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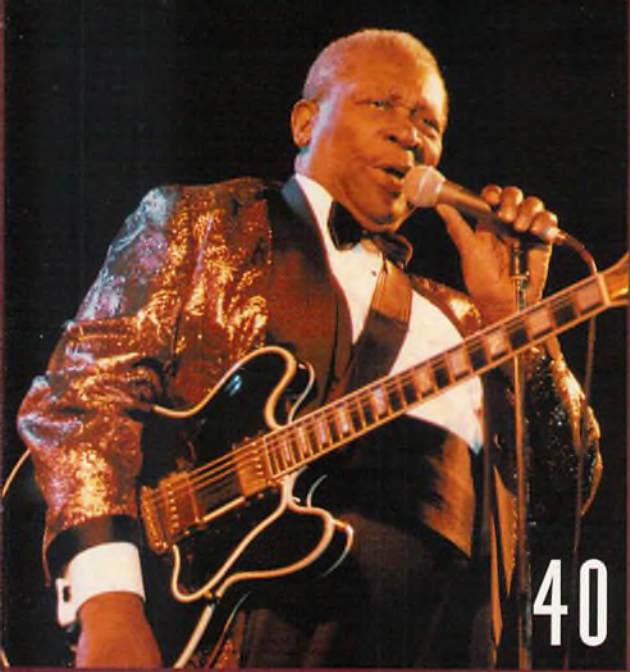


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DECEMBER 1998

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By Jason Koransky

T.S. Monk knew that now was the right time to record the CD *Monk On Monk*, to make his official statement on his legendary father's music. But even as the drummer lays Thelonious' soul to rest, he understands that the legend will always be part of his career.

Cover photograph © John Abbott. Mr. Monk's attire: suit, Agnes B.; shirt, Sandy Dalal; sunglasses, Beau Soleil. Artistic direction, Denise Pruitt for Thelonious Productions. Styling, Harriette Cole & Whitney Kyles for profundities, Inc. Grooming, Jackie S. for Ken Barboza associates

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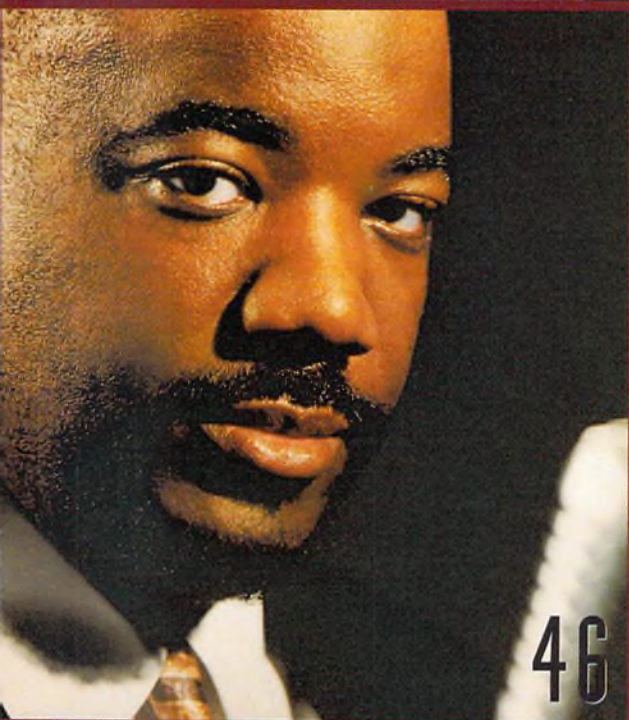
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In Walked Monk

DOWN BEAT
63rd
ANNUAL READERS POLL

T.S. Monk, that is.

Down Beat readers have voted *Son of Monk* a first-time poll winner, and what a whopper: Jazz Album of the Year for *Monk On Monk*. The victory builds on a strong second-place finish in Down Beat's 1998 Critics Poll (see Aug. '98). Both accolades serve as quite an initiation for Monk, who had never even *placed* in a Down Beat poll before this year.

Note just how many of the musicians involved in *Monk On Monk* appear in this year's Readers Poll, some of them as winners (Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Kevin Mahogany) and many as runners-up (Roy Hargrove, Christian McBride, Ron Carter, Wallace Roney, Geri Allen, Howard Johnson, Dianne Reeves, Dave Holland, Arturo Sandoval, Clark Terry and Bobby Watson). But Monk Sr.'s influence extended beyond his son's project in the poll. Let's not forget Arranger of the Year Bill Holman, who scores points for his own Monk project, *Brilliant Corners*, and Thelonious himself, whose performance *Live At The It Club* ranks fifth under Reissue of the Year.

Readers, critics, musicians—if there's one thing we see eye-to-eye on, it's the magnetism of Monk. And this time, we can credit his proud son for bringing all things Monk so nicely into focus. Check out our cover story with T.S. starting on the following page.

Speaking of tributes, just when you thought you'd heard the final word on Frank Sinatra, the Chairman makes his grand entrance into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Since it's impossible to top our homage to the Voice that ran earlier this year ("One More For The Road" August '98), we've decided to keep it simple: a quick word from Sinatra collaborator Quincy Jones and a favorite Herman Leonard photo that could have run as a Down Beat cover unto itself (see Page 34).

Back as Jazz Musician and Composer of the Year, Wynton Marsalis puts a productive 12 months behind him and prepares for 12 more of pure Ellington. Starting on Page 36, Marsalis talks about this pet project, which will involve a 1999 world tour with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, one of the working-est bands in the biz.

As if that weren't enough historical references for one poll, Miles Davis turns up thrice in the Reissue of the Year category (see Page 54). The recent boxed set of the trumpeter's 1965-'68 studio quintet recordings takes top honors, and a remastered *Kind Of Blue* and long-awaited *Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall* make the list, too.

Of the poll's first-time winners, Kevin Mahogany as Male Vocalist of the Year is the most noteworthy. An alumnus of the *Monk On Monk* CD and tour, he checks in with a new project on Page 46.

Also new this year, we invited our readers to vote for the first time on Record Label of the Year. Congratulations to Verve Records (Page 58), and all the other honorees in the 63rd Annual Down Beat Readers Poll.

May Monk be with you.

—Ed Enright

JEFFREY ALTMAN

DOWN BEAT
63rd
ANNUAL READERS POLL



JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

t.s. monk

It's Saturday morning at the Watergate Hotel, and T.S. Monk wants to talk about singers. Never mind the pancakes and coffee on the table in front of him. These can wait. He has issues to discuss.

And when T.S. Monk has something to say, he'll take as much time as he sees fit to get his point across.

"Humanity is enamored with the spoken word," Monk says, carefully choosing every word. "It can come to people like we're talking right now. It can come to people with rap or with singing. It doesn't matter. So even though as an instrumentalist I'd like to be the most beloved on the bandstand, the vocalists are the most beloved. That's that.

"A lot of singers get swept away into the spotlight, and instrumentalists get jealous. But what the singers get swept into is 'singerdom.' It's a whole other zone. And we can't get around that, so let's take advantage of it."

Monk may talk a lot, but he speaks no bullshit. He can make such statements about jazz singers because he consistently uses them to his advantage. Two of the most addictive tracks on *Monk On Monk*, voted Album Of The Year in the 63rd Annual Readers Poll, feature vocalists. On "Dear Ruby," an interpretation of father Thelonious' "Ruby, My Dear," Kevin Mahogany's baritone voice carries the song. On a later track, Dianne Reeves and Nnenna Freelon tear up "Suddenly," his father's "In Walked Bud" with lyrics written by Jon Hendricks.

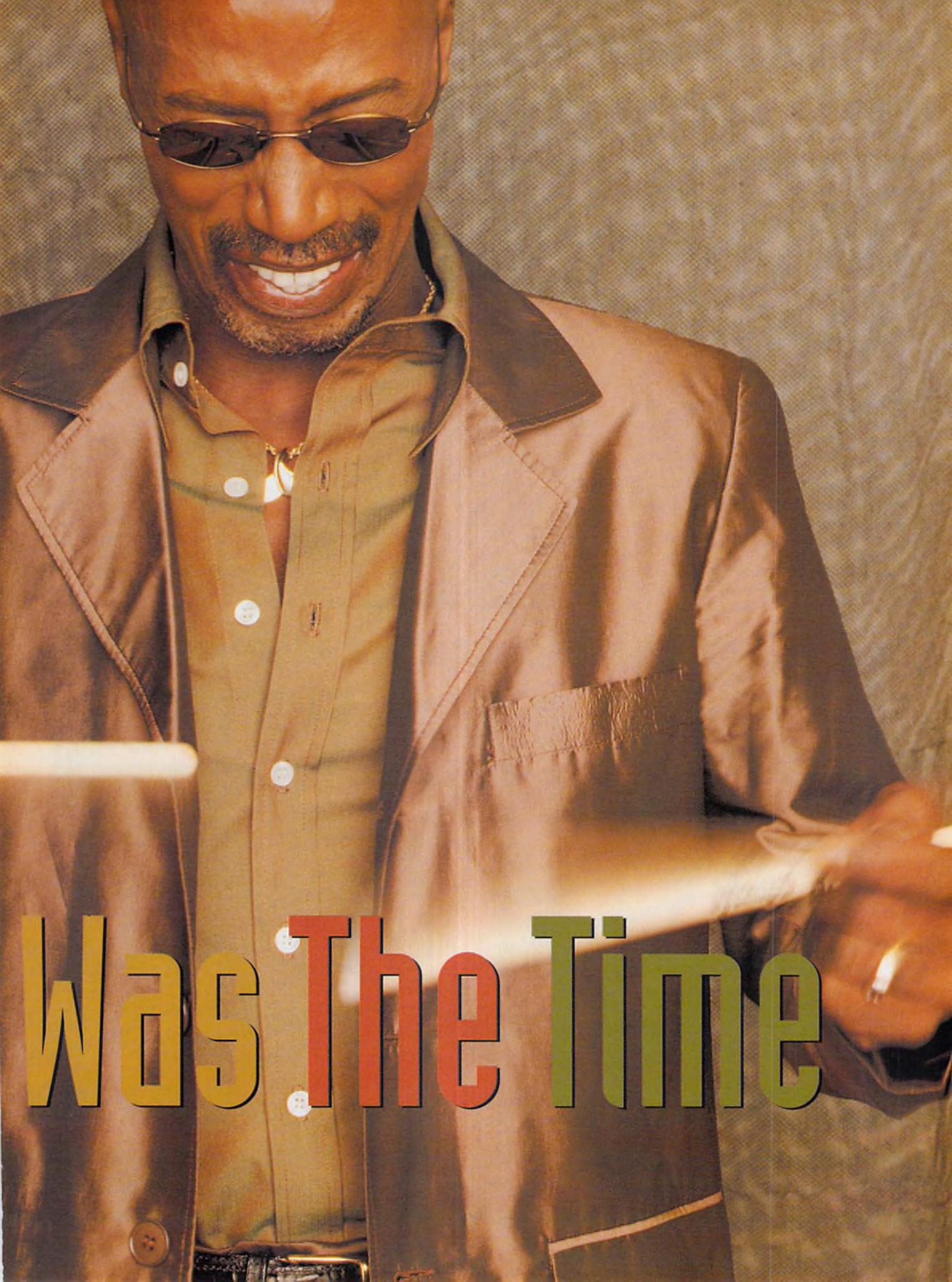
Monk knew that a fitting tribute to his father needed vocals.

by Jason Koransky
photos by John Abbott

Jazz Album of the Year

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Was The Time

"Singing lets people know that Thelonious' music is accessible," says the 49-year-old drummer. "And singers always want to sing his music. It's one of the reasons why the album has been so successful, and I know that it's one of the reasons why the tour has been unbelievably successful. The tour brings people in who might not ordinarily listen, and it positions them so they will listen. It satisfies that thing they have for vocalists, and then they really, really listen."

"You see, I don't get intimidated by singers, because I'm a singer myself. A singing drummer."

A singing drummer. A bandleader. Chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, the educational foundation that held the finals of its 12th Annual International Jazz Competition (devoted this year to singers) the previous night. As T.S. moves further out of his father's shadow, he proves that he doesn't need to rely on his legend to get things done. But at the same time he understands how that legend will always be a part of his career.


"I still listen to *Monk On Monk*, and think, I am so thrilled to be on this record," he says. "I never dreamed of such a thing." He takes a long pause and a deep sigh. "I was born into this jazz



scene, but because the orders of the day in the Monk household were to do your own thing, I ended up in another end of the business. But this record, I know, is going to be out there forever. Forever. And that's a humbling experience. I now see the significance of this record."




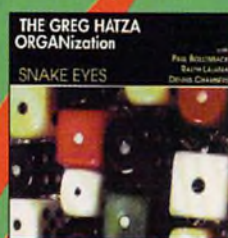

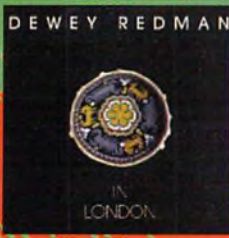
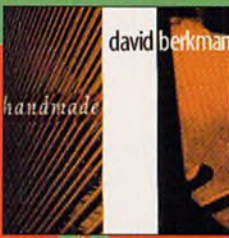

It took 19 years for T.S. to "hear" his father's music. One day in the summer of 1969, he decided to build himself one speaker. When he completed the project, he could have jammed to his Sly & The Family Stone or Jimi Hendrix Experience albums, but he didn't want to subject his new speaker to such bass-heavy music. All of his father's albums were sitting around the family's New York City apartment, and he placed a trio album, the title of which he does not remember, on the turntable.

With the volume turned down real low, T.S. sat with his ear to the speaker and listened to his father play the tricky head of the tune "Work." "Wait a second," he thought. "That was really over the edge." He listened to the tune again and again, for almost three hours, and when he was done with the lesson, he left his bedroom and realized that the man living on the other side of his wall was Thelonious Monk. Before, it had



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meant little to him. All of a sudden, he got it. "That day I got scared," he says. And fear inspired his musical journey.

With *Monk On Monk*, Monk showed his knack for launching a project at the right moment. Timing, after all, is a drummer's best friend.

"This was the album that everyone thought that I was going to make for my first record," Monk says. "But that was exactly the record I absolutely would not make. I could have done it and fucked it up five, 10 years ago. But then no one was familiar with my playing. Now was the time to make the record."

Monk knew he had to progress to a high level as a player before recording *Monk On Monk*. He had recorded three albums on Blue Note—*Take One*, *Changing Of The Guard* and *The Charm*, but the company dropped him, and in 1997 he found himself without a label. He also felt ready for the tribute.

Monk had an idea that he knew he could sell to a label with enough money and interest in "doing it right." At a meeting with N2K Encoded Music about the company's interest in building a web site for the Monk Institute, conversation turned to *Monk On Monk*. "We never got to the second half of the meeting about



the Web site," Monk says.

Still, he gave Blue Note one last shot at the record. "I wanted Bruce [Lundvall] to have this record. He always supported me," Monk says. But Blue Note wasn't interested in making the album at the time ("a mistake," Lundvall says in retrospect), and work got underway for his first project on N2K.

With trumpeter/producer Don Sickler (the impetus behind Monk's T.S. Monk Sextet) working on the arrangements, concrete ideas began to emerge. They wanted to invite a group of heavies to represent Thelonious' genius, but they had to define a purpose for the music.

Sickler wanted to emulate the sound Thelonious created with a 10-piece ensemble in 1959's *Live At Town Hall* and 1963's *Big Band And Quartet In Concert*, recorded at Philharmonic Hall. These were the only recorded dates of Thelonious with this large ensemble arrangement. On the Philharmonic Hall date, for example, Hall Overton arranged charts for Monk's regular quartet plus soprano saxist Steve Lacy, alto saxist Phil Woods, baritone saxist Gene Allen, cornetist Thad Jones, trumpeter Nick Travis and trombonist Eddie Bert.

"Monk's voicings a lot of times are four-note voicings, and with these combi-

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Tony Coleman

Blues Group of the Year
(B.B. King)

T.S. Monk

Album of the Year

Lionel Hampton

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nations of players you can really hit the right flavor," says Sickler, who brought Bert into the *Monk On Monk* session to capture a bit of the spirit of Thelonious' classic concerts. "Essentially I did the same thing. If you really listen to the arrangements, you'll see that I took a lot directly from Thelonious."

They also had to define a purpose for each great artist invited to the session.

"I thought it was amazing that 'Crepuscle With Nellie' had no solo when my father recorded it," Monk says. "So we thought it might be special to play a solo, and once we said that, Wayne Shorter's name jumped off the page. He had just lost his wife, and we knew that he would understand this kind of love song at the time."

Shorter ended up playing his solo with Thelonious' wife, Nellie, in the room.

"On 'Bright Mississippi,' a tune where the bass can lead the whole thing, we thought, That's what Christian McBride is all about," Monk continues. "With 'In Walked Bud,' I always thought that it sounded like a duet. I haven't heard a good jazz vocal duet in about 25 years, and we twisted it to make it two females [Reeves and Freelon]."

The session's legend grows as time passes. Danilo Perez walking into Rudy Van Gelder's Englewood Cliffs, N.J., studio with a 104-degree fever and nailing down a piano solo in true Monk fashion on "Little Rootie Tootie." Herbie Hancock, flying

Holland (27 artists appear on the album), and it's no wonder why the album has received so much attention.

"Thelonious inspired the shit out of everybody, so this was really an easy record to make," Monk says. "Everyone was making a major statement on it. What you hear on the album was not me, it was my father. After listening to tapes of the first day's recording, I said, 'Something's going on here.' It was out of my hands. It was out of everyone's hands. It was magical, a watershed moment in my life that I'll never see the likes of again."

Recording an album was only the start of the *Monk On Monk* phenomenon. An international tour followed. Special guests such as baritone saxist/tuba player Howard Johnson, alto saxist Bobby Watson, trombonist Bert and Freelon played with his regular sextet (Sickler, saxophonists Willie Williams and Bobby Porcelli, pianist Ronnie Matthews and bassist Gary Wang). The crowds went wild, and the music progressed well beyond the nine tracks on the album.

"We made a wonderful, wonderful record, but now we had a chance to really lay into things," Monk says with increasing excitement. "With the steady work, with the core being my band, it locked down. It locked down hardcore. That's why by the time we came to Birdland in New York ... forget about it! I knew we were going to steamroll New York. I planned to steam-



"What you hear on the album was not me, it was my father. It was out of my hands. It was out of everyone's hands. It was magical, a watershed moment in my life that I'll never see the likes of again."

through the piano solo on "Two Timer," a composition Monk never recorded, on the first take. The emotion surrounding Tony Williams' death a few days earlier, and artists like Ron Carter and Hancock seeing each other for the first time after the drummer's passing. Grover Washington Jr. returning to Philadelphia so excited after recording "Little Rootie Tootie" he found a late-night jam session to blow at. Roy Hargrove, just hanging out in the studio like a gunslinger with his flugelhorn ready to play, being asked by Monk to record an impromptu solo after Washington, and unleashing a flurry of melodic licks. Throw in performances by others from Clark Terry to Dave

roll New York. I said, 'This band, playing this music regularly? Come on, man!'

"No one since my father had a chance to play this music every night, with these players, in these venues, and it's made for some absolutely magical nights when the crowds have not wanted to let us off the stage."

After the tour started in Israel in June '97, Monk took the group to 55 U.S. cities, St. Lucia, seven Canadian provinces, five European countries and Japan. Road rigors away from his New Jersey home paid off commercially, with *Monk On Monk* standing as the best-selling album of his career.

"But maybe now it's time to move on. This is what I had to say about Daddy. I set a standard."

T.S. Monk could continue to pay tribute to his father. He has plenty more tunes he could record, and with his charisma and conditioning he could easily keep up the touring. But he is ready to change gears.

"I'm a little scared now. This was so wonderful that now I'm saying, 'Maybe this is one of those things where you're supposed to do it and leave it alone,'" he says. "I kind of get that feeling. It's kind of like a pearl cultivating. You put in a grain of sand, and every once in a while you get a gorgeous pearl. But maybe now it's time to move on. This is what I had to say about Daddy. I set a standard."

As well as setting a standard for how to pay a fitting tribute to a jazz legend, Monk feels that he helped let his father's soul rest in peace, that he gave the man and the music the due it never received when he was alive. Now Monk can let him go.

"We are afraid to let Thelonious go. We are afraid to let Bird go. We are afraid to let Coltrane go," he asserts. "Do you know what we have to do? In some cultures, they say that if certain things don't happen, the spirit never rests. Some proper events have never happened in jazz. We have to let those spirits rest. That doesn't mean that we forget them. It means that we say, 'OK, now it's time for the next group.'"

Monk entered the studio in October to record his second N2K album, on which he will be singing, playing electric drums and focusing on more of a groove-oriented sound. He will not play his father's tunes. He will not go very far out in the music, but will stay somewhere in the middle. He says

that in the future he will not be playing his father's music in concert with such frequency. His music has always represented a particular stage in his life. And right about now, he feels he has little to prove.

"Maybe what I'm trying to say is that I feel a little comfortable, not totally, but a little bit, like it's all becoming real," he says with a hesitant smile. "Like I said, I didn't expect this."

A few days before he arrived in D.C. for the vocal competition, Monk's 9-year-old son, Thelonious Sphere Monk III, brought home a trumpet. Just like his father, T.S. doesn't bring up music in his household. And just like Monk did when he was 15 and decided that he wanted to play the drums, his son simply decided to play the trumpet.

"One of his friends asked him, 'You're not going to play the drums?'" Monk laughs. "He said, 'No way, man!' That was so funny. I never told him to play. I just told him to be hip." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

T.S. Monk uses a Yamaha Custom kit, with an 18-inch bass drum, a 14-inch floor tom, 8-, 10- and 12-inch rack toms and a 6 1/2-inch snare. He uses several Zildjian cymbals, including a 20-inch medium-ride K, and a 20-inch thin-ride riveted A. The rest of his cymbals are Zildjian A's: 16-inch custom crash, 17-inch custom crash, 12-inch splash, 17-inch China and 14-inch hi-hats thin.

Monk uses Yamaha pedals and Pro-Mark sticks (737-S jazz stick model).

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

MONK ON MONK—N2K 10017
THE CHARM—Blue Note 89575

CHANGING OF THE GUARD—Blue Note 89050
TAKE ONE—Blue Note 99614

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Runners-Up: Jazz Album of the Year

T.S. Monk may have overwhelmingly won Album of the Year, but the other albums in the running captured readers' imaginations with intense lyricism.

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove dipped into Afro-Cuban tradition for *Habana*, a CD that Down Beat reviewer Dan Ouellette said "brims with an energetic, percussive spirit, fiesta-like interplay and sultry romanticism." It takes confident players to attack Cuban rhythms with fire, and Hargrove's crew—Gary Bartz and Ku-umba Frank Lacy included—matched well with pianist Chucho Valdés and the other Cubans on the album.

For old friends Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, *1+1* rekindled a long musical relationship. The level of communication between the two reached some other-worldly heights as they intertwined piano and soprano sax on 10 duets. As with conversations between longtime buddies, a lot was implied from years of shared experience.

Tom Harrell's ambitious *The Art Of Rhythm* combined 24 players into a cohesive whole. Shot through with global beats, the recording showed understated leadership and deep beauty. Harrell's inventive compositional gifts shone in the juxtaposed instrumentation, and he integrated his trumpet so smoothly that his occasional burst of brassy abandon was startling.

In what Down Beat reviewer Zan Stewart called "Bill Holman's best album," *Brilliant Corners* created a heady and uncannily seamless synthesis of

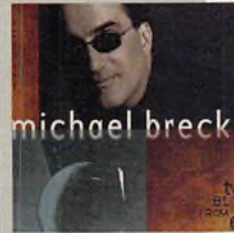
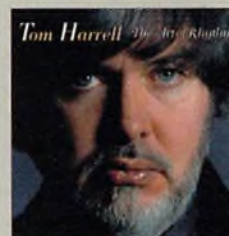
his individualistic voicings and Monk's distinctive writing. Whether twisting tunes through a prism or applying a pure, soulful bass clarinet to the intro of "Round Midnight," Holman made some of the most familiar jazz material sound fresh.

