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Brian Setzer

New Swing King

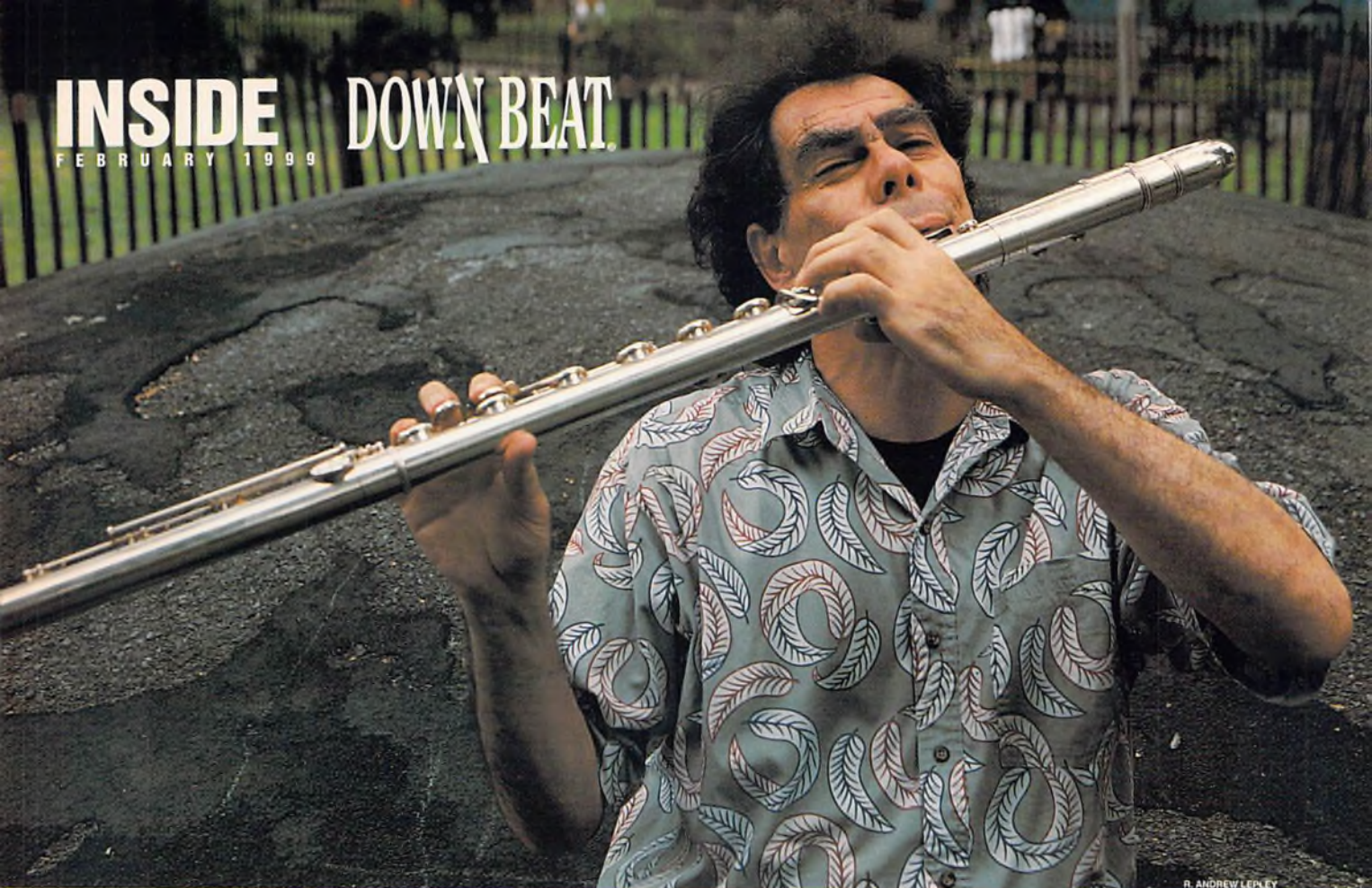
CLASSIC INTERVIEW:

Jimmy Knepper

BLINDFOLD TEST:

Nick Brignola





R. ANDREW LEFLEY

40 Robert Dick

20 Brian Setzer *New Swing King*

A veteran of no one's big band but his own, former Stray Cat Brian Setzer reigns as the new King of Swing.

By Ed Enright
Cover photograph by Neal Preston

28 Jazz Goes Pop
By Dave Helland

FEATURES

30 Paquito D'Rivera
Paquito's Passions
By Jim Macnie

34 Bobby Previte
Assimilation Man
By Ted Panken

40 Robert Dick
The Outer Limits
By Howard Mandel

44 Classic Interview:
Jimmy Knepper: A Rare Bird
By Lee Jeske

48 Tradin' Fours:
Steve Bernstein
David Soldier
Buster Williams
Phish

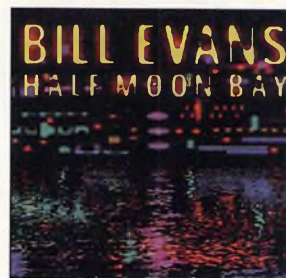
76 Down Beat Gallery:
Bill Gottlieb's 52nd Street

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 On The Beat
- 10 Chords & Discords
- 12 Riffs
- 50 CD Reviews
- 66 Caught
- 68 Woodshed
- 72 Jazz On Campus
- 78 Blindfold Test



