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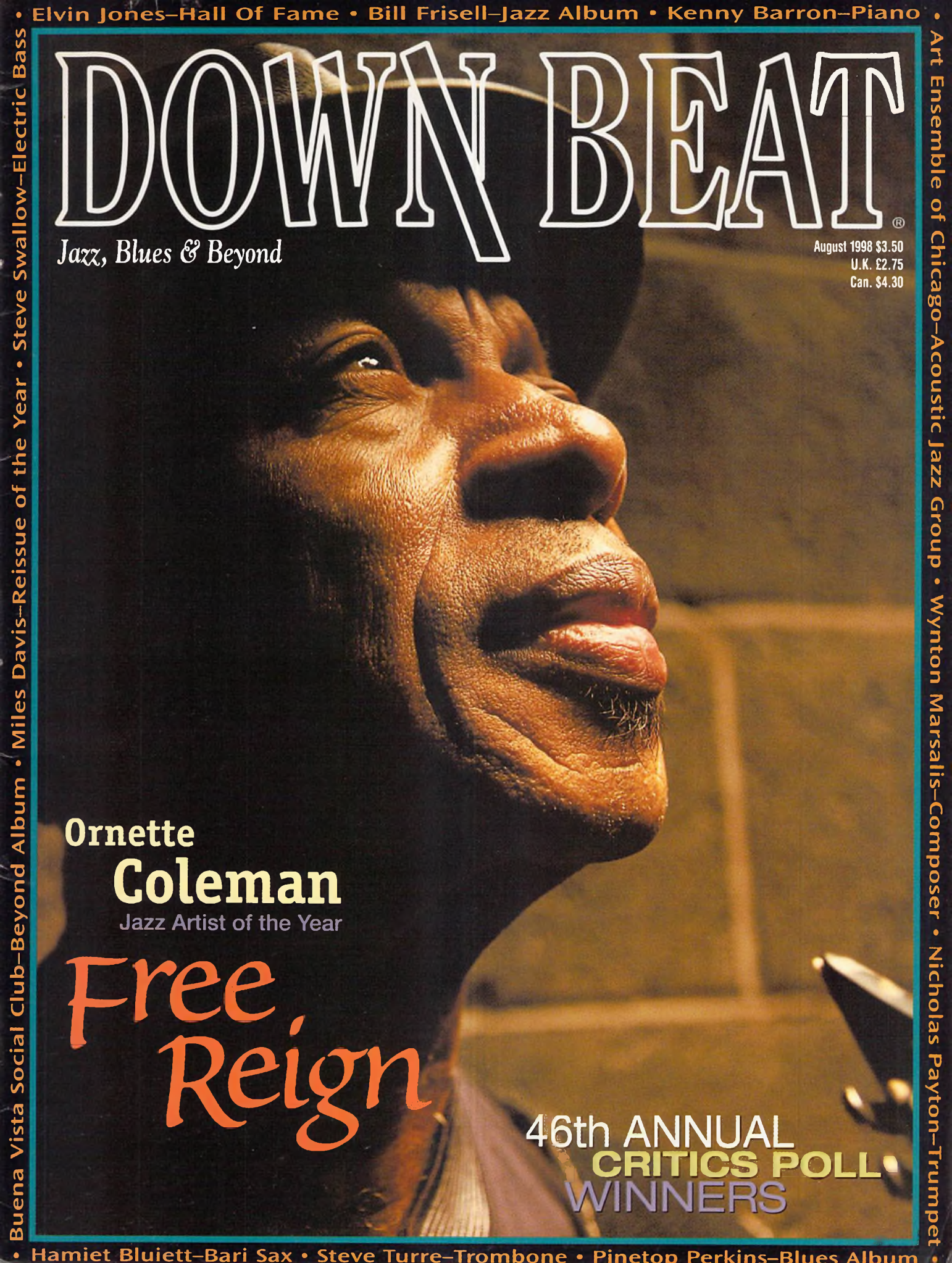

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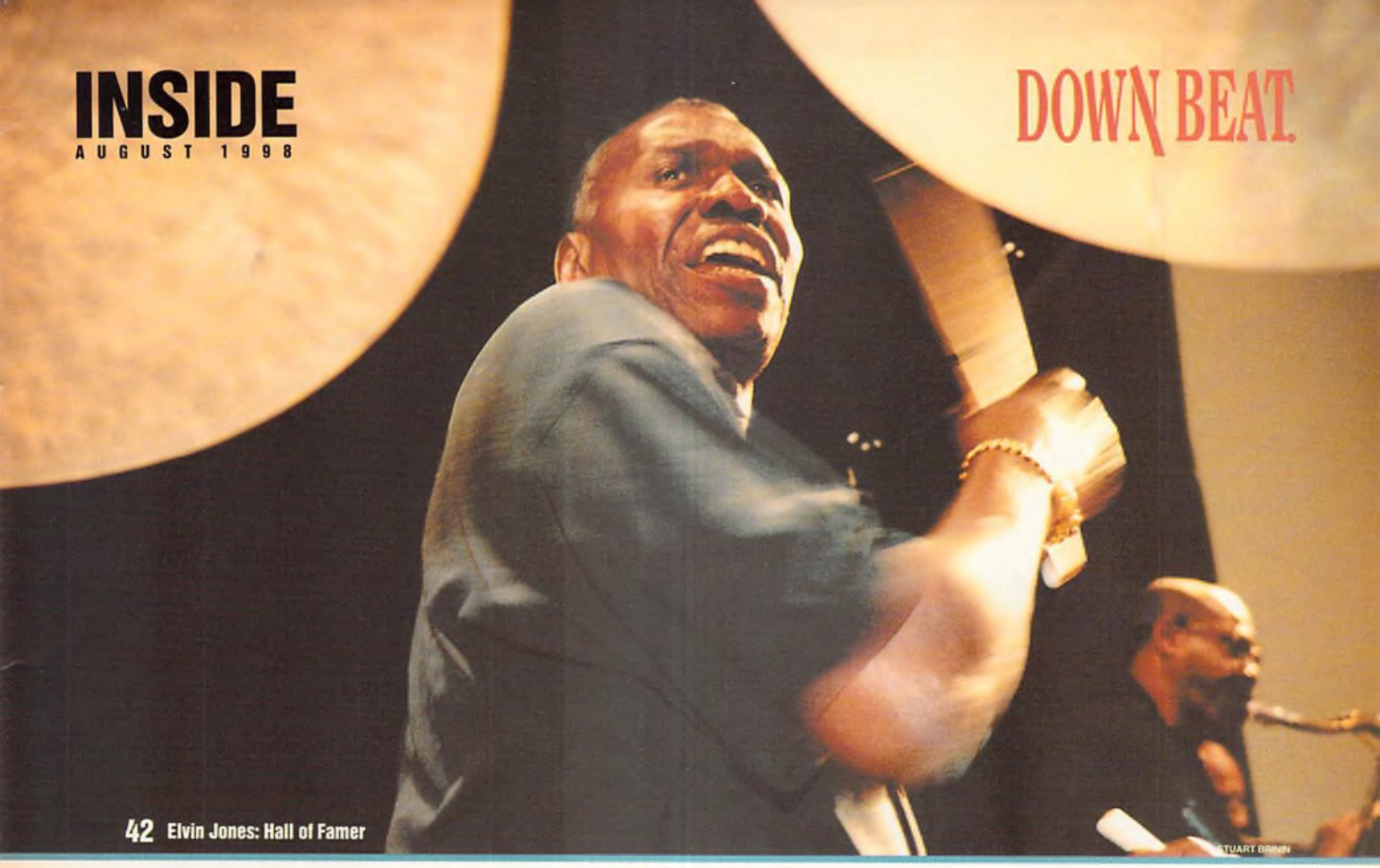

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Everybody's Sinatra

by Frank Alkyer

The day Frank Sinatra died, millions of average Joes shed a tear, tipped a toast and remembered—a first Sinatra record, a romantic encounter sealed by "Fly Me To The Moon," maybe even a rare, live glimpse of the man himself.

For me, his passing brought back a flood of stories; the kind that show you one more time that the Sinatra legacy belongs to everyone in a small way.

In the early '80s, I worked as a newspaper reporter in New Jersey and spent a good deal of time covering news from Hoboken, Sinatra's birthplace.

The town oozed Sinatra even though the man hadn't been back for decades.

All the old-time establishments had their Sinatra shrines, but Piccolo's, a cheesesteak joint at the south end of town, was the undisputed temple to Sinatradom. The jukebox played Sinatra and only Sinatra. The walls were jammed—floor to ceiling—with photos detailing the life and times of Hoboken's favorite native son.

When the evil Kitty Kelly published her scandalous book, *His Way*, even the staunchest Sinatra fan shuddered, "Say it ain't so, Frank."

But Piccolo's responded with a 30-foot banner across the front of the restaurant: "Don't worry, Frank. That book lies! We still love you!"

They restored order for those who believed that it's truly Sinatra's world and we just live in it.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

A star marks Sinatra's birthplace in Hoboken, N.J.

In 1984, Hoboken whipped into a frenzy when Sinatra returned for the first time in more than 30 years. He received a hero's welcome wheeling into town on a campaign stop with President Ronald Reagan, who was running for re-election.

Throngs packed Washington Street, the town's main drag, for a ticker-tape parade fit for a returning king. Even the President played second fiddle that fine day. But give him credit: Reagan knew the only sure-fire way to enter that Democratic stronghold and come out a hero.

Back at the newspaper, I didn't get the job of covering the actual event. That was left to more experienced reporters.

My mission? To drop by the local taverns and get responses from the barstool crowd.

I weaved in and out of more than a dozen fine establishments that night. Honestly, I don't remember if the article was any good or not. While I did my best to conduct serious, journalistic interviews, the locals kept coercing me into raising another glass to Frankie's health. By my calculations, he should've lived to be 150.

Why do people love Sinatra? Because he was an average guy with an extraordinary gift. His voice was timeless; his showmanship, superb; his dedication to craft, exemplary. Those characteristics made him an artist for all generations.

Personally, I love Sinatra's music because of my mother. I was raised from the womb on that voice. Even in rebellious youth, when she and I couldn't believe we were from the same planet let alone the same family, his music served as one topic we could discuss. Fathers and sons have baseball. My mother and I had Sinatra.

I'm sure it's not uncommon. So, from millions of average Joes and their mothers and their children: Thank you, Mr. Sinatra, and good night. **DB**

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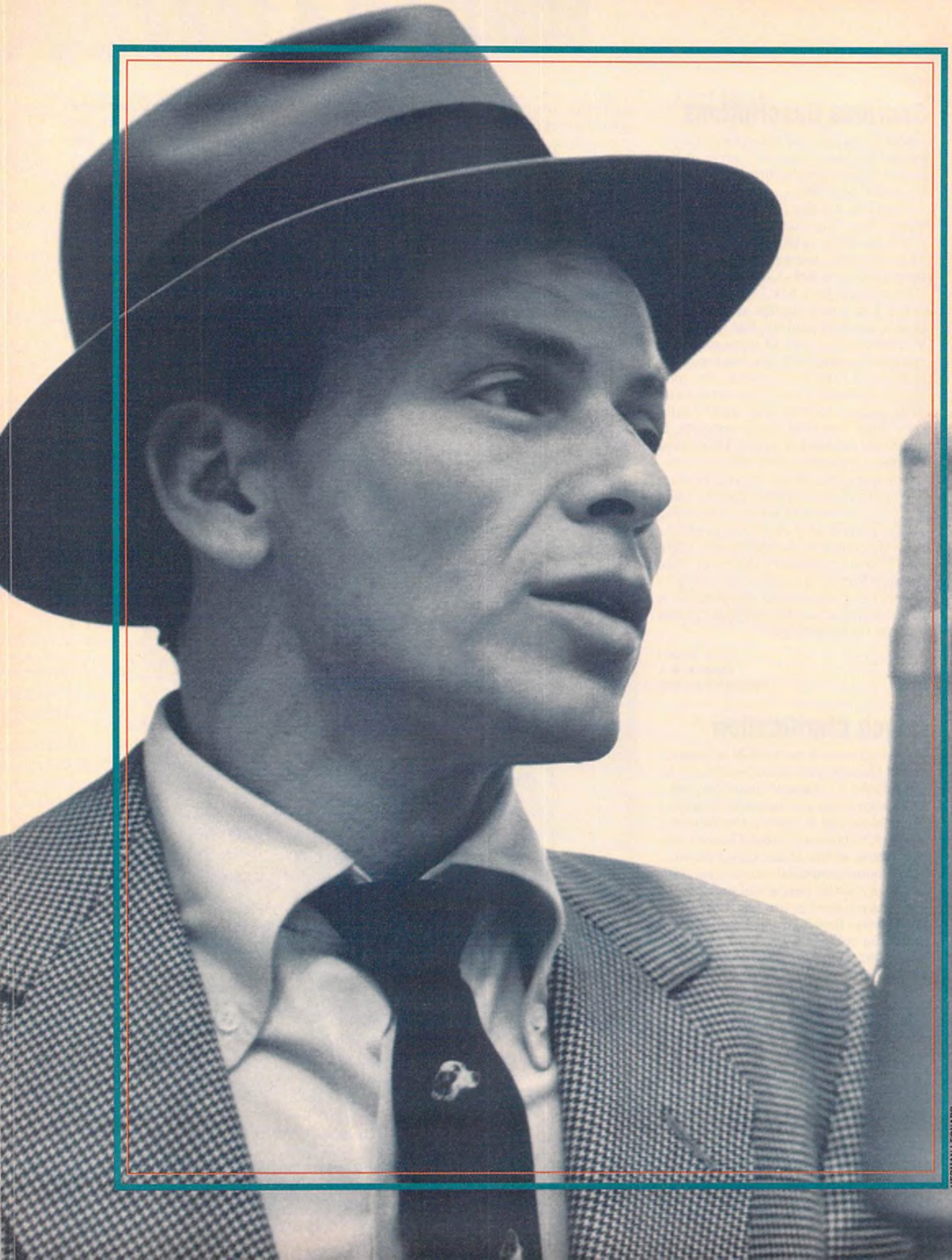


HERMAN LEONARD

Frank Sinatra 1915-1998 One More for the road

FRANK SINATRA BESTRODE 20TH-CENTURY POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT LIKE A ROMAN COLOSSUS. No single figure in popular music sustained a career at so high a level for so long a time. That he did so without ever seriously tampering with the fundamentals of his style or basic repertoire says much about the choices he made in the beginning and about his decision to stand by those choices during less friendly times.

Sinatra, who died May 14 (see "Riffs" July 1998) at age 82, was born to Italian parents in Hoboken, N.J. He harbored early ambitions to be a journalist, ironic considering how hostile he became to segments of the press when he became famous. In 1935, with no formal music training, he auditioned to perform as a solo act on the *Major Bowes Amateur Hour*. Bowes matched him with three other youngsters, dubbed them the Hoboken Four, and, after giving them a shot on the program, sent them out as part of a road show. "Shine" was their big number. In a recording of the original 1935 radio appearance, the boyish sound and phrasing of the 19-year-old singer is unmistakable, even through the '20s Rhythm Boys stylings. The Bowes period also produced two little known short film appearances, one with Sinatra as a blackface minstrel.

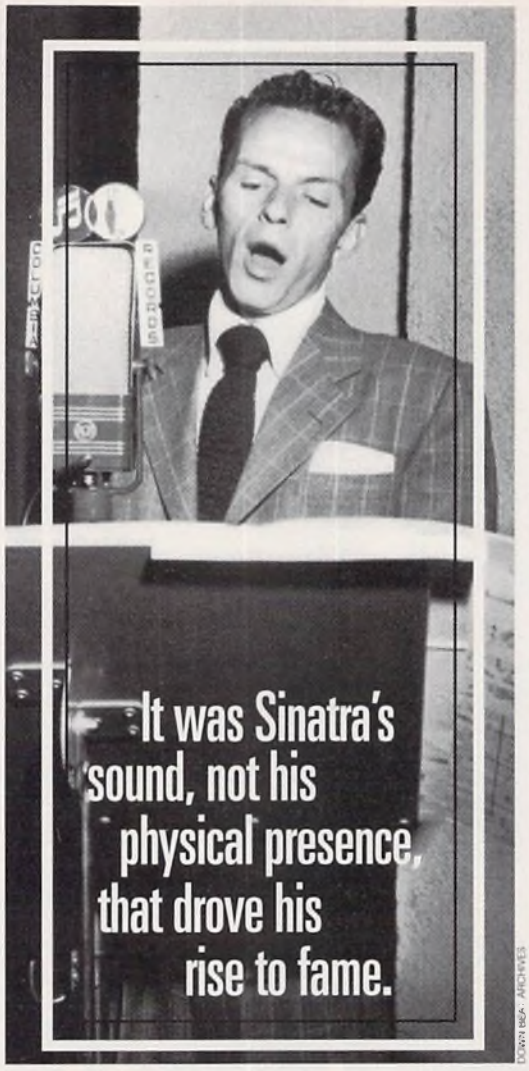
Sinatra joined the first Harry James band in 1939 and began recording for Columbia Records. (In August of that year he recorded "All Or Nothing At All," a song he would perform throughout his career, until his last major concert tour in the fall of 1994.) He reached an even larger national audience when he joined Tommy Dorsey in the early '40s. Dorsey was in the process of reinventing his band with the addition of Sy Oliver, Jo Stafford, Connie Haines, Buddy Rich, Ziggy Elman and others. Sinatra's ballad style on "Stardust" and "I'll Never Smile Again" would become Dorsey's most valuable single asset. Both were arranged by Axel Stordahl, who would go on to frame virtually all of Sinatra's recorded work for the next decade, beginning with his first session under his own name in 1942. Sinatra also made his feature film debut with Dorsey in *Las Vegas Nights* (1941, Paramount) reprising "I'll Never Smile Again." He next appeared in *Ship Ahoy!* (1942, MGM), and in September 1942 he left Dorsey for a solo career that included his first starring film role in the RKO film *Higher And Higher* (also Mel Torme's first picture). It was the beginning of a spotty 1940s film career that would carry him through the sensational bobbysox years mostly trapped in boy-next-door roles.

By John McDonough

Despite the films and the squealing teens at his personal appearances, it was Sinatra's sound, not his physical presence, that drove his rise to fame—unlike today, when visual impact seems to be the sole negotiable currency in the music marketplace. Would Sinatra have stood a chance a dozen years later had he been up against the brute physicality of Elvis Presley or Jerry Lee Lewis, or the psychedelic hallucinations that swept over pop music in the '60s? Sinatra was a creature of records and radio (*The Lucky Strike Hit Parade, Songs By Sinatra)*, not television and music videos. It was precisely because his audiences could *not* see this thin, diminutive, innocent-looking kid that listeners paid attention to the music, listened to the words and configured private images to suit their imaginations.

When his career fell on indifferent times in the late '40s and early '50s, it was to the phonograph record, now empowered by the new vistas of the LP, that Sinatra returned for redemption. With LP technology emerged a new musical architect, arranger Nelson Riddle. He had a new label as well, Capitol, which had a vision for the hot combo it had landed and avidly promoted them.

With the '40s behind him, Sinatra's golden age began. It included great films—*The Man With The Golden Arm, High Society, The Manchurian Candidate, From Here To Eternity*—the latter of which included a performance worthy of the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in 1953. He was featured on landmark TV specials such as *The Edsel Show* and *Ol' Blue Eyes Is Back.* There was a series of "concept" albums for Capitol and, after 1962, recordings for his own Reprise label (later bought by Warner Bros.). His songs contemplated love (*In The Wee Small Hours)*, loneliness (*Only The Lonely, All Alone)*, maturity (*That's Life, September Of My Years)* and the swinging life (*Ring-a-Ding Ding!)*—all in ways no singer had ever done before.



Sinatra entered the '60s mature, definitive, supremely powerful and in control. The world was his. He chaired a social circle that included the elite of show business. At its inner circle prowled the roguish "Rat Pack"—Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop. These five glamorous rascals celebrated their liberation from the ordinary, the boring, the bourgeois. In their self-styled hipness, there was an arrogance that was charmingly attractive in its mischief.

They celebrated their liberation from prejudice with irreverence. This packed a subliminal social message. Anti-Semitism was still a force, though no longer a respectable one; and the Civil Rights Movement was moving toward its climactic confrontations in the South. Yet the Rat Pack, a couple of Italians, a Jew, a Negro and a WASP, established their own turf, a demilitarized zone in Las Vegas where they relentlessly and hilariously mocked one another's ethnicity with a nonchalant disregard for offense. In their good-natured rapport, they were way ahead of their time, offering promise of a relaxed, liberal future when the tensions of racism and ethnicity would be little more than the grist of wisecracks among pals secure in their standing.

Sinatra's generation had fought its way through a depression and war, and it saw Sinatra as the personification of the promised land fulfilled, with prosperity and material well-being for all.

But its supremacy would be challenged by an unexpected fifth column: their own children. An antiwar, anti-bourgeois counterculture grew out of the convergence of an unpopular war with new social freedoms symbolized by sex, drugs and rock & roll.

The Las Vegas Sinatra of 1960 became a standing joke to baby boomers by the late '60s. Liberace, Presley and Wayne Newton turned the town into the capital of kitsch. Sinatra, however, pressed on, retired in June 1971, and returned two years later. Caesar's Palace became his Vegas venue, but even Sinatra could not slow the city's slide into a desert Disneyland, symbolic, along with Sinatra, of everything the counterculture despised.

Millions still wanted to see him, and to accommodate his fans Sinatra turned increasingly to mega-concerts in huge theaters and stadiums around the world. His albums became events as well, sometimes reaching a little too far ("The Future" on the otherwise superb *Trilogy: Past, Present & Future*), and sometimes a bit overstuffed (*L.A. Is My Lady*). *She Shot Me Down* managed to retain a classic sense of proportion and is probably the best of his '80s albums. An attempt to reunite the Rat Pack in March 1988 fell apart almost as quickly as it began when Dean Martin left the tour in Chicago. Two years later, Sammy Davis was dead.

By the '90s there were growing rumors about Sinatra's health. His stage patter seemed increasingly incoherent. There were embarrassing memory lapses (he used six teleprompters to feed him lyrics he'd sung for 40 years), as well as a public collapse on stage in Richmond, Va., in March 1994. For a moment it seemed the end was near. But he resumed touring in Tulsa, Okla., two weeks later and maintained a busy schedule through the end of the year. Making minor allowances, critics could not deny that he was delivering sublime performances.

His fast rebound from Richmond was not the first surprise from Sinatra in the '90s. When all that seemed to remain were a few farewell appearances and a final retreat from public life, he suddenly turned tail in late 1993 and produced one of the great swan songs of show-business history. After an absence of a decade from recording, his *Duets* CD not only became the biggest-selling album of his career, but also a kind of rapprochement between Sinatra and the rock generation, now old and wise enough to comprehend and embrace the man and the music it had once scorned.

Among his last major concerts was one in the United Center in Chicago before a crowd of 25,000. His daughter Nancy provided a description of this show in her 1995 book *Frank Sinatra: An American Legend*: "I had the distinct, slightly ominous feeling that this would be the last time Dad would perform in Chicago," Nancy writes. "I could tell by the fact that he was putting all the energy he possessed into each number. The applause was deafening ... almost frightening. He knew what he had done that night. The tears were still in his eyes as we drove toward the airport. It was a breathtaking moment. I was never more proud of my father than I was that night." **DB**

The Music

today, virtually the entire commercially recorded output of Frank Sinatra is available on CD, plus many more concerts and rehearsals, forming an unprecedented body of work. It runs from the 1939 Harry James sides (1935 if you count the Major Bowes air check) to his final performance on Feb. 25, 1995, a powerful, commanding 25-minute set before an invited audience in Palm Desert, Calif.

We are a lucky lot of listeners as the gods of fate or coincidence favored our greatest singer of popular songs with a long productive tenure (see accompanying discography on Page 38).

The work of Sinatra and the other singers of his generation coincided with the careers of an unparalleled community of popular composers and lyricists, from Broadway, Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley. They fed on each other's work in a symbiosis that becomes to American music what the Renaissance is to European art. The popular singers whose reputations have stood the test of time best—Crosby, Ella, Nat Cole and Sinatra—have at least one thing in common: They picked (or had picked for them) the best songs.

To understand the importance of material, compare the careers of Sinatra and Perry Como, a fine singer and an even bigger hitmaker than Sinatra in the '50s. Yet 40 years later, Sinatra's reputation looms huge while Como's has all but faded. Examine the songs they chose to sing:

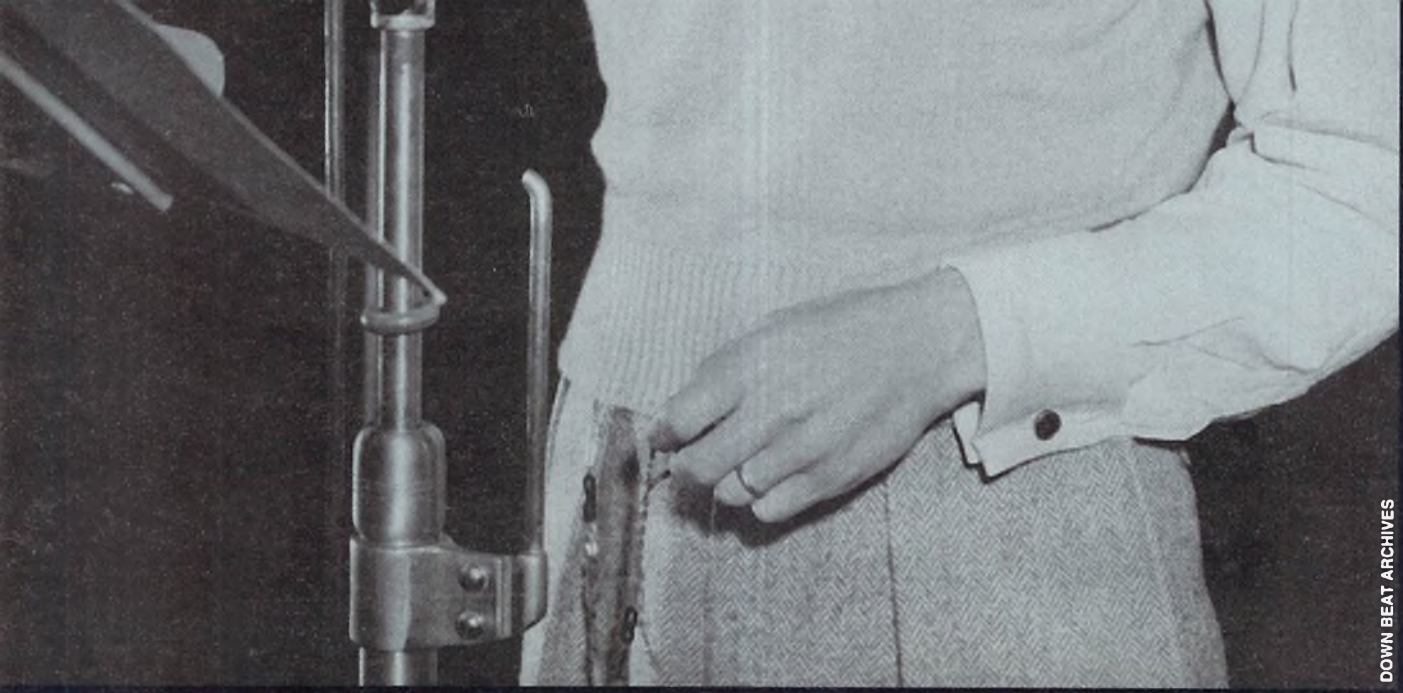
SINATRA	COMO
"Young At Heart"	"Hoop de Doo"
"Learnin' The Blues"	"Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes"
"Love and Marriage"	"Ko Ko Mo"
"All The Way"	"Hot Diggity"
"Witchcraft"	"Round and Round"
"In The Wee Small Hours"	"Juke Box Baby"
"Summer Wind"	"Kewpie Doll"
"A Very Good Year"	

Sinatra picked standards. Como did not. Singers sing Sinatra hits today because they are eminently singable. Como's are largely uninteresting novelties or insipid teenage laments. Material obviously counts.

Sinatra's prime audience may be 70-something and fraying with mortality as the century winds down. But unlike most pop icons, Sinatra's audience is layered with successive waves of listeners who came after his initial decade of fame. He continued to fascinate the young of the '50s and '60s, and even managed to appeal to the more sophisticated young of the '70s and early '80s. His stardom was never entirely demystified. He never ceased to draw press. Because he never stopped working, he added more fans to his audience than attrition subtracted.

Because the rock generation made Sinatra a preeminent symbol of their discontent, one cannot help reflecting on certain comparisons as the heat of battle cools. If we can tell anything about a generation by its most treasured cultural icons, we first have to wonder why, in the '30s and '40s, the worst of times seemed to produce a generation of indomitably romantic optimists who found their most durable reflection in Sinatra's music. The puzzling irony is that in the '50s and '60s, the best of times would breed a generation of apathetic skeptics who found something of themselves in a not-too-bright redneck named Elvis.

By John McDonough



DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES


CBS

Each is a fascinating case study in both resilience and cultural symbolism: the first, tough and sentimental to the end; the second, ultimately flabby and jaded. Sinatra thrived at a level of fame no one before him had known. Presley caved under it, flattened like a bug. Can anyone resist laughing out loud when he hears a decrepit Presley waddle through Sinatra's "My Way"?

As Mick Jagger and the Stones run through another tour and their aging fans wonder how Jagger can still do it at his age, they might consider that Sinatra was still at the peak of his musical powers around that age. Surely no one is likely to examine Jagger's vocal instrument for subtle imperfections, as has been the critics' way with Sinatra for the last two or three decades. The only question to consider with Jagger is: How long does he have the lungs to run the stage with a straight face?

We once judged aging singers by the quality of their sound and their power to artfully control a note at proper musical and emotional pitch. In the esthetic of rock and its offshoots, we judge them fit if they can sprint across a stage scaffolding a dozen times without succumbing to a coronary. The rock star is, by and large, a singer only in the sense that, say, Victor Borge is a pianist. The vocal instrument has little to do with the act, other than as trim for real goods—a pugnacious and confrontational attitude and an illusion of energy.

When Sinatra occasionally stooped to try his hand at kiddie-pop or contemporary repertoire, as on his 1974 debacle *Some Nice Things I Missed*, the results were nothing short of an abomination. "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown" is an embarrassment that easily surpasses "Mama Will Bark" from 1952. While Sinatra found a convenient scapegoat for "Mama" in Mitch Miller, then Columbia's A&R czar, by 1974 he was old enough to know better and powerful enough to make his own decisions. The real embarrassment of "Leroy Brown" is that Sinatra could not blame anyone but himself. To some, it takes its place alongside Bing Crosby's "Hey Jude" as the ultimate musical joke, the clincher in any argument over whether old geezers are fit to sing the great anthems of rock.

Pretty bad? You bet they are. But in their shamefulness they bring up quite a different, and subversive, question entirely: Are the great anthems of rock fit for any decent singer? When a performer of Sinatra's monumental achievements (or Crosby's) is brought to his knees trying to interpret contemporary chart pieces, the real joke is the complete creative destitution of serious song writing in modern American music.

It was Sinatra's good fortune to come of age in a time of great songwriting. From the beginning he was provided with material that played to his strengths. These included the combined resources of a pure musician and actor, two talents that have no discernable statues of limitation. They served equally well in youth and old age. The famous Sinatra "attitude," which has become the focal point of much admiration from rock acts such as U2, was a pose that stood apart from his music and was never intertwined with it.

Ultimately, the punches at the photographers, the backstage photos with mobsters, the slights, the offenses and the perceived arrogance will fade without his presence and celebrity to drive them. In the end, all that will be left for the writers will be the records and the music. This should be more than enough.


WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

In the immediate response to Sinatra's death, however, many smart things were said, some dumb things, and occasionally something that told us more than it intended. When a New York Times editorial declared Sinatra to be among "the three most influential male forces in 20th century pop music—the others being Elvis Presley and the Beatles," the writer became an instant symbol for the most common failing of pop music criticism: an inclination to ignore anything that happened before one's birth. The writer was evidently too young to know about Bing Crosby and to understand that there was life on earth even before Sinatra—proving that cultural commentary requires the perspective of a historian even more than the enthusiasm of a fan.

In the instant analysis and punditry that came in the wake of his death, there was also no shortage of inconsistency, which perhaps was a reflection of Sinatra's complexity. On *Dateline*, for example, radio personality Johathan Schwartz said, "To me he's the greatest interpretative musician this country has ever produced." Yet, others, including Schwartz, also emphasized how the passions of his private life gave authenticity to the lyrics he sang. "Without Ava Gardner," Schwartz said later on *The Charlie Rose Show*, "there would be no 'Wee Small Hours.'"

This idea of authenticity is an odd notion coming from Schwartz, son of composer Arthur Schwartz—a notion more fitting to rock and folk genres, but one that has become erroneously superimposed to some extent on the music of Sinatra's time. The fact that Sinatra himself exploited it in such

heroic self portraits as "It Was A Very Good Year," "My Way" and others doesn't diminish its essential subterfuge. Let's remind ourselves that Sinatra was in show business, which is a profession of illusion, even when other pros surrender to the belief that the man and the songs were indivisible. "When Sinatra sings," Liza Minelli said on *20/20*, "it's like getting a peek at the inside of the person, at the pain he's been through."

But if this theory is correct and all material must be a direct extension of the artist to be valid, then it undercuts Schwartz's own praise of Sinatra as "America's greatest interpretative artist." For there's no interpretative art if one is interpreting only one's self. That Sinatra made us believe that the songs of so many different composers were *his* personal statements was only because his skills as an actor exceeded our perceptions of the line between show business and reality.

"He had very good instincts as an actor," Robert DeNiro noted on *20/20*. "Being a singer, he had a rhythmic thing. When you work with certain actors, you play off each other, like musicians." Good point. Consider the Harold Arlen–Johnny Mercer song "One For My Baby." It was introduced by Fred Astaire in *The Sky's The Limit* (1943). But it never stuck to him as it did Sinatra because Astaire could never act the barfly. Sinatra, on the other hand, who was no more an alcoholic than Astaire, turned it into a piece of miniature theater every time he performed it, even down to the lit cigarette and woozy body english. Some assumed he was performing while drunk.

