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*Dreamer*



Jack DeJohnette  
CORE



## 20 Jack DeJohnette

### *Dreamer*

By Alan Nahigian

Cover photograph of Jack DeJohnette by John Abbott.

Jack DeJohnette has found an almost metaphysical unity in the many diverse projects he's taken on since first appearing as a sideman in New York in the 1960s. As a drummer, percussionist, pianist, bandleader and composer, he's played so many different styles that he no longer wants to make distinctions. Instead, he strives to bring it all home.

## FEATURES

### 30 Wynton Marsalis

#### *Talkin' Trumpeters*

By Ed Enright

### 36 Olu Dara

#### *Looking For Blues*

By Alan Nahigian

### 40 The 21st Annual Down Beat Student Music Awards

*Plus Down Beat's 7th Annual Achievement Awards For Jazz Education*

### 52 Tradin' Fours:

*Irma Thomas, Marcia Ball & Tracy Nelson*

*Paul Ellington*

*Peter Leitch*

*Michael Wolff*

### 72 Bright Lights, Big Show

*Products & Performance Highlights From Winter NAMM International In L.A.*



36 Olu Dara

ALAN NAHIGIAN

## DEPARTMENTS

8 On The Beat

10 Chords & Discords

12 Riffs

56 CD Reviews

70 Caught

80 Woodshed

82 Jazz On Campus

86 Blindfold Test



56 Fred Hersch



Gary Burton



Haden & Barron



# Jack DeJohnette

is a dreamer. When you listen beyond his extreme chops, when you look past his extensive resume, his spirituality cuts through.

A passionate player whose bass drum, stick technique and cymbals sound like no other, DeJohnette has found an almost metaphysical unity in the many diverse projects he's taken on since first appearing as a sideman in New York in 1966. He's studied and played so many different styles—from standards to fusion, free-jazz and world music—that he no longer wants to make distinctions. Instead, he strives to bring it all home.

DeJohnette's open-mindedness, which he says stems from his Native American roots, has led him to the forefront of the art of percussion. He has traveled the world in search of new ideas, and he's found them. He has seen the big picture, and it's growing on him.

During a long afternoon of discussions and listening sessions at DeJohnette's beautiful log cabin near Woodstock, N.Y., the drummer/percussionist/pianist/composer looked back on his wide range of musical experiences and shared his all-encompassing artistic vision.

By Alan Nahigian  
Photos By John Abbott

*dreamer*











**ALAN NAHIGIAN:** *You've played in so many different contexts, especially early in your career, as a sideman in some very prominent ensembles. But let's talk about the changes and growth you've experienced over the years as a leader.*

**JACK DeJOHNETTE:** Milestone was the first label I did a recording with as a leader. My first record was different. I had two bass players on it. I had Roy Haynes on it, Miroslav Vitous, Eddie Gomez, Stanley Cowell and Bennie Maupin. I played melodica and drums on that, and I wrote some compositions. I wrote one for Roy Haynes called "Papa Daddy," because he's one of my mentors. Eventually I left Milestone, and Keith [Jarrett] had told me about the ECM label. I was getting together with John Abercrombie and Mick Goodrick. We used to play a place in New Jersey, after I moved out of the city in '69.

**AN:** *What was the difference in your mind between what you were doing there versus what you were doing before?*

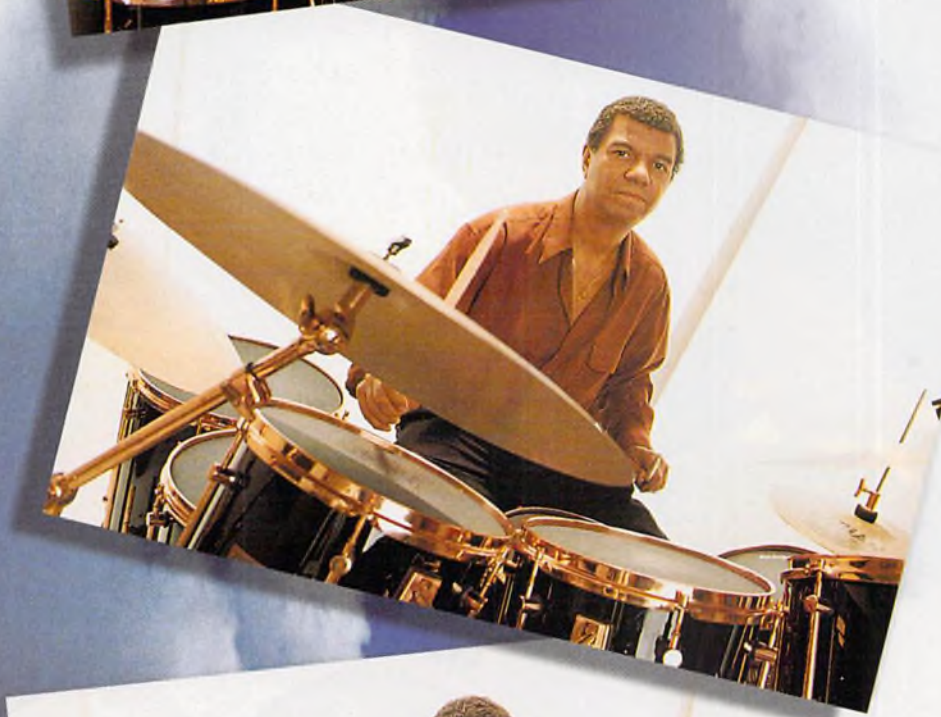
**JD:** I was hearing guitar, I liked guitar. I wanted somebody who could do some things from rock to free to whatever. Abercrombie could do that. He had been working with Chico Hamilton. I liked the idea of two guitars: One could be chordal, the other one solo. We played quite a bit, then eventually I got a hold of Alex Foster, who was playing alto at the time. Then I formed Directions, and I think the first bassist I had in there was Peter Warren. First we had a quartet with Alex, Peter, John and myself. We were pretty wild. A lot of the music then was just open-ended. We would just go out and play. A lot of improvisation. I loved doing that.

**AN:** *But you knew these musicians well, so you probably had a feeling of what you were doing together.*

**JD:** Sure. The group recorded *Directions*. Then I added Warren Bernhardt on piano, then I did a Directions album on ECM. But before that I was on Fantasy. The band was Peter Warren, Alex Foster and Abercrombie. We made one album with Directions that was called *Cosmic Chicken*. It hasn't been reissued on CD, but that's one of my favorite records.

**AN:** *Why?*

**JD:** It's just experimental. There's a piece on there I wrote called "Last Trance Stomp," which, through technology, actually goes through the different eras of drumming and includes the recording sound of the times. I put white noise on there, took out the EQ, made it sound real thin, and as each era passed, the fidelity gets clearer and clearer, up until the present day. So that's the historic evolution of drums through that. The music was constantly changing, radical. I was considered avant-garde, whatever that word meant. That word actually prevented some people from coming to the





music. Some practitioners of the so-called free-form jazz gave it a bad rep. The two camps of structured versus non-structured were at odds about the validity of the other. Both were really doing the same thing, in pursuit of trying to express something different: Some were trying to find freedom in the confines of rigid structures, while others were trying to find structure in the looseness of open-ended playing.

There's an argument that says playing within the structures is challenging, it's very hard. Yeah, it is. But it's also very hard to play with no piece in mind if you haven't had experience playing structured music. If you have, and you've gone through all those disciplines, when you do play without any music in front of you, you wind up playing a structure anyway in your free improvisation. I find invariably that if I'm soloing on drums or piano, I make up a structure as I go along, an A form, a B form, a C form. A motif that I'll come back to. Or that form might be something totally wild and abstract and the next section may be very calm and rhapsodic, romantic. So I think there's validity in both of those things. There doesn't need to be this separation. I've been in the center of that controversy all my life in music, because I'm in all these different situations.

**AN:** *And by being in all these different situations, you grow more as an artist. You can take something that you learn from one area and incorporate it into another area. And it will work.*

**JD:** I'm always doing that, putting things in where it might not necessarily seem to work, and maybe that's how I hear. Like the Directions group. We had slight personnel changes. Mike Richmond replaced Peter Warren. When I moved to ECM, I got to ECM through Keith, and Keith and I subsequently had produced this session that turned out to be *Ruta And Daitya*, which we made in California when we were playing with Miles. We went into the studio for two days and just improvised.

**AN:** *Then you performed with Gateway.*

**JD:** Somewhere around that time. I added Warren Bernhardt with the Directions band. We toured for a year and had some great times with that group. That went along for a while, then the Gateway band formed out of a suggestion by [ECM's] Manfred [Eicher]. He liked getting different combinations of the artists together to come up with something new for his label, which, most of the time, worked. That's how Gateway was formed. Subsequently, we did a few CDs, including *Gateway* and *Gateway II*. That was a fun band because it was a co-led band. We took a little hiatus and decided to put it back together during the last few years.

**AN:** *How did your approach with Gateway differ from Directions?*

**JD:** The difference was basically the personalities. In Gateway, John, [bassist] Dave [Holland] and I have a sound as a unit, because each one of us has our own strong, personal voice. Because it's a collective format in a co-led situation, Gateway has a strong presence. It's raucous, it has tunes that were mostly contributed by John and Dave. And I've written a few pieces for the group. I plan to write some more, but it also utilizes me on the piano, which is a place I play ballads or a couple different things to change the color.

**AN:** *I noticed when you started with ECM, you used more space in your music.*

**JD:** Yeah. Some of that is Manfred's influence because he has a European sensibility about that. He sees music as a complete thing, like a production, like a movie.

**AN:** *There's more openness; it's less dense.*

**JD:** I think it's beautiful to leave space. And I like the detail that Manfred takes with the sound of the instruments.

**AN:** *Like your new CD, Oneness, there's a lot of nice cymbal work, this shimmering sound, and impressionistic feeling, a lot of colors (see "CD Reviews" Feb. '98).*

**JD:** I like that. That is a side of Jack DeJohnette. That doesn't represent the total picture of who I am.

**AN:** *We can also contrast that with Album Album, where there's the horn section.*

**JD:** You can also bring up *Music For The Fifth World* [with John Scofield, Vernon Reid, Lonnie Plaxico, Joan Henry, Will Calhoun and others] since we're talking about contrast. That project had special meaning to me in examining my Native American roots in this country and also the period of music from the '70s, which means Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, also aboriginal music, in a way. It was a project that I'm glad I got documented. It shows me as a composer and a producer. And my socio-political musical interest. And the connection to the planets and all living things. The unity or oneness of all those things. Just because things are different and they don't work together sometimes doesn't mean they're not connected. There are just certain levels where they shouldn't be together, where they shouldn't work. But underneath all of that, there's a unifying concept.

**AN:** *On Oneness, you draw from these same things, but the overall sound is different. What was your approach in creating the feelings for this music?*

**JD:** One thing that worked in our favor for *Oneness* was the studio, Right Track. We were supposed to have a bigger studio so we could have more isolation, but the studio was smaller. We had [pianist] Mike Cain and [percussionist] Don Alias and myself all in one room. So the level

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Jack DeJohnette



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of volume that I played with the drums had to be more subdued.

**AN:** *It worked because you get those shimmering cymbal sounds.*

**JD:** Right. More emphasis was on the cymbals and less on volume and the drums, which created a really intimate feeling. I mean, this CD is remarkable. The last tracks "From The Heart" and "C.M.A." were the first things we did. The first part of that was open-ended improvising, and then we go into "C.M.A.," which is in 6/8 then different aspects of 4/4. That was the first thing we did, just went right down. So there's some really wonderful magic that comes through there.

**AN:** *As a composer, when you write, do you have specific people in mind?*

**JD:** Yeah. Michael Cain. [guitarist/bassist] Jerome Harris and myself are the nucleus group for Oneness, and Don Alias and [saxophonist] Bennie Maupin appear as special guests. But if it's possible, I like to do this with the trio and just focus that aspect. Then I can use special guests at times.

**AN:** *So when you compose, you think of who's going to be playing this music.*

**JD:** It was the spirit the musicians brought to the music, the character. You can have



**"That's what I like, the unpredictability of things. You run that risk when you improvise."**

somebody who's really musically adept and plays everything correct, but there's no character. You paint. You can look at a painting and say, "Oh, that's very nice, very technically correct." But where is the

spirit? Where is the soul of it? Where is the energy of it? That's what I like, the unpredictability of things. You run that risk when you improvise. You have to take these changes when they come and make something out of them, make something positive happen. That's what I endeavor to do with all my groups. Sometimes it's frustrating for the members when I do that. Sometimes I get carried away and put the brakes on, step back and re-evaluate and see how it affects the other members. I'm in a state like that now with the Oneness group. There are always shifts that are happening, and these are all good things that develop you as a whole being.

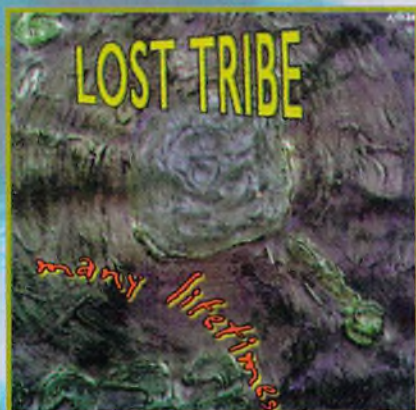
**AN:** *You just played me Music For The Fifth World and we've heard Special Edition and New Directions. They each have their own unique sound. You're exploring all these different areas, yet you're still Jack DeJohnette.*

**JD:** Maybe that's my idiosyncrasy. As to the future of the band Oneness, we are now going through some changes. Michael Cain expressed his conviction that this band should be a cooperative group, and that he and Jerome Harris should share artistic control with me. Michael felt that their contri-

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butions were just as important to the success of the band as my own. We have come to feel that we can each have something special to contribute that will result in a more cohesive unit. Working together, we create a sacred space for our voice; we make the band a living entity that is the meaning of Oneness. For example, Jerome has a great voice on his instruments and can do some amazing things. His contributions are very important. He feels that he can display some of his talents through this band and do some writing for which he has never had a forum. Mike has his own unique ideas. We can all do vocals and chants. During a performance, I might take over at the keyboards and Mike could play percussion. The potential for this group is incredible. Our working together as equal members will lead to something more spiritual. Michael and Jerome will feel more responsible, and musically they will give more of themselves as opposed to being just members of my band. We have something to gain by all three of us being equal members. This could be a place that we could all call home. People who hear and see us perform will be able to identify with that, that this is a very sacred type of music. For now, the goal has changed from what I want personally to what we want as a collective. It is very important to see and hear this band as a cohesive unit. This is what we feel about the future of this band, that we will all be together as one.

**AN:** *As a child, you say you listened to country & western, jazz, classical. It was all the same to you. That is also a "oneness."*

**JD:** Yes, because they are only separated by categories, and I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but there also needs to be room for this other mix. We have that going on now, categories like world jazz and musicians exploring ethnic possibilities. Randy Weston has been doing the world music thing since before it was in fashion. Forty years ago, he was using African drummers and paying tribute to his African roots. Even going to the extent of living in Morocco to actually get that experience. Now you have people like Steve Coleman doing Cuban music. Ry Cooder has done things with African musicians, stuff with Ali Farka Toure. There's Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who unfortunately passed away. There are these things that Peter Gabriel has been doing on Real World. Youssou N'Dour, Baba Maal, Salif Keita, Papa Wemba. I'm turned on by them. These are just a few that inspire me. You have Pharoah Sanders, who's doing things with Gnawan music, you've got Bill Laswell, who's putting together these cross-mixes of things on the Axiom label. Sometimes it works, sometimes it

doesn't. But I've been approached for us to do a project with [guitarist] Pat Martino and [cellist] Yo-Yo Ma. I like doing these things. If the vibration is right and the intention is positive and people work at it, these things do work. I believe that. You just have to keep trying things.