50 Herbie Hancock



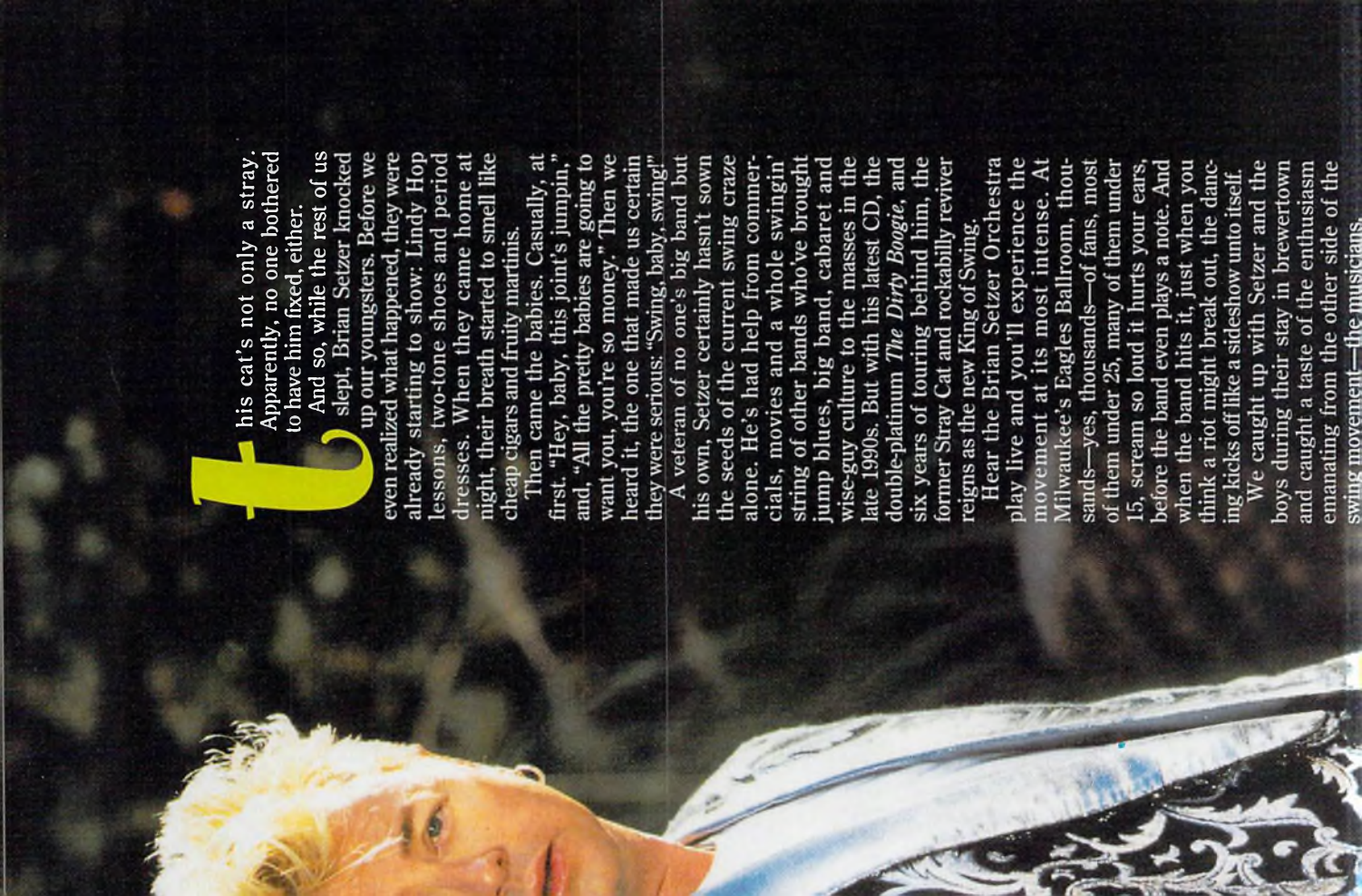
Bill Evans



David Binney

New Swings King





his cat's not only a stray. Apparently, no one bothered to have him fixed, either.

And so, while the rest of us slept, Brian Setzer knocked up our youngsters. Before we even realized what happened, they were already starting to show: Lindy Hop lessons, two-tone shoes and period dresses. When they came home at night, their breath started to smell like cheap cigars and fruity martinis.

Then came the babies. Casually, at first. "Hey, baby, this joint's jumpin," and, "All the pretty babies are going to want you, you're so money." Then we heard it, the one that made us certain they were serious: "Swing, baby, swing!"

A veteran of no one's big band but his own, Setzer certainly hasn't sown the seeds of the current swing craze alone. He's had help from commercials, movies and a whole swingin' string of other bands who've brought jump blues, big band, cabaret and wise-guy culture to the masses in the late 1990s. But with his latest CD, the double-platinum *The Dirty Boogie*, and six years of touring behind him, the former Stray Cat and rockabilly revivaler reigns as the new King of Swing.

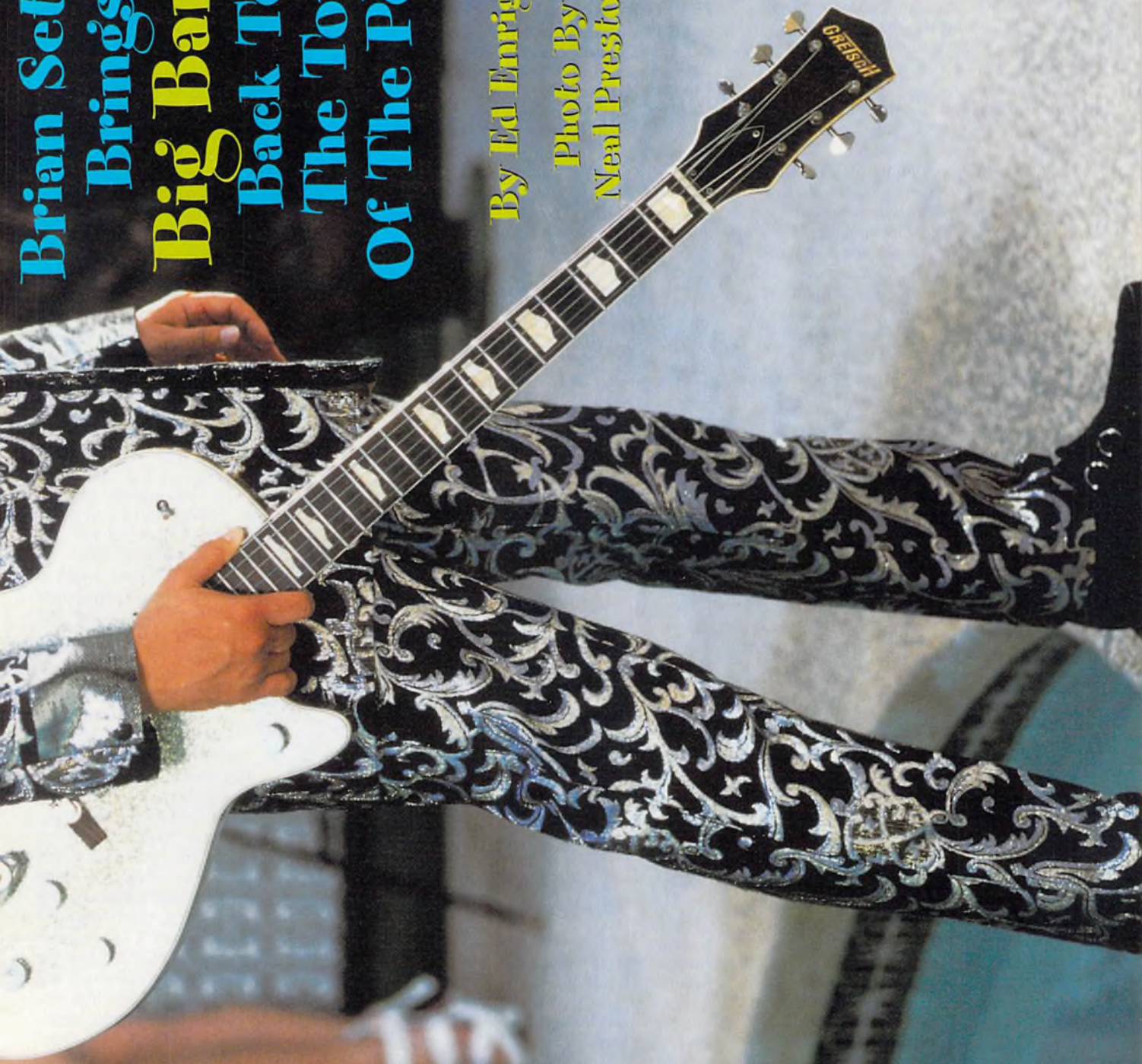
Hear the Brian Setzer Orchestra play live and you'll experience the movement at its most intense. At Milwaukee's Eagles Ballroom, thousands—yes, thousands—of fans, most of them under 25, many of them under 15, scream so loud it hurts your ears, before the band even plays a note. And when the band hits it, just when you think a riot might break out, the dancing kicks off like a sideshow unto itself.