It took a veteran New Yorker like Michael Brecker to straddle that invisible musical boundary between Uptown and Downtown Manhattan. With *Two Blocks From The Edge*, Brecker pulled together a band with a kick-ass rhythm section of Uptown drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, Downtown bassist James Genus, pianist Joey Calderazzo and Don Alias on percussion for one of the year's most popular small-group recordings.

Ornette Coleman seems to be making up for lost time in his late 60s, overflowing with musical ideas that his fans could only dream about during the years when he was rarely recording. The pairing of the saxophonist with the nimble and resourceful pianist Joachim Kühn on the live album *Colors* delivered Coleman in a new light.

At 27, pianist Brad Mehldau was the youngest musician to place a recording in the poll, and his playing on *The Art Of The Trio, Volume Two: Live At The Village Vanguard* had the dimensions of a mature artist. The set found him climbing inside well-worn standards to reveal some kernels of undiscovered expression. Mehldau, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy pushed the hoary piano-bass-drums vehicle in new directions.

—James Hale



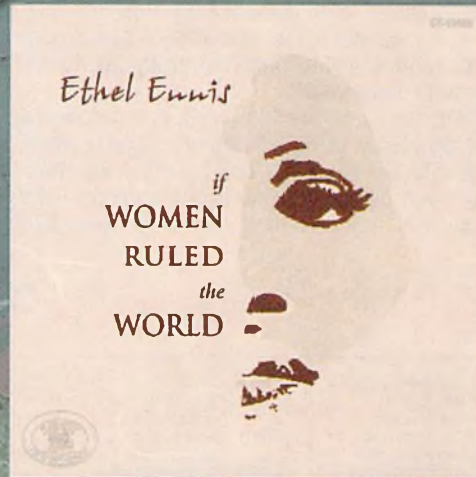
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Frank Sinatra

Frank Sinatra has rejoined the company of Count Basie—not just in that big band in the sky, but in the Down Beat Hall of Fame as well.

Like Basie, who came to national fame in the late 1930s, Sinatra's career was covered in Down Beat from beginning to end. Whether or not you call him a jazz singer (like we did in March 1996, the subject of a hot letters-to-the-editor debate), Sinatra's Hall of Fame status fits him as perfectly as a broken-in fedora or a medium-tempo swing.

Frank and Basie shared a gift for musical understatement. Discipline, restraint and self-editing made them stand out on their respective instruments. Put them together, give them a little time to work, and you get a masterpiece like 1966's *Sinatra At The Sands*: mighty swing that's naturally accessible and ultimately memorable.

When he wasn't at his jazziest, even during his most decidedly square moments, Sinatra never met a melody he couldn't lick. Based on that skill alone—his unflinching ability to navigate any line thrown his way—Sinatra ranks up there with the

rest of Down Beat's Hall of Famers.

Sinatra didn't have to die to get in. He could have been elected a Hall of Famer in the '50s, long before *Sinatra At The Sands*, when he was winning polls left and right. Back then, he was in Down Beat every couple of months as we covered the ups and downs of his career. He was a star with us all along.

There's not a whole lot more we can say about Sinatra that hasn't already been said in this year of his death. Nor can we honor him any more than we did in our August issue, a large chunk of which we proudly dedicated to him. Perhaps Quincy Jones, who arranged the charts and conducted the Basie band on the Frank-Splank collaborations, put it best in the liner notes to 1964's *It Might As Well Be Swing*.

"Both he and Basie have this remarkable ability to eliminate the negative," Jones said. "So far as I can put the essence of Frank into words, I'd say that he just makes everything work."

Everything Frank touched turned to swing. We welcome him into the Down Beat Hall of Fame. **DB**

by Ed Enright

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



Hall of Fame

- 311 Frank Sinatra
- 232 Mark Murphy
- 110 Antonio Carlos Jobim
- 90 Milt Jackson
- 77 Wayne Shorter
- 70 McCoy Tyner
- 48 Lee Konitz
- 46 Buck Clayton
- 46 Clark Terry
- 45 Joe Henderson
- 32 Four Freshmen
- 32 Doc Cheatham
- 24 Don Cherry
- 22 Erroll Garner
- 20 Philly Joe Jones

HERMAN LEONARD



**Jazz Musician
of the Year**

- 319 Wynton Marsalis
- 205 Ornette Coleman
- 163 Joe Lovano
- 153 Sonny Rollins
- 90 Nicholas Payton
- 84 Dave Douglas
- 70 Tom Harrell
- 64 Kenny Garrett
- 64 Fred Hersch
- 62 Joe Henderson
- 60 Bill Frisell
- 58 Kenny Barron
- 55 James Carter
- 55 Pat Metheny

Composer

- 146 Wynton Marsalis
- 80 Tom Harrell
- 59 Horace Silver
- 53 Wayne Shorter
- 40 Maria Schneider
- 40 Henry Threadgill
- 33 Benny Carter
- 31 Carla Bley
- 31 Dave Douglas

JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR
COMPOSER OF THE YEAR

DOWN BEAT

63rd

ANNUAL READERS POLL

wynton marsalis

For the second consecutive year, Down Beat readers have voted Wynton Marsalis Jazz Musician and Composer of the Year. However, as a man of constant motion, Marsalis has put 1998 behind him, a year that saw the release of his *The Midnight Blues: Standard Time Vol. 5* (see "CD Reviews" June '98) and his continued heavy schedule with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra "going all over the world with the band and swinging."

Now, he's focused on leading the world's most ambitious Ellington tribute with the orchestra. His enthusiasm for the coming year spills over on the phone, as he'll be honoring his principal influence and inspiration as a composer.

"Duke was one of those rare breeds of people who are great at what they do, and produce an enormous body of work," says Marsalis, 37, the orchestra's artistic director. "And his music can be played in so many different formats. So really the question was, What do we leave out? He was out there for more than 50 years, and he worked the entire time."

The orchestra has devoted 1999 to teaching the world about Ellington's genius. They will perform nothing but Ellington compositions (nearly 100) and present education programs in more than 100 cities throughout North and South America, Europe and Asia. They will collaborate with pianist John Lewis, the New York Philharmonic, New York City Ballet and the Juilliard School. Include a lecture and film series centered around Ellington and an expansion of the Essentially Ellington education program into the mix, and the group is looking forward to a particularly prodigious undertaking.

The orchestra will play Ellington's original charts, or transcriptions of the charts by David Berger. Comparing Ellington's artistic prowess to Picasso and Beethoven, Marsalis tries to capture the spirit of Ellington in the orchestra.

"I never really compose any interpretations of his pieces," he says. "I'm influenced by him, and I use certain things that I hear him do, but his pieces don't need any interpreting. All you have to do is play them.

"We try to remain true to his spirit, because when you listen to recordings of his own music, he didn't view the score as a bible. He played his music many different ways, and that's exactly how we approach it. I always tell the cats in the band to find their own way to play it, to personalize it."

A highlight of the 1998-99 season comes April 8, their collaboration with the New York Philharmonic at Alice Tully Hall. First, both orchestras will perform alternating movements of Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, with Maestro Kurt Masur of the Philharmonic conducting his group through the original movements, and Marsalis leading his orchestra through jazz arrangements of

by Jason Koransky

the piece composed by Ellington.

Following the *Peer Gynt Suite*, the orchestras will combine, under the direction of Masur, to perform Marsalis' new arrangements of Ellington classics.

Marsalis has strong opinions about this concert, especially to those who consider it an elevation of Ellington's music to the pantheon of classical music. "We do not consider this an elevation. I want to make this especially clear," Marsalis asserts. "It's another form of music. Ellington's music is jazz music, even though he rejected the term—but that was more out of frustration because he couldn't get a good definition of it."

The show could be considered elevating classical into Ellington's world.

The orchestra will play for the first time in 24 cities and will continue their PBS television telecasts and National Public Radio broadcasts. "We want to make Ellington a household name," says Rob Gibson, executive producer and director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "People have yet to fully discover the importance of his music. Mental preparations have been underway since '91, and now we have dedicated ourselves to this."

Jazz at Lincoln Center has worked closely with the Ellington family in coordinating next year's program, which celebrates the centennial of the composer's birth. "The family is glad that these efforts are being made over Ellington," says Mercedes Ellington, Duke's granddaughter. "It's really a full cycle. For generations who are coming up that were never exposed to the music first-hand, they will get a chance to hear it. Wynton certainly has been a champion of Ellington music and the Ellington tradition."

"My father, Mercer, dedicated his life after my grandfather passed to maintaining the Ellington music and his position in the music world. He made tremendous efforts that were never really realized. I believed that there were many dyed-in-the-wool Duke fans who thought that when he passed, his music and sound passed with him."

One way that Jazz at Lincoln Center has devoted itself to Ellington is through education. With the expansion of the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition (see "Jazz On Campus" Sept. '98), bands from all 50 states can participate. In addition, they

are taking their popular "Jazz For Young People" program to Ellington's old stomping ground, Harlem, for a Friday afternoon series at the Apollo Theater to complement the Saturday series at Lincoln Center.

As Composer of the Year, Marsalis continues to steep himself in the music of his predecessors. He understands what made Ellington timeless.

"He didn't fall victim to any 20th century misconception," he says. "He did not run from himself. Like you see in classical music, a lot of people ran from themselves because they wanted to be considered new. He didn't do that. At the Newport Festival in '56, when things turned around for him, it wasn't for some new piece that he wrote. It was 'Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue,' the blues. It was his contention."

And for Wynton, speaking about Ellington means remembering someone whose influence flames throughout his compositions. "This music is an important part of our landscape," he says. "It's not some old, dead music that's etched in stone. It's still alive. Like Picasso said: If a work of art cannot be considered in the present, it should not be considered at all." **DB**

JAZZ LEGEND.

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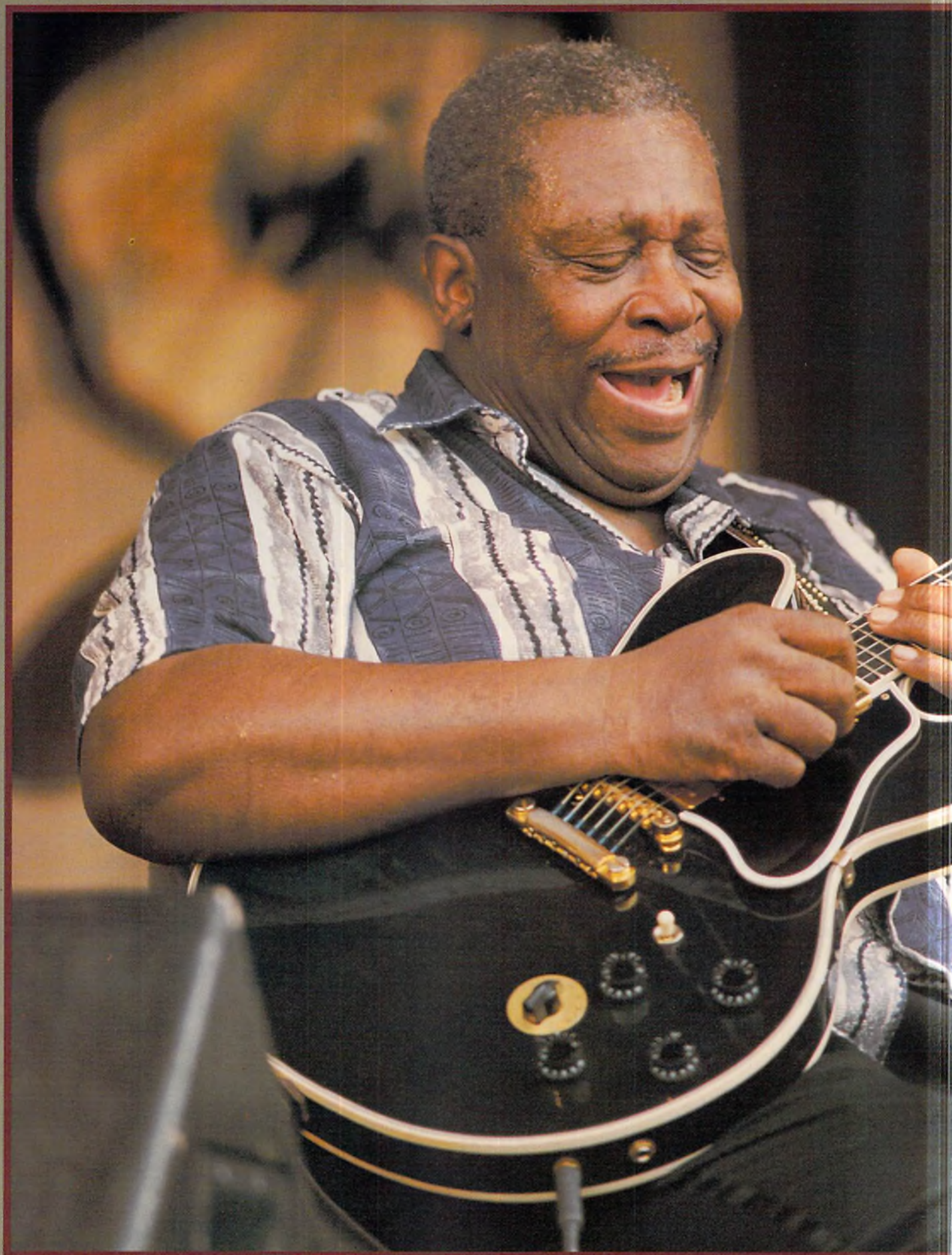
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BLUES MUSICIAN, BLUES GROUP
BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR

DOWN BEAT

63rd
ANNUAL READERS POLL

b.b. king

Maybe it was preordained from birth. The surname was obviously intended to wear a crown. Through the years, the honors and titles have accumulated like well-deserved tributes to a musical majesty. Whatever the reason, there's no doubt it is indeed good to be the King. And it's great for the blues world that B.B. remains its royal ruler.

It's been 50 years since the Mississippi-born King, determined to make a name for himself, took to the airwaves on Sonny Boy Williamson's *King Biscuit Time* radio program in Memphis. After a half century of sterling service to the blues, the name he has made is synonymous with the music as he's become a pleasantly pervasive presence both at home and abroad. From Las Vegas to the Vatican, the former his longtime home base and the latter where he played for the Pope last Christmas, King is the blues. It's not record company hype or the opinion of a few critics. It's a universal sentiment repeatedly reinforced by the voices of his fans and fellow musicians.

But it really doesn't take a Down Beat Readers Poll triple crown (Blues Artist, Blues Group and Blues Album

by Michael Point

Blues Musician of the Year

- 314 B.B. King
- 147 Buddy Guy
- 98 Ronnie Earl
- 97 Olu Dara
- 90 John Lee Hooker
- 88 Taj Mahal
- 70 Joe Louis Walker
- 67 James Cotton
- 64 Charles Brown
- 40 Clarence Gatemouth Brown

Blues Album of the Year

- 231 *Deuces Wild*,
B.B. King (MCA)
- 160 *In The World*, Olu Dara
(Atlantic)
- 158 *Born In The Delta*, Pinetop
Perkins (Telarc)
- 81 *Great Guitars*, Joe Louis
Walker (Verve)
- 56 *Sing It!* Marcia Ball/Irma
Thomas/Tracy Nelson
(Rounder)

Blues Group of the Year

- 192 B.B. King
- 117 Roomful of Blues
- 109 Buddy Guy
- 92 Ronnie Earl
- 80 Taj Mahal
- 77 Charles Brown
- 40 Joe Louis Walker

of the Year) to know B.B. is the best-known and most beloved bluesman on the planet. And rightfully so. No one, past or present, has done more to popularize the music on an international basis, and done so with such consistent creativity and artistic integrity. It's fitting that B.B.'s only true peers in American music history, in terms of temperament and talent, as well as sustained excellence and enduring influence on players and listeners, are seminal jazz legends whose full names are also unnecessary: Satchmo and Dizzy. King, like Armstrong and Gillespie, transcends his multitude of musical accomplishments through the power of his personality, one so amiably open and inclusive that even non-music fans smile at the mention of his name.

King has endured his share of tough times—he was still picking cotton when he first went on the radio—but his pro-



lived on the road, playing almost every night of the year in juke joints and claustrophobic clubs, preparing for his eventual success by, as the title of the classic King song he re-recorded with the Rolling Stones last year says, "Paying The Cost To Be The Boss."

King's signature blues guitar approach has been so widely imitated for so long, it's hard to remember there was a time when he was still developing it.

King credits much of his sound to the influence of early blues greats Lonnie Johnson and Blind Lemon Jefferson, but the most conspicuous component comes from T-Bone Walker, a fact King proudly admits. "T-Bone's guitar is what got me into the blues," King recalls. "It was some of the most beautiful music I'd ever heard, and I wanted to try to play something that sounded that pretty. I didn't even know the blues, or any kind of music, could sound like that."

"Playing the guitar is another form of singing to me, like having a different and more talented voice."

fessional life has been a blues anomaly. His story is not that of a tortured spirit who managed a few bursts of brilliance before burning out, but instead that of an endlessly optimistic soul who cheerfully persevered through trials and tribulations to create a lengthy and illustrious career that has remained relevant from the first note.

The open secret to King's success is a simple one he learned decades ago in the blues bars of Memphis. "Having fun is what it's all about," King says. "Nobody goes out to a club or a concert because they want to have a bad time. I found out when I was just beginning to play in front of people that the enjoyment starts on the stage. If you couldn't have fun playing the blues, nobody would have much fun listening to them. So, I always try to enjoy what I'm doing and hope the feeling spreads from the stage to the audience."

King's share-the-excitement technique has now been tried and proven throughout the world. But despite his early years as an r&b hit-maker, it took him a while to gain the attention of the mainstream market. It wasn't until the late '60s when he played rock palaces such as the Fillmore West for the first time that his public profile, and the resultant record sales, rose above the regional level. Before that, King literally

But while Walker's jazzed-up take on the blues gave King a starting point, what he did afterwards was purely his own invention. His single-string, treble-intensive guitar style, as instantly recognizable as any instrumental sound in existence, was an influential creation. But it was how King utilized it that was the truly significant evolutionary step forward for the blues. King used his beloved guitar Lucille in a feature role, allowing the guitar to step into the spotlight on its own instead of just being used to support vocals, effectively creating the modern blues (and rock) guitar solo. "I just wanted to let Lucille sing a bit," King jokes. "But in truth, playing the guitar is another form of singing to me. It's like having a different and more talented voice since Lucille can hit notes I've never been able to reach."

Texas guitar-slinger Jimmie Vaughan has toured and recorded with King, as well as sharing a 1996 Grammy with him. The close association has only made him more of a fan. Vaughan, whose lean and mean tone is the sonic opposite of King's well-rounded blues peals, is convinced King's true importance is still undervalued. "B.B. may be the best-known blues guitarist ever, but he still doesn't get

enough credit," he states. "Almost every rock guitarist has stolen from him for decades, and it's just about impossible to imagine the blues without him. When someone is that influential, there's no sense in comparing them with anyone else. B.B. is the king and everybody knows it."

Vaughan is by no means the only established star to hold such an opinion. Just how widespread the admiration of King was brought into entertaining focus with the release of *Deuces Wild*, his fastest-selling record ever. On it, a generation of stars/fans such as Van Morrison, Tracy Chapman, Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones and Bonnie Raitt reprised the sort of crossover collaboration King had done with U2 on "When Love Comes To Town" a decade earlier.

In 1993 a similar album, the Grammy-winning *Blues Summit*, successfully paired King with a dazzling assortment of his contemporaries, including John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Etta James, Albert Collins and Ruth Brown. With assistance from the younger generation of King's accomplished admirers, such as Robert Cray, Kim Wilson and Joe Louis Walker, the blues greats enjoyably embellished their individual legends while reinforcing King's royal stature. B.B. apparently had as much fun as anyone. "I've had the good fortune to record with a lot of great players and singers in my career," King says graciously, seemingly unaware that the rationale behind the albums was that the greats wanted to record with him. "I always enjoy it because I enjoy hearing great musicians. But I also always learn something from listening to them play."

The ongoing reissue of King's extensive and uniformly excellent recorded catalog, which continues with the January 1999 release of *Live In Japan*, is a significant cultural event. It ensures his early work, which is as classic a slice of musical Americana as can be imagined, will still be heard in the next century. But the artist himself, while pleased with the prospect, is somewhat underwhelmed by the historical context. "I made them to be listened to, so I'm happy they're becoming more available, but that's not really what I'm interested in now," King explains. "Hearing them brings back a lot of memories of the past, but you've got to live in the present. I'd rather have people listen to my new album than the old ones because it's where my music is now."

King's current release, the laid-back, late-night *Blues On The Bayou*, is noteworthy not only for its collection of King-written and King-approved songs, but also because it marks the guitarist's belated debut as

a producer. Recorded by King and his stalwart touring band in four days of sessions in Maurice, La., the album showcases the guitarist in a back-to-the-basics format totally devoid of overdubs and other standard studio sweetening. "There's nothing too fancy about it," King says with a laugh. "I'm not into studio tricks or any of those technical things. I'm just a guitar player who has a good idea of what he wants the music to sound like. When I'm working with professionals like the guys in my band, it's not hard to make it come out right. My idea was to just play the music in as natural and relaxed a setting as we could create. And I believe I did just that."

King has been a relatively prolific songwriter. But many of



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The legendary George Shearing Quintet paints a vivid holiday scene in their signature style with their first-ever Christmas album. In addition to the witty, well-crafted versions of familiar classics like *White Christmas*, *Winter Wonderland*, and a sparkling 5/4 version of *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*, Shearing has included beautiful arrangements of some unusual tunes like *Ding Dong! Merrily on High*, and the haunting lullaby *Balulalow*.



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the songs most often identified with him, such as "Everyday I Have The Blues" and "The Thrill Is Gone," have usually come from other sources. With a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Songwriter's Hall of Fame to his credit, King is justifiably proud of the classics he has contributed to the basic blues repertoire. He doesn't consider himself as primarily an interpreter, but he does acknowledge he has a special gift for remaking marvelous melodies, whether it's Willie Nelson's "Nightlife," Stevie Wonder's "To Know You Is To Love You," Ivory Joe Hunter's "Since I Met You Baby" or any other melody he can reconfigure. "I've always tried to do songs that would stand the test of time," he says. "If some of my songs fit that description, that's fine. But if it's a good song, I don't really care where it comes from. And I don't think the fans do, either."

Not just any song, no matter how clever its musical construction or distinguished its origin, passes the King test. "A song has got to say something to people, or it's just a lot of notes, no matter how pretty they sound," King elaborates. "An instrumental can make it on melody and improvisation. But when you sing a song, you better actually be saying something worth hearing. Otherwise, you're just wasting your time and that of the audience, and that's a shame."

King's summer was spent touring as the headliner of his own traveling blues festival, effectively re-educating fans to the fact that he is not just a legend whose glory days are all on old albums. And center stage is indeed the place King feels most at home, whether he's gently bending Lucille's strings to create sweet-toned cries of blues bliss or belting out the blues with authoritative intensity. "I've always enjoyed playing in front of fans more than just sitting in the studio, no matter who is in there with me," King says. "Blues is meant to be shared,

and the best way to do that is live and in person. I like to look out from the stage and see those smiling faces getting into the music. That's why I started playing the blues, and that's what has kept me going all these years."