The Rat Pack was another case in point. They are remembered as bad boys. In fact, they were performers doing an act. The fun was real, of course; these men didn't have to combine to draw an audience. But if you saw more than one performance or heard the surviving recordings today, you quickly learn that the structure and rapport was the same from show to show. *Oceans 11*, the film that first brought them together, was not the exercise in '50s cool it is seen as now, but a caper film of World War II veterans using their wartime skills in Las Vegas. But today World War II has drifted beyond the reach of experience for many. So they relate it to Vegas kitsch, which it is not, and take it as a matrix of a crude hipness.

How absurdly incomprehensible it seems that a generation that venerates rock, rap, violence, misogyny and street culture in its music as art should find the worldly, adult elegance of the Rat Pack, which never vandalized a hotel suite or overdosed on crack or heroin, to be crude! Sinatra called women "chicks." Miles Davis called them "bitches." Tell me about crudeness.

"People identify with the anti-socialness of Sinatra," biographer Will Friedwald said on *Nightline*. "The hostile and aggressive side is very sexy [in a song like 'That's Life']. All of us identify with a guy who can celebrate himself and tell everybody else to screw off."

"Yet, he had a social conscious and great loyalty," said author Bill Zehme. "He was an urban hero who could take on the big wigs and take care of the little guys."

And those closest to Sinatra knew he was no thug. "I never saw the tough side [of Frank]," Nancy Reagan told Barbara Walters. "I think underneath he was really an old-fashioned Italian man who believed in old-fashioned values."

And Mia Farrow, Sinatra's third wife, added: "I think the reason he had this tough-guy thing is because he was protecting a man who was so very sensitive and fragile." **DB**

By Bill Gottlieb

Sinatra In The Studio

Photos From A Mid-Career Recording Session

back in 1947, I covered, for kicks, a Frank Sinatra Columbia record date, produced in New York at Liederkranz Hall. There was an acoustically superb studio large enough to handle the sumptuous, full-fiddle orchestra assembled by Axel Stordahl, the leader and arranger. In the band were many of the city's top studio musicians, a stimulating sight.

Dominating the scene was Sinatra, the one-time skinny kid, now filled-out and looking handsome and confident. His voice still had the seamless, carefully articulated, meaningful quality that could make everyone, even in a large audience, feel that he was sending a private message to him or her.

A happy scene? Not quite. It was widely known that Sinatra's once-meteoric career was skidding badly. Gone were personal appearances jammed with screaming, adoring fans. Where once his recordings typically topped the weekly sales charts, they now more often placed near the bottom, if they placed at all. Columbia was rumored to be ready to drop him, as was filmmaker MGM. It was also rumored that the lavish support he received at the Liederkranz date was due to obligations in a contract signed at an earlier, more positive year.

Sinatra's problems were due to the confluence of many factors, among them such unappealing personal characteristics as his ill-timed pugnacity, his reputed friendship with Mafia bosses and his blatant womanizing, all of which alienated fans and the press. There were powerful outside forces, too, including the ascendancy of rock, bebop and country music, as well as the inevitable introduction of newer singing styles, like those of belter Frankie Laine (with Elvis Presley and the Beatles waiting in the wings).

Sinatra wasn't the only one who was hurting. By 1947, the entire big band swing era was on the way out. Damage came from wartime personnel disruptions, a wartime entertainment tax, a long strike by the musicians' union against radio stations, the blossoming of TV and an economic recession that favored small, less expensive musical units. Greater emphasis was placed on singers. Where singers had once been just vocalists within a band, they became the main attractions, with the musicians relegated to accompanying roles (and with fewer of them needed). Ironically, Sinatra was undermining the swing era that had been his foundation.

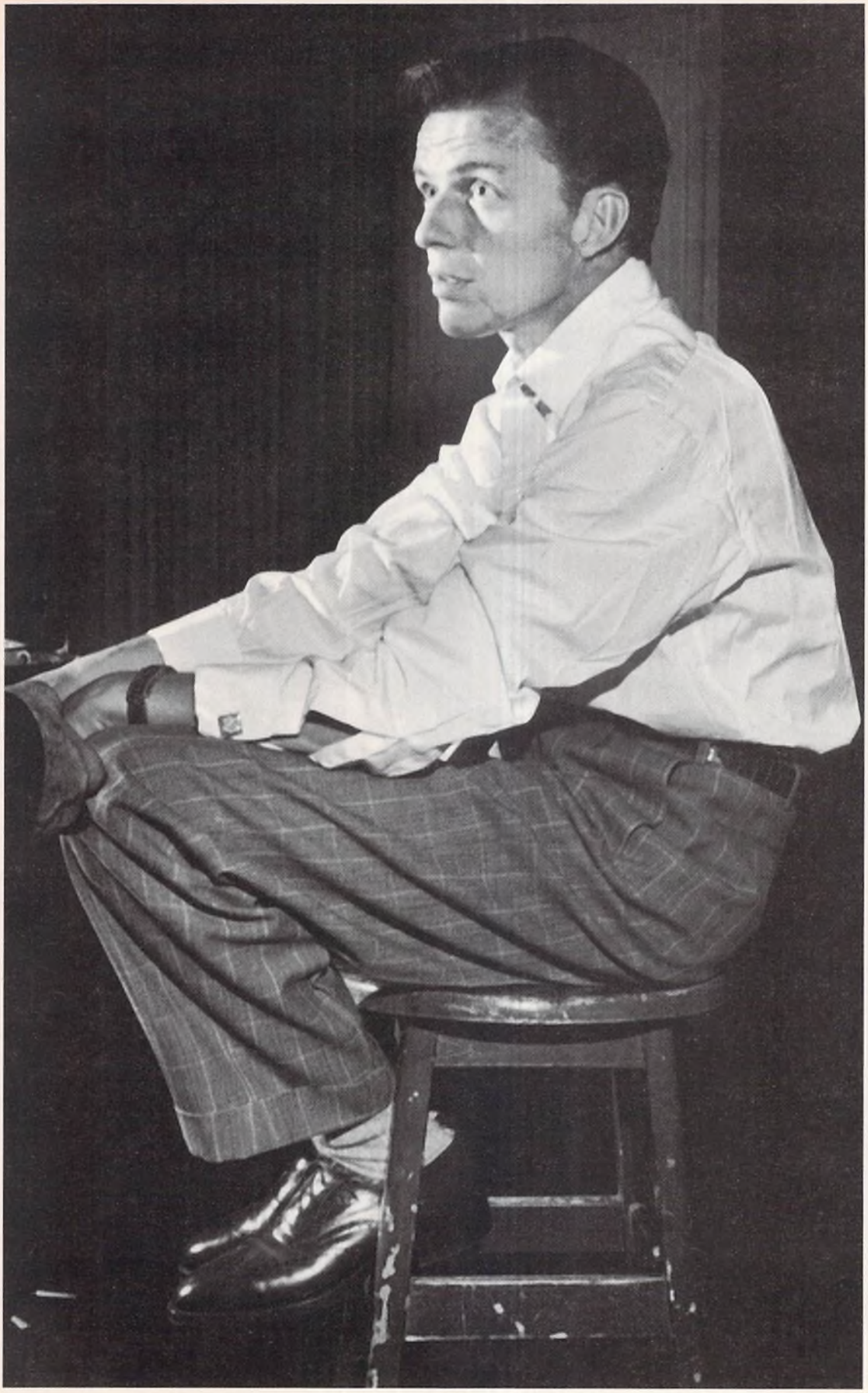
What better evidence of the new situation than the fate of Tommy Dorsey. His orchestra, the one in which Sinatra first became famous, had been enormously successful—the winner of a couple of Down Beat magazine polls as "Top Orchestra of the Year" and the creator of smash record hits such as "Marie," "Song of India," "I'll Never Smile Again" and "Boogie Woogie." But by 1947, Dorsey's grand orchestra was extinct (as were those of Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, Harry James and others). Dorsey, at one point, was reduced to attempting a solo speaking role as a radio disc jockey.

At the recording session in Liederkranz Hall, with a frequency that puzzled me, Sinatra kept interrupting "takes" to point out what he felt were mistakes, and to call for a retake. Or he'd find fault when listening to a playback. Another retake! Lots of overtime! I couldn't help thinking of the cost, especially with so large an orchestra and with the instigator as someone whose career was waning.

Did Sinatra know what he was doing? Were the mistakes he heard really there, or was this the affectations of a former star, trying to show himself and others that he was *still* the star? I asked the musicians of the orchestra. Unanimously, they assured me that when he found fault that day, he was right.

I was relieved.

For several years, Sinatra kept singing, expertly but with only modest effect on the public. Then, in 1953, he played a non-singing role in the film *From Here To Eternity*. The movie was a hit and Sinatra was a huge success, winning an Academy Award for "Best Supporting Actor." The effect on his musical career was instant and fantastic. He once again became a superstar, reaching a rare status that seems to have become not only greater than ever but impervious to setbacks. **DB**




COLUMBIA
RECORDS

Opposite page: Sinatra, tie loosened for an overtime recording session, approaches the microphone.

Above: A view of Sinatra and arranger Axel Stordahl from the violin section as they prepare to do a run-through of "Laura."

From Down Beat
August 22, 1956

THE Frank Sinatra I KNOW

By Sammy Davis Jr.

I first met Frank Sinatra about three months before he left Tommy Dorsey to go out as a single. The band was playing Detroit, and a unit called Tip, Tap and Toe was to open with them, but the unit was hung up in Canada. So they put us in for three days on the same bill as the band.

My first impressions of him were that he was a very nice, warm guy, but I was close to Buddy Rich then because I wanted to learn drums. One thing I do remember is that Frank had the lapels taken off one of his jackets because he couldn't afford a cardigan.

We met in 1945. I'd just gotten out of the army. He was doing the Old Gold and the Hit Parade shows from Hollywood at the time. I stood for tickets in the servicemen's line with my uniform on. I went backstage. He came out the stage door, and they rushed him to a car, and I yelled, "Hi, Frank."

I went two weeks in a row, and one day I caught him going into a rehearsal and asked him to sign my book. "You've been here a couple of weeks," he said. Seeing my discharge emblem, he asked why I wore the uniform in line, and I told him it was because I couldn't get tickets otherwise. Frank turned to one of his men and said, "See that there are tickets there for Sam from now on."

My dad, uncle and I were laying off around this time, so I used to go to both of his shows every week. I came to be known as the kid who hung around Frank. Frank was an inquisitive guy if he liked you, and he'd do little considerate things like once at the beginning of a rehearsal asking me if I wanted some coffee. I said, "Yuh," shaking a little and with my palms sweating.

"You're in show business?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"You work with your uncle and father?" And he asked about our act and what we were doing.

I didn't see him for a year, and when we met, he said he was going into the Capitol Theater. I told him it would be great for us to get that kind of date. He said, "Yuh." Without our knowing it, he went on to pitch us to Sid Piermont, head of Loew's booking agency. Sidney didn't know who we were, and by this time, we'd left town. All he knew was that I was a kid named Sam with a father and an uncle. He finally found us through AGVA.

We were a $300-a-week act then. "We can save on the budget," Sid told Frank.

"No," said Sinatra, "give them $1,000."

"But we can get the Nicholas Brothers for that."

"No," said Frank, "I want the kid."

That was our first major break. At that time I was doing just a six-minute hoofing act. Frank had a Thanksgiving party at the Capitol where I got up and sang. He told me I had a good voice and should sing. "You sound too much like me, but you should sing," is what he said.

After that, we became very close. I used to go to his home in California, and he'd ask how my career was going. I'd see him about once every six months. This was in the late '40s and early '50s. I was getting a hold in the business. Every time I saw him it was a real breath of spring. No matter which of his own troubles and problems he was involved with then, he always had time to talk to me about my career. He'd advise me what to do and whom to watch out for.

Frank next saw our act in 1952, the act with the impressions, etc., in it, and he flipped. "This is it," he said. "Now why don't you make records?"

"I have no style of my own," I said.

"Find one."

"Well, they tell me I sound too much like you."

"Well," said Frank, "that's not the worst thing in the world. You could sound like Dick Todd. But sing more of yourself and go for yourself. One day you'll get your future together."

Our friendship has progressed beautifully since then as we've become more and more close. After my accident, for example, he had me at his home in Palm Springs recuperating for two weeks. Our friendship now is at the point where we expect nothing of each other except the friendship itself. He's likely to call up in the middle of the night, as he did once, and claim to be the house detective.

Frank is also the man for whom I'm starting my film career. My first picture will be *The Jazz Train* for his own company. It'll start in the spring. The show has been a very popular one in England. Frank will play an army captain, and I'll be his buddy. Don Maguire, who directed Frank's *Johnny Concho*, will direct *The Jazz Train*, too.

Another film project Frank has asked me to do with him is *The Harold Arlen Story*, to be produced by Sol Siegel for MGM. The title will probably be changed to one of Arlen's hits. I'll be the guy, a college friend of Arlen, who first takes him to the Cotton Club in Harlem and intro-

duces him to the blues and blues-influenced music. My role then calls for me to go to work at the Cotton Club as a sort of composite of Cab Calloway and Bill Robinson, and Arlen will be depicted as writing material for me.

About *The Jazz Train*, Sinatra got me a lot of loot for the film, plus 25 percent of the picture. He personally made the deal for me, and that's just another indication of his generosity.

Another sign of the kind of guy Frank is is that he didn't send a wire on our Broadway opening night of *Mr. Wonderful*. Instead, he had sent a wire from Spain on the night we had the run-through. And two days after the opening, he called me.

"How did it go?" he asked. "I didn't send an opening-night wire. I knew it was going to be great." Frank was disturbed the way the critics had reacted, but he was glad I was going to stick with it. "If the people like it, you're in business," he said.

Frank is the type of man every guy from a truck driver to a Hollywood producer would be proud to call "my friend." And it's not because of his position. It would be the same thing if he were a cabbie. The man stands for everything that is good in a human being, and like a human being, he makes mistakes. But he never really hurt anyone else, only himself. Sure, he's made a lot of mistakes. But there's only been one perfect being. Frank shouldn't be condemned for having made mistakes.

I'm very proud to be considered a friend of this man. He has ways of doing things that are unbelievable. Like when Confidential came out with its story on me. Disneyland opened about the same time. I went to the Disneyland opening with Frank and his three kids. Millions of people saw it on television. That was his way of refuting Confidential without ever mentioning it.

Sinatra the singer: His is the essence of vocal style. This man has an innate quality of knowing what is good musically. I guess you can sum that up best by saying that he has musical integrity. If you remember, even in the Columbia days, Frank has always surrounded himself with guys whose musical tastes were great. Like Axel Stordahl. Even when he did a bad song, there was a particularly good quality of the presentation.

Frank is now in an enviable position—he can record whatever he wants, and he makes a lot of records. As for being influenced by him, as one guy said, "It's good sense to sound like Sinatra because he sounds better than any other singer."

Another thing about Frank is that you can listen to him all night, and he never tires on your ears. That's why he's so successful an album seller.

I have a complete collection of Sinatra. On the coast when we get together, I take a Dorsey record from the '40s and compare it with one of his current releases. Even then you can see the beginning of what he has now.

He's painstaking about his recordings. Nelson Riddle doesn't write a note that Frank doesn't eventually change one way or another. He'll do 20 takes if he feels it isn't the way he wants it. He'll stay all day to get *one* ready. There was a session for "Wee Small Hours." It was 3 a.m., and he was still going over certain things, listening to the playback, and shaking his head, saying, "No."

He was there until dawn until he got what he wanted. He hears the smallest detail. It's not that he doesn't trust Riddle, but there are certain things he wants done his way. It was Frank, incidentally, who selected Nelson for his dates. Riddle has always been sort of a freelance artist. Nelson started doing things for Nat Cole, and Frank heard them. That's the way I think it happened.

Frank very rarely discusses his own singing, but he's ready, willing and able to tell you about other singers.

As for whether Frank is a jazz singer, he certainly has a feeling for jazz. Remember the swinging thing he did for Dorsey, "Oh, Look At Me Now" and all the others since? Look, if I were to be around Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud for 30 years, some Shakespearean knowledge would have to rub off on me if I were a good student and listener. Now, Frank was with James and Dorsey in the years when they had bands that had jazz soloists and a jazz feel, and it would be impossible for a lot of that not to have rubbed off.

Buddy Rich, for example, was an influence. Of course, he was also a target once, too. Frank didn't like the way Buddy would beat the drums sometimes when he was singing. Once in Detroit, Frank was singing "This Love Of Mine," and Buddy was talking in the back of the bandstand. "Sh-sh-sh," went Frank.

"What did he go 'sh' about?" asked Rich.

Dorsey said at this point, "Keep it quiet, Buddy."

So Rich paradiddled instead. Frank went into the wings and from there on to the back of the stand, and he knocked Buddy off the drums. But they're very good friends now, and it was Frank who financed Buddy's first band.

So to sum up Frank as a singer, I would say Frank has the musical integrity to do what he feels like doing, and he does it all so very well that he's the musical end. **DB**

Sammy Davis Jr.

DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

the Virtuoso

Strip away the Hollywood glamor, the lady-killer reputation, the ring-a-ding-ding shenanigans, and you'll find something far more important at the heart of Frank Sinatra's turbulent life: the work of a virtuoso musician.

In other words, though it's easy enough to lump Sinatra in with various high-living, high-rolling singers of his day—from fellow Rat Packers Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. to Vegas denizens Wayne Newton and Vic Damone—Sinatra's music endures longer, and not simply because of the man's notoriety. Rather, it was Sinatra's natural gifts and hard-won achievements as a musician that made all the rest possible.

From his first recordings in 1939 to his last in 1994, Sinatra used a good, though not neccessarily great, instrument to achieve profound artistic results. It took more than an adept vocalist to achieve so many stylistic innovations (in swing, ballads, bossa nova and other idioms), and only a restlessly inventive and deeply accomplished musician could have done it.

Admittedly, Sinatra from the start was a skilled crooner, able to meet Bing Crosby on his own dulcet-voiced terms. As early as the 1939 recordings, there's no doubt that Young Blue Eyes had the accuracy of pitch and felicitous way with phrase to stand among the elite singers of the pre-World War II era.

"When I was a kid, and Sinatra was singing with Tommy Dorsey, I loved him then," says Ray Charles, whom Sinatra once dubbed "the only genius in this business." "All the teeny boppers just loved Sinatra, but I was always listening to the way he controlled his voice, the way he controlled notes. You could tell that this guy was into what he was doing. I wasn't looking at him like the teenagers; I was looking at him like a musician, so I was paying attention to what he did and how he did it. I tried to pick him apart, especially from a musical point of view, but there was nothing you could find wrong with what he was doing. Nothing."

But Sinatra himself found something wrong with what he was doing, at least stylistically. Though he often conceded that Crosby was his early hero, the fiercely competitive younger singer also yearned to step far beyond Crosby's shadow.


Harry "Sweets" Edison: Sinatra's harmon-muted secret weapon

"From the beginning, I was determined to find a different sound," Sinatra said in a 1990 Chicago Tribune interview. "Bing was the crooner, and nobody could compare, but I could be different."

Furthermore, Sinatra—though unable to read music—instinctively knew that he needed to develop the physical side of his instrument in order to accomplish artistic breakthroughs he had not yet conceived.

"It was heaven when I joined Tommy Dorsey's band," he said. "I didn't think anything could ever be better. I had always admired his apparently seamless playing, and I wanted to capture that in my singing. Sitting on the stage between my numbers, I studied Tommy, and over the months realized

By Howard Reich

he took very small, subtle breaths out of the side of his mouth. Of course, he had the trombone and his hand to hide the movement. It was a revelation, and over time I was able to do the same thing Tommy did with the trombone to sneak in air to vary my phrasing. I also swam laps in hotel pools—and continue to do so—to build up lung capacity, which increases my ability to lengthen phrases."

Already, Sinatra was laying the technical groundwork for the ballad innovations of the '50s, unveiled in recordings such as *In The Wee Small Hours* (1955) and *(Frank Sinatra Sings For) Only the Lonely* (1958). If the incomparably long lines that he unspooled in these and subsequent recordings brought an operatic intensity to his singing, he nevertheless sounded nothing like the European-tinged crooners of an earlier day.

Blue Eyes and Bing: beyond the shadow

DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

In part, that was due to Sinatra's distinctly American approach to rhythm. "He came from the big band era, and Dorsey and most of the bands leaned on the backbeat—on two and four," says Bill Miller, Sinatra's pianist for most of the last four decades of the singer's career. "And that's what they instilled in him over the years. To the very end, he preferred that slight accent on two and four, and it worked."

Indeed, "If Frank Sinatra belonged to one section of the orchestra, it was the rhythm section," says Gregg Field, who played drums for Sinatra briefly in 1981 and from 1991 to the end of the singer's performing career, in '95. "That's where he lived, even on the ballads. There was such a sense of pulse within his ballads. And he needed the rhythm section to continue the rhythmic spark and momentum even when he was singing a ballad. The momentum didn't let down at all."

Beyond rhythm, Sinatra pushed past Crosby's manner by declining to use very much vibrato until the final moments of a note. The technique represented the antithesis of the crooner's art, and it defined Sinatra's ballad singing through the end of his career.

"That was his thing—no vibrato until the end of the phrase, that was real important to him," says Mike Smith, who played winds in Sinatra's bands from 1988 to the end. "I consider him the originator of that style. It reminds me of Miles [Davis], who would also carry a melody across the bar lines, just like Frank always did." Indeed, Davis, in his memoirs, credited Sinatra as a key influence in matters of phrasing.

To the sublime legato technique and irrepressible swing rhythm, Sinatra added a keen sense of pitch.

"Sinatra didn't just sing in tune, he had perfect pitch," says Harry "Sweets" Edison, whose harmon-muted trumpet adds shimmering color to many of Sinatra's studio recordings, beginning with *In The Wee Small Hours*. "He didn't have to hear the [first] note that he would sing. He could just start off and hit it, bam, just like that."

Obviously, perfect pitch is not essential to great musicianship—well-developed relative pitch serves most musicians just fine. But Sinatra's mastery of pitch sheds light on his ability to achieve exceptional results in the recording studio. Regardless of how dense or harmonically complex his orchestrations might have been, Sinatra's pitch was unwaveringly accurate, an impressive accomplishment considering that he insisted on recording with the band roaring behind him (not via headphones in the recording booth) and that he loathed multiple takes.

Thanks to his control of pitch and line, in other words, Sinatra could cut a definitive version of a tune in the first or second take, thereby preserving the freshness and spontaneity on which his art always thrived.

"Working with Sinatra in the recording studio was like nothing I've ever seen," remembers Field, who played drums on *Duets* and *Duets II*. "The first night, Frank showed up and left—he didn't sing a note. The second night, he came in and claimed that his voice was giving him some problems. My personal feeling is that he hadn't been in the studio in about 10 years and was probably a little nervous. The third night he came in, he did something I've never seen: He recorded nine songs in three hours. It was incredible.

"He usually would do one take, maybe two, and he would not ask for a playback unless he thought he had it. He wouldn't say, 'Let me hear that back,' and then say, 'No, I don't like that, let me do it over.' It was a big shock, because the first thing that I recorded with him was 'Come Fly With Me,' and we did one take on it. I'm expecting to do another take, and suddenly I hear on the [head]phones, 'Next.'"

Above all, though, Sinatra distinguished himself as a musician through

They all loved Frank: Joe Lovano (top), Ray Charles, Gregg Field

> "When Sinatra sang with different bands and players, his feelings took shape with the musicians around him."
>
> —Joe Lovano

his uncanny talent for redefining himself to suit the musical occasion. The singer crooned in the '30s, learned to swing in the '40s, created profound balladry in the '50s and produced exquisitely understated and thoroughly authentic bossa nova singing in the '60s. Sinatra, in other words, perpetually adapted to the setting.

"When Sinatra sang with different bands and players, his feelings took shape with the musicians around him," says Joe Lovano, who tipped his hat to the singer with his recording *Celebrating Sinatra* (Blue Note). "That's the essence of jazz as far as I'm concerned. The way he sang within the [arranger] Neal Hefti sound, for instance, was different than the way he sounded when there were strings accompanying him. That's why most of the singers who try to copy him, they can maybe try to imitate a style, but they couldn't capture that feeling, that mood he could create."

It was a mood Sinatra invented on the spot, reacting to the players, the arrangements, the audience, the emotional temperature of the setting and of the singer himself. The familiar repertoire and the lack of melodic embellishment may have led some listeners to believe Sinatra's performances essentially were set in stone, but, in fact, no two performances were alike. Sinatra improvised freely—at least when it came to phrasing, rhythm, tempo, color and attack.

"In rehearsal, he would sing all the way through a song, he would get into it and let the orchestra know, say, to pull back here—he's going to sing this part real slow," remembers Smith. "But then during the performance, it could be totally different. The rubato section that he had pulled way, way back during rehearsal, he might rush through during performance. So you had to watch, to be really on your toes. He sang just for the moment."

Or, as Field puts it, "He allowed himself to react. He operated on instinct. There were certain things I could almost count on him always doing, but for the most part it was a very spontaneous thing that we created on stage. You listened to where Frank sang, where he heard the rhythm of the song, and then you reacted to it. In other words, if we heard him put beat one in a particular location, that told us where we needed to lay beat two. It took a conductor that really knew what he was doing to be able to follow the old man. And though Frank [Sinatra] Jr. got the job because he was Frank Jr., he kept the job because he was a very good conductor, and nobody knew Frank Sinatra's music as well as Frank Jr."

As anyone who attended Sinatra's concerts at the end of his career knows, they often were bittersweet affairs, with the great singer often struggling to perform despite somewhat diminished vocal resources. Yet on a good night, such as Sinatra's stunning farewell performance to Chicago at the United Center in October 1994, the man could muster the sonic force, rhythmic fury and interpretive power of old.

"He was really on top of the game in that concert, complete command," remembers Smith, who played that night. "He was like a prizefighter who suddenly has his strength back. But even on nights when his instrument wasn't up to par, he had so much style and timing and musicianship that it still sounded great. In fact, I think he still could have kept performing, but it got harder for him when his hearing started to get a little shaky. Those are the things, in fact, that made him retire. His [failing] hearing was bothering him, and I know it because he used to tell us it was bothering him, just not being able to hear as well as he wanted to."

No longer able to nail a pitch dead-on every time, often clipping phrases short when he couldn't sustain a note, Sinatra was witnessing the diminishment of his fabled skills. Perhaps it was no surprise, then, that he would stop performing in '95, after a final, private performance in Palm Springs, Calif.

"On his last performance, unbelievably, he did seven or eight songs, and sang them all perfectly, exactly as they were supposed to be sung," remembers pianist Miller. "And everybody [in the band] kind of looked at each other like, 'Wow, maybe he's OK, maybe he's got it back.'"

Sinatra never again would sing in public, but to those who performed and recorded with him, the man's musicianship will not be forgotten.

"He was a total musician, a total natural," says Smith. "There wasn't any formal training there, but he knew exactly what he wanted."

And he knew how to get it. **DB**

Frank Sinatra's first Down Beat cover, at age 27

March 25, 1953

HOKEY TUNES 'BUG' FRANK

"Do I still think it's hard to find a decent new pop tune these days?" echoed Frank Sinatra. "Man, it's worse than ever. These trick songs are coming out of my ears. But the situation isn't hopeless.

"First of all, we've got to convince the accepted songwriters to come out of hiding and write again. The way things are now, they feel they'd be wasting their time. Another way is to record and revive more of the standards—like "The Birth Of The Blues" on my last release—that way we can at least balance the hokey tunes. It's murder now.

"And I don't think the reason for the low caliber is the public primarily. They're not that square. They certainly weren't five and 10 years ago when at least four out of five of the first 10 on the Hit Parade were good tunes.

"I think it's all part of a cycle—including the echo chambers and the other gimmicks—that will exhaust itself. Everybody now wants to take the easiest way out, but eventually the people who have something to say musically will be the ones who survive.

"Future plans? Well, I've been awarded the wonderful part of Maggio in the film version *From Here to Eternity*. Montgomery Clift, Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr will be in the cast, and Fred Zinnemann will direct. I expect to be making more pictures than before but not all straight dramatic tones. Roles like this don't come along that often."


HERMAN LEONARD

Sinatra then spoke long and feelingly about the band business and the prospect of its full-scale revival. "As you know, the band business was at its height when I was with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey. It was great training for me. I learned about tempos—which ones for what tunes—and how to mix them up and how to pace a show.

"Somebody—Tony Bennett, I think—said I was the first singer to make it on a popular-enough kick so that the way was cleared for other singers. Well, whether that's so or not, it's true that the emphasis on singing certainly hurt the band business. But inflation had a lot to do with it, too. The bands began to ask for higher guarantees, the promoters passed the increased cost on to the kids, and they couldn't afford it.

"I'd surely like to see the bands come back. One way would be to get men like Norvo and Goodman (and I'm glad to hear about his tour), who know how to put a band together, to go on the road. After all, there are only a handful of real dance bands on the road now, so how can you hope to make the kids dance-conscious?

"I know it's a problem. It's hard to get good sidemen to go on the road, what with studio jobs and the like. And Kenton may have a point when he says the kids have forgotten how to dance. Because there hasn't been enough sound dance music to which they could learn. They're so busy listening to gimmick records without any good dance music on them.

"There don't seem to be any parties any more, like when I was a kid, where we used to dance to records or go out to dance to bands. But if the bands are to come back, Les Brown is the model. Not this 55-piece concert band stuff. Les has stayed with dance music all along. But your guess is as good as mine as to whether they'll come back. This is a crazy business."

—Nat Hentoff

FRANKIE FANS MAKE POOR WIVES

March 26, 1947

A recent report from San Francisco alleges that "teenage girls who get all fluttery over Frank Sinatra's voice are a bad marriage risk and may need treatment." At least that's the way Alice La Vere, a coast psychologist, has it figured.

She says that girls who profess to find romance in the epicene (common to both sexes) voice of crooners are really running away from sexual truth.

The kids, she added, are subconsciously driven by the desire to escape what seems gross and terrifying in males. They find a symbol of purity and sexlessness in crooners with choir boy voices.

Down Beat can remember when similar barbs were tossed at the gals in the '30s when they fell all over a couple young sprouts named Bing Crosby and Russ Columbo. And yet, these same frustrated little dolls grew up to be a pretty procreative generation if birthrate figures can be used as a yardstick.

Come now, Miss La Vere, leave us not to kid the kiddies into a phoney phobia about their idol. **DB**


DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

Sinatra: a symbol of purity and sexlessness?

June 9, 1960

Sinatra/Buddy Rich Enmity

The Dorsey band was a group loaded with temperament. Tommy himself, never reluctant to say it as he saw it, was involved in his intermittent fights with brother Jimmy. And when Frank Sinatra joined the band, the combination became really explosive. Sinatra, capable of being every bit as salty as Buddy Rich, didn't always enjoy the drummer's sense of humor.

On one occasion, Rich talked a girl into approaching Sinatra for his autograph as he was coming off the stand on New York's Astor Roof. Sinatra gave it to her. And the girl, carefully coached by Rich, said, "Gee, thanks. Now if I can get two more of these, I can trade them for one Bob Eberly." Sinatra, seeing Rich laughing on the sidelines, was furious.

The Sinatra-Rich enmity inevitably came to a head—on the street one night, in front of an Automat in New York. The battle made headlines in the trade press, which duly reported that Buddy lost a couple of teeth in the fight. The fight must have been to a draw, since history does not record a winner.

Somewhere along the line, the animosity between the two rugged individualists—very much alike in temperament, according to some of those who knew them both—faded out. By 1945, Sinatra and Rich were friendly enough that the singer put up $25,000 to help Buddy launch his first big band, and Sinatra reportedly was the first person to be sufficiently impressed by Buddy's singing to urge him to go ahead with it. The two are good friends still. When Rich suffered his heart attack, Sinatra was the first to show his concern. Rich calls Sinatra "the greatest personality show business has ever known." —*George Hoefer*

Sinatra and Buddy Rich were friendly enough by the mid-'40s, despite their publicized animosity, to appear together on the cover of Down Beat.

June 1, 1955

Frank Sinatra

In The Wee Small Hours

Capitol 12" LP W-581

★★★★★

A real bonus this time for Sinatra enthusiasts. Frank is in wonderful form, and creates exactly the mood the album title implies as he caresses and lends distinction to 16 superb songs.

A few of them have been recorded previously by Sinatra for other labels, and it is interesting to make comparisons of the different versions. Although his voice has dropped in pitch over the last decade, it has not lost its intensity, and Sinatra has polished the edges of his phrasing to the point where it becomes difficult to conceive of anyone else doing a tune after he finishes it.

This is superb music—the type that cannot be affected by current fads. The package should be a big seller for years. **DB**

In The Wee Small Hours—*In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning; Mood Indigo; Glad To Be Unhappy; I Get Along Without You Very Well; Deep In A Dream; I See Your Face Before Me; Can't We Be Friends?; When Your Lover Has Gone; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Last Night When We Were Young; I'll Be Around; Ill Wind; It Never Entered My Mind; Dancing On The Ceiling; I'll Never Be The Same; This Love Of Mine.*

March 11, 1953

A charitable Sinatra, shown here plugging for the March of Dimes

Sinatra's Global Charity Tour Highly Successful

When his plane touched down at Los Angeles' International Airport after a globe-girdling tour of concerts for the benefit of underprivileged children, Frank Sinatra's box-office score for the charities had risen to $1.2 million.

During the singer's seven-week trip, he staged a total of 30 shows in Japan, Hong Kong, Israel, Greece, Italy, England, France and Monaco.

Accompanying Sinatra was a hand-picked group of Hollywood musicians under the direction of his pianist, Bill Miller. The sextet included Harry Klee, reeds; Emil Richards, vibraharp; Al Viola, guitar; Ralph Pena, bass; and Irv Cottler, drums. **DB**

January 25, 1968

A Swinging Birthday: Chairman Meets Duke

Frank Sinatra spent his 52nd birthday, Dec. 12, in excellent company. Having worked and recorded successfully with Count Basie, the singer realized a wish of long standing—to collaborate with another great band, that of Duke Ellington.

The summit meeting took place in Hollywood. Two ringers were added to the ducal trumpet section: Al Porcino, and Sinatra's favorite obbligatist, Harry (Sweets) Edison

Billy May arranged the music, which consisted of only eight selections, allowing for some stretching out by the instrumentalists. Following the date, there were two birthday cakes and plenty of champagne for all. The album will be issued on Reprise. **DB**

September 15, 1943

AGENCY PUTS $60,000 ON LINE

The Swami of Swoon is out of escrow at last, following the filing of a series of "I-want-my-cut" suits, all of which were settled at conference tables here, over which attorneys huddled as the man who tosses the well known Sinatrance prepared to embark on his movie career at RKO.