**AN:** *You're in the Blues Brothers 2000 movie. That must have been an interesting experience.*

**JD:** I was in Japan doing the Coltrane tribute, and my wife, Lydia, called me and said that Paul Shaffer called. He's the

musical director, and they wanted to know if I could make it. Then when she told me the lineup of people: Bo Diddley, Dr. John, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Stevie Winwood, Billy Preston, Lou Rawls, Koko Taylor, Gary U.S. Bonds, Jon Faddis, Clarence Clemons, Grover Washington Jr. They had all these people there. So it's the end of the movie, the big finale, and there's been this battle of the blues bands. And the Blues Brothers think they've won. And, of course, they say there's one more band, the house band, the Gator Boys Band, and that's the band

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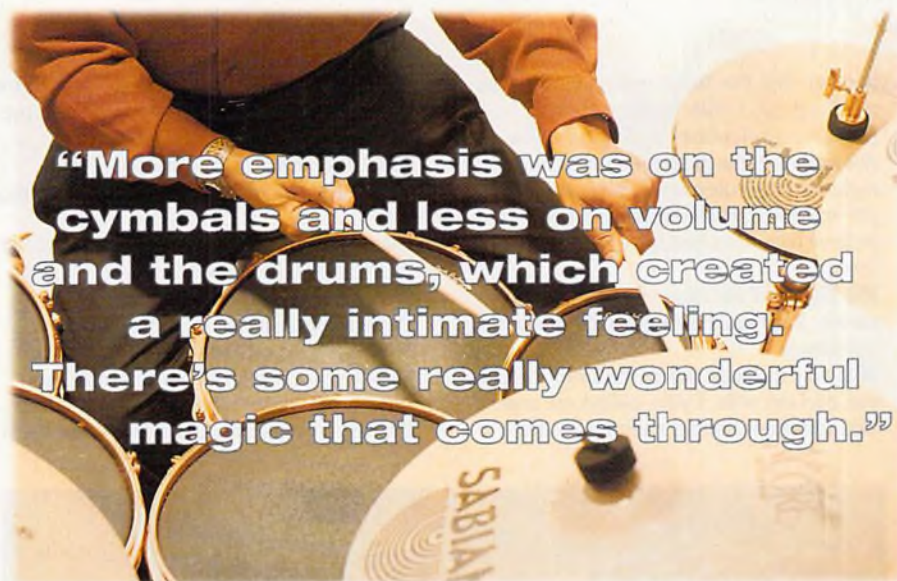
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**“More emphasis was on the cymbals and less on volume and the drums, which created a really intimate feeling. There’s some really wonderful magic that comes through.”**

that I’m in. We play a B.B. King blues called “How Blue Can You Get?” and then we jam with the Blues Brothers band with Steve Cropper and we do Gary U.S. Bonds’ “New Orleans.” We had a lot of fun and a lot of jamming was going on, instigated by Bo Diddley in between takes, and John Landis and Dan Ackroyd thought they were in heaven!

**AN:** *I’m sure you get approached a lot to do sideman gigs. How do you deal with that?*

**JD:** I do like to do recordings with musicians who are not heard of. I usually have them send me some of their music, their CDs, so I can get a feeling or vibration of how they write. Then I decide whether I’ll do it. I like to help the younger musicians. It’s important. That means a lot to a musician when they’re developing. Or I might do a special concert one time. My plate is pretty full. At this point, I’m at a crossroads about what I want to do next. I actually want to study more classical piano and some more theory and harmony. I’d love to do a solo piano album, unaccompanied. I really love the piano. At some point, I’d love to take half a year off and just do that: study and enjoy life. Also find new ways to express myself as a human being, as a spiritual being, as an artist, but also in my relationships with my musicians, with my wife and my family.

There are a number of special projects that I’ve been involved in with West African drummers, and some of them are in Manhattan. I did a performance with them at the Symphony Space sponsored by the World Music Institute. I’d like to produce a project with them where we do some performances and videotape it. It’s really incredible what they do. Some of the other projects I’ve done involved a soundtrack for a documentary written by Meryl Joseph. This one is about the people in New York City around the boroughs who were called “city farmers.” They take these vacant lots used by drug dealers and where people dump things, and clean them up. Operation Green Thumb brings them the tools and the

seeds and everything, and they get organized as a community. It talks about the transformation that happens in the community with these people and the stories that happen. It was shown at the Berlin Film Festival.

I did a soundtrack similar to that with Lester Bowie and myself for the CD, which was done on MCA, called *Zebra*. It was a Japanese filmmaker/photographer who got fascinated with patterns of the zebras and went out and spent two years in Africa just filming them. So it’s a 40-minute video of zebras. He wanted to have Lester come in and improvise over what I had written. Lester’s on three tracks, and the rest is me.

**AN:** *Of course, Lester was in one of your bands.*

**JD:** Yeah, the New Directions band with John Abercrombie and Eddie Gomez. That was a fun band. Lester can play anything, anywhere. We made a live recording in the studio on ECM, and we actually toured that group, played in New York. Some years ago, somebody wanted that group, and we got together and had a reunion at the college in Virginia.

**AN:** *John Purcell was in your band, David Murray was in your band, also Arthur Blythe and Chico Freeman.*

**JD:** I’ve had a cast of characters in the horn section. That was a great thing. It’s been a real rich, diversified life of music, the life and times of Jack DeJohnette. I’m practicing more hand percussion—congas, a wave drum, djembes—and listening to a lot of drumming. I’m trying to hook up and do some collaborations of some other drummers of different cultures, so that’s also in the works. I need to be exploring that and incorporating that into some of my different avenues in music.

**AN:** *You’re keeping pretty active.*

**JD:** I can’t complain. I just need to keep working and improving and finding joy doing what I do and learning from my successes and failures. And growing from all of that.

## EQUIPMENT

Jack DeJohnette plays Sabian Jack DeJohnette Encore cymbals, including 18-, 17-, 16-, 15-, 14- and 13-inch crashes; 22-, 21- and 20-inch rides; and 14-inch hi-hats. He plays Sonor drums: 8-, 10-, 12-, 13-, 14- and 16-inch tom-toms; a 14x16 1/2-inch snare; and either a 16x18-inch or 14x20-inch bass drum. He plays Vic Firth drumsticks (“It’s an extended 5A that’s got some meat to it but isn’t too heavy”) and uses black Aquarian Jack DeJohnette signature drumheads. He plays Toca congas and percussion products. He also plays Korg synthesizers: the SG1D, the Trinity, the M11 and the 01W. He prefers Steinway pianos.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(For additional listings, see February 1996 Down Beat.)

*ONENESS*—ECM 21637  
*DANCING WITH NATURE SPIRITS*—ECM 21558  
*EXTRA EDITION SPECIAL*—Blue Note 30494  
*MUSIC FOR THE FIFTH WORLD*—Blue Note 99089  
*EARTH WALK*—Blue Note 96690  
*PARALLEL REALITIES*—MCA 42313

(with Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock)  
*IRRESISTIBLE FORCES*—MCA/Impulse! 5992  
*AUDIOVISUALSCAPES*—MCA/Impulse! 2-8029  
*NEW DIRECTIONS*—ECM 21128  
*NEW DIRECTIONS IN EUROPE*—ECM 21157  
*ALBUM ALBUM*—ECM 823 467  
*SPECIAL EDITION*—ECM 827 649  
*THE DEJOHNETTE COMPLEX*—Fantasy/OJC 617  
*THE PIANO ALBUM*—Landmark 1504  
*SORCERY*—Fantasy/OJC 1838  
*INFLATION BLUES*—ECM 1244  
*ZEBRA*—MCA 42160 (with Lester Bowie)

with Gateway (John Abercrombie, Dave Holland)  
*GATEWAY*—ECM 21061  
*GATEWAY TWO*—ECM 21105  
*IN THE MOMENT*—ECM 21574  
*HOME COMING*—ECM 21562

with Miles Davis  
*LIVE/EVIL*—Columbia Legacy 65135  
*BLACK BEAUTY*—Columbia Legacy 65138  
*LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST*—Columbia Legacy 65139  
*BITCHES BREW*—Columbia 40577

with the Standards Trio (Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock)  
*AT THE BLUE NOTE*—ECM 21575  
*STANDARDS IN NORWAY*—ECM 21542  
*BYE BYE BLACKBIRD*—ECM 21467  
*THE CURE*—ECM 21440

with various others  
*THE NEW STANDARD*—Verve 529584 (Herbie Hancock)  
*TALES FROM THE HUDSON*—Impulse! 191  
 (Michael Brecker)

*MICHAEL BRECKER*—MCA 5980 (Michael Brecker)

*IMAGES: LIVE FROM MT. FUJI*—Blue Note 99492

(Gonzalo Rubalcaba)

*UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE*—Blue Note 99830

(Joe Lovano)

+3—Milestone 9250 (Sonny Rollins)

*FEED THE FIRE*—Verve 523 600 (Betty Carter)

*REAL BOOK*—ECM 23207 (Steve Swallow)

*THE COMPLETE BLUE NOTE 1964-66 JACKIE MCLEAN*

*SESSIONS*—Mosaic 150 (Jackie McLean)

*DOUBLE RAINBOW: THE MUSIC OF ANTONIO*

*CARLOS JOBIM*—Verve 527 222 (Joe Henderson)

*FOREST FLOWER*—Atlantic Jazz Gallery 71746

(Charles Lloyd)

*TALES OF ANOTHER*—ECM 21165 (Gary Peacock)

*SUPERNOVA*—Blue Note 84332 (Wayne Shorter)

*RUTA AND DAITYA*—ECM 21021 (Keith Jarrett)

*SONG X*—Geffen 24096 (Pat Metheny, Ornette Coleman)

*80/81*—ECM 21180 (Pat Metheny)

*TERJE RYPDAL, MIROSLAV VITOUS*

*JACK DEJOHNETTE*—ECM 21125

*NIGHT*—ECM 21272 (John Abercrombie)

*IN PASSING*—ECM 21139 (Mick Goodrick)

*TRIPPLICATE*—ECM 21373 (Dave Holland, Steve Coleman)

*FICTIONARY*—Geffen 24521 (Lyle Mays)

*ANGELUS*—Warner Bros. 45499 (Milton Nascimento)

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

*ANOTHER HAND*—Elektra/Musician 61088

(David Sanborn)

*WORD OF MOUTH*—Warner Bros. 3535 (Jaco Pastorius)

*BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON*—CTI/CBS Assoc.

40810 (George Benson)

*MOUNTAIN IN THE CLOUDS*—Atlantic 1622 (Miroslav

Vitous; out of print)

*ELIANE ELIAS PLAYS JOBIM*—Blue Note 93089

(Eliane Elias)

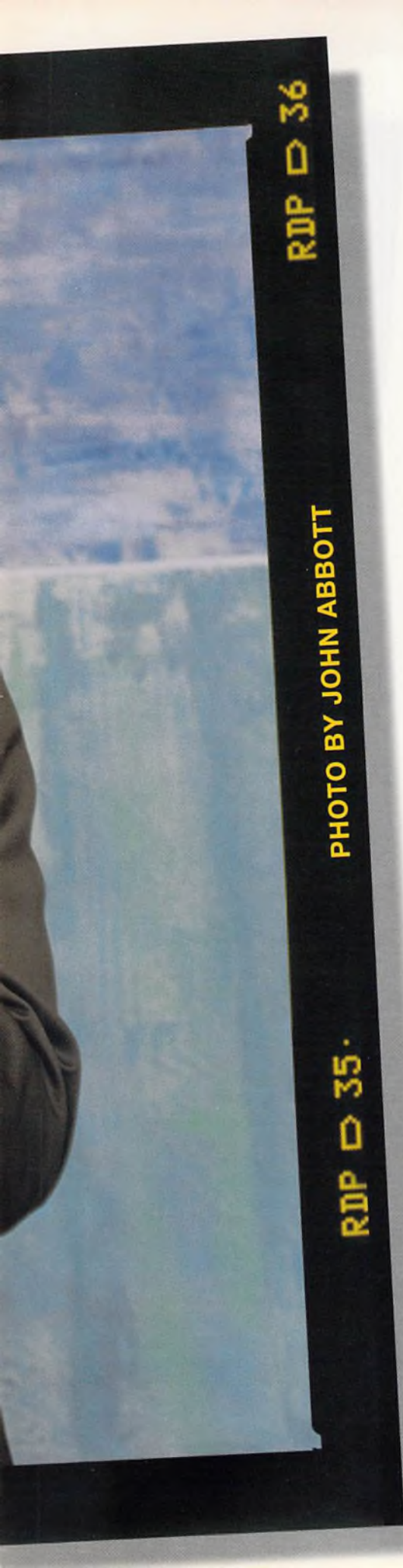
*FIRST LIGHT*—CTI/CBS Assoc. 40687 (Freddie Hubbard)



RDP 179







# Talkin' Trumpeters

With Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis wants to let the world know how he feels about his fellow trumpeters. During an informal chat with Down Beat earlier this year, Marsalis expressed his desire to accentuate the positive aspects of his favorite trumpeters in a context that goes beyond the cliché praise of “Yeah, he can play—he’s bad.”

Before digging into his list, though, Marsalis reflected on his reasons for wanting to speak up. “What normally comes across in musician interviews that carries any weight is always something negative,” said the famous trumpeter/bandleader/composer, who’s no stranger to negative press. “It’s like the whole philosophy of the news: It’s who got killed. Everybody notices things you don’t like about somebody’s playing. But there’s almost always a lot more that you actually *like* about what they’re playing.”

The following piece is an edited version of what Marsalis said during an hour-long conversation—which proved to be not nearly enough time to cover all the trumpeters on his mind. Look for a second installment in a future issue of Down Beat.

By Ed Enright



"One thing that really made me start thinking is the development that I've seen in **JON FADDIS'** trumpet playing. I've known him for a long time, since I first came to New York, since I was 17. That's almost 20 years ago now. I've seen his playing go through many changes. He could always read bet-

from Louis Armstrong onward. He can play real sweet—like when we did a Young People's Concert at Lincoln Center and we were doing a tongue-in-cheek version of "Moonglow" that we said Dizzy Gillespie might have heard when he was in high school coming across the radio by the Casa Loma Orchestra. Faddis and Ted Nash were playing. Man, it was unbelievable the way Faddis raised that melody. On our first show! Everybody, like Charles McPherson, was looking around like, "Damn! Did you hear that?" It was a tongue-in-cheek thing, but he played it with so much sensitivity and beauty.

"Another thing: Faddis has perfect pitch. He has very good harmonic hearing. He's very metic-

ulous about the music. He learns things the right way. He has phenomenal endurance. He could play two octaves above you and you're gonna get tired before him.

"He's a great teacher. He's always encouraging the younger musicians. All over the country, they say, 'Jon Faddis came to our school and did a clinic.'

"Faddis has talked to me in such depth about different members of my band. He was always listening to the records and saying how a cat could interpret something on the drums, on the bass ... he was aware of what I was doing to that degree."

ter than anyone else. Nobody in history has played trumpet the way he plays: higher than everybody else, and more accurate. In tune, clean-toned, and big and loud, with tremendous power. Very accurate. He plays with great rhythmic sophistication.

"I've heard him play so many times and in so many contexts, and I always notice something new about Faddis. One time in particular, he came on the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra tour in 1993 and subbed for Lew Soloff, and it was incredible every night.

"He can play all of the styles,

**"TERENCE BLANCHARD—** I like that cry that he has in his sound. He croons on his horn a certain way. I also think that he's written some good compositions. Terence can play the piano very well, too, and he's got that Crescent City rhythm, a distinct New Orleans way of playing.

