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hit
it
hard

David Murray &
James Carter

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Hit It Hard

Blowing extreme is nothing new, but there are only a few modern honkers and shouters who can simultaneously rant and persuade. Saxophonists David Murray and James Carter are two.

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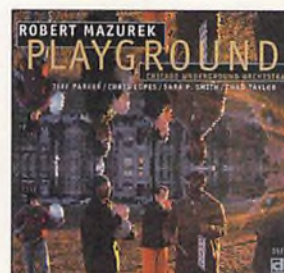
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BAMMO! WHOMP! BOOM!

Go to a show by David Murray or James Carter, and you'll hear enough exclamatory smacks to rival the weekly melees on the old *Batman* TV series. Both saxophonists hit it hard. And both have been rewarded career-wise for their keen mix of brutality and exuberance. The sweetest science may indeed be boxing as writer A.J. Liebling proffers, but in certain hands jazz's left hooks and roundhouse rights are just as commanding. Blowing extreme is nothing new, but there are only a few modern honkers and shouters who can simultaneously rant and persuade. Carter and Murray are two, their work refuting the notion that improvisation is a chess match. Each makes his moves on the canvas, in the ring.

By Jim Macnie

Photos By John Abbott

For the last couple of years, Murray has made his home in Paris. There, a whirling confluence of Afropop, hip-hop and jazz has inspired him to create his latest ensemble, the Fo Deuk Revue. Like Branford Marsalis' Buckshot LeFonque unit, its use of singers, rappers and syncopation woos a different kind of audience. It's also given the leader a new perspective on his work. "Yeah, yeah, like reminding me that there are other routes to travel," he says. "I've pretty much played all the jazz venues around the world, but this group has brought me to Africa. We've played Ghana, Senegal and lots of places where people come out and dance. That gives me a great sense of fulfillment."

hit it hard

David Murray &
James Carter

Murray is currently putting the finishing touches on his Satchel Paige project, a musical written in cahoots with Taj Mahal and Bob Weir. His piece for four marching bands will also grace the World Cup activities this summer. In New York to cut a new World Saxophone Quartet (WSQ) disc for Justin Time, Murray says he returns to the States more often than people think. "I'm always coming back and forth for work—I just sneak in and out." After our talk he headed off to Philly for a quartet concert.

Carter, too, is always in the ring. He gigs continuously, developing a stream of ideas that often displays his ferocious chops. Kicking off a set at the Village Vanguard in late February, his physicality was unmistakable. He flailed and lunged, commanding the room's attention with relentless thrusts. A few fans front and center were literally knocked out of their seats.

Over the last few years, this pugnaciousness has gathered poise. An enhanced equilibrium is obvious on the new *In Carterian Fashion*, the saxophonist's third disc for Atlantic. It's an organ outing that allows Carter to further investigate the deep sense of blues that has driven his work from the get-go. But the blitzkrieg of his phrases and the authority of his attack haven't been diluted. Carter still kicks butt first and asks questions later. "In a way that comes from when I first heard the WSQ," he says. "They pretty much justified the viability of the saxophone by itself, showing the power behind the horn, and its ability to hold its own. The blend they have is amazing."

Murray attended one of Carter's Vanguard shows, and the pair wound up sharing the stage a few nights later at an effervescent Craig Harris gig. These two jazz athletes sat down in a Midtown Manhattan photo studio to assess the corporeal side of swinging.

JIM MACNIE: *You guys shared the stage with Craig Harris the other night. James, what did you hear in David's horn?*

JAMES CARTER: I was caught up in the social vibe. I wasn't saying, "Those are a lot of upper partials he's dealing with tonight." I was just happy to see my people. We're in great health and spirit, and expound upon that through the music. That's what matters.



David Murray

DAVID MURRAY: In a situation like that we don't have time ... in fact, we rarely do analyze each other's playing. It doesn't work like that. We all know where the influences come from, where they're going, who's playing what. Playing together, you just worry about blending, having things make musical sense. I recently played with Chico Freeman, Steve Williamson and Jean Toussaint in England, and they wanted us to use bell mics so the guy in the booth could blend us. I said, "Unh-uh." We hardly know each other. We'll do it ourselves, no mics.

JC: Yeah, the clip-ons. Those are weird because they pick up the bell noise, key noise, the whole horn. Nah. Didn't the critics mention it about your stuff on *Hope-Scope*? You get down to the low B-flat and the partials from that note fill up the horn and it winds up sounding like a bass sax. Awwwwwwwwwhhhhhh!

JM: *Newk's been taken to task for using that thing.*

DM: There's nothing more personal than your tone, and if you use those, you're basically signing it off to the sound man. Of course, Newk is so powerful, he can probably play without a mic, even in front of a rhythm section. He's so strong. Sonny is everyone's idol.

JM: *You're both extremely physical musicians. There are head players, body players and head-and-body players. You guys use a lot of body.*

JC: I've learned it's not about a musician concentrating on his fingers and lips. Those are the two assets of saxophonists. In order for an individual to totally be there music-wise, he has to use his whole body. Nobody cares about a basketball player who can ...

DM: Only use a finger roll and that's it.

JC: Right, right. There's a whole body that's put to work in getting that shot across. Some shoot three-pointers, some go to the hole and tomahawk their way through. You have to keep your body in order to come across with the same soul you've always had. That's what made people dig you in the first place.

DM: I know a guy out in California who wrote a poem about me, and he called it "The Body English of David Murray." It goes on for about five pages, talking about me playing a solo onstage. I looked at it and said, "Man, you didn't really see all that.

You were making that stuff up." I can't see myself onstage, but ... it kind of took me aback.

JM: *You, the old football player, don't think you move it around a lot?*

DM: I was honored that he thought to talk about it. And then I watched some video of myself and thought that maybe he had something. Like a tennis player or a pool player putting that spin on the ball. If you don't get the right inflection, you don't do nothing. Like when James pops that reed. "Pop!!" If the attitude's not there, the move is weak. The attitude goes along with the body and from the heart. But it has to be executed by the body.

JM: *It's not only body language I'm talking about. But just the full-tilt demeanor of you both. Many people don't choose to go that way. James, your opening foray—your salutation—to the crowd the other night at the Vanguard was like a broadside.*

DM: Yeah, get in or get out.

JC: It's an ultimatum of some sort. Of course, I hope everyone stays and digs whatever hipness comes along. I never mean to diss the set just because I can hit it hard. I hope it always has a purpose. I hate it when individuals come up and say, "I heard a lot of Ben [Webster] in you, or [Albert] Ayler in you." I want them to hear *me* in the midst of all that. If I'm going to align with something, I've liked it when people have said they hear Jimi Hendrix feedback in the horn, something that's not necessarily of the norm. Everybody expects you to play like Lester [Young] or [Coleman] Hawkins on tenor—they're the norm.

DM: But in the rock world, like when I played with the [Grateful] Dead, those are the references they know. And believe me, you can get tired of them, too. It's refreshing at first, because it's different than the usual jazz comments. But it gets old. "Man, you were wailing like Clarence Clemons, man!" Say what? I need to send you some real albums to listen to. Ha ha! Of course, on bad nights I've got people who come up to me and say I sound like shit. And they've got a right to say it. Like, "Hey, the horn sounds a little stuffy these days."

JM: *David, when you hit New York in the late '70s, the vitality of youth helped determine your sound. You played like a hurricane back then. Are people attracted to the brawn it takes to do that? Do we all want to see someone tear it up?*



James Carter

DM: Yeah, audiences go for that. But on the other hand, it made me miss a lot of work back then, too. I had that rep put on me: and nobody called me to sit next to them in the studio or nothing. They thought I might erupt or something: Mount Vesuvius, right? You know what Bill Cosby says about me. "David is one of the cats, he can play it real cool. But you wouldn't bet on him. You wouldn't bet on him." Which was right-on the way he said it. He's not wrong. Because I'll be playing some shit, nicey-nice, and after a while it's fuck that, "BAAAAHHHH." I get bored, man.

JM: *It's been 20 years. You wonder what it is inside you that makes you do that?*

DM: I'm a revolutionary, I know what's inside me. I was like that as a little kid. Someone says left, I'm going right. The other way is very interesting to me.

JC: Especially if you're holding the rein.

JM: *Were you a rough-houser as a kid, James?*

JC: Yeah, I've been inquisitive. Actually that's how I started on the sax. We had a boarder in our house, and he had a soprano and a tenor, a gold-plated Selmer Mark VI with engraving and all. I was told, "Don't touch it, now." When he was out, I'd go in and open the case and pantomime with it. Then one day I was caught red-handed. He wound up picking out my first horn.

JM: *James, have you ever thought about downplaying the rambunctiousness? So far it's helped generate a fair amount of your acclaim. Do you find yourself having to live up to expectations to go ballistic?*

JC: I never really thought about it, because that's kind of like putting the reins in someone else's hands. I am naturally inclined to look into more avenues than one, that's for sure. And that's something I've done when I felt like it. Like with this organ album—it's not about blasting all over the place. I'm sharing the spotlight with individuals I came up with, and it comes across. We share. But no, I've never worried about things like, "Oh, they're saying stuff about me tearing it up. We've gotta put out a response to this; let's try a Neil Diamond tribute." No. If that was the case, I might as well give my horns over to the critics and see what happens.

JM: *What about the reactions in the front rows of the Vanguard the other*

night? You had a whole cheering section that was egging you on.

JC: Sunday, huh? Well, the first thing that comes to mind is church. The stage is the pulpit. The audience is the congregation. And I'm being ordained by the creator above. So it was like church. It often is when I go on stage. It's not like they're saying, "C'mon baby, bust that vein in your head." Not like that. Just me and the audience feeling great. Celebration of life, and I'm officiating.

JM: But rather than meditation, it's exclamation.

JC: Well, folks can meditate on it as well. I've seen it happen right in the front row.

JM: Both you guys are rugged. Has your body ever failed you on stage? I remember Peter Brotzmann telling me he woke up one morning after a gig and found he had cracked a rib by blowing so hard.

DM: The only time that ever happened to me was in Paris with a 20-voice gospel choir and six-piece funk band, and the place was really hot. We were speaking in tongues, there was synthesizer going, and it freed the horns up to really let loose. It just happened that my horn got a little banged up before the show and there was no way to repair it. So I had to blow extra hard. The next morning I remember thinking I'd found some new muscles. We took out past our bodies. That's the only time I outblew myself. The horn was wrong and I overcompensated. Generally, people like James and I have an unlimited capacity for blowing. It's never an issue. I don't see a lot of older guys out of breath, either. Once it's there, it's there.

JC: Bubba Brooks is like that.

DM: The music takes over. Maybe Peter Brotzmann's level of spirituality is a bit different. He's what I call a force player; he forces his music, and it's very loud. But I'd like to hear him play a slow, D-flat blues. I'm sure he wouldn't ache inside then.

JM: The Art Ensemble of Chicago played New York last week, and I heard talk before the show that they're a bit more ancient than future these days. Do we sometimes have a hard time accepting our once-progressive players becoming elder statesmen?

DM: I could listen to them all day, man. I turn to what's exciting to me. I wouldn't want to appear in a quartet every time I play. Using a

different aggregation each time keeps things fresh, and that's what's going on for me in Paris. I'm trying all sorts of different things. I get mad when I see the same old fans sitting in my audience. I like to find an audience that's a little younger, a little different. I mean, I love the people who come, but I do see the same faces quite a bit.

JC: I can see that at my shows. We got kids that come in with their folks. There's diversity: Symphony individuals come in,

metal heads come in. And everybody's getting their jollies from the show. But getting back to elder statesmen, I don't look at it that way. The music is timeless, and the statesmen are timeless. Some people have gotten grayer. That doesn't change the music any. Lester [Bowie] has gotten grayer, but the fire is there. I'd never say that it's an antiquated deal at all.

DM: If you're the kind of artist who

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wants to always paint yourself in the same light, well ... I have an office in Paris and I hear what the promoters say. "Guy with a quintet? No, no quintet this year." They're always looking for variety from artists. As artists we have to find more ways to express ourselves. Sometimes I think jazz artists stop growing. We have to fight against that. Playing well is one thing. But creating a diversity in your own music is important. The audience deserves that. That said, the whole thing with concept albums has reached a point where they're contrived, too. They're going to be passé soon. It became apparent to me when I was in the studio doing the music of 007. I was a sideman on the date. We tried to play it twice, and that shit didn't work twice. They brought in a rock drummer—didn't work; they brought in a reggae drummer—that didn't work. Concept records are good when your dealing with major figures and you're willing to work to arrange the material your way. Not just say, "I'm doing Miles," and then just get his arrangement. Not enough. Some people are just skating today. You hear what Slide Hampton is doing, the stuff Thad used to do. Not many are doing that these days. It makes everybody play better, like walking on a cloud. That's the shit. And that to me is what's getting lost in these concept albums.

JC: Sometimes it's got an angle, even if it's just stressing diversity. OK, we got Joe Neckbone over here, and Professor von Leibenstein over here—let's see what happens. They'll go for weird individuals trying to get something unique.

DM: But they forget the glue. Some cats don't need a concept. They already got a vision.

JM: *What about doubling? James plays a variety of reeds. David, you're bass clarinet stuff is real mature at this late date. Is it a way to present a different persona?*

JC: It's me in any instrument all the time, depending on varying degrees on what I'm feeling at the moment. Certain instances, there's a need to bring out a true baritone sound, or if I'm playing fast, a bari with a tenor attitude. I look at it as options, although I'll say each instrument is a different person. I can cross-reference certain properties of ... let's say a flute on an alto. There are great possibilities. Like dialects. Some

people don't hear high-pitched sounds, others do. I'm blessed in hearing it all, and having an understanding of it all. Because it helps in arranging. In general, it broadens my horizons. Like what picking up the soprano was to Trane, the upstairs of the tenor for him. That's how I look at it: different parts of one mindset.

JM: Did you try to think in a different way from the tenor when you first picked up the bass clarinet, David?

DM: I started playing when James Newton gave me a bass clarinet for a wedding gift. People often equated him with Eric Dolphy because of the flute stuff, and he had a bass clarinet back then. He wanted to shed everything but the flute, so I got it. I can relate to what James said about Trane. Upstairs is soprano. Downstairs is the bass clarinet. It also gives me a warmer sound than I can get out of any saxophone. Sounds like I'm outside blowing on a tree. Which I like. I can play all the notes in the world on the tenor, but when I pick up the bass clarinet, the kids come closer to me. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

"As far as saxophones are concerned, I'll use anything that has pads and covers," laughs James Carter. "Selmer, Conn, Yamaha, whatever. Mouthpiece-wise, I used some Lawton things that I go through and retouch, file down a bit. Some are prototypes. It's kind of tripped-out when you're able to unify your mouthpieces. Before 1987, I was using a Couf on soprano, a Myer on alto, Dukoff on tenor and Berg

Larsen on bari. Now it's just all one. Reeds? I'm hooked up with Rico."

"I've got a new Selmer tenor, I'll give you the series number," says Murray. "I've got an 8600 series here; it's gold-plated, and I bought it in Japan. I'm still getting into it. It's a big thing for me to get a new one. I'm not like James, horns everywhere. I've got children to take care of. I play Rico Royal #4 reeds." His mouthpiece is a Berg Larsen 120.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

For additional listings, see June 1995 and August 1996 Down Beats.

