius (a recent Peterson sideman), a new addition filling the chair most frequently occupied by Philip Catherine. What we hear is a set of mostly original compositions. Opening with George Gershwin's "Our Love Is Here To Stay," NHØP displays a radiant tone, "singing" the theme while Wakenius assumes the bassist's usual rhythmic role. Pedersen takes a brooding, ECM-like turn on his arrangement of Danish classicist Carl Nielsen's elegiac "Derfor Kan Vort Øje Glædes," then romps playfully through the tortuous chromatic changes of his own "With Respect."

The title track, written by Liza Freeman and sung by Lisa Nilsson, is disappointingly bland and banal, with trite lyrics like "I'd rather love and lose/Than not know love at all." Wakenius cops George Benson licks on the mildly amiable "Friends Forever" and the wistful, fusionesque "Wishing And Hoping," as Pedersen flaunts his nimble chops and cliché-free imagination. But "Guilty, Your Honour," a sort of Scandinavian hoedown set to a funky backbeat, bogs down in a muddle of stylistic confusion.

On the two tracks where guest tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin sits in, however, the music assumes a whole 'nother level of emotional depth. Oozing soul from every pore, Griffin squeezes the blues out of Pedersen's "The Puzzle" and mines deep nostalgia from the standard "You And The Night And The Music." On these cuts, the bassist reverts to his instrument's customary low register, pro-

viding the kind of warm, solid, resonant support that his reputation has been built on.

—Larry Birnbaum

Those Who Were—*Our Love Is Here To Stay; Derfor Kan Vort Oje Glaees; With Respect; Those Who Were; Friends Forever; The Puzzle; Wishing And Hoping; You And The Night And The Music; Guilty, Your Honor.* (54:53)

Personnel—Pedersen, acoustic bass; Ulf Wakenius, acoustic and electric guitars; Victor Lewis (2, 3, 5-8), Alex Riel (4, 9), drums; Johnny Griffin, tenor saxophone (6, 8); Lisa Nilsson, vocal (4).



Rick Margitza

Game Of Chance
Challenge 70044

★★★★

B Sharp Jazz Quartet

Tha Go 'Round
MAMA 1020

★★

Jazz is a subjectively infinite art form. The fact that these two recordings share synchronicities of era and genre and instrumentation does not mean that they transport the listener to similar places. *Tha Go 'Round*, especially taken in doses larger than three tracks at a time, is a dangerously mind-numbing experience. On the evidence of *Tha Go 'Round*, none of the members of the B Sharp Jazz Quartet has yet been visited by an interesting idea—which does not keep their music from hammering endlessly, obsessively forward. But on *Game Of Chance*, the two reed instruments of Rick Margitza penetrate like laser lights of intelligence. Margitza's music has the ineffable yet unmistakable quality of all good jazz: Constantly willing to risk creativity, it bets the farm on every decision.

Drummer Herb Graham Jr. produced *Tha Go 'Round* and wrote eight of the 10 tunes. The mix is dominated by his drums and Osama Afifi's bass. Randall Willis' reeds and Rodney Lee's piano are not well-served in this bottom-heavy tonal balance, but they also make their own problems. Even on pieces like "Tightrope," which opens with genuine rhythmic thrust, Willis' solo dissipates interest by regurgitating a compendium of stock tenor saxophone devices. His soprano saxophone is saccharine on the cloying melody of "Mujeres." "Confirmation" is turned into a piano-trio funk tune. The famous theme becomes a quick little right-hand run by Lee within a deep backbeat groove plowed by Afifi and Graham. It's an odd enough

"Confirmation" to arouse temporary curiosity.

Margitza's band contains strong, if not yet famous, players. Swedish bassist Lars Danielsson is a subtle, fluid presence. American pianist Jeff Gardner, who has lived in Paris for the past decade, takes expansive, freewheeling, poetic solos. Drummer John Vidacovich, from New Orleans, instills a loose momentum into every song, propelled by unexpected accents that always cohere.

Game Of Chance has a unity, a continuity of feeling that sustains through disparate structures and tempos. It is a luminous quality, and it starts with Margitza, who always sounds intense but patient. On pieces like "No Minor Affair" and "Blades Run," his ideas bubble and stream like whitewater rapids, yet they pos-

sess order and proportion.

This sense of passion, restrained by the dictates of formal elegance, is one of Margitza's signatures as an improviser. Another is his sound on both saxophones, a clean cutting edge with glistening bright overtones. *Game Of Chance* is not the best recorded rendering of Margitza's tone. That distinction goes to one of the great unknown jazz albums of the '90s, Kei Akagi's *Mirror Puzzle* on Joe Harley's sonically state-of-the-art AudioQuest label. But the audio quality of *Game Of Chance* is adequate to convey moments like the beginning of "Cidade Vazia," where three sets of stimuli gradually overlay: chiming piano, silver filigree of cymbals, smoothly rounded sculpture of saxophone.