"Terence has quick reflexes. I used to like the way he and [saxophonist] Donald Harrison would play together when they were a band. Terence is another one that goes in very interesting harmonic directions in his tunes. And he always writes things that are unusual—

it won't be head-solo-head or some boring format that everything kind of falls into. He comes up with different formats on a lot of pieces he's written."



**"WALLACE RONEY is another one with perfect pitch. Wallace knows so much about music. He knows exactly what everybody's playing. He's got encyclopedic knowledge.**

"I think the thing I like the most about Wallace's playing is the incorruptibility that's in his sound. He believes in playing. You don't get the feeling that he's easily corrupted. There are no gimmicks in his playing.

"I like the way Wallace puts his albums together. He's very organized. He tries to find things that are atypical as a bandleader, like using different interludes and going into different tempos, interesting things to take you off the common pad. But I think I've also heard tremendous development in his playing, too, over the years, just in how he addresses the rhythm. Wallace is more than a trumpet player; he loves drums, too.

"I think he has a different way of playing the chromatic ideas, different than how Miles Davis played. People hear it and they think that it's like Miles because it's in that orbit of sound, but he has a different way of interpreting the chromatic notes. He plays them in a different part of the harmony. Even though the melodic vocabulary is somewhat similar, there is a difference. He goes for different notes in the chord. He resolves his chromatic notes in a different way. Wallace can hear where he is. He's not using chromatic notes just to get from one note to another. He knows what they are. He can hear them. He hears the harmony."





**"NICHOLAS PAYTON** has a big, huge tone. Always had it. The first time I heard him play—he was about 14—he could play like that then. And he always could play really well through the harmony, even as a kid. Nicholas is

strong in all different styles of music, especially New Orleans music.

"Nicholas is another musician with great knowledge. He listens and studies all of the chords, and he's very much aware of everything that's going on. He's very dedicated, too. I'm sure he's practicing right now. He's always trying to develop his musicianship and improve. He demonstrates tremendous powers of concentration. He knows how to stick to a theme when he's soloing. He's also a good arranger. I remember I heard some arrangements he did of some vocal songs when he was in college. He did an excellent job of putting the band behind the vocals. Another guy who's patient with the time, very good time. Doesn't rush. And he has this sense of drama. He knows when to do certain things: when to hit it, when to go up high, when to go down low."



"I first heard **ROY HARGROVE** in high school. He was playing all the lead parts, and he was soloing. Roy has an incredible sense of rhythm and good hearing. And he has that thing in him, like the church people



say, that can make you 'get happy.' He has a certain type of heat in his sound. When he gets to that heat, his tone rises a certain way.

"Roy Hargrove really can play a ballad. That's one of his real great strengths. I think that's because his time is so good. I really would like to hear a record of him playing ballads with strings.

"Roy sounds like he's from Texas, that certain type of bounce that he plays with that you hear in Texas saxophone players like David 'Fathead' Newman, Arnett Cobb and Ornette Coleman."



**"MARCUS PRINTUP** is another one with a regional sound. You can tell he's got a Georgia thing in his sound, very soulful. Marcus is very original, plays interesting intervals. I think he's another one with perfect pitch. There's an interesting coloration in his sound, very unusual. He loves Booker Little. He goes up and down his horn, which is great to hear. He's another one who's got that heat in his sound.

"Whenever I need something that's deeply soulful, with any type of playing with mutes or any intricate type of playing in the harmony, I give that to Marcus. Also lead parts that require a certain amount of happiness and pathos. He can get a lot of pathos in his sound. I'd like to hear him play some Spanish music. He'd be great on something like *Sketches Of Spain*. He has that kind of happy/sad thing that Spanish music has.

"Marcus is another one with very quick reflexes. He's fast, too. He can run fast. Got a lot of speed. You ought to see him with a football."



**"RUSSELL GUNN** can play the blues. He has the ability to play fast and play in the time. He's really good at double-timing. He doesn't play with a lot

of vibrato in his sound, but his sound still has a lot of life. His playing is very witty. He's not afraid to play what he hears. He's very conscientious about his playing. I've known him since he was in high school. He was in East St. Louis, Illinois, one of [educator] Ron Carter's students at Lincoln High School."

**"NEXT TIME,** I want to talk about some more trumpeters, like Ryan Kisor and a whole pile of them," concluded Marsalis, ready to hurry off to an afternoon rehearsal. "And all over the world, too. The thing that I really want to do is to give people a clearer understanding of how many trumpeters are out there playing, lighting up the clubs and concert halls."

DB



# Olu Dara

## Looking For

# Blues

**Olu Dara has discovered a forgotten path. He takes a cue from the days when performers had to dance, act and sing and play an instrument to survive.**

Today, the specialist reigns. Entertainers are expert in creating a certain persona and style that they revisit in each performance either as an actor, dancer or musician. But rarely does an individual artist mix these three theatrical genres or cross over naturally from one to another like Olu Dara, who's just as comfortable acting or dancing

on stage as he is blowing his cornet, picking a guitar or singing.

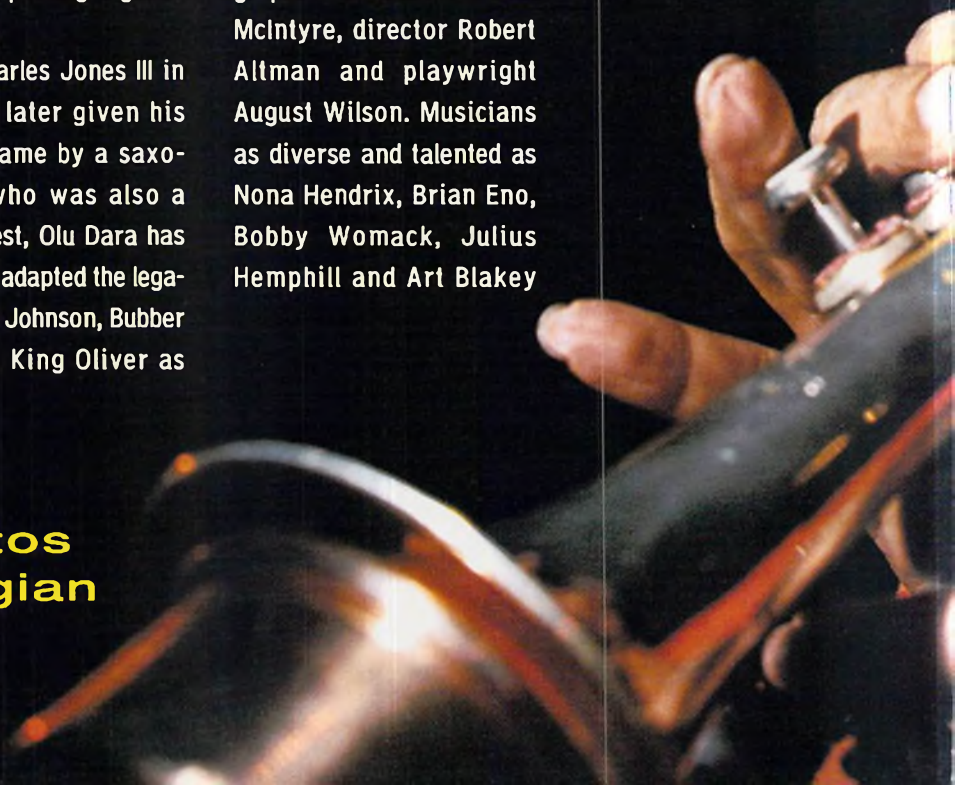
Born Charles Jones III in 1941 and later given his present name by a saxophonist who was also a Yorba priest, Olu Dara has mined and adapted the legacy of Bunk Johnson, Bubber Miley and King Oliver as

well as used Caribbean and African rhythms to form his own bluesy sound, which he refers to as "exotic rhythm." His music looks to the past while sounding contemporary.

Olu Dara has worked with many talented directors and performers such as choreographer and dancer Dianne McIntyre, director Robert Altman and playwright August Wilson. Musicians as diverse and talented as Nona Hendrix, Brian Eno, Bobby Womack, Julius Hemphill and Art Blakey

have utilized his talents as a musician. His son Nas is a popular rap artist with million-selling recordings. And this year, Olu Dara will perform in his own play in Virginia, and his debut album *In The World: From Natchez To New York* will be released on Atlantic.

**Story & Photos  
By Alan Nahigian**









**ALAN NAHIGIAN:** *You use African and Caribbean rhythms in your music. How did you pick that up?*

**OLU DARA:** That was a natural for me. When I first heard it, I loved it right away. I was in the Navy traveling to the Islands and Africa. I was very influenced by that experience. I could see the correlation between what was happening between the other cultures and what I experienced growing up in Natchez, Mississippi.

**AN:** *You played music in the Navy. What was that experience like?*

**OD:** It was like a job. You'd go out and play a gig, and you had to play standards and jazz. I never really studied jazz. I would just go out and play. I just thought of myself as being a horn player.

**AN:** *You played cornet or trumpet?*

**OD:** Trumpet. Cornet was supposedly a thing of the past, a relic, basically. As I got older, everybody was playing trumpet. Eventually I went back to the cornet.

**AN:** *Did you find your playing changed when you switched instruments?*

**OD:** Yes. When I played the trumpet, I sounded like all the other trumpet players. When I picked up the cornet, I went right back to the way I used to play. I don't think I play any different now than I did when I was 12 years old.

**AN:** *When you got out of the Navy, is that when you went to New York?*

**OD:** In 1964, I was discharged in New York. I was stranded here; I ran out of money [laughs]. I had no intention of becoming a musician. I had done it so much, I was glad to get away from it. I mean, I was in marching bands, big bands that I never liked.

**AN:** *Why didn't you like big bands?*

**OD:** There was just too much going on. It was almost like being on a football team. Who's gonna be the halfback, who's gonna run, who's gonna be quarterback, who's gonna be a soloist? Guys fought over solos. It took away from the essence of what I like in music. I like spontaneity. That is the great thing about music and art: the surprise element, no restrictions.

**AN:** *What about when you were soloing in front of the big band?*

**OD:** You knew what patterns you had to play. Everything was laid out for you.

**AN:** *So did you play any music when you got to New York?*

**OD:** Not right away. I didn't own a horn for maybe six years. Then I started running into people I knew in high school, like [drummer] Freddie Waits. And the guys I was in the military with, like [baritone saxophonist] Hamiet Bluiett. Also guys I had gone to college with like trumpet player Fielder Floyd and [vocalist] Leon Thomas. A lot of those guys were asking about playing music. I would just go and listen. When I finally started playing again, it was in the rhythm & blues bands, the natural place for me to be. We'd use two or three horns, and it was very creative. When that dissipated, I



**"I'm basically a performance artist. Everything I do now comes from when I was very young."**

wanted to play, and jazz musicians were the only musicians that were playing. I never called them "jazz musicians." I'd call them "instrumentalists" because I was always used to the voice, the vocal. Maybe that's why I wasn't too interested in bebop and stuff like that, because I never heard them with singers or never heard them play dance beats. I ran into people on the street like [tenor saxophonist] Carlos Garnett. He and [saxophonist] Bill Barron and [saxophonist/pianist] Sam Rivers were instrumental in getting me into their bands because there was no place for me to go after rhythm & blues disappeared from the scene.

**AN:** *So how did it feel playing more in a jazz context?*

**OD:** I was like a fish out of water. I loved to entertain, a song-and-dance man. I had to change my demeanor, because ...

**AN:** *They felt their music was more serious?*

**OD:** Yes. I always played in Caribbean bands, African bands and rhythm & blues bands. But the jazz world was different. Most people assumed since I had the trumpet that I was all the way into jazz. I could be in conversations or be around musicians and they would say things not too complimentary about other music. I

was told a lot of places that my solos were basically blues-oriented.

**AN:** *And they looked down on that?*

**OD:** Some did. A lot of musicians had scales and scale patterns they would play. I didn't think it was necessary. I had my own concept. But jazz kept me working.

**AN:** *Didn't you play with Art Blakey for a while?*

**OD:** One year. Even when I got with Blakey, I had never really played bebop.

**AN:** *So how did you get into Blakey's band?*

**OD:** He loved the way I played. He liked me because I could play in that vein and I wasn't intimidated. He used to say that a lot of other musicians were intimidated by the music itself. They were never satisfied with their solos. The concept wasn't anything mysterious to me. It was laid out. But I liked the idea that you play a song and don't know what key it's in or what the progressions are. I felt that's what jazz was about. I believe the excitement of the music was to go into a song without ever hearing it before.

**AN:** *Who was in that band?*

**OD:** Carter Jefferson, Cedric Lawson and Stafford James. Blakey was my main influence for forming my own orchestra. One night we were in Spain, and he called me over and said, "This shit is boring to you, ain't it?" He smiled and said, "Look, go out and do what you want to." So I went out and sang, just made up lyrics.

**AN:** *In front of Blakey?*

**OD:** Yeah. I sang blues and played different trumpet styles. He used to like the so-called avant-garde stuff that Carter, Cedric, Stafford and I used to do.

**AN:** *So you decided to leave Art. Did he tell you to do your own thing?*

**OD:** Well, no. We used to have conversations. He would say, "I see you have a lot of other things you like to do." I said, "Yes, I want to have a band where I just

## EQUIPMENT

Olu Dara plays an Olds Ambassador cornet, model #A00870, with a Giardinelli 10B mouthpiece. His guitar is a Gibson ES125, circa 1956. He also plays a Pro Hohner Blues Harp and a wooden Aboriginal trumpet.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(Listeners may want to check the used-record bins for many of the older titles listed here, as many of them are out of print.)

*IN THE WORLD: FROM NATCHEZ TO NEW YORK*—Atlantic 83077

*with various others*  
*LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE*—Big Ox Productions 9701 (Greg Bandy)

*ENDANGERED SPECIES*—India Navigation 1025 (Hamiet Bluiett)

*ORCHESTRA, DUO AND SEPTET*—Chiariscuro 182 (Hamiet Bluiett)

*FLAT-OUT JUMP SUITE*—Black Saint 120040 (Julius Hemphill)

*LIVE AT MOERS*—Moers Music 1062 (Philip Wilson)

*FLOWERS FOR ALBERT*—India Navigation 1026 (David Murray)

*MING*—Black Saint 45 (David Murray)

*DOCTOR TOO MUCH*—Khama 2 (Frank Lowe)

*HEAVY SPIRITS*—Arista Freedom 1008 (Oliver Lake)

*ARE YOU GLAD TO BE IN AMERICA*—Artists House 13 (James Blood Ulmer)

*THE SIXTH SENSE*—Black Saint 120088 (Don Pullen)



can be theatrical and play all forms of music." He picked that up. So I got my concept playing with his band by him letting me do my little stage show with him and stuff like that. Art really enjoyed it.

**AN:** *After you left Art Blakey in 1974, the loft scene started.*

**OD:** Yes, it was in its embryonic stages. After I left Blakey, there wasn't anything happening musically. Hamiet Bluiett called me—he had just left [Charles] Mingus, and we were both looking for something to do. He said that guys were coming to Manhattan from all over, a lot of them from St. Louis: Julius Hemphill, Philip Wilson, Arthur Blythe, Oliver Lake.

**AN:** *Most people associate you with these musicians.*

**OD:** Yes, they do. [laughter] They didn't know that it was an anomaly for me because I didn't grow up in that environment, nor did I know about this music really existing on that level.

**AN:** *So you were sort of thrown into the fire.*

**OD:** Yeah. They didn't have many trumpet players. A lot of the guys who played straightahead jazz, even if they weren't working, refused to play that kind of music. So there was an opportunity for me to play. I performed on some of their first records. I was always working.