And keep going is definitely what the seemingly indefatigable King is planning for the future. "I can't pretend that I'm as young and energetic as I was when I was starting out. But this has been a very exciting year, and I've enjoyed it as much as any I remember," the 73-year-old King says with satisfaction. "Of course, I'm planning on enjoying next year even more." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

B.B. King's guitar Lucille is a Gibson, based on the ES-355 he played for years. He also uses Gibson B.B. King strings and a Lab System amp.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BLUES ON THE BAYOU—MCA 11879
 DEUCES WILD—MCA 11711
 GREATEST HITS—MCA 11746
 BLUES SUMMIT—MCA 10710
 THE FABULOUS B.B. KING—Flair 29653
 THE ELECTRIC B.B. KING—MCA 11767
 COMPLETELY WELL—MCA 11768
 LIVE AT THE REGAL—MCA 11646
 LIVE IN COOK COUNTY JAIL—MCA 11769
 TAKE IT HOME—MCA 11770
 MY SWEET LITTLE ANGEL—Flair 39103
 DO THE BOOGIE—Flair 39654
 SINGIN' THE BLUES/THE BLUES—Flair 86296
 THE BEST OF B.B. KING VOL. I—Flair 91691

with Bobby "Blue" Bland
 TOGETHER AGAIN—MCA 27012
 TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME ... LIVE—MCA 4160

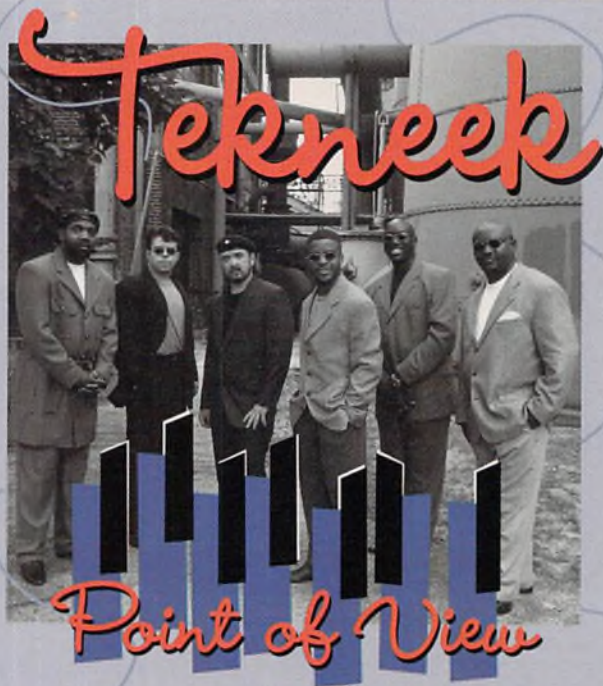
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MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

Male Vocalist

- 300 Kevin Mahogany
- 146 Joe Williams
- 131 Frank Sinatra
- 70 Kurt Elling
- 69 Tony Bennett
- 68 Bobby McFerrin
- 57 Andy Bey
- 52 Mel Tormé
- 51 Sting
- 47 Ray Charles
- 42 Freddie Cole
- 41 Jon Hendricks

DOWN BEAT

63rd

ANNUAL READERS POLL

Kevin Mahogany

The career path of a male jazz vocalist can be a tortuous one, tangled in a thicket far from the path of least resistance. Lured by cartloads of money, or at least the prospect of a decent living, many would-be scat men are sidetracked into more commercial realms. So it's rare when a male jazz vocalist, based in a small Midwestern locale like Kansas City, goes so far as to land two major record deals, complete six albums as a leader in six years, then top his category in Down Beat's Readers Poll, all by the age of 40.

Record labels were signing few male jazz vocalists at all in 1993, when Kevin Mahogany landed his first deal, on enja. After three CDs and a few years of hard work, he brought himself to the point where he could move on to a contract with Warner Bros. The new deal benefited him with wider distribution and increased promotional support, and from there, his career kicked into higher gear. Having already performed in the movie *Kansas City*, he took another step into the movie world, first singing on Clint Eastwood's *Eastwood After Hours—Live At Carnegie Hall* CD, then performing on the soundtrack for Eastwood's movie *Midnight In The Garden Of Good And Evil*. With the help of such mainstream exposure, no doubt, he steadily climbed up the Readers Poll, not to mention the Critics Poll.

Still, while he could be called a crossover artist, he's no sellout. He sings compositions by James Taylor, Lyle Lovett and Van Morrison on his newest CD, *My Romance*, but the harmonies and style of these interpretations are in the jazz tradition, and they're done with taste. Although Mahogany describes himself simply as a singer, not a jazz singer, he can scat with the best of them. He played legit clarinet and big-band baritone sax long before specializing in vocals, and he says this background helps him hear music a little differently than most singers. His voice, he says, is just another part of the ensemble.

by John Janowiak

At any rate, defining "jazz singer" is a sticky endeavor that can sound like the President discussing what "is" is. Is he is, or is he ain't a jazz singer? When you get right down to it, Mahogany is just that, and then some.

Why then, given the commercial limitations of this niche, does he sing jazz?

"I don't know," Mahogany says with a sigh of mock resignation, then a laugh. Then seriously: "I think it's also a matter of what you love to do. I mean, we [singers] are blessed with a job that we love. I love singing all styles of music, but I don't think anything touches me as much as jazz does. Also, when you look at career longevity, it's definitely more prevalent in jazz than it would be in any other form of music. Look at Joe Williams. And Mel Tormé was singing until he had the stroke. And Tony Bennett. I mean, you see very few pop or r&b artists singing at their age, except for oldies reunion kinds of things. You don't really see them performing at the level that these gentlemen continue to perform at."

The title of his latest CD can serve as a metaphor for his calling. His romance, you could say, is a lifelong pursuit of musical expression.



RONALD HEARD

"The one time I actually did speak to Joe Williams, he was saying how he's still learning," Mahogany says. "Every day there's still something new for him to learn in jazz. And I think that's a lot of [the appeal]. I think that it's a life-long pursuit for all of us."

While he is flattered to be acknowledged by fans in the Readers Poll, Mahogany bends over backward to point out that he, too, still has plenty to learn. "I am so far behind, in fact, they might be holding me back a year," he jokes. Lately he's been working on improving his songwriting, harmonic concept, vocal quality, scating and pitch selection. Much of his learning is done on the fly, since he finds it hard to find enough time to practice. This fall, he was busy rehearsing his band

to go on tour and promote the new CD. Over the past year, he gigned on four continents, from Kansas City to Austria to Japan. Among the year's highlights, he sang with the Metropole Orchestra for a concert radio broadcast in Amsterdam, brought his own band to São Paulo, Brazil, and performed at the Montreal Jazz Festival. Then there's been activity closer to home, like working with a community jazz band in Fargo, N.D., and guest-artist stints with college ensembles, an educational role he often plays.

Another project that keeps him busy—and keeps him learning—is *The Jazz Singer*, a quarterly magazine he launched about and for jazz vocalists of all levels.

"I'm trying to get information out of singers," Mahogany says. "Because it used to be, you sang in a big band, that's how you came up through the ranks, just like Joe Williams, Frank Sinatra,

"I love singing all styles of music, but I don't think anything touches me as much as jazz does."

all those guys did. But now, without the big bands, there's only so much you can get education-wise in the schools. Sometimes we have to turn to other places for information. What I'm trying to do is fill a little gap there."

The magazine is an outgrowth of a newsletter he has published, and it's an example of the kind of grassroots marketing he has used to promote his career and the profession as a whole.

"You just learn to do the things that you have to do to get the results you want," he says. "I don't mind working hard. This is not an easy business, we all know that, and no one's going to give you anything here. So I don't mind working for what I get, especially because this is something I love. It's hard to envision myself doing something else."

Mahogany is on the phone a lot, setting up not only his own concerts, but bringing other artists into Kansas City. "Because remember, to have a good local scene, you have to have other

This horn-augmented New Orleans quintet is the tightest and tastiest Louisiana groove band to emerge since the Meters. -The Village Voice
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Mahogany & Company

He may top the Male Vocalist category on this year's poll, but Kevin Mahogany shares the list with some heavy company. Here Mahogany offers his thoughts on some of his runners-up, from older as well as newer generations:

Joe Williams: "Fortunately, I've been able to see him more than a couple of times, and to me, he's really a consummate performer. I don't hear just blues and just jazz from him, but also the way he performs, overall, has meant a lot to me. Plus he's just a

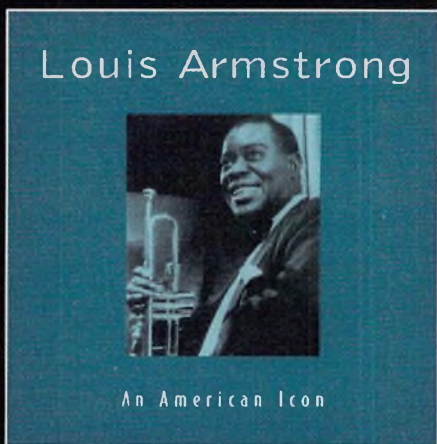
genuinely nice person. Seeing that offstage, you hope that you can be perceived in years to come as that kind of a person. The whole thing—his stage presence, his performance, the rapport, I mean, the whole package—that's what I think makes him such a special artist."

Frank Sinatra: "Just another graceful artist. I really never considered him a jazz singer. I always thought of him as more pop, but that's because at that time, that music was pop that he was doing. But he had such charisma. It's charisma that I think people would love to copy, but it can't be done."

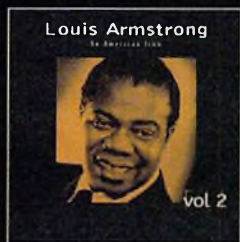
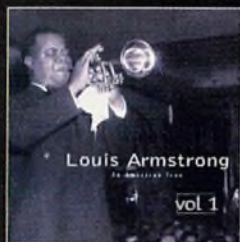
Kurt Elling: "Kurt's going to be one of those artists who, once he totally develops, is going to have some interesting possibilities

Louis Armstrong

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artists from outside the area," he says. Another ongoing endeavor is the constant search for songs. He digs into his past, searches record stores and solicits opinions, not only from people like his producer, Matt Pierson, but from fans as well.

"You look for lyrics that you can wrap yourself around, and hopefully you can relate to it to some degree. You don't have to have had your heart broken all the time to be able to sing all those songs, but it helps to know something about it or to know something about being in love, or whatever it is that helps bring that song across. So you have to be able to convince someone that you've been in this situation. Consequently, you have to have lyrics you can appreciate that mean something to you.

"A great love song will never go out of style," he says, paraphrasing, of all people, Barry Manilow. "And I really believe that. That's something that in my live shows has always been more successful than anything else." Thus the concept of *My Romance*. "The whole thing was to be just love songs and ballads, something that you can sit back and relax with. That was really it, there's not a whole lot of magic to it. Just sit back, relax and enjoy."

No follow-up record is in the works yet, but when the time comes, it might be along the same lines. "Some of it may depend on how well *My Romance* does. I think if this one does as well as we're anticipating, there might be, for lack of a better title, *My Romance Part II*. There are still a lot of great love songs and ballads out there that either haven't been covered or can be done again that people would love to hear."

Further down the road, he hopes to work more with big bands, "little" big bands and other vocalists. He aspires to sing with Nancy Wilson, Williams and Jon Hendricks, but he dreams of working with non-jazz vocalists, too, like Barbra Streisand and Luciano Pavarotti. Until that day arrives, he has his work cut out for him, and the Readers Poll gives him extra incentive.

in the future. I mean, he has choices to make, too, because he can do so many different things. He's an excellent vocalist, a really good singer with a lot of talent. It's just a matter of polishing it, just like myself—I still have a lot of polishing to do."

Tony Bennett: "That's another consummate gentleman. I had the fortune of running into him twice, once at the North Sea Jazz Festival. What endears him to the public is not only his talent, but also his personality. At North Sea, he was leaving the hotel to go to his car—it wasn't more than 40 feet [away]—and he got swamped by people for autographs. But by the time he had gotten to the door of his car, he had signed every autograph, [posed for] every picture. Talk about gracious. I remember thinking to myself, I wish I could be

that nice to people. Those are the people who will always remember him—not just the fans who just know his music, but who have met him personally."

Bobby McFerrin: "An incredible talent who can do anything. In a lot of ways, a trademark of this next generation is that vocalists are more flexible, I think because we've had more input from radio and from TV than artists before us. He's got such incredible talent that he can do anything musically, sing like an instrument. He's such a pure singer because he has such command and such control over his instrument from top to bottom, and perfect pitch control. I would love to be able to have that kind of control."
—J.J.

"I'm definitely flattered to be accepted, because the lineage of these polls is incredible, the past winners. So now to be included as one of them is really a great honor. And hopefully it won't be the last time to be included as one of these artists. We know that just because you win it once doesn't mean it's over, or that you should stop now and everything is OK, you're an established star. No, it's not that at all. In fact, if nothing else, it means you need to start working harder to maintain an integrity of music. That's what I want to try and do. That's why, as much as I enjoy the critics' accolades, my personal preference is for the Readers Poll because these are the people who go out and spend the money on you. And believe me, they'll never know how much I appreciate that, even though we try and tell them every time we perform by going out and doing the best we can. This means a lot to me, probably more than most people realize." **DB**

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

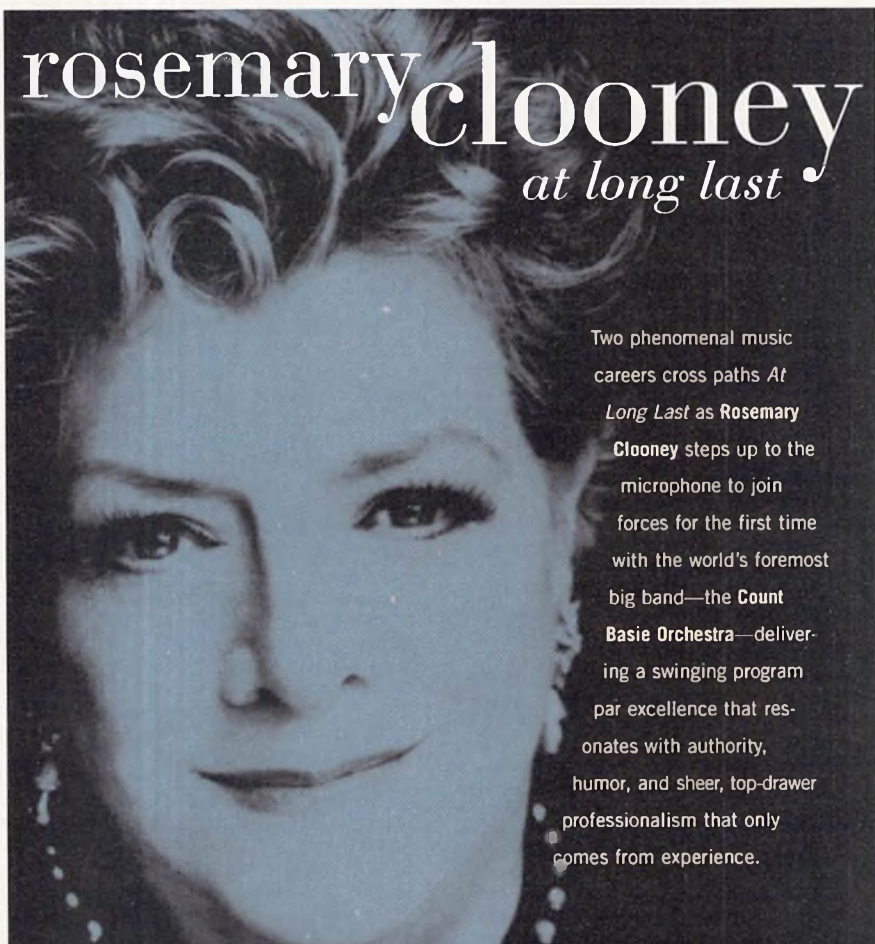
MY ROMANCE—Warner Bros. 47025
ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE—
 Warner Bros. 46699
KEVIN MAHOGANY—Warner Bros. 46226
YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES—enja 9039
SONGS AND MOMENTS—enja 8072
DOUBLE RAINBOW—enja 7097

as guest vocalist

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE SINGERS—Telarc 83441 (Ray Brown)
WARNER BROS. JAZZ CHRISTMAS PARTY—Warner Bros. 46793
EASTWOOD AFTER HOURS—Malpaso/
 Warner Bros. 8728 (various artists)
MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL—Malpaso 46829 (soundtrack)
TESTIMONIAL—Atlantic Jazz 82755 (Carl Allen)
IT DON'T MEAN A THING—enja 8066 (Elvin Jones)
DANGEROUS PRECEDENT—Sea Breeze 2046 (Frank Mantooth)
SOPHISTICATED LADY—Sea Breeze 2074 (Frank Mantooth)
DANGEROUS—Concord Jazz 2074 (Marlena Shaw)
PASSION DANCE—Telarc 83385 (Roseanna Vitro)
KANSAS CITY—Verve 529 554 (soundtrack)

rosemary clooney

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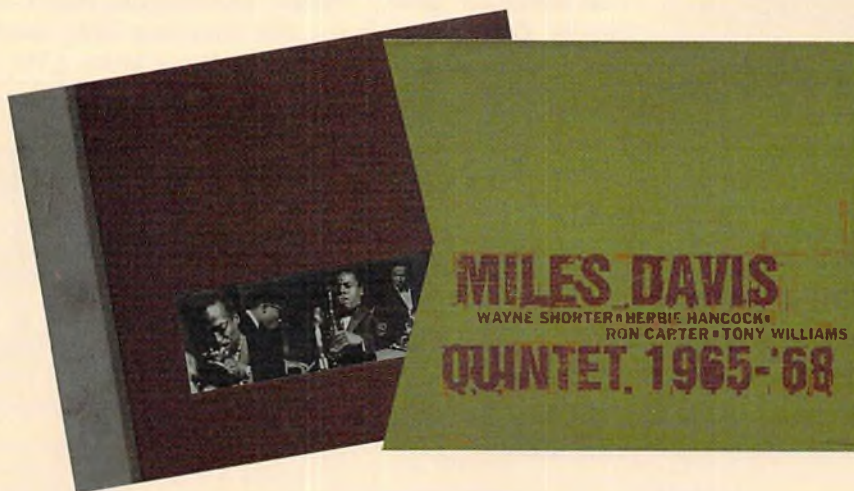
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DOWN BEAT

6^{3rd}
ANNUAL READERS POLL*miles davis quintet*

Considering how classic recordings are being digitally Spic and Spanned, reordered and rendered “complete” with added material, the term “reissue” seems ripe for an overhaul itself. How can there be anything “re” about albums that sound different, take different routes from start to finish and take detours via previously unheard songs?

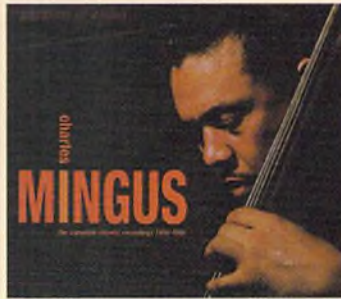
If some listeners have a problem with these rehabilitative methods, that isn't reflected in the 1998 Down Beat Readers Poll. No artist has been on the receiving end of such treatment more than Miles Davis, whose Columbia recordings have had so many lives, you need a family tree to keep them straight. In naming *The Complete Studio Recordings* by his legendary '60s quintet as top reissue, while also honoring *Kind Of Blue* and *Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall*, voters sent a mandate to Columbia/Legacy to stay the course in its ongoing traversal of the late trumpeter's catalog.

The label certainly deserves credit for its recent “A” treatment of Miles' recordings, which head the list of prized items bungled and bobbed by previous regimes. If the new Columbians had released nothing but the *Plugged Nickel* set and Gil Evans collaborations, they would deserve some kind of lifetime achievement award.

Even in the face of such staunch approval ratings, though, it's fair to question whether the music is being presented in the best possible light—whether the “improvements” are truer to '90s marketing needs or the artist's (and original producer's) intentions. Is there a silent majority out there that doesn't care for the revisions?

For all the glories of *Miles Davis Quintet 1965-68*, *The Complete Studio Recordings*, it suffers from the now-common affliction *chronologitis*, the dreaded bug that compromises the identity and integrity of the original albums by reprogramming songs in the

by Lloyd Sachs



order in which they were recorded (with bonus alternates added to the mix).

Consumers with nimble trigger fingers can restore some of the order via the CD program button. But there is no cure for the *masterpiece interruptus* that also dogs this collection, which leaves listeners hanging by including only that portion of *Filles de Kilimanjaro* that features original quintet members Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter (their replacements in the band, Chick Corea and Dave Holland, perform on the remaining selections).

As for the umpteenth release of *Kind Of Blue*, there is no arguing, on paper, with the speed adjustments that reinstate the keys in which the music was recorded. But the esthetic correctness flies in the face of established reality. Forty years on, is one of the greatest and most widely heard jazz albums suddenly greater as a result of proper pitch?

The 20-bit detailing also brushes out the reality that in recording *Kind Of Blue*, Davis and producer Irving Townsend took the technical limitations of the day into account. Boosting and clarifying the sound obfuscates rather than honors their achievement.

Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall reflects a healthier trend in restoring concert footage that was trimmed because it couldn't fit on an LP (or, in this case, the original LP and a sequel). Reclaiming edits and deletions gives the listener a more complete and satisfying picture of the performance, its ebb and flow, as does resequencing the songs in the order in which they were performed.

Thelonious Monk's *Live At The It Club*, a treasureable item before the Legacy restorations (which, among other things, make fans of perennially underrated tenor saxist Charlie Rouse very happy), is now one of jazz's pantheon live albums. So is another Readers Poll runner-up, John Coltrane's *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* (Impulse!), an

epic affair that documents the tenor saxophonist's soon-to-be transitional efforts with Eric Dolphy.

Among the other reissues honored by Down Beat readers, Charles Mingus' *Passions Of A Man* (Rhino) plays around with

some of the sequencing of his '50s Atlantic albums. But somehow, the late bassist/composer's towering personality, and the charge that comes out of his most consistently inspired period, overwhelms any serious objections to the track adjustments.

The Complete Sonny Rollins (RCA Victor), boasting the recordings that followed the tenor titan's famous 1959-'61 sabbatical, represents his most wide-ranging period. Here, squeezed into a two-year stint with RCA, are his voluble dip into free-jazz with Don Cherry, the classic album *The Bridge* and his Latin experiments. The return to the racks of *Our Man In Jazz* alone is worth the price of the collection.

Only a liner note writer or the most compulsive fan will claim to have listened to all 18 discs of *The Complete Bill Evans On Verve*, which requires its rust-ready, industrial-strength container to stand up to four previous Evans boxes. What prevents the music from bogging down, or giving in to its inconsistencies, is its varied format.

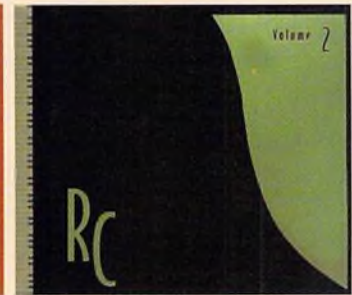
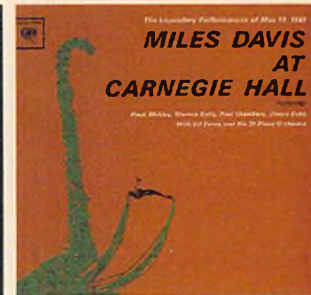
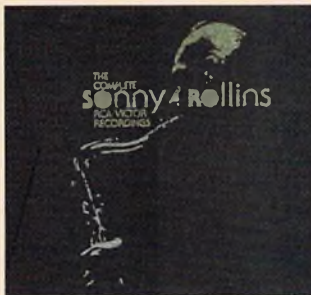
Though Evans spends most of his time at the altar of the trio, he also is heard in other settings, including Gary McFarland's big band.

As for Ray Charles' *Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary Collection*, one wishes that Rhino had felt freer to underrepresent the weaker material of later years and beef up the material from the early genius periods. Still, the compilation does a great job of cutting across periods, styles and record labels to give a definitive overview of this most influential of artists—who sat on the rights to his output for years before agreeing to release it. What'd he say? His individual albums have been painfully slow in coming out. But enter here for a first-rate indoctrination or refresher course.