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One minor complaint: Why edit out so much of the crowd noise from a live recording? Those folks at the Bim-Huis in Amsterdam were there, after all. Their presence enhances the ambience.

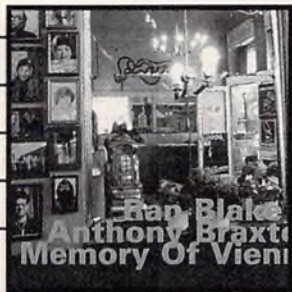
—Thomas Conrad

Game Of Chance—*Good Question; August In Paris; 13 Bar Blues; Careless; Blades Run; Bird Shit (For Charlie Parker); Jazz Prelude #9; No Minor Affair; Cidade Vazia; Game Of Chance.* (62:30)

Personnel—Margitza, tenor and soprano saxophones; Jeff Gardner, piano; Lars Danielsson, bass; John Vidacovich, drums.

Tha Go 'Round—*Steppin'; The Wanderer; Tightrope; Mujeres; Funk For Mr. B (For Billy Higgins); Coupe de Ville; Confirmation; Tha Go 'Round; Eva; Brilliant Corners.* (56:22)

Personnel—Randall Willis, tenor and soprano saxophones; Rodney Lee, piano; Osama A'fifi, bass; Herb Graham Jr., drums.



Ran Blake Anthony Braxton

A Memory of Vienna
hatOLOGY 505

★★★★

Anthony Braxton Richard Teitelbaum

Silence/Time Zones
Black Lion 760221

★★★★

In 1988, Ran Blake and Anthony Braxton seized an impromptu opportunity to record favorite standards as duets for piano and alto saxophone. The session tapes were then

consigned to a vault for close to a decade. Newly issued as *A Memory Of Vienna*, the tapes deserved a better fate. Braxton switches to his "inside" mode for this date, embracing traditional material with affection and subtlety, while Blake is consistently inventive and entertaining. Here's a rare instance in which Braxton serves as the reassuring center of gravity, balancing his partner's eccentricities. Blake brings an emotional, almost melodramatic sensibility to "Round Midnight," but sounds playful and upbeat on "Yardbird Suite" and "Four." Even when he cops behind Braxton, his playing is rich in detail, full of jolts, curious harmonic choices and playful quotes. On "Just Friends" and "You Go To My Head," the pianist excels at plucking bitter-sweet moments of beauty from discordant passages.

Featuring alto sax exclusively, Braxton's solos avoid abstractions and respect the melodies of these songs, largely following the approach to traditional repertoire he used in '80s recordings like *Seven Standards 1985* (Magenta). He seems to relish the opportunity to play these songs, as well as his role as "straight man." On "Soul Eyes" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," his playing is sensitive, measured and thoughtful, bringing to mind Paul Desmond, whose playing has often been admired by Braxton.

If *A Memory Of Vienna* takes Braxton as far inside as possible, *Silence/Time Zones* finds him testing the outer limits. This reissue packages two long-unavailable LPs released on the Freedom label, combining Braxton with trumpeter Leo Smith and violinist Leroy Jenkins for the 1969 *Silence* session, and with synthesist Richard Teitelbaum for *Time Zones* (1977). *Time Zones*, standing alone, merits four stars. Braxton takes the lead, searching and exploring with an array of horns, and he's in excellent form throughout. *Time Zones* derives special value from Teitelbaum's improvisational skills as well as his remarkable ability to surround and enhance Braxton's reeds with electronic sounds, especially considering the limited sonic palette then available with analog synthesizers. Teitelbaum enhances Braxton's contrabass clarinet yawnings with eerie atmospheres on "Behemoth Dreams," and complements his alto sax with gently complementary synthetic sounds on "Crossing." On the latter track, Teitelbaum interacts effectively with Braxton through a clarinet-like voicing. His electronics

were truly interactive, long before that term enjoyed currency.

Silence documents an impressive trio from 1969, but the performances haven't aged well. Compositions by Smith and Jenkins demonstrate the AACM's multi-instrumentalist approach of the time, making use of "little instruments," such as harmonicas, flutes, whistles, cymbals, and percussion objects to subvert thematic material or break long silences. Smith's trumpet is the most assertive voice, sounding brash and forceful, but Braxton is rarely much of a presence here. *Silence* will have value primarily for historians and collectors.

