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Jazz, Blues &

June 1998 \$3.50
U.K. £2.75 Can. \$4.30

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**FANNING THE
FLAMES ON
JOHN
COLTRANE'S
LEGACY**



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The Enduring Legacy Of John Coltrane

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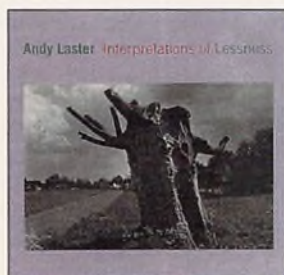
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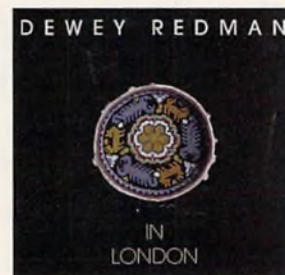
Cover The return of a classic: You might recognize this month's cover photo of John Coltrane, taken by Charles Stewart, which originally ran on our July 12, 1979, cover. Shown above, that issue featured musicians discussing Coltrane and included several reprints from Down Beat's archives. Nearly 20 years later, Trane's legacy and legend are still growing.



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Dewey Redman

tHE SOUND AND SPIRIT OF JOHN COLTRANE FILL THE AIR. Though the man himself died of liver cancer 32 years ago this July 17, two months short of age 41, his music and his personal example still exercise their profound effect, having an impact on the music we call jazz greater than any single figure since Charlie Parker.

It's not just the release of *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Sessions* that brings Trane's deep, fleet, probing sensibility to the fore. There are also a flood of homages that refresh our memories and perspectives on his work, streaming from artists as diverse as Michael Brecker (playing "Impressions") and Kevin Mahogany in a February concert of Coltrane's music with the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, Kenny Garrett (on *Pursuance*, featuring Pat Metheny), John McLaughlin (*After The Rain*, with Elvin Jones and Joey DeFrancesco), the ROVA Saxophone Quartet and guests (*John Coltrane's Ascension*), Prima Materia with Rashied Ali, Dave Liebman, Benny Golson and other Arkadia Records artists (anthologized on *Thank You, John!*, released earlier this year).

The younger lions still regard Trane as the ultimate saxophone technician—more than reed players take his "Giant Steps" as the most challenging test of one's fluidity over changes—and strive to emulate his stance of humility and artistic devotion (Wynton Marsalis himself performed



CHARLES STEWART

"A Love Supreme" a couple years back, in quartet with Jones at Lincoln Center). Avant gardists on the order of Charles Gayle and David S. Ware continue to pursue the unfettered expression of the man who conquered, then shed and transcended his era's conventions. The publication of Dr. Lewis Porter's outstanding *John Coltrane His Life And Music* (University of Michigan Press) rectifies errors and gaps of the previous Coltrane biographies, while on the Internet a John Coltrane list, with subscribers including Porter and Trane discographer David Wild, debates issues prompted by his life and music as being immediately relevant (to subscribe, e-mail to "listserv@listserv.uh.edu"; then enter "subscribe COLTRANE-L" plus your real first and last name). As well, there's the gratifying emergence of tenor and soprano saxophonist Ravi Coltrane, born in 1965, whose debut album *Moving Pictures* proves he's his own man, though informed by genes and study of his revered progenitor's career.

The following interviews with Ravi, Liebman and Porter were conducted this spring; Jones commented in an interview I conducted for the National Public Radio series *Jazz From Lincoln Center*, while Wayne Shorter, Jimmy Heath and Ali talked to me in 1990, during production of the video documentary *The World Of John Coltrane* (produced by Toby Byron, written by the late Robert Palmer). Son, acolytes, biographer, colleagues and friends all attest to the legacy of John Coltrane.

RAVI COLTRANE WAS RAISED BY HIS MOTHER, ALICE, AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH WHEN HE WAS TWO. "The music that John Coltrane created is not a burden for me, but rather a positive force that I've gotten caught up in. If he had lived longer, if I had watched and emulated him, I can see how I might

have felt the weight of being his son differently. But I know him the same way most people do—from his music, which I was drawn to in a real natural way.

"I'd heard it all my life, the Impulse! records, anyway, starting with *Impressions* from '61. But as a kid I was doing kid things, not checking out Coltrane's periods, studying his music with Miles. Then around '84 or '85 I found his Atlantic records, which my family had seldom played. Hearing "Giant Steps," for the first time, I just freaked. I started to listen to that a lot, and it spurred on everything else for me.

Louder than Words

The enduring legacy of John Coltrane



PHOTO CREDITS, CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT:
CHARLES STEWART, CHARLES STEWART,
CHARLES STEWART, RYUICHIRO MAEDA,
CHARLES STEWART, CHARLES STEWART

"It's almost impossible to define, when you first hear something, why it's moving you. It wasn't the things with substitutions he was doing, or the way he accentuated the upbeats, but just how the music made me feel.

"John Coltrane obviously created some great music compositionally. Trane wrote great music to launch his improvisations. 'Giant Steps' shaped the way he improvised even past its period, because he couldn't use prior knowledge to get to the tune, not what he knew of the blues or II-V-I cycles, but had to think to come up with a new way to improvise. That's hip, to write a tune that shapes how you improvise. That accomplishment lasts.

"Now I've come to feel a thread going through all of his music, from '55 through '64 and '65, till he died. At the end it's not the band with Elvin anymore, and he's playing so out sometimes I can't deal with it, but there's an intent he had, a real focus, a strive to find something.

"And that's what the juice is: If you can really make a statement—not just that you can play faster or higher than anybody, but you truly have something to say—that's a beautiful goal to aspire to. Before John Coltrane, I don't think anyone on his level of professionalism addressed the spirituality of music so openly, and he did it not to be popular or hip, but thinking of something beyond himself.

"It's hard to say what direction he'd have taken if he'd lived into the '70s, with electronics coming in, and the fusion of rock and jazz. Such fusions have always happened in improvised music—take what Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie did with Latin music, or what my father



Ravi Coltrane

helped introduce in world music, ethnic music, modal music, things with drones. I think a musician has the right to have the current time influence his music. I'm not saying Coltrane would be playing with rappers and hip-hoppers today, but I think he was always really connected with what was going on.

"Given today's economic pressures, it may be harder than it was in the '60s to follow one's truthful directions. Now sometimes you do have to play the game, bend your thing to be able to be out there. You can't fault the musicians for that, or even the media. It's just how things are now.

"Musicians get caught up in wanting to

be stars, there are fewer opportunities, and no system of working in a big band, coming up through the ranks as my father did, developing over a period of time, staying with one group a period of time. Now you're forced to be a leader almost from the start.

"When I came to town, I knew I wasn't ready to do much on my own. I only wanted to play with the guys I'd been listening to when I was at school. Being a sideman was a priority for me. That role had worked for the people we talk about today: Miles with Bird, Trane with Miles, Sonny Rollins with Miles—great things happened. Fortunately, I've been working with people I could get something from musically, not just financially.

"Besides Coltrane, there's been tons of stuff I love. The '60s were such an inspired moment, with these guys who were all young, out there hitting. I think that was a great period of music, but now we're in a period of reflection, either coping the past or saying, 'Where do we go from here?'

"For me, that works in the same way, with the same purpose. I'm having a great time. I'm glad I came to New York when I did. I've been able to see a lot of older musicians, play with a lot of different cats, guys I now can hang out with, doing sessions, playing, practicing. ... And there are opportunities to find some different things in music. I'm looking forward to that."

DAVE LIEBMAN WAS MAD ABOUT COLTRANE IN THE 1960s, and recently released his own ensemble's version of *Meditations* to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the original's release. "My

A COLTRANE CHRONOLOGY



JACK ALLEN

1962 issues *Live At The Village Vanguard* gigs with Wes Montgomery; records with Duke Ellington; meets Alice McLeod, his future wife and pianist

Feb. 19, 1966: plays Phi-harmonic Hall, Lincoln Center, New York; Titans of the Tenor concert with Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins, Zoot Sims, etc. May 20-29: records *Live At The Village Vanguard*; April/July 9-24: tour of Japan; Dec. 26: plays Village Theatre, on bill with Ornette Coleman.

July 21, 1967: Funeral service "with performances by Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman" recorded and later broadcast by French radio on Oct. 10, 1967—"Lawlis Porter: John Coltrane His Life And Music"

1944: studies at Ormeau School of Music; 1945: takes professional gigs, hears Dizzy Gillespie with Charlie Parker

1946-49: performs with Benny Golson, Ray Bryant, et al., in Philly; tours with Joe Webb band, King Kolax big band; lead reedist/arranger in the unrecorded Jimmy Heath Big Band, in Eddie Vinson's band; switches to tenor sax; with Heath, joins Dizzy Gillespie big band

August 1945-August 1946: U.S. Navy; Plays with the Melody Masters, first recording on alto sax, from a jam session

1951-54: substance use increases; jams with Big Nick Nicholas; tours with Earl Bostic, Bulmose Jackson, Johnny Hodges, etc.

Autumn 1939: first musical instruction, September 1940 co-founds William Penn High School Band, develops interest in alto saxophone and other reeds/winds.

Born John William Coltrane Sept. 23, 1926, Hamlet, N.C.

June 1943: moves to Philadelphia

May 24, 1956: records "Tenor Madness" with Sonny Rollins; Sept. 10 records "Round Midnight" for Miles' album *Round About Midnight*

January 1958: gets clean "cold turkey"; rejoins Miles

March-April 15, 1960: Tours Europe with Miles; June 28: records *The Avant Gardie* with Don Cherry; September: joined by McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones; October: records *My Favorite Things* for Atlantic Records.

March 27, 1963: records with vocalist Johnny Hartman; Dec. 7: videotaped with Jones, Tyner, Garrison for Ralph Gleason's *Jazz Casual*; Dec. 9: records *A Love Supreme*

1926 1930 1940 1950 1960



CHARLES STEWART

Late September 1955: joins Miles Davis band; Oct. 27: records with Miles for Columbia

April 16, 1957: first records with Thelonious Monk; April 28: fired by Miles, due to heroin/alcohol addictions; May 31: first recording as leader on *Prestige*; Sept. 15: records *Blue Train* for Blue Note; November-December: gigs with Monk at the Five Spot

March-May 1959: records *Giant Steps* (for Atlantic) and *Kind Of Blue* (with Miles, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, etc., for Columbia); then quits Miles to open at Five Spot on Nov. 15 with his own quartet; Nov. 28: leads quartet at Town Hall

Early 1961: adds reedist Eric Dolphy to his band; settles on Jimmy Garrison for bass chair; April '61: contracts with Impulse! Records; records *Africa/Brass Impressions*, *Olé*, etc.; November-December: meets Ravi Shankar; voted Down Beat Jazz Musician of the Year

March 1965: Benefit for Black Arts Repertory Theater School, with Sun Ra, Betty Carter, Albert Ayler, etc.; June 28: records *Ascension*; Aug. 15: performs at Down Beat Jazz Festival in Chicago with Archie Shepp; Nov. 23: records *Meditations* with Pharoah Sanders, Garrison, Tyner and Jones; October: records *Om*; possibly under influence of LSD; November: starts to perform regularly with two drummers, to Elvin Jones' dismay

Feb. 27, 1967: Records *Interstellar Space*, d. with Rashied Ali; April 23: last public performance, at the Olatunji Center of African Culture; May: complaining of intense stomach pain, Coltrane refuses surgery in favor of recording *Expression*, which is issued posthumously; dies Monday, July 18, 1967 of liver cancer

MUSICAL ASTRONAUT

A number of musicians playing today talk openly about their experiences with Coltrane, either in person or from listening to the saxophonist's monumental records. Their reflections portray an artist who never stopped in his search for musical perfection.



JIMMY HEATH: "I first met John Coltrane in 1947, and he wasn't any more special than anybody else, except that he decided to be a person who attacked his problems, whereas some people would choose to lay back on what they already knew. If there was a problem that bothered him, Coltrane could zoom in on that problem until he solved it. He could concentrate for such long periods of time. We admired him, because if he could work it out, he would work it out, and so he was always a little ahead of us. It wasn't ambition, so much as curiosity. He wanted to know everything that was possible.

"He was an excellent musician in every sense of the word, a composer and arranger—he did a beautiful arrangement of 'Lover Man' for the big band I had—and a great sight reader, too. Rhythm & blues was more commercial in our early days than bebop, and Trane worked in some of those kinds of bands to make money, learned how to do a little hooting and booting—and then he took those elements and expanded upon them, added much more. He approached all his material with the same conviction, and progressed so far along in his musical life that to others it seemed he could do anything that he wanted to. But he wouldn't say that, because he would try something else. He was always searching. That was his quality: searching. And finding."

WAYNE SHORTER: "Coltrane was an adventurer, just like Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk. I call these people 'musical astronauts.' And to extend all that into your daily life, when you're not playing, that's quite a challenge.

"What Trane was doing—and Charlie Parker and Art Tatum and some other people, too—is make you feel like there is such a thing as being invincible, even in the face of human frailty. Or he made you feel the humanity of having frailty as a primal base, or something that we all, as humans, have to deal with."

ELVIN JONES: "I live in the hope that someday all of John Coltrane's compositions will be played as a matter of course. It shouldn't be anything exceptional for musicians to play this music except the kind of a commitment that's not based on personal aggrandizement to make yourself popular. You have to do it because you want to, because it's a great artistic achievement.

"I know he was a very spiritual man. He believed in God, he believed in right and wrong, he was a good person, a good guy. When he died, we all cried like babies."