DB

Reissue of the Year

- 287 *Miles Davis Quintet 1965-'68, The Complete Studio Recordings*, Miles Davis (Columbia/Legacy)
- 180 *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings*, John Coltrane (Impulse!)
- 162 *Kind Of Blue*, Miles Davis (Columbia/Legacy)
- 90 *Passions Of A Man*, Charles Mingus (Rhino/Atlantic)
- 50 *Live At The It Club*, Thelonious Monk (Columbia/Legacy)
- 47 *The Complete Bill Evans on Verve*, Bill Evans (Verve)
- 32 *The Complete Sonny Rollins Recordings*, Sonny Rollins (RCA Victor)
- 26 *Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall*, Miles Davis (Columbia/Legacy)
- 25 *Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary Collection*, Ray Charles (Rhino/Atlantic)



DOWN BEAT

63rd

ANNUAL READERS POLL

verve

Though the field is rough and the track is fast, it's hardly a surprise that Verve, the international jazz arm of Polygram Records, won top honors as Record Label of the Year. While it's the first occasion the category has been featured in the Readers Poll, Verve has topped the Critics Poll for the past five years by virtue of a strong and diverse catalog, new artist signings, and attention to producing music jazz fans want to hear.

"There are certain things majors can do very well, not only in jazz, but in classical and pop, too," says Chuck Mitchell, the long-ago (mid-'70s) Down Beat editor and co-producer of public television's *Soundstage* who has been Verve's president since 1993. "We can present a broad range of musical styles, and get our records in the stores. When you're running a label through a major distribution company, the reality is that the sales effort does not stop with you, it starts with you. Every day I have to sell records and image artists to the sellers. And Polygram's distribution wing has been particularly good in being able to focus on jazz, to make it available to the consumer in creative ways."

That begins to explain Verve's business success—no small feat, when sales figures compiled by SoundScan and the Recording Industry Association of America show that overall, jazz accounted for 2.8 percent of all record sales in 1997 (the last year for which data has been compiled, as of this writing), down from 4.9 percent in 1989.

"I'm so impressed with Verve," says guitarist John Scofield, whose '98 hit CD *A Go Go*, as well as '96's *Quiet*, are on the label (and who's formerly been signed to Blue Note, Gramavision, Arista/Novus and enja, as well as recorded by Columbia with Miles Davis and Atlantic). "When I first walked into the offices there were about 25 people who worked there, all in jazz, all real smart and perceptive. In a&r, the promotions department, marketing, sales and publicity, they all seemed up to the challenges, knowing and caring about all kinds of music."

"You know, it's like a band: It can only be as good as its weakest member. When there are no weak members, you've got something. And Chris Roberts, who's in New York running both classical and jazz, has an enormous job, but he's really able to carry some weight with the huge powers of Polygram."

Indeed, the knowledge, depth and focus of Verve personnel is acknowledged by many of those who get to peek behind the jazz industry's

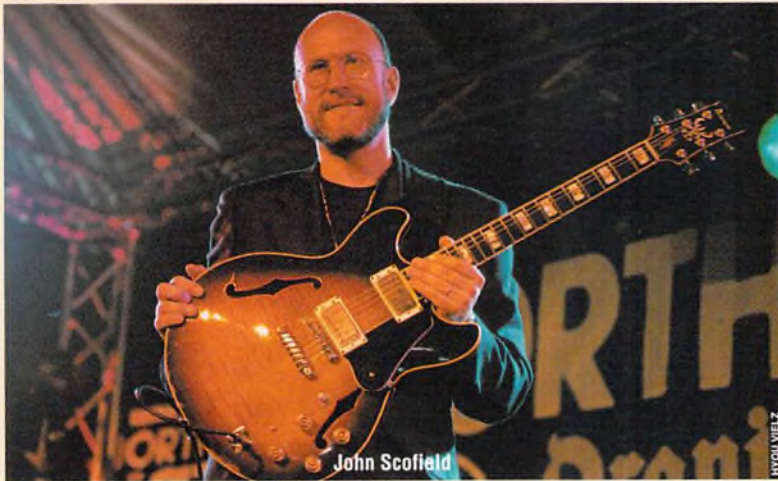
scenes. New York-based VP of a&r Richard Seidel, French producer Jean-Philippe Allard and reissues coordinator Michael Lang are among those most responsible for much of Verve's current breadth and presence, having built on an independent record label foundation laid by Norman Granz in the 1950s.

Much of Granz's pioneering work, and that of '60s Verve producer Creed Taylor, still perks up the release sheet; consider such delights as *Buddy De Franco And Oscar Peterson Play George Gershwin*,



Chuck Mitchell

by Howard Mandel



John Scofield



Courtney Pine

Meade Lux Lewis' *Cat House Piano*, Ed Thigpen's *Out Of The Storm* (with Kenny Burrell, Clark Terry, Ron Carter and Herbie Hancock), Yusef Lateef's *Before Dawn*, Jack Teagarden's *Think Well Of Me* and Alan Shorter's *Orgasm* (with Gato Barbieri, Charlie Haden and Rashied Ali) reissued in a batch in '98, and boxed sets by Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington, and pianist Bill Evans.

But Verve has considerable right-now momentum, as you hear in Herbie Hancock's all-star *Gershwin's World* or his '97 duet album with Wayne Shorter, *1+1* (his independent Verve imprint Hancock Records begins in '99, its first release being by Cuban Juan Carlos Formel); in the fascinating groove compilation *Red Hot + Rhapsody* and nova-bossa nova soundtrack *Next Stop Wonderland*; in the productions from Ornette Coleman's independent Harmolodic imprint and sub-labels Verve Forecast (issuing *The Return Of The Headhunters*) and Antilles (with CDs from trip-hop trumpeter Ben Neill and way-post-Coltrane tenor saxist Courtney Pine, among others).

The latest works of Geri Allen (*The Gathering*), Randy Weston (*Khephera*), Marc Johnson (*The Sound Of Summer Running*, with Joey Baron, Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny), Sphere, Nicholas Payton, Mark Ledford, Charlie Haden, Terry Callier, Christian McBride, Makoto Ozone, Shirley Horn, Abbey Lincoln, Joe Henderson and several more are all on Verve. Even its reissues gain a contemporary slant, as non-Verve artists (like Sonny Rollins) select "the ulti-

mate" Verve tracks of their heroes (in Sonny's case, Coleman Hawkins).

"We're trying to present our artists to the public as artists," Mitchell maintains, "and not deal with jazz music as a genre, generically. We're a jazz label, yes—which is to say most of our records chart on one or another jazz chart. But whether artists like Geri Allen, Najee and Will Downing are all defined as jazz artists or not doesn't mean much to me." The bluesmen Joe Louis Walker, "Gatemouth" Brown, Ronnie Earl and Lucky Peterson are also part of the Verve family, and, new for '99, so are Brazilian singer/songwriter Vinicius Canturaia, violinist Regina Carter and vibist Bobby Hutcherson.

Looking for an unsolicited artist's testimonial? "I feel I can do anything, creatively, at Verve," Scofield says, honestly and happily. "The people I work with there—including Lee Townsend, my personal producer who recently joined the label, just by coincidence—are broad in their scope, open-minded and have vision. They'll get behind anything I deliver, the first time, anyway. And no, I don't know what I'm going to do next."

Actually, no one does. As the Verve label prepares to merge with the Universal Music Group, whose parent company, Seagram's, bought Polygram lock, stock and barrel earlier in '98, anything can happen.

But here's a vote to let Verve be. It ain't broke—don't fix it! It's jazz's Record Label of the Year!

Record Label of the Year

- 341 Verve
- 276 Blue Note
- 160 Mosaic
- 126 Impulse!
- 82 ECM
- 80 Columbia
- 77 Concord Jazz
- 47 Double Time



Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown



Shirley Horn



Nicholas Payton

DOWN BEAT
3rd
 ANNUAL READERS POLL

Readers Poll Results

Acoustic Jazz Group

- 401 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio**
 379 Roy Hargrove
 300 Charlie Haden/
 Quartet West
 273 Joe Lovano
 249 Brad Mehldau
 247 Phil Woods
 221 Art Ensemble of Chicago
 218 Joshua Redman
 207 Nicholas Payton
 198 Chick Corea
 163 Michael Brecker
 151 McCoy Tyner
 138 Tom Harrell

Electric Jazz Group

- 300 Pat Metheny Group**
 224 John Scofield
 194 Medeski Martin
 & Wood
 99 Bill Frisell

- 86 Ornette Coleman/
 Prime Time
 84 Joe Zawinul
 79 Charlie Hunter
 77 Chico Hamilton
 76 Yellowjackets
 68 Chick Corea
 41 Bela Fleck
 & The Flecktones
 38 Steve Coleman

Jazz Big Band

- 441 Mingus Big Band**
 297 Count Basie Orchestra
 295 Maria Schneider
 188 John Fedchock
 117 Bill Holman
 102 Lincoln Center
 Jazz Orchestra
 80 McCoy Tyner
 75 Gerald Wilson
 52 Toshiko Akiyoshi
 52 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

Arranger

- 214 Bill Holman**
 163 Maria Schneider
 95 Wynton Marsalis
 79 John Fedchock
 59 Don Sickler
 57 Bob Belden
 47 Carla Bley
 41 Slide Hampton
 38 Toshiko Akiyoshi
 33 Buck Clayton
 22 Melba Liston

Trumpet

- 297 Tom Harrell**
 278 Nicholas Payton
 264 Roy Hargrove
 198 Dave Douglas
 181 Wynton Marsalis
 154 Jon Faddis
 148 Wallace Roney
 96 Kenny Wheeler
 81 Randy Brecker

- 79 Clark Terry
 71 Arturo Sandoval
 61 Art Farmer

Soprano Sax

- 382 Wayne Shorter**
 343 Steve Lacy
 338 Dave Liebman
 217 Branford Marsalis
 172 Jane Ira Bloom
 75 Bob Wilber
 40 James Carter
 40 Evan Parker
 36 Jane Bunnett

Alto Sax

- 300 Kenny Garrett**
 193 Phil Woods
 140 Lee Konitz
 123 Jackie McLean
 96 Ornette Coleman
 80 Steve Coleman
 55 Gary Bartz
 43 Antonio Hart

- 40 James Carter
 40 Bobby Watson

Tenor Sax

- 312 Sonny Rollins**
 209 Joe Lovano
 203 Joe Henderson
 193 Michael Brecker
 181 Joshua Redman
 162 James Carter
 147 David Murray
 131 David Sanchez
 127 Wayne Shorter
 115 Scott Hamilton

Baritone Sax

- 256 Nick Brignola**
 251 Hamiet Bluiett
 240 James Carter
 187 Ronnie Cuber
 99 Gary Smulyan
 81 John Surman
 80 Cecil Payne



Acoustic Piano

- 224 Kenny Barron
- 219 McCoy Tyner
- 205 Brad Mehldau
- 203 Keith Jarrett
- 173 Tommy Flanagan
- 149 Hank Jones
- 140 Herbie Hancock
- 132 Cyrus Chestnut
- 132 Chick Corea
- 87 Oscar Peterson
- 82 Geri Allen
- 69 Kenny Werner

Organ

- 288 Jimmy Smith
- 225 Joey DeFrancesco
- 210 Larry Goldings
- 185 John Medeski
- 164 Barbara Dennerlein
- 80 Jack McDuff
- 80 Dan Wall
- 48 Jimmy McGriff
- 40 Amina Claudine Myers
- 40 Dr. Lonnie Smith

Electric Keyboard

- 248 Herbie Hancock
- 192 Joe Zawinul
- 162 Chick Corea
- 143 Lyle Mays
- 141 John Medeski
- 67 Wayne Horvitz

Guitar

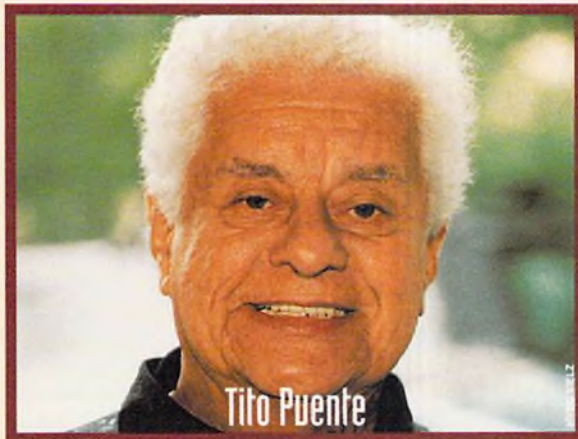
- 284 John Scofield
- 235 Bill Frisell
- 222 Pat Metheny
- 192 Jim Hall
- 172 Kenny Burrell
- 154 Mark Whitfield
- 140 Pat Martino
- 139 Charlie Hunter
- 130 John Abercrombie
- 88 Howard Alden
- 60 George Benson

Acoustic Bass

- 301 Charlie Haden
- 271 Christian McBride
- 190 Ray Brown
- 179 Dave Holland
- 158 Ron Carter
- 83 Gary Peacock
- 73 George Mraz
- 46 Anthony Cox
- 41 Reggie Workman
- 37 Bob Cranshaw
- 36 William Parker
- 30 John Patitucci

Electric Bass

- 197 Steve Swallow
- 180 Marcus Miller
- 113 Bob Cranshaw
- 91 John Patitucci
- 83 Bill Laswell
- 70 Christian McBride
- 66 Stanley Clarke
- 40 Anthony Jackson



Doug Lawrence *Soul Carnival*

"A great tenor man...a natural, like Lester Young." - New York Times

"...a vibrant session that should appeal to anyone who admires the sort of bop-oriented music that flourished on the Blue Note and other labels during the '50s, '60s and early '70s." - Cadence



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Drums

- 362 Elvin Jones
- 326 Jack DeJohnette
- 289 Roy Haynes
- 89 Brian Blade
- 74 Max Roach
- 59 Billy Higgins
- 45 Lewis Nash
- 45 Jeff "Tain" Watts
- 42 Chico Hamilton
- 34 Joey Baron
- 33 Paul Motian
- 32 Peter Erskine

Percussion

- 254 Tito Puente
- 215 Don Alias
- 199 Airto Moreira
- 179 Trilok Gurtu
- 157 Mino Cinelu
- 147 Poncho Sanchez
- 75 Famoudou Don Moye
- 62 Jerry Gonzalez
- 62 Leon Parker
- 50 Ray Barretto

Trombone

- 407 J.J. Johnson
- 233 Steve Turre
- 162 Ray Anderson
- 91 Conrad Herwig
- 87 John Fedchock
- 72 Ku-umba Frank Lacy
- 62 Bill Watrous
- 57 Curtis Fuller
- 56 George Lewis
- 43 Wycliffe Gordon
- 42 Slide Hampton
- 39 Robin Eubanks

Clarinet

- 317 Don Byron
- 213 Eddie Daniels
- 143 Buddy DeFranco
- 137 Phil Woods
- 83 Ken Peplowski
- 72 Ben Goldberg
- 65 Paquito D'Rivera
- 57 Marty Ehrlich

Flute

- 283 James Newton
- 245 James Moody
- 131 Hubert Laws
- 101 Herbie Mann
- 90 Lew Tabackin
- 83 Frank Wess
- 48 Dave Valentin
- 41 Henry Threadgill
- 37 Jane Bunnett
- 29 Sonny Fortune

Vibes

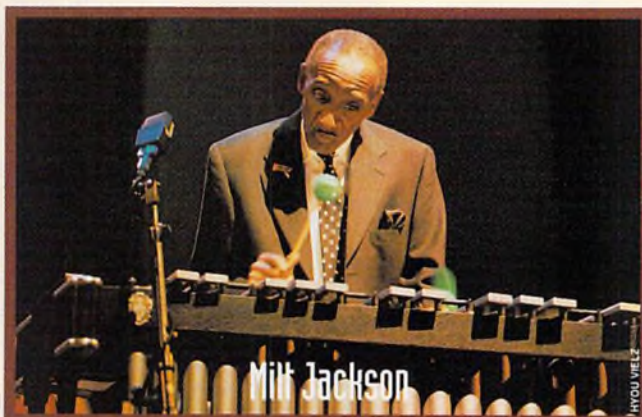
- 292 Milt Jackson
- 283 Gary Burton
- 238 Bobby Hutcherson
- 170 Steve Nelson
- 54 Joe Locke
- 47 Stefon Harris
- 46 Mike Mainieri
- 45 Lionel Hampton
- 30 Terry Gibbs
- 29 Bill Ware
- 28 Gust Tsilis

Misc. Instrument

- 246 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)
- 113 Steve Turre (shells)
- 94 Bela Fleck (banjo)
- 90 Howard Johnson (tuba)
- 48 David Murray (bass clarinet)
- 47 James Carter (bass clarinet)
- 30 Bob Stewart (tuba)
- 24 Regina Carter (violin)

Female Vocalist

- 282 Cassandra Wilson
- 153 Diana Krall
- 146 Betty Carter
- 109 Shirley Horn
- 93 Dee Dee Bridgewater
- 86 Abbey Lincoln
- 80 Dianne Reeves
- 54 Nancy Wilson
- 47 Carol Sloane





Charlie Haden

Beyond Musician of the Year

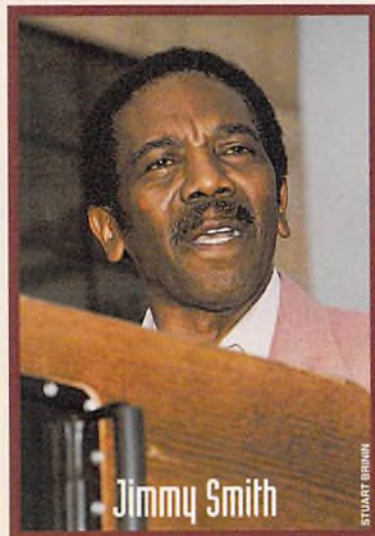
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THE TRUE MEANING OF BETTY CARTER: 1929-1998

A FAN'S REMEMBRANCE OF BETTY CARTER BEGINS ONSTAGE. FOR ALTHOUGH SHE MADE NUMEROUS SUCCESSFUL AND EMINENTLY SWINGING RECORDINGS, BETTY CARTER WAS MOST ASSUREDLY A CREATURE OF THE LIVING STAGE. HER PRESENCE, COLORFULLY GOWNED AND TASTEFULLY COIFED, WAS NOT OF THE REGAL, UNTOUCHABLE VARIETY, BUT MORE AN EARTHY FORBEARANCE—A HIP AFRICAN-AMERICAN EARTH MOTHER OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE. SHE KEPT ALL EYES RIVETED ON HER EVERY MOVE; TWISTING, TURNING, PIVOTING, SHE MOVED HER BODY TO THE RHYTHM IN A SORT OF CALISTHENIC OF SWING THAT WAS PEERLESS.

Carter was unwavering about telling folks what was on her mind, both in music and in conversation. Oh yeah, she could certainly be salty, but that acidity was leavened with a sense of pure truth-telling and jazz love that was undeniable, and merely drew one closer to the flame that ignited her unalloyed jazz passion.

The news arrived like a cold slap in the face, circulating through the audience at this year's Thelonious Monk Competition in Washington, D.C. Coincidentally, it was a vocals competition, won by the seasoned fellow Detroit-native Teri Thornton (see Page 18), who offered an onstage prayer for her sister-in-swing. The seemingly sudden news of Carter's illness passed through certain sectors of the crowd: "She has pancreatic cancer and has been given three months to live," or so it went. Then, just as the news began to sink in, on the next day, Sept. 26, she was gone, dead at age 69. The only solace was the fact that the woman who began her jazz ascent as the kinetic Betty Bebop of the Lionel Hampton outfit didn't have to suffer through a protracted cancer siege.

Once the obituaries were written, it remained for the musicians themselves, particularly those who matriculated at Betty Carter University, to express the true meaning of Betty Carter. An Oct. 3 memorial service took place at Riverside Church in Manhattan, where a cast of swingers paid tribute to Carter, verbally and in

song. It began with a singer, one of many who felt her influence, and ended with an open letter from an alum.

VANESSA RUBIN: "One cannot embrace true vocal jazz without embracing Betty Carter. I think most singers develop along the lines of imitation, assimilation and hopefully innovation. Not many can boast having achieved the latter. None would argue that Betty did, and that she held the doors open for anyone who would dare to enter."

JOHN HICKS (played piano with Carter 1966-'68, 1974-'80): "She was a great inspiration, and she always had her own individual approach to things. Betty didn't deal with the status quo so much; she wasn't interested in getting a hit record; she was more faithful to the tradition of the music for the sake of the best that you could possibly be. When I first started working with her, she didn't have a lot of recordings out, but wherever we played the place was always full of people just through her presence onstage. A lot of people would comment about how tough she was, but what I got out of that was her demand for excellence."

GREG BANDY (drums: 1973; 1980-'82): "She was like a big sister to me. I learned more about how to play the drums from Betty Carter than I have from some drummers! She was the epitome of a serious, strong jazz artist; strong woman, family woman and a true friend. I learned so much about taste and refinement, it's hard to even say. When you came off her bandstand, you'd be wringing your shirt out! You ain't gonna sit up there and look cute—she'd kick your ass more than a horn player. Betty was phenomenal!"

MULGREW MILLER (piano: 1980): "Betty was really my first gig, my introduction to the real jazz scene. I had been on the road with the Ellington band before that. But with Betty, that was the opportunity for me to get noticed on the scene. There are so many things that I admire about her: number one being her artistry, her tenacity, the fact that Betty did it her way; she had her own label, she promoted herself, did everything. Betty was always a part of the scene; she never isolated herself from what was going on; she was in the trenches with the rest of us. That's nowhere any more evident than her Jazz Ahead program, where she introduced so many young talents."

BY WILLARD JENKINS

LEWIS NASH (drums: 1980-'84): "Considering that she was my entree into the international arena, Betty was a lot of things that I needed at that period. I had just come from Phoenix, so she helped me to become acclimated to city life. In a way she was like my mother because I stayed at her house until I got an apartment. She would encourage me to go sit in at different jam sessions so people would know that I was here in New York. She was a mother/mentor/teacher. Betty was a person who encouraged individual thinking, not to follow a crowd. [On the bandstand] it was very intense, and very focused. You never knew what would happen from moment to moment, so you had to really pay attention to her directions, which could have been verbal, sign language or musical. ... Once she hit that stage, there was one thing that had to be done: Make that music live and breathe."

MARC CARY (piano: 1990-'93): "Betty was a mentor who taught me the etiquette of music, taught me how to handle myself and to protect myself playing music. She taught me to appreciate life and appreciate my goals. One of my main goals, up until meeting Betty, was to play with her, to be in the company of somebody as great as her, because of her reputation for bringing good musicians to everyone's attention. [On the bandstand] it was exulting, it was work, because she put the pressure on you. So for me it was a time to prove myself to myself. A lot of the pressure she was putting on was not for us to prove to her, but to prove to ourselves, to find out whether this was what we wanted to do. Playing

with Betty put me in the frame of mind of really pursuing a career in music."

CYRUS CHESTNUT (piano: 1991-'93): "Betty was one of the major mentors in my development. She really encouraged me to try to find something new; she refused to let me just go on automatic pilot. She always wanted the musicians to be sensitive and get all of the love the music had."

DARRELL GRANT (piano: 1988-'89) "Dear Betty: The first time I heard you was in the winter of 1987. You sang an entire 75-minute show with laryngitis. I mean, you couldn't even talk! But what music you made! I didn't know then that I would have the chance to be up there on the stage with you. I didn't know that you would take me into the Betty Carter University. My year and a half on that piano stool was the best school I ever attended. You drove us hard, it's true. There were nights we were so mad we didn't even want to look at you. 'It's about the audience.' 'You can never stop swinging.' 'This music ain't no hobby, you have to live it.' 'Be creative, this music called jazz is supposed to sound different every night.' I know now that you were trying to teach us. That you were working to secure a future for this music, to make sure you were leaving it in good hands. Well, Betty, I'm sorry that you aren't swinging among us any longer. I thought I'd have a lot more time to say thanks. So, if you're looking down, I hope you can see that we learned it, Betty, that we got the message, and the future will be in good hands."



TEHR BLOOM

DB

Exuberant Memorial Music

A multitude of musicians helped memorialize Betty Carter that fall afternoon at Riverside Church. Sometimes, as in the case of pianist Barry Harris, the homage was done in a direct manner as he recalled coming of age with Carter in their hometown of Detroit.

"Bringing beauty and joy, such was her life," Harris told hundreds gathered in the large sanctuary. Then, with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Harris etched a tender and melodic rendition of "Like Someone In Love."