David Murray

CREOLE—Justin Time 115
FO DEUK REVUE—Justin Time 94
JUG-A-LUG—DIW 894
BALLADS FOR BASS CLARINET—DIW 880
DEEP RIVER—DIW 830
SHAKILL'S WARRIOR—DIW/Columbia 48963
MING'S SAMBA—Portrait 44432
FAST LIFE—DIW 861
SAXMEN—Red Baron 57758
BLACK AND BLACK—Red Baron 48852
THE HILL—Black Saint 120110
MING—Black Saint 120045
HOME—Black Saint 120055
HOPE SCOPE—Black Saint 120139
A SANCTUARY WITHIN—Black Saint 120145
FLOWERS FOR ALBERT—India Navigation 1026

with World Saxophone Quartet

REVUE—Black Saint 120056

PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON

—Elektra/Nonesuch 79137
METAMORPHOSIS—Elektra/Nonesuch 79258
FOUR NOW—Justin Time 83

James Carter

IN CARTERIAN FASHION—Atlantic 83082
JC ON THE SET—Columbia/DIW 66149
JURASSIC CLASSICS—DIW 886
THE REAL QUIETSTORM—Atlantic Jazz 82742
CONVERSIN' WITH THE ELDERS—Atlantic Jazz 82908

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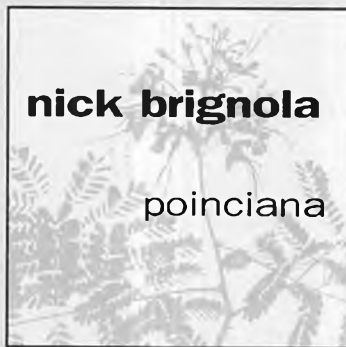
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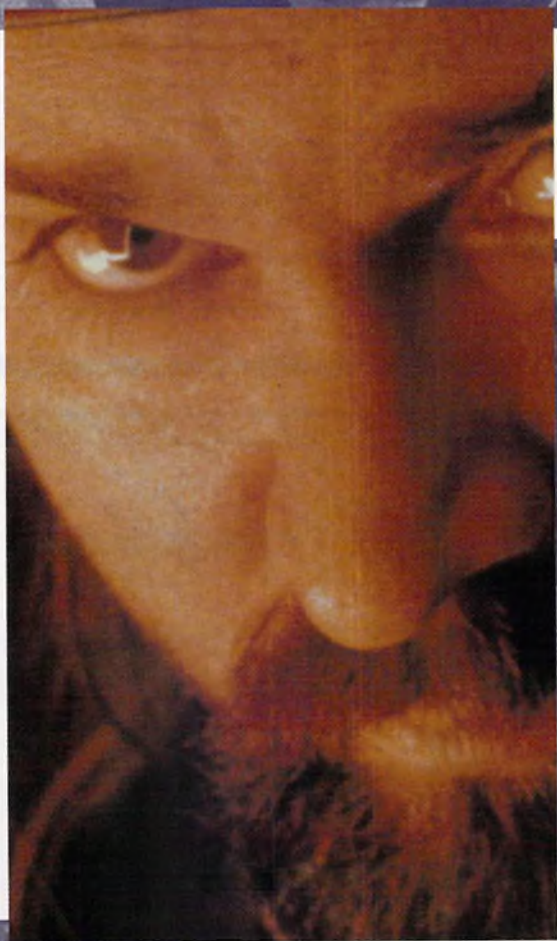
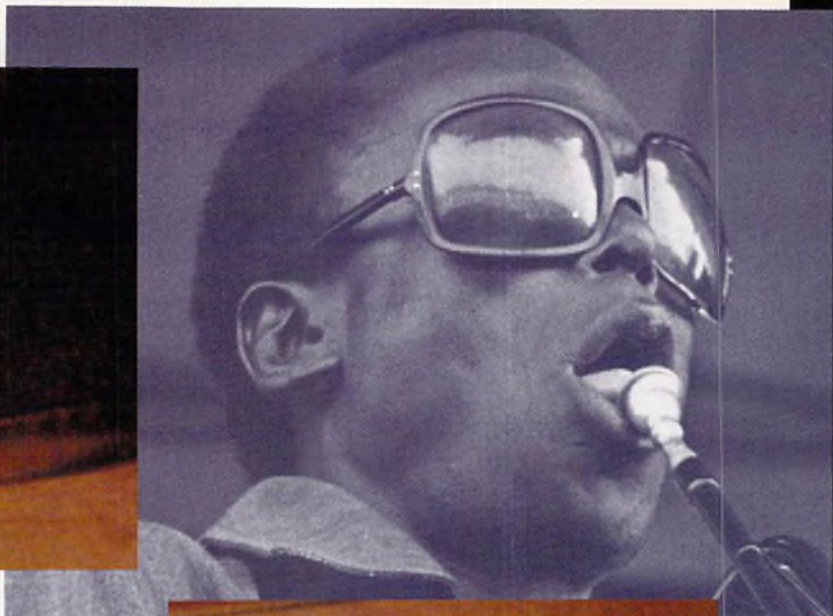
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BILL LASWELL

Reconstructing

(Re)constructing?

Miles

BY DAN OUELLETTE

Even though Miles Davis died in 1991, legions of his fans wrote him off several years earlier. Distressed and at times infuriated by his electronic explorations, they readied his jazz obit in 1968 when electric instruments crept into the mix, nailing his coffin shut in 1969 upon the releases of *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. His newfangled jazz amalgam—steeped in funk and psychedelic rock and infused with the revolutionary zeitgeist of the time—created the biggest schism in jazz since bebop came to blows with swing.

Today, plenty of fans and critics still scream blasphemy and turn a deaf ear to post-'67 Miles Davis music. However, new generations of listeners have been discovering the trumpeter who plugged in and consequently sowed seeds for what has become acid-jazz, hip-hop, bass 'n' drum, trance and ambient styles. Producer Bill Laswell brings it all to the fore on *Panthalassa: The Music Of Miles Davis 1969–1974* with his controversial “reconstruction and mix translation” of material from Miles’ innovative funk-rock-jazz period.

Acting as a conduit, Laswell presents a reinterpretation of several numbers from *In A Silent Way* (1969), *On The Corner* (1972) and *Get Up With It* (1974) by restoring sections edited from the original sessions,

fattening the bottom end of the sound mix, smoothing over quick-cut edits and fusing tracks together to create a pulsating free flow of music. Highly recommended for dance-floor grooving as well as earphone



ALAIN BETTEX



THE LINH LE

listening, *Panthalassa* is the closest it gets to hearing a new Miles album—to which, Laswell believes, the trumpeter would have given wholehearted approval.

"Miles was moving fast then," says the soft-spoken, highly opinionated Laswell. "He was evolving beyond what was considered to be jazz. His music got fried by the critics. I still have that Down Beat two-star review of *On The Corner*," he scoffs, then notes that it's just as vital now as it was then. "But people were so busy saying it wasn't jazz, they weren't really listening. In essence, Miles was laying the groundwork for all kinds of collage music. He was making music meant to be manipulated."

Laswell is referring to Davis' experimentations with session multi-tracking, which helped open the door for dubbing technology that is standard studio practice today. The trumpeter also delved into more expansive musical statements with lengthy free-form jams. "That's how all those late-'60s/early '70s records were made," Laswell says. "There were no fixed compositions. Miles enlisted creative musicians to join him in the studio, improvised with them and let the tapes roll. It was [producer] Teo Macero's job to work through all that taped material and come up with a mix to release as a record. But I feel one version is not the absolute. That's why I put

together *Panthalassa*."

The 43-year-old bassist, bandleader, sideman and prolific producer understands this may rankle people. After all, by having access to the 8- and 16-track analog masters and reels of outtakes of Davis' music, he's fair game for accusations of vault robbing and fiddling with sacrosanct material. "Some people suppose I was messing around with the tapes, but I treated them with respect, focus and dedication," says Laswell. "Teo was made out to be a genius in putting the original Miles albums together, but that's simply not the case. Before 1969, he did a great job at Columbia producing records, including releases by Miles. I'm sure he ran a well-managed, well-controlled, professional studio. But he was coming from another time and sensibility that had everything to do with the jazz tradition. When Miles began to move to another sound world, another strength and clarity of sound imaging, Teo wasn't able to follow."

In addition to what he calls "brutal" and "bad" edits on the originals, Laswell also criticizes the quality of their low-end pulse and clarity. "Those albums carried the size, timbre, tonality and the balance of jazz records, but they didn't have a big sound like funk records of the time. That's what Miles wanted, but didn't get. You listen to Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone albums recorded then,

and they sound great. So I gave my mixes more punch, more bottom end, more everything. Listen to *Panthalassa* with headphones, and you hear a more detailed sound picture. In many ways, what I did was similar to Teo. I worked with the analog tapes and manipulated the music in the same way, repeating things, taking pieces out, putting other pieces in."

"It's not tampering with sacred music. You're just dealing with sounds on tape."

For a sampling of Laswell's work, compare his take on "Black Satin" with the track from Davis' proto-hip-hop album *On The Corner*. The edits are no longer audible, the colors shine with more brilliance and the instrumental textures have greater definition, with bass, guitar, drum, tabla and keyboard all higher in the mix. Plus, Laswell shaved off the end of the original edit and spliced in excerpts from two previously unreleased jams recorded in 1972, including "Pete Cosey," intro'd by grinding psychedelic guitar, and "Agharta Prelude Dub," featuring Davis wah-wahing his way through the "Prelude" theme he refined for his *Agharta* album recorded live in Osaka, Japan.

And what does Macero think of *Panthalassa*? Incensed by the idea of Laswell working with Davis' recordings, Macero refused to make any on-the-record comments.

So, what credentials does Laswell bring to the project? He leads the avant-funk group Material, pilots Axiom Records, was a mover-and-shaker on New York's downtown "No Wave" scene in the late-'70s, and has produced discs for a range of artists from Mick Jagger and Afrika Bambaata to Henry Threadgill and Pharoah Sanders. Laswell has collaborated with several Davis vets, including Herbie Hancock on his 1983 album *Future Shock* and hit single "Rockit." A bit defensively and defiantly, he wants to set the record straight: "I know the music, I knew Miles and I know about recording sound. I do it every day. I'm at an advantage when it comes to having an opinion

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on this material. I don't feel any handicaps. I will challenge anybody on that."

Laswell met Davis in New York in the '70s, and in the mid-'80s the pair often met and discussed working together. "We spent a lot of time when he was getting ready to leave Columbia for Warner Bros.," Laswell recalls. "It was a transition period, and it felt like there might be a fight to record the kind of album we were talking about. Meanwhile, I was also working with Tony Williams, the Last Poets, Bootsy Collins and George Clinton. Plus, hip-hop was beginning to happen, so I was busy. We always kept in touch, but I missed my opportunity to work with Miles. I thought he was going to be around forever and we'd eventually work together. Ironically, I finally did, but he wasn't there."

Laswell traces the origins of the *Panthalassa* project back five years ago when he was approached by Columbia to compile a boxed set from Miles' electric period. "I didn't pursue the offer at the time because I'm not a good archivist. I'm not good at restoring tape and I don't have a good memory. I figured, why not let people who are gifted and more adept at that work do it?"

Since that time, Laswell feels there's a greater understanding and acceptance of DJ remix culture. "It's not tampering with sacred music," he explains. "You're just dealing with sounds on tape. Since Miles created his music in that same spirit, I approached Columbia about doing a reconstruction project and they approved the idea." Laswell also contacted Peter Shukat, Davis' manager in the last years of his life, who secured the blessing of the Davis estate.

With the help of Bob Belden, who's heavily involved with Columbia's massive Davis reissue series, Laswell tracked down the tapes he needed. "There's a ton of Miles material in the vaults, a lot of great music that's never been heard," Laswell says, subtly hinting that he wouldn't mind doing another Miles remix project along the same lines. "Of course, it would take a lot of focused work to manipulate it into something that could come out in a final form. It would amount to collaging different sections together, much in the same way Teo put together the original LPs. That's the logical next step. Just from my short time in the vault, I have six two-inch reels of outtakes from *On The Corner*. That comes to 15-16 minutes of music per reel that no one has heard."

Meanwhile, Belden gives his full-fledged support to *Panthalassa*, named after the primordial ocean in David Toop's book *Ocean Of Sound*. "Bill didn't mess with masterpieces," Belden says. "He didn't chop things up. Teo did that already. Bill added texture. Because Miles was always changing, he never intended the music from this period to have a fixed point of view. As soon as he

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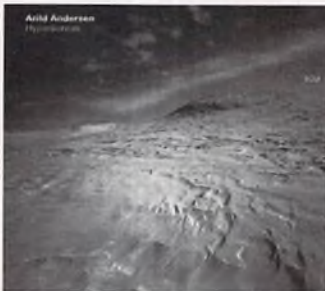
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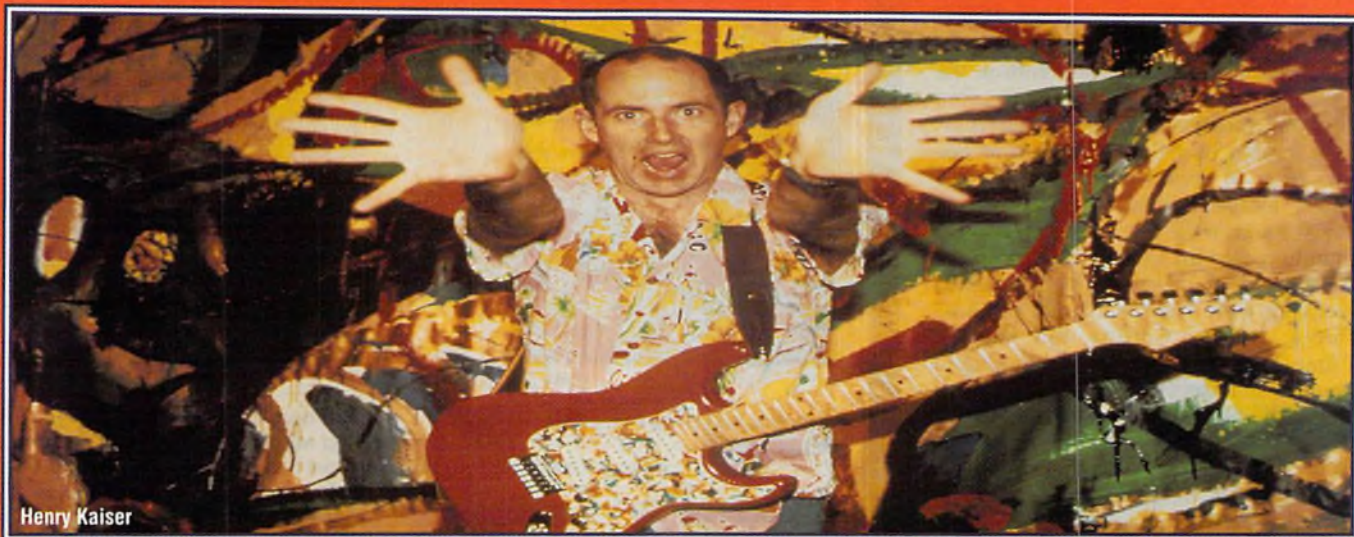
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Electric Miles Still Kicks Ass

Miles Davis RIP 1967? Maybe to jazz lovers of that day, but to future generations of musicians, some not even born when the original controversy was brewing, electric Miles was destined to resonate deeply. Today, with jazz-rock hot again, groove jazz drawing young crowds into hip clubs, and the f-word (read: fusion) open for debate without knee-jerk reaction, the Davis era of wah-wah trumpet and synthesizers has taken on new meaning. Three decades after its birth, plugged-in Miles is definitely in the air with a proliferation of new Davis-inspired projects, ranging from young trumpeter Mark Ledford's debut CD, *Miles 2 Go* (Verve Forecast), to trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and guitarist Henry Kaiser's two-CD tribute *Yo! Miles* (Shanachie). Conclusion? Electric Miles still kicks ass.

"Leo Smith and I both love the mid-'70s ['73-'75] music of Miles Davis," Kaiser writes on his web site. "It's strange that nobody has explored the tunes that Miles wrote during that period in the years since. Our idea is to make new creative recordings [built] on Miles' legacy. We don't emulate or copy Miles. We expand on his ideas with our personal voices." Guests on *Yo! Miles* include keyboardists Paul Plimley and John Medeski, guitarist Elliott Sharp and the Rova Saxophone Quartet.

Trumpeter Dave Douglas, whose CD *Sanctuary* (Avant) is a rich amalgam of music flavored by *Dark Magus* Miles, says he doesn't want to exaggerate Davis' electric influence on his music. Yet he's nonetheless fascinated by the records of that era, including *On The Corner*, which he calls "an avant-garde masterpiece." "My motto with any kind of music has been to look at it, study it and then do your own thing," says Douglas. "When I first listened to Miles' music from that time period, I was blown away by his use of forms and how the pieces were put together. I was interested in understanding how the long form worked and figuring out what was on the page and what wasn't." As for critics of electric Miles, he says it's a case of listeners not keeping open ears and minds. "It's the same as people who still argue about the validity of Picasso's paintings or Ornette's music from 1959."