We caught up with Setzer and the boys during their stay in brewertown and caught a taste of the enthusiasm emanating from the other side of the swing movement—the musicians.

**Brian Setzer
Brings
Big Band
Back To
The Top
Of The Pops**

By Ed Enright

**Photo By
Neal Preston**



“I think anything that gets across to the masses, that’s real—because swing music is REAL—is a step forward.”

ED ENRIGHT: You’ve done three CDs and a significant amount of touring in the six years you’ve been leading a big band. Has playing with the big band made you a better musician?

BRIAN SETZER: It has. I’ve had to be more aware of jazz chords, what’s flying by in that band. It’s big-league stuff. When the band’s hitting a G-minor 7 flat 5, I can’t just rock out over that. You’ve gotta play what’s flying by. You’ve got to be more aware than with a rock & roll band.

EE: Do you think that the swing movement is a step forward for popular music, or a step backward?

BS: I think anything that gets across to the masses, that’s real—because swing music is real—is a step forward. I think the mistake a lot of the bands are making is that they’re playing it too close to the cuff. In other words, there’s an overall lack of imagination, in that they’re playing it exactly how it was 60 years ago. I think whenever you do something like this, you’ve gotta do something new with it. I took my guitar playing and put it in front of a big band. I don’t think there’s ever been a guitar player leading a big band. That in itself is going to make it unique. And just the way we write charts and the way that I play has made it unique. What a lot of the bands are doing are just covering the old songs exactly as they were and trying to make it sound exactly as it was. Now that’s good; I love going out and hearing bands do Louis Jordan or Louis Prima, but I don’t think they’re doing anything new with it. The bands have to put their own stamp on it a little more.

EE: Do you think this movement is good for jazz? A step forward or a step backward?

BS: I’m sure there are jazz purists out there who think this is an atrocity. You’ll never be pure enough for the purists. But I play for myself. If you can get people interested in real music like this, how could that be bad? I never thought it would get to this level, where trombone players are cool. Kids come up—my son’s 11—“Guess what, Mr. Setzer? I play trombone in my school band, and I’m going to start a swing band! Everybody wants me to play in their band!” It’s probably been 50 years since that kid has been cool, you know? They’re at the top of the pops now.

EE: Are you able to put into words what it is about a big band that you like so much?

BS: It makes me feel like a king! [laughs] I’m certainly not the only one with a big band, but I’m probably the most accessible one. When I see 15-year-old kids out there, their jaws hit the floor. It’s musical, it’s powerful. I think what I do with it is make it more accessible for young people. It’s a real one-two punch: My guitar playing with that big band. The audience doesn’t have a chance! [laughs]

I’m really looking forward to playing



Europe. We’re just starting to break in Europe. I’m just waiting to see a whole new bunch of people there. I want to see it happen again. It’s exciting for me to go to a place like Berlin, where they’ve never seen this. We’ve been to Europe, but it was ’93 and they really weren’t ready for it. Now they want it. It’s exciting. On this tour, we’ve been to all new places and nobody had ever seen it. Like in Erie, Pa., and Toledo, Ohio—small towns.

EE: Can you believe the audiences in these places?

BS: I can’t believe it. They’re like from 15 to 80 years old. Everyone is there. Tonight’s almost sold out to 4,000 people.

EE: What do you think that says about the marketplace for this kind of music?

BS: It says to me that the music is the real

deal. It also shows me that it’s valid, being that radio and MTV and all of that stuff didn’t start playing this record until four months ago. It’s all new. And yet I’ve built a following just by word of mouth. We were already doing some big places. That shows me that it’s real music and that people react to something real.

EE: How many stops on this current tour?

BS: It started in October. Now we’ve got it going until January 10.

EE: And you’re not stopping more than a day, anywhere, are you?

BS: No, that’s been one drawback. It’s been a double-edged sword. We have to do five or six shows in a row, because if we take a day off, we lose \$20,000. It’s a big, big thing. A lot of the boys like it. Tim Misica, our tenor sax soloist, told me, “You know something? I wouldn’t mind playing seven nights a week with this band.” I say, “Let’s do six! Give me one night to rest my voice!” But I’m a worker. I like playing five, six nights a week.

EE: Who are some of the guys who have been with you since the start of this project?

BS: Don Roberts on bari sax, he’s been with me since the very first show. We call him “Big Daddy.” Bernie Dresel, the drummer, has been with me since the first year, the very first couple of gigs. George McMullen, trombone player. Robbie Hioki, bass trombone player. Kevin Norton and Charlie Biggs have been with me a long time on trumpet. The sax section is pretty solid now. Tim Misica, the lead tenor player, he’s been with me a long time—

not since the very beginning, but for maybe four years. And Ray Herman, my lead alto player. I couldn’t get him this tour because somebody’s paying him a lot of money, and I said, “You go, boy!” He’ll be back next week. He went away for the summer and the fall. Some French cat is paying him a shitload of money. He’s a permanent member of the band. I moved Rick Rossi over to the lead alto chair, and we got another guy to fill in, Norm Fisher, for the second chair.

EE: Do the guys do a lot more blowing in the live shows than on CD? Or do you stay true to your recorded versions?

BS: I have different songs where I let them blow, and I change the songs a lot. We do “Let The Good Times Roll,” a Ray

Charles kind of version, and I give all the boys a turn. I believe on an album, it's about the song. Even down to the extent of my soloing, I think if the song warrants it, it should be there. But I don't believe in a lot of wanky soloing just for the sake of it. I've got alternative live versions where the guys get a chance to spread their wings a little bit.

I should talk about two new guys in the band who have really turned the band around. Mark W. Winchester, a slap bass player, has brought the band to a whole new level, having that slap bass. That's a whole new thing, again, that's never been done, I don't think. Someone told me that Milt Hinton played slap bass with Cab Calloway, but I never heard it on those old records. It just makes the band jump, having that slap rather than just plucking it. I've got a 23-year-old trumpet player named Willie Murillo who's really spiced up the band. His heroes are Roy Eldridge and Sam Butera. Those are the kind of players I'm looking for.

EE: For someone who's known as a rock vocalist and guitarist, are there any challenges when it comes to communicating with these horn players who come from jazz backgrounds?

BS: There used to be. I used to say, "Can't you make that trumpet sound like Louis Armstrong? That 'waaa-aaaa-aaah.'" The guys just didn't get it. Maybe they didn't know, or a combination of they didn't want to do that, or couldn't do that. The same with sax players. I wanted a guy who could play like Sam Butera. A lot of guys don't get that. Now the guys get it. Of course, now people want to play in this band. I have the loyal guys who stuck by me and have played in the band since when I couldn't get players. Now people get the vibe, I think because the whole swing thing took off so big. They get that sound I'm looking for. The Sam Butera, the Roy Eldridge. And the rock & roll vibe had to happen. I think being on the road made them become more of a rock & roll big band. Even though, let's face it, there are tons of jazz elements. But the overall vibe is rock & roll. And you can't describe that to someone. How do I get these guys to rock more? I can't tell them how to do it; they have to do it. And that came from touring and being in front of a live, wild crowd. They got it.