Abbey Lincoln's tribute was more nuanced. She never mentioned Carter's name, but invoked the bebop diva with a reading of "Midnight Sun," by Lionel Hampton, who gave Carter her first professional stint. It was hard not to think of Carter and her approach to a ballad when Lincoln caressed the line "but after you were gone, there was still some stardust on my sleeve."

Stardust filtered through the air during pianist Cyrus Chestnut's solo on "If I Should Lose You," and was further dispersed when trumpeter Pevin Everett, one of Carter's many proteges at the affair, recalled his mentor on "I Thought About You." Like tenor saxophonist Don Braden, on his version

of "Sophisticated Lady" with pianist Benny Green, Everett found the perfect acoustical spot below the church's dome to cast his sound.

A quintet led by pianist Bruce Flowers played a lively treatment of "B's Blues." Trombonist Andre Heyward was particularly assertive, setting the stage for tenor saxophonist Mark Shim's sizzling but controlled impressions. The source of the steam was bassist Jennifer Vincent and drummer Eric Hardland. Heyward, Shim, Flowers and Hardland are Carter alumni, and so is pianist Danny Nixon, who played a medley of tunes.

In rapid succession, precious nods came from singer Jean DuShon, pianist Mulgrew Miller and trio (Williams and DeJohnette), pianist John Hicks, and tenor saxophonists Benny Golson and Jimmy Heath with pianist Jacky Terrasson. The vocalese tradition was well represented by Jon Hendricks, the Reed Sisters and Leone Thomas.

Near the beginning of the three-hour tribute, Dr. David Lionel Smith of Williams College noted that "her music was like she was: exuberant. She had a way of delivering moments of intimate communication amid public performance." And like Dr. Smith's words, her musical survivors on this occasion captured her exuberance as they recalled her legacy. —*Herb Boyd*

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



Charlie Haden & Chris Anderson

None But The Lonely Heart
Naim 022

★★★★

Here is 72 minutes of thinking man's mood music, full of everything that's good about a much-devalued genre we writers find easy to brush off as musical paint on the wall. In this case, the paint is all pastels and never glossy. It keeps an emotional distance unless invited. The tempos are so unobtrusive and immutable, you barely notice one tune changing into another. And it steps aside willingly, never demanding priority over a passing meditation and daydream.

The reason such music lives in a hinterland of perpetual passivity when taken cold is simply that mood music requires context to be appreciated, the context of a mood. So maybe my mood was receptive for this one. Charlie Haden recorded another bass-piano duo two years ago with Kenny Barron on Verve. But the sensibilities here are distinct and apart. Barron's flourishes and spires commanded attention. And with clinking glasses and dinnerware, there was an instant sense of place. On this one, Chris Anderson moves cautiously but thoughtfully over the familiar but elegant harmonic slopes of eight standards, plus a blues. The place was Cami Hall in New York. But the sense of place is ambiguous, better left to imagination. More important, the natural openness of the sound is a gorgeous model of how to record a piano. Five stars to engineer Ken Christianson.

As for Anderson, this 72-year-old musician's musician has been seen with many of the best since Charlie Parker himself. Seen, but apparently not heard. The name is fresh to me. Still, Haden has done both Anderson and the rest of us a fine service by showcasing him so lovingly here. There is an aura of low light and adult romance about everything he plays, which runs a remarkably narrow gamut from unpretentiously stylish explorations of "Body And Soul" (always worth another tour), "I Hear A Rhapsody" and other beauties where the flatted fifths are far between, to "CC Blues" and "Good Morning Heartache," which have the air of the bar room in their triplets and tremolos.

One final observation: Pianists are frequently eager to tell us all about themselves when they

play, which is a legal act in jazz. Perhaps Anderson is old enough, though, that his preference is for telling us all about the song. Such self-effacing cooperation with the composer is one of the really nice things about the best mood music, or cocktail piano, if you prefer.

—John McDonough

None But The Lonely Heart: The Night We Called It A Day; I Hear A Rhapsody; Alone Together; Nobody's Heart; Body And Soul; The Things We Did Last Summer; It Never Entered My Mind; CC Blues; Good Morning Heartache. (72:42)
Personnel: Chris Anderson, piano; Charlie Haden, bass.



Sphere

Sphere
Verve 557 796

★★★

They're back. After quite a long spell—no doubt lengthened due to the passing of original member/former Thelonious Monk compatriote tenorist Charlie Rouse—this Monk "rep" band (their name derives from the pianist's middle name) jumps back in with the smart addition of reedist Gary Bartz.

First off, mention must be made of how the songs are not typical Monk tunes; in fact, only two are, "We See" and "Hornin' In." It also becomes clear with Sphere that this really has stopped being a "rep" band, the group over time having chosen to inject their own material into the mix more and more.

The delightful "We See" swings right out of the gate, giving everyone a chance to stretch and get acquainted, while Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan" is taken at a similar and unusual pace. Swinging it with Bartz on these two openers, it's obvious and interesting that picking him as a replacement for Rouse was as much a personal as musical choice. His sound is heard in the soprano and alto ranges, whereas Rouse was a tenor man. Bartz's horn gives a definite lift to Sphere, in a sense changing a sound that was traditionally in the Monk quartet mold. In other words, this band, formed in 1979 and maintaining three of its original members, is still clearly a new band.

Kenny Barron and Bartz both contribute three tunes between them ("Bubba's Blues," "Buck & Wing" and "Twilight Song"), while they all close with a nice burn on the Rodgers and

Hammerstein standard "Surrey With The Fringe On Top." "Hornin' In," not one of Monk's most distinctive tunes, is given enough of a facelift to make it somewhat less recognizable, played medium tempo but streamlined without his angular, disjunctive arrangement or weighty chords. But then, this approach may be suggestive of Sphere's attitude and way with a song, offering great musicianship but lacking the capacity (or interest) to paint in bold colors, with broad, idiosyncratic strokes. There is great swing but little suspense, or sense that maybe the bottom might fall out, like with Monk himself.

Hearing this band makes me miss Monk all the more, knowing how hard it is to have a musical personality that stays long after the music has ended. And this is said realizing how great the musicianship is in Sphere. Barron is no Monk, nor should he be. Maybe the band's name gets in the way. Even former Monk bandmate/Sphere drummer Ben Riley sounds very tasteful, swinging but ultimately undistinguished.

Then again, in all fairness, how many Monks come along in a lifetime?
—John Ephland

Sphere: We See; Isfahan; Uncle Bubba; Hornin' In; Buck & Wing; Twilight Song; Surrey With The Fringe On Top. (56:04)
Personnel: Gary Bartz, alto and soprano saxophones; Kenny Barron, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Ben Riley, drums.



Joe Lovano

Trio Fascination Edition One
Blue Note 7243

★★★★

Be it orchestral outing or duet date, Joe Lovano's increasingly fertile horn prowess is exhibited on every new record he makes. But the saxophonist's art is never about mere soloing: Chemistry and concept are the true hallmarks of his projects. Though it's been a while since he applied himself to trioing with bass and drums, his ongoing efforts with Bill Frisell and Paul Motian have obviously sustained his talent for shape-shifting. This new date with Dave Holland and Elvin Jones revels in the consonance of three-sided transactions, and it sounds momentous.

Trios are about equilibrium, which may or may not be the same as stability. On Lee Konitz's *Motion*, flux is king. And it was Sam Rivers, a trio adept if there ever was one, who titled several

pieces after various forms of movement: "Streams," "Waves," "Bursts." With partners like Holland and Jones, Lovano's improvis are always changing, too. *Trio Fascination* is a storehouse of themes and rhythms novel enough to nudge the players away from the tedium of convention. At times it sounds huge, a likely result of Jones' husky virtuosity and the leader's barreling lines. But other moments seem reductive, as if the musicians were distilling a grand statement to its bare bones.

Lovano's dedication to anomaly—make that gorgeous, swinging anomaly—is perpetual. Simply put, his solos on *Trio Fascination* would rather plow into a ditch than risk walking the straight and narrow. With the help of his partners and his writing skills, he steers clear of platitudes. On "Eternal Joy" his soprano writhes and skulks into a novel zone where transition is equal to thrust. By the time he's done making his stuttering salutation on "Cymbalism," he manages a sage coordination: Brief, bouncy motifs ultimately form an epic pronouncement. As the title suggests, Jones' signature splash helps with the liftoff.

Holland's a virtuoso of triospeak (replay his take on Bird's "Segment" from *Triplicate*) and his hook-up with Jones is deep. The drummer elicits a decidedly physical attack from the bassist, especially on the opener, "New York Fascination."

Many Lovanophiles are smitten by their hero's exploratory timbre. The buzzes and breathiness of his attack often connote a pursuit of sorts—as if ardor was its own reward and each tune the soundtrack to a hunt. Here, even when he walks on the romantic side with "Ghost Of A Chance," there's a palpable yearning in the air.

Addressing rock singer Polly Jean Harvey, critic Robert Christgau says that she yokes the "indubitably traditional to the overtly experimental." That's an apt synopsis of Lovano's tack as well. And the authority with which he does so just grows and grows. —*Jim Macnie*

Trio Fascination Edition One: New York Fascination; Sanctuary Park; Eternal Joy; Ghost Of A Chance; Studio Rivbea; Cymbalism; Impressionistic; Villa Paradiso; 4 On The Floor; Days Of Yore. (66:08)

Personnel: Joe Lovano, saxophones, alto clarinet; Dave Holland, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.



Jimmy Giuffre

Free Fall

Columbia/Legacy 65446

★★★★★

That this record is of such enormous historical significance, representing perhaps the most radical interrogations and expansions of the technical and formal resources of jazz up

to the date it was recorded, 1962, should not overshadow the fact that it remains one of the most glorious, illuminating records of chamber jazz ever made. Out of print for decades after its first issue, *Free Fall* has been available as a French import for a few years; this incredible domestic reissue augments the original LP with six additional tracks, five of them—all solo clarinet pieces—never before issued.

Solos were a central part of the project, and the original issue included five of them, placed one every other track in the sequence: "Propulsion," "Ornothoids," "Man Alone," "Yggdrasill" and "Primordial Call." On these completely improvised recordings, Jimmy Giuffre is working at the edge of his instrument, exploring intervallic disjunction (exten-

sion of Dolphy), harsh shrieks, breath and keypad sounds, unbridled angular energies and carefully placed multiphonics. He's devastatingly fresh, but also sensitive and in places tender—"Man Alone," for instance, is lovely, melodic, gentle. Taken with the copious new solo material, this is a major statement on reed potentialities, and it is as vibrant and current as the day it was made.

The record also features Giuffre's trio with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, an ensemble that had already recorded twice for Verve (*Fusion* and *Thesis*, both reissued by ECM as a double disc called *1961*) and toured Europe for a week (hear the two great hat ART issues of radio recordings). According to Swallow, Columbia and producer Teo Macero were more receptive

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THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
CHARLIE HADEN & CHRIS ANDERSON <i>None But The Lonely Heart</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★
SPHERE <i>Sphere</i>		★★★1/2	★★★1/2	★★★	★★★
JOE LOVANO <i>Trio Fascination Edition One</i>		★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★1/2
JIMMY GIUFFRE <i>Free Fall</i>		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2

CRITICS' COMMENTS

CHARLIE HADEN & CHRIS ANDERSON, *None But The Lonely Heart*

Comfort food. An unyieldingly soulful, heartfelt, relaxed interaction, preferable, in these ears, to Haden's duets with Hank Jones. Anderson should be better known; he's graceful, with wisdom of ages and youthful spark and not a trace of showy razzmatazz that less tasteful pianists lunge for these days.—JC

Its dedication to reflection is its downfall. Anderson's much vaunted chromatic complexity and harmonic flair are formidable, but rhythmic cogitation winds up stealing every scene.—JM

A pleasant ride through a series of American standards, this mostly piano/bass duet set plays more like a recording for private consumption. The fairly anemic renderings offer little in the way of invention, let alone imagination. An exception: Anderson's journey through "It Never Entered My Mind" does put him in a position to improvise more than usual, and to good effect. Except for relatively spirited "CC Blues," Haden merely plays the plodding bassist.—JE

SPHERE, *Sphere*

This Monk spinoff redefines itself, spinning out to Ellington, Richard Rodgers and others. Gary Bartz is a cohesive and consoling center of gravity, with the smart, subtle detail offered by Riley a parallel pleasure.—JMD

Seasoned pros working a satisfying program. As free of gimmicks and straight-down-the-middle as its title, Bartz fills Charlie Rouse's big shoes with elegance and restraint.—JC

Finesse comes naturally to musicians of this caliber, but somehow this return sounds overly refined—quite beautiful and a bit humdrum.—JM

JOE LOVANO, *Trio Fascination Edition One*

Exit Sinatra, enter a freer, more freaked out Lovano in this memoir of '60s emancipation and high jinx.—JMD

A definite keeper. Diligently as some are drawing the line separating "in" from "out," Lovano's busy erasing it. In that way, this disc links to the Blue Note creative music legacy of Andrew Hill, Grachan Moncur III, Jackie McLean, Wayne Shorter and Sam Rivers. Thoroughly enjoyable triangulation, great tunes. And Elvin Jones: so solid, so swinging, a teacher every time he hits the throne.—JC

Lovano's style is perfectly suited for this forceful-yet-intimate excursion. It embodies the twin virtues of separate and combined musical personalities: three strong voices, one strong musical unit. With Holland and Jones, Lovano has found yet another near-perfect match. This album also sports the length and breadth of Lovano's influences. Hear a melding of middle and even late Coltrane on "Days Of Yore." His Websterian take on "Ghost Of A Chance" is pure delight.—JE

JIMMY GIUFFRE, *Free Fall*

Genuine '60s avant garde on the march, with shamelessly self-conscious solutions to problems no one knew existed. But not even the knottiest non-sequiturs can hide the brittle virtuosity and structure. Few '60s dead ends were as charming and brainy as this. Good notes too by Steve Swallow.—JMD

One of the clarinetist's most exploratory sessions, it never forsakes the graceful maneuvering that's become his hallmark.—JM

With rereleases from other quarters, Giuffre continues to get his due. What a refreshing change of pace is offered with the clarinetist's "quiet storm" of avant chamber jazz/classical music. Giuffre's tone, exposition and pen are all enchanting, creating another, beautiful world. That he has Bley and Swallow with him only enhances this world: Time stops on a dime with "Threewe," starts and stops on the mildly jittery "Spasmodic," and seems to track duet partners on "Divided Man." And yet, in the end, the true, delightful mystery resides in this man's horn: Hear "Propulsion" and "Ornothoids" and one is treated to gentle, off-kilter splendor.—JE

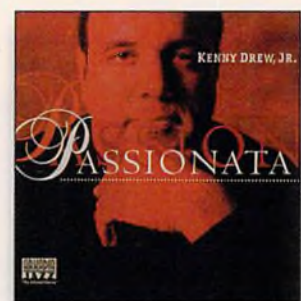
to the group's challenging music, and this is certainly the most liberated of their studio outings. Indeed, *Free Fall* goes so far as to challenge the notion of "chamber" jazz, wiping out trite connotations of lite classical and jazz-à-la-Bach and replacing them with an incisive musical polemic on creativity. While traces of the second Viennese school and impressionist classical piano literature are present, *Free Fall* portends the dawn of free improvised music in Europe and points ahead to the AACM's liberal use of space and sound.

Swallow and Giuffre perform two intimate duets, both of which use minimal prestructuring—quick unison theme on "Divided Man," clarinet long-tones collaged against brusque bass blurs on "Dichotomy." Three trio tracks on *Free Fall* show how far the ensemble had taken its remarkable new concept in the year since its inception. "The Five Ways" consists of five through-composed (in the true sense of non-repeating) parts, abandoning the jazz proclivity for thematic reiteration, but retaining the pliancy and life of improvisation. Midway, Swallow slips effortlessly into a walk and Bley pecks out a comp; a moment later the pianist is inside the piano scraping a string, Giuffre writhing around in his trademark low register.

The only sad note is that these master tapes have suffered over the years, and significant bleed-through is audible in places. This is particularly a problem when dealing with music of such dynamic extremes, since the silences are never completely silent and sudden sounds are always presaged by a ghost of what's to come. Nonetheless, this technical imperfection aside, *Free Fall* deserves a place among the classic documents of free music. —John Corbett

Free Fall: Propulsion; Threewe; Ornothoids; Dichotomy; Man Alone; Spasmodic; Yggdrasil; Divided Man; Primordial Call; The Five Ways; Present Notion; Motion Suspended; Future Plans; Past Mistakes; Time Will Tell; Let's See.

Personnel: Jimmy Giuffre, clarinet; Paul Bley, piano; Steve Swallow, bass.



Kenny Drew Jr.

Passionata
Arkadia Jazz 70561

★★★1/2

I sense that when a jazz trio CD arrives at my word processor with a title like *Passionata*, it comes with strings attached and large ambitions to be taken with the utmost seriousness.

Strings are indeed attached to four performances, and quite nicely by the hand of Bob Belden. As for ambitions, they turn out to be a

matter of Kenny Drew Jr. and his wish to honor his father, Drew Sr., who was born in 1928, died in 1993 and spent his career after 1961 in Europe, far away from Drew Jr. The result is a pleasant recital, produced in 1995 for Japanese release apparently, and one far less solemn than its name would suggest.

Presumably Drew comes to the material here, which is a mix of works by his father and pieces he liked and played, with a certain objectivity. Whatever his distance might be, though, is his affair. Drew is a seasoned pro with his own track record. He offers no particular imitations, just himself. It's a talent that covers a formidable range, from the precise, hard-driving right-handed lines that fill "Summertime" to the lush, full-fingered lyricism of "It Might As Well Be Spring" or "Dedication," where a stentorian flurry of notes turns out to introduce an unexpectedly lean and driving little solo flight of bass and piano. Because he is fluent in numerous genres, some of them classical, he is able to work the values of contrast and dynamics with confident virtuosity.

Belden's scoring is limited to the selections composed by Drew Sr. He genuinely enhances "Dark Beauty," especially the deeper underpinning of cellos early on to balance the sweetness of the violins. Drew provides considerable balance himself, laying into large romantic chords and arpeggios. The strings seem less crucial in the other pieces, where they drift quietly in the background much of the time. "Passionata" is an unfinished tune that Drew Jr. found among his dad's papers and completed for this CD. There are two versions, one scored, the other not. Take your pick. —John McDonough

Passionata: Passionata; Hush-a-Bye; Dark Beauty; Dedication; When You Wish Upon A Star; Serenity; Summertime; It Might As Well Be Spring; Evening In The Park. (57:46)

Personnel: Kenny Drew Jr., piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; strings (3, 6, 9, 10).



Sex Mob

Din of Inequity

Columbia/Knitting Factory 69432

★★★★½

Sex Mob is a fine name for this band, for what we have here is an act of sheer exhibitionism. Why else would an artist boast of creating "the first album in recorded history to feature the slide trumpet"? Who else would use this antiquated instrument to play a wacky lead on the modern dance hit "Macarena"? Why, it's Steve Bernstein, music director of the Lounge Lizards, co-director of Spanish Fly and

maven of New York's downtown music scene.

Bernstein's slide trumpet (slumpet?) sounds like Roswell Rudd on a good day after a strong whiff of helium or, to put it another way, like a mischievous schoolboy making funny noises with a balloon. That's intended as a compliment, oddly enough, since his musical musings are infused with wit. Avant-gardists ought to be intrigued by originals like "Holiday Of Briggan," but I prefer the covers of pop tunes like the Cardigans' "Been It" and McCartney & McCartney's "Live And Let Die." While they may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, they sound sincere, too, and they're a pleasure to hear. "Macarena" is the biggest hoot of all, for if people tried line-dancing at this dirge-like tempo, the scene would resemble *Dawn Of The Dead*. We

won't hear this version played at many weddings.

If Bernstein is going to construct a band around the slide trumpet, he damn well better milk that slide for all it's worth, and of course he does, sometimes with the aid of a digital delay. Sure, he cracks notes with impunity, and intonation seems not to be his highest priority, but it's all done for the common good. He's like a circus geek who gets off on shocking us with his audacity. I can just picture him as the kind of kid who would bring weird treasures to school to get the attention of classmates. ("Hey guys, check this out. It's a slumpet!") Far too subversive for show-and-tell, he could only show it off during recess to a few cool kids, the kind who grow up to be ... well, they never grow up, they just hang out at the Knitting Factory a lot.

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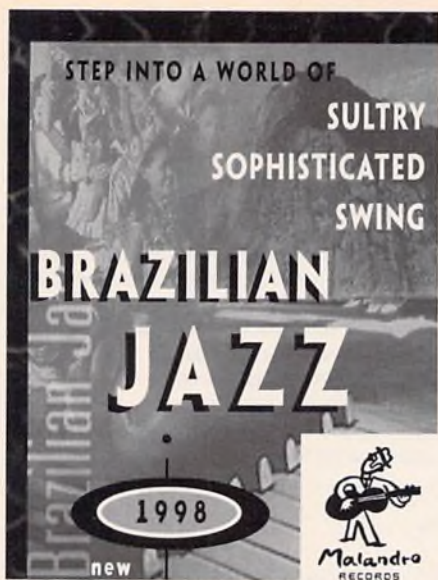
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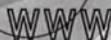
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Briggan Krauss is his partner in crime. He's the kid who brings in the electronics kit, the kind of toy they made in the '70s that makes mechanical beeps and squawks, except he makes these noises on an alto saxophone, not an erector set. This, too, is intended as a compliment. Although his style is not without derivations—there are shades of John Zorn, Archie Shepp and Johnny Hodges in his solos—he appears to be striving for a language all his own, especially in his jarring epilogue to Prince's "Sign O' The Times."

The rhythm section isn't too shabby, either. Bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Kenny Wollesen get down with more groove than lots of funk bands. When they're joined by guest organist John Medeski and guitarists Adam Levy and London McDaniels on several tracks, everyone feeds off of each other well.

Sex Mob is a novelty act, to be sure, and we can only take it as seriously as they let us. And that seems to be the whole point. Despite a decidedly unserious vibe, this album is performed by some seriously clever musicians who deal in outlandish surprises. —John Janowiak

Din Of Inequity: Holiday of Briggan; Sign O' The Times; House Of The Rising Sun; Goldfinger; Super Don; Been It; Come Sunday; Head Check 2000; Roswell; House of Peck; Macarena; New Orleans; Live And Let Die. (54:34)
Personnel: Steve Bernstein, slide trumpet; Briggan Krauss, alto saxophone; Tony Scherr, acoustic bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums. With guests John Medeski, Hammond B-3 (2, 3, 10, 11, 13); Adam Levy, guitar (2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 13); London McDaniels, guitar (2, 11, 13).



Jon Gordon

Currents

Double-Time Records 136

★★★★

Along The Way

Criss Cross Jazz 1138

★★★½

As Jon Gordon, 30, states in the liners to *Along The Way*, his way is what he's trying to find. Both these albums, recorded in mid-'97 (*Along*) and early '98 (*Currents*), reveal a searcher: The 1996 winner of the Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition is no longer merely a bebopper in the shadow of his onetime teacher, Phil Woods. Though he still has a bit of that mentor's sound, he's going toward his own and stylistically embraces anything from bop to free, as both of these records demonstrate.

Currents is the more cohesive of the two projects, and the more mature, due mainly to the program: Seven of the 10 numbers are Gordon's. They're well-crafted and have a consistent '60s-'90s post-bop stance that seems to be what the saxophonist now favors. Also, the leader plays a good deal of soprano here, which adds a distinctive flavor. Finally, his colleagues—an almost ideal crew in the amazing Bill Stewart, newcomer Ben Monder and stalwarts Ed Simon, Larry Grenadier and Adam Cruz—are definitely in sync with him. Together, they breathe life into these tunes, which challenge player and listener alike.

Several of the songs have edge in their themes, and in the subsequent improvs. On "Event By," Gordon, on alto, plays rhythmically as he fences with drummer Stewart, while Monder's guitar creeps around in the background. The latter's outing is full of elastic, other-worldly tones. The drummer cooks non-stop here, as he does on pianist Frank Kimbrough's "The Spins," where Gordon is again angular and deceptive, and Grenadier issues forearm-thick sizzlers in his solo. "Intention" is a free piece, and leads into the title track, with its solid counterpoint. Here Gordon wails persuasively on alto.