**AN:** *So you got involved in the loft scene, you made some recordings and then you decided to form your own band.*

**OD:** When I formed my band, I found that

I had other ideas. I was in theater, also. I was in stage shows. I was in a play in New Brunswick. I had to play the part of a minister who played cornet. When I formed the Okra Orchestra, people from all over would come and see the band—actors, directors, writers; my band was very theatrical. I started getting calls to act in plays and compose music for theater. I got into that really heavy, and then Dianne McIntyre, a great choreographer and director, saw that I had knowledge of composing and performing. I had a dance background, I was a tap dancer. I was into acting in high school. I'm basically a performance artist. Everything I do now comes from when I was very young. I haven't changed.

**AN:** *That's true. When you played with Julius Hemphill and Hamiet Bluiett, you kind of bent them toward your style of playing more than going toward them. I can hear this in your solos: There's a lot of stretching and squeezing of notes that comes from your blues tradition.*

**OD:** Yeah, I would do that. No matter how far-out the music was in my mind, I would try to find the blues. It was like a little game: "Let's see if I can find the blues in this." I enjoyed it. Wherever I could find [the blues], I put it in. I was always looking for the blues, and I found I did [influence] a lot of musicians to change the sounds of [their] bands.

**AN:** *You've played with some of the same*

*musicians for many years now: [bassist] Alonzo Gardner, [guitarist] Kwatei ...*

**OD:** Kwatei Jones-Quartey, [drummer] Greg Bandy and Acosta Musamba, the conga player. We are a unit. We have done everything—we've played dances. And the whole 15 years, I think we've spent maybe a total of eight hours [practicing] altogether. They like to create on the spot.

**AN:** *Is that how you approached your new recording?*

**OD:** Yes. I didn't prepare for it. I approached the recording, lyrics and everything, right on the spot.

**AN:** *Did you prepare any differently for the Zora Neal Hurston American Playhouse production or for Robert Altman's film Kansas City?*

**OD:** The same: I just walked in. Even for the film *Zora Is Her Name*. The director says we need this, I ran a song through, then we filmed it. I came up with the song right on the spot to fit the situation. It's just like any other profession. If you go to a doctor's office, he doesn't say, "Well, let me go home and practice how I'm going to put this bandage on you." That's the way I look at music. I don't look at it as being difficult. I find it very easy. I never practice the cornet. I never did. I was brought up that way. My teacher never said go home and practice. He said, how can you practice life? Music is life! Always go in fresh. **DB**



# PURVEYORS OF FINE RECORDED ART SINCE 1973



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*Maiden Voyage*

Multiple Grammy® nominee and winner of the prestigious Billie Holiday award from the Academie Ju Jazz, vocalist Nnenna Freelon presents her new recording, *Maiden Voyage*—a joyous celebration of feminine spirit and pas-

sion. "The music is brimming with a wide variety of emotions which create a mind picture both sensuous and vibrant. The songs are filled with rich and ever-changing harmonies. This wealth of material is carefully culled from a variety of sources...women's songs, some primitive, some sophisticate. Nnenna's singing is deeply passionate—she draws from life experiences. These songs are a treasure trove to be listened to with joy and understanding."  
—Marian McPartland

4788-2



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*Full Circle*

Searching for the sound of classic jazz guitar? Look no further than *Full Circle*, the new release by seven string guitar virtuosos Howard Alden and Jimmy Bruno. In celebration of the great jazz guitar

tradition of Concord Records—and significantly marking both Concord Record's 25th anniversary and the final recording produced by its founder, Carl Jefferson—we are including free as a special bonus, the very first recording produced and released by Mr. Jefferson under the Concord Jazz label, *Jazz/Concord*, the seminal debut featuring another two of jazz' all time great guitarists, Joe Pass and Herb Ellis. Come *Full Circle* with us and celebrate the incredible sounds of the past, present, and future of jazz guitar!

9015-2



**AVISHAI COHEN**

*Adama*

Familiar to U.S. and international audiences for his work with Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez, vocalist Nnenna Freelon, and most recently as a member of Chick Corea's new group Origin, 27-year-old bassist/com-

poser Avishai Cohen—who was born in Jerusalem, and moved to New York in 1992—has been taking the New York jazz world by storm. As living proof of the multicultural nature and embrace of jazz, fusing ethnic influences from his homeland with the contemporary sensibilities of post-modern jazz, Cohen has crafted a swinging, accessible blend of music that appeals to jazz lovers around the world. Features eleven original compositions and the classic standard, *Bésame Mucho*.

Available at **TOWER RECORDS**



## An Experience Of Lifetimes

**‘W**e had so much fun in the studio, I'm surprised we ever got the album done,” Marcia Ball remembers with a laugh. The album in question, *Sing It!* (Rounder), radiantly reflects the pure joy of virtuoso voices joined together in the service of soul as it combines Ball's slinky syncopation with a couple of creatively compatible singers, Irma Thomas and Tracy Nelson.

It's not exactly a vocal teaming to challenge the classical Three Tenors, but to fans of sweet soul music, it's even better. Thomas, the undisputed Soul Queen of New Orleans, has been a shining beacon of elegant r&b for decades, introducing quintessential Crescent City anthems like “It's Raining,” “Ruler Of My Heart” and her sassy signature tune, “You Can Have My Husband (But Please Don't Mess With My Man),” into the core swamp-soul repertoire.

Texas-based but Louisiana-born-and-bred, Ball is a primary purveyor of the bayou beat, pounding her piano with boogie intensity while embellishing the tradition with personalized innovations. Nashville resident Nelson, whose enormous mother-earth voice has been used successfully to envelop everything from country blues to soulful gospel, is an undersung heroine of roots vocal music.

*Sing It!* showcases each vocal talent in effective fashion, but it's the trio numbers that elevate the recording to rarefied r&b heights. The scintillating singers, each distinctive and heavily stylized, don't blend perfectly, but that's part of the trio's attraction. The trio is by no means a classic harmony “girls group,” as the individual personalities are still very much evident in the final product, giving the music an exciting and unpredictable edge.

Ball had a head start on her collaborators since she previously explored the concept in a blues-tinged r&b romp with fellow Austin all-stars Angela Strehli and Lou Ann Barton. But where the Texas trio had frequently shared stages and even bands, the *Sing It!* sessions brought together singers who were very familiar with each other's work and reputations but had little actual experience performing together.

Nelson, who recorded “Ruler Of My Heart” in 1970, and Ball, however, felt they had an advantage in adapting to the situation. “We're both big Irma Thomas fans, so that made things easy from the start,” Nelson confides. “I know I used to sing along with Irma's records, and I imagine Marcia did, too. Actually being in the same room and getting to sing with her in person was one of the highlights of my career, if not my whole life.”

Thomas admits to being flattered by the high regard she's held in by her fellow singers but says the sessions were special to her as well. “I've never had an opportunity to record with singers like Marcia and Tracy,” Thomas explains. “But once we started singing, it was like we had been doing it together all our lives.”

Although the three vocalists felt a musical bond from the first note, mixing and matching their disparate vocal approaches required some unusual fine-tuning. “We were all too nice at the start,” Ball says. “We were real careful not to get in each other's way, but eventually our egos must have come out, because we were in there doing our best to outsing each other.”



Irma Thomas (left), Marcia Ball & Tracy Nelson

Nelson's take on the sessions, which took place in New Orleans over a six-month period, identifies a still more positive problem. “The real problem, if you can call it that, was everything sounded so good,” Nelson confides. “We'd do a song, and even the parts that we'd mess up on sounded great. We've all got a little perfectionism in our musical makeup, but when we heard the playbacks, we always seemed to like everything.”

There's little doubting the seasoned sincerity of the singers, but the downhome authenticity of the crack backing band, featuring New Orleans keyboard ace David Torkanowsky and Memphis guitarist Michael Toles, is equally impressive. The Crescent City flavor of the band is reinforced by the rhythm section of Buckwheat Zydeco bassist Lee Allen Zeno and drummer Raymond Weber, a veteran of Harry Connick Jr.'s funk band. Throw in some soulful sax work by heavyweights Ed Petersen and Victor Goines, and you've got a musical gumbo of classic proportions.

Ball, no slouch as a pianist herself, couldn't agree more. “What a band! Those cats can really play, and they can play any and everything. We didn't even have to think about the music because we knew it was in good hands, so we could devote all our attention to singing.”

The sessions also benefited greatly from well-chosen material, including new tunes from Dan Penn, Sarah Brown and others, as well as a judicious assortment of esoteric Gulf Coast r&b classics, such as Joe Tex's fine and funky “I Want To Do Everything For You.” Everyone involved, including producer Scott Billington, credited by all the singers as a major creative component of the final sound, brought songs to the sessions. “If you don't have good songs, it really doesn't matter how well you sing,” Nelson states. “We had a great band, great singers and a unique recording situation. It would have been a shame to waste all that on anything less than great songs.”

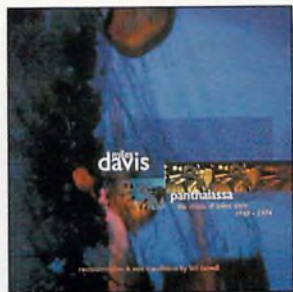
The trio tried out their live act on home ground, playing dates in New Orleans and Austin before taping a show for the PBS *Austin City Limits* television series. The overwhelming success of the performances, coupled with the pure pleasure the singers experienced doing them, bodes well for future touring. “We knew what we did in the studio sounded great, but we wanted to do it in front of an audience and see what happened,” Ball remembers. “It was so much better than we dreamed—we just stood there and smiled at each other like schoolgirls. I think we'd all like to have that experience as often as we can.”

—Michael Point



# CD REVIEWS

MAY 1998



## Miles Davis/ Bill Laswell

**Panthalassa**  
Columbia 67909

★★★★

Ten years ago, John Oswald started a collage technique he titled "plunderphonics"—building new tracks from particles appropriated from other people's work. Dub reggae has long utilized remixing and "versioning" as a standard technique, and one could see the film soundtrack to *Bird's* dubbing of new musicians behind Charlie Parker and Us3's sanctioned raids on the Blue Note catalog as plunder projects. In all these cases, it's accepted that since a label owns a piece of music, it can exercise any kind of power over that property, including making changes to the work itself. If you believe that ownership is 100 percent of the law, that's fine; if not, this raises deep art-ethics issues. By analogy, if a person buys a Cezanne painting, do they have the (legal and moral) right to airbrush over it?

Bill Laswell lists what he does on *Panthalassa* as "reconstruction and mix translation," but it's a form of plunderphonics. He's been allowed by Sony/Columbia (and, to some extent, the Miles Davis estate) to approach three Miles Davis records—*In A Silent Way*, *On The Corner* and *Get Up With It*—as his archive, and to remix and collage them. He also has never-released outtakes poached from the original sessions. All of this material is combined into new versions.

As with any collage work, the question is whether the appropriator creates something unique of his own or whether the most compelling aspects of the work come from the source materials themselves. Laswell seems cagey in this respect: He avoids listing himself as the primary artist, subtitled the project "Music Of Miles Davis 1969-1974," as if it was some sort of academic treatise. But he has actively manipulated the tapes, particularly the mix, giving them a more sanitized, pillowy sound, at the same time drawing out details, clarifying the layers of sound that Miles created. This is interesting, though I must admit, in Laswell's cleaner, slicker, apparently drastically compressed remixes, I miss the dirty edge of

the originals; seems funny that a self-proclaimed "revolutionary" like Laswell surrenders himself to hegemonic esthetics in preferring things so generically clean.

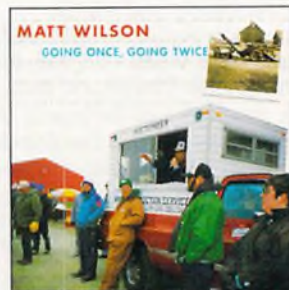
Whether you like or loathe the results, Laswell's role is basically cosmetic, and the hottest aspects of *Panthalassa* unquestionably come from Miles Davis and his cohorts. It is very hot music, fantastic music, a treasure trove of avant-garde pop-jazz. Davis dovetailed funk, fusion, pre-hip-hop, proto-jungle, tabla, acid-rock guitar, tape music, electronics and bop into a visionary stew that's been discussed in such detail lately, particularly with the reissue of five double-disc sets of electric-era classics on Columbia, that it hardly makes sense going too far into description or evaluation. Suffice to say, it's a sound that could have out-posted "post-rock" a quarter-century ago. (The star rating is an average of 5-star music with a 3-star mix.)

It's great to have some more of the reputed zillions of hours of tapes in the Columbia vaults in circulation, but why wouldn't they issue some without Laswell's touch? Complaints have been lodged that this era of Davis' music was edited (by Teo Macero) the way it was—raggedly, with obvious and audible cuts—simply to fit the music on LP format. That may be so, but any of the four tracks on *Panthalassa* could easily fit on a record side, and besides, there were musical issues at play in those jump-cuts and harsh edits, not just pragmatic ones. It is clear from Davis' biography that he considered the records finished pieces; in reference to *Bitches Brew*, he angrily shot down the rumor that it sounded the way it did because of Macero or (then-CBS President) Clive Davis being "white people trying to give some credit to other white people where it wasn't deserved because the record became a breakthrough concept, very innovative."

However they were created, these records must be understood as having a fully realized, not faulty or unfinished, esthetic. The kind of thing that speaks for itself, without "translation."

—John Corbett

**Panthalassa**—*In A Silent Way/Shhh/Peaceful/It's About That Time; Black Satin/Pete Cosey/Agharta Prelude Dub; Rated X/Billy Preston: He Loved Him Madly.* (59-42)  
**Personnel**—Davis, trumpet; Laswell, "reconstruction and mix translation"; members of Davis bands 1969-74.



## Matt Wilson

**Going Once, Going Twice**  
Palmetto 2032

★★★★

The whippersnapper of a drummer Matt Wilson heads out of the barn on his second outing for Palmetto with what is essentially a saxophone oratorio. Unlike the stable he had for *As Wave Follows Wave*, the quartet on *Going Once, Going Twice* is now a flexible quartet with guests on three cuts, including the ubiquitous Lee Konitz.

The title refers to a call an auctioneer bellows en route to announcing the winner at a county fair, or something like it. (I've never had the privilege.) If you've seen Wilson in any number of settings, including the one he toured with last year—his band from *Going Once* with special holdover from *Wave*, Dewey Redman—you know he isn't your typical straightahead or straightanything kind of trapman. So an inclusion like "Going Once, Going

## THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>MILES DAVIS/BILL LASWELL</b> <i>Panthalassa: The Music Of Miles Davis 1969-1974</i>		★1/2	★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2
<b>MATT WILSON</b> <i>Going Once, Going Twice</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA</b> <i>Theme For Monterey</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★	★★1/2	★★★
<b>MARK TURNER</b> <i>Mark Turner</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2



Twice" isn't real news. Wilson's jumpy title track features guests banjo player Pete McCann and "auctioneer" Ned Sublette, who can be heard auctioning a tractor on behalf of the retiring Gus Wilson and his "nest egg." As Wilson says in his liner notes, "It's a salute to the art of auctioneering." Having said this, the music is serious, to a point. Wilson has serious chops coupled with an overt sense of humor: The contrast between saxophonists Andrew D'Angelo and Joel Frahm's various intense, free-range bleatings and their vocalizing on Wilson's "Schoolboy Thug" make you wonder: Are these guys thugs themselves, or just wisecracks lobbing verbal pellets at everybody's least-favorite friend at recess? It's hard to tell, given the guttural approaches taken.