—Jon Andrews

A Memory Of Vienna—*'Round Midnight; Yardbird Suite; You Go To My Head; Just Friends; Alone Together; Four; Soul Eyes; I'm Getting Sentimental Over You.* (55:43)
Personnel—Blake, piano; Braxton, alto saxophone.

Silence/Time Zones—*Off The Top Of My Head; Silence; Crossing; Behemoth Dreams.* (73:00)

Personnel—Braxton, alto and soprano saxophones, contrabass clarinet, reeds, miscellaneous instruments; Teitelbaum, modular moog and micromoog synthesizers (3, 4); Leo Smith, trumpet, miscellaneous instruments (1, 2); Leroy Jenkins, violin, miscellaneous instruments (1, 2).



Jamie Baum

Sight Unheard
GM 3031

★★★★

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the title of the recording. The pair rarely ventures beyond the melodic parameters of the tunes, opting to deliver sweet and emotive reads of standards with a few pop tunes and Beck originals included in the mix. While improvisational forays are kept to a minimum, the two sound great together, Ryerson gently wafting her rich, velvety notes over Beck's serene accompaniment.

The CD starts off with a couple of yawners. Country singer Bobbie Gentry's '60s crossover pop hit "Ode To Billy Joe" is treated to a polite, elevator-ish version, and Monk's "Round Midnight" falls flat because Ryerson and Beck fail to offer anything distinctively new in their interpretation. On the other hand, they deliver fine renderings of two other chestnuts from the jazz songbook, "Summertime" and "Autumn Leaves." Beck's "Cuidado" is the highlight of the originals, and Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce" is taken for a jaunty ride spurred by Beck's bop-driven walking bass line. The Ryerson/Beck soulful rendering of Horace Silver's "Song For My Father"—a perfect flute song—is a delight. Less successful: the schmaltzy graft of "Scarborough Fair" to "Norwegian Wood" and Steve Davis' pattering percussion on half the tracks. Overall, the CD appeals but lacks adventure.

On her sophomore outing, Jamie Baum exhibits remarkable artistic facility as composer/arranger/bandleader/flutist. Invigorating, at times exciting and never predictable, *Sight Unheard* is highly recommended. Baum explores the flute's ensemble role as an improvisational instrument and accordingly stretches throughout, soaring with celebrative exuberance, probing with soulful rumination, dancing with playful joy. She's enlisted a top-notch rhythm team (bassist Drew Gress and drummer Jeff Hirshfield), signed up Kenny Werner and Roberta Picket to share piano duties and called upon brilliant trumpeter Dave Douglas to take flight with her.

Except for a giddy spree through Ornette Coleman's "Una Muy Bonita," *Sight Unheard* offers a compelling set of originals, including the vibrant yet intriguing "Seven Sides To The Story," the dreamy, yearning title tune and the smoky ballad "In The Offing," which brims with pathos and longing. Werner shines, especially with his strikingly angular solo on "Evolution." But the marquee matching on the disc is Baum and Douglas, whose interplay oftentimes scintillates. They play unison lines as if they're one instrument, harmonize wondrously, converse with glee, embrace with beauty. They're especially in sync on the whimsical and dramatic "The Ambivert," which buoys with instrumental peek-a-boo performances.

Another flute adventure takes wing on the Henry Threadgill/James Newton-piloted *Flutistry* CD, recorded in 1990, mixed in 1995 and finally (why so long?) released in 1997. There are string quartets and saxophone quartets, so why not a flute quartet? While in concept it's not earthshatteringly original (flute ensembles exist in the classical world and both leaders have experimented with multiple-flute projects), Flute Force Four breaks new ground in expanding the scope of playing the flute for jazz. The collection of two Threadgill compositions, three Newton pieces and one Threadgill-Newton collaborative work is lyrical, jarringly harsh, playful, ebullient and beautiful.

The quartet, which includes Pedro Eustache

and Melecio Magdaluyo, uses an array of flutes, from piccolo flute to bass flute, to color the magical soundscapes. The CD opens with the delightful Threadgill number "T.B.A.," the flutes together sounding like a flock of birds twittering, chirping and warbling. His "Luap Nosebor" (Paul Robeson spelled backwards), inspired by watching parakeets in a zoo, is also a bird-like track with flute soars and swoops. Newton's tunes are more pensive and introspective in mood, though his "Paseo Del Mar" bursts with lusty trills and exuberant flute free-falls. Overall, a triumphant feast of flutes.

—Dan Ouellette

Sight Unheard—*Seven Sides To The Story; Sight Unheard; Aftermath; Evolution; Una Muy Bonita; In The Offing; Time*

Frame; The Ambivert; Down The Way. (66:04)

Personnel—Baum, flute, alto flute; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Kenny Werner (2, 4, 5), Roberta Picket (1, 6-9), piano; Drew Gress, bass; Jeff Hirshfield, drums.