Softer are the heartfelt bossa "Comecar De Novo" (also known as "The Island") and "Twilight Soul," a modern slow song where the leader, on soprano, is emotive without sentiment. Simon's light touch fits the mood of "Three Springs," and "Alignment" has a happy, rumbling Caribbean feel.

Along is also a demanding album. Here, Gordon is still sorting out the direction he offers on *Currents*, and we get a diverse program: two originals, three free pieces, a standard, two ballads and two jazz classics.

The latter include "Inner Urge," where pianist Kevin Hays uses three notes in varying poses, then off-beat chords, in his solo; and "Friday The 13th," where bassist Joe Martin walks his improv. On both, Gordon works smoothly, making use of the current melodic/harmonic language in a logical, ear-pleasing way. "Portrait of Jennie" reveals the altoist to be a sumptuous ballad artist. He sings in the classic bop style, with asides during the theme and a telling, full-of-feeling improvisation.

An angular "Softly," an alto/bass/drums trio, is one number that leans toward abstraction; it's highlighted by exchanges with ace trapsman Billy Drummond. Another is "Empathy," a lovely extemporaneous piece spotlighting Gordon and tenorman Mark Turner. On the two upbeat looks at "Just In Time," Gordon and Drummond (sans the others) wrestle in a state of spontaneous invention.

The originals are captivating. For example, "Vale" is a very slow, tuneful piece in 6/8, and Gordon, unrushed, lingers on many notes. Turner, in contrast, lets loose, with freewheeling lines and Lovano-like bottom-horn-to-top forays.

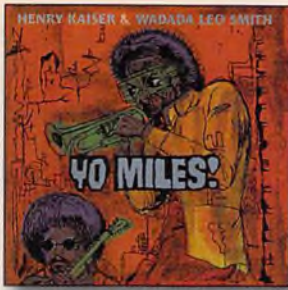
—Zan Stewart

Currents: Event By; Comecar De Novo; The Spins; Intention; Currents; Twilight Soul; Ed's Groove; Three Springs; Shape Up; Alignment. (63:49)

Personnel: Jon Gordon, alto and soprano saxophone; Ben Monder, guitar; Ed Simon, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Adam Cruz, percussion; Bill Stewart, drums.

Along The Way: Inner Urge; Empathy; Friday The 13th; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; Portrait Of Jennie; Just In Time #1; Vale; Along The Way; Body And Soul; Just In Time #2. (61:08)

Personnel: Jon Gordon, alto and soprano saxophone; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Kevin Hays, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.



Henry Kaiser & Wadada Leo Smith

Yo Miles!
Shanachie 5046

★★★★

Various Artists

Endless Miles
N2K 10027

★★½

Hats off to one of the more adventurous tributes yet to Miles Davis. With *Yo Miles!*, guitarist Henry Kaiser and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith have teamed up to create a challenging sonic tapestry dedicated to the late trumpeter's less celebrated (until recently) 1972-'75 electric period. Another tribute, recorded live, *Endless Miles* offers a potpourri of Davis-related players.

Kaiser's affection for electric Davis is becoming better known (see *Down Beat* July '98). In fact, he took in a good number of shows during this period. Smith, being a trumpeter, was bound to be influenced, if not deeply affected, by Davis' music. A delightful revelation is Smith's deep knowledge of and affection for Davis' '70s material, given this AACMer's work in the alternate realms of "world" and avant-garde music.

There is a wealth of playing here, with two discs clocking in at almost 80 minutes each. The vibe is almost like a party, as Kaiser and Smith corral a very large group of special guests alongside their "Yo Miles! Band" of seven. The instrumental range includes the requisite drums, electric bass, keyboards and reeds as well as lap steel guitar. The playing, at times, is reminiscent of Davis' multiple-guitar bands of this post-*Bitches Brew* period.

It becomes apparent to anyone familiar with the originals that these versions, treatments and renditions seem more formal and respectful than need be. The feel is clean, and somewhat more polished, with Smith's horn, for one, sounding a tad too bright, even smooth at times (e.g., "Big Fun," parts of "Themes From Jack Johnson"). The band's take on "Maiysha" part one is emotionally flat, devoid of life, as if they were trying too hard to "get it right." But then, on the same track, we hear that sly and original insertion of lap steel guitar, followed by some what-the-hell screeching guitar and Smith's first real burst of raw, exciting energy.

Overall, *Yo Miles!* gets extra points for taking

on such an ambitious project. As the well-researched (if poorly written) liner notes indicate, there is an incredible amount of minutiae to songs like "Black Satin," "Agharta Prelude," "Calypso Frelimo" and "Ife." To the casual observer, the music may appear to be just a lot of jamming on grooves with a backbeat. In fact, songs within songs can be heard, with arrangements and a variety of moods.

The shortest track on *Yo Miles!* is four minutes, while most are anywhere from 10 on up to a high of over 35. This was a period in Davis' career when recording was an almost completely live phenomenon. Hence, long, sometimes very long, selections (most often edited) were heard. Thus, it makes sense for the material on *Yo Miles!* (even though they are all studio recordings) to be of similar length.

The centerpieces to each disc by virtue of length are "Ife" and "Themes From Jack Johnson." Heard originally on Davis' *Big Fun*, this new, slower and inverted version of "Ife" adds a great deal of stretching, with nice spots coming from keyboardist Paul Plimley and saxophonist Bruce Ackley (from the Rova Saxophone Quartet). "Themes From Jack Johnson" includes, among others, the melding of two highly edited sections from the *Jack Johnson* 1970 soundtrack, "Yesternow" and "Right Off." Performed as one piece, "Themes" lacks the punch of the original, chopped-up versions.

The length of "Ife" and "Themes From Jack Johnson" may have people scratching their heads, wondering what all the fuss was about. One need only go back and listen to what Davis (and producer Teo Macero) did with the incredibly dynamic original takes of most of this music to realize that, even though the harmonic complexities of bop and what the American Songbook offered were in the process of being removed (to be replaced most obviously by the dominant simplicity of the new bass lines), other equally intriguing complexities were replacing them.

As for *Yo Miles!*, one need only listen to Kaiser and Smith's version of the playful, hypnotic "Calypso Frelimo," *Yo Miles!*'s peak, to hear the best mix of this band's originality blended with Smith's fiery wah-wah trumpet and his definitive stamp on Davis' sound. Here is the best example of why this tribute was done in the first place. Credit producers Kaiser and Chris Muir with a great sound (in HCDC), bringing to fruition a mostly hot, loving tribute to some damn hard music to play.

Endless Miles is an interesting recording by way of contrast. Like *Yo Miles!*, it is made up of Davis material. Unlike *Yo Miles!*, *Endless Miles* covers the '50s through the '80s, skipping the most difficult material of the '70s.

By and large, the program has life, and flows fairly evenly, despite the personnel changes and eras reflected. Trumpeter Wallace Roney plays out from under Davis' shadow once "Nefertiti" picks up steam. It's nice to hear drummer Jimmy Cobb again, this time no doubt playing with new musicians. Dave Liebman blows some tantalizing, edgy blues on "Walkin'." The obligatory, so-so "So What" is offset by the cookin' "The Sorcerer," featuring some great solo work from pianist Geri Allen, and nice attempts beyond the usual with "In A Silent Way" and "Tutu."

Perhaps an unfair comparison, *Endless Miles* presents the best that name-brand players can offer in a thrown-together setting, reflecting



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none of the cohesion of the various Davis units this music unavoidably refers to. In other words, there's inspiration with lots of perspiration, but little or no innovation. And the out-of-focus liner photos suggest a high-school yearbook ambiance.

How unlike Mr. Davis. —John Ephland

Yo Miles!: Nok (CD #1): Big Fun/Hollywuud; Agharta Prelude; Miles Dewey Davis III—Great Ancestor: Black Satin; Ife; Maiysha. Sankore (CD #2): Calypso Frelimo; Moja—Nne; Themes From Jack Johnson; Will (For Dave). (79:57/79:58)

Personnel: Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet; Henry Kaiser, Nels Cline, Chris Muir, guitars; Wally Ingram, Lukas Ligeti, percussion, drums; Rova Saxophone Quartet, George Brooks, Oluymemi Thomas, reeds; Freddie Roulette, Elliott Sharp, lap steel guitars; Paul Plimley, piano/organ; Greg Goodman, piano; Bob Bralove, John Medeski, organ; Michael Manning, bass.

Endless Miles: So What; Nefertiti; Walkin'; In A Silent Way; No Blues; The Sorcerer; Tutu; My Funny Valentine. (69:20)

Personnel: Wallace Roney (1, 2, 5-7), Randy Brecker (3), trumpet; George Coleman (1, 8), Antoine Roney (2, 6), Dave Liebman (3, 5), Bob Berg (4, 7), tenor saxophone; Harold Mabern (1, 3, 8), Geri Allen (2, 5, 6), piano; Adam Holzman (4, 7), Robert Irving III (4, 7), keyboards; Gary Peacock (1, 3), Buster Williams (2, 5, 6), bass; Foley, electric bass (7); Jimmy Cobb (1, 3), Lenny White (2, 4, 6, 7), Al Foster (5), drums; Mino Cinelu, Don Alias, percussion (4, 7).



John Patitucci

Now
Concord Jazz 4806

★★★★½

Bassist John Patitucci continues to make the transition from West Coast fusioner to East Coast mainstreamer on this session rooted in the music of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, often with a sound not unlike the combos pairing Joe Lovano and John Scofield.

Scofield and the tenorists—Chris Potter on five tracks and Michael Brecker on two—have the spotlight, although Patitucci makes certain he has plenty of solo space throughout. As masterful a player as he is, however, he can't overcome the basic lack of variety in coloration of his instrument.

The leader shifts to electric bass on the final three tracks, where he works in a trio with Scofield and Bill Stewart, then just Stewart and, finally, by himself. These tracks are OK but seem merely filler.

Scofield's guitar solos and comping are the best things about the session as he adds distinctive touches that make the music interesting and inspire the others.

Potter, whose personal and rapidly maturing sound is more inspired by Hank Mobley than Coltrane or Sonny Rollins, takes the honors in competition with Brecker, a Coltrane devotee

who also plays with authority here.

Stewart, of course, keeps the rhythmic backgro-unds stimulating. —Will Smith

Now: Now; Grace; Out Of The Mouths Of Babes; Hope; Labor Day; Espresso; Forgotten But Not Gone; Search For Peace; Giant Steps; Miya. (70:24)

Personnel: John Patitucci, acoustic, electric bass; Chris Potter (1-3, 6, 7), Michael Brecker (4, 5), tenor saxophone; John Scofield, guitar (except 9, 10); Bill Stewart, drums (except 10).



Count Basie Orchestra

Live At The Sands
Reprise 45946

★★★

Count Plays Duke
MAMA 1024

★★★★½

First came Basie's Old Testament Band, the soloists band of the '30s; then the New Testament Band, the arrangers band of the '50s that Sinatra bankrolled. By the '60s, the Count Basie Orchestra had become the Craftsmen Band; to swing what the Swiss are to watches. Inside the case, itself a gem of gold-plate and filigree, was precision, economy and fine-craftsmanship made manifest. Today's band—led by trombonist Grover Mitchell, who played at the Sands—has kept up the family name.

The producers and engineers have constructed *Live At The Sands* from tapes of the short opening sets the band played during Frank Sinatra's 1966 engagement at the Sands Hotel. As such, it's a lively look at big band showmanship before a crowd of high rollers. This band's swing can swagger, as the horn sections after Basie's rollicking introduction to "Splanky," or spin as on the chart to "Whirly Bird." Their swing can scurry like "Flight Of The Foo Birds" or stomp as on Don Gibson's pop/country tune "I Can't Stop Lovin' You." "Corner Pocket" is a great uptempo chart for dancing, while "Makin' Whoopee" is as danceable, but slow and seductive. The major soloists are tenor saxist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and trombonist Al Grey; both had just rejoined the band.

Basie was no stranger to Ellington, the man and the music. They recorded together and had sidemen "graduate" from one band to the other. The New Testament Band always had a few Ellington charts in the book; they played two at the Sands. So it's not unnatural that the current Count Basie Orchestra would record a CD's

worth of Ellington charts arranged by Allyn Ferguson, a composer of music for film, big band and symphony. But why?

Singers all know that the Basie band makes their charts sound better. *Count Plays Duke* demonstrates that the Basie band also makes the American Popular Song more danceable. And at every tempo, though when they're really jumpin'—as on "It Don't Mean A Thing," with trumpeter Shawn Edmonds' fiery solo—your ear might exceed your feet. For slow dancin' and romancin', nothing beats "I Got It Bad" (with an insinuating solo by trumpeter Scotty Barnhart), "In A Sentimental Mood," "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart" or "Just Squeeze Me." Frank Wess' flute solos on "I Got It Bad" and "Love You Madly" are a cool breeze on a hot night. Drummer Butch Miles saws a pocket just big enough to nestle 19 men. Whether romancing a ballad or wailing the blues, the Count Basie Orchestra is the finest rhythm machine on the road today. —Dave Helland

Live At The Sands: Introduction; Splanky; I Can't Stop Loving You; I Needs To Be Be'd With; Flight Of The Foo Birds; Satin Doll; Makin' Whoopee!; Corner Pocket; One O'Clock Jump; Hello Little Girl; Whirly Bird; Blues For Ilene; This Could Be The Start Of Something Big; Jumpin' At The Woodside. (53:02)

Personnel: Count Basie, piano; Marshall Royal, Bobby Plater, Eric Dixon, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Charlie Fowlkes, reeds; Al Aarons, George "Sonny" Cohn, Wallace Davenport, Phil Guilbeau, trumpets; Henderson Chambers, Al Grey, Grover Mitchell, Bill Hughes, trombones; Freddie Green, guitar; Norman Keenan, bass; Percival "Sonny" Payne, drums.

Count Plays Duke: Take The "A" Train; It Don't Mean A Thing; I Got It Bad; I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart; Just Squeeze Me; Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me; The Star-Crossed Lovers; Love You Madly; In A Sentimental Mood; Cottontail; Paris Blues; Mood Indigo; I'm Just A Lucky So And So. (58:05)

Personnel: Doug Miller, John Williams, Kenny Hing, John "Jackie" Kelso, Brad Leali, Frank Wess, reeds; William "Scotty" Barnhart, Robert Ojeda, Michael P. Williams, Shawn C. Edmonds, trumpets; William H. Hughes, David Keim, Grover Mitchell, Clarence Banks, Alvin Walker, trombones; Terence Conley, piano; Will Matthews, guitar; James Leary, bass; Butch Miles, drums.



Steve Wilson

Generations
Stretch 9019

★★★★

The concept for 37-year-old Steve Wilson's first album as a leader on an American label was to bring together musicians from four different "generations"—Ben Riley from the '50s, Ray Drummond from the '60s/'70s, Mulgrew Miller from the '80s and Wilson from the '90s. But the sweetness of the session probably has more to do with the mutual maturity

and sympathy of the players than their differences in age. Together, they convey a feeling of joy, generosity and easiness of spirit that is in short supply on the tense, ambitious albums of many younger players today.

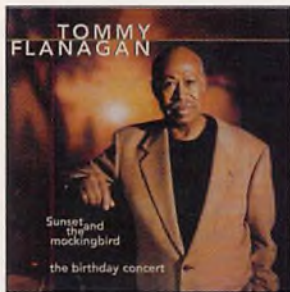
Of course, credit goes to Wilson himself for arranging a smart set of tunes in which the rhythm section plays an integrated role in each composition, often in call-and-answer vamps, or forms that continue under the soloists.

Wilson's attractive songs include the darkly modal "Sisko," the dreamy and sportive ballad "Chrysalis," a tuneful salsa excursion, "Trapaceria," and a carefree gambol with a clever two-against-three section, "A Joyful Noise (For JW)." Wilson's integrated approach fails him on Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge," where an insistently thumpy bass/tom-tom background never lets up enough to let the soloists swing.

A member of Chick Corea's new group Origin, Wilson is a consummate player whose bright but husky tone, legato attack and evenness over the whole horn recall the singing, lead alto quality of Benny Carter. His soprano sound is round, controlled and always in tune; his flute, big and piping, though a little on the cold side. He takes his time while improvising, executing fluid, shapely ideas. But the surprise solo star here is Miller, whose uncharacteristically linear and relaxed solos stick out right from the start, on his own, swinging tune, "Small Portion" and on "Sisko," where he just flies. —Paul de Barros

Generations: Small Portion; A Joyful Noise (For JW); Sisko; Leanin' & Preenin'; Chrysalis; Sweet And Lovely; Wait; Trapaceria; Chelsea Bridge. (63:26)

Personnel: Steve Wilson, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Ben Riley, drums.



Tommy Flanagan

Sunset And The Mockingbird
Blue Note 93155

★★★★½

The dignity and grace of Tommy Flanagan's musicianship can cause him to be misunderstood. The adjectives used for years to describe his playing—"elegant," "sensitive" and "refined"—suggest an artist on the effete side of the machismo spectrum. But *Sunset And The Mockingbird* establishes beyond argument that Tommy Flanagan wails, even if his work is devoid of the ragged edges that, in jazz, are often mistaken for passion and for pushing the envelope.

The program reflects inspired outside-the-box decisions. Thad Jones' "Birdsong" is first, and it flies without sounding hurried. (There is time

for allusions to Woody Woodpecker and Monk.) Flanagan's trio with Peter Washington and Lewis Nash has played together for eight years. With the exception of Keith Jarrett's, no ensemble has taken the piano trio format to a higher level of development in the '90s. Washington is the endlessly varied yet implacable pulse of this music, and Nash is the Flanagan of drummers: so crisp and clean and efficient that ferocious rhythmic resiliency feels light.

"With Malice Toward None" is the first of three Tom MacIntosh songs. Flanagan starts it like a stately hymn and gathers intensity so smoothly that you don't feel it coming when, after Washington's dark solo interlude, the piano release breaks through. There are two Dizzy

Gillespie songs, "I Waited For You" and "Tin Tin Deo." On the former, Flanagan's amazing touch gives each note separate pearl-like identity as the piece lifts and cascades. Flanagan's work shares a quality with another pianist known as poetic, Bill Evans: tough-mindedness. It is what makes their evoked feelings stick.

The other two MacIntosh songs are played as a medley. "The Balanced Scales" begins in spare clusters, haltingly, thoughtfully, as though Flanagan is just discovering it. Then it slowly pools and spills and steadies into firm momentum until, with a flourish, it becomes "The Cupbearers," and bursts into the light.

Flanagan's Blue Note debut, this is one of the richest, most fully realized albums of his 42-year recording career. The only reservation has to

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do with the recorded sound of engineer Mark Levinson. The sonic portrait of this trio is unbalanced—too close on the piano, too distant on the bass and drums. In such a mix, the piano of course fares best, its fierce transients intact, but Washington's bass is blurred, and Nash's cymbals are dim. There is a curious absence of stereo separation, and little sense of the space in which the recording was made. Too bad, since it was the Village Vanguard, the most hallowed recording space in jazz. —Thomas Conrad

Sunset And The Mockingbird: Birdsong; With Malice Toward None; Let's; I Waited For You; Tin Tin Deo; Sunset And The Mockingbird; The Balanced Scales/The Cupbearers; Good Night My Love. (69:50)
Personnel: Tommy Flanagan, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.



Gene Krupa
In Concert
DBK Jazz 70015

★★★★

There are few careers in jazz you can count today that once loomed so large and that have been so completely eclipsed as that of Gene Krupa. He was the most famous drummer of his generation: handsome, heroic, charismatic. In the '50s, the Krupa-Buddy Rich drum battles at JATP drew the kind of roars normally reserved for sports events, which I suppose is what they were.

Then, after his death in 1973, he seemed to disappear. I can't remember when his name last appeared in these columns. Yet, his presence persists in ways only the hip are likely to spot: in the commercials for Chips Ahoy and other products that use "Sing Sing Sing" and its

clones on their music tracks; and in the influx of contemporary jump and swing bands. It could be Krupa is "in" again. About time.

But if he was the greatest "star" the instrument ever produced, it was not an empty stardom by any means, as this rocking little CD clearly attests. Still, you have to turn your ears back a bit in time to when audiences measured jazz drummers by the way they punched the beat during the ensembles; then manipulated, shifted, shuttled and varied the weight and timbre of the strokes in unexpected but not too complex ways in solos.

There are plenty of examples on this set that finds Krupa in late career sitting in with a good Detroit dixie band in 1971. His work has a simplicity about it based in a rigid bass pulse often italicized with a cluster of three or four on-the-beat rim shots. But the variations and time displacements he plays on the snare, cymbals and tom-toms against that beat have such fluid thrust, lift and lilt to them, the power is readily accessible, often irresistible and thoroughly comprehensible.

"Hey Look Me Over" starts in the manner of an old style New Orleans march, then breaks open with an equally old-fashioned and strutting Krupa solo straight out of Zutty Singleton, Krupa's direct inspiration and ancestor (note the press rolls behind Andy Mornile on "St. James Infirmary"). Along with the leaping strut and swagger, though, comes a simple and subtle grace, especially in the succinct eight bar breaks that dot "China Boy" and the way he makes his hi-hat sizzle briefly in the solo that follows. "Sweet Georgia Brown" gives us the Krupa of "Sing Sing Sing" tom-tom fame, just a bit too fast though. But on "Perdido" he plays a long, relatively slow tempo solo that runs the full range of press roll dynamics and contains some intriguing snare work where Krupa shifts the rim shot accents to the up beat.

To those familiar with Krupa, these trademarks will be a familiar treat. It's to those not familiar with him, though, that I would especially recommend this CD, which has plenty of pep and more spontaneity than his usual Krupa trio format. —John McDonough

In Concert: Hey Look Me Over; St. James Infirmary; Sugar; A Smooth One; China Boy; Sweet Georgia Brown; Perdido. (43:21)

Personnel: Gene Krupa, drums; Marcus Belgrave, trumpet; Al Winters, trombone; Andy Mornile, trumpet; Eddie Metz, piano; Don Lewandowski, bass.

Dave Douglas
Charms of the Night Sky
Winter & Winter 910 015

★★★★½

Moving Portrait
DIW 934

★★★★



The Dave Douglas
Quartet
Magic Triangle
Arabesque 139

★★★★

Many critics (including this one) have often taken the easy route in describing the confluence of influences and threads in trumpeter Dave Douglas' defiantly uncategorizable music. European folk and classical ideas meeting in a downtown New York jazz/free-improv classroom is the usual sketch. But as three new Douglas releases attest, this viewpoint—although usually admiring—is just one aspect of his unconfined awareness.

A few years ago, Douglas' *Five* brought in new ideas about how strings and trumpet, improvisation and composition could exist in the future. Chamber jazz, New Third Stream, whatever, those terms were inadequate then, and *Charms Of The Night Sky* shows how his ideas are too individualistic now to point to any school as a demarcation.



We've been a band for four years now. Even so, we are only just beginning to get to the point where I feel like we have a real past on which we can build. In the process we learn what it means to play music, communicate with an audience and make documents along the way. You, the listener, are an integral and essential part of it all. Thanks for joining us in that process. Ellery Eskelin



In their duo, Solal's gift to Konitz is a liberation from ... inherent restrictions. This in turn inspires Konitz to follow his own lyrical impulses to the extreme—listen to how often he stretches his line to the breaking point. This is improvisation that goes far beyond merely altered chords or variations on a theme.



Of course, Background Music isn't straight cool jazz. Gregorio: "I've been trying to combine that sound" - THE sound - "with new musical concepts, not ones from the '40s and '50s." Here we find a sort of intersection of certain materials from low-dynamic modern jazz with the methods and certain other materials from European improvised music. Spontaneous cool, curdling with instant heat. A new, West Coast free improvisation.