RASHIED ALI: "There were times I played with Trane when he had a whole battery of drummers: three conga players, guys playing batas, guys playing shakers and barrels and everything. At the Village Vanguard we had a whole bunch of drummers plus traps. In Chicago, I played double traps with a young drummer coming up there named Jack DeJohnette. And Coltrane loved drums so much, if we had a second set of drums on the stage, sometimes he would come up there and sit behind the drums and play with the band.

"I was totally in shock when I heard that he had died that morning, July 17. I had no idea he was sick: He was not the kind of person who complained, not to me, anyway. I couldn't imagine him being sick, not the way he played, with so much power. But he complained sometimes about being tired, not as energetic as usual, you know. We had just played about two weeks before, and he was playing strong, but sitting down in a chair. The liver robs you of energy when it gets on the blink, you know.

"I still dream about Coltrane—vivid dreams. I used to dream about him so much when he first died, I told my mother. She used to get very nervous about me dreaming about him. She'd always tell me, 'If he asks you to come with him, don't go. Refuse to go.' The dreams were so real-seeming, every now and then I'd wake up and have to really lay there and get it together to make sure that I was back. Because I would definitely be gone, into the dream. And they would be musical dreams, too. I heard stuff in those dreams that needed to be written down. I'd wake up and get my pen out and put it down on paper, or sing or play it on a tape. I could remember the songs that I played, or played with him, or heard him play. Yeah, it was very musical." —H.M.



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friend Richie Beirach, the pianist, used to say you could take Coltrane's little left toe and explore it for a lifetime, or take any eight bars he played on 'Impressions' and trace the developments of sax playing for the next 30 years. We think of his early, mid and late periods, then find subdivisions within them—but he covered so much ground in so little time, from the mid-'50s when he got with Miles through '65, when he must have known he was going down, and then his amazing last two years, that such distinctions are merely a convenience.

"My thing is late Trane, but I came in on mid-Trane. I know his Miles and

'Giant Steps' periods from later research, undertaken in my quest to be complete, but starting in 1961 I saw him dozens of times in New York City. I was already into saxophone then, but he inspired me. His quartet with Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison was one thing, then I really got excited about *Meditations*, *Ascension*, *Expression*—all that free-collective energy. After I left Miles and joined Elvin's group in '70, there I was: face-to-face with Coltrane, the modal dragon.

"From the musical standpoint we can distinguish three successive aspects of his playing, involving chord changes,



Dave Liebman

modal music, then what's called 'free.' Coltrane went to the height of chord changes—nothing's more difficult than 'Countdown' and 'Giant Steps,' the speed of their changes is daunting. Then he went completely the other way, back toward *Kind Of Blue* and 'So What,' reducing everything to the mode, the pedal point, with no chordal or scalar qualities—not major, minor, diminished or augmented. He just played notes. In '66 and '67, Trane employed no harmonic basis at all, but worked on the base level of harmonic minimalism, which he could paint any picture over, moving in and out of the stated key, playing in many keys at once—what I call 'chromaticism.' This had been done before, by George Russell, by Lennie Tristano—but not the way Coltrane did it, with the spontaneity of his choices.

"As is the case in any great artist, his legacy is a sum greater than its parts—in this case a coherent feeling, a vibe, an effect on the spiritual level. You can absorb his specific musical accomplishments or not—but what really matters is this spiritual aspect. It's as though he had a link to a greater force, and the later music is the trail of that. When he played two-hour tunes with the quartet, there was something else besides music going on, and from '65 on even his titling concerns spiritual topics. His legacy is that feeling he put out, the absolute sincerity and conviction of the music, and something passionate that I've never heard from anyone else—well, maybe Beethoven, a man who really meant business—without any pretension.

"There's no one comparable, if you think about it. Miles' music is great and artistic and clever and beautiful and powerful—maybe he comes closest because of the duration and scope of his career, but he's not so spiritual, not so deeply moving. Coltrane's maybe not as clever as Miles, not as stylish, but has everything else in it, speaking louder than style, louder than words. You know, Coltrane seldom spoke in public; he was shy, quiet, understated, gentle—a nice guy, not ominous, always with the horn in his mouth. He *was* like a train, on a path, not to be swerved, with a light in

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front of him that he went towards till the day he died.

"Sadly, our culture doesn't support that kind of approach now; you can't be a holy man with a horn, traveling toward mecca. You could be such an individual without too much pressure in the '60s, and survive on that.

"A young student shouldn't start with late Trane; it's not easy music, its energy and density puts most people off, leaves most ears unable to hear the music in it. My experience was backwards. A young cat ought to begin with Miles' recordings, where Trane's playing is simple, compared to what he was playing years later. And I tell students that the process of being able to play at Trane's level is a long one. It requires imitation, being able to play *exactly* like him—not just his lines, but his sound, feel, vibe. Not close, but *exact*. Transcribing his solos and playing along with them is the best, maybe the only way, to absorb that feel. You can't get his feeling, his nuance and expressiveness out of harmony books."

TRANE BIOGRAPHER LEWIS PORTER WORKED INTENSIVELY DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS to complete *John Coltrane His Life And Music*, based on his 17 years of original research provoked by his dissatisfaction with the prior bios, C.O. Simpkins' *Coltrane* and J. N. Thomas' *Chasing The Trane*. "You'll notice that practically everything is changed—chronology, documentation, everything," Porter stresses,

"from the information on Coltrane's birth certificate to his final moments. If you're writing history, all the details matter. But a lot of people have told me what's most excited them about my book is the analysis of Coltrane's late music, which makes me feel great, because the most important thing is the music.

"Part of the reason his late music is so hard for people—you know, he actually lost his audience in his last couple of years—was the way it was presented, in informal, even unprofessional settings, far from polished and rehearsed. 'Oh, some guys fell by—let's play. As long as they have the feeling.' What was important

was that they have passion in their playing, and boldness. He cared more about that than if they had years of experience playing the instrument, playing professionally. That's why Coltrane was particularly crazy about Albert Ayler, because of his power and originality, though Ayler wasn't the sax technician Coltrane was. That's why I suggest people listen to *Interstellar Space*, his duet with Rashied Ali on drums, because it's hard to get through that wall of sound he constructed with the late, larger bands.

"I think the book shows clearly that Coltrane really was a regular musician, coming up through the ranks, working

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A LOVE SUPREME—Impulse! 155
INTERSTELLAR SPACE—Impulse! 110
THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION—Atlantic Jazz Gallery 7-R2-71984 (reissue of complete Atlantic recordings, including *Giant Steps*, etc.)
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DISSIN' THE TRANE

Editor's note: While the majority of this month's cover-story feature focuses on musicians and historians who have praise for Trane, there are those who are not necessarily in agreement.

A couple of years ago, I ventured a downright felonious act of political incorrectness in commenting on Rhino's complete Atlantic recordings of John Coltrane. Why, I wondered, after so much extraordinary work on the Atlantic records, would Coltrane end up being largely defined by the pontifical, self-asserted pretenses of *A Love Supreme*?

Like a man who had lit a cherry bomb, I covered my ears and sturdied myself for the big bang.

Imagine my surprise when Michael Bernard, the proprietor of the nearby CD store I frequent, smiled at me the next time I walked in and quietly confided that he'd never cared for it much, either. Indeed, he seemed glad that someone had finally committed such a view to print. It makes it all right, he said, for Coltrane skeptics (such as himself, I presumed) to come out of the closet.

I wonder how many readers may be in that closet, a bit bewildered perhaps at all the fuss, but disinclined to challenge the powerful Coltrane lobby. Ignore the flood of critical presumptions and solemn pomposities that have accumulated around *A Love Supreme*. Hear it apart from the mystique of Coltrane for what it actually is—an often droning, if moderately interesting, chant. Come to this "gift to God" fresh today, measure it against its over-hyped expectations, then tell me that God wouldn't have preferred getting Trane's "In A Sentimental Mood." Or maybe even a replacement copy of Coleman Hawkins' "Body And Soul."

Unfortunately, the longer Coltrane played, the more elusive the results became. In his last years, the command and lucidity that had brought him to greatness seemed to disintegrate under his fingers. After the almost unlistenable *Ascension*, he became lost in his own quest, a not-ready-for-prime-time player and mystic always in motion in the hopes that he might, by some accident, bump into an idea.

In a way, his futile search for non-linear alternatives seemed a proper '60s metaphor for youth's faddish search for spiritualism and non-material alternatives. Also, the concept of noble hero was being upended and deconstructed into the cynical anti-hero, a role Coltrane seemed eminently suited to play the more the shock value of his playing overtook the musical value.

If the later music went down with the free-jazz debacle, the personal Coltrane legend did not. Instead, he became a profoundly false prophet who used his prestige and charisma, even in death, to lead jazz down a dead end from which it would not begin to emerge for 20 years. In the late '60s the small jazz audience shrank further, as players such as Shepp, Albert Ayler and Pharoah Sanders bewitched critics with their mayhem. But as they faded by the mid-'80s, the first and second waves of the bop generation (Gillespie, Rollins, Peterson, Blakey, Mulligan) were getting on and moving toward retirement. Suddenly, 20 years had been squandered in foolish self-indulgence, during which time jazz had failed to provide for its future. That's when jazz learned about the other side of the Coltrane legacy: a Lost Generation.

If Coltrane was the last of the unifying innovators in the Armstrong-Parker mold, he is also unique among them. Every invention has limits to its evolution, and it was Coltrane's singular fate to face the consequences of those limits in jazz in a way his predecessors did not. Tatum, Goodman, Gillespie and Peterson had long since drawn the outer limits of virtuosity. Ellington, Parker, Evans (both Bill and Gil) and Davis had probed the frontiers of useful harmonic investigation. By the '60s the heavy work had been done. What was left for Coltrane to explore was considerably less than both his curiosity and ambition craved. So he made his mark, then went outside the natural limits to see what was there.

Thirty years ago, Leonard Meyer offered in his book *Music, The Arts And Ideas* (University of Chicago Press) a prescient prognosis on the topic of limits that now seems almost clairvoyant. In 1967, avant-garde propagandists of the serial and free-jazz movements were claiming a victory over the past as ineluctable as it was arrogant. Meyer wasn't so sure, though. He said that the logic of such music was so opaque, even to its creators, that it would take an educational revolution before it could communicate anything of value to those outside a core audience. And in any case, the almost total lack of communal pleasure it offered held out little incentive for any such revolution. What he predicted instead was a variety of styles coexisting in a "fluctuating stasis," each with its own discreet audience but none with sufficient power to dominate the culture.

In 1974 musicologist Richard Crocker discovered and deciphered a piece of Sumerian music dating from 1400 B.C. What astonished Crocker, though, was not its remote strangeness but its familiar banality. The same diatonic sensibility that we respond to today, it appears, was also in people's brains 3,500 years ago. Kind of makes you think twice about searching for new systems of sound.

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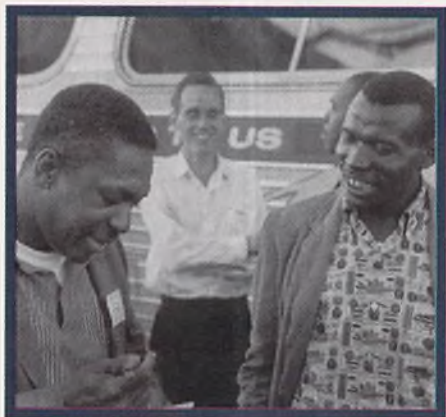
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hard. There are three chapters on what he used to practice. Those recordings Phil Schaap and I found that he made at a Navy jam session in '46 gave me insights into where he started from, what he kept trying to work out. It's also a fact that he was truly humble and respectful of other people, always looking for ideas from others, and he never put himself up as outside the group, but of it.

"Is he a different kind of man than has been reported before? No, I think my book reinforces things you've read elsewhere. He was as lovely a person as everyone says he was—and that's the kind of dirt you're glad to dig up. He was obsessive about practicing, beyond dedication almost into a psychological obsession. He was a tremendous role model to the surprisingly high number of guys born in the '20s and '30s who tried heroin—and even the most straight-laced—who admired that he got off heroin and alcohol, made an effort to get his life together, became a vegetarian. But what impressed me more as I learned more about him was his eclecticism. Coltrane demonstrated you can have big, big ears, be open to anything, and if you're creative, find an authentic jazz way to use it.

"The range of things he practiced was unbelievable—and then his genuine, pioneering interest in world music, heavily into India, Africa, more Latin music than



Trane shares a moment with Elvin Jones (right).

most people realize, even bossa nova before it became big in the States in '61. Coltrane's saxophone playing, of course, is a whole world in itself: There's something about his sound concept, poised and focused and serious and sincere, that always comes through, not showy but very powerful, affecting everybody. And the way he solos, using so many notes, but with such careful effect that there's no waste of notes, they all belong.

"There were people who said he wasn't playing jazz, but anti-jazz—that was John Tynan in *Down Beat*—and that really hurt him. Because I think the essence of Coltrane was the blues. Everything that he plays has the blues element holding it

together—and not just playing blues structures but blues feeling, blues phrasing, black American phrasing, that you find in black American religious and pop music, too. If that glue, the blues, wasn't there, it might not be so clear he's playing jazz, but as it is, it ties him tightly into the tradition. What takes him away from the tradition is the stuff he uses that's atypical. You don't hear the Bird licks, except very early. As radical as everyone says Ornette Coleman was in the '60s, it's Coltrane who gets away from the walking bass and from the thirds with their connection to pop music into fourths, which suggest something else.