Unfortunately, *Going Once* offers even fewer drum spotlights compared to *Wave*. This is kind of a moot point when you consider Wilson's very musical playing is as much visual and aural, what with his postures, the various percussion instruments/doodads he uses, and his bold and enthusiastic bandleading.

Wilson's approach with saxophones and drums is mildly reminiscent of Jack DeJohnette's late-'70s and early '80s bands with Alex Foster, David Murray and Arthur Blythe. Like DeJohnette, Wilson uses saxophonists to essentially determine the color and shape of the music, with tunes that are accessible with familiar backbeats and hummable melodies, strewn though they may be among the high-register playing that makes up much of the disc. Herbie Nichols' straightahead burner "Chit-chatting" is followed by what is essentially a

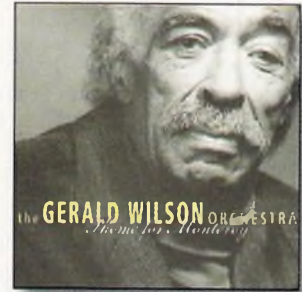
loosely constructed through-composed ballad, the standard "Hey There." Frahm and D'Angelo featured as primary voices throughout. The mood is slightly dark, slightly bent, like a "Far Side" comic. The 6/4 two-chord ditty "Request Potato" continues seamlessly on the heels of "Hey There," the two reed players edging closer and closer to cacophony while Wilson pierces the thick air with his tightly tuned tom-toms and high-pitched cymbals/cans.

The improvised segue piece "Brattleboro" brings on Konitz followed by Wilson's Ornette-ish "Land Of Lincoln," where all three reed players improvise over the simple melody, Konitz reciting the Gettysburg Address, Wilson thrashing away behind them all. These two pieces show an interesting use of Konitz, pretty much as a colorist. The other swinger is D'Angelo's uptempo "Andrew's Ditty." Here, as elsewhere, we hear one horn alone for a spell, only to be coaxed, cajoled and coddled by the other. In fact, one of the great strengths to this album is the chemistry between D'Angelo and Frahm as they interact with Wilson and solid bassist Yosuke Inoue. (Inoue is featured on Wilson's somber ballad "The Blossoms.") "Andrew's Ditty" also gives us one of two brief drum solos on the album (the out-and-out rocker "Schoolboy Thug" has the other).

*Going Once*, *Going Twice* also displays a "Side A" and "Side B" and ends with the Byrds' "Turn, Turn, Turn." Or does it? Not listed is a little vocalized studio groovin' at the very end. It's some serious fun. With Matt Wilson, you seem to get both.

—John Ephland

**Going Once, Going Twice**—Searchlight; Chit-chatting; Hey There; Request Potato; Going Once, Going Twice; Brattleboro; Land Of Lincoln; Andrew's Ditty; The Blossoms; Schoolboy Thug; Turn, Turn, Turn. (53:03)  
**Personnel**—Wilson, drums, percussion; Andrew D'Angelo, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, voice; Joel Frahm, tenor and soprano saxophones, voice; Yosuke Inoue, acoustic and electric basses; Lee Konitz, alto saxophone (6,7); Ned Sublette, auctioneer (5); Pete McCann, banjo (5).



## Gerald Wilson

### Theme For Monterey

MAMA 1021

★★★½

**G**erald Wilson's third CD for MAMA is an all-pro, big-band set whose centerpiece is Wilson's "Theme For Monterey," a five-part suite commissioned for the 40th Monterey Jazz Festival last year.



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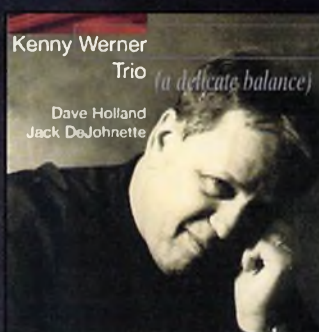
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Though each part stands on its own, the basic melodic material (vaguely reminiscent of Burt Bacharach's "What The World Needs Now") is the same throughout: an AABBA structure covering 40 bars. It's Wilson's varied treatments and the first-string solo team that give each version its identity, perspective and mood. "Romance" begins with a series of whole notes against piano quarter notes suggesting the passing of time, then becomes a showcase for Scott Mayo's expansive soprano with the ensemble delivering full-dress harmonic backgrounds. The lengthy "Lyon's Roar" is more a series of medium-tempo ensemble insertions and backgrounds fitted to pace each of the five soloists. Anthony Wilson (Gerald's son) leads off in some fine, clear-eyed guitar work.

A flute lead gives "The Lone Cypress" a pettily elegant veneer. Trombonist George Bohanon drops quotes ("Body And Soul," "I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues," "Summertime") like Barbara Walters drops names. But Wilson keeps the reeds simmering behind him and, in fact, seldom lets the orchestra sit on its hands. It's nearly always there, a full-time partner to each soloist. "Spanish Bay" is a stylish cha-cha. And "Cookin' At The Cannery" brings the theme to battle speed for spitfire solo work from trumpeter Carl Saunders and saxophonist Randall Willis.

The majesty of "Summertime" has inspired classic writing in jazz history, from Eddie Sauter's 1941 score for Artie Shaw to Gil Evans' magnificent blends for Miles Davis in 1958. Wilson fails to scale such heights here, but the playing is worthy of the material. He assigns the swaying chromatic undertones of the opening to the winds as pianist Eric Veliotes solos in the traditional tempo. Then guitarist Wilson abruptly takes it up for the long mid-portion, which he shares with Louis Taylor's soprano and Brian O'Rourke's perky piano. A strutting, high-kicking brass fanfare then slides us back full circle to pensiveness. For "Anthropology" Wilson goes Supersax style (bari Jack Nimitz was in the original group 25 years ago), though with a more stabbing, and less rolling, attack and with what appears to be a soprano lead, giving the section a bit less body. Saunders, Willis and Mayo solo with commanding presence before the final ensemble blowout.

Wilson's orchestra and writing have been collecting lots of praise in recent years, most generally deserved. But with this caveat: As big bands grow scarce, we are inclined to lose a certain necessary perspective when we hear one, lacking others with which to compare it. Praise that might otherwise be apportioned among many tends to be disproportionately handed to the survivor by default. Wilson leads a crack band here with integrity. But the unique harmonic and rhythmic signatures often attributed to his music seem ultimately too generic to stick.

—John McDonough

**Theme For Monterey**—*Theme For Monterey: Romance, Lyon's Roar, The Lone Cypress, Spanish Bay, Cookin' On Cannery Row, Summertime, Anthropology*, (63:25)

**Personnel**—Ron Barrows, Snooky Young, David Krimsley, Oscar Brashear, Carl Saunders, trumpet; George Bohanon, Leslie Benedict, Isaac Smith, Maurice Spears, trombones; John Stephens, Scott Mayo, Carl Randall, Randall Willis, Louis Taylor, Jack Nimitz, saxophones; Anthony Wilson, guitar; Eric Veliotes, piano; Trey Henry, bass; Mel Lee, drums.



## Mark Turner

Mark Turner  
Warner Bros. 46701

★★★

Anyone who heard Mark Turner stand tall against James Moody on last year's *The Two Tenors: Warner Jams Volume 2* knows that the young reed player is a mainstream modernist with enough left-of-center phrasing choices to raise many, many eyebrows.

Actually, I shouldn't use the word "against" regarding his relationship with the master on that animated blowing session. The pair got on like big-time buds. On almost every tune, each started straight and then waxed beautifully bent.

Turner's recent New York appearances have reminded that his solos can be both inspired and idiosyncratic. He exaggerates notes to italicize their singularity, employs silence in ways that make a siesta seem like a storm, puts quizzical semicolons in places where you least expect them, and generally unshackles formula wherever possible. And it's all done in a very unselfconscious way. Such maneuvers sparked the *Jams* disc; they also make the saxophonist's major-label debut an intriguing date. Though it introduces itself with a rather common facade—Turner's yet to forge a personalized composing style—this self-titled disc contains several pieces that stress his proclivity for generating the unexpected. Eternally cogent, he seldom seems mannered.

The three tandem tracks with Josh Redman reiterate what the Moody moves suggested: Turner can hold his own with the most clever of improvisers. His "Mr. Brown" opens the disc with authoritative statements from both tenor players. Each has a knack for pushing the parameters of a chord structure without forfeiting eloquence or group stability. On Lennie Tristano's "317 East 32nd Street" the pair work the head with perfectly ordered parallel lines. Their rapport is deep; both are gleeful and adamant about developing every iota of an idea. By the time Ornette Coleman's "Kathelin Gray" reaches its conclusion, they've wrapped themselves around each other about 100 times.

Turner chose the Lennie piece because he's a Warne Marsh zealot. That tells you something about his commitment to individualism, and why some of his phrases do such great fake-outs. Of course to sound both creative and centered you need a pliable rhythm sec-

tion, and one of the reasons the date works so well is the synergy established by Ed Simon, Chris Thomas and Brian Blade. Listen to them float furiously for a few measures after stating the head of "Hey, It's Me You're Talkin' To." Blade's animation is ultra focused, a model of poise. He and the bassist—both part of Redman's working unit—make "Magnolia Triangle" seem simultaneously facile and complex. Turner's particular about his dynamics, and this band takes his wishes to heart.

Warner Bros. wangled this session away from Criss Cross, the Dutch label that so thoroughly documents the work of up-and-coming New York jazzers. Recorded well over two years ago, it doesn't represent the level of sophistication that currently springs from Turner's horn. We're all in for a big shock when he cuts his first new session for the label. His talent is immense. —Jim Macnie

**Mark Turner**—*Mr. Brown: Lost Ocean*; 317 East 32nd Street; Kathelin Gray; Hey, It's Me You're Talkin' To; Autumn In New York; Magnolia Triangle; 26-2. (62:04)  
**Personnel**—Turner, tenor saxophone; Edward Simon, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Brian Blade, drums; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 4).



## Various Artists

Jazz At The Philharmonic:  
Frankfurt, 1952  
Pablo 3505

★★★★

As Norman Granz introduces the musicians at the start of this 1952 concert, released here for the first time, it is somehow remarkable to hear jazz artists cheered as wildly as rock musicians might be greeted today. Critics hated it at the time. They thought it demeaned a music that deserved reverence, not whistles and cat-calls. Well, jazz and the critics got their wish, and I'm afraid the scene is more boring for it.

Once upon a time, the market was awash in Jazz at the Philharmonic records, and they were taken for granted, even scorned. Today they are rare and missed (though Verve has had plans for a complete JATP box on the boards for several years and Nat Hentoff has reportedly written the notes). This one puts the fun back into reviewing records.

With a relatively small front line, the music is a fairly straightforward string of high-flying solos without the more formatted "battles." Not that there aren't formats. "How High The Moon," which had become a JATP theme song by 1952, sounds mechanical, but gave the audi-



ence the familiar riffs it had been hearing on records since 1946, save for a fresh splash of "Hawaiian War Chant" fitted onto the harmonic chassis at the end.

The most consistent energizer is Flip Phillips, who seems to set the air on fire every time he blows, and the faster the better. He paces himself wonderfully, rarely idling or throwing away a wasted bar. His lines are tight, to the point and swing with a hard, assured power. Eldridge, who is a bit shaky on the opening "How High The Moon," hits his stride on "Undecided." His first three or four choruses have a caged, coiled intensity that seethes with the suspense of an imminent explosion. The actual explosion is, of course, less interesting than its implication. On "Dre's Blues," he comes blasting into the end of a long Max Roach drum solo with an abandon that is both reckless and controlled. Ultimately, he paints himself into the one-note corner, but getting there is one terrific ride.

Lester Young brings a fairly solid early '50s sound to bear, but on the three fast pieces is woefully short on coherent long-term invention. He tosses off familiar signature phrases in short, isolated bursts that rarely take the trouble to connect to one another. They are sturdy but essentially modular non sequiturs.

In the cause of accuracy, the recording date given of Nov. 20, 1952, is patently impossible, as JATP was in the midst of the American tour at that time, producing the famous Krupa-Rich "Drum Battle." Fact is, this is the final set of Granz's first European tour, which did indeed end in Frankfurt, and was played April 19, 1952.

—John McDonough

**Jazz At The Philharmonic**—*How High The Moon; Undecided; Deep Purple; Rockin' Chair; This Is Always; I Cover The Waterfront; Dre's Blues.* (46:37)

**Personnel**—Roy Eldridge, trumpet; Lester Young, Flip Phillips, saxophones; Hank Jones, piano; Ray Brown, bass; Max Roach, drums.



## Fred Hersch

### Thelonious: Fred Hersch Plays Monk Nonesuch 79456

★★★

**A**s a concept, *Fred Hersch Plays Monk* is somewhat surprising. One tends to associate Hersch with an elegant, somewhat formal, meticulous approach to the piano. His precision and light touch are not qualities one necessarily associates with the music of

Thelonious Monk. Putting preconceptions aside, the pianist has devised an innovative, multifarious tribute that approaches and deconstructs the Monk canon from different perspectives, and with varying degrees of success.

Hersch tends to de-emphasize Monk's characteristic rhythms and eccentricities. With lovely readings of "Round Midnight" and "Crespuscule With Nellie/Reflections," Hersch's playing is sensitive and unabashedly romantic. He lovingly embellishes and extends the melody of "Round Midnight," and his treatment of "Crespuscule" is so stately and graceful that I envisioned Hersch playing Chopin Nocturnes in a salon. "Five Views Of Misterioso" and "Think Of One" are more adventurous, if a bit cerebral. Consider these tracks a pointillistic conception of Monk, breaking the melody down into small units and allowing the listener to connect the dots. I don't mean to suggest that Monk's compositions most or should be played the way Monk played them, but I felt that some intangibles essential to Monk had been lost in the translation. Finally, Hersch interprets "Bemsha Swing" and "In Walked Bud," using counterpoint, stylistic flourishes and a healthy dose of toe-tapping Monkian rhythm to achieve an innovative, but highly entertaining compromise.

Hersch's *Thelonious* will generate mixed feelings. Arguably, he's dressed Monk in tie and tails, making him respectable for classical audiences. Or, one might maintain that this is a valid and imaginative reconsideration of a great composer, not bound by preconceptions as to "jazz" vs. "classical" forms. It depends on how you like your Monk.

—Jon Andrews



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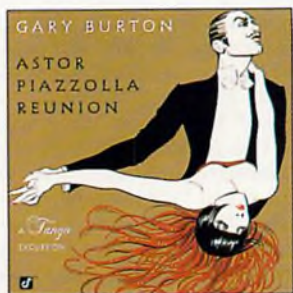
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FRANK MALFITANO, executive producer



**Thelonious: Fred Hersch Plays Monk**—*Round Midnight; In Walked Bud; Crepuscule With Nellie/Reflections; Think Of One; Ask Me Now; Evidence; Five View Of Misterioso; Let's Cool One; Bemsha Swing; Light Blue/Pannonica; I Mean You; 'Round Midnight Reprise.* (53:03)  
**Personnel**—Hersch, piano.



## Gary Burton

**Astor Piazzolla Reunion**  
 Concord Jazz 4793

★★★½

This heartfelt attempt to capture the intense passion of Astor Piazzolla's music is probably as successful as vibraphonist Gary Burton could expect. Burton and this largely Argentine cast—most of the players linked to Piazzolla's groups—do their best to put a faithful touch on this music, to imbue it with the innate sadness and aching beauty that is so much a

part of the tango and Piazzolla's vision of it.

In the end, however, Burton doesn't quite merge into that place where the bandoneon, violin, guitar, piano and bass weave a magic spell of romance lived on the edge of pain and longing. The vibist does a commendable job of distilling some of the feeling but remains, after all, an outsider in what may be the ultimate insider music.