EE: On your big band CDs, everything sounds so tight. Do you attribute that to the musicianship of these guys, or does it actually have to do with the time you put into the production?

BS: It's not just one particular thing. The level of musicianship is real high in this band. They can play with anyone, and they have. I think Sinatra was trying to get Bernie! I know a lot of the guys played with top jazz cats. That in itself is going to make the band a play at a higher level. That's one aspect. B, a lot of it is in the chart writing. If the charts

aren't right, if the voicings aren't right, the band doesn't work. Another big part of it is touring. It's all about the nuances. The guys know what's coming up, and they might feel freer in their solos. They know when to bring it down really low, or bring it up, dynamics. That comes live. That comes after playing on the road.

EE: How did you record this band in the studio? Did you do it all live? Did you overdub?

BS: The best way to record this band was the last way we did it. We recorded the rhythm section and my guitar live. I didn't even go back and put solos on it or redo it. I just played. When I tried to go

back and redo it, it wasn't better. This band is about capturing that live feel. And I've realized this album that I have to be right on top of Bernie, the drummer. We feed off each other. No walls, no nothing. My amp's blastin', Bernie's playin', and I'm rippin' 'em. We fed each other. It just flowed. We basically cut the album, the rhythm section, in three or four days. Bernie used a 1940s drum set with calf skin heads—that was a big difference. The new drum heads, something was conflicting with the slap on the bass. And it's been bugging me for years. I said, "Bernie, have you ever played on calf skin heads?" He said, "It's a new

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thing to me, but I'm into it, too." That solved the problem. The old calf skin heads *thud*, and the new drum heads *ping*. That *thud* was what I was missing. That *pinging* was interfering sonically with the bass. Once we got that, I brought in all the brass and woodwinds, set the boys up, put up the old Neumann mics and just captured the best live takes. I would let the boys blow a solo by themselves, because you don't want to ruin a good take just because a guy's solo's not quite right. But we just got a good, live sound and went for it.

EE: *How much of a hand do you actually have in the arranging? How much do you rely on others?*

BS: I have a big hand in it. I can read and write music, and I've had these horn parts in my head for years. It's always been in my chord work on the guitar. I realized when I was playing chord solos, "Shit, those are big band sections!" [*scats a line*] That's a big band right there, in that chord. So I sit down with Mark Jones, and Mark is such a big part of it.

“I'm sure there are jazz purists out there who think this is an atrocity. You'll never be pure enough for the purists. But I play for myself.”

He's a great arranger and has been with me since day one. He's a trombone player. We sit down and write the arrangement. We're responsible for 95 percent of this stuff. But Mark is the real, true orchestrator. We'll do the arrangement, then he'll sit down and write the full orchestration. Then that goes to Mike Vlatkovich, and he writes all the sheet music. Then the other 5 percent, I like to hear what other people come up with, and I kind of coerce Patrick Williams into writing some charts for me. The first one, I think he did for free, just to be a nice guy. Now I'm up to the level where I can pay him. He's amazing. I think he's one of the best ever.

EE: *Will you ever make your charts commercially available?*

BS: We always have people from colleges who want our charts. They'd be more than welcome. The funniest thing is Drew Carey, the actor, is also a trumpet player. He asked for all the trumpet charts so he could play along with the album. So we sent him the trumpet charts. I think that's really neat.

EE: *Let's talk about some of your favorite big bands. I know that when Down Beat talked to you back in '94, you mentioned seeing the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band. And you mentioned seeing Gatemouth*

Brown and his small big band.

BS: I gotta add another one to that: The NBC Tonight Show Orchestra. Growing up every night, watching Johnny Carson exposed me to that.

EE: *Did you play on that show with the Stray Cats?*

BS: We were invited, but never made it on. It was one of the first times they were ever going to put a rock & roll band on. I think they were still skitzy about it. They asked us to do "Rock This Town," and they asked us if we wanted to use Doc's big band. That was the defining moment. I thought, Wow! That would work, wouldn't it? "Rock This Town" is rock & roll, but basically it's a swing song. I thought, That's never been done before. That's the first time the bells started ringing.

EE: *How did you select the cover tunes for the big band?*

BS: A lot of people would say, "Why don't you cover 'Mack The Knife?'" Well, how could I do that any differently or any better than Bobby Darin? I would just be doing an exact replica. That, again, falls

into the category of not doing enough with the music. So that, to me, is no good. Take a song you like, that's never been done big band, from a different genre. "Since I Don't Have You," a doo-wop song, who would ever think you could do that big band? But we did it. That's something unique. That's what we try to strive for. Even "Jump Jive An' Wail." It's a great song to begin with. Louis Prima, he's become a hero. But what we did to it was turn it into a big band song, substitute chords, there's a modulation in there, there's a wild guitar solo, there's an a capella part in there, there's a slap bass ... there's about six different things we did to it to change it. That's what I think you've gotta do. That's how I choose the older songs. Something that's different that hasn't been done the way you can do it with our version of the big band.

EE: *What about your own tunes: Were they written specifically for this band? Were you thinking of horns when you composed them?*

BS: I don't think horns when I write. The big band just works with any kind of music I seem to write. Like "This Cat's On A Hot Tin Roof." It sounded so good with a three piece. I thought it was a good little rockabilly tune. Then I wrote

the charts and I thought, How was I thinking that this song didn't need the horns? I could never play it that way again. It works that way sometimes.

EE: *Have you ever gone swing dancing?*

BS: Yes. I can do it. I taught some girl how to do it last night.

EE: *On stage?*

BS: No, she was hanging around and she really wanted to learn how to swing dance. We were in Louisville, Ky. I said, "I'll show you." She said, "It's that easy?" My folks taught me how to do it when I was a kid. But apparently I do an East Coast step, a Lindy Hop. And if I dance with a West Coast girl, I step on her feet.

EE: *One of the things that you said in Down Beat in 1994 was that you never thought you'd ever get all the guys together to play, get the big band charts actually written, get together to practice, and then make money at it. Then you said, "I've done everything except the last part."*

BS: I'm glad you reminded me of that, because no matter how far out there this thing gets, it's still an accomplishment that we've actually gotten this thing off the ground. That's still a big deal to do that every night, to set that thing up, to get 16 guys on that stage, playing that music. But, yes, we are making money now. Money comes in different ways. We do corporate events where they pay us a lot and it's a one-time deal. So if I make more money, I pay the band more. They know on the road it won't be as much because a computer conglomerate can pay more than a theater. But they're starting to do pretty well.

EE: *So many big bands fell apart because they couldn't afford to keep it together.*

BS: Absolutely. If you want to eat right and have decent lodgings, I've found it's got to be at least on a sold-out club level. Now we're on a theater level, pushing the real big level, the arena level. Sometimes we play arenas. Now we're comfortable.