"My book contains roughly 10 pages of never-before-published or never-translated interviews with Coltrane, examples of music in his handwriting, including a never-recorded Coltrane composition—and the only photo of him as a kid, in his third-grade class. As far as any personal secrets or revelations: Forget about it. Even guys like Benny Golson and Jimmy Heath, who knew him 20 years or more, seldom heard how he felt about personal matters. But when Coltrane plays the saxophone, he tells you everything. There are no secrets. That's a key to the passion of the music around him, which his music inspires: totally uninhibited expression. He could do that in his music, if perhaps not in conversation." **DB**

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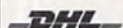
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H is eyes closed in a Buddah-like trance, Kenny Barron whispers a pillow-soft, aqua-hazed piano solo. Joined by Charlie Haden's

omnipresent, velvet bass tones, the duo weave through Barron's elegiac "Twilight Song," the time-tested classic "Body And Soul," Haden's poignant "Waltz For Ruth" and Ornette Coleman's labyrinthine blues "Turnaround"—all selections from their new CD, *Night And The City*, recorded in the same spot a year ago (see "CD Reviews" May '98). The audience at New York's Iridium only claps twice during the whole set—the silence is as sacred as the notes themselves.

"One thing I can bring to someone else's music is that I'm a team player," Barron modestly remarks on this rainy March evening, between soundcheck and the start of his set. "That's important when you're an accompanist." With more than 80 recordings to his credit, the 54-year-old Barron's near-telepathic ability to provide the right mix of melody, harmony and rhythmic ideas as a sideman has earned him enormous respect—and plenty of steady work—from bandmates and vocalists alike.

There's no drama surrounding Barron, no inflated fanfare, no corporate noisemakers pounding his ivories. But the last few years have seen him inch toward his ever-elusive big arrival, so to speak. Since 1993, he's made several CDs as a leader on Verve. Just last year, he was voted the top pianist in Down Beat's 1997 International Critics Poll, and he performed in Ornette Coleman's high-profile Lincoln Center showcase ? Civilization. The 32 Jazz label has recently released some of his notable early work, including *Soft Spoken Here* (a double CD containing Barron's early '70s Muse recordings), *Sunset To Dawn* (his first as a leader) and *Golden Lotus*, plus *First Half Highlights*, a multi-label collection featuring Barron with Victor Lewis, Ray Bryant, Yusef Lateef and Dizzy Gillespie. As he continues to emerge ever so slowly and quietly, you realize that

Barron is a hero who's been hiding in plain sight all along. Just ask the musicians—they all agree, and they've always known, that Kenny Barron rules.

Haden was inspired to record a duet with Barron after he and drummer Roy Haynes collaborated with the pianist on the 1995 trio CD *Wanton Spirit*. "I wanted it to be all about New York," says Haden of the engagement at Iridium, where three nights of their performances were recorded. "After we got into it, the ballads really made Kenny's artistry stand out: He's so melodic and really stresses bringing out the beautiful parts of melodies with his chords. He plays great bebop and great everything, but these ballads really made me feel close to this concept of New York."

Vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, who worked with Barron in the '70s, describes him as "a jazz singer's love. He gives a lot of support, and he always lays down your harmonic structure."

Barron explains his comping style this way: "With [some] singers, you have to hear where they're going and try not to get in the way and be too busy. Every singer is different. Some singers like for you to play notes from the melody; some absolutely, positively don't want you to do that. It's the same thing with instrumentalists."

The Elusive Arrival Of

Saxophonist Stan Getz, who worked with Barron occasionally in the mid-'70s and exclusively in the late-'80s until his death in 1992, and French producer Jean-Phillippe Allard have figured prominently in the pianist's ascendance. "It started with my collaboration with Getz in 1989 on the albums *Anniversary* and *Serenity*," Allard says from his Paris office. "Stan was always talking about Kenny Barron and how great he was. He was not the kind of person to say that about everybody. That's why Stan wanted to do the duet album *People Time* with him. He wanted to introduce Kenny Barron to a wider audience."

Since *People Time* earned a Grammy

nomination in 1992, Barron's profile as a leader has grown thanks to several Allard-produced Verve CDs: the Brazilian-flavored *Sambao*; the aforementioned *Wanton Spirit*, one of the definitive trio statements of the '90s; the neo-classic stylings of *Other Places*; the electric piano, avant-bayou-bopped *Swamp Sally* with percussionist Mino Cinelu; and his latest, *Things Unseen*, which teams Barron with Eddie Henderson, John Stubblefield, David Williams, Victor Lewis, Japanese violinist Nanko Terai and John Scofield.

Barron's current momentum doesn't stop there. This year, he has reunited the quartet Sphere after a 10-year hiatus.

Originally founded in 1981, the cooperative—which features drummer Ben Riley, bassist Buster Williams and alto saxophonist Gary Bartz replacing Charlie Rouse (who died in 1988)—was named for and inspired by the music of Thelonious Monk, whose middle name provided the band's moniker. They recorded four releases (*Flight Path*; *On Tour*, *Live At Umbria Jazz*; *Four For All*; and *Birdsongs*) between 1981 and 1986. However the '90s version of Sphere, which has already toured Europe, Brazil and recorded a forthcoming CD, is a little more free-spirited than it was with Rouse, Barron related. "We wanted someone who was our age with the same kind of experience and attitude about the music. We'll still do some Monk compositions, our own and the compositions of others, but the concept will be different."

Barron absorbed the cooperative concept and learned to value group interplay above all else in jazz-rich Philadelphia, where he was born in 1943. "Philly was a mecca then, next to New York," Barron remembers with a faraway look. "There was a certain kind of camaraderie that was evident with the guys I came up with. All somebody had to do was say we're going to have a session, and everybody would be there."

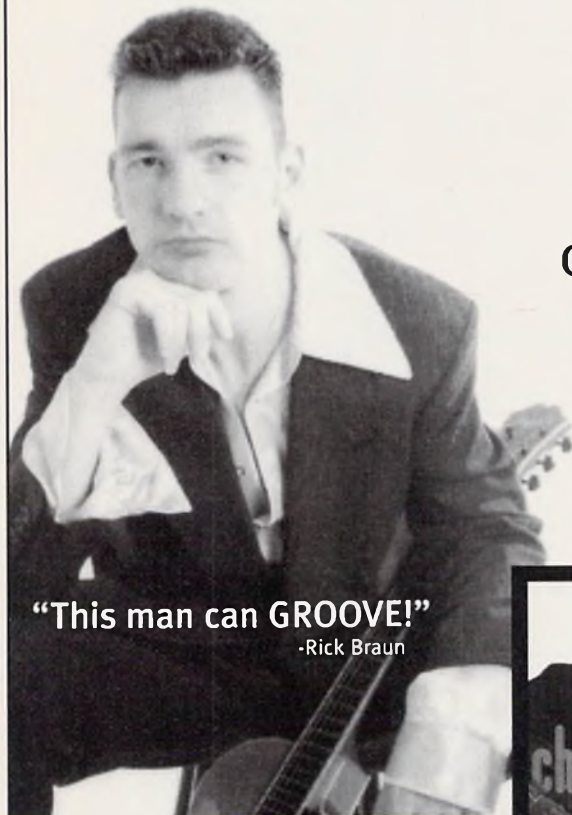
Barron's older brother, the late saxophonist Bill Barron, got him his first professional gig in Mel Melvin's Orchestra in 1959. After a brief stint with Philly Joe Jones, Bill brought Kenny to New York in 1962. "I stayed on the Lower East Side with my brother, then with some other guys from Philly: Reggie Workman, Arthur Harper, Bob Royston," Barron says. "The guys from Philly had a tendency to do that. There were a bunch of guys living across the street: Lee Morgan, Spanky De Brest, Tootie Heath. They all lived in one apartment." Barron will pay tribute to his brother's influence and musical vision on a future record date with trumpeter Ted Curson.

Once he settled into New York, Barron performed and recorded with leading players like Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody, Stanley Turrentine, Milt Jackson and Freddie Hubbard. During the '70s, his most prominent work was with Sonny Fortune, Yusef Lateef, Joe Henderson and Ron Carter. From there, he went on to make numerous recordings as a leader for Muse, Limetree, Xanadu, Criss-Cross, enja, Candid and eventually Verve in the '80s and '90s.

Meanwhile, Barron has been a tenured professor of music at Rutgers University since 1973, teaching jazz piano, composition, arranging and improvisation. He takes great pride in his ability to practice what he preaches. "My students can come see me do what I talk about," he says. "There are a lot of teachers who don't really play. I'm out there all the time."

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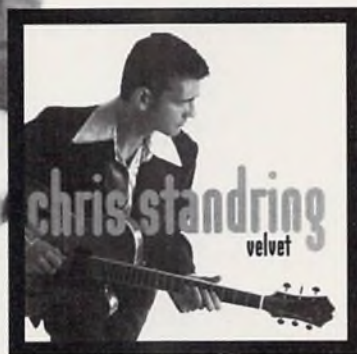
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Anything we talk about in class, the students can come hear me demonstrate."

Two of Barron's more memorable students have gone on to find some success of their own: David Sanchez and Geri Allen. "David is a great player," Barron says with obvious satisfaction. "He didn't do much composing then, when he was in school, but he's a hell of a composer now. And coming out of the Latin thing, he's got some other stuff. Geri used to come up from Washington to study with me. Her playing then hadn't evolved to where it is now, but she was always a very lyrical player. As she moved to New York, she really found her own direction."

The fact that Allen and Sanchez developed into fine writers is not surprising. Over the years, their teacher has created a name for himself as a composer, beginning with his Latinesque "Sunshower," originally recorded in the '70s. His tunes are considered by some to be modern-day jazz standards—as evidenced by San Francisco-based saxophonist Harvey Wainaple's tribute CD *Ambrosia: The Music Of Kenny Barron* (A Records), featuring Barron's compositions performed by the 50-piece Dutch Metropole Orchestra, with arrangements by trumpeter Jeff Beal. "Kenny is doing sound pictures. His tunes are atmospheric and evocative," Wainaple says by phone from Denmark, where he has performed Barron's songs with Danish big bands.

Historically, jazz's many tragic heroes have taught us that it takes more than chops and creative ideas to survive and thrive for as long as Barron has. A professional of the first order, you will never hear anyone say that he was late for a gig or didn't come prepared. Indeed, his calm demeanor is a militant counterstatement to the image of the burnt-out, rude and tragically hip jazz artist.

Barron says the source of his grounding comes from his family. "I've been married to Joanne for 35 years. We have a daughter, Nicole, who's 33, and a son, Nile, who's 30, and two grandchildren. [My family has] been there. I know that when I'm on the road and I come back, they're there."

Although he'll always work as a sideman—he's just finished a record date with guitarist Russell Malone—Barron will continue to head up new projects and explore collaborative possibilities. "I've been doing a lot of stuff with Regina Carter now," Barron relates. "We've been trying to set up a piano/violin duo. There's more stuff with Sphere upcoming. I'd like to start doing more solo concerts, and different kinds of duo projects: piano and cello, piano and drums. I look at music as a journey on which you never arrive. So, I hope I never arrive, because there's always more out there. Once you arrive, it's over." **DB**

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Kenny Barron prefers Steinway pianos.

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Soul

Hank Crawford & David
"Fathead" Newman Pay
Homage To The Glory
Years Of Soul-Jazz



By Ted Panken

Supreme

Photos By Alan Nahigian



Hank Crawford, from Memphis, and David "Fathead" Newman, from Dallas, are originals, often imitated, never duplicated. Both Depression-born, they came up when an improviser impressed peers less by note facility than through conjuring a singularly identifying sound. As young saxophonists, they honed craft playing the blues, post-World War II jump-band variety; Charlie Parker nourished their imaginations. Each is the kind of consummate jazz pro who can play in a section and solo in any situation with conviction and panache. One-of-a-kind stylists, they have left an indelible mark on contemporary music.

They blossomed as star sidemen in Ray Charles' brilliant small band of 40 years ago, the gig that spawned a highly influential series of recordings for Atlantic, a healthy sampling of which can be heard on the Rhino boxed set *Genius & Soul, The 50th Anniversary Collection* (see "CD Reviews" Jan. '98). A young DJ named Joel Dorn, later a prolific producer

with Atlantic, played their sides on Philadelphia's 24/7 jazz station, WHAT-FM, from 1961 to 1967. Dorn now runs the catalog label 32 Jazz, imprimatur of several homages to those glory years, most recently a pair of double CDs drawing from those early Atlantic dates. *Memphis, Ray, And A Touch Of Moody* features Crawford, the definitive soul altoist, preaching an array of blues, spirituals and ballads; *It's Mister Fathead* presents a restless Newman's oblique, bop-inflected take on big-boom tenor.

More than just progenitors of soul-jazz and smooth-jazz saxophone styles, Crawford and Newman continue to make vital music. Since signing with Milestone in 1982, Crawford's churned out remarkably consistent variations on the signature five-horn concept he perfected while serving as Ray Charles' music director and conductor (see *Tight*, 1996) and served up man-sized portions of soul-blues grits and cornbread on a series of organ-alto recordings (1997's *Road-Tested*, with Jimmy McGriff)—never deviating from the melody. In recent years Newman—a less traditional improviser who makes full use of the rich palette his mastery of tenor, alto and soprano saxophone and flute affords—uncorked a pair of ambitious records on Kokopelli. *Mr. Gentle And Mr. Cool* is an endlessly resourceful Ellington tribute; *Under A Woodstock Moon* features Newman the poet over a cushion of strings, crooning mellow, soulful paeans to Mother Nature.

What better occasion for Down Beat to chat with two old masters about old times and new?