Flutistry—T.B.A.; *Intersection; Luap Nosebor; Hymn To Wright Reverend; Paseo Del Mar; Figwig. (44:15)*

Personnel—Henry Threadgill, flute, bass flute; James Newton, flute, alto flute, bass flute; Pedro Eustache, flute, alto flute, bass flute; piccolo flute; Melecio Magdaluyo, flute, alto flute.

Alto—*Ode To Billy Joe; 'Round Midnight; Joy Spring; Mother's Day; Willow Weep For Me; Waiting Is The Hardest Part; Summertime; Scarborough Fair/Norwegian Wood; Autumn Leaves; Cuidado; Song For My Father; What Would I Do Without You?; Billie's Bounce; We Will Meet Again. (52:05)*

Personnel—Beck, guitar; Ryerson, flute; Steve Davis, percussion.



Cara Timbrell of the Lamont Woodwind department.

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JAZZ

They Wrote 'Em

by Zan Stewart

Jazz musicians compose originals for a host of reasons: They are tired of standards, they want to break new ground, they want to express themselves, they want to control their publishing, they're looking for a hit, and so on. Ultimately, originals form the spine of the modern jazz repertoire. Without tunes such as "Giant Steps," "Confirmation," "Spain," "Speak No Evil" and "All Blues," how would the music grow, stay fresh, reinvent itself?

While albums containing a brace of originals by the leader have been around since albums themselves, there have been far fewer collections that are made up solely of one artist's tunes. Such projects are risky, for they demand impressive writing to succeed. Here, then, are six risk-takers, artists who wish to be represented only by their own work (save two tracks among them all), who feel that what they have to say—spanning the breadth of contemporary jazz—is strong enough to carry an entire album.

Randy Brecker: *Into The Sun* (Concord Vista 4761; 59:00: ★★★½) The trumpeter/composer has long had an interest in a multitude of musics, and he investigates many of them—Brazilian, funk, mainstream, fusion, pop—on this impressive disc. Brazilian, via both sambas and bossa, is the overriding genre, with succulent melodies spotlighted on "Buds," "Tijuca," "Just Between Us," et al. "The Sleaze Factor" has a dandy jazz/funk groove, "Gray Area" is appealingly edgy and fusion-like; "After Love," however, is weak pop. Most tracks have really good Brecker trumpet; his fluid lines and smart intervals grab the listener. Keyboardist Gil Goldstein's orchestrations deliciously fatten the sound—a six-piece wind/brass augments the core sextet. The only non-original is a brief bit done by Brecker's dad two weeks after his birth—what a kick!

Dale Fielder: *Ocean Of Love And Mercy* (Cadence 1071; 73:53: ★★★★★) Subtitled "A Passion Suite," this 11-part work takes a passionate stance, indeed. The piece, by Pittsburgh-raised, now L.A.-based reedman/composer Fielder, is dedicated to, in his words, "the female expression of the Creator," and it reflects a warm '60s sensibility. The melodies are rich and evocative, there are lots of chord changes to be navigated, and the nine players—both the known, like trombonist George Bohanon, and the lesser known, like tenor ace Daniel Jackson (somebody record this guy!) and the resourceful leader—are a perfect fit for it all. The title track has a sweetness to it, "Fourth Density" is more rugged, "Les Mots Flottant" is a vital closer.



Bheki Mseleku: writing personal tunes with heart

Bruce Gertz: *Blueprint* (Evidence 22196-2; 55:06: ★★★★★) Made in 1991 and just released, this is the debut outing by Boston-based bassist Gertz and his now well-recorded quintet: Jerry Bergonzi, reeds; John Abercrombie, guitar; Joey Calderazzo, piano; and Adam Nussbaum, drums. Then, as now, the leader wrote in a modern vein; you won't mistake his songs for rehashed bebop. "The Other You" is like a '90s-ish "All Blues," "Proton" is another complex altered blues. Both "It Should," sporting an angular line, and the more abstract "While You Were Out" find Gertz as part of the melody team. "Neves" is a tender ballad, but no Tin Pan Alley ditty. To boot, there are gritty solos from all; the leader's muscular lines shine.

Bheki Mseleku: (*beauty of sunrise*) (Verve 531 868; 62:56: ★★★★★½) The South African pianist/occasional vocalist/composer writes personal tunes that have heart. Stylistically, Mseleku is hard to pin down: He can deliver a '90s hard-bop number like "Adored Value" one minute, and then explore a decidedly African feeling on "Suluman Saud" the next. "Love Joe" has a Joe Henderson-like flow in the melody, enhanced by the fat-voiced frontline of trumpeter Graham Haynes and tenorman Ravi Coltrane. Elsewhere, there's the zesty Latin flair of "Aja" and the slow, earthy tomes "Violet Flame" and "Nearer Awakening." The leader plays in an appealing manner, his ardent work recalling aspects of Monk, Duke, Randy Weston and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Elvin Jones kicks butt on five tunes.