In these often dizzyingly complex works, Burton melds best with his sidemen on "Biyuya" (money), "Caliente" (hot), "Triunfal" (triumphal), "Lunfardo" (street slang) and "Revirado" (crazy). By the way, the closing track, "Mi Refugio" (my refuge), is an electronically created duet between Piazzolla (a recorded solo from 1970) and an overdubbed Burton.

Burton and Piazzolla, who died two years after a massive 1990 stroke, had a history. They met in Buenos Aires in 1965 while Burton was on tour with Stan Getz. And they worked a mid-'80s tour of Europe and Japan, as well as a few dates later in the decade. They also made a Montreux Jazz Festival recording (*The New Tango*, Atlantic) in July 1986, although liner and back-cover blurbs by Piazzolla's widow indicate incorrectly that it is from 1985.

This recording is the result of a three-day Buenos Aires tribute to Piazzolla from December 1996. Piazzolla was, of course, a near outcast in his native Argentina—reviled largely because he dared to toy with the classic tango rooted in the culture of the portenos (Buenos Aires residents) who took the music as their identity. Only toward the end of his life—after the world had decided he was a genius—did Piazzolla win a certain grudging acceptance from the tangueros (his countrymen who loved

only the tango) of the old school of Carlos Gardel and his followers).

One can only wonder how this effort will fly with those same Argentines. —Will Smith

**Astor Piazzolla Reunion**—*Biyuya; Allegro Tangabile; Romance del Diablo; Caliente; Tanguedia; Triunfal; Soledad; Lunfardo; Revirado; La Muerte del Angel; Decarisimo; Concierto Para Quinteto; Mi Refugio.* (67:48)  
**Personnel**—Burton, vibraphone; Fernando Suarez-Paz, violin; Pablo Ziegler (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 12), Makoto Ozone (6, 7, 10), Nicolas Ledesma (3, 9, 11), piano; Horacio Malvicino, guitar; Daniel Binelli (1-3, 9, 11, 12), Marcelo Nisinman (4-8, 10), Astor Piazzolla (13), bandoneon; Hector Console, bass.



## Charlie Hunter & Pound For Pound

**Return Of The Candyman**  
 Blue Note 23108

★★

Charlie Hunter's *Return Of The Candyman* may satisfy his fans, but to someone not familiar with Hunter's music, it's fair to say his self-penned tunes hover somewhere between pop's idea of jazz and jazzy sketches at best.

Overall, drummer Scott Amendola chooses pretty stripped-down rhythms that seldom stray from a simple backbeat. It's particularly offensive on "Electric Relaxation." John Santos' percussion shines here and there, but the material does not command commitment.

Even though Hunter is the leader on *Return Of The Candyman*, vibraphonist Stefon Harris often takes over the front line and steals the show. His rhythmic prowess goes unchallenged just as his solos, setting loose flurries of notes, create the main interest on the recording.

Hunter's tune titles provide another means by which people can apprise what the fare is likely to be. "Pound For Pound," for example, sounds somewhat more complex than the majority of other tunes, but it seems to go on twice as long as it does. Amendola's drum solo draws attention for the wrong reasons. And, what is the point of "Grinch Confront," a 36-second snippet plucked conceivably from a longer dead-end? "Shake It" ends just as the band gets a groove going. A fade-in brings "Of Things To Come" to full volume. The tom-tom beat bores, but soon enough the revelation of things to come recedes into a fade-out.

One of the few successful tunes, "Enter The Dragon" strides in an upbeat manner, but it should have waited for compatible compositions. While a blues titled "Huggy Bear" works, Hunter's cast doesn't depend on spectacular chops. Again, Harris holds up more than his

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share of the bargain. On "Huggy Bear," he fulfills his mission to liven up the momentum. Without airs, he bops his notes, and his runs scintillate while the dynamic romps he invents engage the listener. —Zoë Anglesey

**Return Of The Candyman**—Bongo Confront; Enter The Dragon; Fly Like An Eagle; Dope-a-licious; Electric Relaxation; Return Of The Candyman; Pound For Pound; Grinch Confront; People; Shake It; Turn Me Loose; Huggy Bear; Of Things To Come. (52:18)

**Personnel**—Hunter, 8-string guitar; Stefan Harris, vibraphone; Scott Amendola, drums; John Santos, percussion.



## Ray Bryant

**Ray's Tribute To His Piano  
Playing Friends**  
JMI Jazz 7503

★★★★

**R**ay Bryant leaves nothing understated or in the shadows in this relentlessly oversized, incessant, rolling thunder of a piano-trio recital. It swings literally from the first note, which happens to belong to Ellington's "C Jam Blues." This is the sort of repetitive rhythmic figure masquerading as a melody that is Bryant's dish. Over a powerful beat of primal transparency laid down by Ray Drummond and Winard Harper, Bryant reshapes it with big block chords into an even more elemental riff, which illustrates one of the tenets at work through much of this very good CD—take a simple tune and strip it to an even simpler essence.

It serves Horace Silver's "Doodlin'" and Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" well, indeed (both are inherently funky in the old sense), and transposes Vince Guaraldi's "Cast Your Fate To The Wind" into a piece of gossamer gospel.

Only two numbers trip him up. On "Cute" Bryant seems stymied over how to reduce this irreducible novelty to his kind of piano. I would have preferred that he try something of Basie's with greater possibilities. "Taxi War Dance" would have been right up his alley. And he can't figure out exactly what to do with "Birdland," whose jerky rhythmic underpinning gives a pianist programmed to swing little to work with.

Not everything is so simple, though, especially when Bryant plays solo, which is his method of choice on portions of about half the pieces. He spends nearly four minutes probing Monk's "Round Midnight" before the rhythm section locks him into a groove. But once it starts its march, even Monk becomes reducible to a riff.

Bryant's keyboard attack is immaculately

uncluttered and sharply focused, with his left hand full of percussive punch. He remains one of our supreme masters of blues and gospel piano. —John McDonough

**Ray's Tribute To His Jazz Piano Friends**—C Jam Blues; The In Crowd; The Duke; Doodlin'; Cast Your Fate To The Wind; Cute; Round Midnight; Moanin'; Sunshower; Hi-Fly; Birdland. (62:35)

**Personnel**—Bryant, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Winard Harper, drums.



## Hank Jones

**Favors**  
Verve 537 316

★★★★

**H**ank Jones is, of course, deft, smooth and cultivated throughout this live performance in Osaka, Japan, but never manages, or seems to intend for that matter, to starle us in any special way. His work has the fin-

ished look and feel a master pro, but one who is not putting himself out to any serious extent.

For the last seven years Jones has presided over a piano workshop named for him at Osaka College of Music. This performance was recorded in May 1996 and is split more or less between his trio and a set with the college orchestra.

Tempos are generally moderate and unhurried, with first choruses laid out in rather formalistic time signatures that range from stately to stop-time ("Speak Low"), a device that lets Jones then shift preemptively into straight four-four trot, separate and contrast formal exposition from breezy improvisation, and make the audience appreciate swing when they hear it. Moreover, in a trio format you do what you can to create an sense of variety.

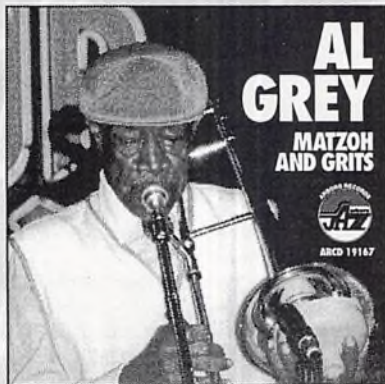
There sometimes might have been a little more tightness in the trio routines rather than let each performance extend through full-fledged bass and drum solos. George Mraz has his own feature on "Interface" and needn't be heard at length in every piece. Moreover, the slower tempos draw on all the considerable percussion artistry Dennis Mackrel can muster. With all that air to fill, slow drum solos are tough.

The Osaka College band sounds like similar bands in the States, which is to say well-crafted but anonymous. Yet, while I wouldn't presume to say Jones plays better with the band, there seem to be some mutual sparks in the air when the saxes come in under him on "Green Dolphin Street." A bright "How High The Moon" is held back by stiff hi-hat work at the top, but Jones, who must have this piece programmed deep in his bones from all those Jazz at

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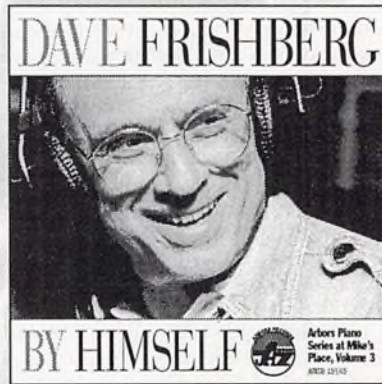


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the Philharmonic performances, promptly pulls it together. And "A Child Is Born" blares when it would better have whispered, but Jones' little coda at the end is just right. The charts by conductor Katsuhiko Tanaka are, aside from a minor reservation or two, just fine.

—John McDonough

**Favors**—*Love For Sale; Favors; Passing Time; Comin' Home Baby; Interface; Speak Low; On Green Dolphin Street; I Got It Bad; How High The Moon; A Child Is Born; Armageddon.* (62:06)

**Personnel**—Jones, piano; George Mraz, bass; Dennis Mackrel, drums; Osaka College of Music Wind Jazz Orchestra (7-11).



## Jodie Christian

**Soul Fountain**  
Delmark 498

★★★★

Pianist Jodie Christian challenges expectations with *Soul Fountain*. From this Chicago-based veteran pianist, you might well expect a swinging session of straight-ahead soul-jazz, taking a cue from the Clifford Jordan-composed blowing vehicle and title track. Christian fulfills that expectation, turns in a bright, engaging program of hard-bop, blues and soul, but also a few surprises. The ensemble includes two reedmen, who, for different reasons, seldom appear on straight-ahead acoustic dates. This 1994 session features the late alto saxophonist Art Porter and multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell, each on five tracks.

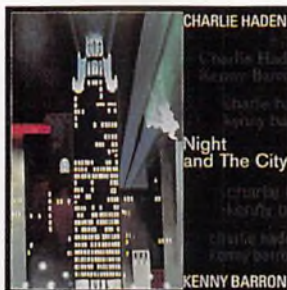
Porter displays a warm, expressive tone on alto, especially on his duet with Christian, "My One And Only Love." He sounds completely comfortable with the swinging hard-bop of "Soul Fountain" and the blues feeling of "That Bright Sun," and contributes a gospel-tinged solo on the soulful "Everlasting Life." Mitchell, a founder of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, seems like a wild card here. You wonder how and whether he's going to fit in. His soprano sax is the focal point of Christian's exploratory "Consequences." In this open-structured piece, Mitchell starts with short phrases, building his solo up into circular patterns with Christian's piano cascading behind him. A rousing version of Charlie Parker's "Now's The Time," concludes the CD, offering Mitchell an opportunity for a bebop solo on his alto horn. He respects tradition, but seems to be straining at its limits, ready to break free.

Two solo piano tracks demonstrate Christian's versatility, and the ruminative, spacious "Abstract Impression" is particularly effective, again taking Christian further outside than one might expect.

—Jon Andrews

**Soul Fountain**—*Soul Fountain; My One And Only Love; Everlasting Life; Abstract Impressions; That Bright Star; Consequences; Jeremy; Blessings; Now's The Time.* (59:10)

**Personnel**—Christian, piano; Art Porter, alto saxophone (1-3, 5, 7); Roscoe Mitchell, alto saxophone (5, 9), soprano saxophone (6); flute (3, 7); Odies Williams, trumpet (1, 3, 5, 7, 9); John Whitfield, bass (1, 3, 5-7, 9); Ernie Adams, drums (1, 3, 5-7, 9).



## Charlie Haden Kenny Barron

**Night And The City**  
Verve 539 961

★★★★

## Kenny Barron

**Things Unseen**  
Verve 537 315

★★★½

Duet recordings have rapidly become trendy, even commonplace, but here's a good one. *Night And The City* was recorded during Charlie Haden and Kenny Barron's three-night engagement at New York's Iridium in 1996. Haden could have called this project his Duo East. Instead of exploring the film noir atmosphere of post-WWII Los Angeles, he invokes the smoky ambiance of late-night Manhattan. The well-chosen tunes suggest a romanticized, after-hours setting, enhanced by the gentle clatter of glasses and plates. Barron and Haden interact as equal partners throughout, and they play familiar old tunes beautifully and with great warmth. In that sense, *Night And The City* offers few surprises.

"Twilight Song" sets the tone for the CD, as Barron's piano intro evokes the creeping shadows of nightfall. The pianist approaches standards like "Spring Is Here" and "You Don't Know What Love Is" with the sensitivity and taste you'd expect, embellishing and enhancing a good melody without excessive flourishes. "Body And Soul" is an obvious choice given the urban nocturne theme, but it's a fine showcase for Haden, who steps into the central role usually reserved for tenor sax, and delivers a tender, lyrical performance on the bass. He displays a warm, resonant tone on "The Very Thought Of You" and his own "Waltz For Ruth." (It turns out this CD was assembled by culling only ballad highlights from three nights at the Iridium. The pairing of Haden with Barron is so strong that I might have preferred a program more representative of a night's work.)

*Things Unseen* presents Barron playing original compositions with his long-time quintet, augmented by a trio of guests. Recorded in 1995, the session alternates blowing vehicles for the full ensemble with more experimental small-group offerings. "Marie Laveau" and "The Moment" bookend *Things Unseen*, and they share a graceful, medium-tempo swing along with insistent refrains reminiscent of middle '60s Herbie Hancock tunes. "Marie Laveau" is one of Barron's most attractive themes, and it includes a fine solo from Eddie Henderson on the muted trumpet. Barron allows soloists, including Henderson and tenor saxophonist John Stubbsfield, ample space to stretch out.

"Joy Island" and "Rose Noire" are among the more unusual tracks, each featuring strong, soulful work by violinist Naoko Terai. "Rose Noire" is a chamber-jazz duet for Barron and Terai, the violinist "singing" with an expressive, bittersweet tone recalling Stephane Grappelli, consoled and supported by Barron's lush phrases on piano. Guitarist John Scofield appears on three tracks, but his solos sound perfunctory and a bit out of place in this straight-ahead, acoustic setting.

If *Things Unseen* doesn't rank among Barron's very best records, that's a commentary on the high standards and expectations we now attach to his work.

—Jon Andrews

**Night And The City**—*Twilight Song; For Heaven's Sake; Spring Is Here; Body And Soul; You Don't Know What Love Is; Waltz For Ruth; The Very Thought Of You.* (70:47)

**Personnel**—Haden, bass; Barron, piano.

**Things Unseen**—*Marie Laveau; The Sequel; Christopher's Dance; Tongue In Cheek; Rose Noire; Things Unseen; Joy Island; The Moment.* (73:26)

**Personnel**—Barron, piano; Eddie Henderson, trumpet (1, 2, 4, 6, 8); John Stubbsfield, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 4, 6, 8); David Williams, bass (1, 2, 4, 6-8); Victor Lewis, drums (1, 2, 4, 6-8); Mino Cinelu, percussion (1-4, 6-8); John Scofield, guitar (2, 3, 7); Naoko Terai, violin (2, 3, 5, 7).



## Joey DeFrancesco & "Papa" John DeFrancesco

**All In The Family**  
HighNote 7021

★★★★

If your pulse does not quicken at the first quiver and sumptuous quake of the combined organs of Joey and Papa DeFrancesco, then there must be something wrong with your ticker. For their opening salvo, the father and son, in melodic unison with guitarist Melvin Sparks



and the twin tenors of Bootsie Barnes and Houston Person, sink their enormous chops into "Bags' Groove."