TED PANKEN: *How did the alto become your horn of choice?*

HANK CRAWFORD: Early on, I listened to a lot of saxophone players, from Bird to Earl Bostic, Tab Smith, up through to Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt. I can't say one more than the other inspired me the most; I got a bit from each. Although I played a little tenor or baritone, I could express myself more on alto. That seemed to be my voice.

Piano was my first instrument. In ninth grade, I wanted to be in the high school band, and the piano was a bit much to march with. My father had a C-melody saxophone, so I went to the closet and took out the horn. I taught myself the fingering and rudiments out of a book.

Our high school had a marching band, a concert band and a 16-piece dance band called the Rhythm Bombers, which played charts by Woody Herman and Count Basie. Our band director was Dee Dee Bridgewater's father, Matthew Garrett, a trumpet player. We worked a lot of Monday night jobs, usually on campus, also in local clubs off-campus and amateur shows known as midnight rambles.

DAVID "FATHEAD" NEWMAN: My mom bought me a Martin alto saxophone when I was still in elementary school, and I started taking private lessons from my music instructor, J.K. Miller, the band director at Lincoln High School who taught Cedar Walton and James Clay. Our jazz band played stocks—published orchestrations by Basie, Tiny Bradshaw, Lionel Hampton—and arrangements by Buster Smith, my main influence, and one of the saxophonists I admired most. I also liked Johnny Hodges, Tab Smith, Jimmy Dorsey, Charlie Barnet, and especially Eddie Vinson, Earl Bostic and Louis Jordan. After about my second year in high school, when I'd been playing alto a long time, I heard Bird play "Koko." From that point on, I started listening exclusively to bebop. It was very melodic and a challenge on the instrument.

Cedar Walton and James Clay were a year or two behind me. Most evenings after school we got together and jammed, listened to records and copped different things from the bands. We listened over and over to all the bebop

tunes as they came out by Dizzy Gillespie, Bird, Fats Navarro, J.J. Johnson, Dexter, rehearsed them, wrote down the heads and played head arrangements, and memorized the solos. I knew all Bird's solos, and the trumpet players learned Dizzy Gillespie and Fats Navarro solos.

Ornette Coleman and I patterned ourselves after Red Connor, a very good tenor saxophonist, who played in a style between Wardell Gray and Dexter Gordon, and even maybe Don Byas. You can hear some of him in the playing of Booker Ervin, who was from Denton, Texas. I was playing alto and baritone with Red when I met Ornette, who was playing tenor. Ornette had the huge, wide-open sound typical of tenor players of that era—and from that area also. We played Bird's tunes, Ornette would play Bird's solo note-for-note, then go into his own conception, which was Ornette's style and sound as we know it, not conforming to the chord structure.

HC: As David said, we came through bebop, and I admire some of the people he named. I loved Bostic for power. I listened to Johnny Hodges, and Tab Smith floored me with "Because Of You." At that time, Memphis was full of great musicians. Phineas Newborn was there, playing out of sight in high school! Among the local Memphis saxophone players, the guy who impressed me most was a tenor player named Ben Branch, who sounded a lot like Gene Ammons—and I always liked Ammons' playing. Then there was Hank O'Day, an older alto player who I got my name from.

I was in the same class with George Coleman; Frank Strozier, Charles Lloyd and Booker Little were a few years behind us. At 14 and 15 we practiced bebop all day at each other's houses, to learn all the tunes, but when we went out to play the dances, our primary function was to play the blues. I walked bars and laid on my back on the floor with people dropping coins in the bell. Playing bebop was our classroom, the study period. But blues came natural if you were from that part of the country.

Most road bands came through Memphis and played places like the Palace Theater, the Hippodrome, and Club Handy in Mitchell's Hotel. We got to see a lot of the performers we later came to know, singers like Percy Mayfield, instrumentalists, too.

TP: David, how did your audiences respond if you played bebop on your gigs in Dallas?

DN: We played bebop in jam sessions or played for the door—which wasn't very much money—at clubs like the Log Cabin in south Dallas. To make any money playing music around Dallas, you had to play the blues. Now, the younger people danced to anything we played. They were receptive. But the older generations didn't take too much to bebop. They listened for the sound they were accustomed to, whether swing from the big band era or something like blues or rhythm & blues—something bluesy with a beat. T-Bone Walker was from Dallas. I worked with him whenever he came through town, and I worked with Lowell Fulson, who lived in Fort Worth.

There was an abundance of good musicians in Dallas, and several big bands that played ballrooms and hotels, as well as small nightclubs downtown that had combos. Buster Smith had a big band that played his arrangements, and there was a big band downtown led by an alto player named Red Calloun that played

stocks. Buster learned about me through some older musicians and asked me to play in his band.

Buster was a gifted musician with a big sound and superb execution. He was self-taught, had perfect pitch and could arrange and write without being around an instrument. They called him "Prof" because he had this air about him as this well-educated professor. We drove up and down the road, and Buster would sit with a cigar in his mouth. He wasn't a drinker; he just had a cigar.

Buster put together small combos for the road or to back up people like T-Bone Walker and others who came through Dallas. Around 1951–'52, he organized a group with Leroy Cooper and myself to do a tour of the South with Ray Charles, who sang and played the alto. I had met Ray a little earlier, when I was playing with Lloyd Glenn, a piano player with a hit record called "Chickaboo," and Ray was with Lowell Fulson. We were on the road playing black theaters and dance halls with a package that also included Big Joe Turner and T-Bone Walker. Sometimes Ray sounded similar to Charles Brown, sometimes like [Nat] "King" Cole, even sometimes like T-Bone, but you could hear his thing starting to come out. I think "I Got A Woman," when he started to inject a gospel feel, is where the real Ray Charles started to emerge.

TP: Hank, do you recollect when you first went out on the road?

HC: My real initiation to the road was after Brother Ray came through Nashville in 1958 when I was still in school. A couple of buddies from Nashville, the trumpeter John Hunt and the drummer Milt Turner, were already in Ray's band. Leroy Cooper, "the Hog," was out for a minute, and they suggested me to Ray for the baritone part.

My only experience on baritone was fooling around in the bandrooms. I borrowed a baritone sax, brought it to the Club Baron, and with no audition or rehearsal I sat in and played the gig that night. Three months later, I got a call asking if I wanted the job.

DN: I took the same route. I came in playing baritone.

TP: David, what was your route to Ray Charles?

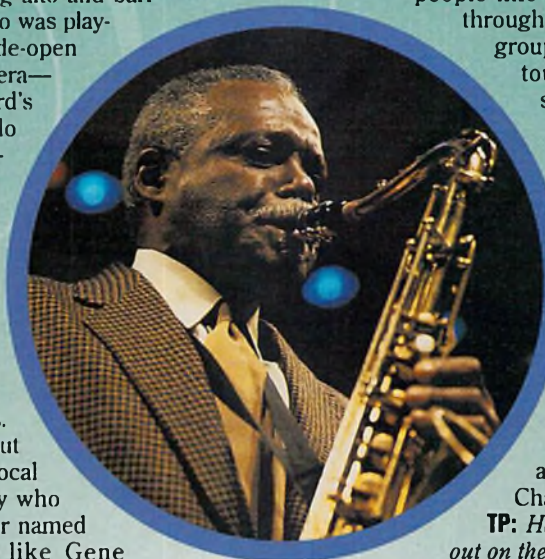
DN: When I met Ray in '51 with Lowell Fulson, he had already recorded a few singles. We became friends right away, and he called me when he formed his band in '54.

The tenor saxophonist was Donald Wilkerson, a fine musician who got over the horn very fast, as if it was a smaller instrument. Donald was getting all the solos. I wanted to stretch out. Donald left the band after a disagreement with Ray, so the chair was open. I told Ray I wanted it. That's when I started playing the tenor.

HC: I played baritone with Ray from 1958 to 1960, until Leroy came back. In 1960, Ray got big band eyes, and I went to alto. Man, we were busy. We played the theater circuit, dance halls, clubs. We had some great musicians, like "Fathead," Cooper, Marcus Belgrave, later Bruno Carr and Philip Guilbeau. Whatever we played, whether it was outside or inside, the musicianship was so good that it happened automatically.

TP: Hank, talk about the dynamics of arranging for Ray Charles.

HC: At Tennessee State, I fronted and wrote for the campus band, a 16-piece band. We always had the eight pieces and gospel type of sound in Memphis, so I knew the feeling. I fell into the groove I'd been raised with in Ray's band, and after a while Ray asked me to be music director. I kept that post for three years. The



band had it for 45 minutes or an hour before Ray came on to sing, and that's where I got a chance to do a lot of writing.

I listened to Quincy Jones, Frank Foster, Ernie Wilkins and some Ellington things, but the band that really knocked me out was James Moody's octet, when Johnny Acea was writing for it. I took a little from each arranger, but I was basically myself. I've always used horns on my records, except for a few quartets. I studied how Ray made tenor, alto, baritone and two trumpets sound like a big band. First, he dictated his charts to me, and I notated; after a while he'd come in, state what he wanted, and then say, "You got it." I don't think we ever played anything above a 9th chord. We didn't get into flatted chords and extensions. Everything was basic. When you take a seventh chord, man, and it's voiced right, five horns can sound like 10. It only sounds like less when it's distorted.

DN: The brassy sound of the five-horn arrangements with two trumpets gave the effect of a big band. Ray preferred two trumpets to trombone. His voicing for the five horns was very unique.

HC: Ray is an individualist—the only one. Certain saxophone players, certain musicians, there's only one. I haven't found anybody that has my sound yet, and David is unique. We all have our distinctive sounds. Identity is the secret of survival in this business. People buy identity. If you put on Miles Davis, automatically somebody goes, "That's Miles." You put on Dizzy, and they know him. They know Louis Armstrong. The man on the street isn't going into a record shop to listen to 50 other guys.

I'm not concerned about changing with what's in. I found my sound, I'm sticking to my guns. I've established what kind of player I am. I approach the alto as a lead vocalist, and the horns are my backup singers. I sing melodies through the instrument. I'm most expressive on ballads.

TP: How complex is it to play as simply as you do?

HC: For some people, it's hard. For me, playing simple is almost a natural. I've studied, man, and I can get off into some pretty hard

bebop. But that's not naturally me. I chose to do what I do best. Nobody's going to come to one of my gigs and pay \$20 or \$25 at the door to hear me sound like somebody else.

DN: Ray gave us a lesson in music appreciation. Before I encountered Ray, my only real love was jazz and bebop. With Ray I learned how to love all other forms of music. I want to expand my mind and expand the music as it comes through me, put my stamp on it and see what comes out. I want to explore other areas, bridge the generations, even see how my music fits into rap—I mean, poetically. It's an extension from Louis Armstrong. You can't close yourself off as music moves on.

DB

EQUIPMENT

Hank Crawford plays a Selmer Super Action 80 alto saxophone with a Barreth mouthpiece and La Voz medium reeds.

David "Fathead" Newman plays Selmer alto, tenor and soprano saxophones and a Gemeinhardt flute. He uses a rubber Otto Link mouthpiece on alto and tenor, and a Myer on the soprano.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Ray Charles

GENIUS & SOUL: THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION—Rhino 272859

Hank Crawford

TIGHT—Milestone 9259
SOUTH-CENTRAL—Milestone 9201
PORTRAIT—Milestone 9192
GROOVE MASTER—Milestone 9182
NIGHT BEAT—Milestone 9168
INDIGO BLUE—Milestone 9119
MIDNIGHT RAMBLE—Milestone 9112
MEMPHIS, RAY AND A TOUCH OF MOODY—32 Jazz 32054
HEART AND SOUL—Rhino 2-71673

with Jimmy McGriff

ROAD TESTED—Milestone 9274
ON THE BLUE SIDE—Milestone 9177
STEPPIN' UP—Milestone 9153
SOUL SURVIVORS—Milestone 9142

David "Fathead" Newman

UNDER A WOODSTOCK MOON—Kokopelli 1314
MR. GENTLE, MR. COOL—Kokopelli 1300
RETURN TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES—Amazing 1021 (with Cornell Dupree and Ellis Marsalis)
BACK TO BASICS—Milestone 9188
BLUE HEAD—Candid 79041
FIRE! LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Atlantic 81965
HEADS UP—Atlantic 81725
IT'S MISTER FATHEAD—32 Jazz 32053
LONE STAR LEGEND: STILL HARD TIMES/RESURGENCE—32 Jazz 32014
BIGGER AND BETTER/THE MANY FACETS OF DAVID NEWMAN—Rhino 2-71453
HOUSE OF DAVID: THE ANTHOLOGY—Rhino 2-71452

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Band **with a** **Mission**

By John Corbett

Italy's Instabile Orchestra
is a microcosm of the
country's 35-year-old
creative music scene



Pisa, Italy. Home of earth's foremost monument to instability, the leaning tower. Of course, nobody would have given it much rank in the list of worldly wonders had the tubular building simply toppled to the ground six centuries ago. So it embodies a paradox: Despite its lurch, the architectural marvel is only worth marveling at because it's still upright, defying gravity. A miracle of stability in the face of impending collapse.

The Italian Instabile Orchestra lives by the same paradox. Formed by trumpet and flugelhorn player Pino Minafra and European music cognoscente and concert-organizer Riccardo Bergerone in 1990 as an initiative for L'Europa Festival Jazz in Noci, the stylistically diverse, 18-strong grouping seemed likely to be a one-off event, sort of a publicity stunt on behalf of creative music in Italy. There's nothing wrong with that—of all European new jazz scenes, Italy's is definitely the one most deserving of greater attention than it's received in its rich, variegated 35-year history. But at first, even Instabile's participants were skeptical about the viability of the all-star assemblage. The parts were so musically different that it seemed too volatile a concoction, and moreover, as Minafra puts it, "They didn't believe in it yet." But the funny thing is that a year later it happened again. And again. And repeatedly, more frequently. They released a CD on Leo, then in '95 one for ECM. And along the way something even stranger happened—the unstable amalgamation turned into a bona-fide band. A band with a mission.