EE: *Do you feel like you were a little bit ahead of your time with this? Do you feel like you've started a craze?*

BS: I can't say that I started a craze myself. There are a lot of bands out there who have been doing a lot of swing music different than the way I was doing this. I can say this: I knew when I heard that band come back behind my guitar, that it was good. I was almost grabbing people, shaking them by the neck: "Listen to this! I swear to God, this is good!" That was the frustrating part, getting people to listen

to it. I always knew it was something good, and it was good music. Of course, you never know what radio is going to play. They're so fickle. Or video music channels. Or the public's taste.

EE: *How long do you think you'll do this?*

BS: I'm going to do it until it stops thrilling me musically. If it gets to the point where I'm not excited by it, that's when I stop doing things.

EE: *What are you going to do next? Another CD?*

BS: I've got a lot of songs written. Now it's crazy. We just can't seem to stop. Now that Europe is starting to get interested, and Australia, I think we'll be doing that all next year.

EE: *How long do you expect to be overseas?*



BS: We're going to go in March, only for two weeks. But if it breaks, they'll probably have us back for the summer. In the meantime, we've got a lot of movie themes. I wrote a theme for a movie called *Three To Tango* with Neve Campbell, Matt Perry and Brandon McDermott. Then I've also been asked to write something for a new Disney movie, *Inspector Gadget*. We've got a lot of things like that. Last year, we did the Schwarzenegger movie *Jingle All The Way*. We had three songs in that. They're using "The Dirty Boogie" in the new Robert DeNiro movie. It's called *Analyze This*. Movies are a really difficult thing to do. They change it constantly. But once again, that's really good for the band because they get residuals. I might be

doing a duet with Natalie Cole. She asked me to write a song for her and she wants to use the whole big band. That'll be fun. She's total class.

EE: *Do you have a definite plan for the next CD?*

BS: I've got a record contract with Interscope, but it's tough putting an album together. Interscope was pretty tough on me with songs. I've got quite a few songs written, though, so I don't think it'll be as tough as last time. But that has to happen; all the slots have to fall in place. Everyone has to approve what I've written. It's like taking castor oil, for your own good. I have to say, they forced a better record out of me. I know so. Nobody ever likes that, but I have to say it was for my own good.

EE: *The "Khakis Swing" Gap commercial featuring "Jump, Jive An' Wail" came out shortly before the release of The Dirty Boogie. Was there any marketing plan behind that?*

BS: No. We had the song in the can. Then the Gap commercial came out. We thought, Oh, no. It's going to wreck our chances. It was being considered for a single, but it wasn't a definitive choice yet. But what happened was, that served like putting gasoline on a fire. It doesn't matter if you like Gap clothing or not: It got that song to the masses. How else could people in Kansas City hear about this? They didn't have a scene going of their own, they didn't know what the music was. It wasn't like in L.A., San Francisco, Chicago. People needed to get this, and that's one of the ways it got there.

EE: *What are some of the other ways?*

BS: *Swingers*, the movie. Again, people don't like to admit this. But it got it to the masses. Going to the cities and playing, word of mouth. Selling out the Greek Theater, 7,000 people. No radio. No MTV. No VH-1. It was all word of mouth, going to these people's towns and playing the music. The funny thing is, radio started playing it, almost as a goof, I think. And the phones were ringing off the hook! Kids were calling up. "This is great! Would you play this song again?" People genuinely like it.

EE: *Regarding the chord solos and the chording melodies you play so often—who were some of the predecessors for you in that style?*

BS: That's the best, the melody-chord playing. That's something rock & rollers know nothing about. My influences are all the old Italian guys from New York: Joe Pass, my teachers growing up on

Long Island, Van Moretti. You rarely see tablature for that anymore. He had a page in a publication called 20th Century Guitar. He put a different song with melody chords, and I would just go for that. I would eat, live and breathe that. I'd play it for my wife, and she'd say, "Oh, that's so beautiful." Chuck Wayne. The New York guys, that was their specialty. I was really lucky. When I was growing up I could go out and see—on Long Island there were jazz clubs—guys doing that.

EE: How about current guitarists?

BS: John Pizzarelli. He plays beautifully like that.

EE: Which other jazz guitarists do you admire?

BS: I think George Benson is a beautiful guitar player. So what if he wants to change his song selection around? Wes Montgomery? Absolutely. The stuff that he did with CTI, I grew up on those records. The Verve compilation of Wes doing "Tequila" and all that stuff. ... Jim Hall, Billy Bauer in New York. Ray Gogarty, my guitar teacher when I was growing up, was one of the best guitar players I heard. When I finished with all my Mel Bay books, my first teacher, Henry Scurti, he taught me how to read and write music, that was about all he could teach me, so he recommended another teacher, Ray Gogarty. He taught me all the jazz chords and all that stuff. Then Al Viola, of course. But I've gotta get into the new crop of jazzers.

EE: What about horn players?

BS: Butera, Prima, Eldridge. I've got to say Bird and Diz, all the bebop stuff. Even though sometimes it gets a little too notey for me. But that's genius level. I like Harry James. I like players who I can distinguish who they are. I think a lot of guys make mistakes, like a new guitar player who sounds just like Wes Montgomery. I'd rather just listen to Wes Montgomery. As a guitar player, I strive to have my own sound, my own tone. Mixing up the styles has enabled me to do that. When Lester Young plays, it's Lester Young. **OB**

EQUIPMENT

Brian Setzer plays Gretsch 6120 guitars; Fender Bassman amps, '62-'63 vintage; 10-gauge D'Addario strings. For effects, he uses old slapback tape echoes—which they put on the whole band in the studio. For picks, "I know this is kind of quirky, but I like the pink plastic!" Setzer says. "I don't know what it is. They have the right kind of bend. The tortoise-shell are too thin. Even though they make different thicknesses, I like the medium pink ones."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE DIRTY BOOGIE—Interscope 90183
GUITAR SLINGER—Interscope 90051
THE BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA—Hollywood 61565

with The Stray Cats
ROCK THIS TOWN: BEST OF THE STRAY CATS—
EMI 94975
GREATEST HITS—Curb/CEMA 77592

On The Road With Setzer

They work like dogs, playing six nights a week, swinging hard, making choreographed moves, shouting vocal refrains and getting only a few precious solos. But the members of the Brian Setzer Orchestra value this gig above most others.

"I'll tell you, man, this is the toughest book in town to play," said Willie Murillo, trumpet I. "No shit. Range-wise, speed-wise, everything. It's the easiest book and the toughest book all at the same time. It's hard because of the moves that go with it, the energy; you've got to be there every night. The writing is hard in itself; it's kind of a ball-buster endurance-wise. But it's also easy because everything grooves. Brian's written this stuff so well. It lays well on the horns."

Baritone saxophonist Don Roberts says the real difficulty of the book is mastering the feel itself. "The time is very important," Roberts said. "To play on the beat, now lay it back. Basically, this band is a bebop-phrasing band."