Valery Ponomarev: *A Star For You* (Reservoir 150; 53:52: ★★★★★½) Russian expatriate trumpeter Ponomarev worked and recorded with Art Blakey from 1977 to 1980; you know he cherished the experience. Five of the seven tunes (a much-reworked "We'll Be Together Again" the sole non-original) were craftily written in the flavor of the Messengers, from the hard-driving backbeat—provided by Billy Hart—of "Commandments From A Higher Authority" to the down-home blues ballad "A Star For You." Other winners: the Latin-ish "Dance Intoxicant," the medium-up tempo "First Draft." Only "Uh Oh" is non-Bu: In 6/8, it has a Mingus feel. Ponomarev, like Freddie Hubbard, plays singing, then steaming, lines with ace time; his tenorman, Bob Berg, as always, blends intensity with musicality.

Jeff Williams: *Jazz Blues* (Willful Music 7695; 60:05: ★★★★★) New York-based drummer/composer Williams documented these eight compositions in August 1995. The writing is fresh and of today; we hear bits of Shorter, Scofield, Motian, but nothing overarching. Williams writes the drums into the lines: The somber "Lament" has the leader playing unison figures with bassist Doug Weiss, pianist Kevin Hays and tenorist Tim Ries; "Funhouse Living" intersperses drum breaks with the melody. Form and harmony are basic to Williams' songs, but they can be stretched, maneuvered: The catchy "Borderlines" evolves into a loose platform for Patrick Zimmerli's tenor; the funk of "The Hunt" has an abstract streak as well. Let's hear more. **DB**