"I know some musicians come to Italy and look down at Italian musicians as dilettanti," explains Minafra on the final night of a three-day Instabile Festival in Pisa in December 1997. "That is not true. We have a precise identity, soul, a big story in art. Italy is not just for tourism—we have a story!" Over seven years, Instabile's personnel has remained remarkably stable; three CDs and more than 40 international performances later, nearly all the original players are still with the group. "Everybody thinks of Italy as a great place for pizza, for cappuccino," grumbles Minafra. "But they think Italian jazz is just provincial, not competitive. I would do anything to change this image. I woke up one morning with the complete definitive list for the orchestra very clear in my head. The objective was to make one point for communication between south, north and central, and for musicians from three generations."

Instabile is a microcosm of creative music in Italy. While there are significant players not included in the ensemble, Instabile fulfills Minafra's vision of being a clearinghouse for differing regional and historical streams in Italy's new jazz, incorporating '60s pioneers like trombonist Giancarlo Schiaffini, alto saxist Mario Schiano, bassist Bruno Tommaso (all three members of the groundbreaking Gruppo Romano Free Jazz) and multi-instrumentalist Renato Geremia, heavy '70s figures like trumpeter Enrico Rava and reed player Gianluigi Trovesi, and a younger contingent that includes multiple reedist Carlo Actis Dato, bassist/cellist Paolo Damiani and extraordinary trombonist Sebi Tramontana. The background of Instabile's players is very broad, including direct connections to the denizens of Italy's deep classical avant garde (Luigi Nono, Giacinto Scelsi, Franco Evangelisti) through the complete range of jazz experiences, inside and out. The group's geographic range covers the country from the core jazz metropolises of Rome and Milan to Venice, La Spezia, Bergamo, Turin, Minafra's far south and off the mainland, on Sicily. (Certain Italian critics still complain that there's no Tuscan or Sardinian representation in the band.) Aside from Tramontana, who now lives in Munich, all the members reside in Italy; aside from french horn player Martin Mayes, who hails from Scotland, all are native-born Italians.

"In the mid-'60s, the main reference was perhaps free-jazz," offers Schiaffini through his thick beard, soft smile and wise-looking wire-rimmed glasses. "But we started with a different approach. As I remember, in the early '60s in the States, it was never completely free. There were always some head arrangements, and the roles of the players were fixed. For us, as Europeans, it was not like that, then. We were completely interchangeable. The role was not fixed, and there were no heads. The other difference was that we were more Italian, Latin, melodic, maybe we sang more with our instruments. That was our way to free music."

Trumpeter Guido Mazzon, one of the first Italians to work extensively in non-Italian ensembles during the '70s, echoes Schiaffini's sentiment and speaks of a distinctly Mediterranean attitude: "I love to improvise melodies. When I played in Germany, they told me: 'You are playing improvised music, but you're too lyrical.' But I'm playing with my musical culture, which includes Verdi and Puccini. From the beginning I mixed improvised music with popular melodies. But I don't like to arrange other people's music—I prefer to write my own new melodies that seem like popular ones." Mazzon brought a quartet to the Moers Festival in 1977, one of the first Italian new jazz projects presented outside the motherland, and that led to an appearance at the same event the following year with a seven-piece outfit he called the Precarious Orchestra. The name certainly has lingering resonance in the title of the newer ensemble.

Instabile's music is literally all over the map: It includes American jazz (all subgenres from rags to *Bitches Brew* and beyond), snippets of bel canto, movie soundtrack, music of the Venetian renaissance, pan-Italian and Balkan folk references, brass band, improvised texturalism drawing on the British free improvisation, Germanic energy jazz, Mediterranean lyricism, and a remarkable amount of humorous, to-the-hilt genre splicing, clearly influenced by the Dutch new jazz scene. "I was always fond of structure, arranging," admits Schiaffini. "Not to make a kind of cocktail, but just to play what I like. I like so many things. I don't just eat chicken, but sometimes I like fish. Man is a complex being."

Instabile Fest: A Sequence Of Courses

Fourteen bare-chested angels gazed down from the ceiling of the spectacular big hall of Pisa's Teatro Verdi during three multifarious nights of music at the Instabile Festival. Organizer Francesco Martinelli created a program that spotlighted both the full orchestra and its composite parts, and the mid-1800s opera house, meticulously restored a decade ago, set a spectacular backdrop for the proceedings. The event included a lively, academic-style conference and international panel discussion concerning 30 years of Italian creative music. Italians enjoy fun and pleasure, but they approach the care of their culture with utmost seriousness.

Like an Italian meal, the festival was presented as a sequence of courses. Primi: Before the main act each night, Carlo Actis Dato served a short, zany appetizer on bass clarinet, baritone and tenor sax in the theater's columned foyer. He strolled into the audience, blaring r&b tenor, sporting a colorful robe and hamming it up with fake rubber ears, though ironic distance gave way to musical intrigue on an odd arrangement of "Autumn Leaves." Other soloists and duos played early-evening gigs in the theater's small hall, including pianist Umberto Petrin, who played a melange of Monk tunes, and Eugenio Colombo, who superbly explored unorthodox flute technique.

One of the fest's highlights was a duet for trombones and electro-acoustic processing by Sebi Tramontana and Giancarlo Schiaffini. Blowing into electronically rigged mics, the single piece found the trombonists pitch-shifting, echoing, stretching time and laying a thicket of electric horn. Schiaffini's huge trombone sound sometimes returned as a high-pitched mouse version; meanwhile, Tramontana conjured effects even without voltage—in places he

tongued so hard it was like someone beating dust out of a rug. Also in the theater's smaller concert salon, Renato Geremia worked from a piano strewn with instruments (saxes, clarinet, flute, violin) in free duets with percussionist Vincenzo Mazzone.

The primi course continued on the main stage, which was decked out with a giant painted backdrop depicting lords and ladies of yore at some courtly function. The fest's free-jazz forefathers, Schiaffini, alto saxist Mario Schiano and bassist Bruno Tommaso, reunited as Gruppo Romano Free Jazz in an intimate, sweet and bluesy set. Tommaso is a killer, as he proved all fest long; he could switch from time to sound with ease, tease harmonics from close to the bridge or combine hammer-ons and string-beating with the bow. Schiano's extremely special—with his inimitable tone, he'd sometimes blow a lachrymose line, bringing an achy-breaky feel to the heart of the free play. Udu Calls, Daneile Cavallanti and Tiziano Tononi's wind/drum duo, drew unapologetically on American free-jazz roots. The set had promise, but was unfortunately sluggish and in need of pruning (most urgently of all, Tononi should ditch his extensive collection of chimes!).

The Italian String Trio incorporated tonal writing and textural improvisation. Martin Mayes gurgled water in his french horn with the Moers Brass Quintet with Schiaffini on tuba and all five using breath noises. Gianluigi Trovesi's wonderful compositions were featured in duets with Damiani; pedal tones, folk-derived melodies and unison parts in odd meters, plus a version of "Django." Enrico Rava and Pino Minafra were an unlikely pairing, but the two players found common ground in a blues.

For the secondi course, the fest offered Italian

Instabile Orchestra in full glory, the big brass section flanked by two drummers. These selections included "Fellini Song," from ex-member Giorgio Gaslini's *Skies Of Europe*, and Schiaffini's "Litania Sibilante," a stunning new composition, stylistically broad but never too direct in its references. Minafra's "Fantozzi" was far more obvious in its pastichery—it peaked in a freaked-out Cab Calloway feel, with the composer conducting calisthenically, leaping and waving wildly, punching out chords like a kick-boxer. But the over-gesticulating found its mark, deliberately making the band play more raggedly and recklessly. Actis Dato, too, looked to the zany for inspiration in his "AEIO." Trovesi's "Scarlattina" stood out as one of the finest compositions, with a quasi zulu-jive section and neat three-trombone engagement, during which Tramontana kicked proverbial booty, as he did in an unaccompanied slot on Schiano's "Sud" and in a mightily quiet solo on Colombo's very Italianoid "Scongiuro." Tommaso, who was the most at home conducting the band, contributed a stylish, elegant piece, "Virtuosi Di Noci," which gave Schiano (also an accomplished actor) a vocal cameo. Not all the contributions were successful, as must be expected in a group of such size and ambition. Damiani's "Sequenze E Fughe" fell flat, and a pack of parts in five and seven couldn't resuscitate Tononi's tacky arranging on "La Leggenda Del Lupo Azzurro."

What to do for dessert? Dolci: After-hours, maestro Schiano played popular favorites on a keyboard with built-in drum machine. Fondlest memory: 2 a.m. at restaurant Banco della Berlina, head full of jazz, veins full of wine, belly full of gnocchi and Mario playing the evening's last tune: "You Do Something To Me." Ciao, baby, I'm totally gone! —J.C.

"There is a new group of people in Italy who play free improvised music in a radical way, more radical than we were. For me, I prefer some kind of contamination, not a radical position in any sense. These 'free radicals,'" jokes Schiaffini, who worked for eight years as an experimental physics researcher, "are too theoretical in their free attitude, so that the language music be totally broken, there must be no melody. I have a problem with radical positions a priori, because you have to do it, and when you play it, something happens and you can have a different interaction with it. Their position is too dogmatic. Like the Coltraneans, doing great damage to following generations." He sings a cliché Trane arpeggio. "Sheets of sound," he sighs, then laughs at what his slight accent made him say: "Shits of sound."

Aside from its musical scope, the most remarkable aspect of Instabile may be its organization. The orchestra has no "leader," but operates as a true composers orchestra, with a commissions committee—including Bergerone, now the group's manager—that regulates who's being asked to contribute to the book (currently containing 24 original pieces by 15 of the group's members). Mayes even keeps a chart of how many solos each player is allotted in the band's active repertoire, so that none of the strongest soloists gets shortchanged on blowing space. It's a sort of model society, democratically run with input from all, drawing on the deeply rooted Italian predilection for rigorous debate and the intricate history of progressive politics in the country. In the end, the band's egalitarian social climate and complex interpersonal chemistry is one thing that keeps members from getting too upset playing material they don't like by other players.

"In the beginning, two or three musicians in the orchestra didn't play my piece very well because they didn't believe in the project," recalls Minafra. "But now they play with feeling

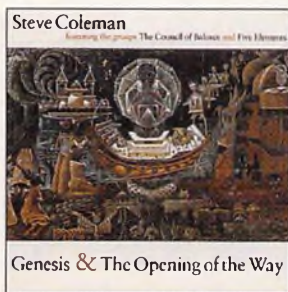
because they understand that it's important to play everything with respect. Yes, maybe you don't like my music, maybe I don't like your music. But I must respect you. The concept is very simple: We must stay together for development," he says, growing animated. "It is very ambizioso, the project, because it's impossible to stay together seven years with 18 egos. But after seven years, the orchestra is consolidated."

As the band celebrates the release of its third CD, *European Concerts '94-'97* (Nel Jazz; other CDs include *Skies Of Europe* on ECM and *Live In Noci And Rive De Dier* on Leo), and a comprehensive book documenting and analyzing the ensemble (published by Auditorium Edizioni), utopia comes disguised as an ongoing struggle. Pianist Giorgio Gaslini, one of the most influential and accomplished figures in Italian jazz since the '50s, left the band—amicably—in '96 after a power struggle over how much of their repertoire would be dedicated to his compositions. And even long after the "consolidation" of the band, it remains a powder keg of sorts. Tramontana, for one, says it was a great honor for him to be invited, at age 28, to join the band when it commenced, but he has serious esthetic issues with some of the slapstick antics and showy composing of other members. "It's difficult for me to be on the stage with all this theater going on. It's too much. There is an interesting phrase from Anton Webern: 'We must play music for ethical reasons more than for vanity, not to be like a peacock.' For me, theater is theater and music is another thing."

Tramontana's statement is strong, but rigorous critique seems an integral part of the orchestra. Indeed, access to that kind of raw nerve is precisely what keeps the Instabile gritty and honest, what keeps the leaning tower leaning. Temper that critique with respect, tolerance and a burning desire to spread the word, and you know what keeps it from falling down. —John Corbett

CD REVIEWS

JUNE 1998



Steve Coleman

Genesis &
The Opening Of The Way
RCA Victor 72934

★★★★½

Talk about layers. This two-disc set is as vibrant and multi-textured a polyrhythmic sedimentary formation as you'll find. At once integrating elements that are tightly knit and loosely spun, the ambitious project's many strata are coordinated at the expert hand of alto saxophonist and M-Base cofounder Steve Coleman. While that collective's "macro basic array" concept hasn't always found its mark in these ears, Coleman's recent works for RCA—which include releases with the rap-funk ensemble Metrics (*The Way Of The Cipher*), and Coleman's bands Mystic Rhythm Society (*Myths, Modes And Means*; *The Sign And The Seal*) and Five Elements (*Curves Of Life*)—unerringly have, and these new studio recordings, *Genesis & The Opening Of The Way*, are no exception.