Many of the musicians in the Brian Setzer Orchestra have pretty long resumés playing jazz and commercial music, as well. For example, George McMullen, Brian's lead trombonist and contractor/musical director, has played with the Tonight Show Band, Poncho Sanchez, James Newton and George Lewis. He's also done a fair amount of jingles, and even toured with the pop group Oingo Boingo. Tim Misica, tenor I, has played with Dizzy Gillespie, Prince, and did *Grease* on Broadway. But for a lot of these guys, this gig is the topper.



Setzer and orchestra backstage at Milwaukee's Eagles Ballroom

Drummer Bernie Dresel put it best by comparing the Setzer tour to previous professional experiences. "There's a lot more screaming girls rather than screaming brides," he said with a laugh. "I've played with a lot of different bands who had aspirations of playing original music and getting it heard. You try to get these things off the ground, and most of the time they don't go anywhere. For this, to see where it came from six years ago, and now it's at this level. Wow! What happened?"

Misica enjoys the freedom he has to improvise anything he wants. "Last week, Brian was right in my face," he said. "I think the tune was 'As Long As I'm Singing'—'Rhythm' changes with an altered bridge. And I threw something at him really off the wall, and he loved it. I could've been fired at other gigs for doing stuff like that. Brian is a *player*. He's just like one of us."

All of the horn players we talked to expressed great satisfaction with the quality of the arrangements in the book.

"Some of the inner parts are challenging," said Kevin Norton, trumpet IV, noting that his section mates trade parts quite a bit. "But the charts are written really well, with similar voicings. Mark Jones and Brian get this really good sound together. You can always find yourself in the chord no matter what part you're playing or what chart. It's easy to lock in."

The show itself offers a nice balance of showmanship and musicality. It has something for the average listener, and something for the musicians in the audience as well. And while the Brian Setzer Orchestra swings like crazy, this is mostly a rock & roll band at heart.

"Every guy in a working band knows that when he pulls out a rock & roll chart, he just cringes because it just doesn't work," Norton said. "I think for the first time, Brian's really pulled off rock & roll in a big band setting." **—E.E.**

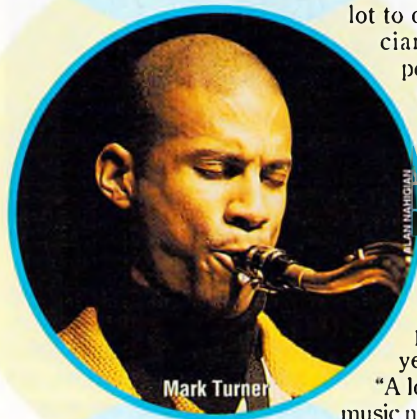
Jazz Goes Pop

When pop goes jazz, it's only appropriate that jazz goes pop, too. While rock & rollers like Brian Setzer (this month's cover story) have hit it big by turning to big band, jump blues and the swing era for inspiration, more and more jazz musicians have drawn on popular rock and soul tunes for their CDs and concerts over the past two years. One of the favored composers of the "jazz goes pop" phenomenon is Joni Mitchell.



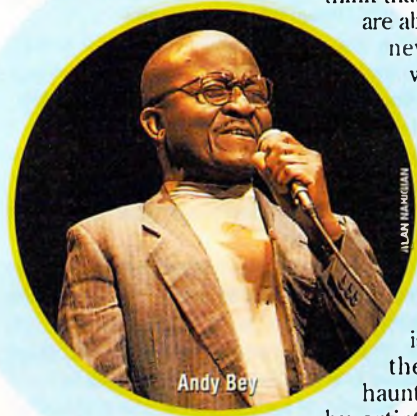
Charlie Hunter

She'll never replace George Gershwin in the hearts nor on the music stands of beboppers. But Mitchell has written tunes with a lot to offer improvising musicians, according to trumpeter Dave Douglas. His CD *Moving Portrait* (DIW) includes three.



Mark Turner

"There's nothing new about that idea. But what is new is the larger vocabulary that jazz musicians have with which to incorporate pop-song composers of the past 30 years," Douglas explains.



Andy Bey

"A lot of what goes into pop music now is sonic and textural. I think that younger jazz musicians are able to deal with that. It's a new area for jazz, dealing with timbre and texture and formal complexity."

Jazz singers and instrumentalists under 50 are increasingly recording not just the pop music of their youth, but also newer rock and urban releases. Among vocalists, Cassandra Wilson is the pace-setter with her haunting recordings of tunes by artists as diverse as Hank

Williams, the Monkees and U2. But Holly Cole was equally a groundbreaker with her tribute to Tom Waits, *Temptation* (Metro Blue). Patricia Barber's *Modern Cool*

(Premonition) includes the Doors' "Light My Fire," done as a seductive, understated recitation with a trumpet solo by Douglas.

Kevin Mahogany's *My Romance* (Warner Bros.) features Lyle Lovett's "I Know You Know" sung like something from Joe Williams' book, and he does the same for tunes by Van Morrison and James Taylor. Andy Bey's *Shades Of Bey* (Evidence) includes a string-laden recording of British singer/songwriter Nick Drake's "River Man."

Coincidentally, pianist Brad Mehldau plays "River Man" and Radiohead's "Exit Music" on *Songs* (Warner Bros.), both with a heavy emphasis on the melodies, then toying with their harmonies in swinging improvisations. Mehldau plays on Mark Turner's CD *In This World* (Warner Bros.), where the tenor saxophonist reharmonizes the Beatles' "She Said, She Said." At the opposite end of the sonic spectrum, Jazz Is Dead, featuring drummer Billy Cobham, explores the music of the Grateful Dead on *Blue Light Rain* (Zebra). Even bassist Christian McBride, who in the past scoffed at the idea of using pop as a jazz vehicle (see June '97), has recorded Sly Stone's "Family Affair" while saxophonist Joshua Redman's exploration of tunes from the rock era includes reconstructions of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" and Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

Blue Note has tried to do for bop music of the past 30 years what Verve did for the pop music of the '20s and '30s: Besides single cuts on individual albums by a variety



Cassandra Wilson



Christian McBride



Dave Douglas

By Dave Helland

of artists young and middle-aged, its "Cover Series" includes jazzy recreations of half-a-dozen individual albums, including Carole King's *Tapestry* by Bob Belden, Sly & The Family Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On* by the late George Howard and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Deja Vu* by Fareed Haque (see June 1997).

But don't discount these as slick, commercial moves. The response in music stores and on jazz radio is decidedly mixed, and crossover to other formats is elusive. From *Blue Note Salutes Motown*, covers by Ray Barretto, Eliane Elias and Charlie Hunter have gotten the most airplay from jazz programs with wide-ranging formats, while smooth jazz stations tend to only play Dave Koz's cover of the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There." "Smooth jazz radio is very single-oriented, while at more eclectic jazz and college stations everyone is picking different tracks," explains Neil Gorov of Groove Marketing, an independent marketing firm that works Blue Note releases.

"It boils down to how tasteful and how appropriate it is, not for a given format but for a given radio station," concludes Gorov, who mentions Detroit's WDET, Chicago's WNUA, Boulder, Colo.'s KGNU and Miami's WLRN as the sort of jazz stations that will give jazz covers of pop tunes a shot.

"It's very smart for Blue Note to be doing that as a way of tapping into the baby-boomer generation. They bring some familiarity, that 'Oh, wow' factor, yet you're hearing an artist's own interpretation," says Bob Kakke, program director at Chicago's smooth-jazz WNUA. "What works is a strong melody line that becomes recognizable to our audience."

And crossover to other formats is hard. Quiet Storm and even Adult Alternative Album (AAA) formats are tightly structured. Bey's "River Man" caught the ear of AAA music directors when it aired on the syndicated *World Cafe* program. Evidence Records head Jerry Gordon reports a stronger response from jazz and college stations. Jazz Is Dead's version of "Scarlett Begonias" has gotten a little play on AAA stations and a couple classic rock outlets, sparked by spins on the syndicated *Grateful Dead Hour* and the band's 1998 tour, but has done better with college stations, reports Zebra publicist Rob Evanoff.

Chicago's WXRT played adult rock spiced with blues, reggae and jazz for two decades before that mix became codified as AAA radio. The station's music director, Patty Martin, reports that Charlie Hunter's cover of Steve Miller's "Fly Like An Eagle" got a little play—mostly on "New Releases Thursday"—as did Jazz Is Dead's "Scarlett Begonias." But they were more likely to have been heard on the weekly *Jazz Transfusion* and didn't join cuts by Pat Metheny, Headhunters, Buckshot LeFonque and Liquid Soul in the station's massive rotation.

Still, she'd be receptive to projects like Redman's and Metheny's cover of Eric Clapton's "Tears From Heaven," Bill Frisell's various pop covers and even Sting singing "It Ain't Necessarily So" on a case-by-case basis—but Martin doesn't remember getting serviced with those discs.

A tune becomes a standard through repetition—on the bandstand and in the studio, on the air and in the buyers' homes—as players and listeners alike recognize a specific tune's validity. Till jazz musicians and singers start being inspired by each other's choice of pop covers—or original compositions—and the public hears them on the radio, the search for "new standards" remains more than a fad but less than a real movement on the jazz scene. **DB**

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real swing.*

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Paquito's Passions

WEBERN
Concertos,
WILLIS
Conover,
North
American
Swing &
10 Decades
Of Latin Love
Songs

I don't care how aggressive a driver you are, there's not a cabbie around who can make good time traversing Manhattan's Upper West Side during the mid-afternoon rush. But today, instead of creating anxiety, the inevitable delays bring riches. Sitting in the back seat of a taxi, oblivious to the blockage, Paquito D'Rivera is recalling a few key images of his youth.

Some of these memories have previously been shared with the public. Shots from the reed virtuoso's childhood dot the liner sleeve of his 1996 Grammy-winning disc *Portraits Of Cuba* (and several more are part of the packaging of the currently out-of-print Columbia LP *Manhattan Burn*). There we see him as a tyke, on stage with his dad, a classical saxophonist. Back then the Havana native was known as "Paquito—The Smallest Saxophone Player in the World." Isn't show biz grand?

D'Rivera was 10 when he soloed on Webern's Clarinet Concerto No. 2 at the Cuban capital's Teatro Nacional. Castro and his guerrillas were still up in the Sierra Maestras scheming; the island hadn't yet experienced the political uproar that loomed ahead. On his way to a rehearsal with his favorite clarinet in his lap, the 50-year-old D'Rivera confesses to still being enamored of that piece.

"Yes," he says with a typical grin, "I like that second concerto. When you have a terrible voice like me, the only way to be an opera singer is to play Webern on a horn."

As the traffic congestion abates, Paquito moves to a more resonant memory.

"You know who really saved my life?" he queries. "Willis Conover. I listened to the Voice of America jazz hour all the time. That's how I learned about jazz."

Out of the blue, a basso voce spills from Paquito's throat. "This is Willis Conover speaking. You're listening to the jazz hour *Music USA* ... part one. Tonight we present the great Duke Ellington.' I actually played that show once," he beams. "Right after I came to America—1982. I found Conover, called him up and said, 'Man, you made my life happen.' Next thing I know he's telling me to come do the show. That night! When I got there, I couldn't believe I was watching him say, 'Hello, this is Willis Conover. You're listening to *Music USA*, part one. Tonight we present the great Paquito D'Rivera.' That was it. I almost shit my pants."

Well, compared to the obvious dead ends of living under a repressive regime, America is the land of opportunity: Some pants get shit in, and some dreams do come true. Especially if you have the mastery D'Rivera has. Conover wasn't wrong: D'Rivera is a virtuoso whose talent radically changed his life. His 1980 defection to the United States is taken as a matter of course these days, and though he acknowledges that it's the toughest decision he ever had to make—left behind were parents, wife and children—he says he had virtually no choice in the matter.

"It goes past politics," he says. "There comes a time when you realize there's no point of staying down there, because simply put, there's no future. Anyway, I had to come here; I dreamt of playing in Carnegie Hall ever since I heard that classic Benny Goodman live record that was recorded there. Right around the time of that Webern gig, I started trying to copy the jazz solos from that album. So, I guess it's Benny's fault."

Bruce Lundvall signed Paquito to Columbia as soon as he hit the States. "His talent was obvious," says the record executive, now the head of Blue Note. "Every time he blew his horn, he turned heads. Musically, he can do whatever he chooses."

For the last 20 years, D'Rivera, a former member of the Cuban pop-jazz group Irakere, has forwarded an agenda that blends North American swing with Caribbean cadences, making him an icon of "Latin Jazz" for most listeners. But definitions are sort of like repressive regimes. These days, the guy who grew up with jazz heroes Chico,

By Jim Macnie

Photos By Alan Nahigian

Chocolate and Cachao visiting the house is widening his circle.

We hit 110th Street, pay the fare, and stroll into the rehearsal space, which doubles as the apartment of pianist Pablo Zinger. Some of Paquito's latest interests become obvious. "Chamber Music From The South" reads the concert poster on the wall. It's advertising a string of shows that feature Zinger, D'Rivera and cellist Gustavo Tavares. The trio is leaving on a tour of Brazil in a few days, and the afternoon is dedicated to fine-tuning the material.

"Now remember, this is our first time together in a while," says Paquito. And there *are* a few gaffes and slip-ups while they work on attack, dynamics and flow. Intricate pieces like Ignacio Cervantes' "Suite de Danzas" are no cinch, even for masters.

"The arrangement is mine by suggestion of Paquito," explains Zinger, and in the middle of one passage, the clarinetist exerts a bit of authority by throwing a line from "Begin The Beguine" into the mix. No one seems to mind.

A Hackensack, N.J., resident, D'Rivera is the artistic director of jazz programming for New Jersey Chamber Music Society (NJCMS). There, at a November concert of Gershwin material, he brought an improviser's sensibility to the classical realm.

The fruits of such a combination are all over Paquito's latest Heads Up CD, *100 Years Of Latin Love Songs*. His reeds—alto and soprano saxes and clarinet—glide through Bob Belden's string arrangements on a serene disc that spotlights what the leader considers a neglected side of Latin American music.