The tone, as in mood, set at the beginning never wavers, though the funky frolic is occasionally slowed as on Bobby Hebb's immortal "Sunny" and "My Buddy." But applying the brakes does little to stifle the bluesy intensity of the date. On the former tune, we catch the Hammond B-3 duo as they release all stops in their flawless take, tucking the tune's bouncy optimism under a blanket of brooding chords. Lose the mushiness on "My Buddy" and you have another gorgeous interpretation of a song that seems never to go out of style.

"Slammin' At Slims" is one of those roiling, let-it-all-hang-out numbers once heard in thousands of bars and clubs during the time when the organ/guitar/saxophone triumvirate was at its peak. Replete with boisterous announcements, the group recreates those hectic times, Barnes and Sparks jumping forcefully on the DeFrancescos' lavish romps and vamps.

Since the DeFrancesco solos are not disclosed, it was difficult to know which of them had the lead and who was comping in the background. This was of little consequence because the two organists have, quite naturally, a lot in common. Even so, there were moments, particularly when the arpeggios were a bit quicker and leaner, that suggested it might have been Joey.

No matter. The DeFrancescos are joined at the reeds, buttons and keyboards; and rather than bother about the differences, enjoy the blend.  
—Herb Boyd

**All In The Family**—*Bag's Groove; Sunny; Slammin' At Slims; Those Were The Days; My Buddy; Tuxedo Junction; Blues for Sweet Sue; When The Saints Go Marchin' In.* (51:12)

**Personnel**—Joey and "Papa" John DeFrancesco, Hammond B-3 organ; Bootsie Barnes (1-4, 6-8), Houston Person (2, 3, 6, 7), tenor saxophone; Melvin Sparks, guitar; Byron Landham, drums.



## Benny Waters

**Birdland Birthday, Live At 95**

enja 93212

★★★

**B**enny Waters began recording as a journeyman sideman around 1926 with Clarence Williams, Charlie Johnson and King Oliver, names that may but probably won't impress you now. Aside from that and a brief stay with Jimmie Lunceford in 1942, there is nothing in his career to have earned him a listing in any of the standard jazz references: Feather, Chilton, the Grove, or even the huge net dropped upon jazz history by Gunther Schuller.

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5. Up to 20 competitions may be held this year, each with a \$1,000 Grand Prize plus the Crystal Music Award and 99 Runners up awards.
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As of now, that will change. For Waters has survived intact to age 95, and such survival, once noted, accords the remedy of swift affirmative action to any worthy player whose career has become misplaced in obscurity. It happened to Bunk Johnson, Eubie Blake and, more recently, Doc Cheatham. Now it's Waters' turn to enjoy the rights and privileges of the oldest active but ignored jazz musician (see "Riffs" May '97).

Wisely, there is no effort here to restore Waters to a period band or sound. He plays it straight down the middle with a sympathetic but contemporary rhythm section, and his strong, gritty-on-demand sound in all registers neither asks nor gives any quarter. His intonation and control are clear and hard as a rock, as he twists notes with a raw lyricism. It's that strong sound more than his ideas that regularly carry his solos to a boil on track after track.

It's in his attack that you hear glimpses of a period clunkiness clinging around the edges. At fast tempos his sense of time tends to make him chug and plow rather than glide through his solos, a characteristic of his pre-swing '20s roots. But clearly he didn't stop listening to successive players or learning how to infuse his lines with more advanced rhythmic precision and variety. This is more evident on ballads like "I'm In The Mood For Love," "I Cried Because I Love You" and his slow blues. He navigates them with as much grace and poise as any good player out there.

Judged solely on the music, this is a consistently good, solid alto set. Feel free to add an extra star for the age factor. —*John McDonough*

**Live At 95**—*Exactly Like Me: Blues Amore; Everybody Loves My Baby; Besame Mucho; I Cried Because I Love You; Callin' The Cats; I'm In The Mood For Love; Jungle Blues; Misty.* (56:51)

**Personnel**—Waters, alto saxophone; Mike LeDonne, organ, piano; Howard Alden, Steve Blalock (9), guitar; Earl May, bass; Ed Locke, drums.



# Ron Carter

## The Bass And I Blue Note 59698

★★★★

The seven compositions here, an uncrowded number for a memorable CD, were performed on tour in Brazil and Japan before final selections were made. These distinct cultures seem to influence the overall approach. A spare elegance permeates the recording, while delicately executed Brazilian rhythms percolate on "The Shadow Of Your Smile," Carter's "Mr. Bow-Tie" and "Double Bass." No gimmicks, no mannerisms, no band-stand—each cut on *The Bass And I* attains its

mark with graceful precision.

Carter guides this band into its paces of synchronous musicianship. "You And The Night And The Music" jaunts along to Lewis Nash's skillful repartee tapped out on the tom-toms, spiced by shimmering cymbal textures. Carter's pizzicato draws in Steve Kroon's dry bongos. This dynamic concludes with the bassist plucking a two-note purr that fades into its own after-hum. Another criteria for a fine recording now becomes apparent: the care given to cultivating a natural, deeply rich and resonant sound. Add to this the following citation: "Recorded by Rudy Van Gelder." A legendary studio, meticulous in calibrating optimal acoustics, definitely lends itself to Carter's music.

On "Someday My Prince Will Come," Stephen Scott draws the spotlight as he constructs the melody's contour mainly at the high-end of the keyboard. Here we realize that while Carter explores the sonics of his instrument in impeccable time, he gives members of his quartet plenty of room to air their own chromatics. Nash sets in motion a modified fox trot on "The Shadow Of Your Smile." Carter's rhythmic figures complement Nash's, while Scott, with the exception of one improvisational excursion, maintains fidelity to the lyric. Carter relishes the drone of harmonics. Throughout, he indulges in a few quotes, and a host of pleasing slides, glides and slurs. Then for punctuation—a tap, and Carter releases a harmonic sting. Scott counters with a few quotes of his own as Kroon's filigree textures fill in. Scott's gentle strum of the piano strings ends the tune.

Dedicated to Carter's father, this version of "Mr. Bow Tie" (the bassist has recorded another) bobs to a graceful bossa nova. While Carter, Scott and Nash tend to this Rio groove, Kroon spices up the proceedings. After change-ups in tempo and a sudden return to the original cadence, there are more scrapes, sawing, whelps, cowbell clinks, staggered chimes and clave accents executed with sublime sensitivity to Carter's lead. "Double Bass" again features a seemingly relaxed Carter as he does it all, says it all, drawing from the well of porous wood and fat strings. Nash delivers a fearless sprint in brushes while Kroon releases flashier metallic signals.

When musicians love a tune and love the mentor it commemorates, the composition can only be more imposing. Stephen Scott opens Benny Golson's "I Remember Clifford" to a slow hymn-like cadence. At a certain point, the contrast provided by bold stops of high notes and bass chords steers the classic clear of a predictable course. Lewis Nash, like always, maintains an even palette of fine colorations. What an artist! While Carter continues to pursue various tangents, Scott returns pointillistically, note by note, to hopscotch the vectors of the song. Likewise, Kroon's pass through silvery chimes is echoed in turn by Nash on cymbals. Finally, never subordinate, yet never excessive, either, Carter, conveying his own sense of homage, pleasures in his instrument as it intones the soul of this gorgeous song.

Regarding this CD's jewel-box presentation, a fine recording deserves more than a list of credits and three photos. —*Zoë Anglesey*

**The Bass And I**—*You And The Night And The Music; Someday My Prince Will Come; Blues For D.P.; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Mr. Bow-Tie; I Remember Clifford.* (54:30)  
**Personnel**—Carter, bass; Stephen Scott, piano; Lewis Nash, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion.



# JAZZ

## Lab Experiments

by John McDonough

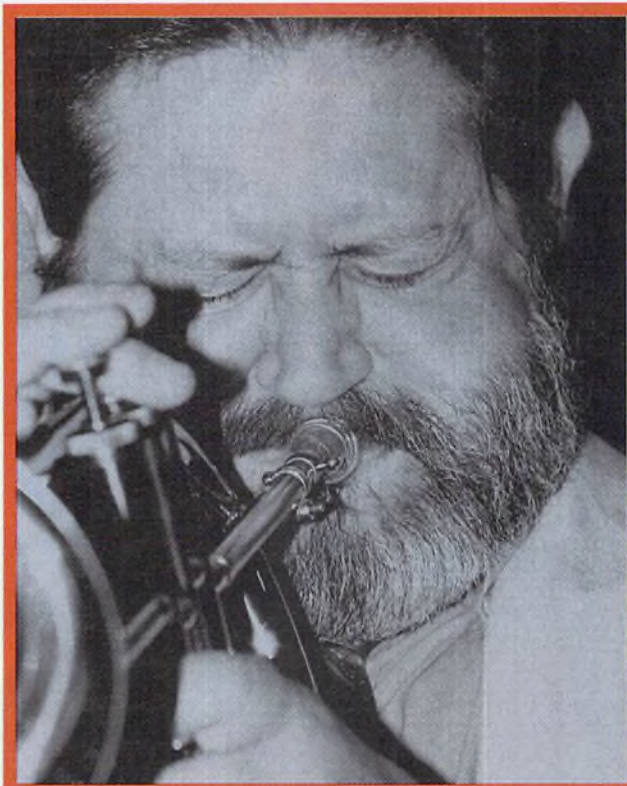
For decades, certain schools have institutionalized traditional rivalries like fall football fields with the faint scent of burning leaves in the air. Among the current batch of school CDs, I find one such rivalry—Evanston High School vs. New Trier—transposed from the gridiron to the bandstand. Alas, not on the same bandstand, but confrontation via CD.

**New Trier High School Jazz Ensembles: *Storm Front* (Soundtracks 2522; 59:47/54:51: ★★★½)** With two CDs to fill, director Jim Warrick gives us glimpses of the farm teams that will ultimately feed Winnetka, Ill.'s elite New Trier Jazz Ensemble I in the year 2000. The result is an interesting document of evolution through what may be life's greatest single leap forward (ages 14 to 18), from the uncertain precariousness of "Four Brothers" and "Front Burner," with its young voices still sounding intimidated if not frightened by their horns, to the relatively confident (if not quite original) soloists on "Sunrise" (actually "The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise") and "Bye Bye Blackbird." The progress in ensemble control and attack is only slightly less remarkable. As to other matters: The title cut, "Storm Front," is a commissioned program piece by New Trier alum J. Michael Verta of moderate interest. And Bobby Shew guests in a bright, virtuoso turn on "One In A Million." Among the students, Doug Rosenberg surfaces with poise and versatility on both bass clarinet and alto, as well as composer of the quintet piece ("Underlying Meaning").

**Evanston Township High School Jazz Ensemble and Combo: *All Save The Blues* (Evanston Fine Arts Department; 50:08: ★★★½)** Conductor David Fodor favors a solid mainstream groove, putting the ETHS Jazz Ensemble through two Basie pieces for openers. Just for a change, though, he might try counting off "Lil' Darlin'" as the hard-swinger composer Neal Hefti intended it to be. Basie's decision to slow it down may have seemed a stroke of insight in 1957, but it's a bit of a cliché today. Antonio Garcia of Evanston, Ill.'s Northwestern University music department guests on trombone on his own "No More Blues," which offers an imagi-

natively surrealistic dixieland interlude. And the brass section crackles on "Flashback," with solos by two unidentified trumpets and a big-toned trombonist. Of four sextet pieces, Monk's "Rhythmaning" (actually "Rhythm-a-Ning") rolls smoothest, with trumpeter Dave Young and trombonist Mario Davis providing a strong front line and good solos. The last piece, "Stardust," arranged by trumpeter Orbert Davis for strings, finds Young in fine dramatic form.

**Berklee: *Summa Cum Jazz, Best Of Berklee 1997* (BMG Jazz Club 118866; 69:57: ★★★★★½)** This is among the best college CDs I've heard, and maybe the first I would actually pay money to own. High praise indeed from a freeloading critic of long standing. Eight Berklee groups—two big bands and six combos—collectively demonstrate that when you've heard one Berklee band,



Bobby Shew: helping to document the New Trier Jazz Ensemble's evolution

you've heard one Berklee band. The New Life Jazz Orchestra's "Welcome To New Life" is a sexy swing cocktail of "Flying Home," "Airmail Special" and Illinois Jacquet riffs that shows tradition need not sound embalmed. And "Melody Changes" and "Starting Five" remind us that the offbeat can still be utterly charming and swinging in their originality. The music never falls below very good, and is often superb. Trumpeter Jeremy Pitt solos with authority in two groups.

**University of Massachusetts at Amherst Jazz Ensemble I: *Pay The Fiddler* (Jazz Ensemble 004: ★★★★★)** Director Jeff Holmes has crafted a smooth, nicely burnished orchestra that boasts a superior home-grown storehouse of composing and arrang-

ing skills. In addition to Holmes, whose contributions include the superb "Esprit" and an ambitious work augmented by the UMass Studio Orchestra, six other pieces come from either band members or others in the UMass family. Dave Pope is a first tenor of outstanding chops whose solos are inclined to veer toward tantrums ("Pay The Fiddler"). And one correction: "Isn't It Romantic" is Richard Rodgers, not Cole Porter (rent *Love Me Tonight* on video sometime).

**Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts: *Arts Jazz 20th Anniversary* (72:06/70:48/ 71:42: ★★★★★)** A parade of bands and vocalists fill this three-CD set from Dallas, which samples Washington units from 1979 through '96. The performances are not only consistent but remarkably assured, considering the youth of the players. "Impressions" (1984) and the ensemble soli break on "Night In Tunisia" (1990) are not pushovers. With some exceptions, though, solo skills are less confident. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove's two 1987 performances ("O.T.H." and "Tune Up") are among the exceptions, and remind us of the difference between a high school star and a young pro in the making. We also hear various generations of the Lab Singers in poised, precise performances, including crack, hard-swinging turns on "Too Darn Hot" (1993) and "Cottontail" (1995) that any pros would be proud of.

**Texas Tech University Jazz Ensemble I: *Seein' The Light* (Sea Breeze 4525; 66:33: ★★★★★½)** Vocalist Carla Helmbrecht is the showcase figure here, moving easily from jazzy scat numbers ("Take The 'A' Train") to standard ballads ("Someone To Watch Over Me") with a graceful articulation and a wide-ranging voice that crosses Laurel Masse and Susannah McCorkle. Five of the nine cuts of the Lubbock, Texas, band, drilled by director Alan Shinn into a tightly knit stage band,

are well up to the bravado section work the bones render on "'A' Train."

**Western Michigan University: *20* (SMR 9801; 45:19: ★★★★★)** Gold Company, headed by director Stephen Zegree, is a choral group of some 16 voices with occasional instrumental support. (The band gets one desultory piece to itself, "I'm The Mayor Of DAT City.") Though part of the Jazz Studies program in Kalamazoo, Mich., the resulting work is a celebration of 20 years of GC under Zegree's leadership. *20* delivers more an illusion of jazz feeling than the real thing. But the blends are so expertly engineered, arranged and performed, it hardly matters when you hear the gorgeous sounds ranging from "In A Mellotone" to "Over The Rainbow." **DB**



# REISSUES

## Quiet Storm

by John Corbett

There's a Shorty Rogers and the Lighthouse All-Stars 10-inch on Tampa that I've always wanted to use in a Blindfold Test: On a blues, a jackhammer tenor sax rips it up hot-and-heavy, wailing as loud and hard as the meanest showboatin' r&b honker 'n' screamer. Who's that man? Paul "Hucklebuck" Williams? Cecil "Big Jay" McNeely? Alvin "Red" Tyler? No, it's James "Jimmy" Giuffre, the gentlest gun in the West, donning his Mr. Hyde alter-outfit. In notes to his 1956 Atlantic record *The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet*, Giuffre wrote: "It has been said that when jazz gets soft it loses its gusto and funkiness. It is my feeling that soft jazz can retain the basic flavor and intensity that it has at a louder volume and at the same time perhaps reveal some new dimensions of feeling that loudness obscures." Clearly, Giuffre spoke of funk and gusto from experience.