The overall key is a dense, rhythmic overlay system that is rarely used so productively—listen to Trevor Watts' *Moire Music* or Ned Rothenberg's *Double Band* for other successful implementations of the idea. On the first CD—which features Coleman's group the Council of Balance (six saxes, eight brass, guitar, piano and keyboards, two basses, drums, a five-piece percussion section and a string quartet)—the leader/composer achieves a dazzling fusion of the mass orchestral possibilities of such a large group, the glorious improvised heterophony of early jazz, the climactic intensity of Sufi dervish music and the raw groove potential of a small funk band.

Coleman's arrangements emphasize antiphonal sectionality—on "Day 5," the strings loop two chords while saxes and bones hocket riffs, and "Day 1" and "Day 2" (which bleed together) pit sheets of string against horn and include some lovely dissonant harmonic parts with lines built by adding voices one-by-one. Atop, expressive, expansive soloing highlighted by Coleman and M-Base-mate Greg Osby's altos and George Lewis' trombone; beneath, a funky underpinning rolls creating the bed, very complex and constructed out of superimpositions of different-lengthed recursive ostinati, often in odd meters. Alongside, Afro-Cuban per-

cussion percolates, sometimes rising to the surface (at the outset of "Day 4" and outro of "Day 5"), other times galloping along with Rickman's propulsive kitwork. Only "Day 6" is cut from a cloth of more straightforward stitch, its electric funk-jazz thumb-poppin' bass a less dense gulf forward at the next disc.

Appropriately, for a suite about the week of Creation, the only slowdown comes on "Day 7," where a low, dark line of 'bone and bowed upright bass assumes a posture of rest; four minutes in, the whole ensemble absorbs the line, and Coleman's exuberant alto takes it out. "Awareness" is a short, upbeat coda: a seven-part suite, the eighth piece—and what time is it in? Nite, natch.

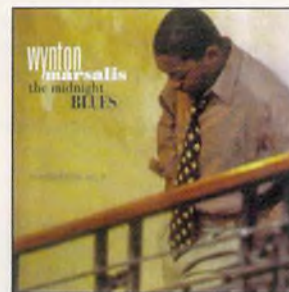
The Five Elements septet (plus Rosangela Silvestre, listed on "dance," presumably in reference to live appearances) could be construed as more of a blowing band, though it's got an equally sophisticated rhythmic stitch. Pianist Andy Milne and guitarist David Gilmore acquit themselves admirably (Milne is featured alone for a rich, extended intro on the ballad "Rite Of Passage"), and Rickman's hypercharged tom rolls and cowbell clang are highly flammable. This is also a perfect vantage to scout what an outstanding soloist Coleman is—he's got googobs of rhythmic acuity, gnawing hungrily on his band's cross-rhythms, and wafts of Ornette's tone and timing sneak into his horn (check out "First Cause"). The arranging is varied and still quite involved: On "Wheel Of Nature," Coleman layers slow line over brisk beat; on "The Law" he generates a hip-hop rhythm with wicked piano overlay; elsewhere, he uses tight unison melodies tandem with piano, bass or both. Regg Washington is even found walking bass, rather than ostinatizing, on "Regeneration." Either one of these discs would repay many listens; together, they'll take a long, enjoyable while to digest.

—John Corbett

Genesis & The Opening Of The Way—Day One; Day Two; Day Three; Day Four; Day Five; Day Six; Day Seven; Awareness; Law Of Balance; Pi; First Cause; Wheel Of

Nature; Rite Of Passage; Regeneration; Organic Movement; The Law; Fortitude And Chaos; Seti I; Polar Shift; Third Dynasty. (68:25/75:37)

Personnel—(on tracks 1-8) Coleman, Greg Osby, alto saxophones; Ravi Coltrane, tenor and soprano saxophones; Aaron Stewart, Yosvany Terry Cabrera, Greg Tandy, tenor saxophone; Ralph Alessi, Shane Endsley, Nabate Isles, trumpet; George Lewis, Tim Albright, Josh Roeseman, André Atkins, Jamal Haynes, trombones; David Gilmore, guitar; Andy Milne, piano; Vijay Iyer, piano (7), keyboards; Kenny Davis, Regg Washington, basses; Sean Rickman (1-5, 7), Gene Lake (6, 8), drums; (on tracks 9-20) Coleman, alto saxophone; Milne, piano; David Dyson, electric bass; Washington, acoustic bass; Gilmore, guitar; Miguel "Anga" Diaz Zayas, percussion; Rickman, drums; Rosangela Silvestre, dance.



Wynton Marsalis

The Midnight Blues:
Standard Time Vol. 5
Columbia 68921

★★★½

Wynton Marsalis' sturdy series of *Standard Time* albums have proceeded according to no iron formula except that the emphasis be on familiar songs. So on the fifth, he has chosen to do what must have seemed obvious from the start: combine the lyricism of trumpet and strings under the structuring hand

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
STEVE COLEMAN <i>Genesis & The Opening Of The Way</i>		★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★
WYNTON MARSALIS <i>The Midnight Blues</i>		★★★½	★★	★★	★★★
THELONIOUS MONK <i>Live At The It Club—Complete</i>		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BRIAN BLADE <i>Fellowship</i>		★★½	★★★	★★½	★★★½

of Robert Freeman. The result is as close to his 1984 *Hot House Flowers* album, for which Freeman also created the string backgrounds, as it is to the other *Standard Time* projects.

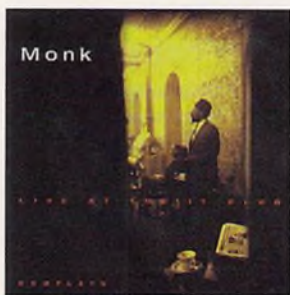
Marsalis' lovely but rather pristine sound brings more stateliness than spontaneity to the material, though. There are occasional pinches of seasoning in the form of a gliss, a trill, a choke, a buzz and even a rare double-time interlude in the coda to "The Party's Over." Otherwise, he is definitely in no hurry, and it's the unremitting indolence of the pacing that may tempt one's attention to roam or even disengage. Although he takes "It Never Entered My Mind" with a straight mute and adds a plunger as well as a tango rhythm on "I Got Lost In Her Arms," his open horn dominates virtually every minute of the rest and accordingly begs for the ballast of variety—a complimentary temperament of contrasting sensibility, perhaps, to give him an adversary off of which to react. Given their mutual respect for melody, wouldn't a dialog with Ruby Braff be interesting? Maybe volume six.

The concluding track, "Midnight Blues," is really two concepts cohabitating within a single title. The first six minutes constitute a kind of informal concerto, bringing soloist and orchestra together in a mutually sustaining work. Marsalis deploys a variety of voices, almost in the manner of a mimic, as he works through familiar material with cleverness and emotional vigor. The second half shrinks the proportions down to a smart-though-standard quartet performance. The strings rejoin in a brief coda to round out the most stimulating of the 12 tracks.

—John McDonough

The Midnight Blues: Standard Time Vol. 5—*The Party's Over; You're Blase; After You've Gone; Glad To Be Unhappy; It Never Entered My Mind; Baby, Won't You Please Come Home; I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry; I Got Lost In Her Arms; Ballad Of The Sad Young Man; Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year; My Man's Gone Now; The Midnight Blues.* (76:00)

Personnel—Marsalis, trumpet; Eric Reed, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; plus string ensemble.



Thelonious Monk

Live At The It Club—Complete
Columbia/Legacy 65288

★★★★★

All props to intelligence, strategy and technical acumen—jazz would be hurting without them. But in my book, improvisation sans glee can be an even bigger drag. Monk certainly thought so. That's why all of his chess matches came in the form of bachelor parties. As a bandleader he encouraged his players to


strive for a sense of recreation that never conflicted with their expertise. And perhaps nowhere is that mix of smarts and swing more exhilarating than on *Live At The It Club*.

A continuous parade of ideas, the music made during this 1964 gig is overwhelming in its spirit. You can credit the fact that much of it was recorded on Halloween, believe it was the informality of the L.A. rathskeller that bolstered the cavorting, or simply chalk it up to the professional effervescence generated by Charlie Rouse, Larry Gales, Ben Riley and their boss. Whichever, for two nights Monk took his team down an avenue where craft and caprice were in equally high relief. *Live At The It Club*, especially in this new, sonically brightened form with extra tracks and unedited takes, is the equal of

other stellar performance dates like Miles' Plugged Nickel sessions, Newk's Vanguard trios, Ellington's 1940 Fargo romp and the Art Ensemble's *Urban Bushman*. Guess that makes it one of the best jazz records ever made.


You can tell its frolicsville right from the get-go. The band lays into a "Blue Monk" that ain't very blue at all. After the leader scatters around enough fraggled phrases to generate oodles of solo options, Rouse lets it rip. Those who believe Thelonious was the only band member to make his maneuvers seem like mischief need to get behind the tenor player here. At the time of the It Club recordings, Rouse had been with the pianist for almost six years; his understanding of Monk's compositions and bandstand ties was fully formed. Perhaps that's why his inven-

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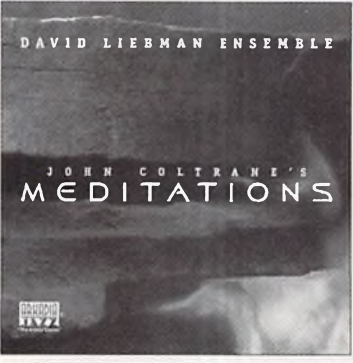
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Bob Karlovits, PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW



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JOHN COLTRANE'S MEDITATIONS

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John MacGillies, CHICAGO'S NEW CITY

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tion is so boundless. On the sprightly "Well, You Needn't" he's a fountainhead of pithy expressions, proclaiming rather than calculating. "Rhythm-a-ning," where Gales and Riley drive hard enough to foster links between jazz and rock & roll, finds Rouse ultra-insistent, blowing a string of authoritative quips. Much of the saxophonist's magic is woven when Monk lays out (check "Straight, No Chaser" and "Nutt"), and in a way, *Live At The It Club* winds up being his date.

Of course, these were two good nights for the pianist as well. The string of staccato notes that announce his solo on "Baluc-Bolivar" is typically eccentric and utterly fetching. Same with the newly added romp through "Bright Mississippi," which winds up being a splendid

sampling of his ingenuity. The pregnant pauses that often dotted Monk's moves in other situations are absent here. The boss knows it's groove time.

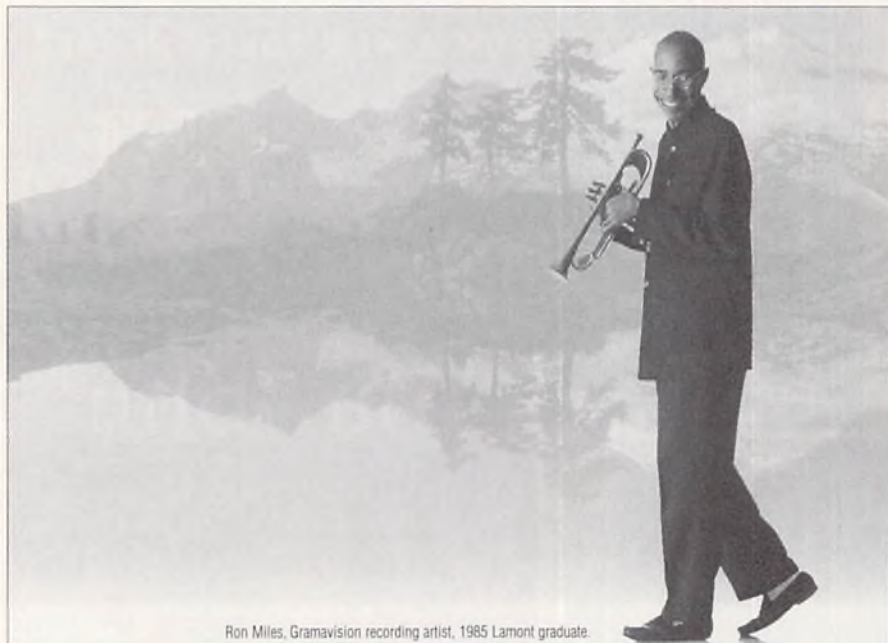
This edition of the disc contains a handful of standards often associated with Monk, including "Just You, Just Me," "All The Things You Are," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." They were left off the 1982 vinyl release in order to make it an all-Monk program. Each is wild with vitality.

In this era of tribute and homage, we sometimes get used to receiving essences second-hand. Flip through the retail racks and you'll clock enough interpretations of the master's work to come away with the notion that Monk's bandstand persona somehow pales next to his

designation as a composer. The reemergence of *Live At The It Club* counters that thesis with a hearty laugh, assuring that on a rousing night, the high priest of bebop led a combo the equal of any other in jazz. —Jim Macnie

Live At The It Club—Complete—Blue Monk; Well, You Needn't; Round Midnight; Rhythm-a-ning; Blues Five Spot; Bemsha Swing; Evidence; Nutty; Epistrophy; Straight, No Chaser; Teo; I'm Getting Sentimental Over You; Misterioso; Gallop's Gallop; Ba-luc Bolivar Ba-luc-are; Bright Mississippi; Just You, Just Me; All The Things You Are; Epistrophy (Theme). (76:32/77:08)

Personnel—Monk, piano; Charlie Rouse, tenor saxophone; Larry Gales, bass; Ben Riley, drums.



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Brian Blade

Fellowship

Blue Note 59417

★★★½

The way this album starts sends a definite message: *Brian Blade Fellowship* is laden with intent, a world of impressions expressed through acoustic, electric and pedal steel guitars, saxophones, haunting cadences, exquisite electric keyboards and some fine, soaring swing.