Guitarist Jeff Parker from the Chicago-based rock group Tortoise is also a founding member of Isotope 217, which recorded its debut Davis-influenced CD, *The Unstable Molecule*,

on *Thrill Jockey* (see Page 57). "Three Tortoise members are in Isotope," Parker says. "We started out as an improvising group. All of us dug Miles' music on *Live-Evil*, *Bitches Brew*, *On The Corner* and all those live albums. We didn't set out to copy Miles, but to use what he was doing in the early '70s as an inspiration, something to draw from. I don't think he was trying to play jazz back then. It was closer to funk and rock, which is what we go for conceptually." As for the resistance Davis faced for his electric proclivities, Parker says, "That's really ridiculous. A sell-out? He heard that throughout his entire career. But he was the guy who revolutionized jazz in the mainstream sense. Miles is a model for me to keep moving forward and keep all the lines blurred."

It takes drummer Bobby Previte by surprise that some people still consider Davis' electric era controversial. "To me that's just plain great music," he says. "Once again, Miles completely changed the way to think about music. Even from the grave, he continues to do that." For nearly two years Previte has led the *Horse You Rode In On* (commonly known as simply the Horse) at the Knitting Factory's Tuesday night jam session. Until recently the band focused on electric Miles repertoire (the scope of the music has been expanded to also include other composers of that era, including Wayne Shorter). "It's just serendipitous how it came about. I had a gig scheduled there each week, so I was casting around for ideas. We decided to work with *Bitches Brew* for two weeks. Two years later we're still going."

Previte was listening to Davis when he was in his teens. "*Bitches Brew* was stunning," he says. "I loved turning the lights off and listening to that album. It made a profound impression on me." What does he hear in the music from that era today? "I love the way Miles allowed the music to be, to just sit there for a long time. He and his bands were making it up as they went along. They had a lot of courage and self-knowledge to let the music speak for itself."

Why is electric Miles suddenly so relevant today? "I can make a conjecture," offers Previte. "Could it be that nothing much is really happening? The spirit of that music is so adventurous and so ballsy. It sticks out today and still sounds exciting and fresh. It's music that cannot be denied."

—D.O.

started multi-tracking, he expected heavy editing. That period was like Frankenstein. Making records was like taking body parts from different sources and stitching them all together. Miles understood the remix philosophy, which was innovative at the time but is old hat now. Yet today, very few people really comprehend it."

As for the first wave of criticism Laswell is facing for playing doctor, Belden says simply, "People should be ashamed of judging Bill. He's one of the few artists who dares to be different in jazz."

While Laswell reports that the response from Europe and Japan has been overwhelmingly positive, he bristles at some of the early critiques, including Down Beat's four-star review

by John Corbett (see May '98). "Even though the CD got four stars, it's not that much better than the two-star review *On The Corner* got. The only difference is now someone is saying they love the music, but they disagree with my project. But to me, it comes down to someone not really listening. The review comes off sounding like I didn't do anything and the original is better. It's as if the review was written by reading the press release and not listening to the record."

Laswell pauses, then pulls out the Davis card again. "I knew Miles and I absolutely know he would have liked this. Nothing else matters. Not one review.

Not one comment."

The Miles Davis electric era holds more than just a fond place in Laswell's heart. One guesses from talking to him that he's secretly hoping to inspire a new generation of musicians. It's sorely needed, says Laswell, who contends that no one in jazz has broken any new ground since the early '70s. "Since that time, jazz has gone completely stale. Instrumentalists that come on the scene every year are a Xerox of what came the year before. Someone with an idea gets copied and copied until it turns into a way of selling music. Jazz stopped evolving after Miles." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Bill Laswell's basses of choice are two Fender Precisions, one with frets and the other fretless, and a Gibson Thunderbird. For strings, he uses flat-wound Dean Markleys on the fretted Fender P. and D'Addario half-round, medium gauge on the fretless. He uses a Fender Jazz Bass pickup on the fretless. For amps, he uses an Ampeg SVT head with two 4 x 12 cabinets, usually Marshalls. For Praxis or Painkiller gigs, he sometimes uses two 100-watt Marshall stacks with Marshall JCM 900 heads. His effects include a Boss whammy pedal, DOD FX25 envelope filter and Electro-Harmonix Q-tron and fuzztone. He has an endorsement deal with Electro-Harmonix as well as with Shure microphones.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Material

THE BEST OF MATERIAL—Charly 117
HALLUCINATION ENGINE—Axiom 518 351
THIRD POWER—Axiom 422 848 417
SEVEN SOULS—Virgin 91360
ONE DOWN—Restless/Metrotone 72654
MEMORY SERVES—Restless/Metrotone 72653

with Arcana

ARC OF THE TESTIMONY—Axiom 524 431
THE LAST WAVE—DIW 903

with Third Rail

SOUTH DELTA SPACE AGE—Antilles 533 965

with Golden Palominos

DEAD INSIDE—Restless 72907
PURE—Restless 72761
THIS IS HOW IT FEELS—Restless 72735

as producer

PANTHALASSA: THE MUSIC OF MILES DAVIS 1969-1974—Columbia 67909
WHERE'S YOUR CUP?—Columbia 67617 (Henry Threadgill & Make A Move)
MAKIN' A MOVE—Columbia 67214 (Henry Threadgill)
CARRY THE DAY—Columbia 66995 (Henry Threadgill & Very Very Circus Plus)
TOO MUCH SUGAR FOR A DIME—Axiom 514 258 (Henry Threadgill & Very Very Circus)
MESSAGE FROM HOME—Verve 529 578 (Pharoah Sanders)
THE TRANCE OF SEVEN COLORS—Axiom 524 047 (Pharoah Sanders, Maleem Mahmoud Ghania)
HOLY TERROR—Black Arc/Rykodisc 10319 (The Last Poets)
FUTURE SHOCK—Columbia 38814 (Herbie Hancock)

Other projects

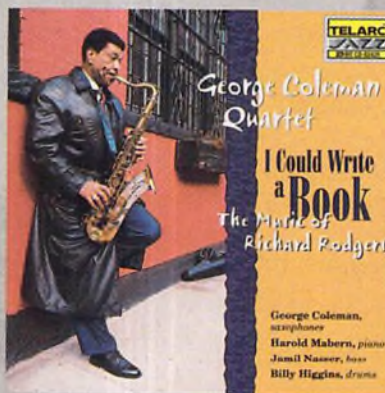
CYPHER 7: NOTHING LASTS—Yikes 7774
DARK MASSIVE/DISENGAGE: AN AMBIENT COMPENDIUM—M.I.L. Multimedia 8508
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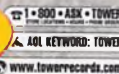
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BY HOWARD MANDEL

WILLIAM PARKER

There's an anchor for New York's downtown free-jazz and improv "wild bunch": His name is William Parker. The steadfast bassist has a huge, deep-rooted sound and concept, tied to more than 25 years of hard-won experience in the noble if often misunderstood, under-appreciated and underestimated world of the avant garde—a term he uses without pause.

"If jazz is the underdog, avant-garde jazz is *beneath* the underdog," says Parker, who lives in Manhattan's East Village, just a couple of blocks from where the great bassist Charles Mingus, who coined that phrase, spent *his* career. Parker resembles Mingus as a driving, rhythmic soloist and provocatively challenging support player, a strong-willed composer and barnstorming bandleader (and also as a writer—he's a published poet). But unlike the stormy Mingus, Parker is low-keyed, mild-mannered and comfortable with his life, though interested, above all else, in pressing on.

"The thing about the avant garde is, even the top people are on the bottom," he understands without rancor. "They don't have major contracts, so there's no lineage of good business. If the top guy's starving, what's for you? To starve also, or go a different way."

Parker's chosen the way of the working man. His indefatigable energy and upbeat spirit infuse more than 80 albums with throbbing plucked rushes of notes and unique singing/sawing bowed passages. Since 1972 he's collaborated with star international iconoclasts like Derek Bailey, Cecil Taylor and John Zorn as well as in underground circuits with such worthy lesser-knowns as cornetist Roy Campbell Jr., tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle, reedman Daniel Carter and the late drummer Denis Charles. Now that Columbia has signed the David S. Ware Quartet, to which Parker contributes mightily, the bassist's profile may further rise—but credit also his recent album releases, including *Sunrise In The Tone World* (with his Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra; see "CD Reviews" March '98) and his dynamic second solo album, *William Parker*.

Parker was, of course, everywhere in the Third Annual Vision Festival, organized in part by his wife, dancer/choreographer Patricia Nicholson, at the Lower East Side Orenzanz Art Center for a mid-May week. He played bass for the Ware quartet (with pianist Matthew Shipp and drummer Susie Ibarra); the Untempered Ensemble; a quartet with Gayle, drummer Milford Graves and New Orleans saxist Kidd Jordan; his standing collaborative Other Dimensions of Music, with Campbell, Carter and drummer Rashid Bakr; the Jemeel Moondoc Quintet; drummers Assif Tsahar and Ibarra with fellow bassist Peter Kowald; bassoonist Karen Borca's Quartet/Trio; trumpeter Raphé Malik; and the Jimmy Lyons Big Band. He conducted Little Huey, too.

BENEATH THE UNDERDOG

PHOTO BY
ALAN NAHIGIAN



It's been like this, he says, ever since he ventured to Harlem from his childhood home in the Bronx to study with Jazzmobile's Richard Davis, Milt Hinton and Art Davis (and later, Jimmy Garrison and Wilbur Ware). "When I bought my bass, I was walking home and got a gig. If I'd gotten a flute, no one would have known."

He'd become interested in bass in high school, absorbing his father's Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Willis Jackson records, especially aware of bassists such as John Lamb on Ellington's "The African Flower," Percy Heath, Jimmy Garrison

with Coltrane, Mingus and Charlie Haden. "Back when stereo came in, one day I bought all the Ornette Coleman records on Atlantic in mono for 99 cents each. That's when the fire really was lit, because I *liked* that music. So before I even started, I knew the kind of music that I wanted to get involved with. I also knew that I had to get a bass and learn to play it. I felt a kinship to the low notes.

"From the start, I was playing with comedians, folk singers, poets, anybody. It was on-the-job training. I had a very good feel; if I didn't know something, I could get by until I *did* know it. It was just like now. It hasn't really changed, except

I travel more. "It's just about responding to other people's sounds. I find out how what I'm doing will fit in with what *they're* doing, and enhance it.

"That's improvisation: knowing what to do at any particular second in the music. That's my role in any band, minute by minute: to help navigate the music so it doesn't have dead spots. I do that either by playing a melody, playing rhythmically, playing harder, faster, slower, or using silence, more sound, less sound—whatever I have to use. Knowing when one music segment has faded away, or is about to, is important, too. Dead spots in the music occur when it's trying to find its way to the next musical link, and then continue. At each link, I'm trying to keep the music afloat.

"I'm always in the back," he goes on, "trying to do something different so that every piece, every concert doesn't sound the same. There are lots of ways to make things different—a little turn, a little twist. There are so many ways of approaching the instrument; every time you think, 'Well, I've about exhausted this,' lo and behold!—there's something else.

"You play something, and you never forget it. It may be something simple that you'd never think of when you're practicing, just the way you move your hand, shift it from left to right slightly, or move your bow so slightly. You get a different sound, and that's like discovering a new word, a new pattern in your vocabulary.

"You keep these things, and as you play your vocabulary gets wider and wider. That's the eternal thing about music: It's always flowing, and you never know what's going to happen, where it's going to go or what wondrous thing is behind this door you're going to open every time you play."

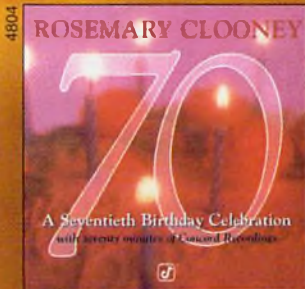
THAT DESIRE TO OPEN THE DOOR, AGAIN AND AGAIN, SEEMS TO DEFINE PARKER AND HIS COLLEAGUES, BUT HE IDENTIFIES ANOTHER QUEST: THE SEARCH FOR ONE'S SELF IN SOUND.

"What makes a musician? That's something people have been trying to find out," he asserts. "What makes a Charlie Parker, a John Coltrane? You can have the records, transcribe the solos, eat what John Coltrane ate, wear John Coltrane's suit, use the same reeds, but then you say, 'Wait a minute, I don't sound anything like John Coltrane,' and you realize the reason you don't is that you're not *supposed* to. It's like a lion trying to be a bird, complaining he can't fly. He's not *supposed* to fly.

"The problem for people looking for their own sound is they're always looking outside. Your sound is like your nose. If you look over *there* for your nose, you don't find it. It's right between your eyes. And those awkward little things about it that sound awful to you? That's the embryo of your own sound.

"That's one of the secrets, finding your

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own thing, and one of the secrets of how to make things happen is, 'Don't try.' Don't try so hard—it just has to *happen*. You have to find what area of music the sound vibrates best for you. Coleman Hawkins could hit one note, make one sound, and whew!—where all these other people could hit all these other notes, and nothing magical happened. And that's the idea: You want something magical to happen every time you play."

TO PLAY, ONE NEEDS A STAGE, AND A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF PARKER'S TIME HAS FOUND HIM ERECTING ONE. "THE FIRST SOUND UNITY FESTIVAL WAS IN '84, AND WE HAD ANOTHER BIG ONE IN '88," HE RECALLS. "Even before that, Billy Bang and I and some other people used to do a Lower East Side music festival. We also had the Improvisers Collective fest before starting the Vision fest, in '96. We've always done what we needed to survive."

He shrugs off special status as an avant-garde arts community organizer or activist, though he is one. "It's natural, these activities," he says, including workshops for young children and senior citizens in the sweep. "They bring the human being part and the musician part together, so when you step off the bandstand you've got a whole creative life, not just when you play.

"See, music really has no parameters,"

he advises, "though almost all the musics in the world *do* have parameters. If you play Indian classical music and go outside the parameter, it's something else. If you play a waltz and take it somewhere else, it's not a waltz. But so-called free music, when it's happening, has a basis, and I can play anything I want to play, and it *works*. There are very few musics in the world where you can play *anything!*" he enthuses.

But not *just* anything. "When I play," Parker adds earnestly, "I'm trying to be thoughtful not only about what I'm doing, but about the whole concept."

Parker's got much more to say: about how to compose for big bands of rugged, if not rag-tag, improvisers; about how the avant garde should be welcomed into jazz's "big house"; about the necessity of musicians taking responsibility for themselves. He's earned his knowledge in the thick of the scene; his wisdom is eminently clear and practical, evident in his actions and his art.

"I have a very large range of things I draw on," Parker mentions, "including my early interests in painting and drawing, in playwriting, in science fiction. But I'm basically a one-five guy, that's my root. I'm not really a 'new music bass player'—though I play 'new music'—not in my feeling. The thing about bass," he rests assured, "is you've got to use the bottom. If not, you're playing something else." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Parker uses Thomastik Spiral Core strings, with a very high setting. "I have them high off of the fingerboard, for sound and touch purposes," he says. "People think I'm playing very hard, but what I'm doing is getting up off the string. I apply pressure, then lift off. And because the strings are high, there's resistance, and bounce. I get my tone from my left hand, that's depressing; then with my right hand—no matter how it looks or how loud it sounds—it's really about hitting the pitch and getting off of it quick. It's a different kind of technique."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

WILLIAM PARKER—No More Records
SUNRISE IN THE TONE WORLD—AUM Fidelity 002/3 (Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra)
INVISIBLE WEAVE—No More Records 4 (with Joe Morris)
IN ORDER TO SURVIVE—Black Saint 120159
TOUCHING ON TRANE—FMP 48 (with Charles Gayle & Rashied Ali)
OTHER DIMENSIONS IN MUSIC—Silkheart/Storyville SH 120
OTHER DIMENSIONS IN MUSIC II—AUM Fidelity 001

with Cecil Taylor

LOOKING—FMP 25
THE 8TH—hat hut 6036
OLU-IWA—Soul Note 121139

with various others

LIVE AT CARLOS I—Soul Note 121136 (Billy Bang)
NEW KINGDOM—Delmark 456 (Roy Campbell Jr.)
THOUGHTS—Soul Note 121111 (Bill Dixon)
KINGDOM COME—Knitting Factory Works 157 (Charles Gayle)
SOME ORDER. LONG UNDERSTOOD—Black Saint 120059 (Wayne Horvitz)
BLACK BEINGS—ESP 3013 (Frank Lowe)
WEE SNEEZEAWEE—Black Saint 120067 (Jimmy Lyons)
THE EVENING OF THE BLUE MEN—Muntu 1002 (Jemeel Moondoc)
FLIGHT OF I—DIW 856 (David S. Ware)



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BRIAN BLADE

Offstage, Brian Blade is reserved and soft-spoken. But put him behind his traps, and watch him fly. He's transformed into a colossus who attacks toms and cymbals with euphoric ferocity and brawny eloquence. Given his penchant for performance rapture and reputation as a riveting drum emissary, you'd think his debut recording as a leader, *Brian Blade Fellowship*, would serve as a thrilling showcase for his jazz drumming prowess. Every piece ripe with rhythm and ready to explode with a volcanic drum solo, right?