**The Complete Capitol & Atlantic Recordings Of Jimmy Giuffre** (Mosaic 6-176; 69:34/60:27/63:15/74:08/56:34/48:52; ★★★★★½) The transformative years in which Giuffre began to explore the subtle power of low-dynamic jazz, between 1954 and 1958, are comprehensively covered in this set. This takes Giuffre from his early small- and medium-sized groups, which fell within the idiomatic bounds of the most adventurous West Coast and progressive jazz, albeit with Giuffre's very individual twists and turns, to the emergence of his groundbreaking trios. Along the way, the superb Mosaic set uncovers six never-before-released tracks, and it finally issues nine full records (and two additional tracks) that have never been available on disc, as well as *The Jimmy Giuffre 3*, which has been out for some time. Mosaic's box also allows a close listen to Giuffre's evolving clarinet style: Oft-criticized at the time for technical limitations, his depth of tone was exceptional and his melodic imagination perhaps just too subtle for a generation weaned on Goodman and Shaw.

Over the course of 84 tracks on six discs, Giuffre investigates new ideas and their consequences with uncommon diligence and single-mindedness. Most central, he interrogates the role of the rhythm section, eventually dismantling it piece by piece. In order to hear more of the sound of the horns—in his own case, his subdued clarinet in low-mid register was easily masked—he was particularly interested in alternatives to the usual niche reserved for drummers. Early, in

groups with trumpeter Jack Sheldon (who is a minor revelation here), a few cuts feature drums and bass fulfilling conventional propulsive functions, including a version of "I Only Have Eyes For You" with Curtis Counce and Shelly Manne swinging hard; but even that track finds Giuffre breaking the flow with arranged interruptions. On the mixed groupings of *The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet*—a magnificent concept album that includes a track of unaccompanied clarinet ("So Low"—get it?)—drumming activities are cut down to coloration, piecemeal fills, reduced volume using brushes and even playing with nothing but fingertips. Biggest surprise in this respect may be an album's worth of tunes from the Broadway show *The Music Man*—what seems like it might be a



Jimmy Giuffre: the gentlest gun in the West

commercial blip in his history is turned by Giuffre into a perfectly good place to test out some of his ideas on a larger group. On "Marian The Librarian," bassist Wendell Marshall provides the spare pulse, staying out of horns' way, with Ed Shaughnessy hueing and shading in near silence on cymbals; Shaughnessy's back in the saddle on "Gary, Indiana," ching-aling-ing behind Giuffre's fascinating tenor solo, which somehow takes a wailing, false-fingering r&b solo like the one mentioned above and runs it through a muted emotional filter—Illinois Jacquet meets Warne Marsh.

For percussionists of the time, even "cool" ones, Giuffre's directives must have seemed a bit perverse, but they clearly set the stage for the next move, which was to lose the rhythm section altogether. First to go was the drummer, and *The Jimmy Giuffre 3*, his

landmark outing with guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Ralph Peña, was the glorious result. That album includes "The Train And The River," one of Giuffre's best-known pieces and a composition that shows how he integrated simple, folksy melodic material without seeming trite. Hall is absolutely brilliant throughout; listen to him take a fragment of "Anything Goes" and stitch it into his solo on "That's The Way It Is," and dig how outrageously nuanced his comp is on "Crawdad Suite." Giuffre was dead-on: That kind of subtlety would have been nixed with a drummer. The follow-up record, with bassist Jim Atlas exchanged for Peña, was rejected by Giuffre and never issued, but it's well worth a listen (Hall fans should jump for joy at having this out); Giuffre was simply hunting for something else, and by dropping the bass and hiring Bob Brookmeyer on valve-trombone he filled some of the same registral area but opened up the idea further. That trio released *Trav'lin' Light*, which consisted of exactly the same nine tunes the Giuffre-Atlas-Hall trio had recorded, and *Western Suite*, the final chapter in Giuffre's Atlantic story.

The box contains the rare *Historic Jazz Concert At Music Inn*, a jam-session event from 1956 that includes "Blues In E-Flat," which was a bizarre study in contrasting approaches to clarinet featuring Giuffre and the morose giddiness of Pee Wee Russell. There are also three tracks by fellow Atlantic label-mates and low-dynamic jazz pioneers the Modern Jazz Quartet joined by Giuffre, and two featuring MJQ plus Giuffre (with Peña). But the most unusual section of the compilation is *The Four Brothers Sound*, an LP-length overdub experiment in which the Giuffre 3 is magically turned into a sextet by the power of hi-fi—Giuffre's tenor multitracked times four. Half the album was Giuffre originals, half standards—it's all pretty strange, but, as are all of the conceptual conceits on these six discs, it's also extremely musical and ultimately rewarding.

Artists of the archive: Mosaic once again succeeds at issuing a must-have collection that sheds new light on a major figure and in the process corrects misunderstandings and clarifies his significance. The Giuffre legacy is that much better for it. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Pl., Stamford, CT 06902) **DB**

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- *Four Brothers 1954*: ★★★★★ (12/15/54 issue)
- *Tangents In Jazz 1955*: ★★★★★ (11/30/55)
- *Modern Jazz Quartet At Music Inn, Guest Artist Jimmy Giuffre*: ★★★★★½ (1/9/57)
- *Jimmy Giuffre 3*: ★★★★★ (7/11/57)
- *The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet 1956*: ★★★★★ (11/14/56)
- *Jimmy Giuffre & His Men Play The Music Man*: ★★★★★½ (4/3/58)
- *Trav'lin' Light 1958*: ★★★★★½ (7/10/58)
- *The Four Brothers Sound*: ★★★ (5/14/59)



# BEYOND

## Beyond The Bloc

by John Corbett

Though the British label Leo Records made its mark introducing the Western world to the creative music of Eastern Bloc countries under communism, it has in fact cut a much wider swath of terrain since it was established by Leo Feigin in 1980, documenting improvised and experimental sounds from familiar and less-trodden regions. Feigin introduced the "Leo Lab" series a few years ago as an imprint for emerging and unknown artists—most of whom contribute financially to their productions.

**Alati/Ielasi/Radaele/Sciajno: *I Am Surprised While It Is Actually Happening...* (Leo Lab 038; 64:21: ★★★★★)**

This free improvising foursome from Italy—two electric guitars (Christian Alati, Giuseppe Ielasi), bass (Domenico Sciajno) and percussion (Ruggero Radaele)—creates a gorgeous 12-part suite of textural studies. Noteworthy for its patience and maturity, sometimes deploying the gradual development and oscillating stuff-in-strings guitar approach of AMM, sometimes more scratchy and interactive, this is very high-level, organically procured, noise-friendly spontaneous music. The guitars work without fancy-dancy effects, just inventiveness and scrappy attitude. Sciajno's gritty bass work is particularly impressive in a cut-loose duet with drummer Radaele ("Part 7").

**Ivo Perelman Duo Featuring Joe Morris: *Strings* (Leo 249; 55:02: ★★½)**

On *Strings*, saxist Perelman's exclusively on cello and vocals; he's an excellent improviser and finds a distinct fingerprint on both instruments. On "Tantalizing Imagery" he's brutal, slapping some body part and vocalizing abruptly, half-articulatedly, while he groans and howls like he's been shot on "Neolithic Man." On cello, he's all pizzing, rhythmically motivated, rather dry. Morris plays acoustic guitar, which he approaches very differently from electric; he uses a wonderful, scrabbling motion, frighteningly fast picking, with absolutely brilliant articulation; sudden high notes pop out like pin pricks, and he floats a gorgeous melodic line over Perelman's chunky rhythm on "Imperial." The collaborative process deserves note—Perelman put most of the tracks down first, then later asked Morris to superimpose his improvisations.

**Moscow Composers Orchestra Featuring Sainkho Namchylak: *Let Peremsky***

***Dream* (Leo Lab 035; 62:14: ★★★★★)**  
This is the label's second release from the 12-piece MCO paired with the outstanding Tuvan vocalist Namchylak. (There's a third disc, as well—*Life At City Garden*, on the U-Sound label.) The band's drummer is Vladimir Tarasov, who was percussionist with Ganelin Trio before its dissolution. Compositions are spacious, sectional and use a wide coloristic range, aided by the presence of bassoon, french horn and fiddle, which augment the brass and single reeds. The theme to pianist/leader Vladimir Miller's "Two Tone Tuva II" has a Sun Ra ring to it, while the stirring title track develops gradually, with loosely calibrated horn parts that finally settle on a drone—Namchylak delectates over the one tone, leaping into the stratosphere, then diving into bass range. Elsewhere, she sings multiphonics, indulges in faux weeping, flutters amazingly and sometimes belts, flat-out. Guyvoronsky's "Brief Meditation" is an ambitious 36-minute excursion with very nice arranged passages, improvised heterophony, some vigorous free-jazz, and a neat, limping waltz section at the end.



Marilyn Crispell: a mesmerizing doozie

**Parker/Guy/Lytton And Marilyn Crispell: *Natives And Aliens* (Leo 243; 69:53: ★★★★★)** Evan Parker and Marilyn Crispell have both made multiple records for Leo. Their first joint venture is a doozie, throwing the American pianist into the ring with the British saxophonist's long-running ensemble. One track to the next, *Natives And Aliens* is mesmerizing improvised music of uncompromising quality and depth. At moments, Barry Guy's bass and Paul Lytton's percussion can turn into a scirocco, whipping energy around with Parker's pot-boiling tenor and Crispell's total-sync rhythmic sense; other points, like "Hirta," manage to be genteel without losing tension. Crispell is magnificent throughout, and she and Parker have a tremendous synergy, as one can plainly hear on "Rhus," where they convene outright. The superb detail of the free play is captured perfectly in this immaculate recording, which couldn't come more highly recommended. **DB**

"Perelmans one of the pre-eminent tenor sax players of our time." **OPTION**

"Ivo produces music of absolutely mesmerizing grandeur." **CADENCE**



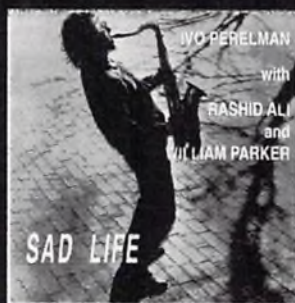
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# BLINDFOLD TEST

MAY 1998

## Christian McBride

by Michael Bourne

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

All of 25 but already a major player, bassist Christian McBride has established himself as the best bassist of his generation, not to mention one of the best on his instrument, period. He's recorded more than 150 albums as a sideman, and names three that were especially exciting: Benny Carter's *Legends*, Joe Henderson's *Double Rainbow* and Javon Jackson's *Me And Mr. Jones*, featuring Elvin Jones. He's also been active as a bandleader, with two albums for Verve, *Gettin' To It* and *Number Two Express*, plus two co-op sessions: *Parker's Mood*, a tribute to Charlie Parker with Roy Hargrove and Stephen Scott, and *Fingerpainting*, a tribute to Herbie Hancock with Nicholas Payton and Mark Whitfield. McBride's current quartet with saxophonist Tim Warfield, pianist Charles Craig and either Gregory Hutchinson or Carl Allen at the drums will be joined by percussionist Don Alias and guitarist Russell Malone for an album to be released later this year.

### Bob Stewart

"Tunk" (from *Then & Now, Postcards*) Stewart, tuba; Graham Haynes, cornet; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone; Jerome Harris, guitar; Buddy Williams, drums.

The tuba player is killing! Playing bass lines like this, other than Howard Johnson, I can only guess Bob Stewart. It took a minute for my ear to get adjusted to hearing the tuba playing the bass part, especially a walking-bass part like this. "Bemsha Swing," maybe? I feel uncomfortable giving stars, because, obviously, the musicians were happy with their performances. Personally, this wasn't something that touched me, but I have to say that I appreciate the performances. They put hard work into it. I'll give it 3 stars.

MB: It's a variation on "Bemsha Swing" composed by Bob Stewart.

Bob Stewart is the only tuba player I know who can play hip bass lines like that.

### Charlie Haden and Hank Jones

"I've Got A Robe, You Got A Robe" (from *Steal Away, Verve*) Haden, bass; Jones, piano.

Charlie and Hank? I don't know too many bass players who can make a nice melodic statement without playing a whole bunch of notes. Charlie's always been one who's able to do that. I don't know too many albums of Charlie in a duet setting like this. This is the kind of stuff I like, just hearing the bass and the piano, just playing, just going for it, really swinging. I don't recognize the song. I know I should. 5 stars. Anything Charlie does, and especially anything Hank does, because he's one of the modern geniuses of the piano, I'd give 5 stars.

### Cinelu, Eubanks, Holland

"The Whirling Dervish" (from *World Trio, Intuition*) Mino Cinelu, percussion; Kevin Eubanks, guitar; Dave Holland, bass.

Oooh, this is bad! I don't know what this is, but I love it! 5 stars! I dig this groove. The guitar player is playing a lot of rhythmic stuff. The bass player is playing a lot of hip stuff. There's a lot going on, but it's still got a basic groove to it. The solo that the bass player took was killing. He played some nice lines, some really slick harmonic things. I can't recognize the bass player, but I can't think of too many guys who can play melodic lines like that with that



kind of facility and still keep a pretty good sound happening. I don't think it's Dave Holland, or Miroslav Vitous. It sounds pretty recent, and I haven't heard anything by Miroslav for a while. Dave certainly has lots of facility, lots of great harmonic ideas, and a great sound.

### Idris Muhammad

"Super Bad" (from *Legends Of Acid Jazz, Prestige, 1970*) Muhammad, drums; Virgil Jones, trumpet; Melvin Sparks, guitar; Harold Mabern, piano; Jimmy Lewis, electric bass; Buddy Caldwell, conga.

When it comes to someone covering James Brown's music, I get very defensive. As well as I know James Brown's music, I don't think I would ever cover any of his music. James Brown is an innovator, but he wasn't really a songwriter. James Brown's innovations came in grooves and textures more than melody and harmonic movement, and most of his songs are just vamps. They've got a nice groove happening, but I'd rather hear them make up a song. What they're doing is very funky, but it's the wrong groove to play on "Super Bad." There's always two guitar parts and a specific bass line that Bootsy Collins innovated. If I didn't know any James Brown material, I'd say yeah, it's funky, but because I'm so close to James Brown's music, I get real defensive. I'll give it 4 stars for the groove, but for the song, 1. I'll guess that this is Idris. Idris is very funky, and if I didn't know what the song is, I'd say this is killing.

### Ray Brown

"Gumbo Hump" (from *3 Dimensional, Concord Jazz*) Brown, bass, composer; Gene Harris, piano; Jeff Hamilton, drums.

Dad! Ray Brown. "Gumbo Hump." What can I say about my father? He's the man! For my money, Ray Brown is about as close to perfect as you can get. He has a perfect sound, a beautiful, woody sound and some impeccable time. He plays the right notes. I'm sorry he waited so long to become such a wonderful bandleader.

MB: Curious that your actual father is a bass player, but you call Ray Brown "Dad."

When I started falling in love with jazz, Paul Chambers and Ron Carter were my two major influences, and they still are. But when I finally heard Ray Brown ... I don't remember the record, but Ray Brown lit a spark that's been sparking ever since. 5 stars! **DB**