Like his drummer contemporaries Bill Stewart and Matt Wilson, drummer/composer/leader Blade seems to be expressing himself as much through his songs and band members as he is with the sound of his drums. Probably more. In fact, except for a spell on "Folklore," there isn't a real drum solo to be found on the album. But there is much to recommend when it comes to styles of support, accompaniment, leading by following, not to mention very well-recorded drum heads and cymbals.

Which leads to another dimension that sends a definite message: *Fellowship* was produced by pop legend/wizard Daniel Lanois, a genius of sorts who's been making his mark with people like Bob Dylan, Peter Gabriel and Brian Eno, among others. The dry, smooth sound here is almost a fault to these ears, given how I like my jazz a little on the coarse side, sonically speaking. But then Blade is coming from a variety of worlds, musically speaking. Not only does he receive praise for his work from Joshua Redman, Kenny Garrett and Christian McBride, he's in demand by folks such as Joni Mitchell, Dylan, Emmylou Harris and Lanois.

Where *Fellowship* stumbles is in not being able to build on the strengths of early material like "Red River Revel," "The Undertow" and "Folklore," songs incredibly evocative and full of storytelling magic. The listener is left to wonder where the music will go, given their

unusual song structures, varied instrumentation, and emotional ebbs and flows. "Folklore," in particular, is a sunny 6/4 ditty that includes Zairian Babenzele Pygmy chants as well as uptempo, straight-ahead grooves that feature some fierce and friendly blowing from tenorist Melvin Butler and altoist Myron Walden. "Folklore," the album's longest cut at 11 minutes, is an example of extended blowing that doesn't wear out its welcome—the song's too well put together, with everyone knowing where they are and where they are going, for any extraneous excursions.

Like "The Undertow," "In Spite Of Everything" conveys a sense of longing and sadness that hits you in the chest. But unlike "The Undertow," "Everything"'s pop sheen ends up leaving it somewhat lifeless. The same can be said for "Lifeline," another very pretty melody draped in an arrangement suddenly sounding a little too down-pat, with a kind of NAC vibe to the solos. It's also at this point where *Fellowship* starts to sound too much like a saxophone album, with too much reliance on the reeds, however well played, to get the music across. It's the dispensing with saxophones as leitmotifs and the featuring of Dave Easley's insistent pedal steel and Jeff Parker's guitar on "Mojave" that give the song backbone and a reason for being. The tune's recurring motifs are familiar by now, but carried by new and equally effective voices.

What I like most about this album is its attitude: Blade comes across as brash, full of ideas, with a big heart, not afraid to try on some new outfits, maybe take jazz to some new places, mix things up a bit. For a 27-year-old, this guy sounds like he's been around, felt some pain, is

well on the way to developing some soul in his art, if not his life. —John Ephland

Fellowship—*Red River Revel; The Undertow; In Spite Of Everything; Lifeline; Mojave; If You See Lurah; Loving Without Asking.* (61:58)

Personnel—Blade, drums; Jon Cowherd, piano; Wurlitzer; Christopher Thomas, acoustic bass; Melvin Butler, tenor and soprano saxophones; Myron Walden, alto saxophone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Dave Easley, pedal steel guitar; Daniel Lanois, mando-guitar (1), white mustang (6).



Urbie Green

Sea Jam Blues
Chiaroscuro 338

★★★


In the 1950s trombonist Urbie Green blew into jazz in a big way, first through the Woody Herman band and then in a series of spectacular solos on various Buck Clayton jam session LPs. If J.J. Johnson was the decade's most influ-

ential player, Green was close on his heels.

This loose and comfortable CD, recorded during a 1995 jazz cruise, finds the thoroughly-bred ingredients of Green's influence still ready for the fast track. His distinctively smooth and oversized open horn sound comes through with poise and command here on a handful of ballads that include "You've Changed" and "I Thought About You." On the faster pieces, he's inclined to mute his sound with a plunger, though without the wah-wah effects. The effect is to muddy that sharp, sweeping edge his attack possesses at those tempos, which is one of his prime strengths. Having denied us this through most of the first eight tracks, when he finally opens up and lets fly on "But Not For Me" the effect is bracing, and maybe even a bit nostalgic to fans of the Clayton sessions.

Green has plenty of stimulation to keep him on his toes. Chris Potter may not be a player of singular individuality, but he has a store of know-how and energy that keeps this group simmering. His showcase feature is "Giant Steps," that post-bebop conundrum that a new level of virtuosity devised for itself to solve, and he highballs through it with a controlled abandon that never slips the track. You'll be equally impressed with Green's son, Jesse. His piano combines a contemporary ear and powerful urge to swing, which comes through as clearly on a straight fast blues like "Sea Jam Blues" as on "Giant Steps." His feature piece, "The Bach Suite," is something of an Oscar Peterson set piece but is done with the required precision. (Chiaroscuro CDs are not available in stores but can be ordered by calling 800-528-2582.)

—John McDonough



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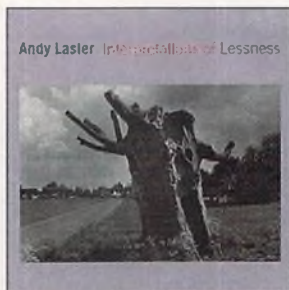
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Sea Jam Blues—*Sea Jam Blues; You've Changed; Giant Steps; I Thought About You; The Song Is You; The Bach Suite; Old Folks; But Not For Me.* (70:10)

Personnel—Green, trombone; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Jesse Green, piano; Paul Rostock, bass; Glenn Davis, drums.



Andy Laster

Interpretations Of Lessness

Songlines 1515

★★★★

While it's too early to use declarative terms like "trend" or "movement," it is striking how there have been some notable chamber-jazz recordings in recent years. One musician whose endeavors in this area should receive more attention is saxophonist Andy Laster. His *Interpretations Of Lessness* disc is an abstract, intuitive performance that's also a lot

fun in its own way.

Laster writes in the notes that his inspiration for this project was Samuel Beckett's method in writing *Lessness*, which involved picking sentences out of a hat and then forming paragraphs around them. Laster's musical interpretation of this idea comes across in a fancifully aleatoric design that presents some fresh platforms for his impressive group's improvisations. On "Earth Sky Body," Cuong Vu's brittle trumpet lead suddenly stops and the tone of the piece shifts with Erik Friedlander's super mellifluous cello. Kenny Wollesen's use of a glockenspiel and bells keeps the piece lighthearted. Stylistic breaks and subversions are prominent throughout this disc; on "Blessed Days" Laster's fluid blue notes respond to Vu's baroque tinged lead, while Wollesen's syncopation keeps the dialogue from sounding too mindfully conceptual. This joviality isn't completely pervasive, as Friedlander's unaccompanied introduction to "Pale Blue" is particularly brooding.

Despite his considerable abilities on both alto and baritone, Laster gives himself surprisingly few moments as the lead instrumentalist. But these instances are consistently well chosen. On "Ruins True Refuge," when he plays baritone alongside Friedlander's cello and Wollesen's temple blocks, he's able to make this unorthodox combination swing. Laster's off-kilter call-and-response dialogues with Vu on "Space Of A Step" and "Other Nights Better Days" are occasionally playful, and always engaging.

Working in this vein, and with this lineup, Laster invites comparison to trumpeter Dave Douglas. Friedlander is a regular member of Douglas' string group, and Vu performed on Douglas' *Sanctuary* CDs. Even though these analogies would be fair enough to mention, Laster's unique embrace of randomness in arranging, composing and improvising shows that chamber jazz has enough room for his vision. —Aaron Cohen

Interpretations Of Lessness—*Earth Sky Body; Blessed Days; Ruins True Refuge; Space Of A Step; Other Nights Better Days; Little Void; Pale Blue; Air Heart.* (44:49)

Personnel—Laster, alto and baritone saxophones; Erik Friedlander, cello; Cuong Vu, trumpet; Kenny Wollesen, drums, glockenspiel, marimba, bells, temple blocks.



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Pee Wee Ellis

A New Shift

Minor Music 801060

★★

James Brown's hitmaking years may be behind him, but his funky legacy lives on at the hands of former sidemen like saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis, whose latest album

adds a few new wrinkles to the groove while sticking mainly to the tried-and-true.

Bright and well-produced, the music on *A New Shift* is more instrumental r&b than jazz; although the players make use of some relatively advanced harmonies, they never venture into anything so far-out as, say, bebop. And while the heavy backbeats and surging riffs are still hearty enough to party to, the prevalent mood is one of nostalgia; fans who wish to recapture the gritty edge of funky are better served by the ongoing flow of Brown reissues.

Highlights include "Chicken Soup," where guitarist Martin Scales, keyboardist Roberto di Gioia, guest trumpeter Till Brönner and Ellis himself motor over familiar changes with as much jazzy panache as they can muster and an amiable reggae version of the Top-40 classic "How Can You Mend A Broken Heart." Lowlights include Ellis' syrupy vocal rendition of Louis Armstrong's posthumous hit "What A Wonderful World." The rest consists mostly of recycled dance jams and bluesy ballads, with guest trombonist and JB alum Fred Wesley contributing a few gruff, squawking solos.

—Larry Birnbaum

A New Shift—It's A Funky Thing To Do; *Chicken Soup*; *What A Wonderful World*; *I'm So Tired Of Being Alone*; *A New Shift*; *Back Home*; *How Can You Mend A Broken Heart*; *Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart*; *Spring Like*; *New Moon*; *Come On In The House*. (62:08)

Personnel—Ellis, tenor and soprano saxophones, vocals (3); Martin Scales, guitar; Patrick Scales, bass; Roberto di Gioia, keyboards; Guido May, drums; Fred Wesley, trombone (1, 5, 9); Till Brönner, trumpet.



Paul Bollenback

Double Gemini
Challenge 70046

★★★

It's a pleasure to hear young musicians picking up where Herbie Hancock's *The New Standard* left off. Yes, new standards have been penned since "Autumn Leaves," and in creative hands, the melodies of Stevie Wonder, Sting and even the Red Hot Chili Peppers can serve as vehicles for jazz improvisation.

In this endeavor, guitarist Paul Bollenback is mostly successful. After years as a sideman for organist Joe DeFrancesco, Bollenback has been gaining notice as a talented improviser in his own right. On this disc, his second as a leader, he teams up with his old soul brother DeFrancesco and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. It would be just another straightahead organ-trio session save one notable twist: the latter-

century pop interpretations that make up more than half the cuts.

From the get-go, Bollenback displays chops galore, a natural feel and an impeccable sense of timing. He burns his way through the Chili Peppers' "Breaking The Girl," which lends itself well to this kind of adaptation with its 6/8 meter and inherent tension and release.

But then we're in for a mild letdown. An odd choice for the second cut, Earth, Wind & Fire's "After The Love Has Gone" seems less geared toward this project, especially since the trio runs it down with little embellishment. There's a built-in risk with instrumental versions of pop tunes: namely, that they'll come out sounding like elevator music. On this cut, they come a little close for comfort. The ballads in general are least successful on this CD, I think, partly

because the trio lays back so much that they give the impression of dragging.

Strangely, I'm more drawn to the (gulp) Hootie & the Blowfish number, "Let Her Cry." At least the trio mixes things up a bit. They start with a 7/8 intro that Bollenback says he based on a John Coltrane intro to "Body And Soul," and he solos over it with fierce determination. Then he plays the melody a cappella, the trio shifts to a double-time feel for more guitar soloing, and Tain and Bollenback drop way back for an organ solo. The peaks and valleys continue through the solos until the song ends the way it started, with Bollenback soloing over the 7/8 meter. Another pleasing track and interesting song choice is Stevie Wonder's "I Am Singing," which ends with a snippet of "Giant Steps." It's details like that—clever con-

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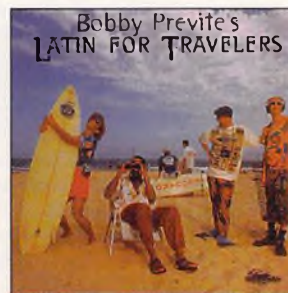
nections between the jazz and pop worlds—that this CD could use in more abundance.

While *Double Gemini* delivers mixed results, it must be noted that Bollenback is a monster who's worth a listen by any straight-head jazz guitarist or enthusiast.

—John Janowiak

Double Gemini—*Breaking The Girl; After The Love Has Gone; Double Gemini; Reflections Of Jaco; Let Her Cry; So Many Stars; Open Hand; Field(s) Of Gold; I Am Singin'; Cat's Eye.* (60:40)

Personnel—Bollenback, guitar; Joey DeFrancesco, organ; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.



Bobby Previte's Latin For Travelers

My Man In Sydney
enja 9348

★★★★

In the notes to *My Man In Sydney*, drummer Bobby Previte writes that his Latin For Travelers quartet is a return to his roots as a member of road-scarred bar bands. The sense of high-octane fun that must have been a big part of playing in this group is resolutely expressed throughout most of this disc.

Latin For Travelers' two guitars, keyboards and drums is an ideal arrangement for heavy funk chords, and the musicians' ideas for solos on top of Previte's dynamic beats are usually sharp. On the disc's title track, Previte's energetic solo opens up for a solid groove from Jamie Saft on Hammond organ, which then becomes a base for an extroverted guitar dialogue between Jerome Harris and Marc Ducret. Elsewhere, such as on "Bear Right At Burma," Previte sounds vigorous, but notably in the background as Saft's simmering notes support the tense leads from Harris and Ducret.

What makes all of this different than more traditional outfits with similar instrumental arrangements is that this resourceful band can change directions at a half-step. This works best when the group makes these alterations sound like natural progressions. "London Duty Free" has a tempo that kicks into overdrive effectively without making the piece sound tacked together. Shifting around from organ to Mini Moog, Saft adds different textures without sounding too meandering or spacey—Previte holds everything together.