"Oh, god forbid," says Blade with a bashful laugh. "Only one tune has a little of that. No, the music itself dictated how things would unfold. I'm telling a story through the songs. Plus, I wanted the spirit and fellowship of the group to be documented on tape. I think we achieved that. So, who needs another drum solo? They're incidental to the big picture."

Blade is in Oakland gigging as a McCoy Tyner sideman along with Joshua Redman and Christian McBride at a special weeklong Yoshi's engagement in mid-January (see "Caught" April '98). Rather than talk in his hotel, he wants to head outside and sit by Lake Merritt. It's a good call as the sun makes a rare winter appearance, the afternoon as warm as a summer day. Families walk along the lake with kids in strollers, joggers skip by and bottle-scroungers rustle through the trash cans near the bench where we're sitting. Even a flock of seagulls, squealing at us throughout our conversation, seem to be giddy with sunlight.

Blade looks up at the loud yellow beaks and recites, "Seagulls come down and squawk at me." He pauses, then says, "*For The Roses*. You know that record?"

You bet. It's one of Joni Mitchell's classics.

"I'm a big fan of Joni's music," he says. "She's been the greatest inspiration to me musically because of the way she uses her experiences and observations to craft lyrics and songs. It's a gift." Blade adds that he's also become buds with Mitchell, a dream-come-true realized while working on her new album, *Taming The Tiger*, due out this fall. "She likes the tone of my drumming. We started talking over the phone about her new songs and me coming to Los Angeles to play on her record. When I flew there, she met me at the baggage carousel. It was like we were old friends. So just the two of us went into the studio and started recording. Basically, she wanted me to dot her i's and cross her t's."

'Who Needs Another Drum Solo?'

BY DAN OUELLETTE



ALAN NAHIGIAN

Mitchell's is one more name Blade can add to his impressive sideman resume. He's drummed with such young jazz noteworthies as Redman (*Mood Swing, Freedom In The Groove, Spirit Of The Moment*) and Kenny Garrett (including *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane*) and supplied the rhythmic drive to albums by pop icon Bob Dylan (his latest, *Time Out Of Mind*), country queen Emmylou Harris (*Wrecking Ball*), innovative songsmith Jane Siberry (*Maria*) and folk-pop singer Victoria Williams (her latest, *Musings Of A Creek Dipper*). Blade has also been recruited by Wayne Shorter to participate on his upcoming orchestral recording project.

Well-known in jazz circles and well-versed in pop, Blade says he enjoys his frequent border crossings. For the last several months he's been touring with Redman and McBride; for the next several weeks he hits the road with Williams. "You know, we segregate ourselves too much," Blade says as he pulls out a pouch of tobacco and rolls himself a cigarette. "Life is much bigger than that. Music speaks to me no matter what box it comes in. It's like this great record store

was great potential for disaster because of all the chordal motion among Dave, Jeff and Jon. But everyone played with such sensitivity that we pulled it off. One of my favorite records lately is *Homogenic* by [pop singer] Bjork. She sings this amazing line that says, 'You don't have to speak/I feel the emotional landscapes.' That sums up what we're after. Yeah, emotional landscapes."

The album opens with the exuberant number "Red River Revel," a snapshot of the Shreveport festival of the same name that exposed Blade to a variety of musical styles. "I grew up in church," says Blade, whose father still serves as pastor of the local Zion Baptist congregation. "I always heard gospel and I was also listening to the radio. But the Revel is what opened my ears. You can go from tent to tent and hear something different. Chuck Rainey would be playing solo bass and telling stories, then you could see Asleep at the Wheel and then catch the Neville Brothers. That's where I learned to think beyond boundaries."

At 17, Blade moved to New Orleans, where he attended Loyola University and later the University of New Orleans. He came under the tutelage of Ellis Marsalis, met several young

"Music speaks to me no matter what box it comes in. It's like this great record store in Austin called Waterloo, where all the CDs are in alphabetical order. They're not categorized by genre. So if you want Miles Davis and Deep Purple, you go to the D section. I admire that because it recognizes that the world is blending."

in Austin called Waterloo, where all the CDs are in alphabetical order. They're not categorized by genre. So if you want Miles Davis and Deep Purple, you go to the D section. I admire that because it recognizes that the world is blending. I hope artists will reflect that in their music. That's what I set out to achieve with my album."

Blade earns high marks doing so on *Fellowship* (see "CD Reviews" June '98). The Shreveport, La., native delivers an improvisationally rich collection of tunes, the majority of which he wrote on an acoustic guitar he bought and learned how to play four years ago. The disc is rooted in straight-ahead jazz, but Blade blends in pop, r&b, African and country music sensibilities. Rather than arrive at the sessions with sketches, Blade composed full-fledged pieces with interweaving melodic parts and beautiful harmonies. "I wanted to create an orchestral quality to the songs, not bring fragments of melodies to the studio and let the guys blow away on a head." The most obvious departure from jazz territory on *Fellowship* also gives the CD its most compelling and haunting sound: the pedal steel guitar, a country staple played to meditative, melancholic and exhilarant perfection by Dave Easley.

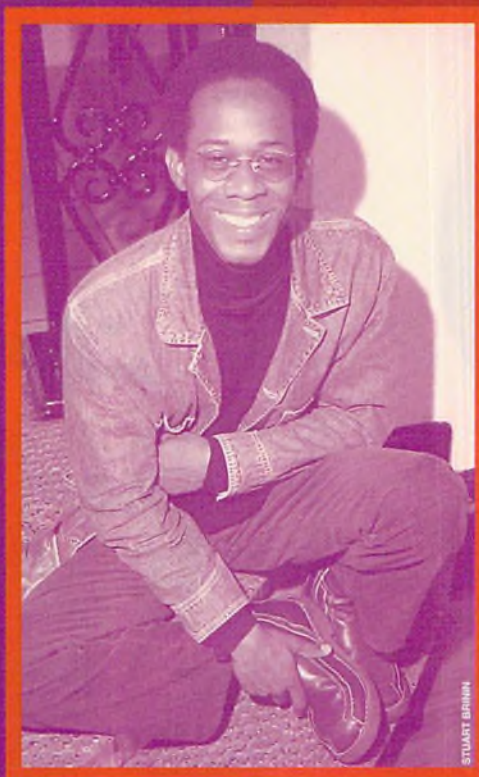
"The pedal steel is one of my favorite instruments because of its range of emotion," says Blade, who also enlisted for the project guitarist Jeff Parker, alto saxophonist Myron Walden, tenor and soprano saxophonist Melvin Butler, keyboardist Jon Cowherd and bassist Christopher Thomas. "But having the pedal steel in the mix was all about Dave. He's so great. I would have used him if he walked into the sessions with a kazoo. There

aspiring musicians like himself (including Nicholas Payton and Christopher Thomas), gigged frequently in clubs and coffeehouses throughout the city and played in street parades. "I was being fed there. I played with so many people. Just being there was like going to school. Moving to New Orleans marks the beginning of my jazz education."

During a tour with Delfeayo Marsalis, Blade met Joshua Redman, which launched a long-term musical relationship with the saxophonist that put the drummer on the jazz map. Meanwhile, his services were also being sought by pop music producer Daniel Lanois, best known at the time for his work with Brian Eno and U2 (he later produced the Harris and Dylan albums). Blade met recording engineer Mark Howard at a Mexican restaurant around the time he was working with Lanois on his second CD, *Beauty Of Winona*. "They were holed up in a theater, so they invited me over to jam for a while," Blade recalls. "A week later I went on the road with Dan for four months, and we got to know each other really well."

Not only has Lanois singled out Blade as his session drummer of choice, but he also agreed to produce *Fellowship*. "[Blue Note Records President] Bruce Lundvall approached me five years ago to record an album, but I didn't have a concept or a group at the time," says Blade. "But once I started writing songs and getting my group together, I knew

I'd need to have friends help see me through the recording." While most Lanois-produced CDs have his signature rootsy sound, his presence on Blade's project is sonically minimal. Lanois plays the 12-string mandoguitar on "Red River Revel"



and his White Mustang guitar on the pensive beauty "Mojave." Otherwise, he keeps a low profile.

But it was Lanois' suggestion to record in front of a live audience one night that proved to be a stroke of genius. "Dan got the idea after seeing our group play its one and only rehearsal gig at Small's in New York before we went to Oxnard [Calif.] to do the recording. So he said, 'Let's have a session where we invite a bunch of friends. Let's see what happens, because playing in front of a live audience always changes things.' One hundred twenty folk came. Dan was right. For the album, we used six of the eight songs from that live set."

While Blade will tour with his band Fellowship as much as possible in support of the new CD, he says that won't interfere with his side gigs, which keep him so busy he's hardly ever home at his Woodstock, N.Y., apartment. "I'll still play with my friends. Joshua, Kenny, Daniel. And if Joni calls, I'm dropping what I'm doing because I owe her a big one."

Is there anyone he hasn't performed with yet that he'd like to? Blade answers immediately. "Neil Young, definitely. He's another person I owe an incredible debt to. I'd love to play with him or play for him, like at that annual Bridge Concert benefit he presents." Why is the drummer so indebted to Young? He responds with the title of a song from Young's classic *Harvest* album: "'A Man Needs A Maid.' I love that song. I was in Mexico with Dan when I first heard *Harvest*. Wow! That's all we listened to while we were there. Because of that, I became a huge Neil Young fan."

For Blade, it's a different road every time out. A few months ago, he teamed with fel-

low drummer Jim Keltner to lay down the rhythm tracks for Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*, then he was off and running around the world with Redman for exhilarating shows that got the audience pumped into a rock concert-like frenzy. And this week Blade is settling in behind McCoy Tyner, hammering out his Elvin Jones-like propulsive beats. At Yoshi's, Blade twitches, punches and careens as he keeps pace with the lightning Tyner, who in turn marvels at his guest drummer.

So how does Blade manage to tailor his playing for the vast variety of artists with which he performs? "It all goes back to my earliest drumming experiences playing in church. You surrender to the whole. It's not so much about what you're playing as it is serving the entire body. Every situation requires you to submit. Each person may be different, but my approach never changes. The way I look at it is each time I go out to play, I'm working with another storyteller."

DB

EQUIPMENT

"I gravitate toward old drum equipment," says Blade, whose set includes '61 Camcos and a Leedy snare that he bought in Shreveport. "The craftsmanship of older instruments has personality. The wood is settled, and sometimes using older stuff makes it easier to get closer to the sound you have in your head, especially when you've spent a lot of time listening to Art Blakey, Elvin Jones and Joe Chambers albums." The rest of his equipment is more on the modern side: Zildjian cymbals (24"A, 22"K, 16"A hi-hats), sticks from Joe Cosatis' Modern Drum Shop in New York and Vic Firth mallets. He also owns a Gibson LG3 hollow-body acoustic guitar that he uses for composing.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BRIAN BLADE FELLOWSHIP—Blue Note 59417

with Joshua Redman

MOOD SWING—Warner Bros. 45643
SPIRIT OF THE MOMENT—Warner Bros. 45923
FREEDOM IN THE GROOVE—Warner Bros. 46330
LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Warner Bros. 45923

with Kenny Garrett

BLACK HOPE—Warner Bros. 45017
TRILOGY—Warner Bros. 45731
PURSUANCE: THE MUSIC OF JOHN COLTRANE—Warner Bros. 46209

with various others

NEW ORLEANS COLLECTIVE—Evidence 22105
WARNER JAMS, VOL. 1—Warner Bros 45919 (various artists)
SEVENTH SENSE—Blue Note 89679 (Kevin Hays)
INTRODUCING BRAD MEHLDAU—Warner Bros. 45997
TIME OUT OF MIND—Columbia 68556 (Bob Dylan)
MARIA—Reprise 45915 (Jane Siberry)
WRECKING BALL—Asylum 61854 (Emmylou Harris)

DAVID MURRAY - Creole

It's clear to followers of David Murray's work that he's not an opportunistic new arrival on the world music scene. "Creole," the highly percussive follow-up to Murray's internationally lauded "Fo Deuk Revue" was recorded in Guadeloupe with many of its finest musicians. Like "Fo Deuk," it celebrates the musical culture of an exotic location, with Murray adding to the native singers and instrumentalists a fine ensemble of imported jazz musicians, this time such luminaries as Billy Hart, James Newton, Ray Drummond and

D.D. Jackson. In Guadeloupe, Murray has discovered a culture and a past that mirror his own. On "Creole" we hear Gwo-ka, celebrational music; the sounds of rebellion; the melancholy, lyrical songs of Cap Verde, jazz and Caribbean mountain music.

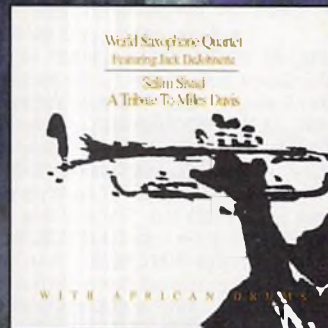


WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

with Jack DeJohnette -

Selim Sivad / A Tribute To Miles Davis

Founded in 1976, The World Saxophone Quartet have always pushed the jazz envelope. This is not surprising, considering the accomplishments its members; Murray, Blüett and Lake have all been at the vanguard of contemporary jazz for the last three decades. This project uses, as a point of departure, music by Miles Davis (plus one tune each from Wayne Shorter and Marcus Miller). Here the WSQ tackle such tunes as Miles and Bill Evans' "Blue In Green," Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti," "Selim," from the "Live/Evil" album and several others.



Fo Deuk Revue will perform live at Summerstage, NYC, Aug. 2, 1998



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CD REVIEWS

JULY 1998

KEY

Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor

★★★★★
★★★★
★★★
★★
★



Nicholas Payton

Payton's Place
Verve 557 199

★★★★

Nicholas Payton's third CD on his own is a lean-and-clean cut of neo hard-bop and a good career move after last year's marvelous seminar with Doc Cheatham. Among the good news, it offers an opportunity (on "The Three Trumpeteers," "With A Song In My Heart" and "Brownie à la Mode") to contrast three of the smartest horns in jazz today: Payton, Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove. The bad news is that, when you get right down to it, there really isn't all that much contrast.

When the advance CD came with a press release but nothing on solo order, it was as if Leonard Feather had come back to entrap me in a Blindfold Test (something critics who value their credibility wisely dodge). Though my hunches were OK, they were little more. So I would not dare tell you here that the order of battle on "Three Trumpeteers," for example, is Marsalis, Payton and Hargrove without having checked first.

It's not as if this is Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart (look up Ellington's 1939 "Tootin' Through The Roof" for contrast), Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers (JATP, 1953) or even Nicholas Payton and Doc Cheatham, for that matter. It's more like Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro.

Each man here has fed on a fairly common body of musical experience that is both specific and vast. They know too much and can do too much to be pegged to a single voice. And they are masters of identity who can mimic anything and exchange personas with wit, precision and dash, all of which combine to put this clear-headed CD a cut above. Accordingly, they have great fun bouncing cordial and often fiery bons mots off one another ("With A Song In My Heart"), and the fun is thoroughly infectious, even if you do need a program.