REISSUES

Down By Riverside

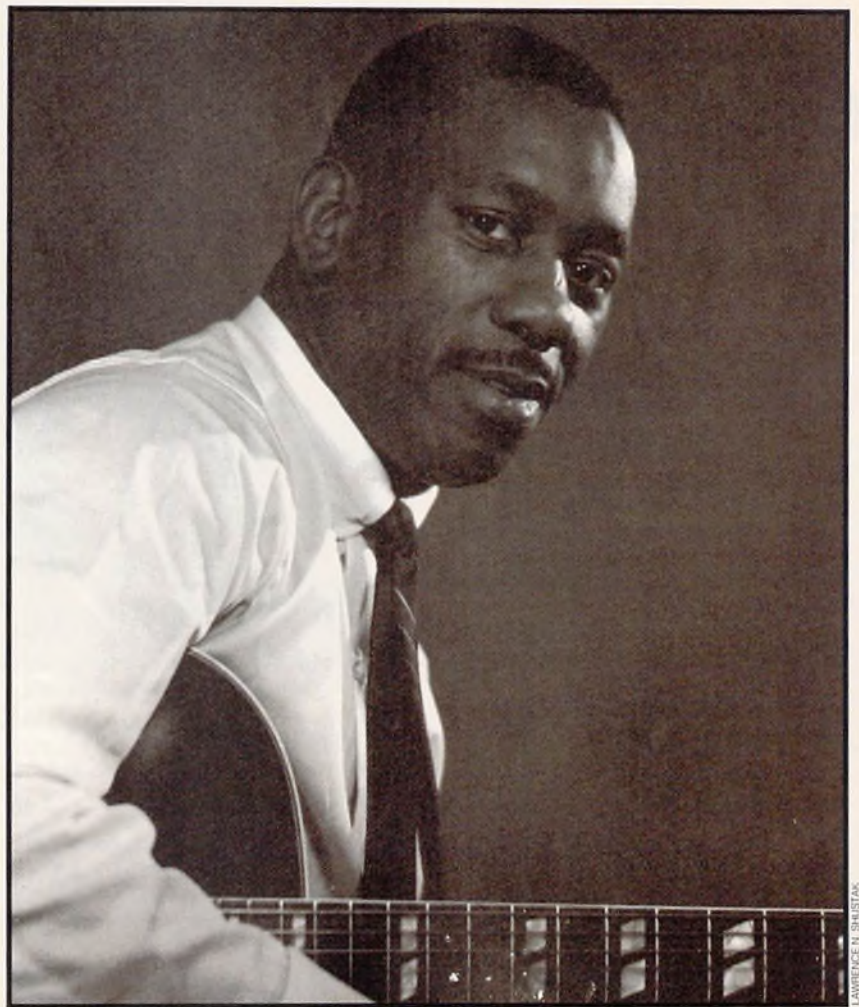
by Paul de Barros

Bill Grauer and Orrin Keepnews started Riverside Records in 1952 as a reissue label, a spin-off of a classic-jazz magazine Keepnews wrote for called *The Record Changer*. (The label was humbly named after the magazine's telephone prefix.) In 1955, with the signing of Thelonious Monk, Riverside began a nine-year odyssey as one of a trio of labels—Blue Note and Prestige being the other two—that shaped our notion of post-bop jazz in New York. Among other classics of this heroic age, Keepnews produced Thelonious Monk's *Brilliant Corners* (OJC-026), Bill Evans' *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (OJC-068), Cannonball Adderley's *In San Francisco* (OJC-035), Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Suite* (OJC-067), Art Blakey's *Ugetsu* (OJC-090), Wes Montgomery's *Incredible Jazz Guitar* (OJC-036) and George Russell's *Ezz-thetics* (OJC-070). Along the way, Keepnews also parlayed Cannonball Adderley's "soul jazz" into a popular genre and had a surprise hit single, the label's only one, with Mongo Santamaria's "Watermelon Man." If great jazz record producers go to heaven, Orrin Keepnews has earned his halo and wings.

Various Artists: *The Riverside Records Story* (Riverside/Fantasy 4RCD-4422-2; 72:03/73:26/75:57/76:45: ★★★★★) In this retrospective boxed set, Keepnews attempts to capture, on four jam-packed discs, the essence of his work. There are 53 cuts, drawn from 51 different albums (45 currently in print as Fantasy OJCs) and two singles. Golden selections from the above-named classics are included, along with some silver surprises. With a few exceptions, everything is fine to fabulous, but the organizing principles and program order leave a lot to be desired.

Things start off well, in a section roped off as "Some Magic Moments" (13 cuts), as Monk and Oscar Pettiford play "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," Mongo struts through "Watermelon Man," Cannonball wails on "This Here," Monk and Sonny navigate "Brilliant Corners," Wes plucks "Four On Six" and Evans tumbles through "Waltz For Debby." Next, in "Some Major Players" (10 cuts) we get the incomparable treat of the complete Rollins *Freedom Suite* and Monk doing "Ruby, My Dear," first with Coleman Hawkins, then with Coltrane.

After that, things fall apart. "The Art of Collaboration" (three cuts) demonstrates nothing in particular and "The Heart of the



Golden selections plus some silver surprises: Wes Montgomery

Matter" (27 cuts) is programmed alphabetically, by artist. Jimmy Heath's swift little-big-band romps "Big P," Coleman Hawkins slaloms through "Laura," Harold Land and Wes nail "West Coast Blues," Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin duke it out on Lester's "Tickletoe." Don Friedman transports the harmonies of "Circle Waltz" and Elvin Jones impersonates Boris Karloff hilariously on "Blues For Dracula." But it's hard to remember why anyone cared about Johnny Lytle's plunky vibes on "The Village Caller," while "Some Kinda Mean" is not the best evidence of Sam Jones cello chops, nor is Yusef Lateef's "I'm Just A Lucky So And So" a brief for jazz oboe. Keepnews also betrays a weakness for a certain kind of schlock, induced by Hollywood studio-budget envy, which led him to record Blue Mitchell and Montgomery with strings, and to throw in a "beautiful" harp here and there.

This grab-bag suggests the image of a producer who has thrown up his hands at the task of giving order to such a wealth of material. Indeed, Keepnews complains in his notes that four discs isn't enough space to do the job properly. Perhaps. But my hunch is that it's not limited space, but rather a failure to find a narrative that has caused the problem here. Ultimately, this isn't the Riverside Records "story," because no story really gets

told, either through the order of the cuts or inside the 52-page liner booklet. There are some nice anecdotes, plus the de rigueur period photographs and impeccable documentation (though a list of the original albums would have been welcome), but there is no analysis.

What, for example, was the driving esthetic at Riverside? What does Keepnews mean by "legitimate," as opposed to "commercial" jazz? How many albums did best-sellers sell? Worst-sellers? And why did Riverside go out of business? Keepnews places the blame on Grauer, yet doesn't offer details. These are interesting questions, but they are lost in Keepnews' persistent self-congratulation for being the ultimate jazz "insider." This suggests that he is not really thinking about the listeners of this collection at all, as much as the artists he is honoring; a noble sentiment, but not one with a lot of return for the public. This would also explain his obsessive inclusiveness and the arbitrary arrangement of the tracks, with ballad following ballad, a piano trio following piano trio, and so forth.