The newspaper stories said that Frankie is his own boss again, after buying out the interest held by Tommy Dorsey and Leonard Vannerson for a sum placed at $60,000.

What actually appears to have happened is this: MCA, which has had longing eyes on the Great Swooner for some time, negotiated a re-financing deal in which the Stein agency put up all or part cash to buy out the Dorsey-Vannerson interest. (RKO is also said to have put up some money, and Frankie, himself, may have chipped in with some of the dough to get himself out of the hock, but the singer couldn't have put up more than a few thousand at most.)

However, Tommy Rockwell's General Amusement Corporation is still in there for 10 percent. Under the terms of the deal as it now stands, GAC will continue to share in Sinatra's earnings for the balance of the Sinatra-GAC contract.

The actual handling of Sinatra has been taken over by MCA. MCA execs claim that the agency will "earn nothing on Sinatra" except the "prestige of handling him" until his GAC pact expires. It is believed that GAC figures only in the singer's RKO deal. **DB**

March 11, 1953

Sinatra In Deejay Stint

On Monday afternoon, Jan. 26, Frank Sinatra became a disc jockey for the first time, taking over the Norm Prescott show on WORL—commercials and all. Sinatra displayed an often electric ad lib wit and a healthy detestation of the clichés of copywriters.

In reading a wine commercial, Frankie read warmly of the large, luscious grapes whence the wine came. Abandoning the script, Sinatra advised the listeners, "Dig those grapes. Forget the wine. Rush out and pick up on some grapes."

His musical taste—on the records he selected—was flawless from Ella's "World On A String" to Walter Huston's "September Song."

At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour stint, a well-wisher in the studio suggested Sinatra could easily become a successful disc jockey if his singing voice ever gave out. Frankie's answer was an eloquent grimace. **DB**

November 1, 1945

Sinatra Flicker On Intolerance A Fine Attempt

Flickerville's timid but not unworthy attempt to do something about racial intolerance—*The House I Live In*—goes into general release this month. It is one picture to be seen, to be talked about, to be understood.

It is a musical short in which Frank Sinatra enacts the real-life role he has been doing before audiences of high school kids and youth organizations—that of torch-bearer in the cause of common sense and decency in race relations.

As a production, the short is not an inspired work of motion picture art. Its value lies in just one element: the unquestionable sincerity of this chap Sinatra, a sincerity that shines through his performance like a clear ray of light.

There is not a single allusion to the Negro problem in the picture, which is undoubtedly better than the usual and inevitable Hollywood sop to the issue. It was Sinatra himself who insisted that if the Negro factor could not be dealt with frankly, it should be eliminated entirely, that a complete and conspicuous omission would be a more honest way to deal with the matter than the usual run-around tactics.

Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and others plan to do shorts in line with Sinatra's trail-blazer if the reaction is satisfactory. In this lies the pic's greatest promise. It also proves that Frank Sinatra is doing much more than just knocking out the bobby-sox crowd. **DB**

Sweeping Through The Polls

Over the course of 25 years, from 1941–'66, Sinatra collected 24 Down Beat awards from the Readers and Critics polls. The consummate fan favorite, he swept the Male Singer of the Year award in the Readers Poll

from 1954–'62, only to be knocked from his nine-year perch in 1963 by Ray Charles in a close 1,856 to 1,719 vote.

But in typical Sinatra fashion, there was no holding him down for long, as he returned to his comfortable position atop the poll for two more years in '65 and '66.

Male Singer of the Year—Readers Poll

1941, 1942, 1943, 1946, 1947, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960 (Japan also), 1961 (Japan also), 1962, 1965, 1966

Personality of the Year, Popular—Readers Poll

1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959

Male Singer Of The Year—Critics Poll

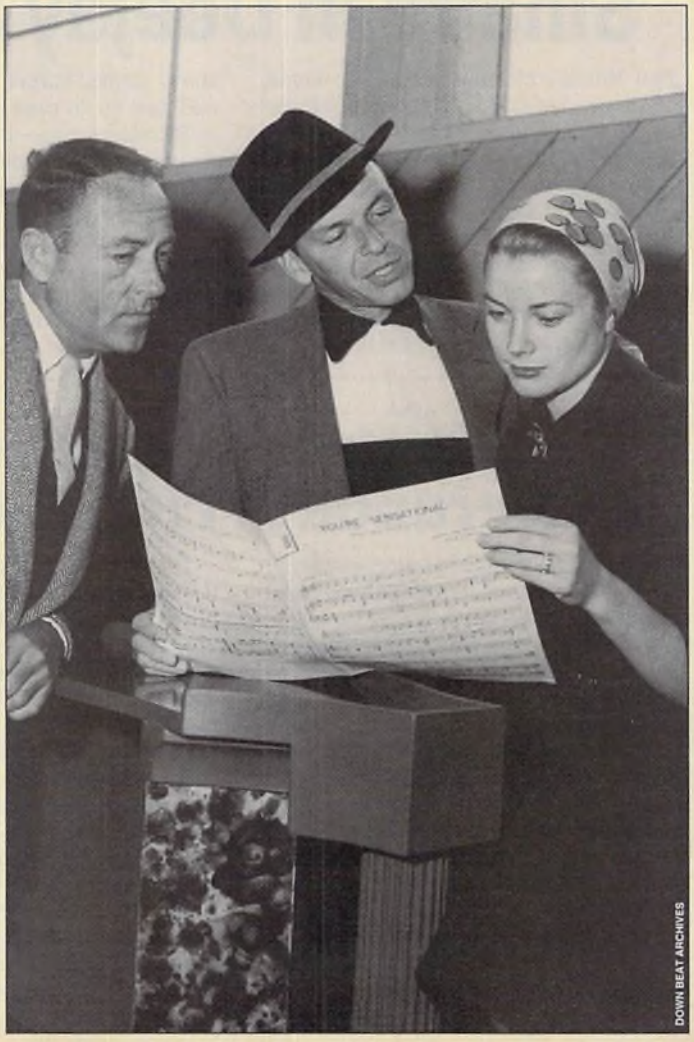
1955, 1957 —*ed.*

Sinatra with arranger Nelson Riddle during a recording session

with Ella Fitzgerald

with Nat "King" Cole

with Doris Day in *Young At Heart*



with Charles Walter and Grace Kelly, rehearsing for *High Society*

May 5, 1954

Sinatra Back On Top Via Oscar & Recent Hit Discs

The last lap of the remarkable Sinatra comeback journey was completed last month when Frank, grinning happily, skipped down the center aisle of Hollywood's Pantages theater to accept his Academy Award. He had arrived all over again, and the millions who watched the TV presentation knew it.

So did the hardened, tradewise theater audience—a group never given to polite applause, but which roared its obvious pleasure in what turned out to be the biggest demonstration of the evening.

Yet it was only a year ago that many of these same observers thought Frank was all but washed up—finished on records, in Hollywood and television.

Frank's chances of getting any film work were less than slight after the dismal flop of his *Meet Danny Wilson*. He also was without his TV show, another in the line of victims who had been thrown in the time slot opposite a Milton Berle in his zenith.

Frankly speaking, Frankie Sinatra was no sensational piece of merchandise. Almost any bookmaker would have given you 4 to 1 that the Voice had had it.

But Frank wouldn't let himself be counted out. He began his move on several fronts, and each action proved to be supremely astute.

He left Columbia, where he had felt for some time that he wasn't being properly promoted or handled. Capitol jumped at the chance to grab him, and the day his first two sides hit the disc jockeys, his wax comeback was on its way. First came "I've Got The World On A String," backed by the warmly sung "My One and Only Love." Then "South Of The Border" and "From Here To Eternity." Then the superbly done album *Songs For Young Lovers*, followed almost immediately by the single side that may yet be the first Sinatra record to hit a million in sales, "Young At Heart." The Voice is once more entrenched among the ranks of the top personalities on records.

His film career, which hit a peak in 1945 with *Anchors Aweigh* (co-starring Gene Kelly), was moving nowhere in a large hurry. No one really wanted him. When he heard that clearance finally had been granted Columbia Pictures to shoot *From Here To Eternity*, Sinatra cajoled and argued with film execs until he was tested. And he got the role, despite the fact that some 20 prominent actors also tested for it, and the role didn't call for a note of singing—Frank was hired as an actor.

The membership of the Academy adjudged his portrayal to be of award-winning caliber. And though he previously had received a special Oscar from the Academy in 1945 for his *The House I Live In*, this was the big one, the one that wrapped it up.

Frank's at the top again. He was waiting at presstime for shooting to begin on *Pink Tights* (supposedly set to go as soon as Marilyn Monroe quits honeymooning), his asking price for TV guest shots and night club stints is once more back in the Holy Smokes bracket, and the intelligent direction thus far of his Capitol recordings indicates that his music will be a staple in the diet of many record buyers for a long time to come.

The guy has come of age. No longer a youngster in a floppy bow tie and a sport coat padded out to here who had kids screaming every time he glissed a note, he is now a completely poised 36-year-old who walks out on a nitery floor and performs to hushed audiences—a polished performer who is just beginning to realize and capitalize on his full potential. Full-blown success has come to Sinatra twice. This time it should stick. —*Jack Tracy*

Vaults Of Sinatra

A crossfire of elegant reissues over the last few years has brought the music of Frank Sinatra together, some so elaborately packaged that they are more like pieces of furniture than objects of recorded art. From RCA there is the complete Sinatra–Dorsey output. In the finest restorations yet achieved, the singer's voice acquires an astonishing intimacy that draws you in close and makes clear how he turned romantic crooning into whispered pillow talk ("Violets For Your Furs").

We also get an abundance of Tommy Dorsey's trombone, which is worth at least as much attention as the singing because in it lies the matrix on which the singing was to mature. Dorsey worked wonders on a melody by gliding over its natural fault lines and endowing it with a long, unbroken flow. Sinatra understood these implications for a singer. Forget what you've heard about Billie Holiday influencing his style. He may have been a fan, but he wasn't a student. Sinatra learned his famous phrasing at the bell of Dorsey's trombone. Biographer Will Friedwald, who emerges as the singer's Boswell in these box sets, gives details in his album notes, and in the book *The Song Is You*, his excellent 1995 study of Sinatra's musicology.

DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

Columbia covers the brief Harry James period on Brunswick in a single CD, augmented by nine broadcast performances that catch Sinatra in some wonderfully relaxed renditions ("Wishing Will Make It So," "If I Didn't Care"). Picking up after the Dorsey era, Columbia continues through the war years and the beginning of the Sinatra/Stordahl partnership with a two-CD box set of V-Disc sides made for military distribution. It segues naturally into the main commercial output of the Columbia decade (1943–'52), which is gathered in a 12-CD compilation.

Capitol restored its library of Sinatra albums and singles covering 1953–'62 in various compilations, but Warner Bros. went the limit with a 20-CD, limited edition of 20,000, compilation packed in a padded suitcase (at a cost of $499). —*J.M.*

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Harry James
HARRY JAMES AND HIS ORCHESTRA FEATURING FRANK SINATRA—Columbia/Legacy 66377

with Tommy Dorsey
THE SONG IS YOU—RCA 66353
I'LL BE SEEING YOU—RCA 66427

with Axel Stordahl
THE "V" DISCS—Columbia/Legacy 66135
THE COLUMBIA YEARS—Columbia/Legacy 12-48673
POINT OF NO RETURN—Capitol 748334

with Nelson Riddle
IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS—Capitol 96826
SONGS FOR SWINGIN' LOVERS—Capitol 46570
ONLY THE LONELY—Capitol 48471
NICE 'N EASY—Capitol 96827
SONGS FOR YOUNG LOVERS/SWING EASY—Capitol 48470
A SWINGIN' AFFAIR—Capitol 94518
SINATRA'S SWINGIN' SESSION!!!—Capitol 46573
THE CONCERT SINATRA—Reprise 1009
MOONLIGHT SINATRA—Reprise 1018

with Billy May
COME FLY WITH ME—Capitol 48469
COME DANCE WITH ME—Capitol 48468
SINATRA SWINGS—Reprise 1002
TRILOGY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE—Reprise 2300

with Gordon Jenkins
ALL ALONE—Reprise 27022
SEPTEMBER OF MY YEARS—Reprise 46946
SHE SHOT ME DOWN—Reprise 2305

with Count Basie/Neal Hefti/Quincy Jones
SINATRA & BASIE—Reprise 1008
IT MIGHT AS WELL BE SWING—Reprise 1012
SINATRA & *SWINGIN' BRASS*—Reprise 27021
SINATRA AT THE SANDS—Reprise 46947

other Sinatra
DUETS—Capitol 89611
DUETS II—Capitol 28103
RING-A-DING DING!—Reprise 46933
I REMEMBER TOMMY—Reprise 45267
SINATRA & SEXTET: LIVE IN PARIS—Reprise 45487
THE CAPITOL YEARS—Capitol 94317
THE REPRISE COLLECTION—Reprise 26340
THE COMPLETE STUDIO RECORDINGS—Reprise 46013
FRANCIS ALBERT SINATRA & ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM—Reprise 46948
SINATRA & COMPANY—Reprise 1033
FRANCIS A. & EDWARD K.—Reprise 1024 (with Duke Ellington)
STRANGERS IN THE NIGHT—Reprise 1017
L.A. IS MY LADY—Japanese Qwest/Warner Bros. 3604

with the Rat Pack
AT THE VILLA VENICE, CHICAGO—Jazz Hour 1033/34

Rare, Gourmet Sinatra

If you feel a bit caged in endless repackagings of the same old stuff, you should consider contacting the International Sinatra Society. It is the best source of rare, gourmet Sinatra CDs not available through normal retail channels.

Take the *Inside* series, for example, on Artisan; or *From The Vaults* on Audio Archive. These offer trial-and-error studio work behind familiar masterpieces. We eavesdrop on an unguarded Sinatra through 10 takes as he battles the chromatic demons of "It Gets Lonely Early" (1965). We hear him adjust "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" (1966) to avoid a low note in the first bar. Through the goofs, false starts, conversations and crafting of details, the atmosphere remains astonishingly civil, good-natured, even jovial. No four-letter words or temperament, just professionalism. The CDs reflect accurately on the "real" Sinatra. They are, unfortunately, expensive; and most are available in limited editions.

The Society also offers a treasure of fresh concert, nightclub, film and television material from the '40s through the '90s issued from labels all over the world. Among the essentials is the two-CD *At The Villa Venice, Chicago*, the definitive Sinatra/Martin/Davis performance not easily available through mainstream retail outlets. The Society is also the only source for *The Last Performance*, Sinatra's terrific, 25-minute set recorded during his Celebrity Golf Gala in February 1995.

The Frank Sinatra Society publishes a magazine of Sinatra news every couple of months, which includes a catalog of available material. For further information: P.O. Box 7176, Lakeland, FL 33807-7176; (941) 646-7650. —*J.M.*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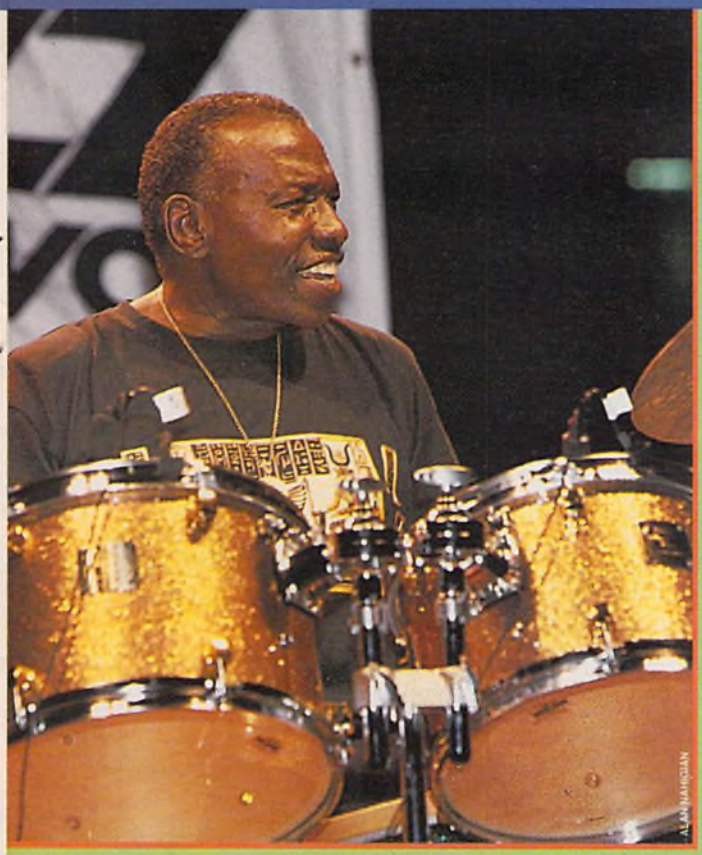


Free Reign

The 46th Annual Down Beat International Critics Poll

When it comes to Down Beat polls, the critics offer a different slant than the readers. Our writers and reviewers act as talent scouts of sorts: They not only tell us which artists are in peak form, but who's up-and-coming as well.

At the top of the heap for this year's Down Beat International Critics Poll sits Elvin Jones, whom we welcome into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Jones, who at 70 can still crush you with a bear hug, has risen through the Hall of Fame voting ranks in recent years and shows no sign of slowing the tempo now that he's in.

The poll caps a banner year for another Down Beat Hall of Famer, Ornette Coleman, voted Jazz Artist of the Year. Top that off with an Acoustic Jazz Group win by the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

A pattern begins to emerge, even if the stylistic association between Jones, Coleman and the Art Ensemble is a bit loose: It looks like the critics have spotted a flashback of sorts to the musical ideals of the past, a free reign of veteran improvisers who first emerged between the late '50s and early '70s.

Beneath the big winners—which also include Bill Frisell (Album of the Year), Miles Davis (Reissue of the Year) and Pinetop Perkins (Blues Album of the Year), among others—this year's poll reveals a number of artists currently on the bubble of popularity but making a serious bid for wider recognition.

The prolific Dave Douglas continues his breakthrough, winning Talent Deserving Wider Recognition honors in the Jazz Artist of the Year and Trumpet categories. Brad Mehldau makes an equally strong dual showing as TDWR winner for Acoustic Jazz Group and Piano.

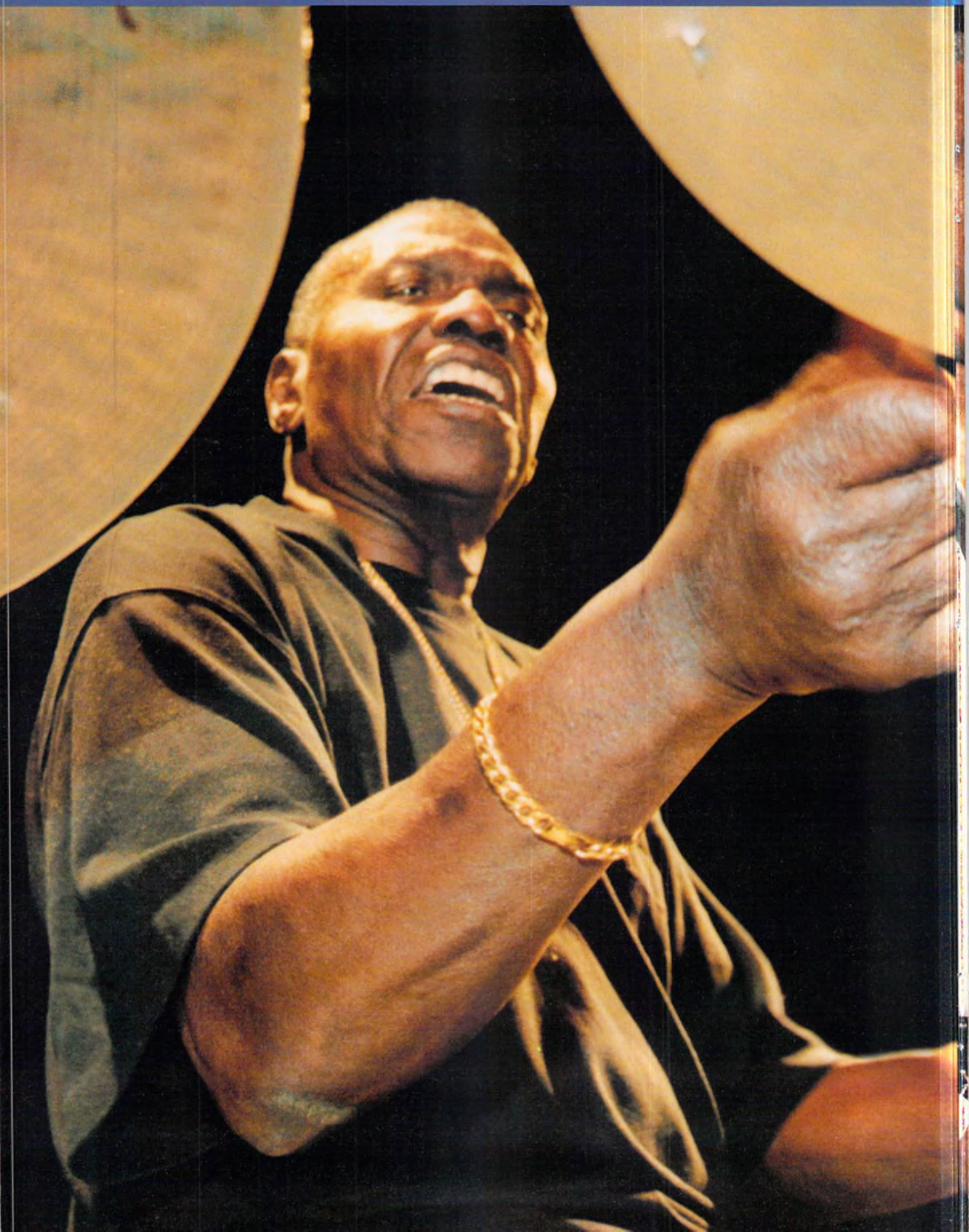
Riding the wave of a 1997 Grammy win, the 71-year-old Bill Holman scores his first win in the Arranger category. And anyone who hasn't heard TDWR Electric Bass winner Victor Wooten, buy his CDs (solo or with Bela Fleck's Flecktones), get out the headphones and prepare to have a blast.

Fresh reeds have grown in the TDWR Sax Section as well, with tenorist David Sanchez and baritonist Gary Smulyan sprouting alongside repeat winners Jane Ira Bloom (soprano) and Antonio Hart (alto).

Other artists on the move include TDWR Electric Jazz Group winners Medeski Martin & Wood, whose musical adventurousness and touring dedication are really starting to pay off (Medeski also took TDWR on Electric Keyboard). The much-heralded Nicholas Payton reigns as the new king of Trumpet territory. And Steve Turre surpasses longtime poll-winner J.J. Johnson for a Trombone victory.

Congratulations to all of our winners and runners-up. And special thanks to the participating critics, listed on Page 81. —*Ed Enright*

Clockwise from top left: Ornette Coleman, Dave Douglas, Elvin Jones, David Sanchez, Nicholas Payton, Steve Turre, Conrad Herwig, Brad Mehldau



PHOTOS BY STUART BRINN

46TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL DOWN BEAT

HALL OF FAME

elvin jones

by Bob Blumenthal

An Elvin Jones victory in a Down Beat poll, whether of the Critics or Readers variety, is hardly news these days. His elevation to the Hall of Fame during this year's Critics round is therefore not a case of honoring someone forgotten by the general jazz public, for both sides of the music's bifurcated voting community were clearly headed toward identical results. That the brilliant and widely influential drummer had to wait until turning 70 to receive this overdue honor may simply indicate that we all got tired of waiting for him to slow down and show any loss of physical dexterity or imaginative brilliance.

Jones has been hailed for his complex polyrhythmic concepts and his ability to execute at the most extreme dynamic levels ever since beginning his historic 1960–'65 tenure in John Coltrane's band. He traces the inspiration for his seminal contributions to his inquisitive youth. "In the back of my mind," he recalled in a recent conversation, "I always felt that there was something more a drummer could do. Take drum breaks, for example. As a kid, I noticed that when big band drummers took a drum break, they would stop playing their cymbal beat. I wanted to find a way to keep that cymbal going. It just took a few years."

One advantage that the Pontiac, Mich., native enjoyed was a musical family, which included older brothers Hank and Thad (the latter inducted into the Down Beat Hall of Fame in 1987). "Hank was 10 years older, and not around that much," Elvin explained, "but I remember one of our conversations quite well. He took out his wind-up Victrola, put on a record by Art Tatum's trio—which didn't have a drummer—and told

Hall Of Fame

80 Elvin Jones
54 Milt Jackson
30 Clark Terry
23 Antonio Carlos Jobim
22 Muhal Richard Abrams
20 Don Cherry
20 Jo Jones
19 Tadd Dameron
15 Jimmy Blanton
15 Doc Cheatham
15 John Lewis
13 Randy Weston
12 Bunny Berigan
12 Lee Konitz
12 Wayne Shorter
12 McCoy Tyner
12 Dinah Washington

me to play along. I got my brushes out and tried to find a place to fit in, like musicians who can't read music and just try to find a note where they can connect without disrupting."

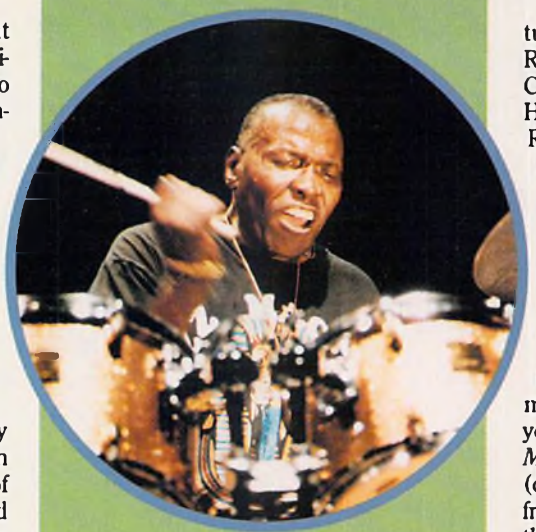
Such experiences were only part of what was a total percussion education. "I didn't get my first drum set until 1949, when I got out of the Army," Jones admitted. "Before that, I had played whatever the school made available for orchestras and marching bands. Other kids didn't like to carry the bass drum, but parades always fascinated me. I loved it."

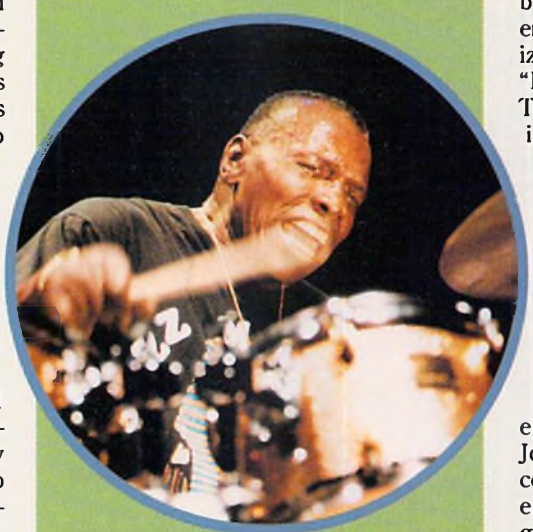
Once out of the service, the fully equipped young drummer found work on the fertile Detroit jazz scene in the band of saxophonist Billy Mitchell. Brother Thad and pianist Tommy Flanagan were also Mitchell regulars, part of a golden era when the best musicians in major cities were supporting, sharing bills and otherwise rubbing elbows with visiting stars. Bassist Charles Mingus was most vocal in heralding Jones as possessor of a conception destined to make jazz history, although it was ultimately brother Hank who was responsible for bringing Elvin to New York.

"In 1955, at the time the film *The Benny Goodman Story* was released," Jones explained, "Benny reactivated his big band. Hank, who was Benny's pianist, recommended me for a tryout. I was working with Carmen McRae and Kenny Burrell in Detroit at the time, and thought I would have to pass up the audition; but the club owner loved Benny Goodman. After Benny called the club to offer me the opportunity, the guy's attitude was, If Benny called, go!

"Of course," he laughed, "I completely flubbed the audition. Benny called 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' which has a drum part a half-inch thick. I was trying to turn the pages and sight-read the part while I played."

Work did follow, though, at first with Bud Powell and then J.J. Johnson. It was in the trombonist's quintet that the Jones style started to emerge. Bobby Jaspar, the band's tenor saxophonist and flutist, explained the drummer's approach in a 1959 article in the Jazz Review that remains a definitive short-course in Elvin's art. Jaspar began with a drawing that showed a car moving at a constant speed with a smaller car that rolled back and forth mounted on top. Jaspar had first used this picture to capture the approach of the early modern drummers, and concluded that "what Elvin was doing was really the continuation and development of the principles that Kenny Clarke and Max Roach had pioneered. ... The basic tempo is there once and for all. ... Over this beat is grafted a series of rhythms so complex that they are almost impossible for me to write out."





"Music can make you feel like you want to burst after two minutes."

Jones himself cited hometown experience, reinforced by international travels, to explain his breakthrough. "My concept really crystallized on a 1957 European tour with J.J. Johnson, where we played dances in Scandinavian amusement parks. It took me back to my youth, going to hear Duke Ellington, Basie and Andy Kirk at dances.

"It was just a matter of accumulating knowledge," he continued, "playing with different people in different styles. I was fortunate to play with people like Johnny Richards, Tyree Glenn, Bud Powell, Charles Mingus, Gil Evans, Miles Davis, Harry Edison, Buck Clayton and Sonny Rollins. It all came together when I joined John Coltrane and found a place to apply these different experiences. That was the point in my life where I could say, 'OK, I've earned my Ph.D., now I'm ready to work.'"

Jones and pianist McCoy Tyner both joined Coltrane in 1960, and from the quartet's transformation of the showtune "My Favorite Things" into a modal maelstrom in 3/4 time in October of that year to the passionate energy of the suite *Meditations* five years later, the band (completed by bassist Jimmy Garrison from the close of 1961) steadily redefined the possibilities of the small jazz ensemble. The level of saxophone/percussion engagement that Coltrane and Jones realized in extended performances such as "My Favorite Things," "Chasin' The Trane," "Impressions" and "Afro-Blue" intimated chaos yet retained a clear connection to structure and tempo. As Jaspar had pointed out, Jones always knew where "one" was. At the same time, more introspective performances such as "Your Lady," "The Drum Thing" and the album *John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman* revealed Jones' ability to sustain his complex polyrhythms at more restrained dynamic levels.

Connecting with a saxophonist in extended dialogue was central to the Jones profile, though, and the drummer continued to feature himself in such heated exchanges after he left Coltrane's group and formed his own band in 1966. "In hindsight, it looks like I was experimenting with my first trio," he said of the pianoless unit with Garrison and saxophonist Joe Farrell that began recording for Blue Note in 1966. "But I was really just trying to function. Part of the problem was that we weren't making that much money. Piano players wanted $50 a night. I wasn't making that much." Turning economic necessity into creative inspiration, Jones established the uncompromising blowing environment of the "burnout" in early editions of his band that, after Farrell's departure, featured the twin horns of George Coleman/Frank Foster and Steve Grossman/Dave Liebman.

By the 1970s, the Elvin Jones ensemble was known as the Jazz Machine, a high-intensity group with piano or guitar as well as horns. Over the years, musicians including Don Alias, Ravi Coltrane, Chick Corea, Sonny Fortune, Jan Hammer, Javon Jackson, Ryo Kawasaki, Kenny Kirkland, Pat LaBarbera, Delfeayo Marsalis, George Mraz, Nicholas Payton,

Greg Tardy and David Williams have performed under the drummer's leadership, pushed by his superhuman energy and daring ideas to create at their highest level. The challenge continues in Jones' eighth decade, although he feels that age has brought the tempering value of wisdom. "All growing older means," he insisted, "is that you have better control of your emotions. Music can make you feel like you want to burst after two minutes. With age, you learn the value of letting those feelings grow and build."

Another feeling only deepened by time is the thrill that all corners of the jazz community feel when playing with Jones. Over the course of the '60s, he had recorded classic encounters with saxophone giants Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins and Ornette Coleman as well as Coltrane, while succeeding decades have found musicians from Sonny Sharrock to Wynton Marsalis and David Murray to the members of Oregon jumping at the chance to place their own voice alongside his mastery. Jones also found the occasion to work with such older luminaries as Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Jimmy Rowles and his brother Hank, emerging as a true team player without sacrificing his individuality in each instance.