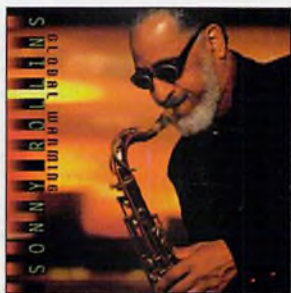
The balance is a fairly standard bop set, with Payton's large sound coming off like a brass section against Tim Warfield's tenor. Joshua Redman sits in on "Touch Of Silver." The ensembles are airtight, but too often inclined to bog down in tricky time signatures, accents and other assorted interferences ("Back To The

Source," "Time Traveling" and a few others). The rhythm section would serve the group better if it felt less compelled to italicize every third phrase with an accent, flourish or bomb.

Once the section finds its groove and stays with it, though, the solo work flies like an arrow. Listen to Warfield on "Concentric Circles." And Payton's work is consistently sharp and bold, with a kind of early Freddie Hubbard edge. On the whole, a fine CD. —John McDonough

Payton's Place—Zigabooogaiou; *The Three Trumpeteers*; *Back To The Source*; *A Touch Of Silver*; *Concentric Circles*; *L'il Duke's Strut*; *Time Traveling*; *With A Song In My Heart*; *Paraphernalia*; *Brownie à la Mode*; *People Make The World Go Round*; *The Last Goodbye*. (71:26)

Personnel—Payton, Wynton Marsalis (2, 8, 10), Roy Hargrove (2, 8, 10), trumpet; Timothy Warfield, Joshua Redman (4), tenor saxophone; Anthony Wonsey, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Adonis Rose, drums.



Sonny Rollins

Global Warming
Milestone 9280

★★★

A trite tune has seldom been a stumbling block for Sonny Rollins' mighty muse. He's made hay out of all sorts of ditties, from "I'm An Old Cowhand" to "I've Told Every

Little Star." It's a skill that's come in handy of late—even the most zealous Newkophiles will concede their hero's newer pieces can't compare to the glory days of "Wail March" or "Strode Rode." Rollins turns to standards when he's looking for compelling melodies, and he turns to his gray matter when in need of acute variations on any and all themes.

Made up of originals, save a romp through Irving Berlin's "Change Partners," *Global Warming* is lacking in the composition department. Trouble rears its head from the get-go: The tail-wagging of "Island Lady" might please drive-time radio dudes, but it's likely to sound corny to those who fervently recall premiere tunes like "Pent-Up House." Similarly, the generic head of the title track does little to differentiate it from myriad calypsos of yore. And "Clear-Cut Boogie" is literally slight, an eight-note riff that barks a couple of times and pads away as Rollins lets it rip.

That said, breezy pieces can also be the impetus for the kind of cavalier approach that has suited Sonny's whimsical improv spirit since day one. And the more I listen to *Global Warming*, the more I become willing to trade the saxophonist's wily excursions for his meager motifs. As stale as the theme of "Island Lady" is, I've got to say that Rollins wastes not one second substituting diamonds for cheese when he blasts off into soloville. Ditto for "Mother Nature's Blues," which finds him snapping off a provocative and intricate passage while riding an innocuous walking bass line.

The reason I bring up thematic content is because everyone in the band isn't Sonny Rollins. When the boss strolls, the inspiration flags and the energy drops. Rollins may have the ingenuity to eclipse banal tunes, but his band doesn't. Stephen Scott comes the closest to delivering the goods, whipping up some hip swirls whenever the blues are the dominant lingo. His Caribbean lines start orthodox and morph droll—one way of denoting the music's amusement. But there are no memorable flashes of brilliance by him or trombonist Clifton

THE HOT BOX					
CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
NICHOLAS PAYTON <i>Payton's Place</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★1/2
SONNY ROLLINS <i>Global Warming</i>		★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
MILES DAVIS <i>At Carnegie Hall</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★1/2
CHARLIE PARKER <i>Charlie Parker</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★

Anderson, who, as usual, merely seems along for the ride. If the pieces were a bit meatier, one suspects the solos would have a bit more expressiveness.

The cheese returns whenever Bob Cranshaw solos on electric bass. Whatever energy has been built on "Island Lady," "Mother Nature's Blues" vanishes as he roams through the changes. The auto-pilot feel to the bassist's lines is unshakable. In a way, it's the exact inverse of his boss's tumbling capriciousness.

With inspiration running hot and cold, *Global Warming* takes on a schizophrenic air. The cautionary tone of the ecological message doesn't exactly jibe with the frolic of the tunes; the substance of Rollins' solos is at odds with the scrawny timbre of the way his horn is recorded. There's little elan to the music despite the uptempo vibe, and the sole indelible theme ("Echo-Side Blue") proves that Rollins has wisdom in his pen, though he may be the last one to recognize it.

A great record has to be more than a handful of deft solos. In some ways, this is Sonny's summer disc: lighthearted, sketchy and overflowing with pleasantries. I bet I speak for a few of his fans when I say I can't wait for the first snowfall.

—Jim Macnie

Global Warming—*Island Lady*; *Echo-Side*; *Global Warming*; *Mother Nature's Blues*; *Change Partners*; *Clear-Cut Boogie*. (50:20)

Personnel—Rollins, tenor saxophone; Stephen Scott, piano; Bob Cranshaw, electric bass; Idris Muhammad (2, 4, 5), Perry Wilson (1, 3, 6), drums; Clifton Anderson, trombone (1, 3, 6); Victor See Yen, percussion (1, 3, 6).



Miles Davis

At Carnegie Hall
Columbia/Legacy 65027

★★★★½

It's about time. One of the no-brainers in reissue history has finally been resolved: namely, putting *all* of the May 19, 1961, Miles Davis Carnegie Hall music together in one package. Why it was sliced and diced in the first place is beyond reason. Another twist: Why the awful sound quality for such a momentous occasion? (The label states "360 Stereo Sound," but what we get sounds like a below-average radio transmission, not unlike the original releases.) An honest account as to why a concert of this stature was recorded so poorly remains to be heard.

This show was the first public performance of anything by the trumpeter and arranger Gil Evans with a 21-piece orchestra, the two having bagged three albums' worth of material by this

time. As for Davis' group, it was a transition band, all of the players fresh from recordings in March (*Someday My Prince Will Come*) and April (the Blackhawk club dates). Clearly, the Carnegie Hall performances are inspired, one to the next, alternating between quintet and full-ensemble performances, drawing from Davis' distant past (e.g., "Oleo," "Walkin'") to more recent band themes ("So What," "Someday My Prince Will Come," "Teo") to selections from two of the three Davis/Evans collaborations ("The Meaning Of The Blues/Lament," "New Rhumba," the adagio from "Concierto de Aranjuez" from *Sketches Of Spain*) to what ended up being the surprise of the concert, Davis' first public performance of the standard "Spring Is Here."

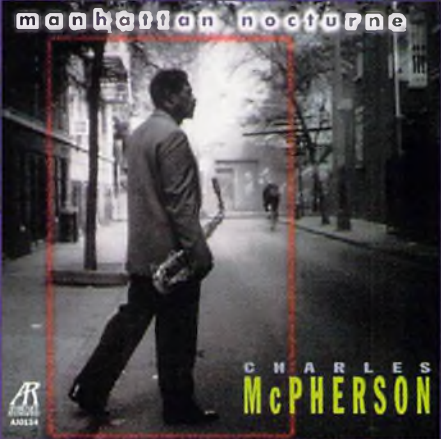
There are two things that make this record-

ing one for the ages: Davis' playing and the fact that this is the only legit live document we have of the trumpeter with Evans and his orchestra. The fact that they could pull it off in public, playing strong renditions of music recorded in the studio, is enough to silence those critics who carped that their three albums were possible only because they made their music in the haven of a recording studio, practicing, dubbing and remixing takes many times over. In fact, it's unfortunate that there wasn't more of the orchestra on this program, only about 30 minutes of this 86-and-a-half-minute concert featuring everyone together.

Evans' somber orchestration of pianist Bill Evans' mood-setting introduction to the original version of "So What" begins the program. What

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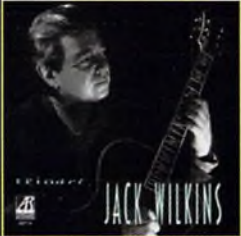
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follows is the band's jam on the famous blues. One wishes the orchestra would have been brought back in to conclude the song somehow. As it is, we hear more orchestra in a lovely rendition of "Spring Is Here," complete with pianist Wynton Kelly's beautiful chords at the end. "Teo" and "Walkin'" are straight-out, blowing numbers for the band, as are later tunes "Oleo" and "No Blues," while the ballad "I Thought About You" features Davis in, as critic Bill Coss stated in his *Down Beat* concert review, "an open, emotional experience" (July 6, 1961). Coss went on to say that "all the impressive features of the concert were insignificant in the face of Miles' performance. He soared away from his usual restraint and limited register, playing high-note passages with tremendous fire, building magnificent solos that blazed with drama." He also praised Evans' scores as "perfect complements to Davis' middle-register brooding." Indeed.

For those familiar with the original release (and subsequent CD of additional material), it's a treat to finally hear this music in the order it was performed. As it is, this band with tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb can be heard in what was essentially their swan song with Davis. —John Ephland

At Carnegie Hall—*So What: Spring Is Here; Teo; Walkin'; The Meaning Of The Blues/Lament; New Rhumba; Someday My Prince Will Come; Oleo; No Blues; I Thought About You; En Aranjuez Con Tu Amor (Adagio from Concierto De Aranjuez).* (43:29/43:00)
Personnel—Davis, trumpet; Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone; Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums; Gil Evans Orchestra.



Charlie Parker

Charlie Parker
 Verve 539 757

★★★★★

This hodgepodge of Charlie Parker recordings for Verve—culled from the previously released comprehensive 10-disc Verve box—is almost all drawn from after the period normally treated as the primo bebop years. Nevertheless, Parker is in superb form, perhaps never better than on the breathtaking "Confirmation," from the latest session, in July '53. And for Bird lovers, these cuts have one important advantage over pre-1947 material: Excepting three tracks, there are no other horns, so the improvising is almost completely given over to the alto maestro, who takes his longest studio solo on "The Bird." Close inspection of Parker's genius comes easy on these sides.

All of the recordings Bird made with pianist Hank Jones are present on this set, including the earliest track, the aforementioned "The Bird." From a Jazz at the Philharmonic date with a rhythm section of Ray Brown on bass and West Coaster Shelly Manne on drums, Parker dives headlong into the virtually themeless piece, crafting a model of rhythmic dynamism before the abrupt headless stop. The merits or faults of his encounters with Buddy Rich—whose esthetic difference is highlighted on this set by proximity to bebop master Max Roach—is the source of debate among Bird watchers, but I find Rich's gonzo swing snare on "Celebrity" an interesting foil for Parker, his brushes perhaps the perfect tangent drawn between Coleman Hawkins and Bird on the fascinating "Ballade."

The bulk of the disc comes from '52 and '53, quartets with Roach, pianist Al Haig and bassist Percy Heath (so supple!) or Jones and bassist Teddy Kotick. They play standards, some Parker originals, including the classic "Now's The Time," and more cuts with minimal or non-existent themes, owing to the spare frontline. No need rehashing Bird's monumental achievement, except to say that these recordings set the record straight for anyone who doubts the power of his later years.

The two '49 tracks utilizing fuller lineups (another Norman Granz JATP Grrranimals combo), "Cardboard" and "Visa," are badly recorded, which makes the brass sound ill. That said, I take issue with liner notician Brian Priestley's assessment of the unfortunately obscure trombonist Tommy Turk, who he writes can be "charitably described as one of Granz's few artistic failures." This is to grossly

underestimate the extremely inventive Turk (and at the same time to overestimate Granz). That position is hardly supported by these two tracks.

Verve's "master edition" series producers know to file reference materials like 10-second false starts and inferior (but always interesting for comparison) alternate takes at the end of the disc, rather than integrating them and thereby disrupting the track-to-track flow.

—John Corbett

Charlie Parker—*Now's The Time; I Remember You; Confirmation; Chi-Chi; The Song Is You; Laird Baird; Kim; Cosmic Rays; Star Eyes; Blues (Fast); I'm In The Mood For Love; The Bird; Celebrity; Ballade; Cardboard; Visa; alternate takes and/or false starts: Chi-Chi; Kim; Cosmic Rays; Confirmation.* (65/36)

Personnel—Parker, alto saxophone; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone (14); Kenny Dorham, trumpet (15, 16); Tommy Turk, trombone (15, 16); Al Haig (1-4, 15-19, 22-25), Hank Jones (5-14, 20, 21), piano; Percy Heath (1-4, 17-19, 22-25), Teddy Kotick (5-8, 20, 21), Ray Brown (9-14), Tommy Potter (15, 16), bass; Max Roach (1-8, 15-19, 20-25), Buddy Rich (9-11), Shelly Manne (12), drums; Carlos Vidal, conga (15, 16).



Jon Faddis

Remembrances
 Chesky 166

★★★★★

Jon Faddis is perhaps best known for his formidable chops, his ability to hit those notes off the staff consistently, but on *Remembrances* the trumpeter demonstrates he can get inside a song and touch those often elusive tender spots. Of course, this doesn't mean he's shying away from those inimitable stratospheric runs. They pop up occasionally, but only in service to the overwhelmingly milder moments.

Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" is evidence of both tendencies. There is the husky tonal dip when he negotiates aspects of the bridge, particularly where Mitchell Parrish supplied the lyric "nonchalant." Having completed the conventional choruses, Faddis then zips into the ozone, spurring a constellation of lustrous high notes, each of them containing separate instances of drama.

Knowledgeable listeners are sure to discern a resemblance many of these arrangements have to those Gil Evans did for Miles on *Sketches Of Spain* and at other sessions, which is more a compliment than a putdown of Faddis and this date's arranger/conductor, Carlos Franzetti. Unlike Miles, however, Faddis rarely strays too far from a tune's basic core, staying within comfortable proximity to the melody and

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the harmonic bends.

Franzetti's orchestration of horns—and the superb execution by such remarkable musicians as Bill Easley, George Young, John Clark, Roger Rosenberg and Paquito D'Rivera—sometimes has the effect of a string section. And D'Rivera's soprano solo on "In Your Own Sweet Way" is as clean and elegant as the bones in a Georgia O'Keefe painting.

On Coltrane's "Naima" and "La Rosa Y El Sauce," by Carlos Guastavino (a virtually unknown Latin American composer deserving wider recognition), Faddis and Franzetti merge their considerable skills in two lovely works of art. Each piece coheres in an almost intuitive manner—what Franzetti initiates Faddis completes.

All of the tunes are warm and smartly developed, but Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" leaves the deepest impression. Years ago, the vocalist Pha Terrell recorded a popular version of this song with the Andy Kirk band, and it was hard not to recall his magnificent baritone as Faddis and Franzetti evoked the haunting lyrics. As on the other tunes, Faddis limits his excursions into the upper register; even so, to paraphrase a line from Ellison's "Invisible Man," Faddis has a way of speaking to us in the lower registers.

—Herb Boyd

Remembrances—*Sophisticated Lady*; *Laura*; *Speak Like A Child*; *Naima*; *Johnny Bug*; *La Rosa Y El Sauce*; *In Your Own Sweet Way*; *Riverside Park*; *Goodbye*. (67:13)

Personnel—Faddis, trumpet, flugelhorn; David Hazeltine, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Clarence Penn, drums; George Young, Lawrence Feldman (1, 3, 7-10), Dale Kleps (2, 4-6), alto saxophone, flute; Paquito D'Rivera, soprano and tenor saxophones, clarinet; Bill Easley, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Roger Rosenberg, baritone saxophone, bassoon, bass clarinet (1, 3, 7-10); Ken Hitchcock, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet (2, 4-6); John Clark, (1, 3, 7-10), Stewart Rose (2, 4-6), french horn; Jim Pugh, alto and tenor trombones, euphonium; Blair Tindall, oboe, english horn (1, 7, 9, 10).