Someday, perhaps, the Riverside Records "story" will be told. Until then, however, we'll have to be satisfied with this oddly arranged sampler of some of the best jazz ever recorded. **DB**

BEYOND

Groovy Film Music

by Frank-John Hadley

Music used in films and television must underscore the mood set by the visual images on screen. Sometimes, though, the main themes and incidental music stand by themselves and may be enjoyed without the corresponding pictures. That's the case with the soundtracks reviewed below, now available in the CD configuration after originating in the latter half of the 1960s and the early '70s, a time of great cultural upheaval and pop escapism.

The Saint (Razor & Tie 2156; 28:47; ★★★) The British program *The Saint*, given over to the clandestine exploits of playboy Simon Templar (Roger Moore), relied on Edwin Astley's big band-plus-strings for its musical fun and suspense, minus the then-usual Baroque keyboard instrument. Astley and Ken Jones contributed the arrangements. "Mulligatawny" and "Main Theme," in particular, are appealing in a breezy sort of way.

The Man From U.N.C.L.E. (Razor & Tie 2133; 33:26; ★★★) *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*—the hit TV show with dapper Napoleon Solo (Robert Vaughn) and blonde Russian sidekick Illya Kuryakin (David McCallum) who kept evil THRUSH on the run—was all the more thrilling for the lively, well-played orchestral arrangements of Hugo Montenegro. The most F.U.N. songs on this compilation are the first five, including the familiar main theme, sprung from the fertile imaginations of songwriters Jerry Goldsmith, Morton Stevens and Lalo Schifrin. Unfortunately, several songs penned by either Robert Drasnin or Gerald Fried are formulaic. Consumer Tip: For a superior survey of original U.N.C.L.E. spy music, track down the official soundtrack LP released on RCA Victor in '65.

Neal Hefti: Batman Theme And 19 Hefti Bat Songs (Razor & Tie 2153; 46:26; ★★★½) POW! BHAM! ZAP! The popular fantasy-adventure TV program *Batman* was a sublime exercise in camp. Hefti, a well-respected arranger for Count Basie and other notables before becoming a regular contributor to film/television music, served the series well with his big-band song creations. The Bat songs here, including the well-known "Batman Theme," are soaked through and through with Hefti's keen dramatic imagination and his flair for zany, swinging pop-jazz entertainment. Special Bat praise goes to "Fingers" and its far-out Phantom of the Opera-ish jazz organist.

Frank Zappa's 200 Motels (Rykodisc 10513/14; 42:12/49:57; ★★★½) The executives at United Artists Pictures must have gulped too many martinis when they allotted Frank "No Commercial Potential"



Frank Zappa: providing riotous rock & roll

Zappa \$600,000 to make a movie and soundtrack in 1970. On a sound stage in England constructed as a concentration camp, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra interprets FZ's contemporary classical/avant-garde music and evidences his seriousness of artistic intent and his high regard for Karlheinz

Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez. Also present are Zappa's anarchic Mothers of Invention, notably ex-Turtles singers Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan. They provide some riotous rock & roll and dialogue that jabs a thumb in the eye of rednecks, middle Americans and fellow rock & rollers alike. Be warned, a good chunk of the scripted Zappa humor is dirty, dumb, mean-spirited. The remastered 34 tracks are augmented with four wacky promo radio spots and a multimedia "enhanced track."

Zabriskie Point (Rhino 72462; 36:27/55:30; ★★★½) Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni's box office failure of 1970 was a fascinatingly odd anti-Establishment story with minimalist acting, campus violence, hallucinatory group sex in Death Valley and a wide-ranging soundtrack that was in keeping with free-form FM radio of the day. Disc One has three country-tinged rock bands—Kaleidoscope (with David Lindley), the Youngbloods, the Grateful Dead—and folk-blues guitarist John Fahey, Kentucky hillbilly Roscoe Holcomb, pop-country singer Patti Page and space-rockers Pink Floyd. (The Rolling Stones, Roy Orbison and the MEV avant-garde collective contributed music to the movie but not the soundtrack.) Disc Two contains previously unavailable outtakes of four gentle, meandering guitar improvisations by Jerry Garcia and credible stabs at country rock (!) and straight blues (!!) by the post-Syd Barrett Floyd. Groovy, man. **DB**

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BLINDFOLD TEST

FEBRUARY 1998

Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown

by Dave Helland

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.

Don't limit Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown by calling him a bluesman in spite of his several W.C. Handy awards. This Grammy-winning guitarist and fiddler plays cajun and country along with swinging blues and jazz. He's recorded with country star Roy Clark—and appeared on *Hee Haw*—as well as Eric Clapton, Leon Russell and Ry Cooder.