While Previte's playing on previous discs has often been loose, he's unfailingly tight on this outing. The live recording (from an Australian club called the Basement) is sur-

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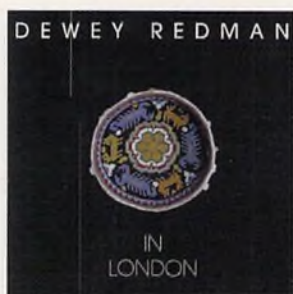
prisingly well recorded.

At times, the group's vast musical interests and the travelogue theme come a bit close to kitch. "Albuquerque Bar Band" is introduced with a Western slide guitar, and "Deep Dish Chicago" features, of course, urban blues progressions. Still, the group's conviction and adroit musical navigations quickly depart from, and make up for, these slightly trite bits.

—Aaron Cohen

My Man In Sydney—Albuquerque Bar Band; *My Man In Sydney*; *London Duty Free*; *Bear Right At Burma*; *Deep Dish Chicago*; *Love Cry New York*. (52:11)

Personnel—Previte, drums, voice; Jerome Harris, electric guitar, electric bass, voice; Marc Ducret, electric guitar; Jamie Saft, Hammond organ, Fender Rhodes piano, Mini Moog synthesizer.



Dewey Redman

In London
Palmetto 2030

★★★★

There is a style of jazz that possesses an elusive force. It is too narrow to be called a genre. It is more a niche. It is what happens when outcats, for whatever reason, come in from the cold and play it relatively safe for a time.

Perhaps the fascination comes from submerged tension, like being in a room with a person prone to violence who is, for the moment, speaking gently. The paradigm is probably John Coltrane's *Ballads* (necessitated, we learned years later, by embrochure problems). Other examples, among many, include *Morning Song* by David Murray (Black Saint, 1984) and *Naima* by the New York Unit featuring Pharoah Sanders (Evidence, 1995). Add Dewey Redman's *In London* to the list.

In London, Redman's 11th album as a leader, could be a breakthrough. It's one of his strongest works, along with being one of his most approachable. It was recorded live at Ronnie Scott's with a rhythm section that Redman clearly finds inspiring and energizing. The bassist is wily veteran Cameron Brown; the pianist is a fresh voice from Rome, Rita Marcotulli; the drummer is Matt Wilson, to whom the cliché "up and coming" would seem to apply. Wilson is in increasing demand on the New York scene because he is both maniacal and musical, and he drives *In London* hard. (In the liner notes, Redman muses on the fact that "he's the first white drummer I ever hired.")

Not all of *In London* is inside the envelope. The oddly titled "I-Pimp" is the Redman we have come to know, still at full strength in his mid-60s, piercing the low ceiling of Ronnie

Scott's with vertical stabs, roiling yet always thinking. (Wilson sounds like multiple drummers and Marcotulli wildly hammers and crashes.) But "I Should Care" is different. Redman lashes it with passion but also caresses it. The contrast between the lethal edge of his tone and the melodic delicacy of one of Sammy Cahn's finest songs creates an "I Should Care" for the permanent archives.

"The Very Thought Of You" is equally unexpected. It is an authentic tribute to Dexter Gordon that also lives on dynamic contrast. Redman's natural aggression pulls against the relaxed phrasing he adopts in Gordon's honor. "Portrait In Black And White" is an Antonio Carlos Jobim samba, introduced by Redman's verbal recitation of Chico Buarque's poignant

lyrics, followed by his astringent, unsentimental tenor saxophone interpretation of these same emotions. Marcotulli contributes with crisp, off-center fills and then takes a head-long, spilling solo.

In London was recorded in one of the best places in the world to hear jazz. There is electricity in the bad air of Ronnie Scott's, and this recording by Michael Waters captures it. We are placed in the front row, close enough to touch the bell of Redman's fierce, eruptive saxophone.

—Thomas Conrad

In London—*I Should Care*; *The Very Thought Of You*; *I-Pimp*; *Portrait In Black And White*; *Tu-Inns*; *Kleerwine*; *Stablemates*; *Eleven*. (66:28)

Personnel—Redman, tenor saxophone; Rita Marcotulli, piano; Cameron Brown, bass; Matt Wilson, drums.

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JAZZ

Clarinet Candy

by Paul de Barros

The clarinet's perky, hard-candy sound lost favor after the swing era, but the instrument has been experiencing a renaissance of sorts, fueled perhaps by the current rediscovery of jazz history—by neo-traditionalists as well as postmodernists—and by the European avant garde, which never abandoned the instrument.

Francois Houle/Benoit Delbecq: *Nancali* (Songlines 1519; 60:40: ★★★★★) Francois Houle, a lapsed Montrealer living in Vancouver, is one of the best new virtuosos, a musician with total control of contemporary techniques, such as multiphonics, circular breathing, false fingerings for producing microtones, vocalizing and playing two parts of his clarinet at the same time. Houle and Benoit Delbecq improvise in the modern classical vein, with a feel of exquisite distance. Delbecq's prepared piano is often muted to a nubby "thock" or gamelan-like chime; Houle's clarinet is hard and pure, with just the finest bark to it. The music is by turns quiet and crystalline, dramatic and vigorous, suggesting alternate landscapes, from childhood dreams ("Late Dance") to unspeakable tragedies ("Plateaux"). Houle is full of surprises, such as a sudden, downward, low-register glissando ("Rhizome") or a zigzag, bumblebee escape ("Sunancali"). This is subdued, carefully crafted stuff that rewards close attention.

Ben Goldberg/John Schott/Michael Sarin: *What Comes Before* (Tzadik 7120; 44:10: ★★★★★½) These spare and quiet landscapes bear some affinity with the Houle/Delbecq project, but the melancholy mood suggests a post-historical, timeless wilderness (auto-suggestion from the cover photo?) Goldberg, of the New Klezmer Trio, gets a juicy, cherry-pie sound with an irresistibly willowy lower register and an amazing, saxophone-like density on open tones. Purity and clarity of sound is the key here, with drummer Mike Sarin quietly tapping his mallets and guitarist John Schott's gently clanging minor ninths occasionally suggesting Bill Frisell. The staggered confluences of

long clarinet high notes and guitar harmonics on "Thirteen Qualities" and the velvety, dead air of "Night Prayer Song" recall Morton Feldman. The trio often hooks up majestically, particularly on "Time Outside Of Time," what with its bluesy undertone, but sometimes the team magic doesn't make for a lengthy visit.

Canvas Trio: *Moments* (Music & Arts 999; 54:47: ★★★★★) The beautiful sonorities of the Canvas Trio (Joelle Leandre, bass; Carlos Zingaro, violin; Rudiger Carl, clarinet and accordion) fleetingly suggest European cafe music. But when a cafe opens where they serve nouvelle cuisine that blends ingredients with the instantaneous empathy these three mix, please make me a reservation. There are

footfalls, and the volume, direction and reverberations change. On "Hungen 609," a dense, foghorn of a multiphonic, tongued with a slight chirrup, slowly gives birth to a high, ringing overtone that floats about. An investigative and tenacious player who also manages to sound warm, Carl mines the huge variety of reedy sounds available to the horn—pops, mellow open tones, squawks, shrieks, champagne phrases—with an astonishing alacrity, sometimes all in a few seconds. Carl also has a sense of humor, called upon nicely in his jazz allusions on "Stutzpunkt II."

George Masso: *That Old Gang Of Mine* (Arbors Jazz 19173; 68:28:



Benoit Delbecq (left) and Francois Houle: quiet and crystalline, dramatic and vigorous

16 "moments" here, ranging from 59 seconds to just over five minutes, each one a tightly attentive, minimalist excursion, true to its own premise, sometimes swelling orchestrally on the waves of the accordion, others creating pointillistic, playful or somnolent moods, with nods to folk tunes. Rudiger highlights single notes and jaunty contrary lines on the accordion, reminding us that, like the clarinet, it, too, is a "reed" instrument. This is one of the most satisfying free-improvising groups in the world.

Rudiger Carl: *Solo* (FMP 86; 70:15: ★★★★★) In June 1995, Carl recorded a solo performance for clarinet and accordion in the Adler-Werke, a huge, empty factory building in Frankfurt. As with Stuart Dempster's classic ambient trombone recordings, the room becomes another "player," as you hear Carl's

★★★★) A clarinet page wouldn't be right without one mainstay; and while Masso's sturdy trombone, which graced the bands of Jimmy Dorsey and Benny Goodman, is the feature here, clarinetist Dick Johnson solos to good advantage on more than half the cuts. Though he doesn't have the facility of label-mate Allen Vache, Johnson's tone has a sweet, Jimmy Hamilton glow and his good-natured, dixie-to-swing approach features a fearless stream of jagged ideas. The disc is nicely arranged, with a clarinet/muted-trumpet back-up riff on "The Very Thought Of You," with Lou Colombo on trumpet, and a lovely trombone/trumpet/low-register-clarinet lead on "What Am I Here For?" to which pianist Dave McKenna contributes a slick solo. Johnson's "dirty" sound on a drumless chorus of "That Old Gang Of Mine" adds just the right touch. **DB**

BLINDFOLD TEST

JUNE 1998

Jackie McLean

by Owen McNally

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.

Jackie McLean, the onetime wunderkind protégé of Charlie Parker, could easily have fashioned a whole career out of toiling amid the safe and familiar grooves of bebop.

But this manchild of the bebop revolution—the kid from Harlem's Sugar Hill district who learned changes at the feet of the great Bud Powell—has always kept his ears open for new colors and innovative ideas. Spiked with hard-bop and free-jazz, the alto master's blue-chip Blue Note releases in the 1960s range with declarations of independence on *Let Freedom Ring* and *Destination Out!* His new Blue Note disc, *Fire And Love*, features him with his young Macband and his son, the gifted reed player Rene McLean.

McLean's career includes vital roles as teacher and social activist. He is founder and chairman of the African-American music department at the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music. His classroom and bands have been launching pads for young talent, including such scintillating saxophonists as Abraham Burton and Jimmy Greene. With his wife, Dollie, McLean founded the Artists Collective, an arts and cultural center that has enriched the lives of thousands of inner-city youngsters in Hartford, Conn. In fulfillment of a dream deferred, the McLeans this summer move their progressive programs out of long worn-out facilities into new, \$6 million digs.

Benny Carter

"Cocktails For Two," (from *New Jazz Sounds: The Urbane Sessions*, Verve, 1996) Carter, alto saxophone with strings.

I'm not really sure. I think it's Benny Carter. Whoever it is, it's very fine. It's that pristine, beautiful, sweet and melodic alto coming out of the '30s and '40s. It's a style of alto playing that I have a great deal of respect for. I've grown to love it. It's got to be Benny Carter. I know it's not Johnny Hodges.

I didn't like the sweeter alto style when I was very young. The only guys that I really loved were the hard-hitting alto players like Pete Brown and Louis Jordan. That was because I was so bent on trying to get the horn to sound more like a tenor. I really wanted a tenor then. And I was just hellbent on making the alto sound like Dexter [Gordon] or Lester Young. Charlie Parker's album with strings was the epitome of alto with strings, but I'd give this gentleman 5 stars.

Lester Young

"I Want A Little Girl" (from *The Kansas City Sessions*, Commodore/GRP, 1997) Young, clarinet; Buck Clayton, trumpet; Eddie Durham, trombone; Freddie Green, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

That could be no one less but Pres. For clarinet, Pres is my favorite. I like the sound. It doesn't sound like a clarinet to me. It sounds like it's just a horn.

The sound of Pres' tenor made me want to play the saxophone. I say that Pres was the first bebopper before Bird—before anybody. Listen to the recordings that he made back in 1936 and '37. He was already playing some of those lines that would become bebop lines.

In my class, I teach that he was the first bebopper. Jimmy



ALAN TANENBERG

Blanton was another one that played that modern style before anybody came out with it. And Bird picked up on this whole style from Pres. Of course, Bird developed it to a fine art. Pres never took it to the highest levels. But he planted the seeds. He was at the root of it.

The trumpeter? That's not "Sweets" [Edison], is it? It's not Doc Cheatham? I don't know who that it is on trumpet. Sounds like Louis in a way, but it's not Louis. Oh, Buck Clayton, that's who it's got to be. Give it 5 stars.

Vincent Herring

"What Is This Thing Called Love?" (from *Scene One. Evidence*, 1997) Herring, alto saxophone; Darrell Grant, piano; Robert Hurst, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

Is it Vincent Herring? I'm not sure, but I think the style is very fine. It's a hard-hitting, very technical alto in a very modern style—a post-bebop style. I like it a lot, but I don't know who it is. I think it must be Vincent Herring. I'd give it 3 stars.

Ornette Coleman

"The Fifth Of Beethoven" (from *The Art Of The Improvisers*, Atlantic, 1988) Coleman, alto saxophone; Don Cherry, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; Ed Blackwell, drums.

That's Ornette, yeah. He's a very important piece of the whole structure of this music. And I can remember from the first time I ever heard that sound come over a record player. I didn't know how to take it because it seemed as though he had thrown everything out the window that I was struggling so hard to capture. It seemed like he was saying, "Forget about this and forget about that!" At first it was so different. But it was right up my alley, because already in the mid-'50s I was getting a little numbed by all the chord changes and playing all the straight bebop things. So he kind of opened the door for me and led me into what I call the Big Room—the Big Room of free playing.

That's a historical band. All those guys—Ornette, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins—were awesome. 5 stars.

DB