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On *Charms*, Douglas leads an unorthodox quartet that also includes bass, violin and accordion. To be sure, such instrumentation, and some of his melodies, recall the fanfares and dances of Central and Eastern Europe. And the group does wonders with waltz time signatures. But these modes are far from dominant. Actually, Guy Klucevsek's free-flowing duets with Douglas make me wonder why the accordion is not used more often in all sorts of facets of American jazz. Without a drummer, this group brings out what an emphatic rhythm instrument the accordion can be—especially in a dialogue with Douglas' bright tone on "Decafinata." Douglas also sounds especially spirited alongside Greg Cohen's bass crescendo and Klucevsek's wails on "Twisted." While the violin has a historically established role in jazz, Douglas' open-ended string arrangements allow for Mark Feldman to burn through the introduction on "Dance In Thy Soul" like nobody else in this music today. Douglas' own terrific sense of pitch and exquisite sequence of held and broken notes are ideal for his cinematic soundscapes.

With Joni Mitchell's singular non-standard guitar tuning system, top-notch songwriting and deep love of jazz, it's surprising that more jazz instrumentalists have not given this musician her props. Douglas covers three of her songs on *Moving Portrait*, and his versions are substantial enough to make up for lost time. In many ways, Mitchell and Douglas are kindred spirits: Their instrumental ideas are far different than the norm, but their lyricism wins accolades; they both admire Wayne Shorter; and while some of Mitchell's best songs involve the characters she met in Europe, Douglas has that rep for absorbing that continent's idioms. This affinity does not prevent him from spinning her work into new directions. When Mitchell sang "My Old Man" (on *Blue*), she carried the melody with a voice that easily glided above the piano. On *Moving Portrait*, Douglas breaks apart and drifts in and out of the tune while keeping it as recognizable as his own distinctive tone. He does not take the easy way out—play the appealing song straight-ahead, trying to imitate her register, and then do some improvisations over the chord progressions. That would be disrespectful.

During some of his *Moving Portrait* compositions, Douglas does recall Mitchell's delivery. The title work features his legato upper-register notes that play with, and are set against, Bill Carrothers' piano lead. Elsewhere, Douglas

evokes different paths. The jagged duet with drummer Billy Hart on "Movement" seems like an inspiring tribute to Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell.

Although bassist James Genus is the only member of *Moving Portrait* to appear on *Magic Triangle*, Douglas' quartet has the agility and intuitive communication of a regular working band. This group is especially nimble in their sneaking around, in and outside of "Padded Cell." At first it seems like Benjamin Perowsky's cymbal strikes are all that hold them together. Throughout the disc, Douglas and saxophonist Chris Potter simply sound like they're having a hell of a good time. The group dynamics certainly work well for Douglas, his introductory notes on "Kisangani" are so amazingly cool, the

group's gradual inclusion into the piece is a fine combination of fun and awe. —Aaron Cohen

Charms Of The Night Sky: Charms Of The Night Sky; Bal Masqué; Sea Change; Facing West; Dance In Thy Soul; Little One; Wild Coffee; The Girl With The Rose Hips; Decafinata; Poveri Fiori; Odyssey; Twisted; Codetta. (56:07)
Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Guy Klucevsek, accordion; Mark Feldman, violin; Greg Cohen, bass.

Moving Portrait: The Nine Cloud Dream; Paradox; Moving Portrait; First Frost; Roses Blue; My Old Man; The Same Situation; Movement; Romero. (64:49)
Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Bill Carrothers, piano; James Genus, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Magic Triangle: Everyman; Magic Triangle; Padded Cell; Circular; Kisangani; Barrage; Odalisque; Coaster; Ghost. (57:00)
Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Chris Potter, saxophones; James Genus, bass; Benjamin Perowsky, drums.



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Charles Gayle Quartet

Daily Bread
Black Saint 120158

★★★★½

Charles Gayle 3

**Berlin Movement
From Future Years**
Free Music Production 90

★★★★½

One might not listen to Charles Gayle so much for pleasure as to be part of the cathartic experience he pours out with such great intensity. He makes you feel a religious fervor through an expression that truly carries one along with its force.

The roots of his tenor playing are in the black church experience that also influenced and energized the sound of Albert Ayler. It's as if they both sought the purifying passage through fire. The shrieks, shouts, thick cries of pain and low-register smears are all a part of spiritual possession.

Daily Bread offers other musical sides of Gayle. His piano playing on two duo tracks with Morris is more grounded in Thelonious Monk than in Cecil Taylor and his followers. Gayle's viola work on two other tracks—which form

avant chamber music groupings including a string quartet—is another story. These dark, droning mutterings in the sound-for-sound's-sake realm recall Ornette Coleman's violin "sawing." Bass clarinet is listed on the back cover but doesn't show up on this CD.

And for those who think that Gayle plays only in the Ayler zone, listen to "Offering To Christ," where he works in a nearly conventional area that one would swear might come from a Sonny Rollins disciple.

This 1995 recording will not be for all listeners. Those brave enough to enter this trial-by-fire will find, perhaps, the same cleansing that Gayle has realized in making the music.

The work on the FMP disc, recorded at a Berlin concert in 1993, is another matter. While Gayle does a fairly good job of sustaining interest over the three movements (25, 19½ and 35 minutes), the tracks are just too long—although it's clearly a tough thing to self-edit in a performance situation.

Gayle's direction on the German recording is more guttural and emphasizes high wails and low honks at the expense of his middle-register playing on both tenor and a fairly brief bass clarinet solo on the "Second Movement."

The religious underpinnings are clear, even though the titles avoid sacred references. And Gayle's stylistic links to Ayler are made abundantly evident, particularly when he closes the final movement by roughly reworking the theme of his idol's anthemic tune "Ghosts." Cherry and Wimberly show considerable skill in their support and solo work throughout, as do the sidemen on the Black Saint CD.

—Will Smith

Daily Bread: This Cup; Our Sin; Inner Joy; Drink; Earthly Things; Watch; Rest A While; Offering To Christ; Shout Merrily. (76:11)

Personnel: Charles Gayle, tenor sax (1, 5-9), piano (3, 4), viola (2, 8); William Parker, piano (5, 7, 8), cello; Wilber Morris, bass; Michael Wimberly, drums, violin (2, 8).

Berlin Movement From Future Years: First Movement; Second Movement; Third Movement. (79:15)

Personnel: Charles Gayle, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Vattel Cherry, bass; Michael Wimberly, drums.

Greg Cohen

Way Low
DIW 918

★★★½



Moment To Moment

DIW 928

★★★½

Recently prominent as the bedrock of John Zorn's far-flung Masada Quartet, bassist Greg Cohen displays a witty, non-derivative post-swing sensibility on a pair of late-'96 programs marked by economical compositions and arrangements that cut to the chase, canny pacing, deep grooves and some inspired blowing.

On *Way Low*, the top-shelf New York ensemble sounds like they'd been playing together for a few years rather than just a two-day session. Cohen paints a broad timbral palette with versatile multireedist Scott Robinson, happy growler Joel Helleny and inhumanly flexible trumpeter Dave Douglas; Ted Rosenthal is an idiomatic pianist for all situations; drummer Tony De Nicola, an alumnus of Harry James and Charlie Ventura, lays down an elemental big beat; guitarist Romero Lubambo and percussionist Kenny Wollesen entexture Cohen's lyric Latin-inflected "Salta Montes" and "For Mica." Cohen gets the Ellington essence on obscure gems "Way Low" and "Creole Rhapsody," while originals "B&W," "Lazurite" and "Beheading Your Way" bespeak intimacy with the maestro's tropes.

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bop tenor innovator Teddy Edwards, time-stretching pianist Gerald Wiggins and drum monster Donald Bailey. Probably it's the time constraint that keeps the band from truly meshing; the tunes are more vignette than short story, though not one performance is a throwaway.

The date is all about sound. Edwards projects a scen-it-all sour/sweet tenor voice and never-in-a-rush phrasing to great effect on Johnny Mandel's deep-emotion title track, Ray Noble's "The Touch Of Your Lips," Cohen's wistful "Severino," Tadd Dameron's rousing "Milt's Delight" and the Strayhorn meditation "Daydream." Wiggins chooses different strategies for each brief solo, taking unexpected turns on familiar routes; he has punchy trio features on "Blue Turning Grey" and "East Of The Sun," a tour de force of churning block chords. Bailey maneuvers the trapset with trademark ingenuity, while the leader uplifts resonantly with an impeccable beat and solos with melodic fervor.

—Ted Panken

Way Low: Way Low; B&W; Salta Montes; Lazurite; Creole Rhapsody; Beheading Your Way; Octaboo; So Sorry, Please; For Mica. (48:55)

Personnel: Greg Cohen, bass; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Joel Helleny, trombone; Scott Robinson, clarinet, flute, tenor sax, bass sax; Ted Rosenthal, piano; Romero Lubambo, guitar (3, 9); Tony De Nicola, drums; Kenny Wollesen, percussion (3, 9).

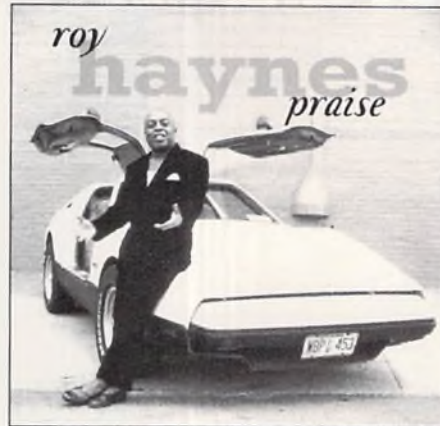
Moment To Moment: Dog Walk; Blue Turning Grey; Cracker Jack; The Touch Of Your Lips; Moment To Moment; Severino; East Of The Sun; Milt's Delight; Daydream; Darkness On The Delta. (49:06)

Personnel: Greg Cohen, bass; Teddy Edwards, tenor sax; Gerald Wiggins, piano; Donald Bailey, drums.

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Russell Malone

Sweet Georgia Peach

Impulse! 275

★★★½

Eschewing the razzle-dazzle attack in favor of a relaxed and ardent approach, Russell Malone delivers a satisfying collection that's part frolic, part romance and part heart-felt reflection. There's straightforward swing, catchy lyricism and top-notch ensemble interplay thanks to his superb bandmates, including pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Lewis Nash. Conspicuously absent are exclamations, sparks and surprises, which is in keeping with the guitarist's comfort zone of smooth-toned, blues-tinged playing. So while *Sweet Georgia Peach* won't thrust Malone to the head of the guitar class for daring and innovative performance, it wins him big points for pre-

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Malone pays loving homage to two of his heroes, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson and trumpeter Thad Jones, with gracefully swinging tunes. He offers the original "To Benny Golson" then covers Jones' "Mean What You Say," opening that number gently with Nash brushing the drums before pushing the tempo to a sweet lilt. Other uptempo originals include "Mugshot," with Malone sailing into single-note flights through sunny skies while Carter puts storm clouds on the horizon with his lightly menacing bass motif, and the title track, which cooks with the leader's rippling, blues-stung six-string cavort. The best of the hushed tunes include "Song For Darius," the quiet reverie celebrating the birth of his son, and a peaceful solo guitar meditation on the trad hymn "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

What's particularly impressive about *Sweet Georgia Peach* is the way Barron and Malone play off each other, especially on Carter's upbeat "For Toddlers Only" (which features strong solos around the horn). But it's best displayed on their duo romp through Thelonious Monk's "Bright Mississippi," where they dance together with slightly off-kilter Monk-ish glee. It's the highlight number of a pleasing CD.

—Dan Ouellette

Sweet Georgia Peach: Mugshot; To Benny Golson; Strange Little Smile/With You I'm Born Again; Sweet Georgia Peach; Rise; Mean What You Say; Song For Darius; Bright Mississippi; Someone's Rocking My Dreamboat; For Toddlers Only; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. (61:36)

Personnel: Russell Malone, guitar; Kenny Barron, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion (1,5).



Geri Allen
The Gathering
Verve 314 557 614

★★★½

Here's a concept album that, bucking the fashion of recent years, honors something besides a jazz legend. With her first Verve release, pianist Geri Allen celebrates treasures even nearer to her heart, namely family, motherhood and the spirits of deceased loved ones watching over us. Fleshing out the family theme, Allen dedicates three songs to her husband, Wallace Roney, and even enlists two of her children, little Wallace and Laila, for cameo appearances.

Crashing this musical family reunion, we get a first impression of Allen's kin as a rather serious lot, more inclined to bemoan the time Uncle Herman fell downstairs and broke his collarbone than to cheer on the Knicks over

brats and beer. Uncle Herman is my invention; the point is that *The Gathering* strikes a moody pose that initially made this guest want to slip out of the party unnoticed. But minding my table manners, I stuck it out, returned for several listens, and came to appreciate the charms of this crowd.

There are simple touches that work to great effect, like doubling the bass line on "Sleepin' Pretty" with Dwight Andrews' bass clarinet. There's rhythmic innovation in passages where Allen, drummer Lenny White and bassist Buster Williams play disparate figures that blend into a polyrhythmic whole. Then there's the structural sophistication of numbers like "Dark Prince." Like a story that begins in mid-stream, the song starts out at a full-throttle clip, then cuts to a sparser, staggered bass line; and out of nowhere, Allen cuts to a brightly inflected bridge. Then it's back to the "B" section and a hasty exit on an unexpected double-time bass trot. "Joy And Wonder" is another notable track for the way it gradually builds intensity from start to finish.

Guitarist Vernon Reid, alumnus of the late, great rock group Living Colour, adds a welcome dash of cross-pollination to the session. His heavily distorted solo on "Dark Prince" implies guidance from Sonny Sharrock's ghost and reveals a degree of introspection that one might not expect from a mere rock legend. Reid takes center stage on "Ray," a genre-defying masterpiece that bears many repeated listenings.

First there's promise, then delivery. Including the brief "Baby's Breath (For Little Barbara)" as an intro, "Ray" has three setups prior to the main act. There's a floating horn, vocal and percussion interlude; a peaceful piano, acoustic guitar and udu drum journey down a



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tropical stream; then a statement of the theme on Allen's a cappella piano. Reid's plucky acoustic guitar delivers the payoff, and what a payoff it is. "Ray" has an embracing melody that, in a fair world, would hold potential as a crossover hit. (Eric Clapton, eat your heart out.) Whoever "Ray" is, he must have the small-town values of Sheriff Andy Taylor and the charisma of Muhammad Ali.

Charisma—now that's a quality sometimes underrepresented among the jazz elite. It's nice to hear excellent musicians drop all pretensions as if to say, "Screw the cognoscenti; let's make a pretty song." While "Ray" offers immediate accessibility, other numbers creep up on the listener slowly. Yet there are a few elements holding this CD back. At times, it's the recording mix. Despite masterful playing, White's drums come off a bit loud, seemingly to the point of distortion on the first track, and Robin Eubanks' expressive trombone solo on "Gabriel's Royal Blue Reals" is disserved by a kind of piped-in sound quality.

These complaints are minor, though, and Allen deserves credit for an ambitious and imaginative project. Even if we tire of hearing about poor Uncle Herman and his collarbone, we can't help but acknowledge the artistry of the storyteller.

—John Janowiak

The Gathering: The Gathering; Dark Prince; Sleepin' Pretty; Light Matter; Baby's Breath (For Little Barbara); Ray; Soul Heir; Joy And Wonder; Gabriel's Royal Blue Reals; Daybreak And Dreams; Angels. (59:50)

Personnel: Geri Allen, piano; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Dwight Andrews, reeds; Vernon Reid, acoustic and electric guitar; Ralph Armstrong, seven-string bass; Buster Williams, bass; Lenny White, drums; Mino Cinelu, percussion.



Kermit Ruffins

The Barbecue Swingers Live
Basin Street Records 0101

★★½

A couple from, say, Toledo are on vacation in New Orleans, and they head over to Tipitina's for some down-home jazz. They hear Kermit Ruffins and the Barbecue Swingers, with Ruffins blowing big, bold tones on trumpet, accompanied by the dramatic smears and growls of trombonist Corey Henry. They delight in Ruffins' colorful stage patter, and they relish the chance to echo him when he hollers "hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-ho." They roar with the rest of the audience when, in "St. James Infirmary," he sings, "Whether she's upstairs or down below with the devil, she'll never find a sweet trumpet player like me!"

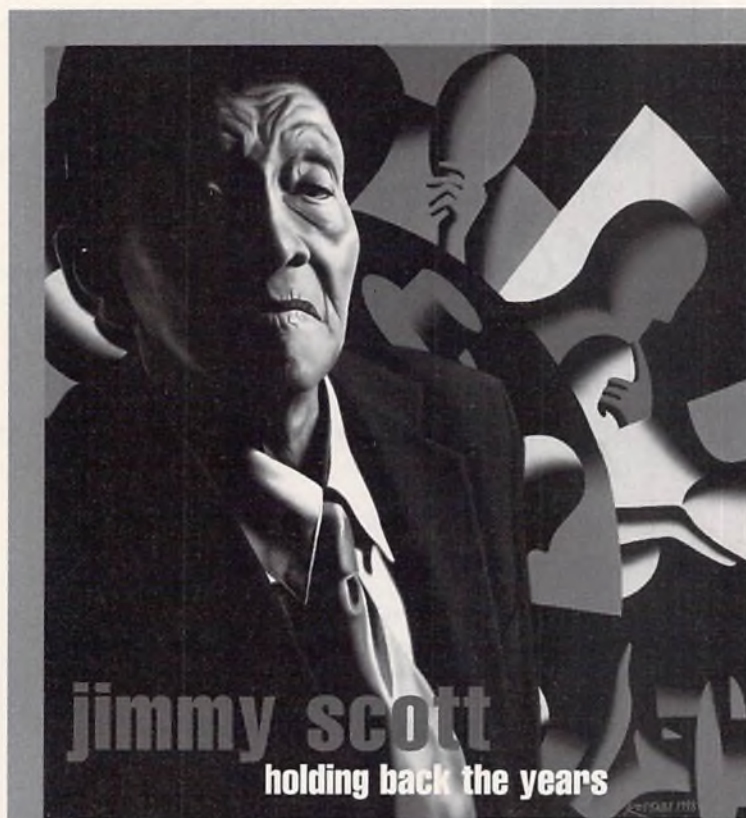
They get, in essence, exactly what they came for. The problem is, it's just not the same for us as it was for our friends from Toledo. Picturing ourselves in the live setting, it's easy to see the appeal of a song like "What Is New Orleans," a slow blues in which Ruffins says, "New Orleans is ..." and offers numerous descriptions like "grits with liver smothered in onion with brown gravy and two sunny-side-up eggs with a little biscuit on the side with cheese on top of the hash browns." OK, but when he says, "New Orleans is ..." and names, oh, seven different kinds of gumbo, I'm thinking maybe you had to be there.

The band's greatest asset is the boisterous horn section of Ruffins and Henry. Yet while their solos are full of crowd-pleasing personality, they aren't especially deep, and the rhythm section plods along behind them like a July day in the French Quarter. Ruffins embraces various forms, from brass-band music to r&b, but he doesn't combine them with any remarkable insight. Funkier funk and more rapturous rap have been put to CD before.

But pay no mind to a snob like me. That couple from Toledo are sitting in the front row—and enjoying every minute. —John Janowiak

The Barbecue Swingers Live: Introduction; Chicken And Dumplings; Interlude; Smokin' With Some Barbecue; St. James Infirmary; Interlude; Just Showin' Off; What Is New Orleans?; Do The Fat Tuesday; Peep This Groove Out; Killing Me Softly With His Song; Do Whatcha Wanna (The Final Chapter); The Star Spangled Banner. (70:54)

Personnel: Kermit Ruffins, vocals, trumpet; Corey Henry, trombone, raps; Kevin Morris, bass; Emile Vinette, piano; Jerry Anderson, drums.



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Trigonometry

by Jon Andrews

Bill Evans is often credited with advancing the model of a "conversational" piano trio in which all three players participate actively. No individual is relegated to passive timekeeping duties, and each player is challenged to interact on equal terms. That model has become popular, if not predominant, over the years, and it surely contributes to the enduring appeal of the piano trio today. Here's the pick of the current crop.

Paul Bley/Furio Di Castri/Tony Oxley: *Chaos* (Soul Note 12185; 59:24) ★★★★★ With Bley, a trio isn't always a trio. *Chaos* continues his strategy of presenting musicians in solo performances and various duet combinations, in addition to trio interactions. British drummer Oxley, who presents a burly, energetic approach to improvisation, still seems like a curious choice to work with Bley, who tends to precision. Oxley isn't much interested in delicacy and finesse. On four solo tracks, he uses gongs, chimes and wood blocks to evoke African and Balinese sounds. Within the trio, he rarely plays a pulse or keeps time, preferring to roam freely. Oxley's volatile, unpredictable drumming complements Bley's mood shifts and introspective turns very effectively. "Chaos" offers more structure than its name would imply. Bley's winding, wistful melody shapes the title track, leading the listener through ascending and descending passages, and against increasingly turbulent rhythms from Oxley and Di Castri. Bley's solo performance of "Turnham Bey" is expressive and melodic, but also tense, as it sets a yearning melody against a disquieting selection of chords.

Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette: *Tokyo '96* (ECM 78118-21666; 79:07) ★★★★★½ This trio sets the standard of performance for all others on the scene. Released to mark the group's 15th anniversary, *Tokyo '96* is their 12th recording as a unit. Beginning with a starry-eyed, rhapsodic treatment of "It Could Happen To You," it's an unusually joyful date. "I'll Remember April" takes on a festive, Caribbean atmosphere based on DeJohnette's multilayered, carnival grooves. The emphasis on rhythm continues as "Last Night When We Were Young" segues into Jarrett's "Caribbean Sky," which features infectious rhythms, with

Peacock's bassline hinting at reggae. Happily, Peacock's bass is more prominent than usual in the mix, and he takes several strong solos. When Jarrett negotiates a fragile melody like "Never Let Me Go," he displays uncanny timing and a sixth sense for hitting the optimal chord in just the right way at the most appropriate moment. The set closes with Jarrett drawing his glowing, uplifting "Song" out of the introspection of "My Funny Valentine." This trio's music works on all levels, cerebral, emotional and physical.

Ellis Marsalis Trio: *Twelve's It* (Columbia 69123; 76:29) ★★★★★½ *Twelve's It* features the Marsalis patriarch in a favored hometown venue, Snug Harbor, and in the company of

Jacky Terrasson Trio: *Alive* (Blue Note 59651; 60:30) ★★½ A charismatic, colorful performer, Terrasson shares Jarrett's interest in refurbishing familiar tunes. Drummer Leon Parker and bassist Ugona Okegwo complete this well-balanced, sometimes ferocious trio. Recorded at New York's Iridium in June 1997, *Alive* contains some dynamic, crowd-pleasing performances. Terrasson adeptly creates a sense of tension and high drama. Tony Williams' "Sister Cheryl" illustrates the approach, starting as a slow, spacious elegy for the late drummer, gradually building force as Terrasson deconstructs and embellishes the melody, and finally turning Parker loose for a tumultuous crescendo. "Cumba's Dance" develops out of Okegwo and Parker's solid groove, gaining momentum to reach a near-ecstatic level of intensity. Credit Terrasson for his willingness to take risks in performance. His arrangement of "Nature Boy" becomes an intriguing, ethereal exploration, as the pianist gradually introduces a new melody.

Brad Mehldau: *Songs* (Warner Bros. 47051; 59:33) ★★★★★ Though a relative newcomer, Mehldau has been able to keep his trio, which includes bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, intact through his "Art Of The Trio" series. The benefits of continuity are evident on *Songs*, his best, most distinctive work to date. Mehldau's diverse, interesting program mixes standards, originals and curious covers, linked by the pianist's ongoing interest in achieving a "singing" quality through his playing. He approaches the standards like "Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered" and his own "Song-Song" as a singer might, primarily as a means of expression and secondarily as a platform for improvisation. "Unrequited" summons up Mehldau's classical training for a rippling, beautiful tour de force suggestive of Chopin. Nick Drake's haunting "River Man" is an inspired choice, and Mehldau's trio plays it as a hypnotic groove and a springboard for the leader's inversions and inventions.