Martial Solal

Just Friends
Dreyfus Jazz 36592

★★★★

Argiers-born, Paris-based pianist Martial Solal, at age 70 and with a distinguished 50-year career, continues to test his skills with challenging musicians such as bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian in this French recording from last July.

Solal's basic style, with clear influences from Bud Powell and Art Tatum, includes his own rhythmic and melodic emphasis, as well as dissonance from Thelonious Monk and forays into freer zones. He offers enough improvising

twists and turns to place him in the front rank of European-based pianists like Mal Waldron, Enrico Pieranunzi, Walter Norris and Misha Mengelberg. Peacock and Motian offer typically sensitive and inspired support with an open-ended creativity.

Although Solal's four originals are the most interesting of these nine tracks, his clever reharmonizations of standards are consistently intriguing. The best tracks are "Sapristi," a loose-limbed original with fascinating free interplay and a grand solo-bass intro by Peacock, and Solal's restructured version of "Summertime." "Willow Weep For Me" is a Solal-Peacock duet.

—Will Smith

Just Friends—*Just Friends*; *Coming Yesterday*; *Willow Weep For Me*; *You Stepped Out Of A Dream*; *Hommage A Frederic Chopin*; *Sapristi*; *Summertime*; *Sacrebleu*; *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*. (50:50)

Personnel—Solal, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Paul Motian, drums.



Marie McAuliffe's

Ark Sextet
Koch Jazz 7859

★★★★½

In just a short time, pianist Marie McAuliffe has won support for her performances and compositions from musicians as diverse as Richie Beirach and John Zorn. For a relative newcomer, McAuliffe has developed a distinctive sound for her compositions, one that emphasizes unusual rhythms, idiosyncratic touches, multiple segments and tight ensemble playing. It's refreshing to come across a new composer whose style can't readily be compared to Mingus, Monk or anyone else.

It's tempting to categorize *Ark Sextet* as a composer's album with emphasis on the group's execution of McAuliffe's complex, episodic arrangements. Saxophonist Rich Perry may be the standout soloist. On the quirky "Mechanical Difficulties," his liquid soprano sax solo becomes a constant while the musical landscape changes behind him. He solos on tenor with considerable feeling on the subdued, more conventionally structured "Quality Of Limbo."

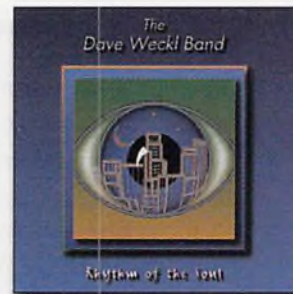
Compositions like "Lunar Patio" are so busy, crammed with events, twists and changes in tempo, that it may seem the composer is trying too hard. "Bloom" and "Hospital Corners" are among the most successful tracks. Both are introspective, with graceful horn arrangements and a natural, flowing development of McAuliffe's ideas, and both feature solos by McAuliffe, who plays with tenderness. Among

the uptempo tracks, "NBD" is particularly strong, as it generates rhythmic intensity, and features crisp percussion from drummer Kevin Norton. There's nothing predictable about McAuliffe's music, which manages to be adventuresome while retaining its structure and logic.

—Jon Andrews

Ark Sextet—*Lunar Patio*; *Mechanical Difficulties*; *Quality Of Limbo*; *McGee And Me*; *Bloom*; *Fish In The Sky*; *NBD*; *Hospital Corners*; *Saved*. (53:36)

Personnel—McAuliffe, piano; Rob Henke, trumpet; Rich Perry, tenor and soprano saxophones; Chris Washburne, trombone; David Holstra, bass; Kevin Norton, drums.



Dave Weckl Band

Rhythm Of The Soul
Stretch 9016

★★★

Drummer Dave Weckl pumps out joie de vivre jazz on his latest disc, a groove-driven bash of good-times tunes. From the get-go, it's obvious that Weckl, Chick Corea's beat man in both his Elektric and Akoustic bands, is playing the power pop-jazz card with his immensely catchy melodies (singalong-in-the-shower instrumentals), cooking rhythms (speedy but not really danceable) and ample improvisational space.

This space ably filled by Weckl's bandmates, including electric keyboardist Jay Oliver (who shares songwriting credits with the leader on all the tracks), guitarists Buzz Feiten and Frank Gambale, saxophonists Bob Malach and Steve Tavaglione, and bassist Tom Kennedy.

It's a fun session, sonically a bit too slick in spots, but musically never soft or saccharine. Weckl banks on funk, r&b and hard-rock influences to fuel the proceedings. The two leadoff tracks, "The Zone" and "101 Shuffle," not only sink under the skin with their indelible melodies, but they pack a punch. "Mud Sauce," sparked by New Orleans rhythms, is a hip, upbeat number that dances, and "Big B Little B" funks it up in the fast lane. Also the two slow numbers fit in well. Gambale's electric-sitar solo, supported by Kennedy's moody fretless bass lines, takes the prize on the Sting-inspired "Someone's Watching," while "Song For Claire," Weckl's quiet ballad for his newborn daughter, has an alluring, soulful feel. The most interesting and out-of-the-ordinary track is "Good Night," the murky shorty at the end that Oliver plays on the "basement" setting of his synth. Nothing glossy about this number, which is a welcome respite.

Too bad more "silliness," as Weckl calls it in his liner notes, wasn't included. Also on the

down side, Weckl's improvisational freedom doesn't really foster any memorable solos from his team. In fact, the guitar excursions rely a tad too much on rock clichés. Plus, the let's-have-fun sensibility of these tunes means there are major limitations when it comes to getting fed on the reflective end. Don't count on much beyond party time here.

Overall, *Rhythm Of The Soul* is a surprisingly entertaining fusion recording with the same propulsive, muscular energy of a Medeski Martin & Wood date but without the appeal of their avant shadings and imaginative improv forays. —Dan Ouellette

Rhythm Of The Soul—*The Zone*; 101 Shuffle; Mud Sauce; Designer Stubble; Someone's Watching; Transition Jam; Rhythm Dance; Access Denied; Song For Claire; Big B Little B; Good Night. (56:53)

Personnel—Weckl, drums; Jay Oliver, keyboards; Bob Malach, tenor saxophone; Steve Tavaglione, alto and soprano saxophones; Buzz Feiten, electric guitars; Frank Gambale, 6- and 12-string electric guitars, electric sitar; Tom Kennedy, electric and acoustic bass.



Red Holloway

Live At The 1995
Floating Jazz Festival

Chiaroscuro 348

★★★

Clark Terry & Red Holloway

Top And Bottom

Chiaroscuro 347

★★★★★

For a long time now, a lot of good jazz has been getting played far from land on the S.S. Norway during its annual two-week Floating Jazz Festival. CDs typically follow, some of them quite remarkable; but, alas, distribution being the fatal glass of beer for many independent jazz labels, most of them get sold on other Floating Jazz fests, depriving the larger audience of some real treats. These two focus on Red Holloway and are fairly typical of the cozy club atmosphere and inspiration that occasionally strikes at sea.

Holloway has been defined by his various r&b associations over the years and seems to have no argument with such typecasting. But on the *Live* CD he's as at home on down-home gospel ("River's Invitation") as highly sophisti-

cated standards like "Out Of Nowhere" or bop mainstays on the order of "Nica's Dream" and "Well, You Needn't." Harry Edison contributes a guest appearance on three numbers, with "Wave" and "I Wish I Knew" to himself. He moves through them at some length with a well-plotted plan of attack that is alternately coy, strutting, intricate and stripped-down. He quotes with discretion (from *Porgy And Bess* on "Wave"), uses repetition with tongue in cheek, and knows exactly where he's going with them. His muted sound is brittle but never feeble.

While both men play well, though, the set never quite finds a crucial spark, a climactic moment. Also, two Holloway vocals are for the audience and better heard in person than on record.

Holloway is considerably more inspired in the context of the Clark Terry quintet on *Top And Bottom*, recorded a week earlier on the first of the Norway's two sails. Here, in what is surely the best of Terry's many recent CDs, the music clicks from the start and quite literally never falters. Maybe because Terry has spent much time inside or in front of big bands, there is the sense of band here. With altoist David Glasser joining Terry and Holloway in the front line, the result is a prodding ensemble supporting and often booting the soloists.

Terry is at the top of his form, setting notes into place with the alacrity of a jeweler setting diamonds, but at glancing velocities. He decrees a demanding pace on the sleek, tightly engineered opener, "Quicksand." "Mood Indigo" is enlivened by putting each soloist through a cycle of three tempos before finally

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bringing the piece to rest after 10 minutes. And on "Straight, No Chaser," no horn solo is longer than 12 bars, which keeps the action shifting rapidly into a sequence of seamless fours before finally sliding into a striking rhythm dropout in which the three horns tangle with miraculous precision.

On one cut after another, this tight, rip-roaring little band "hits the jackpot," to lift Terry's bemused observation after the fiercely exciting title track. Terry and Holloway rise with the tide generated here. And Glasser's alto, incidentally, turns out to be the ideal linkage to hold the blend together. His tone has it all—warmth, body and clarity.

A genuinely hot set like this couldn't happen without a top rhythm section, and all concerned deserve credit. Willie Pickens is little short of astonishing on "Strike Up The Band" and "Mood Indigo." (Chiaroscuro CDs are not available in stores but can be ordered by calling 800-528-2582.)

—John McDonough

Live At The 1995 Floating Jazz Festival—*Hitting The Road Again; River's Invitation; Wave; Out Of Nowhere; Greazy Blues; I Wish I Knew, Well, You Needn't; This Is No Shit; Nica's Dream.* (73:10)

Personnel—Holloway, tenor saxophone, vocals; Harry Edison, trumpet (3, 4, 6); Dwight Dickerson, piano; Richard Reid, bass; Paul Humphrey, drums.

Top And Bottom—*Quicksand; Mood Indigo; Straight, No Chaser; My Romance; Top And Bottom; Love Walked In; Come Sunday; These Foolish Things; Body And Soul; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; Strike Up The Band.* (70:24)

Personnel—Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn; Holloway, tenor saxophone; David Glasser, alto saxophone; Willie Pickens, piano; Marcus McLaurine, bass; Sylvia Cuenca, drums.



Michel Petrucciani

Both Worlds
Dreyfus Jazz 36590

★★★★½

The title *Both Worlds* refers to the European and American contingents in Michel Petrucciani's new sextet, but it might also describe the pianist's complementary interaction with trombonist/arranger Bob Brookmeyer.

With a surprisingly long discography behind him, Petrucciani is certainly a known commodity. His playing is unfailingly bright and enthusiastic. He explores melodies with a light touch, and he doesn't disguise his admiration for Bill Evans' music, particularly on "Petite Louise." In this yin/yang pairing, Brookmeyer's arrangements develop the pianist's riff-based compositions, investing them with new complexity, intriguing harmonies and a certain emotional contrast.

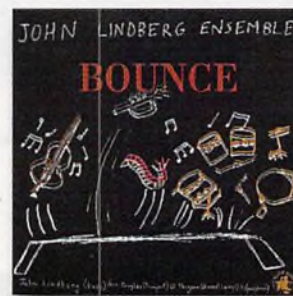
Where the pianist sounds cheerful and effusive, Brookmeyer tempers that optimism with darker, subdued moods and textures. His arrangements draw a remarkably full, rich sound from just trumpet, trombone and saxophone, often implying a much larger group. "Colors" and "Guadeloupe" are among Petrucciani's most appealing tunes. "Colors" offers an insinuating melody with a mid-tempo swing, sounding like something Kenny Barron or Herbie Hancock could have penned. "Guadeloupe," as arranged by Brookmeyer, projects a seductive Latin ambiance reminiscent of Carla Bley, as Brookmeyer's wry trombone lines counter Petrucciani's piano over Anthony Jackson's purring electric bass.

It's hard to imagine that *Both Worlds* could be nearly so effective without Brookmeyer's contributions. Most listeners will associate the rhythm section of Jackson and percussionist Steve Gadd with fusion projects, but they're very effective in this straight-ahead context. Gadd plays in a variety of styles on this CD, and he's consistently tasteful and interesting.

—Jon Andrews

Both Worlds—35 Seconds Of Music And More; Brazilian Like; Training; Colors; Petite Louise; Chloe Meets Gershwin; Chimes; Guadeloupe; On Top Of The Roof. (49:52)

Personnel—Petrucciani, piano; Bob Brookmeyer, trombone; Anthony Jackson, electric bass; Steve Gadd, drums; Flavio Boltrio, trumpet; Stefano Di Battista, soprano and tenor saxophones.



John Lindberg Ensemble

Bounce
Black Saint 120192

★★★★

One of John Lindberg's most enduring distinctions is that he demonstrates how much having fun could—probably should—be central to modern-jazz dynamics. It seems like Lindberg is one of the few bassists who actively pursues this emanation of Charles Mingus' smile. What makes his recent *Bounce* such a rewarding listen is that his sense of humor and dexterity balances and sparks the acumen of a particularly like-minded quartet. Lindberg's own words in the liner notes, mentioning how his compositions are tailored to convey a feeling of "relaxed enthusiasm," are accurate.

Lindberg's most striking new collaborator is trumpeter Dave Douglas, whose technique and imagination continues to astound. On the disc's opener, "Firewood Duet," Lindberg's syncopated vamps provide the ideal launch and exchange for Douglas' sidelong growls. The

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rhythm section of Lindberg and drummer Ed Thigpen also pushes Douglas to soar on "Fortune On A Sphere." About a third of the way through that piece, Lindberg suddenly shifts the mood by switching from a dark arco to more beat-laden pizzicato while Thigpen responds with a brush-and-cymbal combination. During this substitution, Douglas swings from a muted to a brightly unbridled tone.

Throughout the disc, the quartet's jocularity takes on different forms. The aptly named title track draws on a sack of upbeat vamps that are the quartet's answers to Lindberg's call. On the same tune, saxophonist Larry Ochs draws on his freewheeling experience from the ROVA Saxophone Quartet with his fragmented solo. Lindberg's snappy vibe on "Common Goal" opens up a path for Thigpen's brief explosions. Ochs also uses these techniques on the charmingly crackpot march "Eleven Thrice" as a combination to Lindberg's high pitch. Subversively, Thigpen's shuffling drums and cymbals change the otherwise plaintive effects of the quartet leader's Bartokian bow work on "Off Right."

Fifteen years ago, when then-23-year-old Lindberg recorded the notable *Give And Take*, his group's take on whimsical free improv embraced slurps and gasps into their palette. While that approach didn't cover up for a lack of skill back then, *Bounce* shows how accomplished Lindberg's technique is now by any traditional measuring stick. Lindberg and his pals also still know how to avoid becoming too ponderous.

—Aaron Cohen

Bounce—Firewood Duet; The Terrace; Bounce; Fortune On A Sphere; Common Goal; Eleven Thrice; Off Right. (55:47)
Personnel—Lindberg, bass; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Ed Thigpen, drums; Larry Ochs, saxophones

concert hall and the care the engineers took to preserve it as anything the musicians do. Also, heeding the wisdom of Nat Cole and Oscar Peterson before him, he has chosen to work with bass and guitar, giving us a welcome break from the sharpness of drums while adding a third "horn" to the mix.

A combination of divided loyalties and bountiful crossover appeal have led the jazz world to brush Previn off, at worst, as a part-time dilettante; at best, as a suave but emotionally empty virtuoso. I don't hear any of that here, though (any more than I know how to accurately access "emotion" in modern music). What I do hear are three wonderful musicians having lots of fun.

Aside from an occasional stuttering note, Previn never betrays the stylistic trademarks of his pop work. This is bright, straight-up jazz piano played with a rhythmic power equally shared by Previn and bassist Ray Brown. Maybe Previn's non-resident status helps keep the demons of staleness at bay in this essentially standard repertoire. He brings fresh and jaunty thinking to a staple like "I'm Going To Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter" and renders a masterly and ripping exploration of "What Is This Thing Called Love" (a.k.a. "Hot House"). Even "Satin Doll" draws your ear in with the unexpected ostinato line in the first chorus by Brown and guitarist Mundell Lowe. Just listen to the notes. The emotion will come.

Lowe's guitar, both electric and acoustic, is beautifully recorded. And Brown's quote of "Taxi War Dance" as the intro on "Captain Bill" is some of the neatest bassing since Jaco Pastorius played "Donna Lee." But no fanfare, please.