His latest release, *Gate Swings* (Verve), puts him in front of 13 horns arranged by Wardell Quezergue playing swing standards like "Flying Home" and "One O'Clock Jump," Percy Mayfield's "River's Invitation" and several originals. It's the same format that garnered him hits half a century ago when he recorded for the Peacock label. "Unless you tell people in detail what you have, it doesn't seem to register," Gate asserts. "All of my albums have got horns on them—maybe five, maybe 10. Lot of bands have 13 horns sound like 10. If you don't voice them right, you still haven't gotten any place."

Woody Herman

"Caldonia" (from *Blowin' Up A Storm, Drive, 1958*) Herman, clarinet, vocals; big band featuring Al Cohn.

Heck of a good band. I give 5 stars. Louis Jordan originally did that tune, and then Woody Herman came back and did it much faster, but it was fine the way he did it. It worked.

Stevie Ray Vaughan

"Texas Flood" (from *Greatest Hits, Epic, 1984*) Vaughan, guitar, vocals; Tommy Shannon, bass; Chris Layton, drums; Reese Wynans, keyboards.

I hear a lot of B.B. [King] licks. I know that voice, too. It's not Albert [King]. See, a lot of these people sound alike to me. I've heard that voice, and I'm quite sure I know that person. But it's so intertwined with the other. I would give that a 3. Tell me.

DH: Stevie Ray Vaughan.

That's what I said: I hear all B.B. King, carbon copy of B.B. King. In the first place, [Stevie Ray] played too loud. But listen to B.B. King and many other Kings all mixed in there, even his voice. He would have got his own niche, but he failed to be himself. It's easier being somebody else. That's why I wrote that tune "Everybody's Trying To Be Somebody Else When It's Hard Enough Just Trying To Be Yourself." And that's the truth.

Vassar Clements

"Cherokee" (from *Once In A While, Flying Fish, 1987*) Clements, violin; John Abercrombie, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

Stuff Smith—or one of the fiddle players, violin players that I'm thinking of like Joe Venuti, Ray Nance or Vassar Clements. A guitarist like that, I would say to him, "Man, are you gettin' paid by the notes or the gig? If you're gettin' paid by the notes, tell me how to do it, because I can make more money by the notes than by the gig."

Why Stuff Smith?

Well, all the violin players, you can put the whole bunch of them together, let 'em all do a solo; they're gonna do practically the same thing because they're classical trained. My daddy played



cajun, bluegrass, country, celt, polkas—the same thing I play, only I've developed more style. I'm the only artist in world who can play a blues and make it sound like a blues on a fiddle or viola. I'll say 4 stars for what he's doing, because he's playing jazz.

Melvin Taylor

"T-Bone Shuffle" (from *Melvin Taylor And The Slack Band, Evidence, 1995*) Taylor, guitar, vocals; Willie Smith, bass; Steve Potts, drums.

Chicago and Mississippi jump-blues, straightahead blues—that's all it is. He's playing a little bit of this and that. He's playing on top of his voice, whoever that is, and then he wasn't singing in the pocket. He would come on a second afterwards and rush himself into the lyrics. I heard some of the licks Stevie Ray was trying to run—some of B.B., some of Freddie King. I'd say 3 stars.

Count Basie

"Time Out" (from *The Complete Decca Recordings, 1937*) Count Basie, piano; Eddie Durham, guitar solo; big band featuring trumpeter Buck Clayton, saxophonists Lester Young and Herschel Evans, and the All-American Rhythm Section.

That's the corniest thing I ever heard. It was all right in its day, but this is not its day. It had to be the early '40s. That guitar isn't saying anything. Whose band is that?

Count Basie.

That was when Basie was real cornball. But do you notice, that man grew through the time, whereas a lot of them didn't. Like Louis Armstrong never did grow, kept that same old dixieland—I don't like dixieland. Now this band was on the border of dixieland and modern jazz, but [Basie] progressed. I didn't start listening to this man till in the '50s. I'd say 4 stars for that particular style.

Bob Wills

"Take The 'A' Train" (from *The Tiffany Transcriptions Vol. 3, 1947*) Wills, Joe Holley, Louis Tierney, fiddles; Herb Remington, steel guitar; Eldon Shamblin, electric guitar; Tiny Moore, electric mandolin; Millard Kelo, piano; Billy Jack Wills, bass; Johnny Cuiello, drums.

[from tape, "aaaahhhh"] That's got to be Bob Wills—real corny, playin' "A Train." Now I want you to notice the kind of "A Train" I do, way different from that. Now, that's real cornball. And people try to link me to Bob Wills, and I say, don't do that. I know him very well, but he was strictly from the [stresses and draws out] country-type jazz, Texas-type jazz. As country [pauses to reflect], I would give it 5 stars. But in jazz, I would give him less than 3. His jazz just wasn't saying nothing.

DB