"People think that in order to make music sound Latin, you have to keep adding percussionists. Well, let me tell you—you can destroy it that way. I have nothing against percussionists, but you don't need them to be Latin."

100 Years Of Latin Love Songs is a stylistic bounty composed of idiomatic music from nine countries. The idea was not only to cull pieces from all over the geographic diaspora, but cut across historic lines as well. The record begins with a 1905 tango and closes with a '70s salsa piece. The disc is enhanced with CD-ROM features that provide facts regarding the countries and cultures at hand. D'Rivera suggests that while Anglo views of Latin America have become more sophisticated with time, there's still a tendency to lump all the musics together. "I've had musicians tell me, 'I play Latin music.' What do they mean? Latin America is huge. What they really play are a couple of mambos and sambas—and most of the time badly.

"It's not just other people. I used to be guilty of the same. When I first got to the States, I remember going to a Brazilian restaurant with a bunch of Brazilian musicians—Claudio Roditi, Portinho and others. I mentioned I'd been listening to Brazilian jazz in Cuba. 'Oh, I love this guy, that guy.' There was total silence at the table. Portinho said, 'Paquito, I think you'll have to start from the beginning—all those players you mentioned are great musicians, but they don't know shit about Brazilian jazz.'"

Roditi the globe-trotting trumpeter says the schism isn't only between Brazil and Cuba. "All musics have their particulars," he reminds. "Paquito knows that; his drummer Mark Walker has studied all the different Latin countries, and has a very good [command] of each style."

On the Colombian vallenato "Tu Mariposa," Paquito's soprano flits between three acoustic guitars. The visual of butterflies frolicking in the garden is unmistakable. The alto



flights on "Sin Tu Carino" are typically animated as well. But there's a new sense of composure running through *100 Years Of Latin Love Songs* and D'Rivera's other recent work.

"When I came to this country, Leonard Feather played Phil Woods a record of mine on a Blindfold Test," Paquito recalls over lunch. "Mr. Phil Woods said, 'This is my amigo, Paquito, and he's playing too many notes. When he settles down, he's going to be a wonderful saxophonist. Paquito, don't worry about it, they used to say the same thing about me!' Some people might have been insulted: How dare he say that crap? But I thought, Man, that's the truth, and I'm going to learn from what this gringo says, because he is a great saxophone player. Dangerous fingers, that Phil Woods, dangerous fingers.

"So on these newer records, I've learned how to do what he mentioned. There's nothing wrong with a lot of notes, but technique is used to make art, not the other way around. It's like boxing: No one gives a shit

how you put your enemy on the floor, winning the battle is what's important."

Some of that finesse was featured in D'Rivera's recent premiere, "Rivers." It's a work for jazz quartet, chamber group, soprano vocalist and—ahem—percussionists. Written for the 25th anniversary of NJCMS, it's based on a variety of poems dealing with the subject, including those by José-Maria Heredia, Langston Hughes and Julia de Burgos.

The river thing is big for Paquito. His favorite is known to him only from afar. "I'm obsessed with the Amazon, though I've never been there," he says. "I loved that thing since I was a kid, with all its Indians and crocodiles. I've often dreamed of being exiled in the Amazon and never being able to come back."

That's not his only dream. While discussing the possibility of Irakere reuniting for a tour, he mentions a distressing image that steadily recurs.

"It's a nightmare, really," he says with no smile whatsoever. "I go back to Cuba, and they don't let me leave. I'm not alone in that thought, either. Many people who lived in a communist country have those kind of dreams. I've talked to several who can't get that fear out of their head."

Leaving the restaurant, we pass the exposed butt of a brass statue near the exit. Grabbing its buns is an in-house tradition alleged to bring good luck. Paquito uses both hands, and that famous smile returns.

"Don't worry," he quips. "I have happy dreams, too."

DB

EQUIPMENT

Paquito D'Rivera plays Yamaha Custom alto and soprano saxes. His alto mouthpiece is a metal Selmer F (D for classical work), and his soprano mouthpiece is a hard-rubber Otto Link. He uses Rico Royal #3 sax reeds.

His clarinet is a custom-made Louis Rossi, "a wonderful craftsman who lives in Chile," D'Rivera says. His clarinet mouthpiece is a hard-rubber copy of a RIA made by Heinz Vioto. For reeds, he uses Vandoren #3 German cut or Zonda 3 1/2 from Argentina.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

100 YEARS OF LATIN LOVE SONGS—
Heads Up 3045
UNITED NATIONS ORCHESTRA LIVE AT
THE MANCHESTER CRAFTSMEN
GUILD—Blue Jackel 1003
PORTRAITS OF CUBA—Chesky 145
CHAMBER MUSIC FROM THE SOUTH—
Mix House 0002

HAVANA CAFE—Chesky 60
TICO! TICO!—Chesky 34
A NIGHT IN ENGLEWOOD—Messidor
15829
40 YEARS OF CUBAN JAM SESSIONS—
Messidor 15826
THE BEST OF IRAKERE—Columbia
57719

Bobby Previte

fresh from three oeuvre-reprising nights of concerts last fall at the Knitting Factory, Bobby Previte finds himself in a retrospective mood. That doesn't keep the jockey-framed 40-something trapsetter from focusing on the here-and-now with a vengeance.

Previte's first releases on his recently launched label, Depth of Field, straddle past and present. He reunites with three key partners in sound-stretching since his first New York days, rugged individualists who've fought protracted battles to elaborate radical esthetics. On *Euclid's Nightmare*, he hurtles through a program of 27 architectonic, blink-of-an-eyelash duos with galvanic saxman John Zorn. Keyboardist Wayne Horvitz and guitarist Elliott Sharp join the fray on *Downtown Lullaby*, seven extended comprovs culled from a full day of music-making. Each piece takes its name from the addresses of Manhattan venues where the avatars performed with an army of like-minded musicians, developing vocabularies now honed to a nine-decimal-points-of-accuracy edge. The discs unleash a river of memory; talismanic, they open a window onto Previte's attitudes and sources.

"Since 1982 we're each kind of a stronger magnetic pole," Previte says of his Downtown mates, over late morning java at his Upper West Side office. "That works two ways. We can pull a lot more toward us, but we can also resist more. Yet there's a shared experience and language that I thought we would get to—and I think we did. For me, *Downtown Lullaby* is very personal, a document of that era and how it intersects with this era—how we've moved and changed, and what that means. A lot of stuff that we were working on got assimilated. Look at pop music and a lot of alternative music, the use of noise, the stop-on-a-dime quality you hear a lot now. John was doing that then. I hear it on television, in the commercials."

Previte joined the Downtown New York mix through Sharp, already a Loisdia music activist, a friend from cusp-of-the-'70s



Assimilat

By Ted Panken

Photos By Alan Nahigian



ion Man

student days at SUNY–Buffalo. “Bobby’s playing was always crisp and energetic; he could groove, he could swing, and he liked to listen,” Sharp recalls. “His talent as a drummer and ability to play just about any style made him very attractive to a lot of people right away. John picked up on him first because when he wanted to point his finger at someone and turn on a bit of jazz groove for a second, Bobby could give it to him. