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# Together

a once-in-a-lifetime conversation

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## 18 Louie Bellson, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones & Max Roach

### *Once In A Lifetime*

How often can you find four of jazz's top drummers in the same place at the same time? Seldom enough to declare it an occasion for a roundtable discussion with the swiftest septuagenarians in the biz.

By Ed Enright

Cover photography by Rick Malkin

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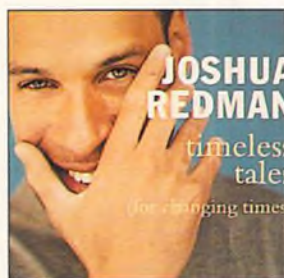
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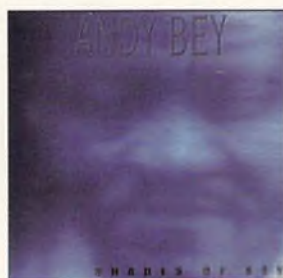
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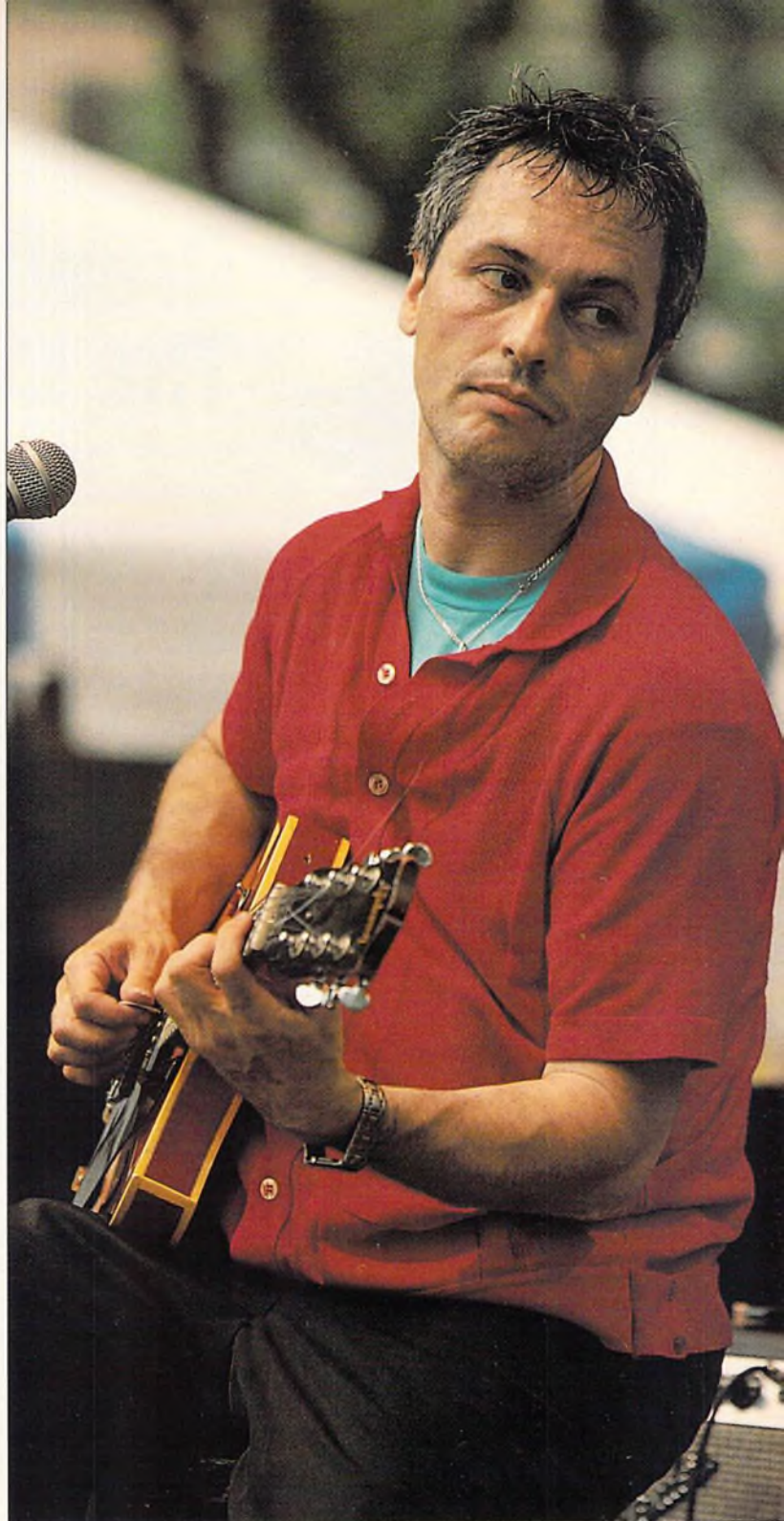
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# Once in a Lifetime

by Ed Enright

**L**ouie Bellson, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones and Max Roach are like four giant planets. Fellow musicians gravitate like meteors, and hangers-on constantly orbit like satellites. Getting them together is like orchestrating the Harmonic Convergence—a once-in-a-lifetime celestial phenomenon.

Avedis Zildjian Co., the 375-year-old cymbal-maker, made it happen this September when they paid tribute to these four jazz-drumming heavies, septuagenarians all. Billing it the American Drummers Achievement Awards, Zildjian called on a younger generation of drummers—Steve Gadd, Terri Lyne Carrington, Peter Erskine and Marvin “Smitty” Smith—to perform in honor of Bellson (74), Haynes (73), Jones (71) and Roach (74), respectively. Proceeds from the bash, held at Berklee College of Music in Boston and hosted by Bill Cosby (himself a closet drummer), went toward scholarships in each of the honorees’ names.

The day before the big event, Down Beat held a roundtable discussion with the foursome in the privacy of the

Friends Lounge, upstairs from the Berklee Performance Center. (We also heard from the honorees during a brief press conference the afternoon of the show; a few of those comments have been integrated into the following interview.) After posing for a quick photo session, Bellson, Haynes, Jones and Roach drank a toast of red Italian wine, sat down and were ready to roll.

**ED ENRIGHT:** *Have the four of you ever been together before?*

**ROY HAYNES:** I know we’ve all been together, separately, but not all four of us.

**ELVIN JONES:** Not at the same moment. This is the first time for that.

**EE:** *What does it mean to receive this honor? How does it make you feel to be together for this?*

**RH:** I’m glad to be here with these guys. Somebody said I was in good company to be with Max, Elvin and Louie. I’m looking forward to it. But I would like to hear these guys play! That would really knock me out. I’d sit back and just check ‘em out! We’ve got some youngsters playing tomorrow, so it’ll be cool.

Photo By Rick Malkin







**MAX ROACH:** It brings back a lot of memories. For example, I remember the time that Louie Bellson and Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa ganged up on me because I had won this Down Beat poll. I was the first black musician to win a poll for the magazine. So they went to California with Clark Terry and me, and here I was on the stage with these three killers. What a night that was! When I first heard Elvin, the band with Brownie [Clifford Brown] and them came to Detroit, and I got sick and I had to stay home a couple nights. Every night when the gig was over, I'd hear them coming down the hall happy. Laughing. This is Elvin, now, so I thought, I'd better get well and get myself back to work. Quick! Elvin Jones, he was a baby at that time. Roy Haynes, every time we came to Boston, Roy was the killer in Boston. When Roy finally got to New York City, Bird [Charlie Parker] hired him. I left and went on the road with Benny Carter, and Roy took my gig and kept it! [laughs]

**LOUIE BELLSON:** It's a very special honor for me because I consider myself a student of these three teachers. I started with Big Sid Catlett, "Papa" Jo Jones, Max Roach, Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones. These are truly my teachers. Anything I do today is a reflection of what they showed me. Max, I recall in the '40s when we did two drumset clinics in Brooklyn for Henry Adler. Saul Goodman was there for tympani and Burt Morales did the Latin thing. After I played, Max came to me and said, "Louie, you play so wonderful, can I add a comment?" I said, "Yeah, of course." He said, "Why don't you learn how to play melodically?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "For instance, if you're playing 'Cherokee,' build your solo around that tune of 'Cherokee.'" I never forgot that. It put me on a new avenue. Of course, many times I've listened to this gentleman here, Roy, and also Elvin. I'm especially honored to be one of the four honorees. And I think it's marvelous that this is happening, because what we've done so far can be a reflection on some of the students coming up: to love your craft and do the best you can and add something to this wonderful history of drumming.

**MR:** Let me just say something about Louie and what an inspiration you were to me. As a composer and an arranger, you stood out in the crowd. Louie Bellson was a craftsman, one of the few people whose music Duke Ellington played. Mercer [Ellington] always complained that his father never would play his music. When we did a record dedicated to Charlie Mingus, Duke invited us all to participate and asked us all to bring in compositions, and we played your music as well. We got to the studio, and Duke was at the piano—Louie, you're probably familiar with this

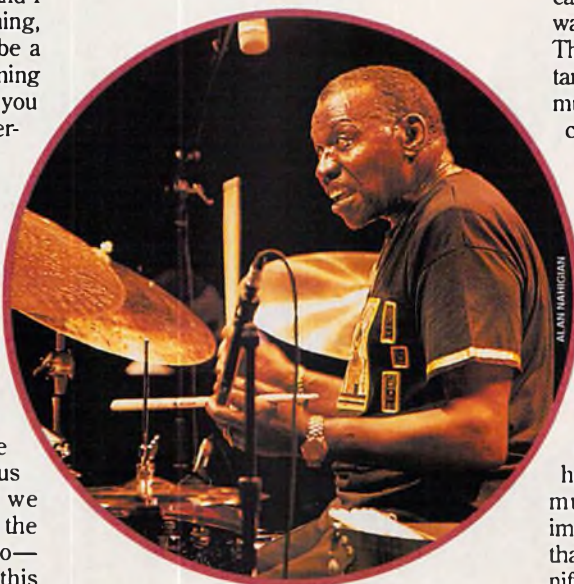


"When I hear Louie, when I hear Elvin, when I hear Roy, I know that work has been going on."

—Max Roach

"When I walked into a club and saw Max Roach playing, I'd stand there. Or Art Blakey. Or Henny Clarke. Something would hit me."

—Elvin Jones



sight—he was already writing stuff, putting stuff down. When we finished the date, we didn't play anything of Mingus', we didn't play anything of mine! [laughs]

But we recorded Louie's. Louie to me was as much a drummer as he was a composer and an arranger. I especially remember the tune "Skin Deep."

**LB:** That was actually written in 1947. Of course in those days, Tommy Dorsey or Benny [Goodman] had their own arrangers. I just wrote to keep my hand in composition. Then when Juan Tizol and Willie Smith and I joined Duke, Tizol said, "Bring those arrangements in to Duke." I said, "Juan, are you crazy? Me bring in arrangements to Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn? No way!" So finally, Duke came to me and said, "Bring the music in." So, reluctantly, I brought in "The Hawk Talks" and "Skin Deep." I was just flabbergasted that he wanted to hear some of my music. Even if he just heard it during rehearsal, that was good enough for me.

**MR:** That was a great piece, "The Hawk Talks." I forgot about that one. But that was an inspiration to the few drummers who *did* do a lot of writing. It got me really on it; I was always trying to do something in that area.

The drums are a hell of an instrument, and people don't always recognize that. One of the things about Elvin that has always mesmerized and fascinated me was the way his mind worked on that instrument. He uses all four limbs, not just contrapuntally—not left, right and against each other—but as a composer. No matter how much you watched and listened, there was something else. And there were a few people like that: [to Bellson] You mentioned "Papa" Jo was one of the great masters, and of course Big Sid. The track Jones set is an innovation that came out of the United States, where you charge with all four limbs, you *charge*. And Roy Haynes was another one who came to New York with all that stuff. Stuff was happening from every other direction. Then when I learned that Elvin played guitar, that really fascinated me. It was very musical. I had no idea about Elvin until he came to New York. He just shattered the vernacular, as did Roy.

**EJ:** This is the first time a manufacturer has recognized their endorsees as contributors to the musical art form. I think it benefits not just the four of us, or the next four artists, whoever they may be; but it provides a kind of inspiration for the students. It gives them a motivation. This isn't something that just gets printed in the paper. It's something that recognizes what you have done, what you have accomplished with your life as a musician. I think that's what is most important about the whole event. I think that in the future it will even be more significant because now a precedent has been



established. And I think it will be followed up in greater numbers, with more manufacturers setting up scholarships for other universities and music schools across the country.

**EE:** *The four of you share what seems to be an instant rapport. Would you say that's true of drummers in general, moreso than other instrumentalists? Drummers of all styles seem to learn from each other and feed off each other.*

**EJ:** You say "drummers" as if we're a different breed from anyone else. I don't think that's true. Drummers are certainly musicians, and they may even be more musical than other instrumentalists. But when they say drummers are more of a fraternity, I don't think that's true. It's just that when we're together we know that we share something, something in common, something very essential to our life ... which is a drumset. We use it for musical expression. But all musicians do that, I think: piano players, the woodwinds, the reeds. So I can't say it's anything exclusive in that way, but I think it may appear that way sometimes.

**RH:** I agree. Every time I go someplace and we have a discussion with musicians, I always learn something. That's one of the things I've been doing with the music: I try to keep my ears open,



*"There's something about each of these guys that I've connected with. . . . It's a really strong bond that's here. We're all related in some way."*

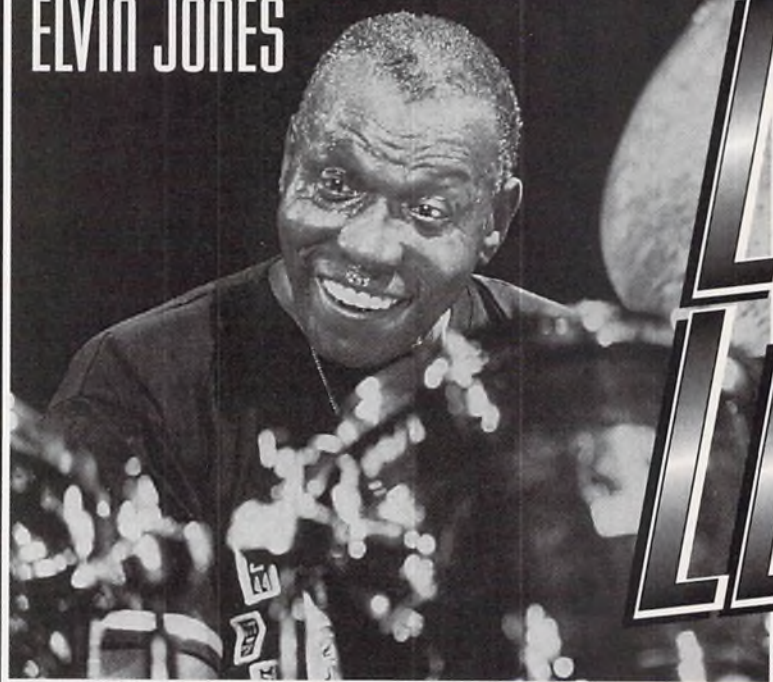
—Roy Haynes

because I'm learning from what he's saying. But I've often heard people—even years ago—say that drummers were closer. I mean, I heard people say that in the '40s and the '50s, so there is something to it. First of all, the drummer is the heartbeat, and there's something about drummers. I don't know what it is, but I've felt it in a lot of the older players. But I like what Elvin's saying about us all being musicians. There's a joke that I heard once, I think when I was with Ludwig. They were having a meeting, and they said all the musicians should be there at a certain time, and you drummers can come too, if you want to! *[laughs]* That's an old one.

**MR:** We had a little abuse that we had to deal with, we were discriminated against, and we had to band together, I guess, so we defend and protect each other.

**RH:** Max Roach, *this guy*, he was the first of the drummers, especially the black drummers, to get credit from where I was sitting, and I've been doing this since the '40s. I've watched him and Sid Catlett and Jo Jones—as great as he was, he didn't get enough credit. Cozy Cole, to me, got a lot of credit. He played the drums with Cab Calloway. He did the movie *Stormy Weather* or whatever movie it was, and he also had a drum school. But this guy [Roach] was the first person around my

ELVIN JONES



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age to really get noted.

And this guy, Elvin ... I was playing with Ella Fitzgerald in the '50s at Café Society, and Hank Jones was playing piano. This young guy comes in and Hank says, "This is my brother." That's when I first met him. That was in the '50s, before I went to Detroit.

**EJ:** I was just visiting!

**RH:** That's the first time I met you. Hank said, "He plays drums," and I said, "OK!" So later on in the '50s, I think I heard him from playing with Mingus and Harry "Sweets" Edison. I used to go to Detroit a lot, and I would always go by the Bluebird, a club where Elvin was working. I would sit and hang out with this guy. That's how we met. There's something about each of these guys that I've connected with.

**MR:** This is very special because Zildjian has opted to recognize the instrument itself. As Roy just told in that funny story about drummers—we're the outcasts. The drummer is not really considered a musician.

**RH:** You guys helped change that, though.

**MR:** And when I think about composition, our instrument—and I know I'm being partial here—brings a special something to the world of composition. Maxine [Roach, Max's daughter], for example, who's a string player, did a piece off a drum solo which was mine. She made the bass drum the cello, the cymbals became violins, and so on. It was a magnificent piece. She took the drum solo and just orchestrated it for strings. It showed me something about that instrument. I told her, "Now, the next one you do, listen to Elvin and put something to what he did!" [laughs]

**RH:** I think it's really a strong bond that's here. We're all related in some way. I filled in with John Coltrane for Elvin several times. And I replaced Max Roach with Charlie Parker. And I think it was 1952 when Louie Bellson was leaving the band and Duke had called me up. Louie, you had just married Pearl Bailey and you were going on a honeymoon. Duke did call me, but he just talked, he didn't say, "I'd like you to join," but that's what it was all about. I didn't go with the big band, because this new music was happening, so-called bebop.

Max Roach, when he left Charlie Parker, he recommended me. He said I took his gig, but he offered me the gig [laughs] and I went with the band and started on 52nd Street at the Three Deuces. And stayed there a long time. They always had two groups on 52nd Street; I think it was Erroll Garner and Charlie Parker. Then Bud Powell came with his trio, and Max Roach was going to be on drums, and I was still going to be there. And I didn't know if I was going to have to mess in my pants or what when I learned Max Roach was going to be playing opposite me with Bud Powell.

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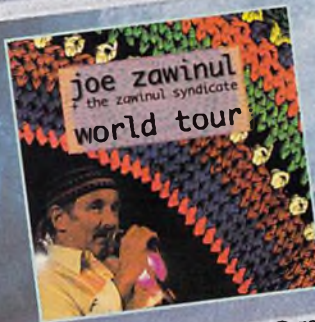
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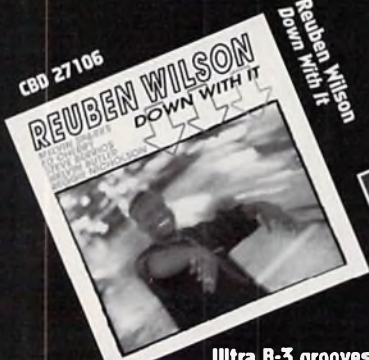


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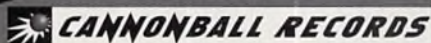
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And I think one of those nights Charlie Parker played a tune that I had never played before, and I didn't know what the hell I was going to do. There was a little door on the side of the drums at Three Deuces, and Max came up to the door and told me everything I should do, if it's a break here or a solo or whatever, and he always helped me. I remember when I was playing in New York at the Royal Roost with Lester Young, and we were playing "Lover Come Back To Me," and Lester gave me the bridge. And at the end, Max said to me, "That was a hell of a 16 bars," and I said, "I wasn't countin' bars." I just played. I realized then, hmmm ... 16 bars, this guy's pretty good. [laughs]

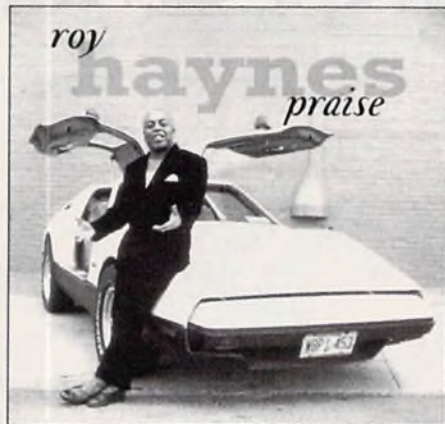
**EJ:** The first time I listened to Max was on a recording. I was in the army at the time, and we were in the barracks practicing rudiments. And this fellow, Raymond Landcaster, I asked him, "What is [Max] playing?" And he immediately analyzed everything you were doing, put it into rhythmic context and said this is what you were doing. And it made me aware of how much further I needed to go to reach a point where I could feel even partially satisfied with what I was playing, the way I was getting myself educated. It was that distinct identity that Max Roach had in any context. The music would start, and everybody would say, "That's Max Roach playing the drums." I think Louie Bellson has the same kind of identity as a drummer. The first time I heard him was with Duke Ellington's band, also on record, and he played a solo, and the only other person I'd ever heard at that time who could play a drum solo like that would have been Buddy Rich, but it wouldn't have been as distinctive. That was a signature of his artistry and ability as a drummer and percussionist. And I had the same experience with Roy Haynes. What fascinated me about him was that he played so many counter-rhythms and phrases, and that was his identity, to approach a rhythm from the back or from the bottom or from the side, and to me it was ingenious to hear that.

**LB:** I feel that drummers are the tone of life. We are rhythm, we are timing, we are pacing. Everything in life is based on rhythm: the way you talk, the way you walk, the way you express yourself on an instrument. And this group here—Max, Roy, Elvin and I—were very fortunate to come through a golden era. I'm talking about the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Oscar Peterson, Ellington, [Count] Basie, Lionel Hampton. This is something that is monumental, and also this group represents identification. You can put a record on and I know that's Max; that's Roy; that's Elvin; that's Lou; that's Jo Jones. That

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mark of identification proves respect for one another. So when I hear something by Max, Roy or Elvin, I respect their ability as gentlemen of high class who know their craft. They have their identification, and that adds a lot of respect from drummer to drummer. I learned from "Papa" Jo. He told me once, "You can walk into some funky little nightclub and hear some drummer nobody ever heard of. And if you listen to him play, you can pick up something that you can add to your repertoire." Always a process of learning. Roy, you and I talked about that today. Every day is a new process.

**EE:** *Each of you has worked with some of the biggest names in jazz. Have you ever thought about how these artists have influenced your own playing—be it melodically, rhythmically, your soloing style or your accompaniment style?*

**EJ:** The more exposure you have with other artists and other contacts in music, the greater the potential for you to develop. And it'll make you better. For me, when I was playing with Coltrane, I heard purity in his tone, in his discipline for study. That's what he was projecting. I think it affected me, as well as when I played with J.J. Johnson. They've got that *purity*. Here's a trombone player that could play with a slide that's faster than somebody could finger a trumpet, that distinct style and taste and articulation as if it were a valve. This is passed on to me. I'm already inspired, but that inspires me to be better, to make myself better so that I can be *worthy* of being in that kind of company. I think you can learn it from anybody. They don't have to be great, well-known artists. Like they say, you can walk into a room and here's a guy who's never made a record in his life, but he's there playing and *swinging* something. You'll absorb that because it's a part of *you*. That's what it is. It's a *part* of you.

**LB:** I was always taught to be an accompanist until it was time to solo. I learned that from Dizzy, too. To be able to hear a soloist, what they're playing, so that you can give them proper backing. Sometimes, in the rhythm section, if the piano and the bass and the drums are all comping at the same time, it's too busy and the soloist has to turn around and say, "Wait a minute—what's going on? Where are the fundamentals?" I feel that I go by the music. Like when I would back Johnny Hodges. If Johnny Hodges was playing one of those beautiful things of his, I'd take great delight in having my brushes and feeling that warmth from that poet. So I play according to what the music is. If it's bebop, if it's swing, whatever music, my ears are tuned in to the band, the soloist, and I gear myself that way. That's what I learned from Max and Roy and Elvin.

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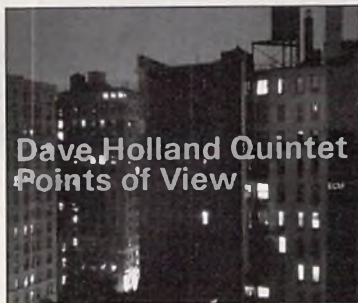
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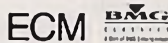
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**MR:** This music is a very democratic art form.

The fact that Elvin worked with John Coltrane, I worked with Charlie Parker, Roy worked with Sarah Vaughan and Louie worked with Ellington—what we got from these great players affected us and influenced what we did. This is a collective; you learned from everybody. We had to coexist with dancers, a variety of things that influenced us: the kind of atmosphere we

came up in, the time, sociologically, politically, artistically. We were exposed to so much. And that individuality is reflected in everybody.

**EE:** *The last time Louie and I spoke, we talked about the importance of passing on what you learn from the musicians who come before you. Who are some of the players—drummers or otherwise—you feel you've passed your knowledge on to?*

**LB:** I've been able to pass it on to anyone who comes along—students, sidemen, you name it.

**EJ:** That's the thing. You never know exactly *who*. I think a lot of people learn just because they buy a record or they come by a club. When I walked into a club and I saw Max Roach playing, I'd just *stand* there. Or Art Blakey. Or Kenny Clarke. Any of these guys. I'd just stand there and watch. Something would hit me. It would all be beautiful, but it would just be a matter of hearing something you feel you'd be able to do. You know you can't do it all, but there's something you can pick up that will help you with part of what you do all the time.

**MR:** The thing that all of us have given to ourselves and the rest of the world is *hard work*. Everyone has given time to develop on that instrument. When I see Louie and hear Louie, when I see Elvin and hear Elvin, when I hear Roy, I know that *work* has been going on. And it still goes on. Louie's always been a perfectionist, Elvin's a perfectionist, Roy Haynes is a perfectionist. Lester Young was a perfectionist. As Louie put it earlier, we inherited something that we hope everybody listens to and passes it on.

**LB:** I don't know who coined this



"I feel that drummers are the tone of life. We are rhythm, we are timing, we are pacing."

—Louie Bellson

history will help them get to this stage, and then further on. That's so important. If a drummer starts and plays for years and doesn't know "Papa" Jo or Chick Webb and Max Roach, Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones, you'd better go back to the drawing board.

**A**s the conversation winds down, we gradually make our way out of the Friends Lounge. A busy weekend awaits these four friends, as does our limo. On the elevator ride down, Roy Haynes looks around and takes a deep breath. "This is very serious," he says. "I never dreamed it would happen like this. We're all in our 70s, and I love you all."

### EQUIPMENT

Louie Bellson plays a Remo drum kit that includes two 24" bass drums, two 16"x16" floor toms, 8" and 10" concert toms, 14" and 16" rototoms, a 9"x13" tom and a 5 1/2"x14" snare drum. His Zildjian cymbals include a 20" or 21" ride, an 18" with three rivets, and 18" crash, a 17" crash, 14" Quick Beat hi-hats, a 22" China Boy and an optional 19" China Boy. He uses Remo Fiberskin #3 drum heads and Zildjian saturn-tip hickory drum sticks.

Roy Haynes plays Yamaha drums. He uses five toms: 16" and 14" on the floor, and 9"x13", 8"x12" and "a smaller one a little bigger than a bongo" on the rack. His bass drum is 18", and sometimes he uses a 23" tympani. His Zildjian cymbals include two crashes and one flat ride, plus the hi-hat. He uses Zildjian's Roy Haynes drum stick.

Elvin Jones plays a Yamaha drum set with an 18" bass drum. His floor toms are 18"x18" and 16"x16", the mounted toms are 9"x13" and 8"x12" and his snare is a 14"x5 1/2". His Zildjian cymbals are two 20" rides (both with rivets), one 20" crash and 14" hi-hats. His sticks are Pro-Mark's Elvin Jones signature line, and he uses Remo heads.

Max Roach plays Zildjian cymbals and has no specific drum set preferences.





**I**n our first installment of “Talkin’ Trumpeters With Wynton Marsalis” (May ’98), we gave the trumpeter an opportunity to accentuate the positive aspects of his fellow hornblowers. His initial list covered Jon Faddis, Terence Blanchard, Wallace Roney, Nicholas Payton, Marcus Printup, Roy Hargrove and Russell Gunn. We ended with a brief mention of Ryan Kisor, a section man in several big bands and repertory orchestras, including Marsalis’ Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

The following comments pick up where we left off, with Marsalis discussing Kisor and his other favorites, including several trumpeters based outside the United States.





# Talkin' **Part II** Trumpeters

With Wynton Marsalis

By Ed Enright

Photo By R. Andrew Lepley





**RYAN KISOR**



**TOMONAO HARA**



**FLAVIO BOLTRO**

"The first time I heard about **RYAN KISOR** was from Clark Terry. He said, 'Man, this guy, he's unbelievable.' Ryan was still in high school in Iowa. I said, 'Iowa? Aw, man.' Clark said, 'You gotta hear this kid play. You won't believe it.' The second time I heard from him was from Nicholas Payton after the 1990 Thelonious Monk Trumpet Competition, in which Ryan took first place. Nicholas said, 'Man, this boy can play!'"

"Then I heard him: He can really play the trumpet. For some time, ineptitude has been confused with soulfulness, so I'm always happy to hear someone who has respect for playing the horn—it really sets the record straight about that misconception. Ryan can play lead, and he has a beautiful sound in the lower regis-

ters. Sometimes, Printup and I look over there because we think a trombone is playing. He has his own way of approaching the harmony, that way he plays with little skips and stuff in it.

"Really, the best thing about Ryan Kisor is that he has great *time*. It's something we all laugh about in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. You can't believe he's actually playing in time, because where he's tapping his foot has nothing to do with where he's playing. He doesn't rush, he doesn't drag, he just gets right in the center of the time.

"He's very thorough in his approach to playing. Any type of harmonic progression, he can play on. He'll sit down and really check the chord changes out, and he'll come back and address the harmo-

ny. He doesn't skate over anything. Ryan, he's very diligent, and he works on his parts until he gets them perfect. And he doesn't have to work long because he has a lot of ability.

"Speaking of the future of the trumpet, there's a great high school trumpeter in St. Louis who is related to Clark Terry in some way. **His name is KEYON HARROLD**. He has 16 or 17 kids in his family, so you know he's going to come out here hungry. He has a very personal sound with a lot of warmth and feeling, but the thing I really like about him is that he's extremely intelligent. And he's able to solve problems by himself. He takes in information carefully and makes his own decisions. That's why at a young age he already has his own identity on his instrument. Plus, when you talk to him, he immediately takes you down home.

"There are trumpet players around the world playing some great jazz and elevating our instrument. **There's TOMONAO HARA in Tokyo**. He's very soulful: That's the first thing about him, as a person and as a trumpet player. He has a lot of students and he teaches them how to play. He puts them on a vibe. His ideas are loaded with information.

"He knows how to make a trumpet crackle. That's an ability Roy Hargrove has, too, to play that kind of crackling trumpet. Roy Eldridge would be the father of that style. Roy Eldridge had that kind of cracklin' style, make you wanna shout! That's church trumpet. Tomonao Hara's like that. He's one of the best musicians in Japan. He's a young guy, 29 or 30. Everybody loves him.

"**There's another one: FLAVIO BOLTRO from Italy**. He plays interesting intervallic relationships. He reminded me of Art Farmer. Not in style, but in substance. Immediately on hearing him, you wouldn't think, That sounds like Art Farmer. But Art Farmer knows how to pull that sixth out or the ninth or the flat nine. Art knows how to go to certain notes. It makes you want to cry when he hits them. Or smile. Flavio Boltro is like that. He gets to certain notes in the harmony and it makes you say, 'Ooh ... whoa!' His playing is very mature. He likes to swing. His whole *family* likes to

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**TOM HARRELL**



**WENDELL BRUNIOUS**



**LEROY JONES**

swing. And he's also very unpredictable.

"I try to take advantage of hearing these cats when I go to festivals. When I can hear them play live, I go hear them. Even in New York, I try to go out and hear cats play.

"Another thing that's really interesting about the international players is how much of the feeling of jazz they have in their sound. They're not trying to play just runs and lines. They're trying to play blues and get to the feeling and substance in the music. That's what they're attracted to about jazz.

**"TOM HARRELL, that's another cat.** His compositions are interesting. They always have some type of point to them, or logic that he's working on in his

composition. As a musician, he's introspective. Not in style, because his style can be flamboyant; he plays out, you know? It's not like he plays soft; he plays with fire.

"A lot of thought goes into what he plays. He addresses the harmony well. He's not trying to figure out how to *not* play the harmony; he's trying to construct lines that are poetic that will also make the harmony glow. There are different ways to approach the harmony. Coltrane was always trying to find that one line or thread that would run *through* the harmony. Another way is to play melodies *on top* of the harmony, like Lester Young. Tom Harrell's playing demonstrates both of these approaches."

"There are guys in New Orleans, my homeboys. **First, you'd have WENDELL BRUNIOUS.** He has a good attack. All the trumpet players from New Orleans have that same kind of singing way of playing, soulful.

**"LEROY JONES. His nickname was 'Jazz' when we were growing up.** He's another one who came out of Danny Barker's band, the Fairview Baptist Church Marching Band. He plays with a great attack, another one who's real articulate on the horn. He plays with a lot of soul and feeling. He can play the hell out of a mute, too. With a derby or a Harmon mute, man, he can make a trumpet sound like it's talking!

"When I was in elementary school, all

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KERMIT RUFFINS



JAMES ANDREWS

IRVIN

the trumpet players looked up to Leroy. It's a trip how you never grow out of that feeling. And he could make you laugh; he has a great sense of humor.

**"KERMIT RUFFINS, he plays with a lot of New Orleans feeling and flavor.** And he makes some good barbecue; red beans, too. He likes to wear those Crescent City hats. There's a certain skill to wearing a hat: It's just like playing with a hat mute. Some people's heads just don't look right with a hat on top of it. **JAMES ANDREWS is good, too.** We call him Lil' 12. He knows all the tunes, and he gets some real good vocal sounds out of his horn. **And they've got some younger cats like IRVIN MAYFIELD, a real good trumpet player who's**

**about 20 years old, very inventive and imaginative.** Irvin has a good chess game, and he always does the unexpected; you never know what he's going to do, with his playing or when he's talking. You should never ask him to co-sign a story, because if you ask him, 'Ain't that right, Irvin?' he'll say, 'Hell, no. Stop bullshitting these poor people.'

**"We've got a little genius in New Orleans now: Lil' 12's little brother, TROMBONE SHORTY.** Shorty plays all the instruments: trumpet, trombone, tuba. He plays all the rhythm instruments, too. And one of these days he's going to figure out he's a trumpet player. Shorty grew up in the Tremé, so he is the New Orleans culture. He plays those little

licks that you've been hearing for years, the ones you equate with being corny or trivial—but when he plays them, they take on their original meaning.

**"I know WARREN VACHÉ is playing great now.** Lord, have mercy! I played with him before on gigs and tours. He's one of the great underrated trumpet players. Warren has a lot of style, just from the way he dresses and the way he carries himself. He's another one with great creative ideas. And he knows how to connect his ideas. He knows how to make his ideas resonate in the form. He has real good ears and good time. And his playing is very mature. It's not something that's on its way to being something; it's what it is.

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And he knows a million tunes.

"RILEY MULLINS is good with what we call the 'stink' trumpet. He comes up with a lot of stink and fire. He's from Chicago. His playing is mercurial—another one with quick reflexes.

"There are a whole lot of good jazz trumpeters all around the world. A lot of musicians are struggling for work right now, but they want to play, so it's just a matter of time: When you want to play, people will hear you. Many times, because it's so hard to make a living in jazz, we question the validity of playing. Everybody questions jazz and whether the public likes jazz. The public wants to hear jazz. The question is, can we play it good enough for them to like it when

they hear it?

"Everybody wants to see Michael Jordan play basketball. But if it was me and you out there, we'd have to pay people to see it. Then our egos might say, 'Well, nobody likes basketball.' But we really know it's not basketball, it's what we're doing. So we shouldn't say, 'Nobody wants to hear New Orleans jazz.' They want to hear it. But most of the time when people hear it, it sounds so sad that the musicians who are playing it don't even want to hear it.

"And if you have any doubt, think about what happens when you go to see a master like Sonny Rollins and they start playing their horn and reveal that thing that's in them that's not in other

people. The audience always goes crazy. Always. They want to hear something great, and they know when they're hearing it. That's the thing about the international musicians: They go for the feeling of jazz. They want to play.

"Then you have the musicians like CHILO MORAN in Mexico. They're older guys, but they've been holding the fort down playing jazz. And FATS FERNANDEZ in Argentina, in Buenos Aires. He's a legend all around. Big fat sound, soulful.

"Trumpet players always have that matador type of thing, a certain strain that runs through us. We need that to survive out here, but sometimes it keeps us from really hearing each other." DB



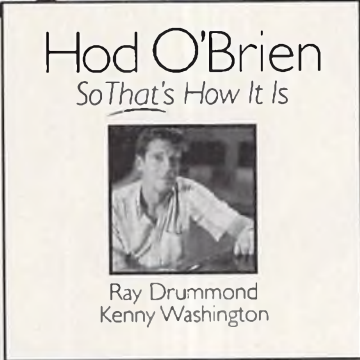
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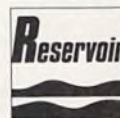


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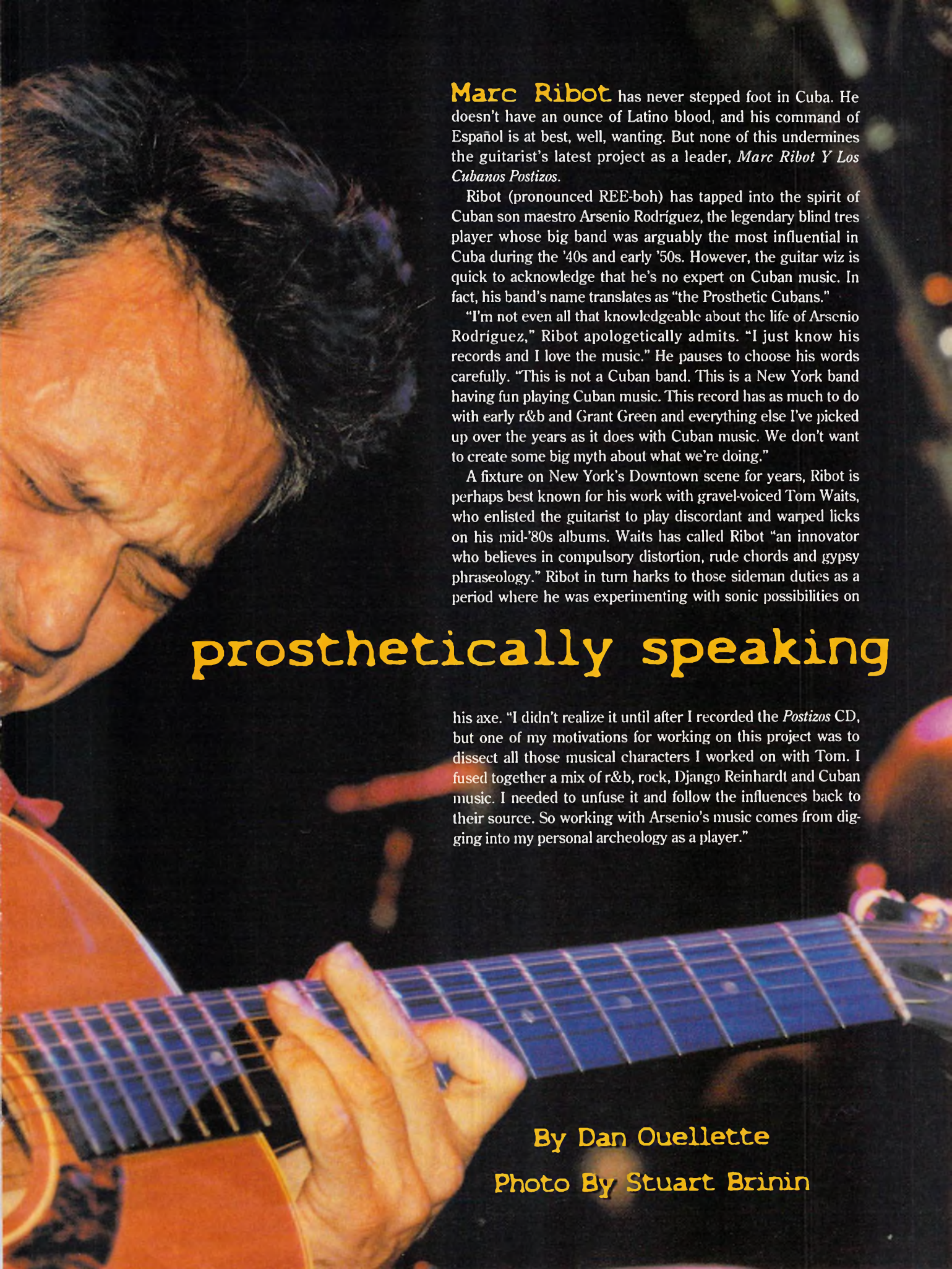


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**Marc Ribot** has never stepped foot in Cuba. He doesn't have an ounce of Latino blood, and his command of Español is at best, well, wanting. But none of this undermines the guitarist's latest project as a leader, *Marc Ribot Y Los Cubanos Postizos*.

Ribot (pronounced REE-boh) has tapped into the spirit of Cuban son maestro Arsenio Rodríguez, the legendary blind tres player whose big band was arguably the most influential in Cuba during the '40s and early '50s. However, the guitar wiz is quick to acknowledge that he's no expert on Cuban music. In fact, his band's name translates as "the Prosthetic Cubans."

"I'm not even all that knowledgeable about the life of Arsenio Rodríguez," Ribot apologetically admits. "I just know his records and I love the music." He pauses to choose his words carefully. "This is not a Cuban band. This is a New York band having fun playing Cuban music. This record has as much to do with early r&b and Grant Green and everything else I've picked up over the years as it does with Cuban music. We don't want to create some big myth about what we're doing."

A fixture on New York's Downtown scene for years, Ribot is perhaps best known for his work with gravel-voiced Tom Waits, who enlisted the guitarist to play discordant and warped licks on his mid-'80s albums. Waits has called Ribot "an innovator who believes in compulsory distortion, rude chords and gypsy phraseology." Ribot in turn harks to those sideman duties as a period where he was experimenting with sonic possibilities on

## prosthetically speaking

his axe. "I didn't realize it until after I recorded the *Postizos* CD, but one of my motivations for working on this project was to dissect all those musical characters I worked on with Tom. I fused together a mix of r&b, rock, Django Reinhardt and Cuban music. I needed to unfuse it and follow the influences back to their source. So working with Arsenio's music comes from digging into my personal archeology as a player."

By Dan Ouellette

Photo By Stuart Brinin



Wearing a white T-shirt, a silver Star of David on a chain around his neck, the unshaven and graying Ribot doesn't come across as someone hellbent on plotting out his career goals. Sitting at a blue collar bar in bohemian central, the East Village, Ribot says he's more interested in trying to stretch beyond the norm than being a commercial success. "How can I say this without sounding disingenuous? When you do a record, it comes out how it comes out. If people like it, great. But [having a hit] is not my consideration in taking on a project."

While he's setting the record straight on one count, Ribot also notes, "I don't want to make claims that push too far into the ridiculous, but why I'm attracted to Arsenio Rodriguez's music is not so far from the reasons I got interested in Albert Ayler. To me, both their musics answer a similar question: how to get beyond AABA. In other words, for someone like me who grew up as a rocker, it's all about how I can get beyond the standard form."

**T**he Arsenio Rodriguez project represents a shift in direction for Ribot, who instead of fragmenting the melodies—which he's likely do with Waits or fellow Downtowner John Zorn—he keeps their indelible lyricism intact. Exploring the Cuban vibe through a hip jazz-pop filter, he mixes the soft and sultry with the hard-edged and rocking, conjuring a triumphant fiesta that bears repeated spins. Ribot's guitar takes center stage throughout as he ranges from quiet romanticism on such tunes as "Aurora En Pekin" to scathing runs on the sizzling "Postizo" theme, the only original of the pack. The ensemble interplay often erupts into percussive, tempo-accelerating free-for-alls on such rollicking numbers as "Como Se Goza En El Barrio" and "Choserito Plena" thanks to the killer band Ribot has enlisted, which features bassist Brad Jones, percussionists Robert J. Rodriguez (the only Cuban in the group) and EJ Rodriguez (no relation to each other or the tributee) and guest keyboardists Anthony Coleman and John Medeski. Ribot also dubs in trumpet lines and sings on two tunes.

While he's enthused about the initial feedback to *Postizos*, Ribot is quick to point out that the band began as a fluke. "I put it together simply because I thought it would be fun. I was coming out of a period where for various reasons I hadn't been doing a lot of playing. I wanted to get back into performing instead of writing. Thanks to Anthony Coleman, who turned me on to him, I was an Arsenio fan. I liked him because he played his ass off. He was a tres player, but essentially he was a guitarist. What was great about him was that even though he was excellent on his instrument, he only took a couple solos per record. What really

intrigued me were his arrangements, how he developed his tunes rhythmically without going through complex chord changes. I also liked the way he progressed from being a sophisticated big band arranger to being influenced by a very West African sound."

Ribot began to rework tunes from Rodriguez's repertoire (his compositions as well as songs by Alfredo Boloña, Inacio Rios and Luis Martinez Grinán), developing arrangements with the guitar as the lead voice (instead of the Cuban son tradition of vocals and horns) and condensing big-band charts for small-group settings ("I cooked the arrangements down to solo guitar, then re-expanded them to trio and quartet").

He scheduled some dates to work out the material. "I've used New York as my rehearsal studio for a long time," Ribot says. "I draw worse here than any other place in the world, but if I feel like working on something, I book a gig. I figured I'd have some fun with this material at some obscure bar on a Friday night."

With Coleman, EJ Rodriguez and Jones, Ribot unveiled his new band at a benefit for a sick friend at the Cooler in New York in February 1997. The response was positive. Soon, Atlantic Jazz A&R man Yves Beauvais caught the band and liked what he heard. "I never intended this project to be recorded," Ribot says. "Yves approached us on our third gig and told me he wanted a demo to play at an A&R meeting. He kept calling, so eventually I made a tape at one of our shows. The next thing we knew, we had a record deal." Ribot booked more gigs and developed new material. Shortly before recording late last year, the band did a five-night stint at the Knitting Factory, opening the Tribeca club's new performance space dubbed the Old Office. "It was really important for us to do it right, to get a familiarity with the material. You can't be reading charts with this kind of music. Especially with the guitar as the lead voice, it needs to be internalized."

After the album's release this summer, the next step was to take the music on the road, which the leader anticipated with a degree of anxiety. The *Postizos* had already opened a couple shows for such hip young acts as the Grey Boy All-Stars, but they took the full plunge this summer as the warm-up for a Medeski Martin & Wood tour. Looking back, Ribot remembers one particularly challenging gig he'd played as an opening act with his group Shrek, which did a punk take on Albert Ayler. "One night, we opened for a Red Hot Chili Peppers set." He recalls telling the promoter that he didn't think Shrek's music was appropriate for the Chilis' audience. "But they went ahead with us anyway. It was really brilliant. For the first seven minutes, 3,000 people stood there with their mouths open. Then they let loose with a rain of everything they could get their hands on.

## bizarro takes

**B**orn in 1954 in suburban New Jersey, Marc Ribot grew up tuning in to Newark AM radio stations. Saturated with the pop culture of the '60s, he picked up the guitar and played in rock and funk garage bands. But he also took lessons from Haitian classical guitarist and composer Franz Casseus. "It was one of those New York things that happened," Ribot says. "My aunt knew Franz. He needed students. It was very cool. He was a smart teacher because he could tell I was just an 11-year-old brat who didn't

care deeply about becoming a prodigy in classical music. So he taught me some basics. He knew I was a little punk who wanted to master tunes to impress the girls."

By the time he was 14, Ribot was adapting what he learned from Casseus into a pop context, performing songs by Wilson Pickett and Booker T & the MGs. He dug Ike Turner (in his mind, one of the most amazing guitarists of all time), Duane Eddy and the Ventures. "Let the jazzers go ahead and laugh, but the guitar was built to play surf," Ribot

says. "I have a great fondness for that sound." After performing in a number of pickup bands over the years, Ribot moved to New York and scored a job playing with Jack McDuff. Then he gravitated deep into the Downtown scene, playing with the Lounge Lizards for five years, adding his distinctively quirky licks to an early edition of the Jazz Passengers and honing his session chops with such pop musicians as Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, Marianne Faithfull and T-Bone Burnett as well as jazz adventure-seekers Fred Frith and John Zorn.

Ribot also formed his own bands, including the Rootless Cosmopolitans with Don Byron and Anthony Coleman. The Cosmos started off playing bizarro takes on Jimi Hendrix and George Harrison songs. A spinoff group Shrek (the Yiddish word for "horror") found Ribot adapting Albert Ayler's principles for harmonizing melodies. Today, Ribot looks back at those projects and says, "I've got to admit they were fairly brutal. If someone bought those records, they may not be so quick to open the *Postizos* disc." —D.O.



It's a good thing they were giving out beer in plastic cups that night, otherwise we might have sustained serious injury."

Ribot laughs and continues. "We were pelted, but I'll have you know, we stood our ground. The sick thing is the more we were pelted and booed, the more we enjoyed it in a perverse way. Actually, I developed a method for controlling the crowd. I closed my eyes and counted the number of cups hitting me. When it hit 20, I broke into a funk riff."

**A** week after telling the cup-pelting story, Ribot and His Prosthetic Cubans (the trio version with Jones and EJ Rodriguez, plus special guest horn player Ralph Carney, another Waits studio alum) win over the youthful, pot-smoking Medeski Martin & Wood followers at the Fillmore in San Francisco, enticing them to dance with wild abandon. Ribot starts the set with "Fiesta En El Solar," which opens with a slow tempo then combusts into a cooker with his rocketing guitar leading the way. With his droll sense of humor, Ribot introduces the songs ("by our hero Arsenio") and sparks the proceedings with fluid but piercing plectra sprees. At the end of the set, he tells the crowd, "After you've lived through a billion disappointments, what does one more matter?" and then slides into the quiet "La Vida Es Un Sueño/Life Is A Dream," which dramatically builds with tension when he punctuates the tune with a bluesy guitar bite. The crowd loves it, and the Postizos leave the stage unscathed. Backstage, Ribot proclaims the show a victory.

But there's one more topic on which he has to set the record straight. With all things Cuban in vogue these days, Ribot concedes that he's ripe for jump-on-the-bandwagon criticism. "Yeah, yeah, I almost feel like I have to apologize. Again, this will sound disingenuous, but it's really dismaying how trendy Cuban music has become."

He shrugs and pleads the final argument in his convincing

case that the *Postizos* project was not calculated. "I'm fairly oblivious when it comes to trendiness. There's an objective reason why the time is right for Cuban music. When the Berlin Wall came down and trade opened up with former Eastern Bloc countries early in the '90s, we finally got to hear a lot of Cuban music, especially on Czech record labels. All my record collector friends like Zorn and Anthony were buzzing about Cuba. It's been extraordinary listening to music that wasn't readily available before. That's how I got into Arsenio. I didn't grow up with this music, but I enjoy listening to it. I was attracted to it at first because I didn't understand it, but now it all feels very natural." **DB**

#### EQUIPMENT

Marc Ribot has several guitars, but he used two on his latest CD. Most of the tunes were recorded on a 1960 Gibson ES225 thin hollow body electric, but he also used a Gibson 12-string acoustic guitar with a DeArmond pick up. "I wanted to have the feel of a tres on some of the numbers, but I didn't have the guts to play one on the album," Ribot says. He uses flat wound strings, no particular brand. To get his distinctive guitar tone, he uses a Fender Deluxe Reverb Reissue amp. For effects, he uses an Electro-Harmonix Memory Man delay and a volume pedal.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

**MARC RIBOT Y LOS CUBANOS POSTIZOS**  
(THE PROSTHETIC CUBANS)—Atlantic 83116  
SHOE STRING SYMPHONETTES—Tzadik 7504  
DON'T BLAME ME—DIW 902  
SHREK—Avant  
ROOTLESS COSMOPOLITANS—Antilles 314 510091

**with the Jazz Passengers**  
BROKEN LIGHT, RED LIGHT—Crepuscule  
DERANGED & DECOMPOSED—Crepuscule

**with the Lounge Lizards**  
NO PAIN FOR CAKES—Antilles 314 510090  
BIG HEART: LIVE TOKYO—Antilles 314 510089

**with John Zorn**  
FILMWORKS 2: MUSIC FOR AN UNTITLED  
WALTER HILL FILM—Tzadik 7306  
KRISTALLNACHT—Tzadik 7301  
THE BOOK OF HEADS—Tzadik 7009

**with Tom Waits**  
BIG TIME—Island 422 842470  
FRANK'S WILD YEARS—Island 422 842357  
RAIN DOGS—Island 422 826382

**with Elvis Costello**  
KOJAK VARIETY—Wamer Bros. 45903  
MIGHTY LIKE A ROSE—Wamer Bros. 26575  
SPIKE—Wamer Bros. 25848

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ALAN NAHIGIAN



# K

**ENNY WERNER** walked to the microphone on the bandstand at Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood and greeted his audience. Then, instead of immediately playing, the pianist began telling the packed house his perceptions about the inner workings of the musical mind.

"Many musicians tie in their self-esteem with their level of performance, so if they don't play as well as they'd like, they question their worth as human beings," Werner observed.

He went on to share some more insights.

"If you aren't worried about whether or not you sound good, and just accept with love whatever comes through your instrument, you might play a great solo.

"Many people don't get anything out of practicing because they're overwhelmed by what they don't know. But if you narrow your focus and master one thing you are working on, that will have a positive effect on your playing."

Werner drew these thoughts and others, which segued into an hour set of unaccompanied piano artistry, from his book *Effortless Mastery: Liberating the Master Musician Within*, published in 1997 by Jamey Aebersold. The slim, well-organized volume—an intriguing mix of musical know-how, psychological insight and Eastern spiritual philosophy—compiles basic concepts about raising consciousness (musical and otherwise) that Werner has been teaching at clinics and workshops for years.

Werner says that it came as a complete surprise that he would end up devoting a good part of his time to being an educator. "I never made a single gesture to be a teacher or lecturer, but I found that when I stood in front of people, I could explain how musicians could liberate themselves with their instruments," Werner says later during an interview. "And after a couple of articles and many lectures, particularly one at the IAJE [International Association of Jazz Educators] convention in Washington, D.C., in the early '90s, I discovered that this material was having a great effect on people, and they were hungry for it. I decided

## I'd Better Write A Book."

---

BY ZAN STEWART



# Inner Impulses

**K**enny Werner was born on Long Island on Nov. 11, 1951. He started piano lessons at age 7, and had his first record out four years later: a single of "September Song" à la Roger Williams. "I was a culturist kid who had a gift for music," he said, smiling.

At 16, Werner heard Charlie Parker, and then came the first album he fell in love with: Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way*. "There were no solos," he recalled. "It just went on and on, with all these sub-events messing with my mind. I thought, That's jazz? Solid!"

After a year at the Manhattan School of Music from 1970-'71, Werner headed north to Berklee in Boston and spent three years there. "I really turned on to jazz," he said. "Pianists like Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans—I saw through them that jazz is a music where you can obey your own inner impulses."

After Berklee, Werner worked in Rio, Brazil, where he encountered a pianist named Joao Assis Brasil, who instigated the line of thinking that resulted in Werner's acclaimed book, *Effortless Mastery*. "He showed me how to be kind to myself, how to practice and be productive," Werner said.

Some 18 months in Bermuda followed Brazil. Then he was back in Manhattan, connecting with many of the friends he met at Berklee: Joe Lovano, Steve Slagle, Billy Drewes, Dennis Irwin, Joey Baron and John Scofield. In various locations, he began a decade of gatherings with like-minded fellows such as Lovano, Rashied Ali and Drewes, playing free and entering what he calls his most important period of development.

"Playing free allows you to test the dynamics of music—loud, soft, high, low, dissonance, consonance—and develop a relationship of equanimity to all those things," Werner said with passion in his voice. "You develop your intuition through free playing."

In the '80s, Werner played with Mel Lewis' Jazz Orchestra, where he encountered a Zen master in the drummer. "That man taught me how to swing," he says. During this period, Werner started a trio with bassist Rato Harris and drummer Tom Rainey. "Trio seems the most natural vehicle for a pianist, if you're not playing solo," he says. "It's a pure form where I can empty my thoughts and impulses."

Werner broke up that trio in 1995, and turned part of his attention to composing, completing his piano concerto, "Baba: Concerto For A Saint," a 50-minute work dedicated to the "great saint and teacher Baba Muktananda, whose disciple, Swami Chidvilasananda, is my spiritual teacher." Of his interest in spirituality and Siddha yoga in particular, the pianist says simply: "A good spiritual path can be so helpful to find the divine principle within." —Z.S.

Although Werner is achieving a bit of notoriety from *Effortless Mastery* (which has sold more than 5,000 copies) and the clinics, he's still better known as a smooth-lined, modern-minded pianist who has issued 15 albums as a leader and played and recorded with such notables as Joe Lovano, Mel Lewis, Toots Thielemans, Tom Harrell, Chris Potter and Archie Shepp. His recent *A Delicate Balance*, his first CD for a major label, features the sublime rhythm pair of bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette.

The recording places the pianist in the foreground on eight provocative yet accessible selections, a harmonically revamped version of Nat Adderley's "Work Song" plus

"I was happy with what we reached in the four days we spent together," Werner says. "I threw some music at them that they both felt was very challenging, and I felt we reached a great level. I can't say that we totally found out what it was like, because the best way to do that is to tour for at least three weeks. But musicians these days don't have [such luxuries]."

Last spring, Werner made another quickly put-together yet outstanding recording, *Unprotected Music*, a program of completely spontaneous compositions that features two other favored associates, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joey Baron. Of the latter, the pianist extols, "Joey's a metaphysician at the

## "I don't feel as confined by the word 'art' as I used to."

drums. Yet he's one of the most rooted drummers. Before he shaved his head and put tape on his cymbals, he was one of New York's most sought-after drummers for his big, fat swing." Werner prefers threes, and this year, he formed another trio, with bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Hart. "Billy and I are very fluid in our ideas, and Ray is like the pillar that holds us up," the pianist says. "I know that my solos with these guys felt great in the context of someone else's band, but I wanted to see what happened when it was just us. It's been great. Billy and Ray put a beat and imagination to my surreal music."

To complete this annum, Werner will be mixing his performances with his trio, as well as with other colleagues, with clinics devoted to his book. But he's finding that appearances similar to Catalina's—where he wove the ideas from the book, in the manner of part lecture/part comic routine, in with a set of music—can also work. "This might create a new vehicle of performing," he says. "I don't know the form yet, but I do know now that I don't feel as confined by the word 'art' as I used to." **DB**

Recorded in three days last year, the album was conceived when Jean-Jacques Pussiau, founder of the defunct French label Owl Records and now with BMG France, met Werner in Paris in 1995. Back then, he queried Werner about players he might like to record with.

"I said that one potential rhythm section would definitely be Dave and Jack, two of the most visionary musicians on the planet and two of my heroes," Werner says. "Then I forgot all about the conversation. Two years later, Jean-Jacques called and said, 'We're ready to do the album.'"

Werner didn't have a lot of time. The trio took only a day of rehearsal in the studio. Still, the pianist felt he established a copasetic musical relationship with two giants he had played with very little.

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## EQUIPMENT

At home, Werner plays a Steinway D full concert grand. He also occasionally uses a Kurzweil Micro Piano synthesizer, as when he performs with Toots Thielemans. On the road, he takes with him a Yamaha CBX-K1XG multilayer portable synthesizer with computer interface.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*A DELICATE BALANCE*—RCA Victor 51694  
*UNPROTECTED MUSIC*—Double-Time

Jazz 139  
*LIVE AT VISIONES*—Concord Jazz  
CCD-4675

*AT MAYBECK*—Concord Jazz CCD-4622  
*INTRODUCING THE TRIO*—Sunnyside  
SSC 1038D

*PRESS ENTER*—Sunnyside 1056  
*CHRIS POTTER/KENNY WERNER*—  
Concord Jazz 4695

with Joe Lovano  
*CELEBRATING SINATRA*—Blue Note  
37718

*UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE*—Blue Note  
99830

*LANDMARKS*—Blue Note 96108  
*VILLAGE RHYTHM*—Soul Note 121 182  
*TONES, SHAPES AND COLORS*—Soul  
Note 1132

with Mel Lewis  
*THE DEFINITIVE THAD JONES*—  
MusicMasters 60228A

*THE DEFINITIVE THAD JONES, VOL. 2*—  
MusicMasters 5046

with Betty Buckley  
*MUCH MORE*—Sterling 1014  
*LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL*—Sterling 1012  
*THE LONDON CONCERT*—Sterling 1010

with various others  
*PORTABLE UNIVERSE*—Freelance 027  
(Scott Colley)  
*CONCENTRIC CIRCLES*—Concord Jazz  
4595 (Chris Potter)  
*LABYRINTHS*—RCA Victor 68512  
(Tom Harrell)  
*FORGOTTEN DREAMS*—A Records 73049  
(Dave Pietro)  
*THE OPEN ROAD*—Double-Time Jazz 114  
(Don Braden)  
*SWEET SOUL*—Novus 63140 (Peter  
Erskine)

video  
*EFFORTLESS MASTERY*—Double-Time  
Jazz



*Inspired by the parade bands and second-line drummers of his New Orleans childhood, drummer Ed Blackwell played no small part in the free-jazz movement of the late 1950s. As the percussive force behind many of saxophonist Ornette Coleman's classic recordings, Blackwell crafted his own drum vocabulary by fusing that New Orleans sound to Coleman's ground-breaking free approach. Published Oct. 3, 1968, this "Classic Interview" finds Blackwell discussing his relationship with Coleman as well as the revelations that African drumming held for him when he toured with pianist Randy Weston in the late 1960s.*

## Ed Blackwell: Well-tempered Drummer

By Valerie Wilmer

There's something about a man from New Orleans, something that's hard to define. The first giants of jazz were born there, but the era doesn't matter. The city seems to produce a gentle breed of musicians, men who know music almost instinctively, and who carry themselves with a rare kind of dignity. George Lewis has it, Jim Robinson, Slow Drag Pavegeau—and Edward Blackwell has it, too. Ornette Coleman's drummer is by no means a small man, but he knows how to tread softly, with the leisurely walk of the Louisiana delta.

He plays drums in that deceptively casual manner, too; unruffled no matter what he's into. His interplay with Coleman is understanding personified. Blackwell plays so *cool*; his eyes invisible behind green-tinted glasses, his pencil moustache hidden when he draws in his lips to dig into the music; a picture of perception, finesse and concentration. Ornette has only to breathe in a different way, it seems, for Blackwell to sense his change of direction.

In spite of its obvious looseness, his drumming sticks a little too rigidly to a straight 4/4 beat for the people who like their drummers to really go "outside." But his most recent predecessor with Coleman is not among those. "Billy Higgins and Edward Blackwell," Charles Moffett once stated emphatically. "I'd go out of my way to hear these guys play because they play some very nice percussion and, at the same time, they can be very musical. And that's a hard thing to do on drums."

Moffett, himself deeply rooted in the old-time tradition and never a man for half-baked opinions, was echoing precisely the virtue that Coleman admires in his three favorite drummers. When Moffett left the quartet in August 1967, his place was immediately taken by the gregarious Higgins, who filled in for Blackwell, then touring with pianist Randy Weston in Morocco.

Now the soft-spoken New Orleanian is back with Ornette and the wheel has come full circle. In the '50s, when the saxophonist was an outcast on the Los Angeles jazz scene, it was Blackwell's steady encouragement that helped him stay on the right roads. "When I heard Ornette for the first time, I felt the happiness he generates," Blackwell explained in his unaffected, gentle manner. "That was one of the main things that I loved about his playing. It was so free, although he had so many terrible experiences behind him because of the way he played. I couldn't understand why people couldn't hear it."

Blackwell, now 41, met the saxophonist in New Orleans in 1949. Both were with rock & roll groups at the time. The drummer, together with clarinetist Alvin Batiste, was one of the few musicians to recognize that the unorthodox saxophonist, then playing tenor, was into something all his own. Blackwell enjoyed the vibrant

happiness that sparked from Ornette's horn, especially since it recalled for him the joy he'd experienced as a child following the parades in the "second line."

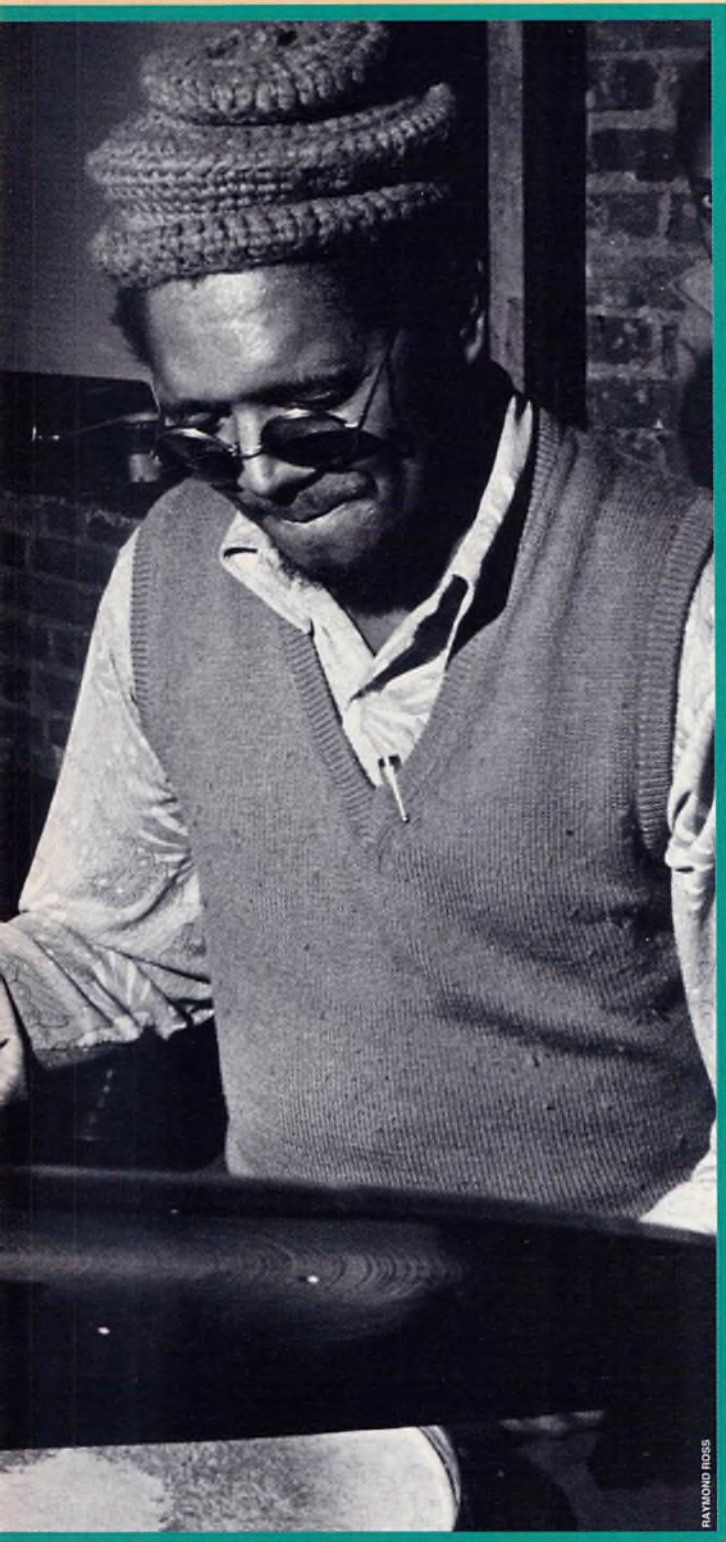
"The rhythms they had going with those parade bands were so beautiful that even now I still feel that rhythmic inspiration I got from being able to run along behind the drummers coming from the funerals and things," he confided. "It was such a gas, man. In fact, you can always hear that type of thing in the playing of practically any drummer that's from New Orleans, the parade beats and the street beats, you know."

In 1951, Blackwell moved to Los Angeles, and two years later Coleman migrated there from Texas. For three years the two musicians shared a house and worked out daily until the saxophonist married, and according to Blackwell, much of the groundwork for the contemporary Coleman concept was laid in those drab and penniless days. Most Los Angeles musicians became so hostile when hearing the new Messiah that the two men were unable to even find a bass player to audition with them when the rare gig came up. "The only time we could get a bassist was when we had the job," said Blackwell ruefully. "We'd play for \$10 a night, sometimes eight, just to be able to be working."

Blackwell decided to return to New Orleans shortly before Coleman's long association with Don Cherry began, but just before he moved, he and Ornette did some more practicing with the young Billy Higgins in a garage owned by another alto player







is now. He knows I can play more or less what he wants to hear on drums, but when you grow up together, *what* a person actually likes about you is something you can't describe."

In 1959, Coleman sent for Blackwell for his first Contemporary recording session, but the drummer returned the ticket. "I wasn't ready then," he smiled, "so he used Billy and then took him to New York." The following year, the saxophonist recommended Blackwell to the late John Coltrane, who was then in the process of forming a new group. The drummer decided that now was the right time to move north, but in the meantime, Higgins had run into cabaret card difficulties in New York, and Blackwell arrived just in time to take his place with Coleman at the Five Spot. "I appreciate the fact of being able to work with Ornette," he said, but added regretfully, "I now wish I'd been able to play some with John, too."

Coleman's group spent three months at the club, and the mixed reaction to the music is now a legend in the jazz annals. "One thing I seem to notice is that whenever Ornette and I played together, people seemed to be able to hear what I was doing more than they did what Ornette's into," Blackwell mused. "I can't understand how they would differentiate so much as to prefer what I'm doing when I'm playing what he's playing!"

"But people are so fickle. Like, if you go to California now, everybody's been digging Ornette for *so long!*" he laughed. "I can understand them not liking him if they don't *listen*, but after three or four tunes they should begin to hear what he's doing. His music arouses aggressiveness in people who can't understand it, but he doesn't let himself be worried. There are times when his meekness has infuriated me, but he just doesn't anger very easily."

After the Five Spot engagement, Coleman's group went on the road. On his return to New York, Blackwell worked for a while with pianist Mal Waldron and bassist Richard Davis in the combo co-led by Booker Little and Eric Dolphy.

Two barren years followed, with little or no work apart from the occasional coffeehouse or loft gig with Don Cherry, and a few recordings, one with Cherry and Coltrane (*Avant Garde*, Atlantic). The drummer's luck changed in 1965, when he started to work with Weston, who took him to Africa on his 1967 State Department tour.

The trip made more than a fleeting impression on Blackwell. "Africa really reminded me of the South, the way the people live and the whole atmosphere of it," was his comment. "I'd see people that reminded me of home everywhere I went. You'd see your father and you'd see your mother, and it was such a close resemblance that I really got nostalgic. The three months we spent there were such a success, and I was really happy for Randy because it was one of his life's ambitions to go there and play."

In September of last year, Weston returned to the African continent, this time to Morocco, taking Blackwell and bassist Bill Wood with him. This second trip conclusively cemented the drummer's view of the permissible extent of freedom in music. "I really could hear the freedom I've always felt for drumming in the drummers in Africa. I feel more uninhibited now as far as the right and the wrong things to play are concerned. I began to realize that there's never any wrong way to play if you play the drums."

Music for Blackwell remains a strictly happy affair. "I always try to generate the feeling that I got as a kid in New Orleans," he explained. "The best music is the happiest kind, and that's how I feel about what Ornette plays. It's happy music, like in New Orleans."

"But New Orleans music generates many feelings. For instance, when they were on the way to the graveyard it was very sad, mournful, almost like a dirge, but on the way back it was a happy thing, a complete turnaround."

"I imagine that's what made New Orleans music so fantastic, because of the way they were able to generate different moods. I think that's the mark of professionalism, being able to play with a variety of different feelings."

DB

from Watts, Cherry's and Higgins' neighborhood. "That's how I got to be pretty close to Billy before I split," said Blackwell, whose fondness for Higgins is that of a brother. "He was more or less naturally the one for Ornette to get, I guess, since I wouldn't come back."

Although the drummer had opted to return to the South, his fortunes were to be inextricably linked with Coleman's. He was attracted by both the man and his music, "because they were so close," he put it. "I know that after we lived together for a while, I found that his personality is really such a peaceful thing. It rubbed off on me a lot because I was very wild in California! He was a big influence on channeling my way of playing to the way it



# CD REVIEWS

NOVEMBER 1998



## Frank Wess Quartet

Surprise, Surprise!  
Chiaroscuro 350

★★★★

Nominally, this may be Frank Wess' date, but he's not alone. Recorded aboard the S.S. Norway's Floating Jazz Festival in 1996, this double CD offers a number of agreeably unexpected and informal musical encounters that owe much to the fact that after dark in the middle of the Caribbean, there isn't a whole lot to do; and that visiting with old pals is a healthier pastime than taking it in at the midnight buffets or losing it in the casinos.

Of principal sentimental interest here is the reunion of Wess and Frank Foster (who also contributes the witty liner notes). In the '50s, they made their names as the solo point men of the Count Basie reed section, occasionally doubling up on a showpiece like "Two Franks." But this music is not about sentiment.

Of the three tracks they share here, "Estoril Sol" is a mid-tempo blues that leaves you wanting more. Foster's solo turn is a sharply curving trail of loose, gritty riffs and strobing arpeggios that seem to fling near the edge; this in contrast to Wess' more formal, straight-down-the-middle savvy. On "It Could Happen To You," Wess is poised and unflappable. He glides smoothly over the kind of triplets and note-chewing that used to inhabit Lester Young's faster solos, while Foster digs in with a style that bestrides late hop and early Coltrane. Both square off in some smashing exchanges and ensemble work at the end. The third two-Frank pairing, "My Funny Valentine," has to work its way through a prolonged bass interlude before getting to Wess' lovely flute statement and Foster's probings.

Flip Phillips sets a torch to "Cottontail" and outswings everyone in sight, even Wess. The rapid-fire fours that lead into the closing ensemble may be the kind of contrivance that invariably brings any crowd to a boil. But that doesn't make it easy or any less exciting. You're not likely to hear it done any better than here. And bassist Lynn Seaton provides a pulse of unforfeiting potency.

There's less heat but no less light in Wess' duos with Jimmy Heath, who explores the rich-

es of "All The Things You Are" with grace, eloquence and relaxed urgency.

Overall, for Wess this is an above-average, largely open-ended solo playground. The dead spots are relatively few, and pianist Richard Wyands and drummer Winard Harper, while not widely known, are well up to the company. Chiaroscuro is distributed by MS, Bayside and Distribution North America.

—John McDonough

**Surprise, Surprise:** All Or Nothing At All; A Beautiful Friendship; My Funny Valentine; Estoril Sol; One For Amos; Firm Roots; Nada Mas; It Could Happen To You; All The Things You Are; On Green Dolphin Street; Cottontail; Surprise, Surprise. (73:08/56:33)

**Personnel:** Wess, tenor saxophone and flute; Frank Foster (3, 4, 8), Jimmy Heath (9, 10), Flip Phillips (12), tenor saxophone; Richard Wyands, piano; Lynn Seaton, bass; Winard Harper, drums.



## Danilo Perez

Central Avenue  
Impulse! 12812

★★★★

It's not much of a shock to find out Danilo Perez was surrounded by bongos and congas as a kid. The pianist has proudly made a point of incorporating into his art the percussion interests of his youth. 1996's sublime *Panamonk*—the definition of a breakthrough disc thanks to focus, focus, focus—was only partly distinguished by the eternal poetic integrity of the composer's tunes. Most of its allure came from the ace interpreter's sage rerouting. A personal spin is everything in jazz, and by flagging the Caribbean cadences he's known his whole life, Perez created one of the most idiosyncratic takes on Monk to be heard in ages.

The pianist gets even more blatant with his roots on the spirited *Central Avenue*. And he ups the ante by providing some ethnic diversity, too. The program's swirl incorporates Panamanian folk singing, gypsy melodies, Brazilian vocals, Indian tablas and jazz harmonies—a strategy that amplifies his persona as cosmopolitan virtuoso. Of course, integration's one thing; it's a modern commonplace to attempt the art of the blend. But here Perez achieves a much rarer goal: consolidation. The focus mentioned above defines this record's palette of ideas, too. At the start of his liner

notes, Fernando Gonzalez speaks of the leader's skill at making complex notions sound simple. Touché. That's the essence of Perez's art, and that's what's accomplished on *Central Avenue*.

Equilibrium guides the action, even when bustle threatens to rock the music off the hook. "Impromptu (Conversations)" has got piano rumbles on the bottom, tabla claves in the middle and Luciana Souza's cooing on the top. On its way to recalibrating "Caravan," it picks up mucho steam. But the sundry lines are graced by a momentous balance. Whether the pianist doubles the time in his right hand trills or slows down his left to mess with the percussionists, the group's elaborate interplay is in sync.

The thrills behind this rapport are a key to why Perez's audience increases so steadily. Like the educator he is, the pianist has the ability to reduce a 10-ton idea to a tidbit. Sounds like there should be a downside to that, I know—jazz extols elaboration, after all. But Perez's morsels are heavy in their own right. Like his pal Jacky Terrasson, he's utterly familiar with the way kingpins like Ahmad Jamal and Keith Jarrett tied their knots with the simplest of maneuvers. When "Blues For The Saints" reaches its apex, it's impossible to tell from what direction the storm began. Even the genteel "Love In 5" finds ways to build a castle out of an ordinary web of timber.

Since I'm stressing rapport, let it be said that John Patitucci is hooked up big-time with his boss. Perez spent a chunk of the spring touring with the bassist and Roy Haynes, and the fruits of that work are obvious. *Central Avenue* substantiates what fellow musicians have spouted for years: Patitucci's a monster. He's on the money everywhere he needs to be, with a virile tone and sly maneuvers. On "Sideways" he gallops with Jeff "Tain" Watts like they were Tonto and the Lone Ranger. Tain's mastery should be known to all at this late date. His loosey-goosey hard pack benefits everyone it touches, from Branford to Brecker. Does funk get much more unbridled than it is on "Playground"? Don't make the mistake of believing he can't be gentle, too.

What *Central Avenue* tells us is that Perez is fully prepared for any adventure. He recently played duets with Steve Lacy, a guy ostensibly outside the pianist's circle. Reports had it a significant outing. Wise enough to stress collaboration, the pianist's pandemic interests never seem to get the better of him. Like Don Pullen's trio discs for Blue Note, and maybe Misha Mengelberg's recent Avant dates, Danilo's latest is the sound of audacity shaking hands with decorum—everything jells quite nicely.

—Jim Macnie

**Central Avenue:** Blues For The Saints; Impromptu (Conversations); Lush Life; Rhythm In Blue Suite; Playground; Sideways; Love In 5; Impressions; Cosa Linda; Panama Bues. (46:28)

**Personnel:** Perez, piano; John Patitucci, bass; John Benitez, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Jeff Ballard, drums; Ray Spiegel, tablas; Luciana Souza, vocals; Pernell Saturnino, congas, guiro, clave, shekere, okonkolo; Raul Vital, vocals (9); Miguel Anga, okonkolo, iya, itotele; Aquiles Baez, cuatro.

KEY

Excellent  
Very Good  
Good  
Fair  
Poor

★★★★★  
★★★★  
★★★  
★★  
★





## Mickey Hart/ Planet Drum

Supralingua  
Ryko 10396

★★★★

**P**ercussion. World music. Mickey Hart has brought these two worlds together in a way that many of his much-revered percussion predecessors have not. Call it timing, clout or just plain better people skills.

Percussionist/producer Hart (better known for his work as part of the genre-splicing Grateful Dead) is no Johnny Come Lately, cashing in on the multicultural wave so much in vogue these days. His *Rolling Thunder* and *Diga Rhythm Band* albums showcased his early interests in a kind of cornucopia of drums, percussion and "world musics" (a term not yet invented in the mid-'70s) with a touch of psychedelia. (*Rolling Thunder*, his first, is still his best, what with its rough production values, jarring musical sequences, rock influences and juxtapositions of East and West.)

Not the virtuoso Babatunde Olatunji or Mongo Santamaria were decades ago, Hart's skills seem to lie elsewhere: as a unifier, collaborator, not to mention keeper of the flame. Still, he does command attention as a musician in his own right. In fact, one only has to listen to "Angola," the first track to *Supralingua* (his fourth for his *The World* series on Ryko), to recognize that his melding of electronics with percussion and "world music" sensibilities is not a gimmick. It doesn't hurt that he has some heavies on board to help authenticate his sound. Musicians like Giovanni Hidalgo, Zakir Hussain and Olatunji lend depth to this percussive enclave that could have easily been eclipsed by Hart's electronically laced, synthetic pop sheen.

On the other hand, the huge personnel on board could have submerged *Supralingua* with too much, producing too little. Again, Hart meets the challenge, keeping the proceedings from tiring into a clever, trendy trip through easy-on-the-ears grooves or a party with too many guests. Some are songs, like "Angola," others are simply vamps that run the listener through grooves folded into engaging vocalizing, like the fun "Frog Dance" and "Fall Grass." In fact, the vocals on *Supralingua* are just as much a presence as the percussion. Compositionally, each song appears to have been written by most of the group performing it, which may explain why some of the material sounds less distinctive, more generic at times.

The second half of *Supralingua* features an enhanced CD with remixes and a video inter-

view with Hart. "Yabu," from disc 2, is a good example of taking Hart's idea of mixing percussion's past and future together, as he takes processed sounds with his RAMU (Random Access Musical Universe) "soundroid" computer workstation further than anywhere else on the album, yet all within a somewhat basic rhythmic framework.

The label hypes it all as "a state of the art global fusion that leads world music into the new millenium." Claims aside, *Supralingua* offers a lot of fun, including danceable grooves, not to mention a little mystery along the way. It's a world music bazaar; a reinvented world music, to be more exact, since there is so much crossing over of musical styles and percussion instruments from all over the world, and practi-

cally little or no ethnic "purity." —John Ephland

**Supralingua:** Angola; Yabu; Endless River; Umayeyo; Secret Meeting Place; Tall Grass; Umasha; Frog Dance; Damawoo; Indoscrub; Wheel Of Time; Space Dust; Umasha (Strawberry Swamp Fever Mix); Yabu (Transmigration Mix #2); Umayeyo (Slakked Plastik Remix); Wheel Of Time (Stolen Moments Real Time Dub Crime remix). (54:32/27:06)

**Selected personnel:** Hart, RAMU (processed kalimba, violin, flute, vocal samples, scrub samples, water drop samples, trumpet samples), indio, roto-toms, kanjira, tom-toms, octobans, wood blocks, ilib kundu; Giovanni Hidalgo, congas, vocal; Zakir Hussain, duggi, madal, djembe, bongos, bass drum; Sikiru Adepaju, dundun, wood blocks, djembe, metal percussion; David Garibaldi, drum kit, metal percussion, wood blocks; Airtio Moreira, caxixi; Bakithi Kumalo, electric bass, wood blocks; Babatunde Olatunji, vocal sample; the Gyuto Monks Tantric Choir, vocal sample.

## Justin Time For Great Music



### Stéphane Grappelli - "Live"

A gem of a recording, this 1994 live concert was captured in Québec, and features guitarist **Bucky Pizzarelli** and bassist **John Burr**, with the late master violinist performing an energetic set of mostly standards.

### Bluiett Baritone Nation - "Libation For The Baritone Saxophone Nation"

Arguably the concert of the 1997 Festival International de Jazz de Montréal, this blistering live date of Bluiett's powerhouse **Baritone Nation** group celebrates the baritone sax and his quest to change the language, while acknowledging the "ancestors," from Harry Carney to Leo Parker. Featuring **James Carter**, **Alex Harding**, **Patience Higgins** and drummer **Ronnie Burrage**.

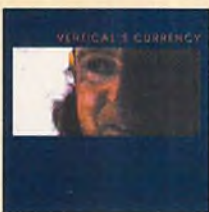


### Bryan Lee - "Live At The Old Absinthe House Bar ... Saturday Night"

Following the brilliant success of his monumental blues guitar blowout "Live At The Old Absinthe House Bar ... Friday Night," we are pleased to offer round two. "Saturday Night," again featuring guests **Kenny Wayne Shepherd** and **Frank Marino**, is an electrifying reminder of the power of live blues.

### Kip Hanrahan - "Shadow Nights 1"

"Shadow Nights 1" is the brand new volume of Kip Hanrahan's ambitious "Arabian Nights" project. In his interpretation, Bagdad has become The Bronx, and elements of the American experience in Vietnam have been transported to Persia. As always with Hanrahan's productions, this a very sensual, evocative and highly original recording. With **Don Pullen**, **JT Lewis**, **Milton Cardona**, **Billy Bang**, **Steve Swallow** and others.



### Kip Hanrahan - "Vertical's Currency"

First released in 1985, (and unavailable in North America for over a decade) "Vertical's Currency" is probably the most commercial and accessible of Kip Hanrahan's records of this period. It's a perfectly focused record, with all the ingredients working toward creating a mood or an image. This unearthed gem, featuring **Jack Bruce**, **David Murray**, **Arto Lindsay**, **Steve Swallow**, **Milton Cardona** and **Anton Fier**, received a five star rating from Bill Milkowski in *Down Beat* on its initial release!



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# THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>FRANK WESS QUARTET</b> <i>Surprise, Surprise</i>		★★★★	★★★	★★★1/2	★★★
<b>DANILO PEREZ</b> <i>Central Avenue</i>		★★★	★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★1/2
<b>MICKEY HART PLANET DRUM</b> <i>Supralingua</i>		★★	★	★★★	★★★★
<b>WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET</b> <i>Selim Sivad</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★

## CRITICS' COMMENTS

### FRANK WESS QUARTET, *Surprise, Surprise*

Rock-solid, swinging quartet; studies in contrasting saxophony; fun with guest walk-ons, especially the indefatigable Flip Phillips. Few real surprises, though. Pleasing as these concerts surely were, they had difficulty holding my attention over two discs. An 18-minute "My Funny Valentine," replete with de rigueur "Flight Of The Bumblebee" quotation courtesy of Frank Foster, is appropriate for club (or ship) date but lacks compelling justification for issuance.—JC

You look at the 18:14 "Round Midnight" and go, "Aw, shit." You listen to the 18:14 "Round Midnight" and say, "Holy shit!" Wess, Foster, Heath and Phillips just blow and blow across these tunes, revitalizing their reps with deep swing and purposeful improvis. Very impressive.—JM

For anyone wondering where some of jazz's luminaries have been (and haven't been able to make it onto any of the S.S. Norway jazz cruises), this two-CD, 1996 set is a good point of reference. Including relative youngsters bassist Seaton and drummer Harper was a nice touch. Nothing flashy, it's a treat to hear Wess' trademark flute alongside Foster and Heath's respective tenors.—JE

### DANILO PEREZ, *Central Avenue*

Fine pianist with a big, percussive sound. But the menu is spotty, from a bluesy "Lush Life" down to a positively dreadful "vocal" on "Panama Blues."—JMD

Builds nicely on the *Panamonka* idea. Very personal blending of rhythmic concepts from South, Central and North American sources, culled in a way that's integrated and thought out rather than pastiched together. "Lush Life" is treated with reverence and given a new view at the same time. Strong production, in general: swell tabla touches on "Impromptu," though "Impressions" should have lost the drippy vocals.—JC

Perez's set is a return to roots that evokes a collage of Chick Corea, Bud Powell, McCoy Tyner and, in rare moments, Vince Guaraldi and Keith Jarrett. Perez relies on rhythm to get his message across; hence the preponderance of percussionists. The dreamy opener, "Blues For The Saints," could have been extended into a suite all its own, what with its ideal blend of melody and gentle rhythmic urgency.—JE

### MICKEY HART PLANET DRUM, *Supralingua*

A pastiche of world rhythms, chants, riffs and whoops that starts like a variation on the "Macarena." Some call it hypnotic. Monotonous comes closer. Up with Western Civ.—JMD

What happens when commercial (or misguided artistic) interests force musical cultures together? A polyester syncretism, portended in Jon Hassell and Brian Eno's "Fourth World" projects and brought to fruition on Hart's "supralingual" global music mishmashes. As usual, the exotic "other" ethnicities are treated ornamentally, not substantively; the song structures are funky pop, vocal samples and non-Western percussion gliding along on a familiar rhythmic base (4/4, mostly) with awful glitzy production.—JC

I take my percussion pieces and cultural excavation on the unplugged side, so a bit more subtlety's readily available. But there's something to be said for Hart's initiative in this brocade of beats. His electronic button-pushing conjures up anything he needs to flesh out the grooves, from the drones of monks to the laughter of children, and ultimately it expands the music's essence.—JM

### WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET, *Selim Sivad*

Boredom to burn in all the jungle onomatopoeia and caterwauling, but held in check by structurally sound ensembles and solos from this still surprising group.—JMD

Nifty solos and clever arrangements are a good place to start when dealing with highly familiar material. But in the end, these novel moves make an only partially convincing portrait. There's clutter and garrulousness to contend with. Though I will say that the ensemble's robust nature is still its most attractive element.—JM

An inspired set, this tribute to Miles Davis rises above the pedestrian treatments given the trumpeter since his passing. This is true because of repertoire that includes the whole of Davis' career (instead of just the acoustic material), the great instrumentation of WSQ with vocals and some strong drumming (DeJohnette included) and imaginative arrangements.—JE



## World Saxophone Quartet

Selim Sivad  
Justin Time 119

★★★

In the current bumper-crop of Miles Davis tributes and songbook projects, it's nice to hear one that has so little directly in common with its dedicatee. *Selim Sivad* draws its thematic material from the Davis and Davis-related diamond mine—full-range, from hard-bop to pop-funk—but the arrangements, textures and musical sensibilities aren't too close for comfort.

World Saxophone Quartet's been working with African percussion since the dawn of the '90s, and Hamiett Bluiett's relationship with Chief Bey—anchor of the African drum trio here—tracks back at least as far as his 1981 record *Dangerously Suite* (Black Saint). Over the years, combination with drummers, African and not, has provided the saxophonic ensemble with welcome timbral variety, though perhaps it's also taken away some of what made them special, too, casting them as a horn-heavy frontline rather than as a sax quartet. On this outing, WSQ adds Jack DeJohnette (presumably flashing his Miles-alumni card) to the soundscape with success—DeJohnette never thunders over the top but inobtrusively integrates into the African drum choir.

"The Road To Nefertiti" begins amorphously, with swells of bass clarinet and flute that gradually take shape and join a two-kalimba groove; contra-alto and bass clarinets vary the thumb-piano ostinato before the elegant statement of Shorter's familiar composition arrives. On "Seven Steps To Heaven," perfectly Milesy staccato horn parts give way to a group blow in the middle; a cricket- and cicada-like hi-frequency percussion backdrop frames John Purcell's interesting arrangement of "Selim," though DeJohnette's fruitless piano interlude (he also turns to keyboard on "Blue In Green," someone else clunkily manning cymbals) and a touch of echoey saxophone effect (ineffectual nod at electric Miles) detract from the overall picture.

Bluiett dives into his familiar strutting-bass role on "Tutu," an unabashedly funky cut that does, in fact, give the drummer some. On this track, Oliver Lake emerges as the soloist with the greatest emotional power, resisting the hollow grandstanding into which David Murray sometimes lapses, the vague phrasing of which seems to be rubbing off on Purcell. Where things turn modal, as on "All Blues," the hornwork tends to shift into auto-pilot. The blowing gets aimless on "Freddie Freeloader," which searches out com-



monalities between a kalimba vamp and Davis' modal classic, Titos Sompá toasting "bad boy Freddie" and adding Leon Thomas-esque yodeling.

Not by any means WSQ's most inspired disc, *Selim Sivad* nevertheless has its genuine charms and avoids the worst traps of tributism.

—John Corbett

**Selim Sivad:** Seven Steps To Heaven; Selim; Freddie Freeloader; The Road To Nefertiti; Tutu; Blue In Green; All Blues. (52:59)

**Personnel:** Hamiet Bluiett, baritone sax, contra-alto clarinet; David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Oliver Lake, alto sax, flute; John Purcell, saxello, alto flute; Jack DeJohnette, drums, piano; Chief Bey, Ashiko African drum; Okyerema Asante, African drums, percussion, kalimba; Titos Sompá, African drums, percussion, kalimba, voice.



## Ralph Towner/ Gary Peacock

**A Closer View**  
ECM 21602

★★★★

Sublime. Tempered. Polite. Mannered. Delicate. All these adjectives, especially "sublime," describe the music created by Ralph Towner and Gary Peacock on *A Closer View*, the duo's followup to 1993's *Oracle*. Of the 12 compositions here, seven are penned by Towner, one by Peacock, four by both. As is the case with most Towner recordings, he is the principal composer, and his releases are occasions to highlight not only his exemplary guitar (and sometimes piano) skill, but his pen as well. In fact, every one of Towner's albums are, in the main, new, with a standard or favorite previous composition thrown in for good measure.

Another adjective: dreamy. While Towner returns to one of his more memorable songs in recent years, "Beppo" (recorded with Oregon on 1991's *Always, Never, And Forever* on vernalBra), most of *A Closer View* offers a seamless web of dreamy sonic landscapes, where beautifully recorded instruments are heard playing through interesting, caressing and, like a waking dream, wispy melodies. "Beppo," with its distinct and sunny lines, stays with you long after the song has ended. The rest of *A Closer View*, on the other hand, slips through your fingers, like soothing grains of sand, never to be captured again. These tunes, one to the other, provide a thread of continuity, with no jarring interruptions, no dramatic pauses or changes of musical style or scenery.

Taking "a closer view," however, one can still appreciate the subtle and sublime compositional differences in each of the tunes, and, likewise, when the two musicians are joined together as co-composers. "Opalesque," by both, for example, is

lush, with the song's simple chord progression engaging players on an almost equal footing, solos weaving in and out of both instruments almost simultaneously. Musically modest, the song holds a strong, subtle undercurrent of feeling. Volume and pitch are maintained here, and throughout *A Closer View*, almost requiring the listener to come to the music and hear the delicate emotional shadings. As for "Opalesque," a sense of longing, hopeful but ultimately sad, is cast.

As Towner moves from classical to 12-string guitar, the difference is like one of reflection versus a mild kind of exertion, the difference of one who sunbathes versus one who goes for a good walk on the beach. And bassist Peacock is there at the ready, pushing and stopping, strumming and plucking, offering the requisite juices in a

kind of game of hide-and-seek with his fellow string player. They walk together, they stop and close their eyes. All the while, the playing is intricate, sometimes simple, always engaging.

Worlds apart from Towner's heartier and grittier *Trios/Solos* encounter with fellow Oregonian/bassist Glen Moore (ECM, 1972), *A Closer View*'s dreamy, emotionally modest program indicates a mellow ripening on the part of both artists, two quiet giants in music whose efforts still reward those who come close enough to really hear.

—John Ephland

**A Closer View:** Opalesque; Viewpoint; Mingusiana; Creeper; Infrared; From Branch To Branch; Postcard To Salta; Toledo; Amber Captive; Moor; Beppo; A Closer View. (56:34)

**Personnel:** Towner, classical and 12-string guitars; Peacock, double-bass.

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## Ryan Kisor

**Battle Cry**  
Criss Cross 1145

★★★★

The recording career of Ryan Kisor, the 1990 winner of the Thelonious Monk Institute competition who is heard regularly in New York and elsewhere with the Mingus Big Band, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, shows that all young lions don't fare splendidly at first. Following his Monk win, Kisor was signed to Columbia, which initially failed to emphasize his strengths and ultimately dropped him from the label in 1993 after two slow-selling recordings.

Five years later, Kisor gets another shot with *Battle Cry*, which is on the money. This is an in-the-pocket, let's-groove session that showcases the brassman's big round sound, fleet technique, melodic imagination and solid swing in a set of unpretentious mainstream jazz.

Kisor's no innovator, but he's a good observer. He's checked out the best and he emulates beautifully. You hear: Freddie Hubbard's bold tone and sweeping drive on the title track and "Birdlike," both crackling blues; a lovely, lyrical synthesis of melody and harmony in a song-like solo on "I'm Old Fashioned" that would make Kenny Dorham proud; the kind of inventive melodic snap that characterizes Tom Harrell's artistry on the perky waltz "Falling In Love With Love." No particular influence stands out, proving that Kisor is on his way to an original style. Let's hope he'll undertake the hearty practice regimen and work on his writing chops and appearances as both leader and sideman to get him there.

Kisor is wrapped tight by the trio of organist

Sam Yahel, another NYC up-and-comer, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Brian Blade. These fellows deliver supple accompaniment, then solo with crafty lines full of well-chosen notes that sizzle and pop. Yahel's sound is a la Larry Young, and Bernstein's gleaming tone complements it wonderfully. The pair give the whole date an added sonic fatness. —Zan Stewart

**Battle Cry:** Battle Cry; It Happens; Falling In Love With Love; I'm Old Fashioned; Birdlike; Sweet Pumpkin; If Ever I Would Leave You. (53:49)

**Personnel:** Kisor, trumpet; Sam Yahel, Hammond B-3 organ; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Brian Blade, drums.



## Paul Wertico Trio

**Live In Warsaw**  
IGMOD 49802

★★★★½

Anything that Paul Wertico puts out himself is going to be held up to the work he's done with Pat Metheny. That's the price he pays for interpreting the guitarist's music so well for the last 15 years. In the driver's seat on this DAT-captured concert date with a couple of excellent Chicago-area musical cohorts, the trapster shows his mettle as a leader, writer and instigator.

The drummer is frequently called on with Metheny to create a texture but not a diversion, a wash of cymbals rather than breathtaking tomtom roll. With the freedom of this tight, supportive trio, Wertico is loosened up to explore all angles of the drum kit, hands open to any whim. He keeps up the high musical standard—in fact, for himself the bar is a little higher now.

*Live In Warsaw* is a combination of the type of adventurous world-wise rhythmic jousting Wertico did with Kurt Elling on Bob Belden's *Shades Of Blue* (McCoy Tyner's "Tanganyika Dance") and the daring improvisational power heard on his duet with Gregg Bendian, *Bang!* This concert is also very much about his talented cohorts, world-class players each. They dig into "Cowboys & Africans" with a sense of adventure but also maturity in the groove. Versatile guitarist John Moulder brings to mind a ripping John Goodsall and Brand X one minute, then a more dreamy Jan Akkerman vibe, and John Scofield at his dirtiest the next. Bassist Eric Hochberg is formidable as well, a rhythmic and melodic partner in the group bowing, plucking, never letting the level falter. As they ride out "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise" in a blaze of glory, this real "playing" band serves notice, and Wertico raises the stakes with an awesome flurry. —Robin Tolleson

**Live In Warsaw:** Toms For Talia; Cowboys & Africans; Little "e"; Time For The Blues; Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise; Magical Space; Give The Drummer's Sum; 8 X 12. (54:40)

**Personnel:** Wertico, drums; John Moulder, guitar; Eric Hochberg, bass.

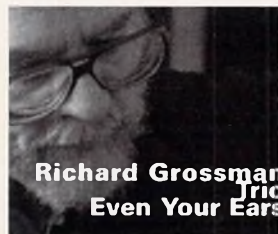


## Cindy Blackman

**In The Now**  
Highnote 7024

★★★★

"A King Among Men" is an engaging precis of a CD that is basically a showcase for Cindy Blackman as composer/arranger. On this tune, dedicated to the late drummer Tony Williams, Blackman disgorges her full arse-



Richard Grossman, who passed away in 1992, was a pianist who believed in the primacy of the immediate, the spontaneous. He saw creating music as "an existential situation," felt the urgency of improvising without preconceived conditions as a challenge "to make something, some kind of art, out of it."



Billy Bang is the focal point of this performance, and the tough fibre of his phrasing—sometimes audacious, sometimes eloquent—is always articulate. In his hands the violin becomes one of the most impressive instruments of the New Music—or any music.



Shipp's music displays his own thought processes, and in trio lays out a physical trail reflecting the way the three players think along with each other. Following those thoughts leads us deep into a new jazz style that has sprung, like Athena from the brow of Zeus, out of the body of jazz preceding it.

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nal of musical skills and emotions, at once gentle and probing, then firm and demanding. The tune is invested with more contrasting movements than a conventional concerto.

A work of shifting moods, Blackman and her men come close to maximizing its orchestral potential—especially Ravi Coltrane, who solos with hymnal splendor. If the CD had been devoted exclusively to exploring the many facets of "A King Among Men," it would have been no less rewarding. Still, there are elements of it found among several of the other tunes.

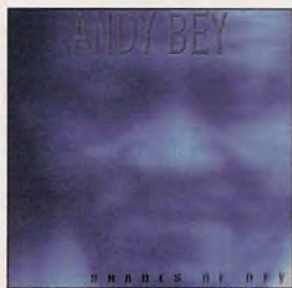
Some portions of those furious rhythmic exchanges occur on the title tune, and Blackman and Coltrane are swift, inventive companions, feeding from both their separate jaunts as well as the collective expressions. The spirited interaction here among the musicians is reminiscent of those Les McCann dates of yore with only a call-and-response vocalist needed to complete the festive, party atmosphere.

Much more subdued is "Passage," and Blackman's approach seems to bend toward another alumnus of Miles Davis' great bands, saxophonist/composer Wayne Shorter. There is an alluring suspension of sound where the beat is not stated, but implied, and Coltrane's tone and tempo underscore Blackman's possible intentions. These harmonic options are given greater clarity on Shorter's classic "Prince Of Darkness." Once more, Coltrane, like the best blues musicians, uses repeated phrases to ponder the next notes, to tighten the tension of the song.

"A Strawberry For Cindy" is Blackman's treat, and she creates a veritable tsunami of sound, echoing modulations that take these veteran ears back to the Max, as in Roach. These extended comments are perhaps a reminder to listeners that her chops are no less daunting even if her skills as an arranger and composer dominate *In The Now*. —Herb Boyd

**In The Now:** In The Now; A Banana For Ron; Passage; A King Among Men; Sophia; Prince Of Darkness; Happy House; A Strawberry For Cindy; Let Love Rule. (63:15)

**Personnel:** Blackman, drums; Ravi Coltrane, soprano and tenor saxophones; Jacky Terrasson, piano and Fender Rhodes (1); Ron Carter, bass.



## Andy Bey

**Shades Of Bey  
Evidence 22215**

★★★★½

Andy Bey staged a comeback from decades of exile—and a paucity of recordings to begin with—two years ago with his marvelous *Ballads, Blues & Bey* disc. His performance of standards on that one and the winning risks he takes on *Shades Of Bey* affirm that he is one of the most

outstanding male vocalists currently working.

Bey's voice is unmistakable. His molasses baritone trails off into a dreamy falsetto at moments that are surprising, but sound so right in his embodiment of the lyrics he lives. He also accompanies himself exceptionally well on piano, and these interludes are as incisive as his vocal refrains. For *Ballads*, Bey was the sole performer and expertly interpreted Gershwin, Kern, Porter and Ellington. On *Shades Of Bey*, he includes more diverse instrumentation, and he expands his repertoire to include tunes that have not been as prominent in jazz singers' lexicon.

The most startling selection is "River Man" by Nick Drake, a '60s/'70s British folksinger whose somewhat-underground following in the United States has not resulted in a cover version on a

jazz disc until now. While Bey's version feels more forthright than Drake's dreamy melancholy, the uncanny arrangements are similar: a small string section that enhances the singer's inflections without spiraling into the maudlin. Bey also sounds ideal alongside other strings, especially the way his voice fills the spaces in Paul Meyers' flamenco-derived guitar lines on "Drume Negrita." This acute sense of when to stretch out a lyric, when to sing through measured refrains, and build a crescendo along with the other instruments in the group (particularly saxophonist Gary Bartz) is unwavering.

Usually, vocal interpretations of Thelonious Monk sound too stilted and affected to carry much poignancy beyond good intentions. That's not the case with Bey's version of "Straight, No

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Chaser," renamed "Get It Straight." This accomplishment can be chalked up to Bey's strong rhythmic sense, which is clearest in his exchange with drummer Victor Lewis. And Bey's version of Ellington-Strayhorn's dark "The Last Light Of Evening (Blood Count)" shows that he's the vocal-ist Duke should have recruited. Bartz understands the nuances of Bey's beautiful desperation on that song so much, it's frightening. —Aaron Cohen

**Shades Of Bey:** Like A Lover (O Cantador); Midnight Blue; Get It Straight (Straight, No Chaser); Pretty Girl (The Starcrossed Lovers); River Man; Dark Shadows; Believin' It (Half & Half); Some Other Time; The Last Light Of Evening (Blood Count); Drume Negrita (Afro-Cuban Lullaby). (51:05)  
**Personnel:** Bey, vocals, piano (2, 6, 7, 8, 9); Geri Allen, piano (4); Paul Meyers, guitar (1, 5, 10); Gary Bartz, alto saxophone (2, 6, 9); Andy Stein, violin, viola (5); Annabelle Hoffman, cello (5); Dennis James, bass (5); Peter Washington, bass (2, 3, 6, 7, 9); Victor Lewis, drums (2, 3, 6, 7, 9).



## Marc Copland

Softly ...  
Savoy Jazz 18076

★★★★

Many albums configured like *Softly ...* lack continuity. As they shift from piano trio to quartet-with-tenor to quartet-with-trumpet to quintet and back to trio, coherent development is lost in pastiche. *Softly ...* is different. Marc Copland adds, by turns, Joe Lovano and Michael Brecker and Tim Hagans to his trio for all the right reasons. They enhance an already self-sufficient creative entity through fresh eloquence and new attitudes.

The performances flow into one another, and Copland's luminous piano is always at the center. The opener, "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise," is not soft. Lovano and Hagans whipcrack the theme and then square off and duel. Next is a piano trio reading of Cole Porter's "I Love You" in which the energy changes in texture but not in intensity. Copland has a different touch than Keith Jarrett (silkier) and a different idea of structure (more grounded in precedent), but he shares one of Jarrett's most seductive qualities. His lines overshoot the expected resolution and then keep spilling and streaming as if they could run forever on the ecstasy of invention. Another factor that recalls Jarrett is the presence of Jarrett's bassist, Gary Peacock, who takes up when Copland leaves off with whirring, lilting Peacock songs.

"Country Home," the first of three Copland originals, falls into form so inevitably that it could be a standard. Brecker joins the trio on tenor saxophone, and his plaintive call longs for homecoming. The second Porter song, "So In Love," returns to the trio format and brightens the tone. Peacock sets the dance in motion, and Copland climbs the air. The next track, Joni Mitchell's "Blue," brings in a whole new color with Hagans' silvery muted trumpet. Then Brecker returns for "What's Going On," driven by drummer Bill Stewart's spaced eruptions. The painfully slow "Not A Ballad" accumulates from moody fragments: Copland's hanging chords and desolate chimings, Lovano's musings that begin as unisons with Copland, Peacock's high whisperings, Stewart's scattered cymbal elements. All the myriad sonic details within Copland's groups are rendered with lucidity in engineer David Baker's recording.

*Softly ...* ends with a rapt nine-minute meditation upon "My Foolish Heart" in which the interaction between Copland and Peacock

recalls the most famous piano/bass investigation of this theme by Bill Evans and Scott LaFaro at the Village Vanguard in 1961. There is such spiritual continuity between the two versions that 36 years feels like a heartbeat in the history of Victor Young's timeless song.

*Softly ...* is Copland's strongest recording to date, its diversities balanced in a rich, finished whole. —Thomas Conrad

**Softly ...:** Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; I Love You; Country Home; So In Love; Blue; What's Going On; Not A Ballad; Three Stories; My Foolish Heart. (65:27)

**Personnel:** Copland, piano; Joe Lovano (1, 7), Michael Brecker (3, 6), tenor saxophone; Tim Hagans (1, 5, 8), trumpet; Gary Peacock, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.



## Geoff Keezer

Turn Up The Quiet  
Columbia 68988

★★★½

*Turn Up The Quiet* may not be intended to counter the popular expression "Bring on the Noise, Bring on the Funk!" but it certainly captures the mainly impressionistic fare of Geoff Keezer's latest release. Knowing this was essentially a trio date with bassist Christian McBride and tenor saxist Joshua Redman was a good enough hint that quiet moments would probably prevail over their capable thunderous reports.

And true to expectations, carefully nuanced reflection dominates this package. Even the uptempo swing that is often inseparable from tunes such as "Stompin' At The Savoy" and "My Shining Hour" are uncharacteristically tame though rearranged to allow other possibilities of enchantment. While Keezer is obviously a very literate musician, his interpretations of time-worn melodies are hardly literal, and much of his tinkering with old standards occurs in the rhythm. He modifies "My Shining Hour" to conform to the session's overall delicate pattern.

This Eastern-like contemplative mood is not at all disturbed by Diana Krall's vocals, which for the most part provide the breathy but beautiful borders to the shimmering portraits. Her voice is the hazy, distant clouds to Keezer, McBride and Redman's burnished landscape of sound that undulates like misty valleys around Mount Fuji. This motif is elegantly replicated on "Rose" and "Lose My Breath."

Right in the middle of this gallery of tunes as light and fragile as butterfly wings is "Madame Grenouille," a down sister with no trace of the typically lighthearted geisha. Redman and Keezer make some brilliant connec-

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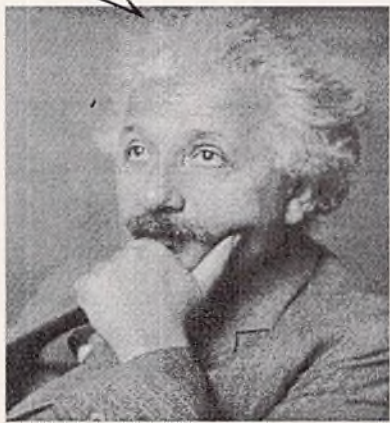
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tions, hitting a cluster of notes with such rare timing that for a moment you forget all about the previously gentle, atmospheric music. Each of them, in turn, etches quick, crafty solos and then finishes in a flurry.

Then it's a return to the land of pretty flowers and precious wind songs. For the rest of the ride, the quiet is turned up to the max, except for an occasional drum effect on the last tune that sounds like a finger being pulled from an empty bottle. A haiku: There came a longing/for Madame Grenouille to break/this zone of silence. —Herb Boyd

**Turn Up the Quiet:** Stompin' At The Savoy; The Nearness Of You; Lush Life; Island Palace; Madame Grenouille; Lose My Breath; Rose; My Shining Hour; Precious One; Love Dance; Biba No Aozora. (61:48)

**Personnel:** Keezer, piano; Joshua Redman, tenor and soprano sax (1, 2, 5, 7, 9); Christian McBride, bass (1, 2, 4, 5, 9); Diana Krall, vocals and additional keyboards (2, 4, 10); Cyro Baptista, percussion and bass drum, triangle (4, 11); Scott Frankfurt, wallet, hi-hat (4); Nona Hendryx, background vocals (4); Jason Miles, programming (4, 11); Maureen McDermott, Caryl Paisner, Laura Bontrager and Maria Kitsopoulos, cellos (11); Tony McAnany, additional keyboards (11).



## Ray Brown

Some Of My Best Friends  
Are Singers  
Telarc 83441

★★★

Ray Brown is a lucky man to have as many young friends as he does, especially friends with a penchant for singing the kind of music that some have given up for dead these days. They have no trouble finding common ground here.

The music straddles the cabaret and jazz genres with ease in a program of top-drawer, if sometimes too-familiar, standards. "Skylark" seems to be turning up everywhere these days, or am I delusional? It's not that these aren't great songs, only that they may need time to rest. I haven't heard "For You" or "Seems Like Old Times" lately.

Each of the five lady singers here is capable of approaching a song with the instincts of a musician or an actor. But in the context of the Brown trio, it's natural that they would be eager to reshape and reconfigure in the ways of jazz and impose a kind of personal domain over the material. But a strong song and lyric tend to resist this usurpation. It fights back.

So in an odd way, it's the weaker songs that often end up serving these singers better. Diana Krall, for instance, sounds far more at ease scatting her way through a 1931 pop gumdrop like

"Little Boy" (aka "Little Girl") than turning the complexities of "I Thought About You" into a vocal jazz variation. Nancy King and Marlena Shaw seem a bit impatient with the texts of "But Beautiful" and "At Long Last Love." Their substitutions are musically attractive and compelling but come at the expense of the lyric.

King has no words to get in her way on "The Perfect Blues," in which she trades graceful fours with guest Antonio Hart. And Shaw is alternately elegant and coquettish in a peculiar way on "Imagination," though it's a lovely performance.

Dee Dee Bridgewater is the true switch-hitter here, playing loyal servant to the song on "More Than You Know" and assured musician

dancing through the bebop jam standard "Cherokee" (with Ralph Moore contributing some good tenor). Kevin Mahogany delivers a fine straightforward "Skylark," though his double-time scat on "The Party's Over" seems a bit forced. —John McDonough

**Some Of My Best Friends Are Singers:** I Thought About You; Poor Butterfly; More Than You Know; Little Boy; But Beautiful; At Long Last Love; Skylark; Cherokee; No Greater Love; Imagination; The Perfect Blues. (59:00)

**Personnel:** Brown, bass; Antonio Hart (5, 12), alto saxophone; Ralph Moore (8), tenor saxophone; Geoff Keezer, piano; Russell Malone (7), guitar; Greg Hutchinson, drums; Diana Krall (1, 4), Etta Jones (2, 9), Dee Dee Bridgewater (3, 8), Nancy King (5, 12), Marlena Shaw (6, 10), Kevin Mahogany (7, 11), vocals.

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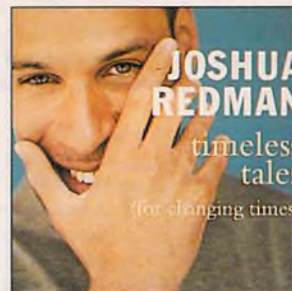
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## Joshua Redman

**Timeless Tales  
(For Changing Times)**  
Warner Bros. 47052

★★★½

It should be clear by now that Joshua Redman is not a heavyweight jazz innovator who delivers complex compositions and ground-breaking improvisations. Rather, he's a marvelously talented fellow who possesses a singing sound on his three horns, who can play with deep emotion (and occasionally be glib), and who can cook like crazy in a fairly direct, uncomplicated post-bop manner.

All in all, Redman's approach is reminiscent of tenorman Gene Ammons, one of the most popular jazzmen of his generation, as Joshua is of his. Jug had a huge sound and a great way with melody, and he played with immense heart, touching listeners.

I suppose *Timeless Tales* could be seen as a knock-off of Herbie Hancock's *The New Standard*, except that Redman has long averred a fondness for pop and funk music. In a way, then, his selection of 10 classics—five from the standard songbook, and five from the pens of pop stars Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, et al.—seems as natural as the swing in his solos.

A superb organizer and leader, Redman arranged most of these pieces with flair. Nothing is done straight, and catchy rhythmic vamps abound. His band is ideal. Brad Mehldau, with his crackling imagination, his love of abstraction, is a perfect foil for the saxophonist, and Larry Grenadier and Brian Blade are so in sync with their partners that the rhythmic heartbeat of each tune never falters.

"Summertime" has two moods. First, the leader alternates oozing low tones, stiletto-thin shrieks and bluesy utterances over a moderate swing feel. Then there's a bristling uptempo section, with Redman offering peals of notes, working creatively within a scalar context. Also two-fold, with a speedy bridge, is "It Might As Well Be Spring," where Redman again goes from tender, creamy tones to fast lines that often have little bits of the theme as guideposts.

Two more on the perky side are "Love For Sale," which rumbles along over a zesty Latin-rock beat, and the swaying, Latin-esque "I Had A King," where the leader works out on soprano. Slower and slightly intoxicating are "Visions," with a gem of a descending unison rhythm figure, and the luxuriant "How Deep Is The Ocean," where Redman is sparse and moving.



Less persuasive is "The Times They Are A-Changin'," which hasn't enough of a melody to work sans lyrics; the same case can be made for "I Had A King" and for Prince's "How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore?" "Eleanor Rigby," done à la "My Favorite Things" with one-chord vamp and all, isn't a killer, either.

The rhythm team shines, with Mehldau starring. He lights up everything from "Love For Sale," where he rambles purposefully over open-feeling vamps, to the gritty "Yesterdays," where he mixes walloped chords, mellifluous abstraction and sly funk to grand effect. —*Zan Stewart*

**Timeless Tales (For Changing Times):** Summertime; Interlude 1; Visions; Yesterdays; Interlude 2; I Had A King; The Times They Are A-Changin'; Interlude 3; It Might As Well Be Spring; Interlude 4; How Deep Is The Ocean; Interlude 5; Love For Sale; Interlude 6; Eleanor Rigby; Interlude 7; How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore? (53:34)  
**Personnel:** Redman, tenor, alto and soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Brian Blade, drums.



## Lalo Schifrin

Gillespiana  
Aleph 002

★★★

When Argentine-born pianist/composer/arranger Lalo Schifrin joined Dizzy Gillespie's group in 1960, Gillespie asked Schifrin to write him some music. The result was the big-band suite *Gillespiana*, which was recorded the following year by Norman Granz of Verve at its Carnegie Hall premiere. In subsequent years Gillespie performed the piece around the world, and it was revived after his death in 1993 by trumpeter Jon Faddis and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. Now Schifrin has recorded it once again for his own fledgling Aleph label, this time in a 1997 live concert in Cologne, Germany, with the WDR Big Band and guest soloists including Faddis, saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera and percussionist Alex Acuña.

Ambitious, expansive jazz works were in vogue when *Gillespiana* was written, but time has dulled its progressive edge to the point that it now sounds thoroughly mainstream—even staid. The five-part suite still paints a warmly affectionate portrait of its subject, with Faddis evoking Diz's trumpet style to triple-tongued, high-noted perfection, but the Gillespie that's conjured up is the middle-aged jazz ambassador, not the fiery bebop pioneer. The three middle movements—"Blues," "Panamericana" and "Africana"—each represent one aspect of Gillespie's musical persona, but they all seem to be written from an outsider's point of view;

"Africana," in particular, has nothing to do with African music aside from Acuña's mainly Afro-Cuban percussion solo.

With their gliding sonorities, swooping dynamics and lush textures, Schifrin's orchestrations offer sleek craftsmanship without much thematic originality or inner passion. The solos are similarly facile, with the exception of Schifrin's own distinctive Monk-meets-Ravel piano (curiously, there are no piano credits anywhere in the package). The album concludes with Schifrin's jazzy arrangements of Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5"; here featured trumpet soloist Marcus Stockhausen takes his inspiration from Miles Davis rather than

Gillespie, and the cool, modal charts float atop a gentle bossa rhythm, giving the number a timeless quality that *Gillespiana* lacks.

—*Larry Birnbaum*

**Gillespiana:** Gillespiana Suite (Prelude; Blues; Panamericana; Africana; Tocata); Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5. (62:07)

**Personnel:** Schifrin, piano; Jon Faddis (1), Marcus Stockhausen (2), Andy Haderer, Rob Bruynen, Klaus Osterloh, John Marshall, trumpet; Dave Horler, Ludwig Nuss, Bernd Laukamp, trombone; Dietmar Florin, bass trombone; Paquito D'Rivera, Harald Rosenstein, alto saxophone; Heiner Wiberny, alto saxophone, flute; Olivier Peters, Rolf Romer, tenor saxophone; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone; Andrew Joy, Charles Putnam, Kathleen Putnam, Mark Putnam, french horns; Ed Partyka, tuba; Alex Acuña, Marcio Doctor, percussion; John Riley, drums.

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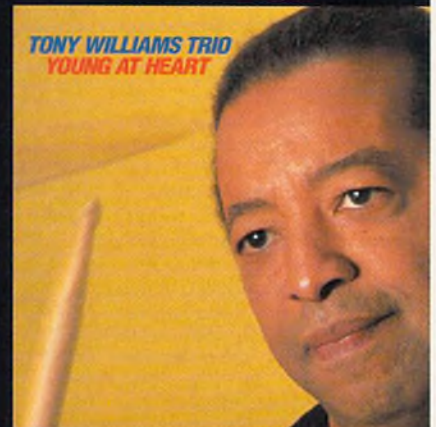
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# JAZZ

## Anything Goes

by Ted Panken

In the world of late-'90s jazz, where just about anything goes, drummers have more options than ever before. But with this freedom comes an ever-greater challenge to say something meaningful. Six drummers answer the call in distinctive, meaningful ways.

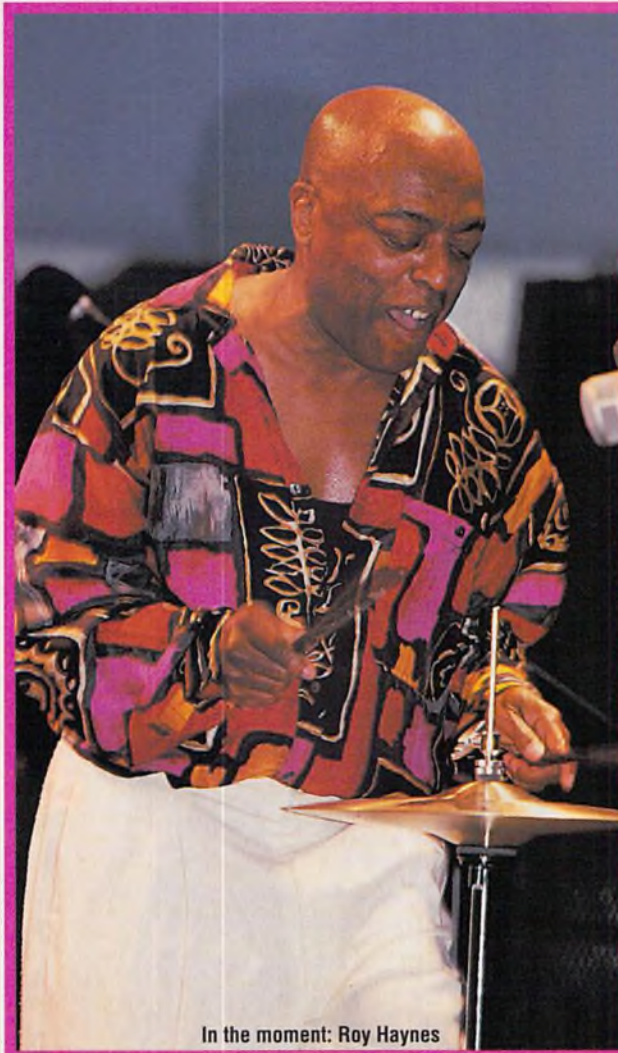
**Roy Haynes: *Praise* (Dreyfus 36598; 62:03) ★★★★★** At 72, Haynes is the ultimate drum improviser, emphatically in the moment, every moment. But for a musician who, as drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts once put it, "has been playing so long that he makes up much of the tradition," Haynes has led surprisingly few records worthy of his stature. Recently he's worked steadily with a core band, producing a series of recordings (on Dreyfus and Evidence) that refer to the maestro's glorious legacy while adhering firmly to the credo "now is the time."

*Praise* is Haynes' most programmatic date, organized and fresh, with highlights galore. The drummer and Kenny Garrett hurtle lockstep through a rampantly imaginative "My Little Suede Shoes," a Charlie Parker tribute. Son Graham Haynes on cornet floats and stings with liquid tone atop Dad's tippin' mid-tempo on "The Touch Of Your Lips," while Haynes goes to church with long-time pianist Dave Kikoski on a slow-roll Tynerish interpretation of "Morning Has Broken." The full sextet, with David Sanchez, navigates elegantly the gnarly harmonies of John Carisi's "Israel" and dialogues keenly on Sergio Mendes' tropi-romantic "After Sunrise," augmented by all-purpose percussionist Daniel Moreno; the quintet, minus Garrett, dances stylishly through the intricate rhythms of Chick Corea's "Mirror, Mirror." The concluding "Shades Of Senegal" is one of the great recorded trapset solos, a masterpiece of structure, timbre and rhythm-melody. Several routine tracks block *Praise* from 5-star nirvana, but there's hardly a beat where Haynes doesn't reach for something he hasn't heard before.

**Jimmy Cobb: *Only For The Pure At Heart* (Fable 54264; 65:07) ★★★½** Legendary for the clarity of his strokes and perfection of his swing, Cobb's approach is a paradigm of functionality and subtlety. He

doesn't change his stripes on the beautifully paced *Only For The Pure At Heart*, his first U.S. release in years. Pianist Richard Wyands and guitarist Peter Bernstein, improvisers of similar sensibility, are ideal soloists for this sort of music, while bassist John Webber contributes a big beat and two compositions. Cobb takes his one solo on the final track; he imprints his personality on every note without seeming to try.

**Idris Muhammad: *Right Now* (Cannonball 27105; 50:58) ★★★★★½** Muhammad is the reigning master of New Orleans drum expression, the talking drummer supreme. *Right Now* is a suite of duos with Joe Lovano, George Coleman and Gary Bartz, saxophone storytellers of the highest caliber, separated by two ingenious Muhammad solo tracks. Fundamental and profound.



In the moment: Roy Haynes

**Clarence Penn: *Penn's Landing* (Criss Cross 1134; 61:01) ★★★** When a producer suddenly offers you your first session the day after tomorrow, the best bet is to open things up. Faced with that situation, that's what the classically trained Penn does on *Penn's Landing*. The program comprises three compositions by Penn, two by tenorist Ron Blake and one each by trumpeter John Swana and monster basswalker Rodney Whitaker. The young veterans stretch out on

cohesive open structures meant to facilitate collective dialogue, the sort that were explored but not exhausted in the '60s. It's like an NBA pickup game, with a daredevil attitude to the improvising; Penn and Whitaker pounce on each other's lines like tomcats, always maintaining deep foundation. The solos sometimes slip into routine calisthenics, and no one breaks new ground, but it's all live, not Memorex.

**Winard Harper: *Tap Dancer* (Savant 2013; 53:14) ★★★** Harper has spent much time in the trenches honing his craft since the Harper Brothers, and knows as well as any young drummer in the jazz business how to manipulate the reins from the kit. On *Tap Dancer*, up-front throughout, Harper offers a tightly paced program of 14 crisp tunes (the longest is 5:41) with varied rhythmic signatures, executed with panache and impeccable craft. Harper's young front line—bravura trumpeter Patrick Rickman, a commanding soloist, and meticulous tenorman J.D. Allen—have digested the postbop vocabulary, have sweet sounds and nice chops and are in the process of finding their improvisational personalities. Harper doesn't leave lots of room for conversation, so the songs remain set pieces. Not that *Tap Dancer* is atavistic, but it lacks the dramatic tension that might elevate the proceedings beyond just another very well-played date. Veteran piano great George Cables contributes mightily, raising the discourse with organic comping and poetic solos.

**Gerry Hemingway Quartet: *Johnny's Corner Song* (Auricle 4; 59:37) ★★★★★½** Hemingway is an old hand at shaping speculative improvising techniques into cohesive compositions. On the four evocative selections that make up *Johnny's Corner Song*, the drummer reaffirms that he's one of the most interesting bandleaders and composers of the '90s. Hemingway thrives on establishing collective dialogue predicated on complex pulse-layering, modulation between different tempi within the ensemble, a richly textured sound vocabulary that extends the possibilities of what instruments are designed to do and melodies that stay with you. Trombonist Robin Eubanks and tenorist Ellery Eskelin, newcomers to Hemingway's world, are in tune with his expansive sonic-rhythmic concept from the get-go, while virtuoso bassist Mark Dresser, Hemingway's decade-long Anthony Braxton bandmate, provides inspired foundation. In fact, he steals the show with imaginative solos on the Mingus-like title track, the up-blues "On It," Mark Helias' hymn-like "Gentle Ben" and, spectacularly, "Toombow," the extended set-closer, on which Hemingway lets loose with a solo that takes you through the full range of trap-set sonority with a minimum of implements. (Auricle is Hemingway's self-produced label; the disc is available through [www.interactive.com/~gerryhem](http://www.interactive.com/~gerryhem).) **DB**



# REISSUES

## Bitches, Voodoo & The Orange Lady

by John Ephland

Time is suspended when feeling hits. And feeling, musical feeling, is what Miles Davis started to pursue with utmost seriousness during and immediately after the album we have come to know as *Bitches Brew*.

**The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions** (Columbia/Legacy C4K 65570; 69:05/75:37/73:22/47:28) ★★★★★½ There's a whole lot more in this package than the familiar six numbers now associated with the original *Bitches Brew* double album from 1969. Covering the period between August 1969 and February 1970, these sessions include nine previously unreleased tracks along with material appearing on the double-albums *Big Fun*, *Circle In The Round* and *Live-Evil*.

Calling all this material *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* is a stretch, since the stuff recorded in February 1970 had nothing to do with the August 1969 recordings. And, chunks of what was recorded, as it was recorded, are missing. So much for the "complete" sessions.

There's the related issue of the label deciding to reissue the six edited *Bitches Brew* tracks in the order they were released instead of as they were recorded (as was done to such great effect on last year's *Quintet 1965-68* box). Because of this decision, the one potential narrative element to this package is missing. (The balance of the program, 15 tunes recorded after the initial *Bitches Brew* sessions, is laid out in chronological order.)

In the case of this music, it helps tell the story to one of the most dramatic phases, or turning points, in the trumpeter's career. A narrative here had the potential to show how this music, so much of it heavily edited, was put together, piece by piece.

Having said all this, it's clear that the final product was meticulously examined, with greatly improved sound (especially when compared to the previous CD reissue of the six-song *Bitches Brew*). The reined-in sound of the percussion and drums, for instance, brings the cymbals and snares of drummers Jack DeJohnette and Billy Cobham so much closer. Also, the re-EQ'd sound results in greater balance given to all the instruments, not just Davis' trumpet.

But most important, and at the risk of sounding self-contradictory, the editing decisions to disregard the narrative element to these recordings was the best decision—on musical grounds. As reissue producer Bob Belden stated in the liner notes, the music that was left behind didn't hold up, and reflected the potential for flops with the experimental nature of this particular creative process. False starts, digressions or open-ended jams that served as potential material for "Pharaoh's Dance" or "Orange Lady" (both written by keyboardist Joe Zawinul), let alone others, added little, by way of contrast, to the released takes, and in some cases, clearly went nowhere. This prudent editing also reflected back on original producer Teo Macero's choices.

The story of this music is enveloped not only in these sessions—which emphasize Davis' movements into double keyboard accompaniment, use of multiple percussion and increased use of the studio as instrument—but in the very nature of the music itself, drenched as it is

bed, leaving all kinds of room to roam, jam and reinvent.

When I first heard "Great Expectations" back in the '70s, it sounded like Davis had given up, gone on automatic pilot, reneged on the demands of his art form. It didn't take long to hear more and more of what was actually going on, what with Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock's contrary and unified electric piano discussions; Ron Carter's definitive acoustic, resonant bass; the mesmerizing sounds of Khalil Balakrishna's sitar, and Bihari Sharma's tabla and tambura; John McLaughlin's ear-catching, funky wah-wah guitar; and drummer Billy Cobham's pushing of the 7/4 groove with Airtio Moreira's guica and berimbau. No, this music was pushing off in another direction of pure feeling, technique finding its place somewhere in the mix, but only in the service of expression.

The additional material, by the way, also features drum and keyboard tandems,



Wayne Shorter (left), Chick Corea (obscured), Miles Davis and Dave Holland: pushing off in another direction

in the mysterious. Or, to return to my original point of departure: the pursuit of feeling above all else. Hence, the likelihood that time would be suspended, virtuosity given less weight, experimentation more weight.

Consequently, there are the extended forms, long selections (only "Guinnevere" has reinserted material), greater numbers of musicians on board, an increased emphasis on simple harmonic lines and Davis' move toward and away (once again) from being a power trumpeter. Hear his playing on "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down" next to "Great Expectations" (found halfway through disc 2) for a clear demonstration of his hot playing followed by a return to simple tones and pure feeling as a means of expression. The compositional structure of "Great Expectations" reinforces his horn playing at the most basic—and sometimes, pretty uneven—level, relying as it does on a series of returns, edited or not, that cover much of the same ground while his band moves in and out of the loosely knit harmonic

Wayne Shorter's soprano saxophone, Dave Holland's electric bass, more simple exploratory musings. A surprise favorite is Zawinul's tender "Recollections," echoing his beautiful "In A Silent Way" and providing yet another occasion for Davis to sing ever so sweetly and gently, wrapping his horn around another simple, engaging melody.

To call any of this music commercial, a criticism leveled at it in its day, seems laughable now. In a conversation recently, I heard once again the comment that *Bitches Brew* was initially perceived as too difficult to understand or enjoy. Today, the music is contemporary, instructive and, most of all, full of feeling in all its flawed beauty. **DB**

Original Down Beat ratings:

- *Bitches Brew*: ★★★★★ (6/11/70)
- *Live-Evil*: ★★★½ (4/13/71)
- *Big Fun*: ★★★★★ (6/20/74)
- *Circle In The Round*: ★★★★★ (8/82)



# BEYOND

## Man Vs. Machine

by Jon Andrews

Electronica has thoroughly pervaded pop and dance music, spawning plugged-in variants like trip-hop, ambient and bass n' drums. It's only a matter of time until jazz musicians and other experimenters explore loops, samples and synthesized rhythms. The most compelling aspect of the following CDs is the interaction between "organic" sound sources, such as trumpet, saxophone or guitar, and the often forceful, robotic beats of electronica. The '70s music of Miles Davis is an important signifier here, and Bill Laswell's *Panthalassa* ambient remix project may become a template for future hybrids.

**Ben Neill: *Goldbug* (Antilles 314 557 085; 73:50) ★★★★★** You won't find a mutant trumpet in the local music shop. Neill developed this instrument with three bells, a slide and a MIDI interface. In addition to recognizable brass voicings, Neill uses his unique ax to trigger a range of synthesized and sampled sounds including percussion. Aggressive synthetic drums and bass drive dynamic compositions like "Goldbug" and "Route Me Out." Neill changes the patterns and grooves to manipulate the sense of tension, and he weaves trumpet lines and synth effects through his intricately detailed inventions. Though layered with samples and effects, "Dark Gift" and "Syntonic" sound purposeful, but never cluttered. *Goldbug* is Neill's most varied and accomplished work to date.



Ben Neill: intricate inventor

**Nils Petter Molvær: *Khmer* (ECM 78118-21560; 42:54/19:58) ★★★★★½** If you've heard this Norwegian trumpeter with the group Masqualero, you won't be prepared for *Khmer*. This startling but highly effective CD joins Molvær's tightly coiled muted trumpet with electric guitars, synthesizers and samplers for a daring, cohesive fusion of the ECM sound with high-energy electronic rhythms. "Pløn" metamorphoses from atmospheric sequences featuring Molvær's breathy trumpet and Milesian phrasings to aggressive passages driven by thunderous beats and squawking guitars. Molvær, who also plays bass and keyboards, creates varied and detailed landscapes. "Platonic Years" smoothly incorporates Nordic folk themes and a melancholy trumpet refrain, and also finds a place for window-rattling bass and drums.

**The Grassy Knoll: *III* (Antilles 314 557 087; 63:28) ★★★★★** The mastermind of the Grassy Knoll, Bob Green uses martial rhythms, samples, industrial electronics, blasts of white noise and the chainsaw buzz of electric guitars to create a singular but consistently foreboding sonic landscape. Miles' sound is represented by distorted electric keyboards and use of wah pedals.

Throughout, malevolent, regimenting forces surround and menace the organic voices of trumpet, cello and saxophone, including Ellery Eskelin on tenor saxophone. Eskelin's tenor becomes the focal point of "Down In The Happy Zone" and "Six To Four To Three," working so effectively in this context that you wish he played on the entire CD.

**Elliott Sharp: *Tectonics: Field & Stream* (Knitting Factory 227; 66:57) ★★★★★½** Not surprisingly, Sharp's foray into electronics is the most challenging and adventuresome of this lot. Despite the ironic title, *Field & Stream* offers few sounds found in nature. Instead, Sharp constructs choppy, often polyrhythmic foundations

employing patterns not meant for human drummers. These rhythm beds give the pieces their organization and continuity. He tops them with industrial drones and splintering, squalling guitar solos. For "Fzarp," he adds an arcade's worth of electronic effects. "Anatomic Dub" emphasizes dub-inflected basslines and snarling, feral guitar-bass solos.

**MOX: *MOX* (RGB 505; 48:40) ★★★★★½** This San Francisco-based trio combines loops, sampled vocals, ambient synthesizers and electronic rhythms but achieves a warm, approachable sound. With acoustic and electric guitars integrated into the mix, *MOX* reflects a sensibility that embraces pop, soundtracks and world music. Electric guitars evoke the sounds of Duane Eddy or the Cocteau Twins, giving a center to the group's infectious, hook-laden tunes. "Fin" is an audio confection, using world music samples and shimmering electronic textures to embellish an irresistible melody. On "Dr. Bombay," twangy Western guitar collides with samples of Eastern music, suggesting an Ennio Morricone score for a Japanese sci-fi movie.

DB

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# BLINDFOLD TEST

NOVEMBER 1998

## David Samuels

by Ted Panken

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.

**M**allet man David Samuels has touched on almost every facet of improvisation in his career. Best known for his 17-year association with Spyro Gyra, the Chicago-born Samuels has lately been exploring world melodies and rhythms with Paquito D'Rivera and steel drummer Andy Narell in the Caribbean Jazz Project.

On *Del Sol* (GRP), issued several years ago, he joined forces with Latin jazz musicians Danilo Perez and Dave Valentin. That puts him in a line of direct descent with Cal Tjader, who, Samuels comments, "is responsible for putting vibes in the center of the Latin small ensemble as a solo voice." On his latest disc, *Tjaderized* (Verve), Samuels joins forces with Eddie Palmieri and others on an idiomatic homage to the maestro.

This was his second Blindfold Test.

## Chick Corea & Gary Burton

"Rhubata" (from *Native Sense*, Stretch, 1997) Corea, piano; Burton, vibes.

I haven't heard this record, but it's clearly one of Chick's tunes—an epic, long, involved piece. 4 stars. Chick and Gary are a mini-percussion ensemble with two keyboard percussion instruments. They've been doing it for 20 to 25 years; they own this sound. I have a similar relationship with Dave Friedman in *Double Image*; it's a very special dynamic and intuition.

## Milt Jackson

"The Masquerade Is Over" (from *Burnin' In The Woodshed*, Qwest, 1995) Jackson, vibraphone; Benny Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

[after six bars] That was the man—Milt. 5 stars. He's like a horn player on vibes. I remember reading a description that he's like someone who's ice skating on the vibes, skating and gliding. He has those big puffy mallets! You don't get a sense of how intensely he plays unless you stand next to him.

## Lionel Hampton

"When Lights Are Low" (from *Small Groups, Vol. 3*, Musique Memoria, 1939) Hampton, vibraphone; Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet; Chu Berry, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, tenor saxophones; Benny Carter, alto saxophone, arranger; Clyde Hart, piano; Charlie Christian, guitar; Milt Hinton, bass; Cozy Cole, drums.

Gates! 5 stars. That's seriously heavy-duty swinging. Lionel's a drummer who subsequently went to vibes, which is my own background, so I relate heavily to that style of playing.

## Bobby Hutcherson

"Pomponio" (from *Ambos Mundos*, Landmark, 1989) Hutcherson, vibraphone; James Spaulding, flute; Randy Vincent, guitar; Smith Dobson, piano; Jeff Chambers, bass; Eddie Marshall, drums; Francisco Aguabella, congas; Orestes Vilato, bongos, cowbell, timbales; Roger Glenn, percussion.

I'm not sure which Bobby Hutcherson record this is. Bobby's an important player on his instrument. He's recorded historic music and continues to make great records. Improvisation is a process with no boundaries; the boundaries you put on how you improvise are the boundaries of style. There are as many



different ways to improvise as different styles of music. I think one approach to playing over a Latin rhythm section like this is to play in a post-bop style, as everybody does here. Another approach is to fit the rhythm into the style of the music. I'll give this 3 stars, partly because the way it's mixed and recorded makes it hard to extract what's going on. I'm missing a lot of Bobby's notes; some great lines are lost.

## Don Grolnick

"Heart of Darkness" (from *Medianoche*, Warner Bros., 1996) Mike Mainieri, vibraphone; Grolnick, piano, composer; Dave Valentin, flute; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone; Andy Gonzalez, bass; Steve Berrios, drums, bongos, percussion; Don Alias, timbales and percussion; Milton Cardona, congas and percussion.

Mike Mainieri on Don Grolnick's *Medianoche*, a great record. 4 stars. Mike has created not only an approach to playing the vibes, but a sound as well. He's able to alter the sound electronically with effects, giving it a characteristic quality that he likes. Combine that with his ability to write tunes, and you've got yourself a great player.

## Sanougue Kouyate

"Bintou" (from *Balendala Djibe: Salif Keita Presents Sanougue Kouyate*, Mango, 1990) Kouyate, vocals; Keletigui Diabate, balafon, arrangements; Salif Keita, chorus.

I first thought it was Salif Keita. I like the way the balafon sounds. It's part of the ensemble. There's a balafon solo, and though the instrument isn't totally tempered, it's in the context. 4 stars.

## Red Norvo

"Move" (from *The Red Norvo Trio With Tal Farlow And Charles Mingus*, Savoy/Denon, 1995, recorded 1950) Norvo, vibraphone; Farlow, guitar; Mingus, bass.

This is that great trio with Red Norvo, Tal Farlow and Charlie Mingus. 5 stars. Red, from my standpoint, isn't recognized as he ought to be in the evolution of jazz vibraphone. He's really the father of playing with four mallets. He started on the xylophone, then started playing the vibes around 1927, which I think is when the vibes were invented.

## George Shearing

"Bal-Aïre" (from *The Best Of George Shearing: 1960-1969*, Capitol, rec. 1963) Shearing, piano; Gary Burton, vibraphone; Vernel Fournier, drums; John Gray, guitar; Bill Yancy, bass.

[quickly] It's one of Gary's first recordings, a live concert, and I remember hearing it years ago. He's got that youthful intensity. In a situation like that, short solos, you have to get it all out real fast—and Gary certainly did! 4 stars. **DB**