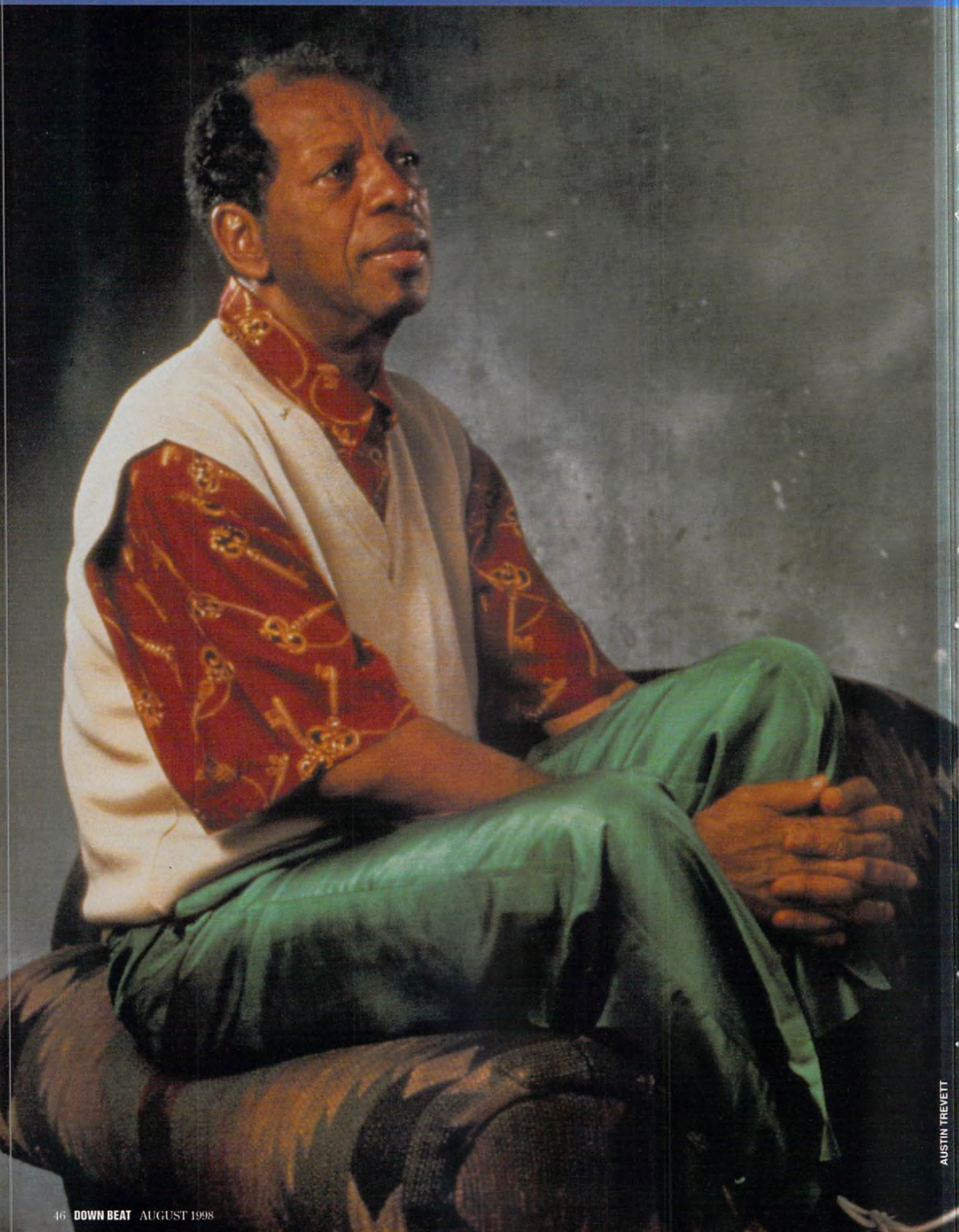
Nothing drove home the universal awe in which musicians hold Jones like an encounter with a very excited Bucky Pizzarelli at the 1996 Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in Moscow, Idaho. "I'm going to play with Elvin tonight, and I can't wait," the proto mainstream guitarist enthused over breakfast one morning. "I've only done it once before, nearly 30 years ago at a union function where I was working in a small group with no drummer. When the second set started, we heard this rumble from the rear of the bandstand—it was Elvin, who just felt moved to sit in. I've been waiting to experience that feeling again ever since."

As if we needed further proof, Elvin Jones' Hall of Fame induction verifies that "that feeling" is one for the ages. **DB**

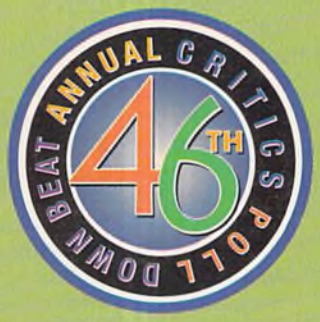
The Hall of Fame: Heavy Company

Legends in jazz, blues and beyond can be elected into the Down Beat Hall of Fame by way of the annual Readers Poll (designated by "R") or Critics Poll ("C"). It all started in 1952 with the readers; the critics got into the game later, in 1961. With this month's addition of Elvin Jones, there are currently 89 Down Beat Hall of Famers, listed below in chronological order of their induction. *—ed.*

1952	Louis Armstrong (R)		Benny Carter (C)
1953	Glenn Miller (R)	1978	Joe Venuti (R)
1954	Stan Kenton (R)		Rahsaan Roland Kirk (C)
1955	Charlie Parker (R)	1979	Ella Fitzgerald (R)
1956	Duke Ellington (R)		Lennie Tristano (C)
1957	Benny Goodman (R)	1980	Dexter Gordon (R)
1958	Count Basie (R)		Max Roach (C)
1959	Lester Young (R)	1981	Art Blakey (R)
1960	Dizzy Gillespie (R)		Bill Evans (C)
1961	Billie Holiday (R)	1982	Art Pepper (R)
	Coleman Hawkins (C)		Fats Navarro (C)
1962	Miles Davis (R)	1983	Stephane Grappelli (R)
	Bix Beiderbecke (C)		Albert Ayler (C)
1963	Thelonious Monk (R)	1984	Oscar Peterson (R)
	Jelly Roll Morton (C)		Sun Ra (C)
1964	Eric Dolphy (R)	1985	Sarah Vaughan (R)
	Art Tatum (C)		Zoot Sims (C)
1965	John Coltrane (R)	1986	Stan Getz (R)
	Earl Hines (C)		Gil Evans (C)
1966	Bud Powell (R)	1987	Lionel Hampton (R)
	Charlie Christian (C)		Johnny Dodds (C)
1967	Billy Strayhorn (R)		Thad Jones (C)
	Bessie Smith (C)		Teddy Wilson (C)
1968	Wes Montgomery (R)	1988	Jaco Pastorius (R)
	Sidney Bechet (C)		Kenny Clarke (C)
	Fats Waller (C)	1989	Woody Shaw (R)
1969	Ornette Coleman (R)		Chet Baker (C)
	Pee Wee Russell (C)	1990	Red Rodney (R)
	Jack Teagarden (C)		Mary Lou Williams (C)
1970	Jimi Hendrix (R)	1991	Lee Morgan (R)
	Johnny Hodges (C)		John Carter (C)
1971	Charles Mingus (R)	1992	Maynard Ferguson (R)
	Roy Eldridge (C)		James P. Johnson (C)
	Django Reinhardt (C)	1993	Gerry Mulligan (R)
1972	Gene Krupa (R)		Edward Blackwell (C)
	Clifford Brown (C)	1994	Dave Brubeck (R)
1973	Sonny Rollins (R)		Frank Zappa (C)
	Fletcher Henderson (C)	1995	J.J. Johnson (R)
1974	Buddy Rich (R)		Julius Hemphill (C)
	Ben Webster (C)	1996	Horace Silver (R)
1975	Cannonball Adderley (R)		Artie Shaw (C)
	Cecil Taylor (C)	1997	Nat "King" Cole (R)
1976	Woody Herman (R)		Tony Williams (C)
	King Oliver (C)	1998	Elvin Jones (C)
1977	Paul Desmond (R)		



AUSTIN TREVETT



JAZZ ARTIST OF THE YEAR

ornette coleman

by Howard Mandel

Summer 1997 through summer 1998 has been a very good 12 months for Ornette Coleman—or rather, for those of us fascinated with and exhilarated by his music.

It started last June when *Colors*, Coleman's inspired duets with pianist Joachim Kuhn (recorded at an August 1996 concert in Leipzig, Austria) was released by Verve/Harmolodic—simultaneous with the reissue of *In All Languages*, his 1987 classic contrasting the reassembled early quartet (trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Billy Higgins) with a snappy, syncopated edition of his contemporary octet, Prime Time.

In July '97, Coleman's startlingly fresh world view was the focus of New York City's Lincoln Center Festival, with Kurt Masur conducting the New York Symphony Orchestra through two full performances of *Skies Of America*, his unique *concerto grosso*. Ornette stood mainstage, smiling slightly, boldly dressed. From time to time he put his horn to his lips and blew plangently, leading in Prime Time's keyboards, guitars, electric and acoustic basses, tabla and traps, setting off gnarly, contained reactions to the ominous themes for brass, strings and percussion of the distinctly unsettled orchestra.

The next night Coleman was back at plush Avery Fisher Hall to unfold an hour of pure jazz eternity, in company with his best men: Haden and Higgins. The three simply created sublime music—effortlessly, gracefully, lyrically, with incomparable empathy—uncovering sunlit vistas that gradually opened and rolled on out of Coleman's loosely bluesy tunes. The audience levitated.

After intermission, pianist Kenny Barron and trumpeter Wallace Roney joined that trio for a worthy set. As a finale to his New York mini-fest, Coleman featured Prime Time as it is *now*, amid the extra-musical FX—contortionists, fire-swallowers, dancers, video collage—of *Tone Dialing*, a harmolodic bacchanal.

Last August, pianist Geri Allen's *Eyes ... In The Back of Your Head* (Blue Note) was issued, with Coleman stretching out naturally on two duet tracks. One of the seldom-remarked aspects of Coleman's music in the '90s is the inclusion of pianos, which formerly he shunned. Since the vastly overlooked and underrated David Bryant joined Prime Time, Coleman has succeeded in tapping keyboards' potentials for further opening up dimensions of celebratory polyphony, without pinning the music with a fixed harmonic frame. Geri Allen has toured with Coleman and was thrilling throughout his two-CD quartet release *Sound Museum* in '96. In spring of '97, Coleman toured Europe with pianist Kuhn again, and recorded in studios in New York City.

Then the honors came rolling in. Coleman was inducted as an officer in the French Order of Arts and Letters, a ministerial honor awarded annually to French and (more rarely) non-French artists. In June, he won high honors in the Critics Choice division of the 1998 Jazz Awards. And now he's named Jazz Artist of the Year in the long-established, much-esteemed Down Beat International Critics Poll.

Informed of these honors, Coleman responded graciously, but also with candid weariness.

"I'm really tired of being sold as a product for being who I am, but not for what I really *do*," said the press-and-camera-shy American visionary, theorist/composer/improvising instrumentalist/ensemble leader, painter and record company chief. He'd been caught by phone at the sparsely furnished Harlem offices of Harmolodic, the company he's established, run by his son Denardo.

Ornette had been coming there every morning to work on his next intercultural touch-down: *? Civilization '98*, scheduled for three nights at the Perugia festival in Umbria, Italy. He was planning to make music, most likely playing heart-wrenching alto saxophone, achingly high trumpet and skittering, urgent violin with Prime Time (and ethnic dancers) in *Tone Dialing*, with Indian classical musicians gathered by Prime Time's tabla player, Badal Roy, and in a one-time

Jazz Artist Of The Year

86	**Ornette Coleman**
65	Wynton Marsalis
51	Joe Lovano
46	Sonny Rollins
31	Randy Weston
30	Benny Carter
25	Tom Harrell
24	Charlie Haden
21	Kenny Barron
20	Roy Hargrove
20	Pat Metheny
18	Herbie Hancock
18	Brad Mehldau

quartet with Haden, Higgins and alto saxist Lee Konitz.

Coleman is the gentlest of souls—"I've never been physical," he mentioned, "being physical not being the same as being sensible, being lovable"—and also a humble student of Socrates, usually asking questions rather than spouting opinions. But as if to clear his throat, he spoke of some frustrations.

"I'm tired of being juried by people who don't know what I'm doing," he complained—though he's evidently approachable, patient and direct with people in public. "The record companies make a profit off your past, but they say they're not interested in what you're doing *now*. The music industry is mostly interested in my past, never in my future. But I believe that kind of thinking hasn't brought us any closer to each other. Art is not for the special person, it is for anybody. It's like the past coming back to the future."

What may seem like a string of non sequiturs is not to Coleman, or those who follow him.

We find wisdom and poetic logic to his utterances, even when they seem at first as oblique as the juxtaposition of lamenting moans and glinting bleats that mark the lines of his many memorable songs. Suppose the past *inevitably* comes back to the future. Say that art isn't *only* or *necessarily* alive in the past, but just might live—certainly its creators hope it does—in the present. Take it that if art *is* alive, it's for everybody—not just people who buy *certain* kinds of music, rather than *other* kinds, or look at certain kinds of art (like TV) over other kinds (strikingly original music, perhaps). If the record companies—with whom Coleman has voluntarily pacted to manufacture, distribute and promote productions of his Harmolodic imprint—supported what's *now* rather than *past*, following Coleman's formulation, they *might* bring people closer together.

That's his goal: to heal people like a doctor of science and raise the conscious health of all society, but turning us back to our own powers. Toward that goal, Coleman lives by his earnest questions of his personal experience. He has little interest in conventional guardedness or reserve.

"Why are people so scared to be who they are?" is typical of his queries. "There are little kids who know fear more than they know love. It's like there's something on this planet that makes everyone a killer."

Coleman's clarity is tempered by his sense of compassion, audible in such compositions as "Lonely Woman." His music seems to sing plainly of many hues of human feelings; celebration and sadness mix in his sound from his first 1958 recordings, *Something Else!* and *Tomorrow Is The Question* (Contemporary Records). Having come on strong in New York, sponsored by some discerning musicians, regarded by the radically chic as an authentic folk hipster with a melodic gift, Coleman paved a path for musicians that was previously untaken. He recorded brilliantly at Atlantic (results collected in Rhino's *Beauty Is A Rare Thing*)—mostly quartet dates but also "third stream" sessions with Gunther Schuller and the epochal *Free Jazz*, which invented the double quartet. Coleman produced his own genre-defying Town Hall concert (and the documentation of it on ESP Disks), toured England and Scandinavia, established an open house in a downtown Manhattan loft, and recorded sporadically but with astonishing results for Blue Note, Impulse!, Flying Dutchman, A&M, Antilles, Epic/Portrait, his own startup Artists House label and his hometown arts center, Caravan of Dreams.

Coleman wrote for chamber ensembles and r&b instruments as early as '62, but fused them into an extraordinary dense mass around his ripping horn on *Dancing In Your Head*, released in '75. Two lead electric guitars chatter and squabble over the slippery bass of Rudy McDaniel (aka Jamaladeen Tacuma) and ferocious battery of Ronald Shannon Jackson. Coleman intends all the parts to be equal, each possible connection among musicians to set off its own chain of events—yet his sax dominates the pan-tonal, polyrhythmic impulses. The music is deeply funky, and fun, in accord with Coleman's unique take on what funk, fun and music are all about. He's proudly self-taught.

"When I went to college, there were kids there whom I'd grown up around who had acquired knowledge, and now they treated me like I didn't exist," Coleman recalled. "If learning put them in this space, and put me in this space, then I didn't want to learn. I decided to teach myself. Because I couldn't see the point of pretending you didn't come from where you came from."

So it is that the past comes back to the future. In what other ways does Coleman's career—which began in Southwestern tent shows and honky tonks and has taken him as far as the mystic mountains of Morocco—inform him?

"I know more about what I'm doing now," Coleman said without hesitation. "I want to compose *music*—not *style—music*. I'm trying to eliminate the word 'style.' I would like to preach about instrumental music being the next 'vocal' music—that is, with 'instrumental' covering 'vocal.' Instrumental music has the effects people get now from vocal music. We have to start going after a universal understanding that 'instrumental' music means *tones*.

"You could say that we're 'styling' music to have acceptance," he continued, "but that's actually what we're fighting. If you go to a store, you go to buy 'style.' But music is an *idea*, more than a *style*. And anyone can enjoy the energy of creativity. It can also *come* from anyone.

"I was born during the time of racial segregation," Coleman explained. "What I'm doing now I knew I wanted to do then. I find that same quality I saw *then* hidden now in everything. Now I want to ask you something: Is there anything natural that the baby and the adult acquires at the same time?"

"Everything," I answer.

"Yes," says Ornette Coleman. "I think so, too. And we need to have more contact with that quality. So I think art must be love, and love must be art. And why couldn't you or somebody else write something just as powerful as I play?"

Wondering about that, one arrives at Coleman's thanks for his medal of honor to the Ambassador Francois Bujon De L'Estang at the champaign reception in the Stanford White-designed marble palace that houses the New York offices of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy last spring.

"People always talk about how much I've done," Coleman said, grateful but truthful, too. "I always hope I can do so much *more*." **DB**

JAZZ ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Talent Deserving Wider Recognition

dave douglas

ALAN NAHIGIAN

Jazz Artist Of The Year
TDWR

65	**Dave Douglas**
39	Nicholas Payton
25	Brad Mehldau
21	Kenny Garrett
15	Bill Frisell
14	Fred Anderson
12	Bobby Previte
11	Roy Hargrove
10	James Carter

It has been, by anyone's estimation, a whirlwind five years for 35-year-old trumpeter Dave Douglas. From the time he released his first two CDs as a leader and joined John Zorn in the saxophonist's Ornette Coleman-cum-klezmer quartet, Masada, Douglas' career over the past half-decade has been an upward spiral of sideman gigs with the likes of Don Byron, Myra Melford and Uri Caine, and a steady stream of personal projects. Keeping track of his burgeoning discography is no easy task; it runs to more than 70 recordings since his first—*Flying With The Comet* by pianist John Esposito's band Second Sight—in 1986.

As prolific as he had been in the previous four, the past year surpassed all expectations—both in terms of output and impact—and has landed him two Talent Deserving Wider Recognition wins in this year's Critics Poll: one for his overall jazz artistry, another for his trumpet playing (see Page 78). Already firmly established as an improvisational hero of those who consider New York City's Knitting Factory the center of the musical universe, Douglas has broken through to a broader audience. The landmark of this progression—perhaps a contemporary equivalent to Coleman's 1959 New York debut at the Five Spot—was a six-night engagement at the tiny Iridium, miles north of the Lower East Side. Fronting a sextet and playing compositions inspired by Wayne Shorter, Douglas succeeded in bridging the chasm that led *Seinfeld*'s Kramer to regard SoHo as a separate world from Uptown Manhattan.

In his concise, low-key manner, Douglas doesn't put a lot of stock in the distinctions between musical genres, as represented by the urban geography of New York. "All music is such a joy to me," he says. "It's finding the new things in music that really turns me on."

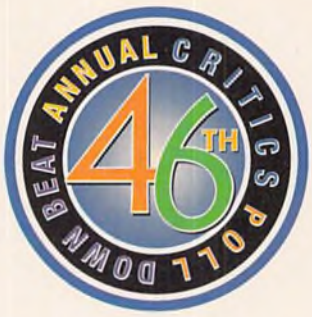
Translating musical languages and dialects has become an ongoing preoccupation for Douglas, who was raised in Montclair, N.J., and studied music at Berklee, New England Conservatory and New York University. Since a 1988 trip to Switzerland with a theater troupe found Douglas playing Romanian folk music, Eastern European styles have continued to fascinate, fueling the repertoire of his Tiny Bell Trio and coloring his improvisations with Masada, Caine and others. His string ensemble has interpreted works by Webern and Stravinsky, along with his own compositions. He has explored electronics and extended, collective improvisation with his double CD *Sanctuary* (Avant). And then there are his tribute projects: Booker Little, the subject of *In Our Lifetime* (New World); Shorter, 1997's *Stargazer* (Arabesque Jazz); and Joni Mitchell, this year's *Moving Portraits* (DIW).

Forthcoming projects include *Charms Of The Night Sky* (Winter & Winter), recorded with accordionist Guy Klucevsek, violinist Mark Feldman and Masada bassist Greg Cohen; a collaboration with Lebanese oud virtuoso Rabih Abou-Khalil; and the debut recording by Douglas' year-old quartet, due out on Arabesque Jazz this month.

The broad spectrum Douglas has addressed in a relatively short time points to a distinctive essence that defines him as both a composer and a trumpeter. Like the very best players a generation or two older, he is a musician who has discovered the key to fitting into a variety of settings while maintaining a highly individualistic voice. That, and he has a work ethic of Coltrane-esque proportions that won't allow him to coast. "Each project is an interior process for me; it's an organic growth of things I'm hearing and that I want to do."

Another sign of his restless nature is his desire to improve as a trumpeter. "In the last few years—both as a musician and a composer—I've come to appreciate the trumpet a lot more, and in a lot of my projects I'm looking for new contexts for the improvising trumpet."

—James Hale



JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

bill frisell

Jazz Album of the Year

34 Bill Frisell, *Nashville* (Nonesuch)
33 T.S. Monk, *Monk On Monk* (N2K)
32 Wynton Marsalis, *Blood On The Fields* (Columbia)
29 Jacky Terrasson & Cassandra Wilson, *Rendezvous* (Blue Note)
28 Roy Hargrove, *Habana* (Verve)
27 Ornette Coleman/Joachim Kühn, *Colors* (Verve)
25 Bill Holman, *Brilliant Corners* (JVC)
20 Herbie Hancock & Wayne Shorter, *1+1* (Verve)
19 Doc Cheatham & Nicholas Payton, *Doc Cheatham & Nicholas Payton* (Verve)
19 Marcus Roberts, *Blues For The New Millennium* (Columbia)
17 Kenny Wheeler, *Angel Song* (ECM)
16 Marilyn Crispell, *Nothing Ever Was, Anyway* (ECM)
16 Brad Mehldau, *Art Of The Trio Vol. 2* (Warner Bros.)
14 Kenny Garrett, *Songbook* (Warner Bros.)
14 Charlie Haden & Pat Metheny, *Beyond The Missouri Sky* (Verve)
14 Kansas City Band, *KC After Dark* (Verve)
14 Charles Lloyd, *Canto* (ECM)
13 Arcana, *Arc Of The Testimony* (Axiom)
13 Fred Anderson, *Fred: Chicago Chamber Music* (Southport)
12 Steve Coleman, *The Sign & The Seal* (RCA Victor)
12 Tom Harrell, *The Art Of Rhythm* (RCA Victor)
12 Dave Douglas, *Stargazer* (Arabesque)
12 Henry Threadgill, *Where's Your Cup?* (Columbia)
11 Joe Lovano & Gonzalo Rubalcaba, *Flying Colors* (Blue Note)

Who would've guessed that Down Beat's Jazz Album of the Year award would go to Bill Frisell for *Nashville*, a brilliant jazz-meets-bluegrass outing the guitarist recorded in the country capital with a supporting cast composed of roots music's top session men. Arguably Down Beat's most unlikely album victor in recent years, *Nashville* (see "CD Reviews" Aug. '97) challenges the notion that creative improvisational music is restricted to the blues-and-swing zone. It may not have offered what most jazz fans expect, but *Nashville* certainly gave jazz critics what they liked: innovative, adventurous music that stretches the boundaries of jazz.

In scoring a plurality of votes for best album (eligible CDs had release dates between April 15, 1997, and April 15, 1998), Frisell outdistanced a full field of noteworthies including T.S. Monk (his compelling *Monk On Monk* tribute to his dad, Thelonious), Bill Holman (who also celebrated Monk with his singular arrangements

for big band on *Brilliant Corners*) and Roy Hargrove (his fiery *Habana* Afro-Cuban outing with his ensemble Crisol). *Nashville* also beat out a sumptuous feast of dual-leader projects, including Jacky Terrasson and Cassandra Wilson's *Rendezvous*, Ornette Coleman and Joachim Kuhn's *Colors*, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter's *1+1*, and Doc Cheatham and Nicholas Payton's self-titled trumpet summit. *Nashville* even bettered Wynton Marsalis' *Blood On The Fields*, which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

A musical omnivore who has shyly defied jazz tradition and boldly crossed stylistic borders throughout his career, Frisell set up an intriguing confluence of two distinctly American styles of music on *Nashville*: jazz and country. In doing so, he created a rootsy hybrid that scribes assigned several names: Americana jazz, heartland jazz, Appalachian jazz and, in the assessment of one critic, "covered wagon jazz."

Frisell, who also received the most votes in the Guitar category (see Page 78), says that he was caught off guard when informed that *Nashville* topped the Down Beat chart. "It's kind of a shock," he says. "It surprises me because the album is, how should I say it, I guess it's a little off the edge from what jazz is supposed to be." When asked if he was aware of how popular *Nashville* had been with the critics, he admits that he reads his press. "Most of the responses were positive, although I did get some negative comments by people here in Seattle. In fact, for a couple weeks people were writing in to the local newspaper and saying that I had sold out, that I had jumped on the country bandwagon to sell lots of records. Some of what was said was even kind of mean, like I should move to Las Vegas."

Frisell laughs at the suggestion that he was trying to rake in the dough. "They don't understand. They thought I was playing it safe. In reality, *Nashville* was one of the most dangerous records I've made. I jumped into uncharted territory, working with people I had never met and playing a style I had never dealt with before. The biggest challenge was writing tunes without knowing a thing about the musical vocabulary."

One of the misconceptions about Frisell, who oftentimes alludes to country in his eclectic style (especially in his pedal steel-like improvisations), is that he's well-versed in the genre. In fact, he says his country influences came from listening to country-inflected pop music by the Byrds and Crosby, Stills & Nash. He also says that *Nashville* wasn't anything new to the jazz world. "Gary Burton went to Nashville to record

his *Tennessee Firebird* country-jazz album, and early in his career Sonny Rollins recorded an incredible album, *Way Out West*, where he did jazz takes on cowboy songs like 'I'm An Old Cow Hand.' He even appeared on the LP cover wearing a cowboy hat."

As for working with country musicians, Frisell notes a major difference from his typical jazz recording sessions. "Usually with my quartet, I write out my compositions. We start by reading the charts and then take a tune into different directions as we get familiar with playing it together. But I didn't present the music that way to the guys in Nashville. It was more of a challenge for me. I played the tunes and they all just reacted. It was exciting to see how quickly they learned the pieces."

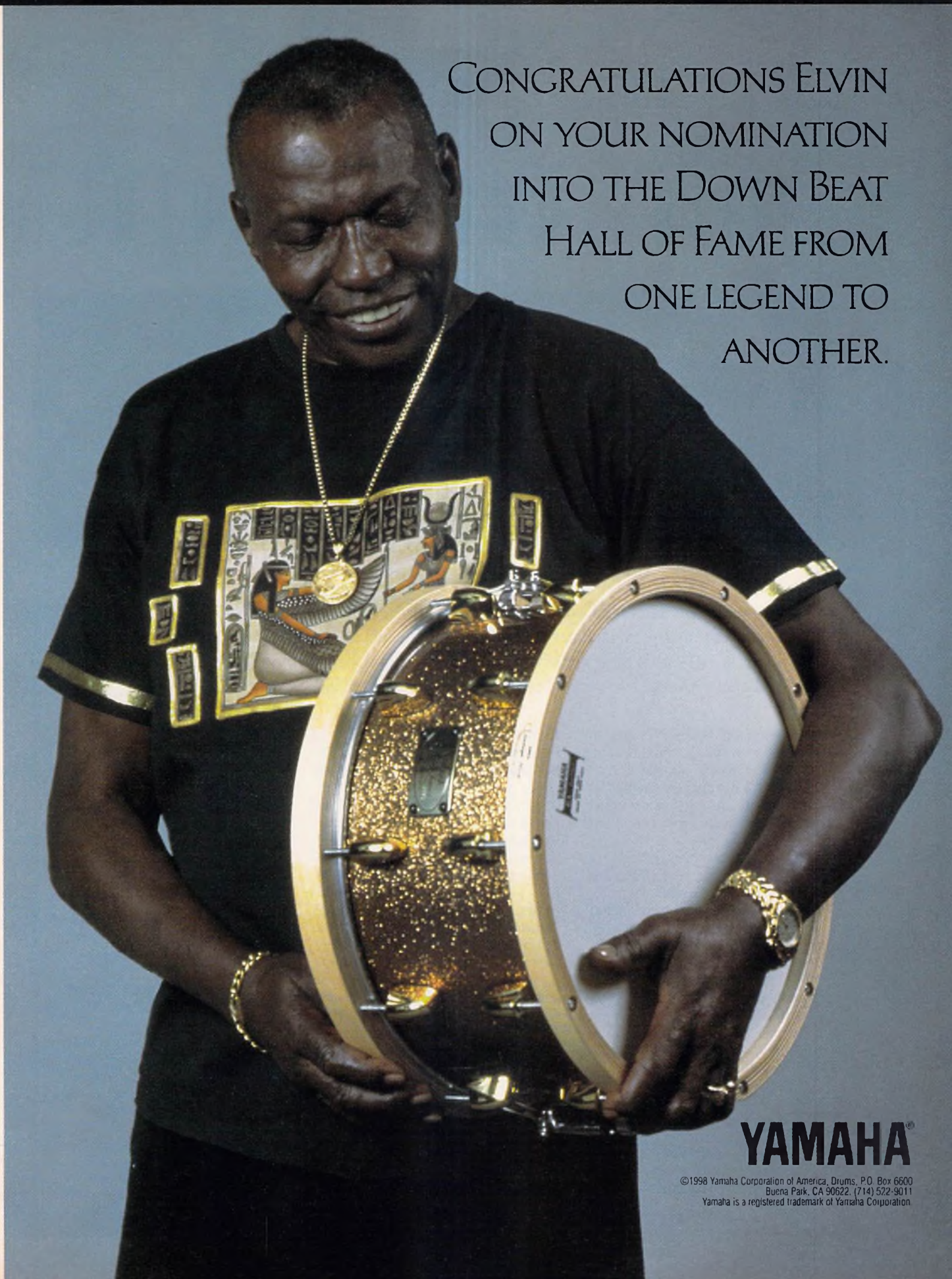
One of several key figures in the *Nashville* sessions was bluegrass dobro maestro Jerry Douglas. "Jerry pushed the entire album over the top for me," Frisell says. "I knew him from some of his records, but I had never met him, so I was nervous. He was great. He just reacted to what I was playing." Case in point: the angular blues number "We're Not From Around Here." Frisell begins the piece by playing a simple bass line then throws a curve at the end with a jazzy melody that has, in his own words, "odd chromatic parts." He says, "I told Jerry about this lower harmony line I had in mind for the melody, and he offered to play it. Well, he got it immediately, which amazed me. I remember thinking, This guy is a heavy musician. He didn't have to read anything. He just heard it. If I were put in that same situation, I'd be in deep trouble."

Frisell's admiration for Douglas is reciprocated by the dobro player, who says the *Nashville* sessions proved to be one of his most relaxed studio experiences. "It was so easy working with Bill," Douglas says. "He was such a teddy bear. The music was so tuneful and so open to improvisation. Country music and jazz are a lot more compatible than people realize."

Even though he's attracted to exploring all kinds of styles, Frisell says jazz is at the core of his music. "Deep in my heart, no matter what anyone calls it, no matter what the rules are, I approach my music from a jazz sensibility. My inspiration comes from all over the map, but it's guys like Monk, Miles and Sonny Rollins that I continue to be obsessed with in terms of trying to figure out their thought processes when they recorded. There's still so much more for me to learn. It's never-ending."

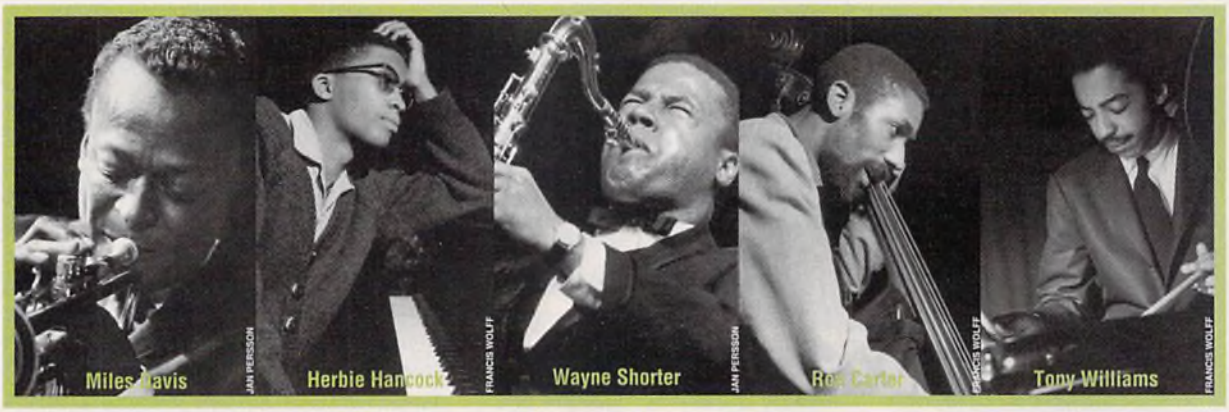
Ultimately it's Frisell's musical wanderlust that makes *Nashville* the perfect choice for Down Beat's Jazz Album of the Year. Instead of recycling jazz's past, Frisell's work of art stands as an auspicious signpost that jazz in its extemporaneous glory will continue to evolve in unexpected and imaginative ways. Critics are constantly inundated with piles and piles of plastic jewel boxes, the majority housing music that treads tired and predictable ground. Frisell's *Nashville* is a rarity: a pure delight of catchy, inventive, improvisationally rich music that demonstrates how pliable and all-inclusive jazz truly is.

—Dan Ouellette



REISSUE OF THE YEAR

miles davis quintet



Enter the world of reissues, and you enter a world both simple and complicated, safe and problematic, not to mention contentious. The music's past is a known entity, something that's been around, heard and talked about. That's unless somebody starts doing some mining. Ya dig?

Another thing: When it comes to reissues, we're talkin' boxed sets, and boxed sets that can fit on your CD shelves for a change. Single-CD reissues of certain titles made it this year, but you'll notice they round out the bottom of the list.

This year's top vote-getter is a repeat winner, three year's running: Miles Davis (and Columbia/Legacy). Two years ago, it was Davis' fabled and famed '60s quintet with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams, with music from a 1965 engagement at Chicago's Plugged Nickel. Last year, Gil Evans and orchestra were along for the ride. This year, it's the trumpeter's '60s band again, this time with studio music from 1965–'68.

To some, the six-CD package known as *The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* (see "CD Reviews" April '98) presented problems that left a boil on the butt. For everybody else, including Down Beat critics, these studio recordings were the hands-down favorite. By way of explanation, the carps about the package will be explained. After all, there's always something to complain about when it comes to Miles Davis, not to mention music critics.

What's at stake here is more than just great music. There's a philosophical issue among record companies and critics that affects musicians, educators and fans alike. Namely, how does an artist's music get boxed? The discussion of alternate takes, in particular, was brought up in these pages recently (see "On The Beat" June '98). More pressing with the *Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* is the question of track order, where albums like *Nefertiti* and *Miles In The Sky* were subject to occasional revamping, songs placed according to when they were recorded, not necessarily as they were found by consumers when first released. The result is a boxed set that creates a fascinating disorientation as the listener is taken closer to

Reissue of the Year

113 **Miles Davis, *Miles Davis Quintet 1965-'68: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* (Columbia/Legacy)**
104 John Coltrane, *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* (Impulse!)
69 Charles Mingus, *Passions Of A Man* (Rhino/Atlantic)
40 Sonny Rollins, *The Complete Sonny Rollins RCA Victor Recordings* (RCA Victor)
36 Lennie Tristano/Lee Konitz/Warne Marsh, *The Complete Atlantic Recordings* (Mosaic)
29 Bill Evans, *The Complete* (Verve)
28 Jimmy Giuffre, *The Complete Capitol & Atlantic Recordings* (Mosaic)
25 Herbie Nichols, *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Blue Note)
23 Ray Charles, *Genius & Soul, The 50th Anniversary Collection* (Rhino/Atlantic)
22 Ornette Coleman, *In All Languages* (Verve/Harmolodic)
15 Miles Davis, *Kind Of Blue* (Columbia/Legacy)
11 Various Artists, *Hot Jazz On Blue Note* (Blue Note)

the creative process of the band, tracks not known to have been made at the time saddled up next to others, songs originally planted next to others sometimes showing up on another disc.

As songs come up, those who are familiar with the original albums are suddenly made to realize how doctored those original albums were, apart from any sound remixing that was done. Tracks released as many as 10 or more years later are no longer heard out of context, a context artificially created by producers and/or the record company, when the music invariably took a backseat to the market. Indeed, "the careful, sensitive arrangement of the original albums," to quote the New York Times review of the box, is a laughable, and ignorant, notion.

What was the point of departure for this box, according to Columbia's current record company staff? "The group did not make albums after *Miles Smiles*," says Steve Berkowitz, VP of A&R, Legacy Recordings/Sony Music, referring to the band's second album, recorded in 1966 and following 1965's *E.S.P.* "The box is an overview of the development of this group from 1965 to '68. In the case of *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, that meant putting half of the album in this box, since the other half was not the quintet. One of the goals and truths of this Miles Davis box is that we are presenting the music as it is, free of the factors of what the album concepts of the time were."

There is so much to say about the beauty of the Miles Davis 1960s quintet, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, bands the music world has known. Personally, I must state that the steam engine known as Tony Williams was the key. Apart from Miles himself, the youngest member of the band was indispensable to their sound and concept. Then came Wayne, and the mind boggles.

With the *Complete Columbia Studio Recordings*, the honor due to these five great musicians is finally bestowed.

The same approach to ordering material, incidentally, was a natural for the runner-up winner in this year's poll: Impulse! Record's four-CD set *Coltrane: The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings*. Documenting a complete live set, or as complete a live set as possible, the listener naturally wants to have the experience of "being there," of having heard it as close to how it went down. The "classic" quartet of reedist John Coltrane, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones are augmented at times by, among others, reedist/collaborator Eric Dolphy, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Roy Haynes. The set features outstanding material long out of print originally released on *The Other Vanguard Tapes*. (See "CD Reviews" Jan. '98.)

The question of ordering material for release also involves our third-place winner, Rhino's six-CD *Charles Mingus: Passions Of A Man*. Down Beat critic John Corbett, in his review of the set ("CD Reviews" Dec. '97), took issue with the reordering of songs according to the very strategy used for the Miles Davis box. Corbett sees nothing but confusion ahead for the listener of this glorious music Mingus played in his first stint for Atlantic Records (1956–'61). Records such as *Blues And Roots* and *Tonight At Noon* are subject to inconsistent revamping, creating a disruption that Corbett says runs counter to the "great effort [that] went into choosing a running order for these albums." Not to be a spoil sport, John, as you yourself pointed out (and as is also true of the Miles Davis titles), single discs of all the albums as they were originally released are available.

Ah, yes. What could be more entertaining than critics disagreeing with each other? Clearly, it is the salt of our Critics Poll! Put yer dukes up! —*John Ephland*

BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR

pinetop perkins

"I've always been a sideman," says blues pianist Pinetop Perkins of his 70-plus years on the road, mostly in someone else's band. "I didn't want to have a band. I had a band once, but it was so hard to keep them together. I decided to be a sideman, and I loved being a sideman with Muddy Waters, Earl Hooker, Sonny Boy Williamson, all of them."

Blues Album of the Year

36	**Pinetop Perkins, *Born In the Delta* (Telarc)**
30	Olu Dara, *In the World* (Atlantic)
25	Joe Louis Walker, *Great Guitars* (Verve)
23	B.B. King, *Deuces Wild* (MCA)
21	Marcia Ball/Irma Thomas/Tracy Nelson, *Sing It!* (Rounder)

Pinetop, 85 this summer, rarely recorded up front through the years, but his album for Telarc last year, *Born In The Delta*, is (finally) definitive Pinetop—and was voted this year's Critics Poll Blues Album of the Year. Highlighting the session are blues classics of Leroy Carr ("How Long Blues"), Avery Parrish ("Blues After Hours"), Elmore James ("Look On Yonders Wall"), Jimmy Reed ("Baby, What You Want Me to Do") and Memphis Slim ("Everyday I Have the Blues")—songs that have been around almost as many years as Pinetop. "I guess 'How Long, How Long' is the oldest. I love these songs and I've always done them. I learned them off the records. I know a lot of old stuff," he laughs, "and I know a lot I've forgot."

Highlighting the classic songs are Pinetop's classic chops—a left hand as deep and dark as the Mississippi River's bottom, a right hand like a roadhouse-rattling horn section. Willie Perkins learned some of his techniques (and earned his nickname) from Clarence "Pinetop" Smith—although his first instrument was not the piano. "I used to play guitar for dances down in Mississippi. I played by myself, no band. I could tear it up by myself." Because of an injury, the guitar became difficult and he switched to the piano. "I just picked it up. I heard horn parts and I thought I could do that on a piano. I guess I had some talent."

Pinetop followed fellow piano great Otis Spann into the Muddy Waters band of the '70s and joined others from Muddy's band in the Legendary Blues Band of the '80s. *Born In The Delta* features two fellow Muddy/Legendary sidemen, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith at the drums and Jerry Portnoy on the harp. Pinetop also frequents the band of another alumnus of Muddy, guitarist Bob Margolin. "Yeah, the older I get, the more they work me!"

Continuum and climax characterize the top five vote-getters of the blues. Pinetop's album hearkens back to timeless roots. Olu Dara's *In The World—From Natchez to New York* offers a unique time-warp of styles, from his solo vocal, guitar and "aboriginal" trumpet on "Father Blues," sounding like an ancient echo from the fields, to his edgy hip-hop couplets on "Jungle Jay." Joe Louis Walker's *Great Guitars* is just that: a gathering of masters and friends in a cross-generational jam, including Gatemouth Brown, Buddy Guy, Taj Mahal, Ike Turner, Steve Cropper and some "Low Down Dirty" slide guitar from Bonnie Raitt. B.B. King's *Deuces Wild* revisits some of B.B.'s all-time hits with a cross-section of American pop, including a get-down of Olympian guitar with Eric Clapton, a romp with the Rolling Stones, a touching "Night Life" with Willie Nelson and an Aretha Franklin classic with the ubiquitous Raitt. And last but most loving, *Sing It!* brings together two vocal vets of the blues, Tracy Nelson and Marcia Ball, with their idol, the "Soul Queen of New Orleans," Irma Thomas, altogether cooking up a feast of heart-breakers, ass-kickers and other diva delights. —*Michael Bourne*

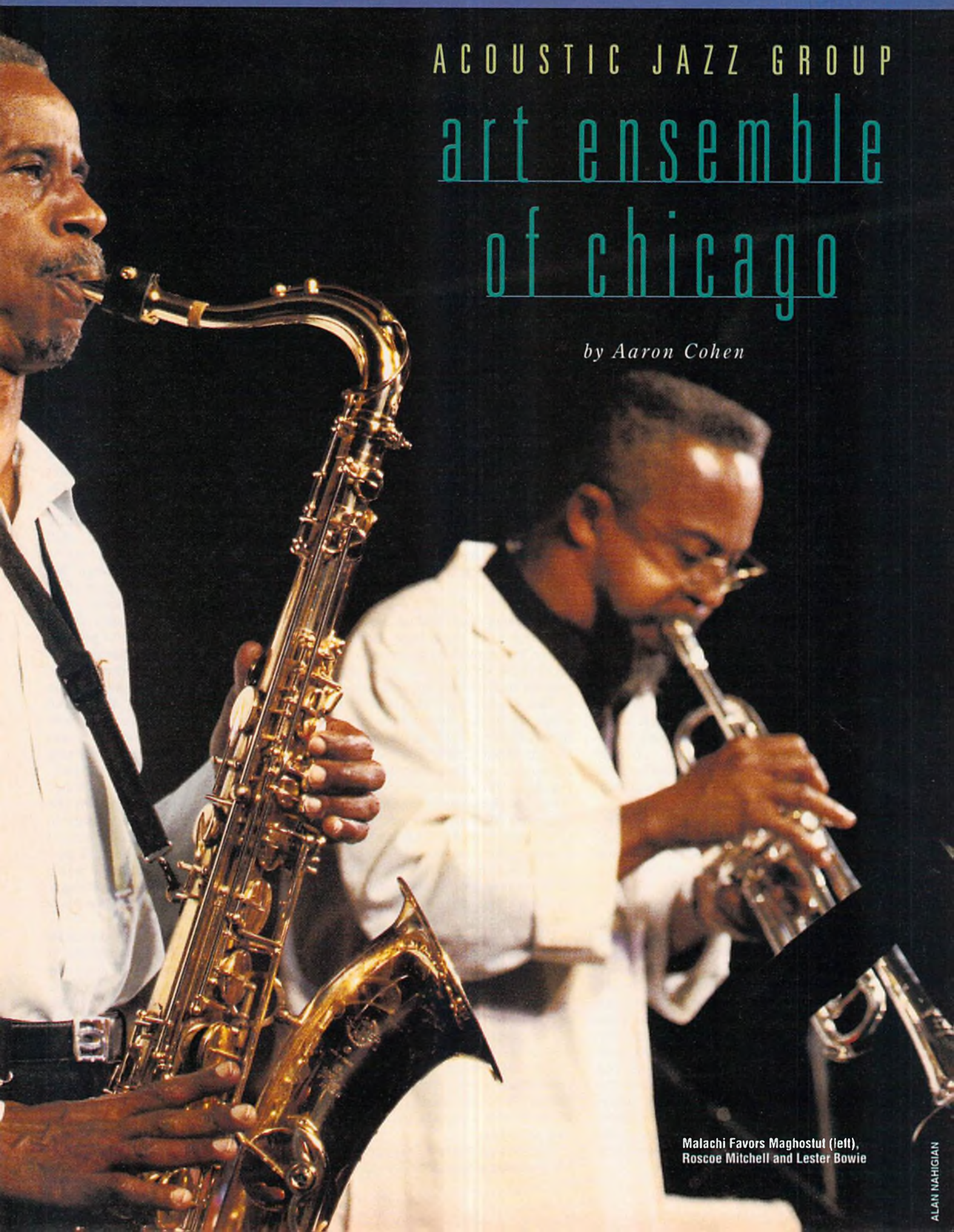
Acoustic Jazz Group

68 Art Ensemble of Chicago
64 Roy Hargrove
60 Phil Woods
54 Charlie Haden's Quartet West
50 Joe Lovano
27 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio
26 Ornette Coleman
23 Clusone Trio
22 Joshua Redman
18 Herbie Hancock
17 John Zorn's Masada
15 Tommy Flanagan Trio
14 Ethnic Heritage Ensemble

ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

art ensemble of chicago

by Aaron Cohen



Malachi Favors Maghostut (left), Roscoe Mitchell and Lester Bowie

ALAN NAHIGIAN

The Art Ensemble of Chicago has been together for more than 30 years. Throughout this time they have demonstrated how extraordinary discoveries can arise from intuitive group affinity. But another big reason for the ensemble's ongoing coalescence is that the members know that three decades is not such a long time.

When Down Beat called the ensemble musicians to talk about their recent activities, drummer Famoudou Don Moye discussed the group's recording in Jamaica. Moye worked with Kumina and Nyabinghi drummers, who he said are "the Maroons who rebelled against the British and subsequent Jamaican governments, so they got their own way of doing things and the music evolved out of that. It relates back to old African influences, and there's a whole historic thing to that."

Moye then added, "It was good to see those cats down there maintaining that tradition."

Compared to the Maroons' freedom struggles, the Art Ensemble's clinching of the Down Beat Critics Poll award for Acoustic Jazz Group may seem minor. But this year's victory reveals a great deal about their music's resonance across the jazz media spectrum. Their win also indicates the parallels between the contemporary jazz scene and the era when the Art Ensemble initially brought their experiments from Chicago's South Side to the world.

"I would say this music is gaining prominence all over again with the same type of intensity that was felt in the '60s," Art Ensemble multireedist Roscoe Mitchell says. "Certainly there's going to be a much larger, younger group of people who are coming over to this type of music. It's got that same kind of effect when Miles Davis put the rock musicians in his band and was able to pull in people who were borderline rock fans and was still able to maintain his sophistication with his jazz harmonies."

Back in their early years, the Art Ensemble were a part of, while distinguished from, many of the opposing streams in jazz. They could swing and play the changes, but they did not always, which mystified the pervasive hard-bop orthodoxy. At the same time, their collective improvisation, compositions, use of "little instruments" (bells, whistles), theatrics and development of sound/space interaction differed from the outwardly expressive insurgent saxophonists on the East Coast. In many ways, these demarcations exist today: Neoclassicists have been aligning themselves with the bop orthodoxy since the '80s. And on the current free-improv side of the fence, many American and European musicians recall the fervent tones of the '60s firebrands. The Art Ensemble is still distinctive.

In 1979, Larry Birnbaum wrote in Down Beat that the Art Ensemble's unbroken series of structured episodes are not "free-jazz." Perhaps, but what's also clear is that free-jazz created the foundation for the Art Ensemble to emerge, and its principles continue to sustain the band.

"What we feel about free-jazz is we feel free to play anything we feel like," says trumpeter Lester Bowie. "We can play a tempo, we cannot play a tempo. We can consider that sort of free-fall as a color. We consider bebop as a color. Dixieland is a color. Rap is a color. It's like a style of music that can be used in the context of a much larger picture. If you're free enough to go in and out of all of these styles and combine them, you can send a whole other message."

This year's award also reflects the scope of the Art Ensemble's international influence. Their time in France in the late '60s and early '70s has become legendary, and they visit the country regularly. A couple of years ago, the ensemble performed with the Bremen Chamber Philharmonic orchestra in Germany. The Art Ensemble were preparing for their second tour of the year when I spoke to them in late May. Such support has helped sustain them through times when their recordings are not released.

"We do prime time TV shows in Europe all the time," Bowie says. "And it's not just us, but there are jazz groups who are constantly on the tube and constantly on the radio. You have all ages of people who have been into the music for a long time. As opposed to Americans denying it, you have other people embracing it. And this has gone on for quite a few years—in France, in Poland. There are musicians playing in Poland, you wouldn't believe what they're playing."

Mitchell points out that the group has maintained a large following in the United States, even if the press has been a few steps behind the listeners.

"The Art Ensemble does have an audience in the States, because everywhere we go, the house is always packed and we don't even have a record out," Mitchell says. "You can't say that nobody likes the Art Ensemble in the States when we did a sold-out concert in New York at Alice Tully Hall—Marsalis doesn't even fill a hall like that. And we did a sold-out concert at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. But I'm not all concerned about these other concerns. I'm getting older, there's a lot of things I want to learn, it takes time to do those, and it's a matter of priority. It's more interesting to me just to do it."

Arranging demanding priorities has become an increasing consideration among the Art Ensemble. All of them devote time to their groups outside the band—Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy and Mitchell's projects have garnered particularly high profiles. Two years ago, long-time member saxophonist Joseph Jarman left the ensemble to devote more energy to directing the Brooklyn Buddhist Association (although he still performs; recently in Chicago he was a part of Mitchell's 20-year anniversary performance of his *LRG/The Maze* recording—see Page 83).

"We have missed Joseph's personality as far as his tone, his contribution to the music," Bowie says. "But there was no compensation because the music stands alone regardless of who's there. The music that we play would be the same type of music if one, two, or three of us weren't even there."

"Coming up in the Art Ensemble and Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, our practice is to do with what you have," says bassist Malachi Favors Maghostut. "For a long time we did not have a drummer. We wanted one, but didn't have one until

Moye came along. Joseph is a Buddhist priest, he's got a dojo, and that's what he wants to do. But if he ever decides to come back, he's the man."

With Favors and Moye remaining in Chicago, Mitchell in Wisconsin and Bowie in Brooklyn, the Art Ensemble's projects take considerable planning. But geographical dispersement is not a serious barrier to their collaborations.

"That's one thing about the technical age that we're living in," Mitchell says. "It used to be people had to be in one place, but now you can be almost anywhere and be in contact with people."

"We usually meet two or three weeks ahead of a tour," Bowie says. "We organize tours so that we get all the work at once. And we get together before that for rehearsal. And then we just go."

Bowie says the Art Ensemble would appreciate more opportunities to present their recent large-scale endeavors to a home audience.

"We would like people to understand the events that we've already done: the Art Ensemble with symphony orchestras; the Art Ensemble with dance groups; the Art Ensemble with African drummers; the Art Ensemble tributes to the blues tradition of Chicago—it has never played Chicago, but it's been played all over the world. So there's a lot of things that we have done that people in this country don't even realize."

Another visionary jazz group that had considerable longevity was the Modern Jazz Quartet, who shared many attributes with the Art Ensemble. Both groups drew inspiration from the American jazz tradition along with various strains of European classicism. Just as all members of the Art Ensemble have doubled on percussion instruments, the MJQ's rhythm section was notably percussive (accepting Cecil Taylor's definition, the piano and vibraharp can be considered finely tuned drums). And sartorial rituals are important for both groups. The MJQ's matching formal evening wear declared that jazz must be taken as seriously as any other concert music. Bowie's white laboratory coat and Favors' and Moye's African face-paint affirm that their traditions need to be investigated and revered.

"The guys in the MJQ are like our fathers," Bowie says. "We picked up many clues from them and all the rest of the guys who were our immediate predecessors. It's the younger generation that didn't do the same thing, and that's why you got this big lull right now in the music."

If there is such a widespread silence in creative jazz, the members of the Art Ensemble are determined in their optimism.

"You can't put away good music," Mitchell says. "We're examples of music that's developing all the time. To try to suppress some kind of music and say that 'this other music is happening' and jumping in and out of this fad or that one, that never really works in the end. Because what happens is people go back to what was really music. If we follow the history of music, there are certain people I'm going to be listening to for the rest of my life, and there are other folks I'm not. So the music has always been developing over time, and that's the way it's going to go down."

"I think people should understand that some things have to be added," Bowie says. "This isn't 1947, '57, '67, or '97. It's '98 getting ready to be 2000, and we want to go into the millennium looking forward, not backward, and I think people understand that now. That we're not out to destroy anything, or anyone's concepts. We're just trying to enhance it." **DB**

ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

Talent Deserving Wider Recognition

brad mehldau

Acoustic Jazz Group
TDWR
51 Brad Mehldau
26 Leon Parker
26 Rova
25 Roy Hargrove
23 Clusone Trio
22 Joe Lovano
20 Nicholas Payton
20 Tiny Bell Trio
17 Joshua Redman
16 Ethnic Heritage Ensemble
14 Ralph Peterson Fo'tet
14 John Zorn's Masada
12 James Williams' ICU
11 Myra Melford
11 Jacky Terrasson

ENID FARBER

It was evident right away on Brad Mehldau's 1995 Warner Bros. debut that the blossoming young pianist already played like a master, in his touch and phrasing, in his feeling for colorful melodies and harmonies, and especially in his intimate interplay with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy. The Brad Mehldau Trio has since recorded two *The Art Of The Trio* CDs (the first in the studio, the second live at the Village Vanguard), and they were voted this year's TDWR Acoustic Jazz Group.

"I think the strength of the trio is that we have no pretext about what's going to happen," says Mehldau. "It's more about how a tune develops over time than me coming in with a set thing to say. I almost never tell Jorge to play a swing beat or a Latin thing or tell Larry to play quarter notes or walk or don't walk. There's very little arranging. It's what takes place because of the level of trust that's developed among the three of us from playing together so much."

Though his name is on the trio, Mehldau thinks of the group as a co-op. "It's important for me to know that the music is compelling for *them*. I know how I've felt when I've been on other people's gigs, when it's been a drag when you don't have any freedom to express yourself. I always want to keep the trio interesting for each of us. I never want it to be work. This trio is precious to me. It's as good as it gets for me. It's real improvisation on a group level."

Mehldau, who also topped TDWR in the Piano category (see Page 78), nonetheless enjoys working from time to time as a sideman. "I love playing with someone like [saxophonists] Mark Turner or Josh Redman, someone with a really strong vision musically. Disappearing into someone else's music can also be gratifying."

He's especially enjoyed playing and recording in a trio with bassist Charlie Haden and saxophonist Lee Konitz (*Alone Together*, Blue Note; see "CD Reviews" April '98). "It's exciting to be with two musical personalities who are so established in their identities," says Mehldau, who looks forward to doing more with them. "You can learn about your own identity and how to assert who you are. Charlie's approach to the bass and to music is so much *him*. The great thing about Lee is that if he's not hearing something, he just won't play. When he does hear something and plays, it has meaning to it. Music is not just filling up space and getting to the next lick."

And he's gigging more as a soloist. "That's been a new thing for me just in the last year. I've always improvised at the piano, but it's always been a private experience. The trick for me now is to find that same comfort level with an audience that I have when I'm playing at home—or when I'm playing with the trio.

"The piano is so compelling, because you have the potential to do so many different things at once and in a direct way. You can suggest more than one note on a saxophone, but the piano is *about* harmony, and I think harmony is always going to intrigue me. There's a whole world in those 12 tones, an infinite quality, and the more I look into it, the more I see that I'm only scratching the surface."

If he's only scratching, he's already scratching deep. —*Michael Bourne*

ANNUAL CRITICS POLL DOWN BEAT 46TH

ARRANGER

bill holman

ALAN NAHIGIAN

modern-minded saxophonist/composer Chris Potter recently said he'd been listening to a lot of 20th century classical composers like Messiaen, Bartok, Berg, Ives and Stravinsky.

In a June conversation with Bill Holman, the bandleader/arranger said he'd been listening to "contemporary classical music: Berg, Messiaen, Ligeti, Lutoslawski, of course, Bartok, he goes all the way through. He's my mainstay."

Potter's 27; Holman's 71.

Perhaps the latter's choices partly explain why, after a 40-plus-year career, he's been chosen top Arranger in the Down Beat International Critics Poll for the first time. Like so many younger, in-vogue artists, from Potter and Kenny Garrett to Renee Rosnes and Brad Mehldau, Holman thinks modern, hears modern, enjoys modern and writes modern.

Certainly, Holman's music has had a contemporary, forward-leaning edge for some time. In the '80s, there was the adventurous work he wrote for saxophone and orchestra, debuted at the Los Angeles Music Center by Stan Getz and the New American Orchestra. On his 1995 Grammy-winning CD, *A View From The Side* (JVC), he offered a piece at least partially inspired by Ives' "The Unanswered Question" called "I Didn't Ask." And last year, after his friend Gerry Mulligan's death, Holman concocted a spirited, atonal-leaning tribute to the baritonist.

Arranger

109	**Bill Holman**
95	George Russell
53	Melba Liston
47	Toshiko Akiyoshi
42	Slide Hampton
35	Benny Carter
34	Bob Belden
32	Wynton Marsalis
31	Carla Bley
25	Chico O'Farrill

Still, despite his previous two Grammys (the first in 1987 for his arrangement of "Take the 'A' Train" for Doc Severinsen's Tonight Show Band, the second for Best

Instrumental Composition for "A View From The Side"), Holman hadn't rated higher than eighth (in 1997, 10th in 1996) with the Down Beat critics—though he placed second to Maria Schneider in the Readers Poll last year, and ninth in 1996.

Then along came Monk.

Holman's *Brilliant Corners: The Music Of Thelonious Monk* (JVC; see "CD Reviews" Sept. '97) has probably received more exposure than any of his previous—and equally dynamic—albums. The recording stretches the idea of how one might interpret Monk's idiosyncratic compositions.

Holman, who won a 1998 Best Instrumental Arrangement Grammy for his version of "Straight, No Chaser," sees the Monk album as one of the highpoints of his career. "With the Monk stimulus and my decision to go the way I did with it, the music all seemed to come off," he says. "If you want to make an arrangement sound like Monk, you can use things he played, like wide intervals. But it's a much different thing to write a piece that sounds like me, using his music."

The West Coast-based Holman feels that *Brilliant Corners* was at least one factor in his winning the Critics Poll, but there are one or two others, among them longevity. "There's the fact that I survived for so long, that I'm still here. And I don't know what [the critics] have been hearing. I don't know who's heard any of the stuff I've done in Europe," he says, referring to his various engagements over the past two decades with German radio orchestras (NDR, WDR), the Metropole Orchestra in Holland and others. The first album of any of this material—*Further Adventures*, done with the Metropole—is now out. *A Personal Voice*, written for and featuring Lee Konitz, also recorded with the Metropole, is due for September release.

Holman's career began as an instrumentalist, and his acclaim as an orchestral writer developed with such still-memorable pieces as "Stompin' At The Savoy," "Theme And Variations" and "Kingfish," all written for, and recorded by, Stan Kenton in the early-to-mid-'50s (all available on the Mosaic boxed set *Stan Kenton: The Complete Capitol Recordings Of The Holman And Russo Charts*). That's when he first got votes in the burgeoning Critics Poll, but never a lot, sticking mostly around eighth place, as he had until this year.

"[The votes] dwindled in the middle '60s and then disappeared, as I did," he laughed, referring to a period from 1965–'75 when he wasn't leading a band and was doing for-hire work, particularly for singers. But before, after and even during that period, Holman wrote for the best: Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Mel Lewis, et al.

These days, Holman's activity is far more brisk in Europe than in the States. "For several years, there've been no bands here to write for, except the ones at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center," he says. "So you just go where the bands are if you want to write big band music."

Holman's fall European schedule is full. In October, he'll offer new work at the Generations '98 festival in Frauenfeld, Switzerland, near Zurich, then travel to Cologne, Germany, to appear with the WDR band. In November, he fronts the UMO Big Band in Helsinki, Finland, then goes to Holland, where other new pieces will be played by the Maastrecht Conservatory big band.

Will Holman's win perhaps increase awareness of the fact that first-rate jazz can come from the West Coast? "It might remind people that they should look a little further," he says. "There's always been players out here that people talked about, but usually the writers that they talk about are in TV or pictures."

Finally, does the long-overdue poll victory make Bill Holman happy? Dumb question. "Hell, yes," he semi-roars, laughing. "And now that I got it, look out!"

—Zan Stewart

antonio hart

ALAN NAHIGIAN

david sanchez

© ANDREW LEPLEY

THE TDWR

by Michael Bourne

SAX SECTION

THE TDWR SAX SECTION

Talent Deserving Wider Recognition does not always mean "newcomer." TDWR musicians sometimes have been on the scene for quite some time—but without enough of the acknowledgement or encouragement that the critics feel they deserve.

"I'm thrilled that critics are thinking about what I'm doing," says soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom, voted TDWR for the umpteenth year. "I'm happy that they've noticed what I'm doing, period." Actually, she hasn't recorded a new album since *The Nearness* in 1996 and hasn't composed a major project for more than a year—though she's nonetheless interested in the ways space and movement can affect music and musicians. "I'm working on music that involves motion for instruments in a planetarium setting, but nothing on the scale of the dance project I did for Pilobolus or the orchestral piece I composed for the American Composers Orchestra that we premiered in Carnegie Hall a few years ago."

Instead, she's been performing much more with her trio or quartet—and retrenching herself in the music. "I've really found a lot of energy and excitement playing this year with Bobby Previte, Mark Dresser and Fred Hersch. I'll be taking the group to Australia and Brazil, and we'll be playing Sweet Basil in August.

"I'm finding a renewed interest in playing melodies *and* a greater freedom. A period of time comes when you reassess what you're doing, and somehow I'm feeling myself coming back into the music with a different vitality. Whatever musical project I'm doing these days, I'm feeling a relaxation or an honesty about who I am and what I do that's coming on strong. Sonny Rollins went to the bridge, right? All of us find a way of doing that, of stepping back and re-assessing. I know there's been something going on in my head about freeing up my voice, and now when I'm playing, walls are coming down.

"I've gotten into electronics, sound and movement, the space program, music and art, music and theatre, all different angles but on the same [plane]." And then there's just *playing*. "It's those transcendental moments when everything is right on the bandstand and you want *that feeling* again!"

This year's TDWR Sax Section also includes two musicians who've been around a while but lately have stepped forward as players to be reckoned with, alto saxist Antonio Hart and tenor saxist David Sanchez.

Hart came to New York around 1991 in the second wave of "Young Lions," and soon was gigging alongside Roy Hargrove, Christian McBride and other contemporaries. "It was definitely a good time to come to New York, and good to play with those guys, but I moved to New York really to go to graduate school," Hart says. "I wasn't too interested in being on the road. I felt I was behind those cats. Thankfully, I happened to get pulled along."

Though he's been on the road much more than expected, recently as a leader, Hart has continued to study music, going far beyond neo-bop. *Here I Stand*, his 1997 Grammy-nominated Impulse! album, included a variety of grooves and other interests. "I wanted to show that I'm not one-dimensional. I don't just play straightahead," he says. "I listen to more world music: Egyptian, Arabian, West African, Latin. And a lot of European classical music: Shostakovich, Bartok, Ravel. You can hear all that on *Here I Stand*. That's where my heart is taking me, to try and find out what my voice is going to be on the horn and in my compositions. I'm not going to be writing 32-bar songs for the traditional quartet/quintet setup."

Unsigned since being dropped by Impulse!, Hart isn't thinking about his next record or other projects. Ironically, just as he's heading into his prime years, Hart feels that he's at a crossroads. "I want to

Soprano Saxophone		Alto Saxophone		Tenor Saxophone		Baritone Saxophone	
TDWR		TDWR		TDWR		TDWR	
70	Jane Ira Bloom	67	Antonio Hart	58	David Sanchez	78	Gary Smulyan
60	Jane Bunnett	43	Sonny Simmons	37	Fred Anderson	70	James Carter
53	Chris Potter	42	Vincent Herring	36	James Carter	55	Scott Robinson
43	James Carter	41	Kenny Garrett	35	Joshua Redman	48	Ronnie Cuber
42	Evan Parker	38	Steve Coleman	33	Craig Handy	47	John Surman
31	Steve Wilson	36	Jesse Davis	30	Chris Potter	40	Cecil Payne
30	Greg Osby	36	Steve Wilson	29	Dewey Redman	32	Mwata Bowden
23	Ari Brown	35	Wessell Anderson	27	Seamus Blake	23	Don Byron
				23	Ellery Eskelin	21	Joe Temperley
				23	Mark Turner	20	Vinny Golia
				22	Javon Jackson		

take time to develop and find out what I'm trying to say. I've felt for a long time that I was just doing what was supposed to be done as a jazz musician—studying songs, learning lines, going through the motions. If I played with Nat Adderley, I played a certain style. If I played with McCoy Tyner, I played a certain style. Now, I'm trying to reach for Antonio Hart."

Sanchez also has come into his own over the last several years. One of the last disciples of Dizzy Gillespie, he's very much determined to continue Dizzy's interplay of Latin American music with jazz. "I've been trying to bring another perspective of playing Latin American rhythms with a jazz interpretation. Sometimes, when people play Latin American rhythms, there's very little jazz in it. I want a real *interaction* with jazz, and I want people to *hear* Puerto Rico."

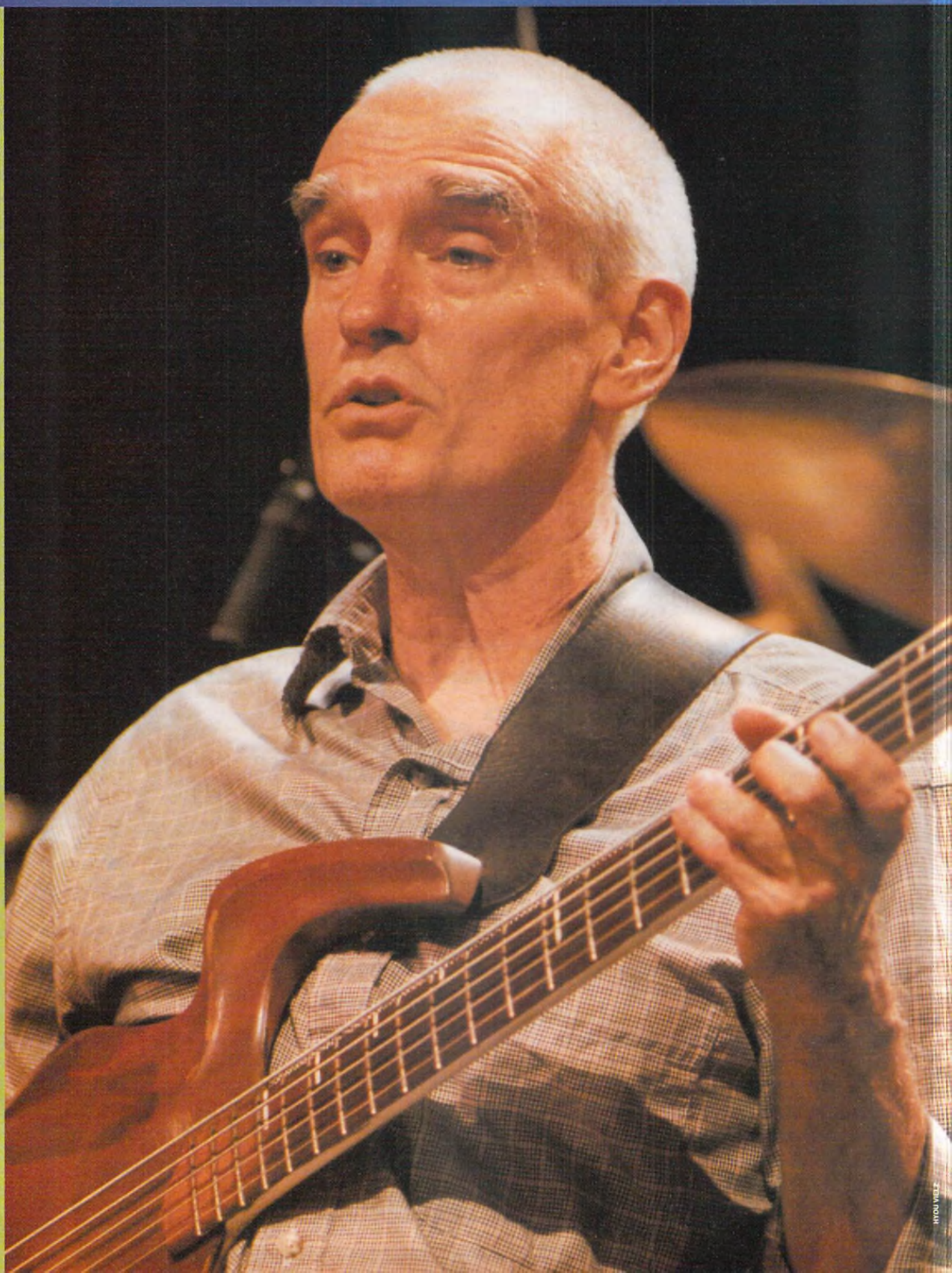
Sanchez is especially excited about his newest album for Columbia, *Obsesión*, a celebration of popular songs from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Brazil, some with a combo but most with horns and strings arranged by Carlos Franzetti. "Everyone has done standards, George Gershwin, Cole Porter. But what about the great songs of Latin America? I'm playing Rafael Hernández pieces with the folkloric rhythms of Puerto Rico. There's a song by José Dolores Quiñones, a beautiful composer of boleros. There's Jobim, and 'Cuban Fantasy' by Ray Bryant. I call the album *Obsesión* because of the song by Pedro Flores, but I've had this idea for a long time. I feel like I'm telling a story, and it's easy to tell because I'm part of it."

While he hopes to perform the music of *Obsesión* live, he's otherwise been on the road with his group, with McCoy Tyner's Latin All-Stars or, lately, gigging with Roy Haynes. "It's important to work with masters, for the impact and how much you learn from them. Sometimes you don't even realize how much you're learning. And I'm listening to much more music, like flamenco. I'm inspired by different cultures and want to put them together with jazz. That's what Dizzy used to do."

Anchoring the TDWR Sax Section is a musician who's really come into his prime this year, baritone saxist Gary Smulyan. He recorded a Criss Cross album with strings arranged by Bob Belden and played Valentine's Day with strings at the new New York jazz joint the Jazz Standard. "The joy of recording with strings was fantastic. Everyone wants to play with strings, and I was very thankful for the opportunity." He also joined Ronnie Cuber and Nick Brignola this year as the Three Baritone Band for a Dreyfus tribute to Gerry Mulligan. And he continues as a regular with three very different big bands—the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band and the Mingus Big Band.

"There's a different concept to all of these bands, so you have to change character a bit to meet the needs of the music. Jon Faddis has a certain sense of how the Carnegie band should sound. The Mingus band is much looser. Sometimes the arrangement is just a suggestion. The Vanguard band is a combination of both. It's loose but there's a structure to it. I enjoy all three of these situations, but I really like playing with the Vanguard band, just to have the opportunity to play music of Thad Jones. He was one of my heroes."

Smulyan will tour this summer back and forth between the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and the Three Baritone Band. If there's time, he plays around Europe, usually with an Italian trio, and he's working on his next Criss Cross album—"no reeds, just low brass, a *Miles Ahead* kind of thing." But that's all happening when and *if* there's time. Really, Smulyan didn't even have much time to react happily to being named a TDWR. A student was waiting, with a rehearsal thereafter and a gig that night—not that he's complaining. "I have enough to keep me going pretty much all the time." **DB**



ELECTRIC BASS

steve swallow

Electric Bass

219	Steve Swallow
87	Marcus Miller
66	Bob Cranshaw
53	John Patitucci
37	Bill Laswell
31	Stanley Clarke
26	Christian McBride
19	Jerome Harris
14	Eberhard Weber
12	Anthony Jackson
12	Charnett Moffett

Steve Swallow is like his avian namesake: His electric bass dives like falling grace, and his increasingly intriguing compositions fly with effortless elegance and apparent simplicity that belie an aerodynamic complexity. Swallow tunes limn lines as sleek as Brancusi sculptures; they stand demurely as benchmarks of post-Shorter dialectic of economy and harmonic advancement.

Paralleling two gently synergistic decades in partner Carla Bley's ensembles, Swallow's slender lead-date output is quietly momentous: stunning studies of Robert Creeley poems (1980's *Home*, ECM), supple flexings for hornfree octet (1992's *Swallow*, Xtra-WATT) and reworked Tin Pan Alley classics (1993's *Deconstructed* and 1996's *The Real Book*, both XtraWATT) to madden tune-namers and inspire new generations.

As sky swallows demurely cede to more aggressive species, the bassist downplays his long string of Down Beat Critics Poll wins on Electric Bass with a characteristically deferential and inquisitive remark: "What interests me is the TDWR category. The critics are doing legwork for me by pointing out people whose names I take with me to the record store. I have an average profile as a buyer: I revisit the glorious memories of my youth [with reissues], but I'm fighting those impulses by buying records of people I haven't yet heard. I also buy more classical than jazz, which has to do with my focus on writing, more important as you get a sense of your own mortality."

As a composer/arranger, and as a bandleader, Swallow exhibits veiled influences from clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre, in whose trio he made his first LPs in 1961. Pianist Paul Bley, a 40-year bandmate in the Giuffre trio and ex-husband of Carla, says that Swallow "is unique in that everybody he's ever played with loves him as a person. His playing is as hip as his relationships are empathetic: He'll predict your feelings and next moves. That's why I told Jimmy before I introduced them that he need not make requirements of Steve prior to performance."

Swallow gets a thrill when 20-year-olds send him tapes or CDs covering his tunes, like "Falling Grace" or "Eiderdown," especially when "someone humbles me with a really good chord substitution. [Reflecting on the jazz continuum] makes you seem a small cog in something vast and wonderful. That's the reward."

Swallow is heartened to find that composers get better as they get older: He favors late Beethoven, Brahms and Shostakovich. "And I'm a predator—once you lose your innocence, you always steal!

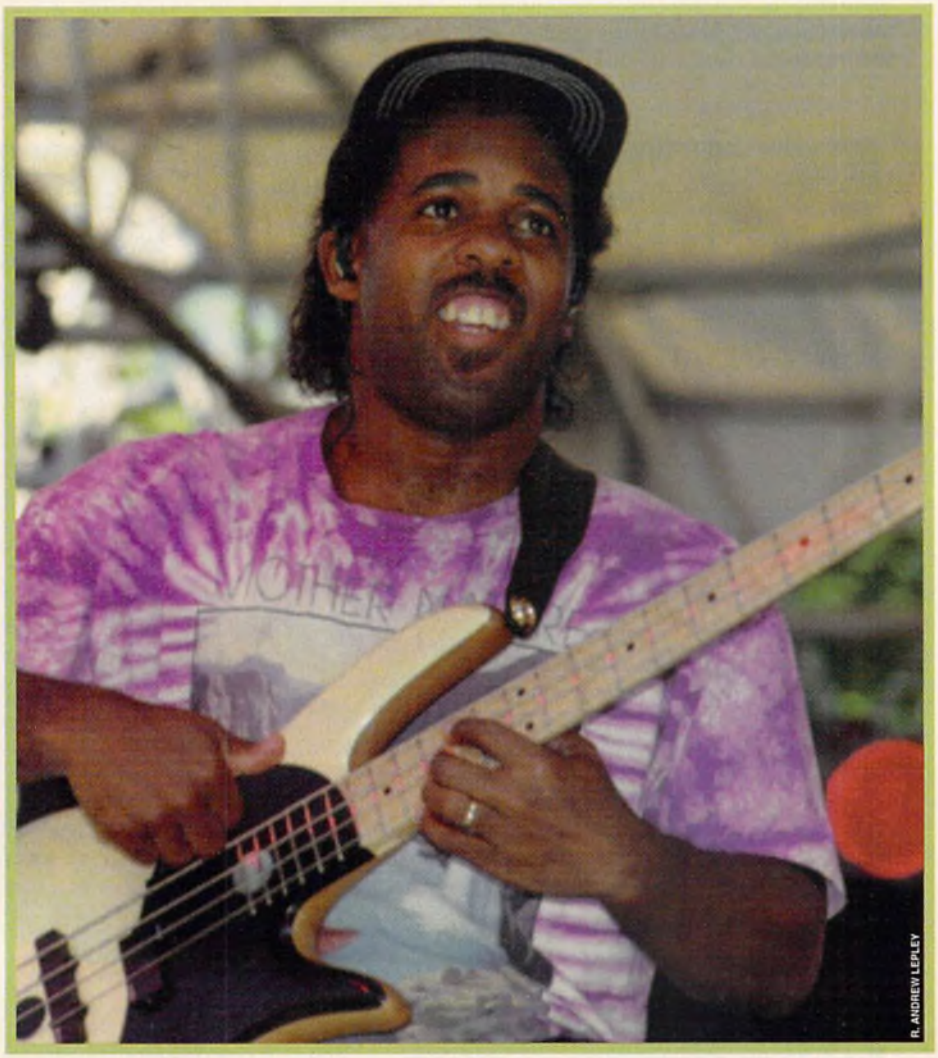
"I'm a songwriter—I rarely get beyond 32 bars, though often a few less!—and singers influence me. When I picked up electric bass, my heroes were still Wilbur Ware, Percy Heath and Paul Chambers, but the Motown singers [also] hooked me: Marvin Gaye and Otis Redding. Jim Hall drew me into bossa nova, but it was Joao Gilberto and his relationship to his guitar that really killed me."

—Fred Bouchard

ELECTRIC BASS

Talent Deserving Wider Recognition

victor wooten



Electric Bass
TDWR
48 Victor Wooten
47 Bill Laswell
33 Eberhard Weber
30 Lonnie Plaxico
30 Avery Sharpe
22 Brian Sandstrom
20 James Genus
19 Marcus Miller
13 John Patitucci
10 Andy Gonzalez
10 Charnett Moffett

It might seem unusual that someone best known as a sideman might pop to the top in the Down Beat Critics Poll, but this year's Talent Deserving Wider Recognition winner on Electric Bass is no ordinary player, and the band he's been an integral part of since 1989 is, well, not your typical group. Victor Wooten is one of three nimble-fingered original members of Bela Fleck & The Flecktones,

a unit whose members defy stylistic categorization and wow audiences with their chops. (The regulars are banjo ace Fleck, Wooten, and Wooten's drum synthesizer-playing brother Roy, better known as Future Man.)

"The three of us defy categories," Wooten says. "I am doing my own thing, whether it comes out sounding original or not. It is Bela's band, but he gives us the freedom to play the way we want. That makes the music what it is more than having one person say what it should be. It allows each of us to put ourselves fully in the music."

The high visibility in Fleck's Grammy-winning band and a memorable *Lonesome Pine Special* on public television a few years back ("Bass Instincts" with Wooten, Ray Brown and bluegrass ace Edgar Meyer) have brought Wooten to the forefront, as have his two recordings: *A Show Of Hands* and *What Did He Say?* (both on Compass). The former was a solo tour de force showcasing his ability to blend bass, rhythm and melody into a performance without overdubbing. His wide-ranging chops may rank as the most inventive on the instrument since Jaco Pastorius.

In addition to 120 to 150 gigs a year as a Flecktone, Wooten finds time to appear at clinics with fellow bassist Steve Bailey and appear as a solo act with support from drummer J.D. Blair on a series of gigs that has included the House of Blues circuit. He's done some studio sessions with guitarist Scott Henderson and drummer Steve Smith (*Vital Tech Tones*, Tone Center), and jammed with Mike Stern at this year's NAMM convention. His own music tends to blend jazz chops with rap influences and funk rhythms.

Wooten, who turns 34 in September, has fond memories of the "Bass Instincts" special he did with Brown and Meyer, a program that showed the elder statesman clearly in awe of what he was hearing from the upstart, whom he had only met the night before. "It was great being next to somebody like Ray. I look back at that show, see myself standing behind him and feel real small in terms of my playing. But he carries you along. Ray gave me a bunch of compliments, and every time I see him, he still does.

"A lot of the guys who have been around for a long time are shocked when they see some of the things I am doing. Fortunately, they like it," Wooten says. "I am taking standard techniques but using them in a different, very musical way." A couple of years ago, he did a solo club performance at Canada's Winnipeg Jazz Festival. "I saw an older gentleman in the back of the room. It was Milt Hinton. I got the biggest thrill when he got out of his seat, moved up and sat in front, just watching. Then he took out his camera and took a picture. He really sat and listened. When they were our age, Ray and Milt were the guys on the edge of the cliff daring to jump. The younger guys who today are trying to keep it 'the way it was' give us more flak. 'The way it was' wasn't the way it was."

There is no end in sight for the Flecktones gig, which has garnered the band a steady stream of awards and recordings, including the June release of their seventh recording, *Left Of Cool* (Warner Bros.). "I am very fortunate with the success we've enjoyed," Wooten says. "I am probably the only bass player out there with a vehicle like this. If I come up with an idea during the day, I can try it out that night. It allows me a lot of freedom. Our music is always moving."

—Ken Franckling

critics poll results 1998

Big Band

247 Mingus Big Band
56 Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra
55 Bill Holman
54 Count Basie Orchestra
53 Maria Schneider
46 Carnegie Hall Jazz Band
44 Toshiko Akiyoshi
29 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra
27 McCoy Tyner
21 Joe Henderson Big Band

TDWR
56 Either/Orchestra
46 Gerald Wilson
45 George Gruntz Concert Band
42 Maria Schneider
30 William Parker Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra
22 Willem Breuker
20 John Fedchock N.Y. Big Band
20 Vienna Art Orchestra
18 Danish Radio Big Band
17 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra
13 Ed Palermo

Electric Jazz Group

103 John Scofield
95 Bill Frisell
94 Pat Metheny
59 Medeski Martin & Wood
55 Zawinul Syndicate
47 Steve Coleman
32 Ornette Coleman Prime Time
31 Yellowjackets
15 Paul Motian Electric Bebop Band
14 Henry Threadgill

TDWR
61 Medeski Martin & Wood
60 Charlie Hunter
38 Steve Coleman & Five Elements
36 Bela Fleck & The Flecktones
20 Wayne Horvitz & Zony Mash
18 Bill Frisell
15 Astral Project
13 Arcana
11 NRG Ensemble
8 Marcus Miller
8 Courtney Pine

Record Label of the Year

207 Verve
148 Blue Note
59 Mosaic
51 Concord
39 Columbia
32 Delmark
31 ECM
25 Impulse!
21 Black Saint/Soul Note
21 Evidence
21 Okkadisk

Producer

204 Michael Cuscuna
65 Bob Belden
60 Manfred Eicher
60 Orrin Keepnews
42 Lee Townsend
41 John Snyder
30 Richard Seidel
27 Craig Street
22 Giovanni Bonandrini
16 Bill Laswell

TDWR
40 Bob Belden
40 Bill Laswell
40 Don Sickler
28 Delfeayo Marsalis
27 Craig Street
19 Gerry Teekins
18 Lee Townsend
17 Bruno Johnson
15 Stefan Winter
14 Cecil Brooks III
10 Mark Morganelli

Composer

101 Wynton Marsalis
80 Ornette Coleman
65 Henry Threadgill
55 Benny Carter
52 Wayne Shorter
51 Maria Schneider
35 Horace Silver
31 Muhal Richard Abrams
31 Randy Weston
29 Carla Bley
22 Tom Harrell

TDWR
41 Tom Harrell
34 Maria Schneider
33 Dave Douglas
25 John Zorn
24 Jon Jang
23 Myra Melford
20 Horace Tapscott
16 Henry Threadgill
16 Gerald Wilson
15 John Scofield

Arranger

TDWR
55 Don Sickler
46 Bob Belden
38 Slide Hampton
31 Maria Schneider
28 George Gruntz
23 Butch Morris
20 Bob Florence
19 Bill Holman
19 Gerald Wilson
16 Jim McNeely
14 Melba Liston

Trumpet

118 Nicholas Payton
116 Tom Harrell
108 Roy Hargrove
95 Wynton Marsalis
52 Dave Douglas
51 Lester Bowie
40 Wallace Roney
38 Clark Terry
34 Ruby Braff
28 Art Farmer
27 Jon Faddis
26 Randy Brecker

TDWR
92 Dave Douglas
54 Kenny Wheeler
44 Tim Hagans
41 Nicholas Payton
33 Claudio Roditi
32 Marcus Printup
26 Malachi Thompson
24 Jon Faddis
24 Ron Miles
18 Dmitri Matheny

Soprano Saxophone

200 Steve Lacy
174 Wayne Shorter
104 Dave Liebman
57 Bob Wilber
44 Evan Parker
36 Jane Bunnett
27 Jane Ira Bloom
25 Branford Marsalis

Alto Saxophone

148 Phil Woods
103 Ornette Coleman
103 Kenny Garrett
92 Jackie McLean
80 Lee Konitz
40 Gary Bartz
40 Benny Carter
21 Bobby Watson
18 Steve Coleman

Tenor Saxophone

209 Sonny Rollins
125 Joe Lovano
88 Joe Henderson
44 Michael Brecker
44 Pharoah Sanders
43 David Murray
38 Joshua Redman
28 Johnny Griffin
25 James Carter
23 Wayne Shorter
17 James Moody

Baritone Saxophone

175 Hamiet Bluiett
158 Nick Brignola
89 Ronnie Cuber
70 Gary Smulyan
57 Cecil Payne
55 Joe Temperley
54 James Carter
42 John Surman
20 Howard Johnson
15 Mwata Bowden

Piano

112 Kenny Barron
74 Tommy Flanagan
61 Keith Jarrett
59 McCoy Tyner
50 Hank Jones
48 Cecil Taylor
44 Randy Weston
32 Herbie Hancock
30 Brad Mehldau
24 Gonzalo Rubalcaba

TDWR
61 Brad Mehldau
47 Marilyn Crispell
39 Jacky Terrasson
38 Danilo Perez
36 Cyrus Chestnut
30 Misha Mengelberg
24 Kenny Werner
23 Gonzalo Rubalcaba
18 Matthew Shipp
16 Myra Melford
14 Geri Allen

Organ

181 Jimmy Smith
97 Joey DeFrancesco
72 Jimmy McGriff
59 Jack McDuff
60 Lonnie Liston Smith
57 John Medeski
54 Larry Goldings
34 Charles Earland
22 Barbara Dennerlein
22 Melvin Rhyne

TDWR
70 Barbara Dennerlein
63 Dan Wall
61 John Medeski
49 Amina Claudine Myers
48 Larry Goldings
48 Wayne Horvitz
32 Joey DeFrancesco
26 Chris Foreman
18 Melvin Rhyne
15 Lonnie Liston Smith

Electric Keyboard

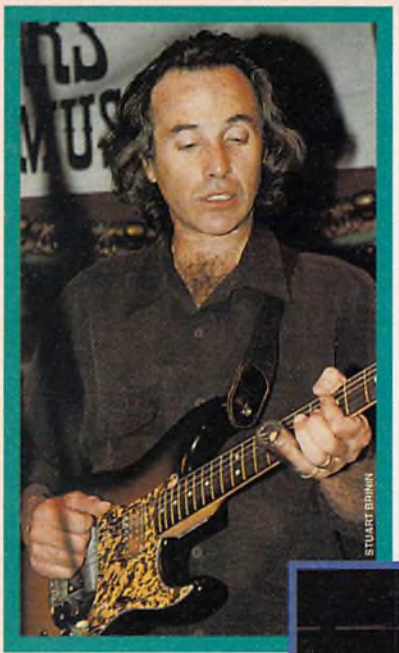
150 Joe Zawinul
99 Herbie Hancock
65 Chick Corea
65 John Medeski
61 Lyle Mays
40 Wayne Horvitz
29 Muhal Richard Abrams
12 Kenny Barron
12 Jim Beard

TDWR
55 John Medeski
33 Adam Holzman
40 Wayne Horvitz
40 Lyle Mays
25 Django Bates
24 John Surman
22 Richard Horowitz
13 Gil Goldstein
12 Richard Teitelbaum
8 Jim Baker
8 Uri Caine

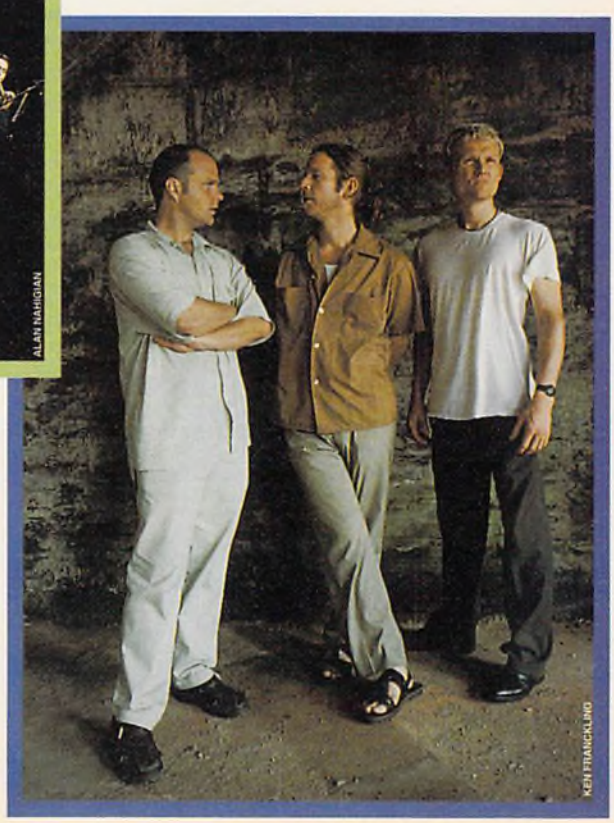
Guitar

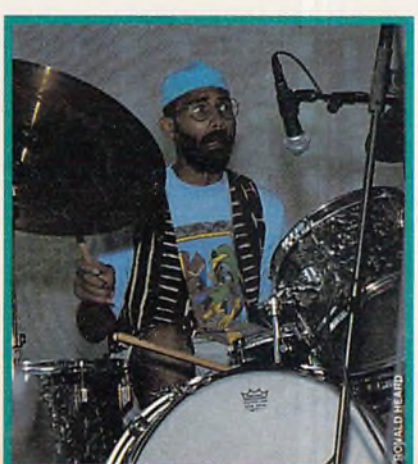
134 Bill Frisell
129 John Scofield
107 Jim Hall
90 Pat Metheny
70 Kenny Burrell
41 Pat Martino
27 John McLaughlin
26 James "Blood" Ulmer
23 Howard Alden
21 Derek Bailey
19 Charlie Hunter

TDWR
72 Charlie Hunter
53 Joe Morris
52 Russell Malone



Clockwise from top left: Ry Cooder, Regina Carter, Steve Turre, Don Sickler, Medeski Martin & Wood, Kahil El'Zabar, Phil Woods, Mingus Big Band, Milt Jackson





37 Howard Alden
31 Steve Masakowski
26 Mark Whitfield
24 Ben Monder
23 Peter Bernstein
22 Peter Leitch
21 Mark Elf
18 Jeffery Parker
18 Anthony Wilson

Acoustic Bass

166 Charlie Haden
146 Dave Holland
109 Ray Brown
61 Christian McBride
41 Ron Carter
37 George Mraz
32 Ray Drummond
30 Gary Peacock
25 Reggie Workman
20 William Parker
17 Buster Williams

TDWR
68 Christian McBride
45 William Parker
33 George Mraz
28 Charnett Moffett
27 Avishai Cohen
27 Peter Washington
23 Anthony Cox
22 Barry Guy
21 Reginald Veal
13 Ray Drummond

Drums

160 Elvin Jones
130 Roy Haynes
103 Jack DeJohnette
89 Max Roach
72 Billy Higgins
30 Andrew Cyrille
26 Idris Muhammad
26 Lewis Nash
19 Joey Baron
19 Jeff "Tain" Watts

TDWR
51 Bill Stewart
46 Brian Blade
42 Leon Parker
36 Lewis Nash
30 Joey Baron
29 Han Bennink
27 Jeff "Tain" Watts
22 Billy Hart
21 Gerry Hemingway
19 Winard Harper
17 Hamid Drake

Percussion

101 Tito Puente
81 Trilok Gurtu
67 Don Alias
61 Ray Barretto
52 Airto Moriera
45 Famoudou Don Moye
29 Mino Cinelu
27 Nana Vasconcelos
25 Poncho Sanchez
22 Jerry Gonzalez

TDWR
48 Kahil El'Zabar
41 Marilyn Mazur
35 Don Alias
33 Jerry Gonzalez
32 Ray Barretto
30 Giovanni Hidalgo
29 Hamid Drake
22 Steve Berrios
16 Leon Parker
16 Poncho Sanchez
15 Cafe

Trombone

176 Steve Turre
156 J.J. Johnson
104 Ray Anderson
93 Ku-umba Frank Lacy
34 George Lewis
32 Curtis Fuller
25 Al Grey
21 Roswell Rudd
17 Dan Barrett
17 Slide Hampton

TDWR
105 Conrad Herwig
89 Ku-umba Frank Lacy
66 Wycliffe Gordon
58 Robin Eubanks
52 Craig Harris
29 Steve Davis
28 George Lewis
25 Dan Barrett
13 Slide Hampton
11 Ray Anderson
10 Curtis Fuller
10 Albert Mangelsdorff
10 Roswell Rudd

Clarinet

232 Don Byron
111 Eddie Daniels
59 Kenny Davern
58 Buddy DeFranco
57 Marty Ehrlich
41 Alvin Batiste
41 Paquito D'Rivera
31 Jimmy Giuffre
29 Ken Peplowski
17 Phil Woods

TDWR
114 Ken Peplowski
62 Marty Ehrlich
53 Michael Moore
33 Alvin Batiste
31 Kenny Davern
31 Louis Sclavis
26 Ben Goldberg
24 Chris Speed
19 Don Byron
13 Eddie Daniels

Flute

162 James Newton
114 James Moody
112 Lew Tabackin
75 Henry Threadgill
69 Frank Wess
46 Dave Valentin
32 Sonny Fortune
27 Hubert Laws
16 Herbie Mann
12 Jane Bunnett

TDWR
64 Jane Bunnett
55 Kent Jordan
47 Sonny Fortune
26 Dave Valentin
24 Thomas Chapin
24 Robert Dick
20 Jamie Baum
15 Frank Wess
12 Henry Threadgill
10 Lew Tabackin

Vibes

250 Milt Jackson
189 Gary Burton
157 Bobby Hutcherson
45 Steve Nelson
27 Mike Mainieri
26 Lionel Hampton
24 Terry Gibbs
10 Khan Jamal
9 Joe Locke
8 Bill Ware

TDWR
106 Stefon Harris
103 Steve Nelson
55 Jay Hoggard
50 Joe Locke
46 Bill Ware
29 Cecilia Smith
28 Bryan Carrott
24 Mike Mainieri
21 Khan Jamal
18 Gunter Hampel

Violin

122 Regina Carter
118 Billy Bang
80 Leroy Jenkins
53 Stephane Grappelli
53 Jean-Luc Ponty
53 Claude "Fiddler" Williams
47 Mark Feldman
39 Johnny Frigo
37 John Blake
15 Svend Asmussen

TDWR
67 Mark Feldman
59 Regina Carter
50 John Blake
41 Johnny Frigo
31 Claude Williams
26 Jason Hwang
23 Billy Bang
22 India Cooke
22 Jean-Luc Ponty
20 Dominique Pifarelli

Miscellaneous Instrument

116 Howard Johnson (tuba)
108 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)
83 Steve Turre (conch shells)
44 Bela Fleck (banjo)
41 David Murray (bass clarinet)
26 Howard Levy (harmonica)
26 Ernst Reijseger (cello)
23 Bob Stewart (tuba)
19 Richard Galliano (accordion)
14 John Clark (french horn)

TDWR
61 Dino Saluzzi (accordion/bandoneon)
45 Bob Stewart (tuba)
31 Richard Galliano (accordion)
27 Marty Ehrlich (bass clarinet)
26 James Carter (bass clar., bass sax, etc.)
23 Eric Friedlander (cello)
22 Bela Fleck (banjo)
20 Tom Varner (french horn)
19 David Murray (bass clarinet)
16 Ernst Reijseger (cello)

Male Vocalist

130 Joe Williams
87 Kevin Mahogany
76 Mark Murphy
53 Tony Bennett
45 Jimmy Scott
44 Bobby McFerrin
40 Jon Hendricks
35 Andy Bey
35 Ray Charles

TDWR
81 Kurt Elling
60 Kevin Mahogany
50 Andy Bey
39 Freddie Cole
32 Miles Griffith
26 David Frishberg
26 Mark Murphy
26 John Pizzarelli
18 Bob Dorough
17 Phil Minton

Female Vocalist

166 Cassandra Wilson
130 Abbey Lincoln
122 Betty Carter
80 Shirley Horn
70 Dee Dee Bridgewater
65 Diana Krall
38 Dianne Reeves
25 Sheila Jordan
18 Carol Sloane

TDWR
44 Diana Krall
37 Kitty Margolis
31 Nnenna Freelon
28 Patricia Barber
28 Dominique Eade
27 Sheila Jordan
22 Dee Dee Bridgewater
20 Ann Dyer
19 Roseanna Vitro
16 Carol Sloane

Blues Artist of the Year

147 B.B. King
71 Charles Brown
61 Buddy Guy
54 Taj Mahal
50 John Lee Hooker
19 Olu Dara
19 Ronnie Earl
19 Otis Rush
16 Keb' Mo'
18 James Cotton
18 Joe Louis Walker
13 R.L. Burnside

TDWR
44 Joe Louis Walker
43 Lucky Peterson
30 Keb' Mo'
24 Robert Jr. Lockwood
18 Otis Rush
17 Charles Brown
15 Mighty Sam McLain
12 David Maxwell
10 Kelly Joe Phelps
10 Christine Santelli

Blues Group

66 Roomful of Blues
64 B.B. King
47 Charles Brown
40 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters
26 Buddy Guy
20 Taj Mahal
18 Joe Louis Walker & Boss Talkers
16 Gatemouth Brown

TDWR
35 Lucky Peterson
32 Taj Mahal & The Phantom Blues Band
23 Saffire The Uppity Blues Women
19 Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials
15 Little Charlie & The Nightcats

Beyond Artist of the Year

34 Bob Dylan
28 Cesaria Evora
27 Rubén González
20 Van Morrison
16 John Zorn
14 Milton Nascimento
13 Bill Frisell
13 Sting
10 Stevie Wonder

TDWR
29 Ry Cooder
17 Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
17 Me'Shell NdegeOcello
13 Lyle Lovett
10 Beck
10 Vinicius Cantuarra

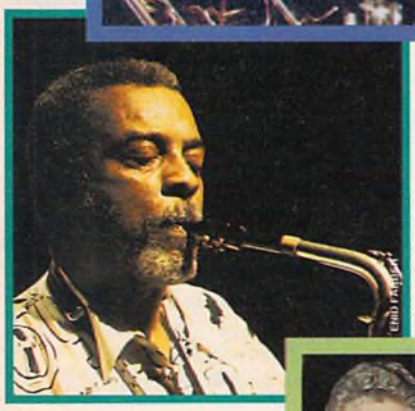
Beyond Album of the Year

30 Buena Vista Social Club, *Buena Vista Social Club* (World Circuit/ Nonesuch)
20 Moondog And The London Saxophonic, *Sax Pax For A Sax* (Atlantic)
16 Bob Dylan, *Time Out Of Mind* (Columbia)
15 Afro-Cuban All Stars, *A Poda Cuba Le Gusta* (World Circuit/Nonesuch)
13 Various Artists, *Cuba: I Am Time* (Blue Jackel)
13 The Skatalites, *Ball Of Fire* (Polygram)
12 Brian Eno, *Bang On A Can* (Point Music)

Beyond Group

38 Jerry Gonzalez Fort Apache Band
34 Los Lobos
33 Kronos Quartet
26 Ray Barretto's New World Spirit
17 Howard Johnson's Gravity
17 Morphine
15 Buena Vista Social Club
13 Los Van Van
13 NRBQ
10 Afro Cuban All Stars

TDWR
34 Liquid Soul
21 Los Musequitas de Mantanzas
19 Sun Ra Arkestra
15 Sonic Youth
13 Steve Coleman
10 Phish



From top to bottom: Cassandra Wilson, Howard Johnson, Hamiet Bluiett, Michael Cuscuna, Diana Krall

the critics

Following is a list of critics who voted in Down Beat's 46th Annual International Critics Poll. A total of 94 critics voted this year, distributing 10 points among up to three choices (no more than five votes per choice) in each of two categories: Established Talent and Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. The participants were:

Don Albert: DB; the Johannesburg Star; Tribute magazine; Radio Today; Jazz Journal International.
Frank Alkyer: editorial director, DB.
Jon Andrews: DB.
Zoë Anglesey: DB; Bomb; Jazziz; New York World; Vibe; The Multicultural Review; The Village Voice.
Robert Baird: music editor, Stereophile.
Robert Baranello: DB; Distinction; Long Island Nightlife.
Paul de Barros: DB; Seattle Times; Coda; 5/4; Earshot.
Peter Bastian: DB; Jazz Podium, Jazzthetik, Jazz Magazine (France).
Larry Birnbaum: DB; Pulse!; editor-in-chief, Rhythm Music; Stereophile.
Bob Blumenthal: DB; Boston Globe; Atlantic Monthly.
Brett Bonner: Living Blues; Blues Access.
Philip Booth: DB; Sarasota Herald-Tribune; Billboard; WUSF-FM (Tampa, Fla).
Fred Bouchard: DB; Jazz Times; Bossa; Boston Phoenix; WMBR-FM (Cambridge, Mass.)
Michael Bourne: DB; WBGO-FM (Newark, N.J.)
Herb Boyd: DB; NY Amsterdam News; Black World Today: Metro Times.
Stuart Brinin: DB; Pulse!; Living Blues; Blues Access.
Pawel Brodowski: editor, Jazz Forum (Poland).
Aaron Cohen: DB; Chicago Tribune; Coda.
Thomas Conrad: DB; Stereophile.
John Corbett: DB; The Wire; Pulse!; Live!; Coda; Chicago Reader; Chicago Sun-Times; author, *Extended Play: Sounding Off From John Cage To Dr. Funkenstein.*
Owen Cordle: Jazz Times; The News & Observer.
Joe Cunniff: DB; Hyde Park Herald; Northwest Leader; West Suburban Post.
Stanley Dance: Jazz Journal (London); Bulletin HCF (Paris); Jazz Times.
Francis Davis: author, *Bebop And Nothingness, The History Of The Blues.*
Chip Deffaa: New York Post; Crescendo (London); author, *Voices Of The Jazz Age, Jazz Veterans.*
Len Dobbin: Mirror; New Genre; CKUT Radio.
Bill Douthart: DB.
José Duarte: editor, O Papel do Jazz; Portuguese Radio.
Jonathan Eig: DB; senior editor, Chicago magazine; Jazziz; The New Republic.
Lofton Emenari: Push/Rainbow Coalition Magazine; JRM; African Word Journal.
Gudrun Endress: editor, Jazz Podium (Germany); Radio SDR (Stuttgart).
Ed Enright: editor, DB.
John Ephland: managing editor, DB.
J.B. Figi: programming committee/Chicago Jazz Festival.
Ken Franckling: DB; United Press International; Swing Journal; Jazz Times.
Maurizio Franco: Musica Jazz; Musica e Dischi; MusicaOggi Musica Realta; Il Sismografo.
Jack Fuller: Chicago Tribune.
Gerard J. Futrick: Coda.
Alain Gerber: Radio France; Diapason; Percussions; Les Cahiers Du Jazz.
Ira Gitler: DB; Jazz Times; Musica Jazz (Italy); Jazz Central Station.
Frank-John Hadley: DB; Houston Press; Jazziz; Miami New Times; Experience Hendrix.
Jean-Marie Hacquier: Jazz Hot.
Michael Handler: DB; Jazz Now; KCSM-FM.
Dave Helland: DB; Pulse!
Lee Hildebrand: associate editor, Express newspaper; SF Chronicle Sunday Datebook; Real Blues (Victoria, B.C.)
Don Hillegas: Cuardernos De Jazz; Mas Jazz.
Eugene Holley: DB; Hispanic; The Black World Today.
Randi Hultin: DB; Jazznytt; Jazz Journal.
Michael Jackson: DB; New City.
John Janowiak: DB; Music Inc.
Niranjan Jhaveri: DB; Jazz Podium; Australian Jazz Chords; Internet's Le jazz; All About Jazz.
Willard Jenkins: DB; Jazz Times; Jazz Report; Jazz Now.
Leigh Kamman: The Jazz Image; Minnesota Public Radio.
George Kanzler: The Star-Ledger (NJ); Syndical.
Bob Karlovits: DB.
Kirby Kean: DB; Rhythm Music; Ritz/Angelika Filmbill; Carbon 14.
Kiyoshi Koyama: Swing Journal; NHK-FM.
Peter Kostakis: liner notes writer.
John Litweiler: Writer and editor; Encyclopedia Britannica.
Jaap Lüdeke: DB; Big Band!
John McDonough: DB; Wall Street Journal; NPR.
Jim Macnie: DB; Musician.
Howard Mandel: DB; Jazziz; Bird Magazine; Pulse!; The Wire; Jazzhouse; The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz.
Rick Mattingly: DB; Modern Drummer; Musician; Percussive Notes; Jazziz.
Massino Milano: Jazz; Jam; Amadeus; Il Carnet; Il Manifesto; Il Sismografo; Cuadernos de Jazz.
Alan Nahigian: DB; Jazz Times; Pulse!
Michael G. Nastos: Cadence; Ann Arbor News; WEMU-FM (Ypsilanti, Mich.)
Stuart Nicholson: author, *Jazz-Rock, A History, Billie Holiday*; Observer; BBC Music Magazine.
John Norris: publisher, Coda.
Dan Ouellette: DB; Stereophile; Pulse!; SF Chronicle; East Bay Express.
Ted Panken: DB; Jazz Central Station.
Thierry Pérémarti: Jazzman, New York Corespondent.
Terry Perkins: DB; St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Riverfront Times; St. Louis American.
Michael Point: DB; Austin American-Statesman; Jazziz; Houton Press, Blues Across.
Doug Ramsey: author, *Jazz Matters: Reflections of the Music and Some of Its Makers*; Jazz Times; Texas Monthly.
Ben Ratliff: New York Times.
Howard Reich: DB; Chicago Tribune.
Derk Richardson: DB; San Francisco Bay Guardian; East Bay Express; Jazziz; San Francisco Examiner; SF Chronicle.
Mark Ruffin: WBEZ-FM; Chicago magazine; JazzUSA; Chicago Sun Times; N'Digo Magazine.
Robert D. Rusch: editor, Cadence; producer for Cimp.
Mitchell Seidel: DB; photo editor/contributing editor-Hot House; Jazz Times.
Phil Schaap: DB; curator/archivist, WKCR.
Chris Sheridan: DB; author, *Count Basie: A Bio-Discography.*
Joel Simpson: DB; Piano Today.
Jack Sohmer: Jazz Times; The Mississippi Rag.
Yves Sportis: publisher/editor, JazzHot.
Zan Stewart: DB; Stereophile; Musica Jazz.
W. Royal Stokes: editor, Jazz Notes.
Andrew Sussman: jazz writer.
Ron Sweetman: CKCU-FM (Ottawa, Ontario); Coda.
Russell Woessner: DB; Philadelphia Weekly.
Josef Woodard: LA Times; Entertainment Weekly; Jazz Times; Jazziz; Jazz Hot.
Scott Yanow: *All Music Guide To Jazz*; Jazziz; Cadence; Bird; Mississippi Rag.
David Zaworski: assistant editor, DB.

Allen Toussaint: classic bayou soul

STUART BRINN

New Orleans Keeps One Foot Rooted

Despite the pressures of its ever-ballooning commercialism, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival has somehow managed to remain true to its original mandate of showcasing regional talent. No other world-class music event is so permeated with the sight, sound and smell of local culture while still offering universally accessible popular entertainment.

Attracting more than 487,000 music fans to the Crescent City, this year's fest was held over two weekends (April 24–May 3) on 10 stages at the New Orleans Fair Grounds.

The big names on the big stages (Bonnie Raitt, Dave Matthews Band) served as crowd magnets, while the lower-profile tents and smaller stages showcased the region's best musicians. The first note of the festivities came from the gospel stage, with the Gospel Revelators supplying an energetic musical benediction. They were followed minutes later on a nearby stage by Lil' Brian & the Zydeco Travelers, who kicked the secular festivities into gear with a bouncing bayou beat.

The lesser-known local jazz choices on the first weekend ran from smooth trumpeter/vocalist Leroy Jones, who had a cross-generational audience joyously dancing and parading, to the abrasively brilliant New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars, who pulled no ethnic punches while whipping an outside audience into a mini-frenzy. Acts such as veteran drummer Ricardo Lewis and soulful singer Phillip Manuel were early serendipitous delights.

The high-flying Michael Ray & the Cosmic Krewe, complete with a half dozen horns and a Mardi Gras-goes-to-Mars stage show, mixed Fletcher Henderson tunes with those of Sun Ra, Ray's former employer. Steve Masakowski, the thinking fan's Pat Metheny, worked small wonders with his seven-string guitar and an expansive selection of harmonics, accompanied by saxist Ed Petersen's vein-popping solos.

The past was consistently reprised and honored, with the best tribute arguably provided by the longtime pulse of the bayou beat, former Meters bassist George Porter Jr. Porter's Runnin' Pardners all-star aggregation included an ailing but still eminently evocative Johnny Adams on vocals. Allen Toussaint, innovator of New Orleans r&b in the '50s and '60s and recent inductee in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, ran through a set of classic bayou soul. Even performances by outside artists resonated with Crescent City history, affirmed by Mavis Staples' moving tribute to gospel legend Mahalia Jackson, who performed at the first Jazz & Heritage Festival in 1970.

The attractions and distractions of being a musician in New Orleans were spotlighted by two of the event's better blues sets. John Mooney, returning to New Orleans after a couple of years of self-imposed exile, and second-generation bluesman Chris Thomas King, whose father, Tabby Thomas, turned in a fine set of his own, both delivered fiery and effective performances.

King, who started his career down the road in Baton Rouge before ultimately settling in New Orleans after a decade of globe-trotting, took a moment after his set to reflect on the local scene. "The roots are right here," King said. "The tradition is everywhere, but you can still get outside and experiment because that's a New Orleans tradition, too."

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival should continue to play a part in that tradition, as long as it doesn't lose sight of those roots. —*Michael Point*

KEY

Excellent	★★★★★
Very Good	★★★★
Good	★★★
Fair	★★
Poor	★

Michael Leonhart

Glub Glub vol. 11

Sunnyside 1077

★★★★

If the titles to *Glub Glub vol. 11* are any indication, this is one head-turning piece of music. Or, should I say, pieces? For there are many discrete, oftentimes very different moments and movements here, ranging in length from 18 seconds on up to just under seven minutes, and spanning a variety of musical styles, with some spoken-word interludes. Except for one piece, it all centers around the compositional thrust of 24-year-old multi-instrumentalist Michael Leonhart. (The other title comes from his father, bassist/singer/composer Jay Leonhart; Michael shares lyric credits on another.)

The primary challenge to *Glub Glub* (Leonhart's followup to his debut album, *Aardvark Poses*) is to hear the unity, the ghost in the machine, the thematic thread that ties it all together. As a pastiche, the music, by and large, succeeds; time and again, a pleasant disorientation occurs. What is that unity? Leonhart's liner notes discuss his circuitous route to recording, based on his taking the soundtrack to a movie he was totally engrossed with (and rented as a video) and "making a sort of 'movie in headphones'" in order to match the "spirit" of the tape he made. You be the judge. (Volumes 1-10 of whatever *Glub Glub* is, we are told, will be released "deep into the next century.")

The great strength to this project is Leonhart's ambition to make an album as uncategorizable as this. In a sense, by releasing himself from any one format, other than a kind of experimental soundtrack jazz, he offers an invitation to free-associate musically, to connect and reconnect, with music as malleable as the dreams we visit when our eyes are closed. It's usually fun, with the occasional impression that the whole thing was, for better or worse, simply thrown together.

There is swinging, some exoticisms, some moments that suggest a meeting between Miles Davis the collagist, circa 1970s, '70s Les McCann and Hollywood lounge musicians. A glance at the song list and personnel should give a good indication that things jump around and that no one instrument (apart from Leonhart's trumpet) dominates. The band becomes the instrument and is directed as much, if not more, from the mixing board as from the music stand. In fact, the virtuosity, the "chops," stem from producers Leonhart and reedist/electric bassist Daniel Srebnick, not from any one instrumentalist soloing.

What lingers, not surprisingly, are the more compositionally oriented pieces. By track three, "El Tapir," we start to hear something that involves a band, playing a mysterious 6/4 vamp with a short, lovely refrain, highlighted by Leonhart's muted trumpet. From a dreamy island at dusk we are back in the city with Leonhart swinging to some brushing drumwork that morphs into percussion ("Toni & Jose/The Woodpecker's Revenge"), followed by some more moody, impressionistic jazz with "Samsara," Leonhart's trumpet this time laced with voice, electric keyboard, drums, vibes and acoustic bass. Except for the voice, all of it may be the result of Leonhart's multitracking.

Glub Glub hangs on pieces like "El Tapir," "Samsara," the ominous funk of "Seashell On Fire" and the slow, easygoing blues waltz "Icodel," selections that keep the project from sounding like a clever novelty act, a string of sketches.

—John Ephland

Glub Glub vol. 11—*Erutrevo; Dalig & Oruamo; El Tapir; Toni & Jose/The Woodpecker's Revenge; Samsara; Glub Glub; Icodel; Finnish Slippers; Seashell On Fire; Oum; Ah ... Sitar ... IA/Boo & Nigel; And The Aardvarks Danced On (Discodust); Let The Flower Grow; Terra Gekker; Mystery Bus; Big M & Danz; Paul's Tripp; Please Don't Put Water On The Seashell; Oruam & Dalig; Mystery Bus (Reprise). (50:21)*
Personnel—*Leonhart, trumpet. Fender Rhodes, Hammond B-3 organ, piano, guitar, acoustic bass guitar, electric bass, percussion, body percussion (16), kalimba, drums, voice, whistle (16); Gilad Dolbrecky, berimbau, percussion; Mauro Refosco, berimbau, percussion, vibraphone; Boo Reiners, mandolin, banjo, lap steel guitar, acoustic guitar; Joe Martin, acoustic bass, col egno bass (9); Joe Strasser, Tobias Gebb, drums; Carolyn Leonhart (3, 15, 16), Carolyn Kelly (5, 16), Michelle Wiley (3, 16), Donna Leonhart (15), voice; Marko Ahtisaari, electric bass; Ben Monder (7, 9), Wayne Krantz (7, 9, 19), guitar; Daniel Srebnick, alto flute, clarinet, electric bass (19); Dan Kooper, flute; Jay Leonhart, acoustic bass (13, 15); Paul Tripp, melodica (7), voice (16); Chris Gekker, piccolo trumpet (14); Lynne Bechtold, violin (3); Francois Zalacain, whistle (1).*

Sun Ra

Space Is The Place

Impulse! 249

★★★★★

In 1972, Sun Ra contracted with ABC/Impulse! in a campaign that would, despite being brief and largely unfulfilled, expose him to his largest public to that date. Under the contract, eight records originally released on Ra's Saturn label were repackaged and reissued (all subsequently reissued on CD by Evidence) and two new records (neither yet reissued) were produced. *Space Is The Place*, supervised by Impulse! producer Ed Michel, slightly predated the Impulse! deal; it was first waxed in '72 on the Blue Thumb label—my copy's quadraphonic—but in its CD debut, it returns to what the notes describe as "its rightful place" in the Impulse! catalog.

The title is probably Ra's best known—there's a movie, a biography and this record all named *Space Is The Place*. The song itself, "Space Is The Place," became a Ra standard. In this version, it appears as an epic space chant, entrancing June Tyson singing lead and other Space Ethnic Voices coolly interweaving with vigorous squalls of soloing by various vocalists, Eloe Omoe on bass clarinet and the pneumatic Marshall Allen, all floating over an ostinato

THE HOT BOX

CDs ▼ CRITICS ▶	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
Michael Leonhart *Glub Glub vol. 11*	★	★★★	★★★1/2	★★★★
Sun Ra *Space Is The Place*	★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2
Chick Corea *Origin*	★★★★	★★★1/2	★★★1/2	★★★1/2
Leon Parker *Awakening*	★★★1/2	★★★	★★★	★★★1/2

shared by Danny Thompson's baritone sax and Pat Patrick's register-shifting electric bass. Ebbing and flowing, it's a study in the juxtaposition of steady structures and open improvising, Ra's exquisite arkestral form of arrangement. And for 20-plus minutes, lurking in the mix, Ra's own "space organ" glisses and burbles like a thermal spring. Joy spring, that is.

The record also contains a racing, short version of another space chant taken from earlier in the Ra book, "Rocket Number Nine." (Compare with the 1960 version on *Sun Ra Visits Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways* and the much slower take from the late '60s on *The Singles*, both on Evidence.) In an agreeable alter-universe, it should have been a hit. The most aggressive track, "Sea Of Sounds," burns with unmatched intensity, including a brutal alto duel between Allen and Danny Davis, while "Discipline" is more courtly Ra, trademark charts, horns and flutes playing densely voiced, through-composed parts and the leader comping on Farfisa. As straightahead a swinger as you'll find from that expansive, experimental period of Ra, "Images" offers a great glimpse of tenorman John Gilmore and the only acoustic piano on the date.

Complaints about the sound of Ra records are normal—he often released rehearsal tapes and other sub-par sounding material. But *Space Is The Place* was well-taped in a fine (still-extant) studio, well-mixed, and it sounds super on disc. A good cross-section of the many musical splendors of Ra, it's a great launching pad for beginners and an indispensable icon for fans.

—John Corbett

Space Is The Place—*Space Is The Place; Images; Discipline; Sea Of Sounds; Rocket Number Nine. (43:01)*
Personnel—*Ra, piano (2), space organ (Farfisa); Akh Tal Ebah, trumpet, flugelhorn, voice (1); Kwame Hadi (Lamont McClamb), tumpet; Marshall Allen, alto sax, flute; Danny Davis, alto sax, clarinet, flute; John Gilmore, tenor sax, voice (1, 5); Danny Thompson, baritone sax, flute (3), vocal (5); Eloe Omoe, bass clarinet, flute (3); Pat Patrick, electric bass (1, 2), baritone sax, voice (5); Lex Humphries, drums; Atakatun (Stanley Morgan), Odun (Russell Branch), percussion (4); the Space Ethnic Voices (with June Tyson, Ruth Wright, Cheryl Banks and Judith Holton) appear on tracks 1 and 5.*

Chick Corea

Origin

Concord 9018-2

★★★★

The press release accompanying *Origin* doesn't hold back. "Inaugurates ... unique chapters" in Chick Corea's music, it says. "A complete rethinking and reworking of [his] roots. ... On the cutting edge."

Don't you love it? Just as we used to get "new Nixons" at regular intervals, are we now to get new Coreas? Well, not really. Corea has commuted between the "cutting edge" and so many other genres for so long, a new Corea is old hat and the cutting edge has grown uninteresting. So set aside the hype and be satisfied that the old Corea can still spin out a new tune as gracefully as "Soul Mates" without having to reinvent the wheels that have been carrying him these 30 years.

Recorded live at the Blue Note in New York last December with the stated purpose of letting the chips lie where they drop, the result is generally a blue-chip performance. With two reeds and a trombone for sustenance and good solo companionship, Corea has given himself a larger than normal ensemble and some tightly packed structures.

The brief opening is not propitious: a wayward interlude of "tuning up" passed off as a selection, the first part of a three-section suite. But the music shapes up quickly enough in part two, then segues into a florid and lyrical piano statement that drifts into a sudden shift to a fast 4/4 tempo accommodating solos by all. Corea's piano work, which opens all but the first two pieces with generous solo statements, is consistently alert and commanding.

Moreover, there is sometimes a clairvoyance among the musicians that marks this as a working group. On "Double Image," for instance, listen to drummer Adam Cruz lock into a quick sequence of quarter notes from Steve Wilson's strong alto solo around 5:40 in the piece. Wilson is less impressive on clarinet ("Dreamless"), which to some ears will sound a

bit bitter and astringent, though he brings a dark, estranged quality to some of the ensemble backgrounds on "Molecules."

Corea has written some fine original material for the group, and in the case of "Dreamless," dipped into his trunk for an older unplayed piece. Of the fresh material, "Soul Mates," a charming waltz, has the melodic weight to live outside the group. *—John McDonough*

Origin—*Say It Again; Say It Again (part 2); Double Image; Dreamless; Molecules; Soul Mates; It Could Happen to You. (65:40)*
Personnel—*Steve Davis, trombone; Bob Sheppard, Steve Wilson, saxophones, clarinets, flute; Corea, piano; Avishai Cohen, bass; Adam Cruz, drums.*

Leon Parker

Awakening

Columbia 68076

★★★

I haven't met anyone who heard Leon Parker's *Belief* and wasn't knocked out by it. Crisp melodies, clutter-free deportment, reflexive sense of swing—the combination of its elements was sage yet subdued, putting the insight and aplomb of its moves in high relief. It is very graphic, very memorable music that made its audience swoon.

I pick that verb—swoon—carefully. Its meaning leads you to words like "faint," which in turn nudge you along to "mild." Curiously, that's the territory that *Awakening* cuts for itself.

Parker's rep has been earned on illustrating the allure of downsizing. A trap drummer who eschews all things extraneous, he's key in making Jacky Terrasson's trio the highly agile unit it is. With skeletal maneuvers expanding and contracting to enhance any situation, *Belief* reminded how intricacy and focus are allies—there, the elementary tap of a cymbal seemed momentous. But this time around, by further reducing the instrumentation and betting the farm on purity, the drummer has concocted an overly balmy environment. For all its meticulousness, *Awakening* lacks something essential to the jazz process: vitality.

Parker is fascinated with the mechanics of tempo. Masterful at concocting elaborate architectures of pulses and cycles, his version of swing is rife with African, Caribbean and Native American rhythms. The gorgeous duet dates he's performed with saxophonist Steve Wilson have been built on such moves. But here, with percussion patterns orchestrated into lilting mantras, repetition becomes a rut. *Awakening*'s grooves are geared to assuage tension rather than build it, and somewhere along the line, Parker's fey minimalism gets the best of him.

The title track is a ghostly chant on which Elisabeth Kontomanou floats an expressionist trill. "Axe Bahia" starkly blends the warble of Sam Newsome's soprano with Rita Silva's sensual poetry. "Enlightenment" is a golden cymbalscape that hints at some sort of celestial salutation. Tranquility defines the attitude of each, and the cool facade may disappoint those who have previously heard Parker's passionate specifics.

Other pieces, "Mother Earth" and "It Is What It Is" among them, titillate momentarily, but ultimately become tedious. Their drum lines beget viable grooves, no question. But little is made of their possibilities. Parker uses a colorful palette—steel pans, shakers, marimba and wood blocks are primary instruments—but his hope that timbre will flesh out the action never pays off. The music is too linear, too bucolic. In his yen to promote the versatility of the drum, he creates a string of ostinatos that, heard in toto, stifle dynamics.

All that said, I bet there's no lack of audience for *Awakening*. Why? Because focus is a winning jazz commodity. Crisp melodies, clutter-free deportment and reflexive sense of swing are hard to refuse. And though they're overly calibrated this time around—making this the hippest new age disc you've ever heard—Parker's intricacies remain exquisite. As on *Belief*, cadence is king. It's just that *Awakening*, made by players known for their ardor, is a bit too stingy with the sweat. *—Jim Macnie*

Awakening—*All My Life; Tokyo; It Is What It Is; Mother Earth; Cruz; Axe Bahia; Enlightenment; Awakening; Peaceful Dream (51:17)*
Personnel—*Parker, congas, bells, caxix, marimba, rattle, clave, piano, ashiko, gong, wood block, snare drum, bowl; Steve Wilson, alto and soprano saxophone, alto flute (1,2,5,9); Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone (tracks 3, 6); Adam Cruz, steel pan, bell (3, 8); Ugonna Okegwo, bass (3); Natalie Cushman, gourd, vocals, ashikos, shekere, caxixi, ashiko; Elisabeth Kontomanou, vocals;. Rita Silva, wood block, clave, vocals, (3,6,8); Lisa Parker, flute (4,9); Rey Cruz, timbales (5); Tomasso Santiago, congas (5).*

Dave Brubeck Quartet

So What's New?

Telarc 83434

★★★

It's easy for a listener of Dave Brubeck's latest album to pose the very question asked in its title. There are 11 relatively fresh Brubeck tunes, but not a whole lot more. The cover design is something of a tip-off—it has the feel of the 1959 Columbia album *Time Out*.

Brubeck has changed little, of course. This effort, recorded a few months before his 77th

birthday last December, has the usual ponderous classical elements and his somewhat bouncy, stilted swing. Subtlety remains a word one would seldom use in reference to the pianist.

The other primary voice, altoist-flutist Bobby Militello, most often works in a style melding bits of various influences. However, on three tracks ("The Things You Never Remember," "Sahra" and "Waltzing") he comes uncannily close to the sound of Brubeck's old sidekick Paul Desmond. Militello is a good soloist whose tone takes on a somewhat hoarse edge when his playing becomes agitated.

Bassist Jack Six and drummer Randy Jones are unobtrusive to a fault.

"Her Name Is Nancy" is a solo-piano vehicle filled with chord changes and a character reminiscent of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps." "Chorale," an admiration of J.S. Bach adapted from his "Chromatic Fantasy," holds Militello's lone flute outing.

While it's not particularly new, it remains good music. Brubeck's loyal fans couldn't ask for more. —*Will Smith*

So What's New?—*It's Deja Vu All Over Again; Fourth Of July; The Things You Never Remember; Marian McPartland; Brotherly Love; I'm Still In Love With A Girl Named Oli; Her Name Is Nancy; Chorale; Sahra; Waltzing; Five For Ten Small Fingers. (57:31)*

Personnel—*Brubeck, piano; Bobby Militello, alto sax, flute (8); Jack Six, bass; Randy Jones, drums.*

Liquid Soul

Make Some Noise

Ark 21 10021 23

★★★½

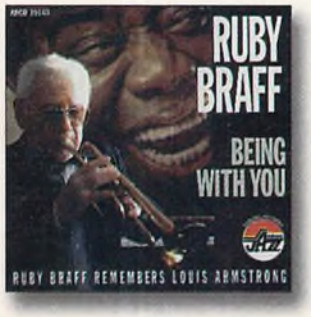
The noise made by Chicago's Liquid Soul is party music at the crossroads of funk, jazz and hip-hop, the stuff intended to fill dance floors with sweaty, writhing bodies. These 10 guys, plus singer Simone (daughter of singer Nina Simone), who joined the group after this part-live/part-studio recording was finished, are not the r&b colossus that many critics make them out to be—hell, P-Funk and Fishbone could pulverize them into a fluidic pulp—but Liquid Soul sure knows how to fuel a helluva good time.

Bandleader Mars Williams, known to jazz buffs for his NRG Ensemble and his work with Roscoe Mitchell, has personality and ebullience to spare. His high-octane solos on "Threadin' The Needle" and "No Cents" are wackily substantial, the funk grease covering real meat. Williams does the bulk of the songwriting, and that's just fine, with lively tunes like the Latinized "Yankee Girl" and the label-defying "Ricky's Hat" begging you to shake your keister and listen hard at the same time. Ajax mans the DJ table, scratching up a funk storm while drummer Dan Leali and bassist Ricky Showalter stay in your face. The brass punch hard. Dirty M.F. turns up here doing his deep-throated rapper thing. And guest singer Trine Rein, a Nordic pop star, lends a frosty prettiness to the throbbing r&b single "I Want You To Want Me"—shades of Whitney Houston singing with Bill Laswell's Material and Victoria Miles with Klaus Doldinger's Passport in the '80s.

Liquid Soul uses samples to good advantage, offering up segments of Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts" (with singer/scatter Kurt Elling on hand to bridge the decades), stitching hip-hop drummer Pumpkin's "King Of The Beat" and Run DMC's "Here We Go" to "Yankee Girl," and resurrecting early '70s funk man Jimmy Castor's "Troglodyte" on "Cookie's Puss." James Brown, Miles, Rahsaan, Eddie Harris, KC & the Sunshine Band and Kurtis Blow make "appearances" as well, all contributing to Liquid Soul's groovin' party vibe. —*Frank-John Hadley*

Make Some Noise—*Intro; Threadin' The Needle; Salt Peanuts/Chocolate Covered Nut; Yankee Girl; I Want You To Want Me; Ricky's Hat; Cabbage Roll; Ramblin'; Cookie's Puss; No Cents; My Three S.O.B.'s; Lobster Boy's Revenge; Opium Jacuzzi. (54:52)*

Personnel—*Mars Williams, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones; Ron Haynes, trumpet, flugelhorn; John Janowiak, trombone; Tommy Sanchez, guitar; Ricky Showalter, bass; Dan Leali, drums, percussion; Frankie Hill, keyboards (6, 9, 10, 13); Chris "Hambone" Cameron, keyboards (2-4, 7, 8, 11, 12); Dirty M.F., rapper, M.C.; Jesse De La Pena, Ajax (2, 4, 5, 12), turntables; Jose Gregorio, congas; Joe Rendon, timbales; Newt Cole, percussion (9); Yvonne Gage, backing vocals (5); Tommy Klein, guitar (6); Kurt Elling, scat vocal (3); Trine Rein, vocals (5).*



Ruby Braff

Being With You

Arbors 19163

★★★★★

Over the last 40 years Ruby Braff has seldom been heard with anything larger than a quartet. He recorded with a few not quite traditional groups for Vanguard, Victor and Epic, and made a gorgeous date for Bethlehem with a sax quartet, all in the '50s. But since then work with anything approaching a band has been zero. Until now.

On this superb CD, Braff and Dan Barrett have put together a 10-man group and crafted some sleek, economical charts. Some capture the tart, compact swing of the old John Kirby band, but fleshed out more. The ensembles are tight and often swing with astonishing drive and focus. The rigorous, two-beat formality of "Twelfth Street Rag" that has resisted some of

the best players is suddenly transformed here by ignoring the formality, implying the awkward tune and mounting the whole thing on top of "Jumpin' At The Woodside."

Speaking of things Basie, although the subtitle here is "Remembers Louis Armstrong," the fact is from the first notes of "I Never Knew," which borrow the main riff from "Easy Does It," it's Basie's spirit almost as much as Armstrong's that pervades these proceedings. Basie-isms frequently bob to the surface, if not always literally, then in riffs that throb with the feel of pre-war Kansas City. Even the airy, de-Dixied "Royal Garden Blues" seems to owe its feel to the 1940 Benny Goodman sextet version on which Basie played. The rhythm section is a no-frills timekeeper with Bucky Pizzarelli's guitar fattening up the pulse.

Although Braff is surrounded by a fine crew of soloists, including Johnny Varro and Jerry Jerome, and shares solo time graciously with all, it's his horn that's at the center of this music, whether it's the longing poignancy of his intonation on "If I Could Be With You" to the swift, sudden solitude of him and Pizzarelli by themselves in the middle of the turbulent "Twelfth Street Rag." A review calling out further fine points might consume this magazine. Enough to say that with the deaths of Dizzy in 1993 and Miles in 1991 (or was it 1967?), Braff may be the greatest, most singularly individual trumpet master alive today. —*John McDonough*

Being With You—*I Never Knew; Little One; Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now; If I Could Be With You; Hustlin' And Bustlin' For Baby; When Your Lover Has Gone; Twelfth Street Rag; Royal Garden Blues; When It's Sleepy Time Down South.*
Personnel—*Braff, cornet, flugelhorn; Dan Barrett, trombone, arranger; Scott Robinson, Jerry Jerome, saxophones; Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar; Johnny Varro, piano; Bob Haggart, bass; Jim Gwin, drums.*

Kamikaze Ground Crew

Kamikaze Ground Crew
Koch Jazz 7855

★★★

Getting really into Kamikaze Ground Crew's ebullient fanfare depends more on personal mood than anything else. Considering how much this extroverted brass-and-drums septet draws on circus music, marches and childrens' songs, this isn't a band to listen to for more subtle, intuitive interplay. That said, the KGC does succeed in providing a fun time that leaves some indelible moments once their show ends.

This disc was originally recorded in 1985 and released on the group's own label (Busmeat) two years later. But considering how more than a decade has passed since then, it's hard to imagine how differently the KGC would have seemed to the music world in the late '80s. Just as it would be equally difficult to find another jazz band with two glockenspiel players. Multi-instrumentalists Gina Leishman and Douglas Wieselman composed most of the group's tunes, and they all follow a similar blueprint. This plan favors upbeat stompers that allow the trumpets and reeds to develop tuneful leads and with miscellaneous instruments (some vaguely named "whackos") offering interesting supporting textures that drummer Danny Frankel and tuba player Bud Chase propel. The heavy-bottomed rhythm section gives a fitting bounce to Wieselman's "Overture" and lends a surprising amount of melancholia to Leishman's "What?" The accordion and glockenspiels tie everything into a disarmingly appealing European folk musette tradition, especially on their fresh arrangements of Kurt Weill's "Alabama Song" and Wieselman's "Wendy's."

At times, the Crew's embrace of zaniness winds up sounding self-conscious to the point of being annoying. Their version of "Teddy Bears' Picnic" shows that some songs are just better left to Bart Simpson. —*Aaron Cohen*

Kamikaze Ground Crew—*Overture: The Phoenix, Jungle Interlude, Ituri Circus, The New Chumleighland March; Alabama Song; Wendy's; Fanfare; Teddy Bears' Picnic; Fanfare "5"; Blue Wheels; Stupid Song; Wa-Wa-Wa; Rearranging The Deckchairs On The Titanic; Grushome (The Cannonball Juggler); Fanfare; What?; Desert Funk; Thunder And Blazes; Turn Your Lights Off. (41:46)*
Personnel—*Steven Bernstein, trumpet, glockenspiel; Bud Chase, tuba; Danny Frankel, drums, percussion; Gina Leishman, piccolo, soprano and alto saxophone, bass clarinet, accordion, piano, glockenspiel, vocals; Paul Magid, clarinet, soprano and alto saxophones, whackos; Howard Jay Patterson, baritone horn, trombone, whackos; Douglas Wieselman, tenor and soprano saxophones, clarinet, electric guitar, tenor banjo, mandolin.*

Brotzmann/ Ghania/Drake

The "WELS" Concert (Parts 1-3)
Okkadisk 12013

★★★★

There's a remote region where the archaic and the post-historical pitch camp together, and it's called the ecstatic. Albert Ayler knew this place intimately; North Africa has been there for centuries. Peter Brotzmann and Moroccan musician Mahmoud Ghania apparently had a cosmic and uplifting discussion there, along with percussionist Hamid Drake, at a concert at Schlachthof Wels, Austria, in 1996, where this album was recorded.

Though there are some occasional miking and balance problems, including one loud burst of feedback, the mysterious and elated spirit of this occasion is captured nicely. Brotzmann's guttural, growling-bear ferocity on tenor saxophone is both enlarged and mediated by the steady, two-beat pulse of Ghania's guembri, a three-string lute associated with the music of the Gnawa Brotherhood. On "Part I," Brotzmann's solo on tarogato, an East European double reed thought to be of Arab

origin, twists ingeniously through warbling figures and affecting cries.

The saxophonist takes a back seat on "Part 2," which has a triplet feel, as Ghania offers an upbeat vocal and Drake, a tabla solo. The credits say Brotzmann plays E-flat clarinet, but the fierce shrieks and low notes toward the end of this section sound distinctly like a bass clarinet. "Part 3," which begins with a beautiful rubato invocation of long tones then slides into yet another rhythmic groove, has more of the three-way give-and-take and layered rhythms of jazz, though Drake's trap drumming and percussion are an evident delight throughout the disc.

If you've been puzzled by Brotzmann's free-improv fury, you might sample this album, not because it's made more "accessible" by a world-music groove, because it isn't, but because it transports the saxophonist's intensity from the world of the intellect to that of the spirit. This is music spoken in the language of the gods.

—Paul de Barros

The "WELS" Concert (Parts 1-3)—*Part 1; Part 2: Part 3. (70:20)*
Personnel—*Peter Brotzmann, tarogato, tenor and alto saxophones, bass clarinet; Hamid Drake, frame drum, tabla, drums; Mahmoud Ghania, guembri, voice.*

The Groov'tet

The Groov'tet
G.T. Records 19971
★★★½

Fred Knapp

Singin' That Bop!
Wake Up Recordings
★★½

A good number of those young lions working the better jazz rooms and recording for prominent labels had modest beginnings in the hinterlands before basking in the bright lights of their adopted home, New York City. One of the new elite, pianist Xavier Davis, from Michigan, whose stock has soared with Betty Carter and Tom Harrell, contributes to two recent albums that provide agreeable listening.

As the title of the latter session states so emphatically, singer Knapp has bop on the brain, enamored of heroes named Ella, Sarah, Bird, Miles, Sonny, Brownie, Trane and Hank ("the middleweight champion of the tenor saxophone," as Leonard Feather described Mr. Mobley). Knapp displays the good working order of his phrasing, timing and timbre when

he wraps his friendly, glowing pipes around the words or scatted syllables of familiar fare like "Oleo," "Blues Walk," "Seven Steps To Heaven" and "I Fall In Love Too Easily." What Knapp's singing lacks in expressivity—that voice of his does at times come off as breezily inconsequential—is more than compensated for by Davis, who captures details of emotion with keyboard expositions that originate in a precociously clear and clever imagination.

Judging by their debut album, the Groov'tet (once a Down Beat Student Music Award-winning band) has the gift of structuring their ensemble and individual parts with a confidence that belies the four musicians' limited time in jazz. Davis melds bountiful spirit and lyricism in his playing on three of his own compositions and on five from group saxophonist John Wojciechowski. Wojciechowski, too, knows what he's about, possessing a feel for bop and post-bop that lets him make his mark without clogging up his alto or soprano with thousands of extraneous notes and bushels of hackneyed phrases. Bassist Matt Hughes and drummer Keith Hall are as one with their colleagues, going after beauty on the gentle, soothing "Karen's Waltz" and kicking up their swinging heels on, among others, "One Way Up." *The Groov'tet* really gets it right on "Innocence Of Youth," plumbing both sunny and dark moods. *—Frank-John Hadley*

The Groov'tet—*G.T.; Emergence; Amy's Presence; Moving Forward; Innocence Of Youth; Pinnacles Of Achievement; Karen's Waltz; One Way Up. (53:21)*

Personnel—*John Wojciechowski, alto and soprano saxophones; Xavier Davis, piano; Matt Hughes, bass; Keith Hall, drums.*

Singin' That Bop!—*Seven Steps To Heaven; Nardis; This I Dig Of You; Equinox; Stella By Starlight; Moon And Sand; Blues Walk; The Days Of Wine And Roses; Have You Met Miss Jones; Blue Train; Hal; I Fall In Love Too Easily; Freedom Jazz Dance, Oleo. (66:02)*
Personnel—*Knapp, vocals; Xavier Davis, piano; Steve Boynton, guitar; Shawn Sommer, bass; Quincy Davis, drums; Bill Vits, percussion.*

Kenny Werner Trio

A Delicate Balance

RCA Victor 51694

★★★½

Dave Pietro

Wind Dance

A-Records 73114

★★★

Kenny Werner has paid his fair share of dues while working his way up to a big-label contract. The veteran pianist set the stage for *A Delicate Balance*, his RCA Victor debut, with a string of solid Concord Jazz releases, including his trio date *Live At Visiones* and the Chris Potter/Kenny Werner duets, as well as high-visibility engagements with Joe Lovano. As always, Werner contributes high levels of energy and unpredictability, working in this case with the sublime rhythm section of Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette. They support Werner by letting him fly, with DeJohnette adding accents and commentary on cymbals, as Holland matches and complements Werner's vigor.

"Amonkst" demonstrates the pianist's capacity for continuously reworking and extending a tune, as well as his propensity to head in unexpected directions with startlingly fast, complex runs. Tunes like "Amonkst" and "Ivoronics" are so packed with Werner's ideas that they hurtle along, as though he had to rush to fit everything in. "Trio Imitation" and Nat Adderley's "Work Song" are more effective, affording a little more breathing room. "Work Song" offers a bright, robust swing as well as strong soloing from Holland.

Werner may not be considered a prolific composer, but seven of the eight tracks making up *A Delicate Balance* are originals. Given the pianist's skill at rethinking traditional repertoire, it's likely that a few carefully chosen standards might have improved the mix.

Werner and Holland return to provide seasoned support for saxophonist Dave Pietro's *Wind Dance*. The most noteworthy characteristics of Pietro's playing are the pure tone and smooth phrasing, as well as the attention to melody that pervades his solos and his pleasing, gently swinging compositions. Although *Wind Dance* is only Pietro's second date as a leader, he's a veteran of the big bands of Woody Herman, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Maria Schneider and Maynard Ferguson, among others. Along with alto sax, he also plays the soprano and C-melody horns.

Tunes like "Juba" and "Wind Dance" glide along smoothly and enjoyably, but over the course of an hour, one may want a little more grit and contrast from Pietro. Werner adds glittering, lyrical solos to "Halcyon" and "I Should Have Known." The surprise of this collection is "Joyance," an apparent homage to Ornette Coleman that recalls the melodic, if unconventional, aspects of Coleman's writing. Here, Pietro's alto manages to express happiness and sadness all at once, which may be the best tribute to Ornette's music. "Joyance" also features Holland prominently, including his best soloing of the session. *—Jon Andrews*

A Delicate Balance—*Amonkst; Work Song; Ivoronics; Footsteps; Trio Imitation; The Look; Lorraine; Melodies Of 1997. (65:05)*
Personnel—*Werner, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.*

Wind Dance—*Juba; I Should Have Known; This Is New; Ashes; Fortitude; Halcyon; Joyance; Waxing Moon; Wind Dance. (67:55)*
Personnel—*Pietro, soprano, alto and C-melody saxophones; Kenny Werner, piano (1-6, 8, 9); Bruce Saunders, guitar (1, 2, 5, 6); Dave Holland, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.*

Joe Maneri Quartet

Coming Down The Mountain

hatOLOGY 501

★★★★

Mat Maneri Quintet

Acceptance

hatOLOGY 512

★★★½

As the discography of late bloomer Joe Maneri grows, it becomes evident that his approach to saxophone and clarinet sets him apart from the pack as a genuine innovator. He's created his own vernacular on reeds, with "inflections" derived from his studies of microtonality and Eastern European musics. *Coming Down The Mountain* is a 1993 concert recording of Maneri's working quartet, and unpremeditat-

ed group improvisation is on the agenda.

Of the handful of quartet recordings released since Maneri was rediscovered, this one is the most cohesive. The process by which the quartet discovers or evolves music seems more apparent, and Maneri contributes memorably effusive solos on tenor and clarinet, as well as a turn at the piano on "Say It All." The tenor solo that opens "Swing High" serves as a primer in Maneri's methods, sounding breathy and quavery, but also grainy and raucous. These qualities also make Mat Maneri's electric violin an ideal foil. The younger Maneri provides melodic counterpoint as well as tonal contrast with his spare, incisive lines. When Joe Maneri plays clarinet on "Coming Down The Mountain," the influences of klezmer, Greek and other world musics are more noticeable.

Listeners interested in Maneri's roots in both Eastern European music and conventional jazz should search out *Paniots Nine* (Avant), an album that combines his previously unreleased 1963 demo recording for Atlantic with a 1981 klezmer duet for clarinet and piano. Sound quality is dubious, but it's proof positive that Maneri anticipated the current interest in these traditional musics by decades.

Mat Maneri's *Acceptance* is a considerably more structured record than *Coming Down The Mountain*, but it's no less challenging. Along with covers of "My Funny Valentine" and Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Rundown," this bipolar project includes intriguing Maneri compositions that emphasize textures as much as improvisations. Curiously, Maneri opts to play viola in lieu of his more familiar electric violin. Without amplification, the viola doesn't combine well with John Dirac's biting electric guitar and Gary Valente's assertive work on trombone, and it too often sounds muddy and nondescript.

Valente plays with vitality in sometimes arid contexts. Not only does his trombone draw the listener's attention, the music seems to coalesce around him. Joe Maneri joins in for Dirac's dirge-like "Acceptance," and his yearning performance on alto sax seems to catalyze the group. "Dolphy's Dance" and "East Broadway Rundown" offer the most conventional, jazz-like structures, with Valente contributing charismatic solos on both. These tracks are playful, bright and rhythmically interesting in contrast to the more experimental works that predominate. Maneri's arrangement of "My Funny Valentine" is uncommonly quiet, sparce and atmospheric—it's as though you're hearing the song played slowly and softly in a dream. "Fever Bed" and "Shroud" go a step further. These pieces move very slowly, without discernible rhythm, using long tones from trombone and viola to manipulate the listener's sense of time. "Shroud" offers tension as well as texture, drawing more attention to Maneri's compositional talents than to his playing.

—Jon Andrews

Coming Down The Mountain—*Swing High; Swing Higher; Coming Down The Mountain; Joe's Alto; Say It All; To End Or Not To End? (54:12)*
Personnel—*Joe Maneri, tenor and alto saxophones, clarinet, piano (5); Mat Maneri, violin; Ed Schuller, bass; Randy Peterson, drums.*

Acceptance—*Dolphy Dance; My Funny Valentine; Shroud; East Broadway Rundown; Fever Bed; Acceptance; Off Shroud. (53:15)*
Personnel—*Mat Maneri, viola; Gary Valente, trombone; John Dirac, guitar; Ed Schuller, bass; Randy Peterson, drums; Joe Maneri, alto saxophone (6).*

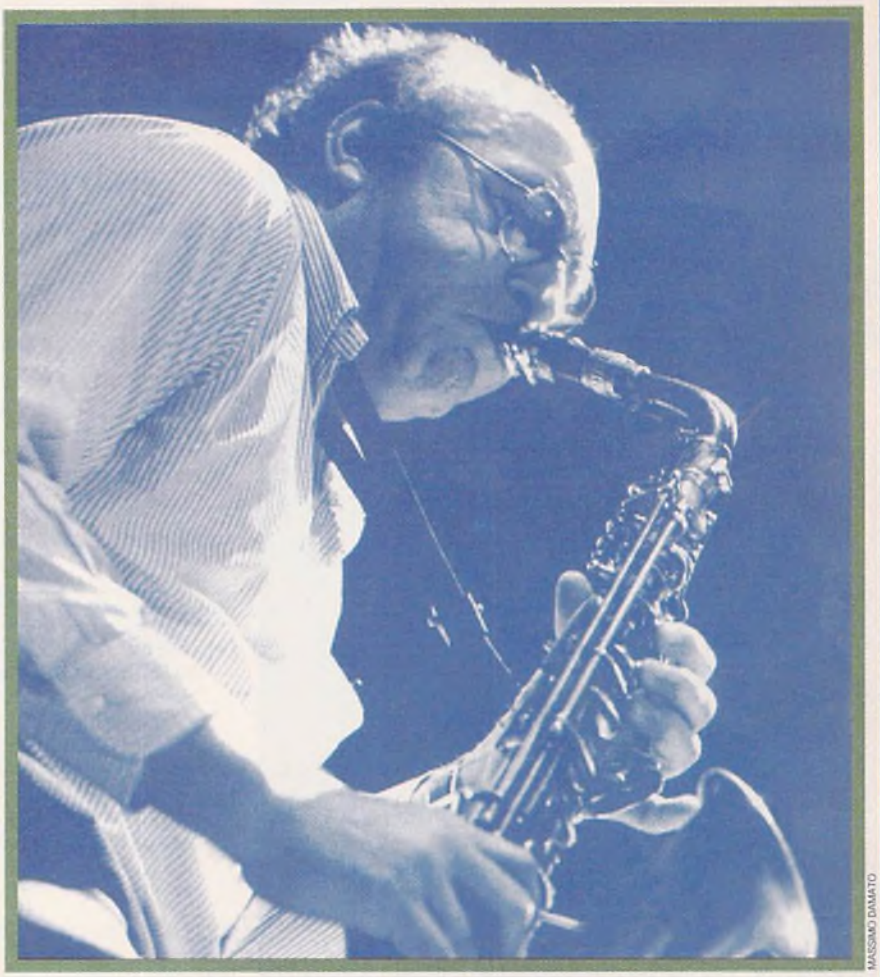
JAZZ

All Italia

by John Corbett

Jazz in Italy is vital and diverse, with a deep well of improvisers, composers and arrangers, bandleaders and sidemen, conservatives, conceptualists and radicals. Despite its musical variety, the country's wares tend to be issued on just a few labels, the most visible of which is no doubt Black Saint/Soul Note and the most active of which is probably Splasc(h).

Italian Instabile Orchestra: *European Concerts '94–'97* (NEL JAZZ 0968; 79:25: ★★★★) Comprising a large portion of Italy's new jazz elite, Instabile is a creative big band in the tradition of the Instant Composers Pool Orchestra, London Jazz Composers Orchestra and Globe Unity Orchestra. Drawing on its members' compositional verve, solo and section skills alike, its two prior records (on Leo and ECM) are certainly more consistent in sound quality than this amalgam of live tracks from different spots and different times. But on this disc, the juice that makes it such a furiously fun band comes fresh-squeezed. Trumpeter Pino Minafra's ludicrous, tongue-in-cheek early-jazz/Italian soundtrack freakout "Fantozzi Bis" could hardly be more different from saxophonist Daniele Cavallanti's more earnest orchestral jazz composition "La Mesa Drive," but somehow they fit together on the same program, no problem.



MASSIMO DAMATO

Mario Schiano: gritty, groping, anti-complacency jazz

***Quattroquinti* (Splasc(h) 643.2; 58:06: ★★★)** From the other side of the esthetic omniverse, a straightahead date from a band whose name translates as "four-fifths"—guitarist/leader Francesco Barberini couldn't play because of chronic tendinitis, but held a quartet session anyway. Stefano D'Anna is a saxophonist I've been watching carefully since first hearing him; he's a soulful tenor player, sinewy, linear, full of ideas (his soprano playing on pieces like the syrupy "Satie(sfied)" is less remarkable) and well featured on Barberini's pretty tunes alongside pianist Stefano Bollani, bassist Lello Pareti and drummer Walter Paoli. Solid chops, not especially memorable material—this wouldn't seem out of place in today's New York hardbop mainstream.

Guido Manusardi: *The Village Fair* (Soul Note 121331; 59:29: ★★★½) Much Italian jazz integrates regional folk music into its fabric. Pianist Manusardi spent seven years in Romania starting in the late '60s, and you can still hear echoes of it on this lovely outing, which has elements of both the Italian hardbop tradition (in which Manusardi is a historic figure) and ornate, Italian-style restructuralism. The sextet includes Paolo Fresu on trumpet and flugel, Gianluigi Trovesi on clarinets and alto sax, and Roberto Rossi on trombone—listen to them dovetail on the "Inch Worm"-esque theme to "Capite De Fin" for a taste of their finesse.

Banda Cittá Ruvo Di Puglia: *La Banda* (enja 9326 22; 47:55/75:58: ★★★½) This ambitious project draws on the uniquely Italian tradition of "Banda," populist reed and brass orchestras that were important musical vehicles of the 19th century, presenting great melodies by Puccini, Bizet, Verdi et al. to folks unable to visit the expensive opera houses. On this set, one disc is given over to traditional Banda playing well-known arias in vocalless versions, while the other mixes Banda and jazz, integrating stunning vocalist Lucilla Galeazzi, as well as French tubist Michel Godard and accordionist Jean-Louis Matinier, Dutch reed player Willem Breuker (accomplished at these sorts of cross-stylistic ventures), reedist Trovesi and trumpeter (and virtuoso megaphonist) Minafra into a gorgeous set of suites, including "Sacra Romana Rota," which uses Nino Rota soundtrack scores arranged by bassist Bruno Tommaso. A stellar syncretic undertaking.

Giancarlo Schiaffini Quintet: *Dubs* (ARTPURecords 04; 69:43: ★★★★); SIC Trio: *Passemmezzo* (Splasc(h) 616.2; 60:22: ★★★★); Gruppo Romano Free Jazz/Schiano Trio: *Ecstatic?* (Splasc(h) 509.2; 66:01: ★★★★) Three outings featuring the outstanding trombonist Schiaffini, who's accomplished both in jazz and classical new music spheres. Don't be fooled by the straight sounding "quintet" denomination—*Dubs* sports an unorthodox lineup with trombone, voice, bass, violin and Iranian percussion playing Schiaffini's chamber-infused, highly coloristic music inspired by James Joyce's Dubliners. On several tracks, the leader electronically treats his playmates, bouncing vocalist Silvia Schiavoni's crystalline voice around like a superball on "Snow Over Ireland." The SIC Trio is a collective improvising outfit with Schiaffini, Michele Iannaccone (percussion) and Eugenio Colombo (alto, soprano sax and flute). Their first record in 20 years, *Passemmezzo* is a rewarding free adventure, 11 tracks full of nuance, interactivity and life, remarkably measured without being introspective. The trombonist displays his incredible range (total control from slurring tailgater to mutations expert), and Colombo proves that certain Italian free musicians are still scouring their instruments for new possibilties. *Ecstatic?* compiles the intitial recordings of free music in Italy, from 1967, with the GRFJ (Schiaffini, alto sax legend Mario Schiano, bassist Marcello Melis and drummer Franco Pecori), and the Schiano Trio's *If Not Ecstatic We Refund* (sans Schiaffini, plus Bruno Tommaso replacing Melis), which was the first such music actually issued (in 1970, the year it was recorded). It is music of an era, no question: gritty, groping, anti-complacency jazz, with energy to spare and no time to waste. As an early document of European improvised music and as sheer glee in ruckus-making, it remains a very rewarding listen. **DB**

BEYOND

Lasting Pop

by Dan Ouellette

In the shifting sands of the pop terrain, today's big star is often tomorrow's has-been. But a handful of artists who broke in during the '60s and '70s continue to attract a strong fan base and charge into the studio with new tunes in tow. While the success of these elders' latest efforts varies, at least each musician shows no sign of disappearing from the map overnight.

Bonnie Raitt: *Fundamental* (Capitol 8 56397; 44:07: ★★★★) Raitt's newest CD, produced by Mitchell Froom, finds her returning to a more rootsy and less pop-ish style. It features several of her own impressive compositions as well as songs written by David Hidalgo from Los Lobos and John Hiatt. As usual, Raitt shows off her remarkable slide guitar talent, sings with robust feistiness on the cooking tunes and romances with heartfelt soul on the ballads. Highlights include her funky, reggae-inflected lead-off, "The Fundamental Things," a skipping, old-time blues rendition of J.B. Lenoir–Willie Dixon's "Round & Round" and the rousing "I Need Love," written by NRBQ bassist Joey Spampinato and featuring his 'Q mate Terry Adams unleashing a quirky keyboard solo.

Bonnie Raitt: robust feistiness, heartfelt soul

Eric Clapton: *Pilgrim* (Reprise 9 46577; 75:40: ★★½) In his first album of original material in nine years, Clapton plays it cool, smooth and safe. It's a radio-friendly collection of tunes with catchy melodies and introspective, solemn lyrics. However, it's marred by tepid stretches of middle-of-the-road music with string arrangements, drum programming and silky background vocals. Even Clapton's guitar solos are largely forgettable. The show finally awakens on the eighth track, the rollicking roots rocker "Fall Like Rain," which unlike the first half of the CD has more grit and less slickness. Then there's the scruffy blues, "Sick & Tired," with string swells and Clapton digging deep with edgy vocals and biting guitar play. He's having so much fun on this number, it makes you wonder why he overloads this album with so many melodramatic, lost-in-the-wilderness songs. Edit out the bulk of the soft pop and you've got a decent disc.

Van Morrison: *The Philosopher's Stone* (Polydor 3145317892; 77:23/74:58: ★★★★) While technically it's not a new album, the long-awaited two-CD collection of unreleased Morrison songs recorded between 1971 and 1988 finally sees the light of day. With rare exceptions, the tunes are top-notch. The only questionable inclusions are two numbers where Morrison takes leave of his grumbling, aching-with-ecstatic-emotion vocal delivery to explore the falsetto range. On the bright side, there are several classic Morrison songs, including the soulfully swinging "Foggy Mountain Top" and the New Orleans-vibed "Street Theory." What's remarkable about *The Philosopher's Stone* is how well these songs, some recorded over a quarter of a century ago, have aged. This is no date with nostalgia. It's all new Van, music that ranks up there with his best work.

Maria Muldaur: *Southland Of The Heart* (Telarc 83423; 51:53: ★★★½) A jug band singer from the '60s (with the Jim Kweskin Jug Band) who transformed into a pop radio hit maker in the '70s (remember "Midnight At The Oasis"?), Muldaur has matured into a fine song stylist who delivers the rootsy goods with heart and soul on her latest CD. With a growl in her voice and a saucy sweetness in her delivery, she serves up a tasty collection of tunes steeped in the blues, tinged with gospel, spiced by jazz and driven by pop sensibilities. She scores with the sassy blues "Fool's Paradise," the deep blues "Blues Gives A Lesson," the jazz-swaying "Latersville" and the church-charged "Get Up, Get Ready," featuring backing vocals by the Chamber Brothers. Plus, there's an infectious title track written by Canadian songsmith Bruce Cockburn.

Nick Lowe: *Dig My Mood* (Upstart 038; 37:26: ★★★★) Nick Lowe is not a household name. But he should be. A member of British pub-rock pioneers Brinsley Schwarz in the early '70s and co-leader of the influential band Rockpile, Lowe has performed with, written songs for and produced albums by such noteworthies as Johnny Cash, Elvis Costello and David Bowie. On *Dig My Mood*, his 10th solo outing, Lowe once again delivers a brilliant collection of pop beauties that gleam with sweet angst. He writes deceptively simple melodies, singing about heartbreak with a grin and sorrow with the emotional detachment of a casual observer. Lowe also serves up a couple of jazzy numbers, including the brushes-and-bongos tune "You Inspire Me" and the dreamy "Freezing," which features a soulful tenor sax solo. This CD is a small treasure that displays the immense talents of the underappreciated Lowe. **DB**

REISSUES

Kirk's Works

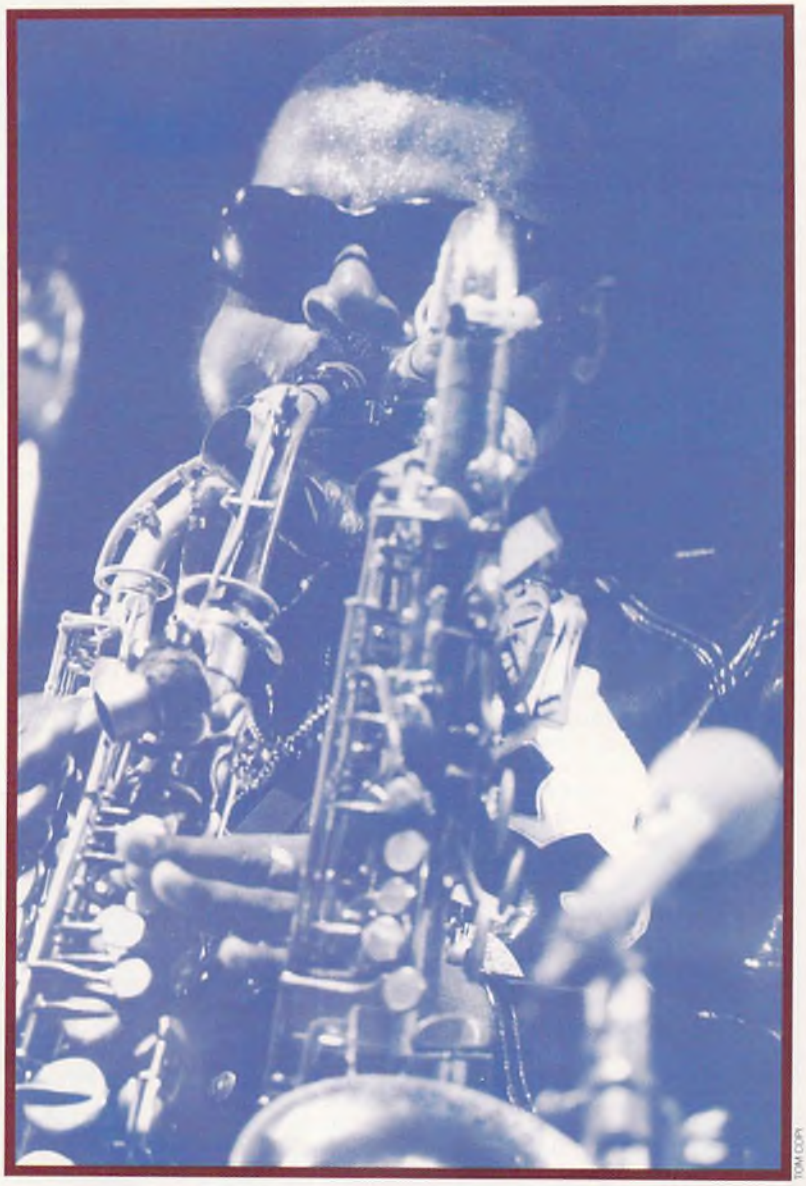
by Jon Andrews

A new batch of reissues from Rahsaan Roland Kirk demonstrates why the multi-reedman's music has retained its fascination over the years. Kirk's music survives because he combined virtuosity with a strong musical persona. Deploying unusual horns like stritch and manzello along with conventional and homemade instruments, playing up to three reeds at once (not necessarily in unison), and engaging in circular breathing, Kirk presented a truly unique set of skills. Six sessions recorded for Atlantic explore contexts for this singular talent, whose extended techniques and audacity were matched by his reverence for jazz tradition.

The Inflated Tear **(Rhino/Atlantic 75207; 40:25: ★★★★)** Given a deluxe reissue to commemorate Atlantic's 50th anniversary, *The Inflated Tear* was Kirk's first and most popular Atlantic recording, if not his most representative. The blues dirge of "Black And Crazy Blues" and the Trane-ish melancholy of the title track constitute two of Kirk's most memorable compositions. "A Laugh For Rory" and "Fingers In The Wind" showcase Rahsaan's abilities on flute. His powerful, expressive playing on that instrument may cause you to wonder how the flute has since become marginalized as a jazz instrument. Jimmy Dorsey's "I'm Glad There Is You" has been added as a brief, rare bonus track. *The Inflated Tear* still sounds a little subdued (by Kirk's standards), but it's a fine introduction for the wary.

Aces Back To Back **(32 Jazz 32060; 42:52/40:04/43:12/46:52: ★★★½)** Joel Dorn's 32 Jazz label obtained the right to reissue four Dorn-produced Kirk sessions that haven't been available on CD until now. *Left & Right, Rahsaan Rahsaan, Prepare Thyself To Deal With A Miracle* and *Other Folks Music* are a mixed bag, reissued here with the original liner notes, but without bonus tracks. *Rahsaan Rahsaan* and *Prepare Thyself* are essential Kirk albums from this period, while the other sessions are more problematic. *Rahsaan Rahsaan* combines "The Seeker," Kirk's extended primer on "black classical music," with a rowdy performance at the Village Vanguard. On "The Seeker," Kirk acts as an acerbic jazz educator, teaching and haranguing while his band, including Leroy Jenkins on violin, takes the listener through the history of jazz including the music of Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker and the New Orleans sound. *Prepare Thyself To Deal With A Miracle* adds strings, voices and horns to the mix with mixed results, and is dominated by two long blowing vehicles for Kirk. "Seasons" features Kirk on flutes over a surging, classically influenced backdrop, while "Saxophone Concerto" tests Kirk's use of circular breathing with a continuous, compelling 21-minute tenor solo without an audible breath.

Left & Right also uses strings and woodwinds to augment Rahsaan. The "Expansions" suite is the highlight, a vibrant acknowledgment of Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington and Igor Stravinsky. On other tracks, the strings tend to dilute Kirk's sound. *Other Folks Music* was recorded near the end of Kirk's tenure with Atlantic, and the session presents him in a smooth and pleasant, but ultimately forgettable, setting.



TOM COPI

Rahsaan Roland Kirk: energetic, mesmerizing

Dog Years In The Fourth Ring **(32 Jazz 32032; 49:38/45:50/37:49: ★★★★)** This three-disc set combines Kirk's rare *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata* album with two discs of live performances drawn from the tape collection of George Bonafacio, and adds excerpts from John Kruth's forthcoming Kirk biography. Recorded between 1964 and 1975, primarily in Europe, the live tracks present Rahsaan leading small groups through compositions by Parker, Ellington, Coltrane, Horace Silver and Sidney Bechet, among others. The sound quality is generally good and centered on Kirk's horns. One wishes for some context for these odds and ends, and, with so much good Kirk already on record, collectors and serious students of Rahsaan may form the principal audience. Dorn's liner notes identify *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata* as Kirk's worst-selling Atlantic album. One suspects that the label didn't know what to do with this energetic, often mesmerizing session, in which Kirk plays nearly all instruments (but for incidental percussion) simultaneously and without overdubs. Along with the usual arsenals of reeds, Kirk plays homemade "black mystery pipes" and assorted percussion devices. To enhance that achievement, Kirk's performance is remarkably coherent and musical, with noticeable influences of African and Caribbean musics. Unfettered and uncompromising, this is a pure, powerful distillation of Kirk's ideas. It's a surprising find, even by Kirk's standards. **DB**

Original Down Beat ratings:

- *The Inflated Tear:* ★★★★½ (11/14/68)
- *Rahsaan Rahsaan:* ★★★½ (2/18/71)
- *Prepare Thyself To Deal With A Miracle:* ★★★★★ (10/11/73)
- *Other Folks Music:* ★★★★★ (11/4/76)
- *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata:* ★★★★ (11/25/71)

BLINDFOLD TEST

AUGUST 1998

Dee Dee Bridgewater

by Dan Ouellette

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.

Dee Dee Bridgewater gravitated to jazz vocals early, joining the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis Orchestra in 1971, a year after she married trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater. While their marriage didn't last, her career flourished. She went on to work with Sonny Rollins, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach and Pharoah Sanders before taking a jazz hiatus in the late '70s to perform in Broadway musicals and on the disco circuit.

After relocating to France in the mid-'80s, Bridgewater resurrected her jazz career with a series of successful recordings, including *Live In Paris*, *Keeping Tradition* and *Love And Peace: A Tribute To Horace Silver*, all of which were nominated for Grammys. Her latest CD, the triumphant *Dear Ella* (Verve), paid tribute to the First Lady of Song and scored Bridgewater her first Grammy win.

While in Oakland a few weeks after her victory, Bridgewater took her first Down Beat Blindfold Test backstage at Yoshi's during a sold-out, week-long engagement.

Ray Brown

"Sister Sadie" (*from* Opus De Funk: The Jazz Giants Play Horace Silver, *Prestige, 1997, rec. 1977*) Brown, bass; Cedar Walton, piano; Elvin Jones, drums.

It's a bass player's gig. Hey, that's Ray! He's the only one who does that lick, which my bassist has been trying to master. I love how he goes into the bottom of the bass. He attacks the bottom notes with such precision. In Europe, a lot of bassists learn to play by focusing on their fingerwork and not going for the bottom, which is the soul of the instrument. Of course, this is Horace's "Sister Sadie." Four stars because it's solid groove playing and because the intro really caught my ear. There's so much soul and meat to Ray's playing.

Kitty Margolis

"Fever" and "The 'In' Crowd" (*from* Straight Up With A Twist, *Mad-Kat, 1997*) *Margolis, vocals; Kenny Brooks, tenor sax; Spencer Allen, keyboards; Brad Buethe, guitar; Peter Barshay, bass; Scott Morris, drums; Mike Spiro, percussion (on "The 'In' Crowd" add: Charles Brown, vocals; Roy Hargrove, trumpet).*

What a wild arrangement. I don't know if I like this. It's like a space-age version of "Fever." Who is this? It's someone younger than me because of her phrasing. Well, I like the timbre of the voice, but I'm annoyed with the arrangement. It's a little too busy, and honestly, it's too experimental for me. It takes the song too far into another direction. So 3 stars, although my curiosity is piqued. I'd like to listen to the entire album to get a fuller picture of what she's doing.

[*after playing her a second track*] Now I like this. This is interesting and cool. She seems a lot more relaxed on this song. And I love Charles Brown's vocals.

Sonny Rollins

"Island Lady" (*from* Global Warming, *Milestone, 1998*) *Rollins, tenor saxophone; Stephen Scott, piano; Clifton Anderson, trombone; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Perry Wilson, drums; Victor See Yuen, percussion.*

Is this the tenor's gig? It sounds like something on GRP. I don't know who this is, but he's got a nice sound. This piece sounds like a throwback to the '70s. That's my period, when we were all trying to do our fusion stuff and sell it. The hook is catchy. [*she scats along with the sax lead*] Yeah, it's definitely coming out of that peace and love era and smacks of that groovy and mellow sound. I'll give it 3 stars.

Get out of here, it's Sonny? I got a lot of my scatting ideas from him. But this is not one of his greatest works. That's the thing about Sonny: He's got these dualities going. When I knew him and gigged with him, sometimes he'd be blowing his brains out and then he'd go so mainstream. I could never pinpoint him.

Dinah Washington

"What A Diff'rence A Day Made" (*from* What A Diff'rence A Day Makes, *Mobile Fidelity, 1997, rec. 1959*) *Washington, vocals; Belford Hendricks, arranger and orchestra conductor.*

[*sings along immediately*] What can you say about Dinah? She's *baaaaad*. The hip thing about her is that she had bluesy sensibility with jazz sensitivity. I love that quick vibrato that she used so well. She also brought soulfulness to whatever she recorded. Every musician wanted to play with her because of her musicality. I give 5 stars to Dinah and to one of those standards that will last forever.

Richard "Groove" Holmes

"Blues All Day Long" (*from* Groove's Groove, *32 Jazz, 1997, rec. 1988*) *Holmes, organ; Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Cecil Bridgewater, trumpet; Jimmy Ponder, guitar; Cecil Brooks III, drums; Ralph Dorsey, percussion.*

Now this is the kind of music I'll put on in the house to put myself in a good mood. I'd pay money to hear this jazz. If this was 20 years ago, I could probably tell you who the performers are. This gets 4 ½ stars because it's good ol' swinging downhome jazz. It cools me out and soothes my soul. I know these players—this is like all the old cats. Dang. I give. Groove? Oh, that explains it. I used to pay to see him. Who's on tenor sax? Houston Person. See, Dee Dee, darn it. What about trumpet?

DO: *Your ex.*

Get outta here. Shame on me.

DO: *It's his song, too.*

When did he write this? It had to have been after us. I'll be damned. **DB**