Keith Jarrett: setting the standard of piano-trio performance

TEFFI BELLOMI

his youngest son, Jason, who played drums and produced the date. In this comfortable setting, the pianist invests originals like the Strayhorn-esque "Orchid Blue" and chestnuts such as "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" with a light touch, romantic flourishes and considerable warmth, as he makes use of wry quotes and melodic twists. *Twelve's It* seems intended as a coming-out party for Jason Marsalis. He enjoys a central role on this CD, turning in a steady, sometimes stirring performance. Alvin Batiste's "Mozartin" is a highlight of the show, and one of several drum features. Owing much more to Ray Charles than to Mozart, the piece benefits from the senior Marsalis' r&b licks and from the younger man's drum rolls and strutting New Orleans rhythms.

Steve Kuhn: *Dedication* (Reservoir 154; 58:55) ★★½ Kuhn has more good records out-of-print (including his encounters with Sheila Jordan) than most pianists will ever record. In a trio format, he's a consistently engaging, colorful player whose left hand steadily supplies interesting chords. Kuhn wrote just two of the tunes that make up *Dedication*, and the CD might have benefited from the addition of a few more. His composition "The Zoo" is a highlight of the date, a mesmerizing theme on which bassist David Finck and drummer Billy Drummond get extensive solo space. Kuhn approaches the ballads "I Waited For You" and "For Heaven's Sake" with a sensitive touch and an introspective frame of mind. Steve Swallow also contributes two compositions to this session. **DB**

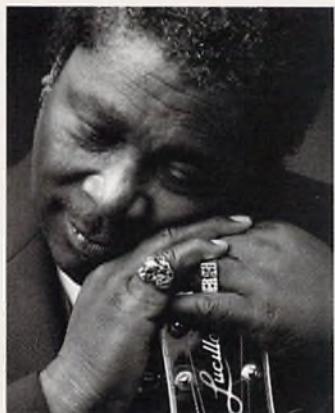
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BLUES

Swing & Things

by Frank-John Hadley

Some of today's best blues comes from men and women who are overlooked and undervalued for one reason or another. The following musicians give us more than a few flashes of authentic bluesy feeling.

Roy Gaines: *Bluesman For Life* (JSP 2110; 42:42) ★★★★★ After decades as a sideman for everyone from Little Richard to Buddy Guy, Gaines finally draws attention to himself by using his expressive powers to tell his own stories. An unbowed advocate of Texas/West Coast blues, he plays sustained or choppy guitar lines with swinging authority and grace; his wry, warm voice shows he has unerring instinct for phrasing and a knack for getting straight to the emotive meaning of words. In the L.A. studio, Gaines communicates well with two saxophonists and a rhythm section who radiate an earnest vitality as they create deep washes of color. One and all shift knowingly from the celebratory mood of "Lulu Mae" to the downheartedness of "You're Gonna Wish I Had Stayed" to the salacity of "Sweet Pig Porker." Eight more songs (perhaps written by Gaines—not clear on the CD) are keepers. There hasn't been a "comeback" album this good since Mighty Sam McClain's *Give It Up To Love* in 1993.

Darrell Nulisch: *The Whole Truth* (Severn 0003; 48:26) ★★★★★ At home on a small Maryland-based indie label, Nulisch draws a variety of quietly intense emotions from as appetizing a program of originals and covers as a soul-blues singer could ever hope for. He endorses staying true to oneself despite adversity on his heavenly rendition of Roy C's "There Goes That Train" (incorrectly listed as "Leaving On The Morning 'Train") and his tenor imbues "There's A Sad Story Here," a Smokey Robinson tune, with measured melancholy and easygoing grace. Nulisch brings warmth, intimacy and intensity to his plea for love called "Like Reed"—just one of six intelligent, open-hearted songs he and bass player Steve Gomes wrote for the record date. The co-founder of Anson Funderburgh & The Rockets plays fine harmonica on several tracks, too. Whether singing or drawing bent tones from his Marine Band, Nulisch

stays in perfect sync with Gomes, the D.C. Horns and the other poised, thoughtful musicians on this memorable album. (Can't find? Call Severn Records at (410) 923-0593.)

Steve Lucky and the Rhumba Bums: *Come Out Swinging!* (Rumpus 65902; 49:05) ★★★★★ What sets these San Franciscans apart from almost all the other so-called neo-swing bands is their superior musicianship and the impression they give of truly caring for '40s and '50s boogie, blues, r&b and jazz. Lucky makes a splendid front man, singing and playing piano as if Roosevelt Sykes or Amos Milburn were channeling through him.



Steve Lucky and the Rhumba Bums: superior musicianship

Every bit as righteous is Miss Carmen Getit, who breaks it up on vocals and jazzy guitar. The pair's vibrant contributions and those of superlative sax players Pee Wee Magee (Peter Cornell), Ben Whalen (Rob Sudduth) and Jules Broussard mesh with the rhythm section in creating a jubilant ensemble sound, one where dynamics and subtle shadings are important. Revivals of Louis Jordan's "Daddy-O" and T-Bone Walker's "Bye Bye Baby" thoughtfully combine flamboyance and refinement, while new tunes like "Play It Cool" and "Jumptown" encourage fancy dance moves without forcing an atmosphere of nostalgia on us. (The one throwaway is "Do The Pup.") The Rhumba Bums seem to abide by Cab Calloway's advice: "Live what's in your

soul and sing your friggin' heart out."

The Love Dogs: *Heavy Petting* (Tone-Cool 1168; 49:39) ★★★½ Like the Rhumba Bums, Boston's Love Dogs have an inclusionary sensibility that celebrates time-honored black r&b and its related musics. Singer Ed Scheer guides his six-piece band and "special canine guests" (all told, six sax players) through an entertaining program of originals and lesser-known joint jumpers like Chuck Willis' "Wrong Lake To Catch A Fish" and Ray Charles' "Roll With My Baby." This is a change-of-pace from the carefully organized merriment as Scheer and his r&b hounds prove they are more

than ready to slip their leash and put the big bite on Blues America.

Deborah Coleman: *Where Blue Begins* (Blind Pig 5048; 42:02) ★★½ On her sophomore outing, Coleman takes a spill. The convictive power of her singing and her guitar playing is beyond reproach, but here she moves away from subtlety, finesse, sensitivity and creativity to join in the testosterone-driven grandstanding of the James Solberg Band. Good originals like "Do You Want My Love?" and "Love Moves Me" would speak more clearly and eloquently in a cooler blues climate. Coleman has too much going for her to become just another fire-breathing entertainer on the blues-bar circuit. **DB**

BEYOND

Purple Hazes

by Frank-John Hadley

The best rock and roll of the late '60s and early '70s had an idealistic spirit, the power to foster a sense of anti-Establishment community, regardless of campus violence, race riots, assassinations, Charles Manson, Vietnam and bad acid. Today, the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin get trivialized under the corporate banner of "classic rock"; only by paying close attention to the music can you get some idea of the Flower Power generation's youthful innocence, provocation, flippancy, alienation or bliss.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience: *BBC Sessions* (MCA/Experience Hendrix 11742; 57:16/50:23) ★★★★★ ½

The century's supreme rock guitarist has serious fun on 31 songs performed in the friendly confines of BBC radio and TV studios between January 1967 and February 1969, almost exactly the life span of his power trio with drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding. Repertory staples "Fire," "Foxy Lady" and "Purple Haze," among others, get pushed to the outer limits quickly and excitedly. But of special value are rare live expositions of "Love And Confusion" and "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp," where Hendrix creates the sonic equivalent of aurora borealis, a show of dancing lights with charged particles from his Stratocaster colliding spectacularly with rumbling bass notes and thunderous drum patterns. Extra special, too, are what the guitar god himself calls "freaky blues": Three versions of "Drivin' South" explode in extemporaneous homage to blues mentor Albert Collins, and "Voodoo Child," to name one more, spills over with startling, futuristic blues ideas. During the course of nearly two hours, Hendrix indulges a taste for flash over musical coherency just a few times—two aimless jams with drummer Stevie Wonder rate as throwaways.

Janis Joplin With Big Brother And The Holding Company: *Live At Woodland 1968* (Legacy 64869; 76:00) ★★★★★ ½ Some old-timers swear that Joplin was in stronger voice in the early '60s as a teenager working with a Texas bluegrass group than she was as a rock superstar who'd ascended to the heights at the '67 Monterey Pop Festival. That's hard to imagine because Joplin's big, rugged, raucous voice, with vulnerability at its root, is nothing less than astounding on a San Francisco gig in '68 just recently resurrected as a live album after a 30-year delay. She pours herself into "Piece Of My Heart," "Ball And Chain," two versions of "Down On Me" and several little-

remembered yet good songs as BB&THC, with Sam Andrew's distorted guitar in the lead, plays raw, blues-drenched "acid rock" that points out how important they were in triggering the singer's acute feelings of pain at the frustrations of a ruthless world.

Jefferson Airplane: *Live At The Fillmore East* (RCA 07863 67563; 76:29) ★★★★★ ½ Bill Graham's hallowed NYC rock hall shook to the trippy sounds of the archetypal Haight-Ashbury/San Francisco hippie band for two nights in mid-'68, and we're now privy to the happenings thanks to the CD release of newly unearthed tapes. Though band members were tugging the musical direction every which way and leadership of the Airplane was up in the air, founder-singer Marty Balin's psychedelic vision dovetails with that of singer Grace Slick and guitarist Paul Kantner on songs



Jimi Hendrix Experience: the sonic equivalent of aurora borealis

from their first three LPs, including an appropriately peculiar reading of their AM radio hit "White Rabbit" and a funk-ed-up take on the folk tune "The Other Side Of This Life." The Airplane's music sounds dated here in spots, but the harmony singing has a timelessly ethereal quality and the musicians, notably lead guitarist Jorma Kaukonen and former jazz drummer Spencer Dryden, take chances while providing muscle, as during the 11-minute-plus "Thing."

The Byrds: *(Untitled)* (Mobile Fidelity 722; 71:33) ★★★★★ ½ Just before they lost their way forever, Roger McGuinn's Byrds made a partially enjoyable double-record set that was divided between studio and live tracks. The California longhairs heat up two New York auditoriums full of college kids with tidy arrangements of "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Mr. Spaceman" and other signature songs before unleashing an exciting, jazzy 16-minute-long "Eight Miles High." Unfortunately, the country-flavored studio

sides are a mixed bag: "Chestnut Mare" and "Just A Season" stand the test of time, but the remaining seven songs are a collective yawn, unlistenable despite the late Clarence White's excellent guitar playing.

The Sir Douglas Quintet: *Live Texas Tornado* (Takoma 6505; 35:33) ★★★★★ ½ Doug Sahm is as much a part of Texas as the Alamo, Bible colleges, mesquite and juniper brush. In fact, there may not be a more passionate and entertaining advocate of local sounds than this San Antonio-bred singer and guitarist. In Austin's Club Foot or L.A.'s the Whiskey, Sahm and his regular sidekicks, plus guest singer-fiddler Alvin Crow and guitarist Louis Ortega, swagger with great pleasure and conviction on Tex-Mex pop hits (Sam the Sham's "Woolly Bully," their own "She's About A Mover"), conjunto rock and roll ("Who Were You Thinking Of?"), nods to Bob Dylan ("Just

Like Tom Thumb's Blues") and Lubbock's Buddy Holly ("Oh, Boy!), and on Lone Star state-style blues ("I-Bone Shuffle") and country ("San Antone"). Dig Augie Meyers' sublime discotheque-meets-honky-tonk organ on a version of "Mendocino," the band's loopy psychedelic hit from '69.

The Kinks: *Everybody's In Show-biz* (Velvet/Konk 63467 79720; 74:31) ★★★★★ ½ Bored with touring as a rock star, Ray Davies wrote wickedly witty songs like "Maximum Consumption" and "Look A Little On The Sunnyside," along with the lovely "Celluloid Heroes," for this 1972 two-record set, which has studio recordings alongside tracks from a memorable Carnegie Hall performance. (Two live tracks surface on CD.) There's a veddy, veddy British slant to the Kinks' generally well-played rock, its music-hall theatricality buoyed by Mike Cotton's trad-jazz horn section, and American rock fans of the time smiled on the Kinks as eccentric counterculture friends from across the pond. **DB**

REISSUES

Mobleymania

by Zan Stewart

Hankenstein ... he was so-o-o-o-o hip!" Those words, from fellow tenor giant Dexter Gordon, basically sum up how musicians felt about **Hank Mobley**, the extraordinarily gifted, still underrecognized artist whose career included associations with such greats as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Horace Silver. Ironically, Mobley, who was active from the late-'40s until the mid-'70s (he died in 1986), was better known as a sideman than a leader, despite 30 albums under his name, 25 for Blue Note.

The Complete Hank Mobley Blue Note Sessions (Mosaic MD-6 181; 6:41:53) ★★★★★ A must-have for fans of this era, this six-disc set includes some of this master's choicest recordings played by a superb collective personnel. Two albums were formerly available only in Japan; additionally, there are nine alternate cuts (one previously unissued).

From the first track, Mobley reveals the remarkable attributes that would forever mark and evolve in his work: a firm yet not overly demonstrative tone, an exultant swing feel, a keen ear for the juicy notes, a blues affinity, a forward-looking harmonic approach and a broad-ranging and alluring compositional stance—he wrote 41 of the 56 selections. In other words, a consummate, individualistic jazzman in the hard-bop mode.

The set kicks off with Mobley's 1955 debut, *The Hank Mobley Quartet*, with Silver, bassist Doug Watkins and Art Blakey on hand. Both "Hank's Prank," based on "Rhythm" changes, and "Avila And Tequila," with its Latin twist, are speeders. Mobley, then 24, exhibits customary dexterity and invention. "My Sin" is a telling ballad, a form where Mobley never faltered.

Next is the late-1956 session known as *The Hank Mobley Sextet*. Here, trumpeters Lee Morgan and Donald Byrd join Silver, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Charlie Persip. Mobley's sound now has less edge (he'd switched from a metal to hard-rubber mouthpiece), but his capacity for streams of stunning ideas is unchanged. The breakneck "Touch And Go" proves this; so does the medium groover "Double Whammy." Silver again offers his succulent yet pithy Bud Powell-influenced lines, and Byrd and Morgan, flinging phrases at each other, light fires as well.

From January 1957 comes the quintet date with vibes giant Milt Jackson, *Hank Mobley And His All Stars*. The same rhythm team as *Quartet* is on board. The leader navigates the changes of the brisk "Reunion" and "Don't Walk" with grace; he is heartfelt on the lovely "Mobley's Musings" and relaxed on "Ultramarine." Jackson is his commandingly boppish self, dropping in long, measured strands of swinging stuff.

The Hank Mobley Quintet, with trumpeter Art Farmer and the prior date's rhythm section, was made the following March. Highlights include "Funk In Deep Freeze," a classic medium smoker, the jack-rabbit "Startin' From Scratch," where the horns gleefully exchange volleys, and yet another sublime Mobley ballad, "Fin De L'Affaire." Farmer, a magician like the leader, takes simple ideas and transforms them into small miracles.

For *Hank*, recorded in April 1957, altoist John Jenkins, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Wilbur Ware, drummer Philly Joe Jones and Byrd round out the squad; the three-horn frontline is a pleasing timbral shift. Among the gems: Mobley spinning a few notes like twirlers, then lengthening his lines on "Hi

ing wonderful snippets into stunning whole cloth. "My Reverie" is the winsome ballad.

Then we have *Poppin'*, an October 1957 session with horn heft in the persons of baritonist Pepper Adams, Farmer and Mobley. Clark, Chambers and Jones encore. Adams' enthusiastic churning fits well against the lighter bite of Farmer. Tempos are up for the title track and "Gettin' Into Something," the solos replete with ear-pleasing, rhythmically dynamic lines, not technical displays. Everybody gets a taste on "Darn That Dream," and the album concludes with the haunting, almost melancholy "East Of Brooklyn."

The set closes with *Peckin' Time*, from February 1958. (Notice that each of these



Hankenstein: "so-o-o-o-o hip!"

Groove, Low Feedback"; Jenkins' Bird-rich style crackling on "Dance Of The Infidels"; Philly Joe's cheerful abandon.

Then comes another six-piece affair: *Hank Mobley*, a June 1957 session with saxophonist Curtis Porter (alto, tenor), trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Sonny Clark, Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. Porter and Mobley both issue breathy tones all around, but the former's brightness and edge to his lines makes for contrast. Hardman can sizzle, then be demure. The crisp "Double Exposure" and Porter's bouncy "News" are among the winners.

Next up are the two excellent 1957 dates issued first in Japan. The August session, *Curtain Call*, has some cast: trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Clark, bassist Jimmy Rowser and Taylor. "Don't Get Too Hip" is a medium blues with an infectious, plain-jane theme; Clark is magisterial and funky, whether in tempo or doubling up. "The Mobe" is a 32-bar "Rhythm" variant with a different bridge; here Dorham and the leader are grandly imaginative, weav-

timeless sessions was a one-day affair.) Here, Mobley is reunited with soon-to-be Blakey bandmate Morgan, as well as past partners Persip and Chambers. Wynton Kelly, who went on to play with Mobley in Miles Davis' early '60s group, is on piano. Snap-crackle assessments are given "Speak Low," the zippy "High And Flighty" and the perky title track. Sparks are provided by Kelly's wonderful rhythmic agility, Morgan's now fully formed sound and Mobley's fluid drive.

Bob Blumenthal wrote the informative liner notes. The set is available by mail from Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902. Call (203) 327-7111. **BB**

Original Down Beat ratings:

- *The Hank Mobley Quartet*: ★★★ (11/30/55)
- *The Hank Mobley Sextet*: ★★★★★ (5/2/57)
- *Hank Mobley And His All Stars*: ★★½ (6/13/57)
- *Hank*: ★★★★★ (5/1/58)

BLINDFOLD TEST

DECEMBER 1998

Jason Marsalis

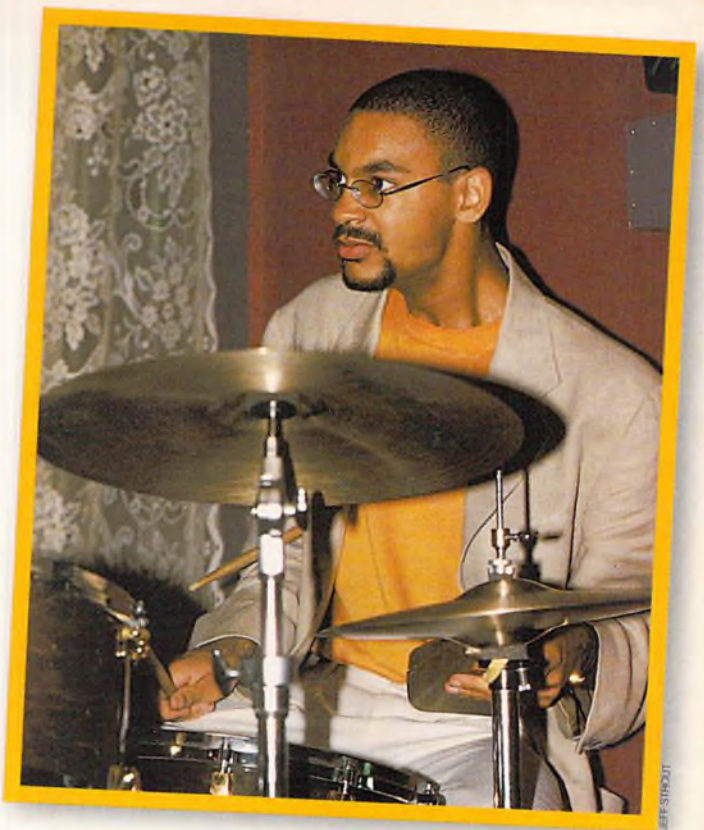
by Jonathan Tabak

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.

Removing a James Brown box set from his CD player, Jason Marsalis laughs, "As you can see, the myth about the Marsalis purism is pure nonsense."

The fourth son to emerge from the distinguished jazz family, Jason, 21, stands as one of jazz's most promising young drummers. On his father Ellis' recent trio record, *Twelve's It* (Columbia), Jason's virtuosity shines in melodic nuance and inventive intensity. He contributes to the Brazilian percussion group Casa Samba, the fusion outfit Neslort and Los Hombres Calientes, the Afro-Cuban/world jazz group. His self-produced debut is just out on Basin Street Records.

Jason took his first Blindfold Test at the Marsalis family's modest New Orleans home, where he still lives.



Clifford Brown and Max Roach

"What Is This Thing Called Love" (from *Clifford Brown And Max Roach At Basin Street*, Emarcy, 1990/rec. 1956) Brown, trumpet; Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone; Richie Powell, piano; George Morrow, bass; Roach, drums.

That's *Clifford Brown And Max Roach At Basin Street*, "What Is This Thing Called Love." These are the records that really codify Max Roach's style. There's other records that he's done with people like Bird and Monk where he's killin' too, but these are the records! Whenever I talk to drummers about Max Roach, the first thing that pops up is Clifford Brown and Max Roach. The drum sound is clear. The form is clear. He's just one of the masters. This is the stuff that I grew up with and learned from. In fact, I've got to polish up on this, because I don't really know this solo note for note. 5 stars.

Brian Blade

"Folklore" (from *Brian Blade Fellowship*, Blue Note, 1998) Blade, drums; Jon Cowherd, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Melvin Butler, tenor saxophone; Myron Walden, alto saxophone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Dave Easley, pedal steel guitar.

I've been thinking a lot about this album lately. Brian Blade has a wonderful drum sound, real beautiful, real pure. When I first heard this record, though, it took me aback a little, because it's real different. The music is really influenced a lot by Joni Mitchell, but they're trying to combine that with jazz. I give it 3 1/2. As far as Blade's playing, 5 stars, but as far as the conception of the record, I'm not sure yet.

Machito and his Orchestra

"Desert Dance" (from *More Than Mambo: The Introduction To Afro-Cuban Jazz*, Verve, 1995/rec. 1949).

This is definitely an old Latin band, because they have that realness about their sound. I guess this is their representation of East Indian culture, with the intervals. The Latin percussion is hooked up, anyway. A nice arrangement, too. This is groovin', man. Those cats from Cuba, they can hook up some grooves, boy! This gets 5 stars. I'm going to guess early Tito Puente, maybe Machito's band.

Baby Dodds

"Tiger Rag" (from *Baby Dodds*, American Music, 1993/rec. 1944) Dodds, drums; Bunk Johnson, trumpet; George Lewis, clarinet; Jim Robinson, trombone; Lawrence Marrero, banjo; Alcide Pavageau, bass.

When it gets to stuff like this, I just rate it 5 stars mainly because it's the source. I was thinking Baby Dodds at first, and if it's not him, maybe Paul Barbarin. It's Dodds? Yeah, he's like the first cat, the Louis Armstrong of the drums. And there's a lot of things in his playing that a lot of drummers don't investigate. This music can be used in different ways. There was this commercial I heard, and I swear, it was trumpet, clarinet and trombone playing authentic trad music over a techno beat. And it worked! That's what people need to be doing, using the trad in different ways.

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers

"Cheryl" (from *Album Of The Year*, Bellaphon, 1982) Blakey, drums; Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; James Williams, piano; Robert Watson, alto sax; Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Charles Fambrough, bass.

Blakey. Late Blakey. I think I know this compilation, where they start off with two tunes from the *Oh, By The Way* album, and then the rest of it has *Album Of The Year*. The playing was OK, but the intent was 5 stars: Here's some young cats, they weren't that great yet, but they were really trying to get to something. The playing was about 3 stars. This is early Wynton when he was raw, and his sound wasn't really developed to where it is now.

Ed Blackwell

"Fourth Month" (from *Boogie Live*, AFD, 1994/rec. 1958) Blackwell, drums; Dr. Alvin Batiste, clarinet; Nat Parrilliat, saxophone; Ellis Marsalis, piano; Otis Deverney, bass.

That's that *Boogie Live* thing. It's funny, that does sound like "E," but it's his earlier playing. 4 stars. One thing that I like about Ed Blackwell is the clarity of sound. He was influenced by Max Roach when it came to the solo, and on forms, but he was also influenced by African percussion. He would take, say, the New Orleans second-line, and use it in a different way. **DB**