—John McDonough

Jazz At The Musikverein—*Stompin' At The Savoy; I Can't Get Started; I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter; What'll I Do; Laura; What Is This Thing Called Love; Captain Bill; Satin Doll; Hi Blondie; This Time The Dream's On Me; Prelude To A Kiss; The Very Thought Of You; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Sweet Georgia Brown.* (68:54)
Personnel—Previn, piano; Mundell Lowe, guitar; Ray Brown, bass.



Jackie McLean

Fire & Love
 Blue Note 93254

★★★★

Let's get to the point upfront: There's little that's particularly new on this latest McLean CD, just a reaffirmation of traditional hard-bop values and verities by an early practitioner of the art in the company of a batch of young sidemen he calls the Macband.

McLean, 66, retains his intense, blistering style, as well as distinctively acrid tone—a



André Previn

Jazz At The Musikverein
 Verve 537 704

★★★★

One of the least quantifiable factors we respond to in the act of processing music is the recording itself. The same performance can be recorded or mixed three different ways and produce three quite different emotional judgments. Acoustic environment is to music what lighting is to an actress. Both radiate emotional overtones that lie beyond the performance and are too implicit to be articulated.

Maybe this is an insight André Previn carries to jazz from his classical career on his latest trio CD (his first on Verve after three for Telarc). It has a soft glow that comes as much from the environment of Vienna's Musikverein

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sound that could almost sear paint off walls. McLean remains steadfast in his headlong improvising, piercing through every musical circumstance with a no-crap approach that conveys many unspoken truths.

His sidemen, all former students from his Connecticut teaching gig, lack his immediacy and personal sound. Son Rene shows his father's influence, as well as the considerable shadow of John Coltrane, while Raymond Williams stems from the Freddie Hubbard wing of Clifford Brown's musical house, and Steve Davis recalls J.J. Johnson. Alan Jay Palmer, a McCoy Tyner devotee, is the standout sideman.

The tunes, one each by Jackie and Palmer, two each by Rene and Williams, and three by Davis, are nicely varied, although largely out of the Jazz Messengers sound school. There are some Afrocentric or Latin tinges in this batch of straightahead, cooking stuff, as well as a lone ballad track, "I Found You." All the tunes are solid, with the leader's opener the best of the lot.

On a related matter: Why hasn't some industrious producer tried to cut through contractual roadblocks and perhaps musical egos to gather some remaining giants for a super session? How about this for a dream band: Jackie, Sonny Rollins or Johnny Griffin, J.J., Freddie Hubbard, Horace Silver or Tommy Flanagan, Max Roach and, maybe as a nod toward the young lions, Christian McBride? Enough said. —Will Smith

Fire & Love—Mr. E; Beautiful Majestic One; Optimism; I Found You; The Griot; Excursions; Cryptography; Entrapment; Rites Of Passage. (51:35)

Personnel—McLean, alto saxophone, percussion (7); Raymond Williams, trumpet, flugelhorn (5); Steve Davis, trombone, percussion (7); Rene McLean, tenor saxophone, percussion (7); Alan Jay Palmer, piano; Phil Bowler, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.



Mark Shim

Mind Over Matter
Blue Note 37628

★★★★½

Tenor saxophonist Mark Shim's career thus far has included work with Betty Carter and the Mingus Dynasty band as well as guesting on pianist/vocalist Loston Harris' latest CD. *Mind Over Matter* extends his rep with thoughtful exposition on this debut release. On most of the tunes, Shim's sound is assertive and full-bodied. His avowed love for the dark tonalities expressed in the styles of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Gene Ammons leaps from his horn with a youthful exuberance, though balanced by a surprising maturity.

"Snake Eyes," one of seven tunes he composed for this date, is a convincing template of his ten-

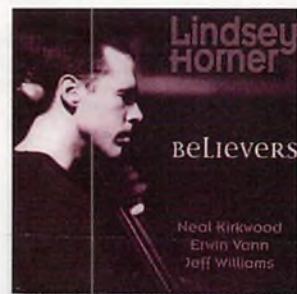
dency to approximate the giant tenor men of the past without going overboard. He stops shy of honking and raging for the mere sake of displaying the menace of his bite. That he is able to exercise restraint and resist the temptation of Geri Allen's elastic chords, the lure of her thunderous solos, is further evidence of the young man's coming of age. But on "Crazy," with its unconventional structure, Shim throws caution to the wind, while the easy fluidity so apparent on "Chosen Ones" and Curtis Lundy's lovely "Oveida" is pushed through an alembic of swirling motion that has neither purpose nor direction.

Some of the themes stated on "Arrival," with its "wade in the water" ostinato, and "Mass Exodus" beg for extensions. And it's good to know there are younger artists interested in promoting the compositions of their peers, which Shim does superbly on drummer Ralph Peterson's "Dumplin'."

Shim, at 23, is a true son of the African diaspora, with roots in Jamaica, Canada and the U.S. We are sure to hear some of this background deftly explored in future sessions. —Herb Boyd

Mind Over Matter—Arrival (intro); Mind Over Matter; Snake Eyes; Dumplin'; The Dungeon (Interlude); Oveida; Crazy; The Chosen Ones; Remember Rockefeller At Attica; Mass Exodus (outro). (45:46)

Personnel—Shim, tenor saxophone; Geri Allen, piano (1, 8, 10); David Fuczynski, guitar (1, 2, 5-7, 9, 10), vocals (9); Curtis Lundy, bass; Eric Harland, drums (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10); Ralph Peterson, drums (4, 6, 8), trumpet (4).



Lindsey Horner

Believers

Koch Jazz 3-7856

★★★★½

Horner, a 30-something bassist who's played everything from free-jazz to Celtic music, takes a decidedly left-of-center approach on his third album as a leader while reaching for middle ground with sweet melodies and soft timbres. Not quite "inside" or entirely "out," the seven compositions, all by Horner, combine semi-abstract structures with wistfully romantic themes, nodding occasionally to Coltrane-esque modalism but steering clear of bebop. Cool and amiable, the music strikes a careful balance between tuneful accessibility and intellectual rigor; beautifully performed by Horner's long-time quartet. *Believers* sounds original and contemporary without really breaking new ground or packing much emotional punch—a statement of sorts for the '90s.

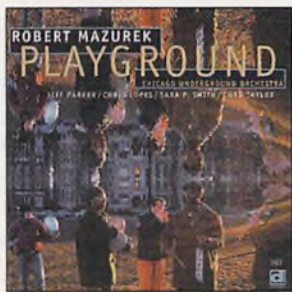
With a bass player's typical self-effacement, Horner backs into the opening "Avril," allowing Neal Kirkwood to pluck an ethereal introduction on the piano strings before tenor saxophon-

ist Erwin Vann states the bittersweet theme. But Horner is out front on the brief "Breather," a duet with drummer Jeff Williams where even the vamps are lyrical. "Altadena" is the album's most engaging and, not coincidentally, most aggressive track, evolving into a playful free romp. Kirkwood's kalimba adds an African flavor to the dreamy melancholy of "Knowing," and his melodica lends a brooding feel to the edgy "Keith Richards."

The interaction between the musicians is warmly empathic, with none, including Horner, playing a dominant role. Vann's velvety sax and Kirkwood's fluid piano blend smoothly, while Williams' crisp, sensitive drumming keeps the most pensive passages from becoming listless. Horner's bass maintains a buoyant, almost bouncy feel, and his solos are as polished and logical as they are songful. But even at its most abstract, the music has few sharp angles; and the passion is curiously muted, as though the players were too polite to risk giving any offense. —Larry Birnbaum

Believers—Avril; *Breather*; *Altadena*; *Knowing*; *Over The Water*; *Keith Richards*; *Shades*. (55:29)

Personnel—Horner, bass, percussion; Neal Kirkwood, piano, kalimba, melodica; Erwin Vann, tenor saxophone; Jeff Williams, drums.



Robert Mazurek

Playground
Delmark 503

★★★★

Isotope 217

The Unstable Molecule
Thrill Jockey 49

★★★

Cornetist Robert Mazurek and his Chicago Underground Orchestra collective have achieved a solid balance between tight melodicism and outwardly unrestrained group interplay on *Playground*. They prove how composition is as adventurous as extended improvisation. The core of this quintet—Mazurek, guitarist Jeff Parker and trombonist Sara P. Smith—are also daring and versatile enough to play enticing instrumental funk under the name Isotope 217.

The group's dual identity is uncanny, but is consistent with their awareness and transformation of divergent strains of jazz on *Playground*. Mazurek has spent a number of years in various hard-bop units, and the results of these experiences are clear in his sharp intonation and expert use of a minimal amount of notes. As

a player, and conceptually, his sound resonates with ideas inherited from Miles Davis, Lee Morgan and Don Cherry. Drummer Chad Taylor and bassist Chris Lopes draw on the '60s free movement's use of the rhythm section to create space and texture instead of just propulsion and timekeeping. On "Boiled Over," Parker's melodic dissonance flows into a silent interlude that becomes a perfect segue into a fine muted lead from Mazurek. The group's intuitive communication is also striking during a lyrical duet between Mazurek and Parker on "Inner Soul Of H" and the cornet-trombone exchange on the aptly titled "Ostinato."

The songs themselves are indispensable in making these moments work so well. Sometimes the melodic qualities unfurl gradually ("Flamingos Dancing On Luminescent Moonbeams"), and other times, the tunes are succinct enough to just create an evocative impression that the band is stepping out of a dream ("The Inner Soul Of H"). Mazurek and Parker wrote most of the compositions, but their selection of cover material is also interesting. Their rendition of Duke Ellington's somewhat lesser-known "Le Sucier Velours" would be a highlight in a set from many of the high-profile repertoire bands. With added percussionists, Herbie Hancock's "Blow Up" has a gritty sense of motion. That Mazurek and Parker's songbooks blend in on the same disc as Ellington and Hancock says a lot for the future of the Chicago Underground Orchestra.

Isotope 217's jazz/funk hybrid is a continuation of Mazurek and company's rendition of "Blow Up." The polyrhythmic interplay of *Live-Evil*-era Miles Davis is one source of inspiration,

along with the pop sensibilities of such early '70s bands as the Pharaohs. One can imagine how a creative DJ, would sequence and sample *The Unstable Molecule* alongside its artistic predecessors. Smith and Mazurek's legato lines work especially well on top of the throbbing drums and bass on "Beneath The Undertow." Parker's guitar work stings on "Phonometrics." With less than 32 minutes on the disc, Isotope 217 restrain themselves from opening up and soaring as often as they're capable of doing live.

Credit for this collective's versatility should also go to Bundy K. Brown, who recorded and mixed both projects. On *Playground*, Brown quietly provides the group with a clarity that focuses on their strengths. By contrast, he takes more control of the mix on the Isotope 217 disc, which suits that band's approach. The use of jumpcuts and tape loops on *Unstable Molecule* not only makes the recording studio a prominent front-line instrument, but gives the CD an evocative, cinematic mood. —Aaron Cohen

Playground—*Blow Up*; *Flamingos Dancing On Luminescent Moonbeams*; *Boiled Over*; *Le Sucier Velours*; *Components Changes*; *Playground*; *Jeff's New Idea*; *The Inner Soul Of H*; *Whitney*; *Ostinato*. (58:11)

Personnel—Mazurek, cornet, bamboo flute, toy trumpet; Jeff Parker, guitar, cowbell, recorder; Sara P. Smith, trombone, glockenspiel, recorder, muffin tin, voice, cymbals; Chris Lopes, bass, India flute, voice; Chad Taylor, drums, street sign; John Herndon, bongos (1); Dan Bitney, congos (1); Tony Pinciotti, percussion (8).

The Unstable Molecule—*Kryptonite Smokes The Red Line*; *Beneath The Undertow*; *La Jeteé*; *Phonometrics*; *Prince Namor*; *Audio Boxing*. (31:07)

Personnel—Dan Bitney, John Herndon, percussion; Matt Lux, electric bass; Rob Mazurek, cornet; Sara P. Smith, trombone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Poppy Brandes, cello (3).

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JAZZ

Singers & Their Songs

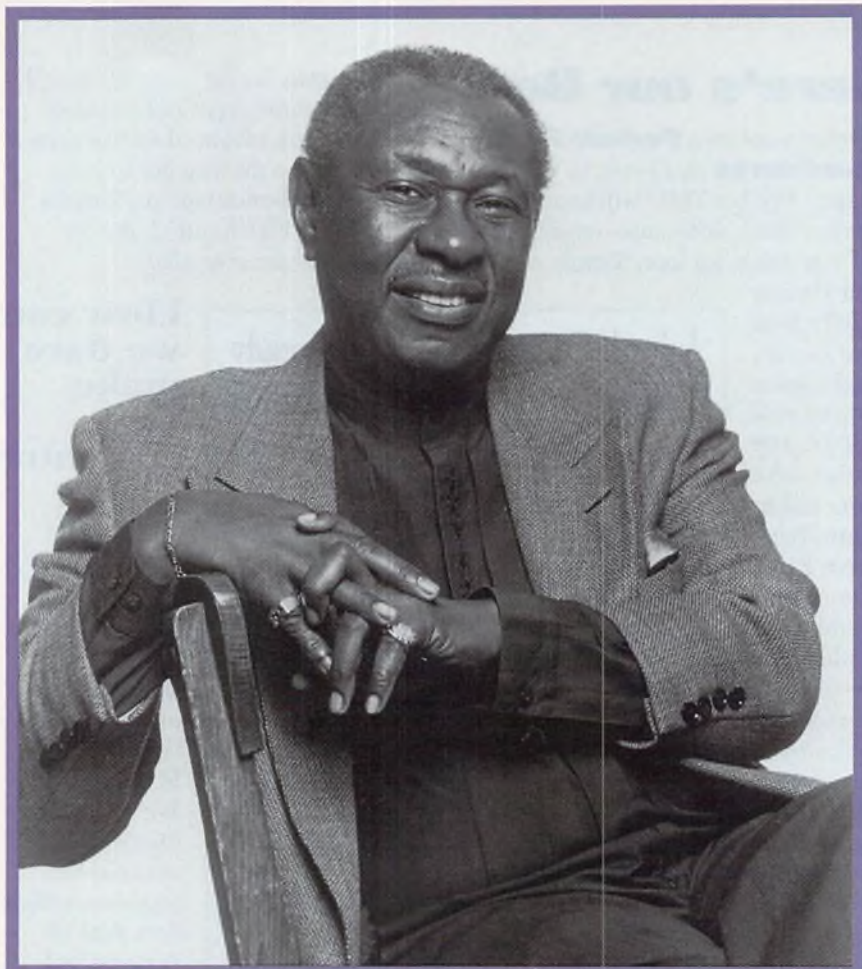
by Paul de Barros

Like an actor, a singer has to make you believe. No matter how good the technique—if there's no credibility, there's no show. A more contemporary challenge is repertoire. With some of the jazz-vocal repertoire not dating well, jazz singers need to find material audiences can relate to. A crop of singers seem to be up to both tasks.

Shirley Horn: *I Remember Miles* (Verve 557 199; 52:55: ★★★★★) Shirley Horn's minimalist affinities with Miles are so obvious, it's a wonder she never thought of doing an album like this before. She boldly cuts to the chase, opening with a phrase from the middle of "My Funny Valentine"—a telling detail that stands for the whole—pure Miles! Her hooting, intimate whisper on "Summertime" features a soft lament from Toots Thielemans; a salty, cleverly arranged "I've Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" sports a complementary comment from trumpeter Roy Hargrove. "My Man's Gone Now" draws from electric Miles, with vamping basses and Horn sliding into a wordless vocal. "Basin Street Blues" is a misfire, an attempt to personalize a monument; "Blue In Green," the closer, comes off as a bit stagey, with its piano solo and one-line closer, "Funny from a horn so sweet." But mood rules, and the project makes you shiver.

Jeffery Smith: *A Little Sweeter* (Verve 537 790; 55:10: ★★★★★½) As Miles loved Shirley, so Shirley adores one Jeffery Smith, a Queens-bred emigre to Paris who just could turn out to be the vocal discovery of the year. Horn produced Smith's first album in France; this is his American debut. Smith has a trombone of a voice, churchy and Johnny Hartman-like, but with none of the stiffness that sometimes plagues choirboys. A supple "Lush Life" and a wackily improvised "Misty" are complemented by Boris Vian's "The Sentimental Touch," sung (partly) in French. Smith has some occasional intonation problems and his "Moanin'" is too polite. But there's not a phony note on this album. The closer, "Come Sunday," makes you warm all over. Wow!

Freddy Cole: *Love Makes The Changes* (Fantasy 96812; 55:21: ★★★★★) Diana Krall had an epiphany hearing Freddy Cole one night at Bradley's, when she realized he was just singing the lyrics, without jazz mannerisms. Freddy is a classic, all right, way underrated. With a slightly grainier quality than his brother Nat, but with some of the same glorious warmth, his lived-in voice



Freddy Cole: a lived-in voice that caresses

caresses the Michel LeGrand/Bergman ballad "On My Way To You," but is just as convincing on the breezy Sammy Cahn chestnut "Wonder Why." Some may find Cole tipped toward the easy-listening side, but when he tackles a song like "Do You Know Why?" every accent, every drawn-out note, every pause, is so perfectly in place, you want to play this album for every singer you know.

Claire Martin: *Make This City Ours* (Honest 5066; 57:51: ★★★★★) Claire Martin has won several British Jazz Awards. Perhaps her third U.S. album, the first with some New York recording studio hair on it, will put her over stateside. A husky alto with trumpet-like clarity and the nervous but perfect rhythmic sense of Mark Murphy brings a silky Brazilian timbre to the reverie "Summer (Estate)." On that old saw "How Deep Is The Ocean?" she manages to convey both vulnerability and a tough edge. Her own "Empty Bed," sung in a whiskey whisper, is a dandy; "Collagen Lips," a sarcastic critique of the female body-part market, is a fittingly hip chaser for an album of up-to-the-minute repertoire. Soloists are sometimes a trifle eager.

Bobby Short and His Orchestra: *Celebrating 30 Years At The Cafe Carlyle* (Telarc 83428; 52:47: ★★★★★½) Bobby Short is a good example of how person-

ality can make any songbook plausible—to wit, the cafe society lyrics of Cole Porter and company. Short was having one of his periodic bouts of laryngitis during this little big-band outing, so there is often more declamation than singing here. Still, he manages to grab (and hold) the bravado final note to "Guess Who's In Town?" "Moten Swing" oddly merges with "You're Driving Me Crazy," Porter's "At Long Last Love" has a terrific punch, and "Hooray For Love" rings with an Al Jolson, music-hall flavor that carries over to an oddly inflated "Body And Soul." More believable is "Romance In The Dark," with bluesy muted trumpet and Ray Charles-like orchestration. All 14 cuts are short; the band plays in '30s movie subtunes more often than I would have preferred.

Enrico Pieranunzi Trio & Ada Montellanico: *Ma L'Amore No* (Soul Note 121321; 61:41: ★★★★★) Italian jazz singer Ada Montellanico has such a transparent, articulate voice, it's pure pleasure to listen to his liquid phrasing on this collection of popular Italian songs, done jazz-wise. Lee Konitz and Enrico Rava contribute solos, and Pieranunzi is a pianist whose Bill Evans persuasion gives "Amore Baciarmi" a lift. Montellanico seals like a champ on "Who Can I Turn To?" The four sung-in-English tunes are a mistake, but this album is a surprise treat. **DB**

REISSUES

Atlantic Swells

by Jon Andrews

Reissue programs have long been driven by a sense of rediscovery. The process is nearly archaeological, as the producer uncovers rarities and forgotten antiquities. Now, as reissue programs work through their third and fourth cycles, it's increasingly appropriate to ask, "What is the purpose of this reissue?" To commemorate Atlantic Records' 50th year, the Rhino label has refurbished and remastered a handful of essential Atlantic jazz titles. These albums have long been available as individual CDs, and have been reissued in comprehensive boxed sets on **John Coltrane**, **Ornette Coleman** and **Charles Mingus**. Each individual CD provides distinctive packaging, including newly avail-

able color photos, original and newly commissioned liner notes, and a 5x5 reproduction of the original LP jacket. Most bonus tracks were available on previous CD issues, or were included in the boxed sets. Sound quality exceeds that of prior single-disc issues to some degree, and equals that of the boxed sets.

John Coltrane: *Giant Steps* (Rhino/Atlantic 75203; 75:27: ★★★★★) It is hard to imagine a credible jazz collection without this almost-perfect album. *Blue Trane* has its adherents, but on this 1959 recording, a mature Coltrane emerges as a consistent, dominating influence on tenor saxophone and an accomplished, visionary composer. With this remastered version, Coltrane's tone sounds even more incisive and urgent. The slight boost given to the bass makes the contributions of Paul Chambers more prominent, particularly on "Mr. P.C." Pianist Tommy Flanagan and drummer Art Taylor may not be soulmates on the order of McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, but they balance Coltrane's intense "sheets of sound" approach. Several bonus

tracks add little insight, though it's interesting to compare early takes of "Naima," with Cedar Walton on piano, with Wynton Kelly's far superior master.

John Coltrane: *My Favorite Things* (75204; 46:39: ★★★★★) Recorded the following year, *My Favorite Things* differs considerably from *Giant Steps*, putting aside original compositions in favor of standards and show tunes, and introducing Coltrane's soprano horn. It's just as effective, breaking new ground in different directions. Coltrane's versions of the title track and "Everytime We Say Goodbye" did much to revive popular interest in the soprano saxophone. The long solos and repeated vamp of "My Favorite Things" subtly communicate Coltrane's growing interest in Indian music through an irresistibly hummable medium. Bonus tracks are limited to two single versions of "My Favorite Things."

Ornette Coleman: *Free Jazz* (75208; 54:25: ★★★★★½) The Double Quartet's 1960 structured improvisation may be a historic landmark, but it's a curious choice for this series. It remains one of Coleman's most daunting projects, though improved sound allows better stereo separation of the players. Eric Dolphy's opening bass clarinet solo still startles and dazzles, setting a high standard that few of the soloists who follow can match. The horns drop out for a mesmerizing encounter between bassists Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro. Drummer Ed Blackwell's New Orleans rhythms combine with jubilant ensemble playing to suggest a surreal version of dixieland. The package includes a reproduction of the original gatefold cover, including Jackson Pollock's "White Light." Gunther Schuller's new notes provide a valuable guided tour to the piece "Free Jazz," commenting on Coleman's structure and conception as well as the solos.

Charles Mingus: *Blues & Roots* (75205; 69:09: ★★★★★) I think of this album as part of a trilogy that includes *Mingus Ah Um* and *Oh Yeah*, projects that emphasize the raucous, earthy and sweaty along with the spiritual side of Mingus' music. The nonet, featuring Jackie McLean, John Handy, Pepper Adams and Booker Ervin on reeds, is exceptional throughout, playing with relentless, feverish energy as though lashed by the leader's whoops and exhortations. From "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" through "E's Flat Ah's Flat Too," every track is strong and exhilarating. Some improvement in sound quality will be apparent from Pepper Adams' baritone intro to "E's Flat Ah's Flat Too," which saws through the floor established by prior releases. **DB**

Initial Down Beat ratings:

- John Coltrane: *Giant Steps*: ★★★★★ (3/21/60 issue)
- John Coltrane: *My Favorite Things*: ★★★★★ (6/22/61)
- Ornette Coleman: *Free Jazz*: ★★★★★/no stars (two reviews: 1/18/62)
- Charles Mingus: *Blues & Roots*: ★★★★★ (5/26/60)



Ornette Coleman: producing a historic landmark

BEYOND

Afro-Pop Plus

by Larry Birnbaum

Ten years ago, "world music" was dominated by Afro-pop, a variegated hybrid of traditional African and modern Western styles. Today, however, Afro-pop is only one aspect of what has become a truly global scene, embracing music from every continent but Antarctica. African music, because of its formative influence on jazz, blues, rock and r&b, still has a special significance, but everything from Argentine tangos to Philippine folk is now grist for the world-music mill.

Maryam Mursal: *The Journey* (Real World/Caroline 2370; 53:04: ★★★★★) A former Somali nightclub diva who survived her country's bitter civil war, Mursal survives *The Journey's* smothering high-tech mix, whose Celtic flavors blend surprisingly well with her winding, Arabic- and Indian-inflected melodies. Compared to the traditional version of "Lei Lei (I Feel Alone)" she recorded last year with members of the Somalian national theater company Waaberi, the in-your-face arrangement of the same song here sounds almost ludicrous—a cross between Euro-funk and Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy. But the tunes themselves, and Mursal's soulful vocals, transcend their slightly tacky context on irresistible tracks like "Kufilaw (Take Care)," a dance-floor smash in any language.

King Sunny Ade: *Odù* (Mesa/Atlantic; 70:18: ★★★★★) Veteran Nigerian singer Ade's heavily percussive juju sound remains strong and vital. Although this retrospective of his 30-year career does not reflect his recent work—speedier and even more rhythmic than before—it's consistently rich and satisfying, with bittersweet Yoruba singing buoyed by steel-guitar glisses and complex, tightly interlocking drumbeats. And while the pop influences are geared strictly for Nigerian tastes, propulsive tracks like "Mo Ri Keke Kan" find a universal groove.

Conjunto Clave Y Guaguanco: *Dejala En La Puntica* (enja/Tiptoe 888 8292; 49:55: ★★★★★) This venerable Havana-based folk troupe specializes in authentic rumbas—Afro-Cuban street chants accompanied only by percussion. Here, they stick mainly to traditional rumba forms like guaguancó and yambu (the former performed on congas, the latter on wooden boxes called cajones), but throw in such occasional innovations as batá drums (once reserved exclusively for Afro-Cuban religious rituals), a rumba rap and even a rumba in English, "Mamaita ... What You've Got." But the album's strength lies less in its novelty than in its beautifully realized performances and pristine production,



Juan-José Mosalini: a romantic approach

which captures the percussive timbres with unprecedented clarity.

Juan-José Mosalini: *One Man's Tango* (Shanachie 64097; 62:33: ★★★★★) With a tango revival in full swing, this Paris-based Argentine bandoneonist is well-positioned to inherit the mantle of the late Astor Piazzolla,

whose music forms the core of the current tango craze. Heavily influenced by Piazzolla's melodramatic "new tango," with its spiky modern harmonies, Mosalini takes a more romantic approach, drenched in nostalgic sentiment that stops just short of schmaltz. This collection is drawn from several of Mosalini's previous albums, featuring his accordion-like instrument in trio, quintet and orchestral settings. With the exception of the sumptuously arranged "Alma De Bohemia," the material, by Piazzolla and other classic tango composers, is more suitable for swooning than dancing.

Various Artists: *Utom: Summoning The Spirit* (Rykodisc 10402; 67:07: ★★★★★) A few remote corners of the world have managed to preserve musical traditions totally unpolluted by Western pop. Among them is the highland region of southwestern Mindanao, in the Philippines, where the T'boli people use homemade lutes, zithers, flutes, drums, gongs and mouth harps to mimic nature sounds. Many of the tracks here, recorded on site by Manolete Mora for Mickey Hart's series *The World*, consist of little more than simple repetitive riffs, minimally embellished and accompanied by the ambient sounds of chirping birds and insects. Yet this rudimentary music, which at times suggests anything from Appalachian dulcimers to Indonesian gamelans, has a hypnotic fascination, as sophisticated in its seeming artlessness as the latest avant-garde abstractions. **DB**

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BLINDFOLD TEST

JULY 1998

Hank Crawford

by Larry Birnbaum

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.

Since the beginning of his career, when he backed B.B. King, Bobby Bland and Ike Turner in his native Memphis, alto saxophonist Hank Crawford has always been associated with the blues. But though he's cut his share of commercial funk dates and still records bluesy sessions like the recent *Road Tested* (Milestone) with organist Jimmy McGriff, Crawford is also a smooth, solid, straightahead player, firmly grounded in bebop and swing (see *Down Beat* June '98).

Crawford first won recognition as musical director of the legendary Ray Charles band of the late '50s and early '60s, where he played baritone and alto sax alongside David "Fathead" Newman's tenor. As a leader, he recorded a series of blues-bop LPs for Atlantic, four of which were recently reissued on the double-CD *Memphis, Ray And A Touch Of Moody* (32 Jazz). In the '70s, he turned to funky fusion on CTI, then returned to the mainstream in the '80s and '90s on Milestone.

Lou Donaldson

"Cherry" (from *Birdseed*, Milestone, 1992) Donaldson, alto saxophone; David Braham, organ; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Fukushi Tainaka, drums; Ralph Dorsey, conga.

That was Lou Donaldson playing a tune called "Cherry." Lou is one of my favorite saxophone players. I've been listening to Lou almost ever since I started playing. He's playing very melodic on this particular tune—not a lot of notes. I've heard him in better settings; I've heard him play more, and I've just heard him play on better records. I think the organ player was Groove Holmes; I recognized the bass line and Groove's style of playing. For the record, I think both of them have played better, so I'd like to give it 4 stars, just because they are who they are, and they are great players. And for Lou Donaldson, I'd like to give him 5, because I think he deserves it. He's one of the pioneers, and he's paved the way for a lot of guys. He's played in all kinds of settings, from barrooms to concert halls, so he's paid his dues.

Alto Summit featuring Phil Woods, Vincent Herring, Antonio Hart

"Blue Minor" (from *Alto Summit*, Milestone, 1995) Woods, Herring, alto saxophones; Anthony Wonsey, piano; Ruben Rogers, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

To me, the two saxophone players had similar styles; they played a lot like each other. I would like to guess that one of them would be Phil Woods, but I'm hung up on the other one. I'm tempted to say Richie Cole, but I miss something about Richie in there. The rhythm section I dare not say, but I think it was a good recording. The saxophonists played well, both of them, and I think the whole group played good, for what they were playing. I can't make a positive identification on everybody else, but I'm pretty sure it was Phil Woods. I'd give it 4 stars.

Benny Carter

"You Are" (from *Legends, MusicMasters Jazz*, 1993) Carter, alto saxophone; Hank Jones, piano.

I'm almost sure that was Benny Carter and Earl Hines. If it wasn't Earl Hines, then I'm not really sure about the piano



player. Anyway, I'll give it 5 stars for Benny Carter, because he's a man for all seasons. He's contributed a lot to the business, not only as a player but as an arranger. And just being alive at 90 years old, I think he deserves it. But I wish I could nail that piano player, because his playing sounds so familiar.

Tab Smith

"Red Hot And Blue" (from *Ace High*, Delmark 1992/rec. 1952) Smith, alto saxophone; Irving Woods, trumpet; Charlie Wright, tenor saxophone; Lavern Dillon or Teddy Brannon, piano; Wilfred Middlebrooks, bass; Walter Johnson, drums.

When that first started, I thought of Johnny Hodges, but as I listened, I changed my mind. I think that's Earl Bostic. If not Earl Bostic or Johnny, it's somebody from that school, maybe Tab Smith. Another one of the first tunes I played was "Because Of You" by Tab Smith; in fact, I recorded it later. But I never heard many records of Tab playing as a power player; I always heard him as a sentimental player. I guess that's what threw me. But Tab was one of the pioneers. That was like one of the old blues jam sessions, and I played a lot of that stuff coming up myself. I'd give it 3 stars.

Frank Morgan with the Rodney Kendrick Trio

"Blue Monk" (from *Bop!*, Telarc Jazz, 1997) Morgan, alto saxophone; Rodney Kendrick, piano; Curtis Lundy, bass; Leroy Williams, drums.

That was Thelonious' tune "Blue Monk." I would dare say it was Monk, but if not Monk, it was surely a disciple of Monk, somebody who admired his playing. The saxophone player, two people come to mind, but I'm going to go with my first thought, Frank Morgan. I knew Frank on the California scene when I was out there for a while, but I never was involved in his company a lot or even on sets where he'd play. I just happened to hear him from time to time, but he was a disciple of Charlie Parker, and I think this was good. So for Frank and Monk, I'd give it 4 stars.

DB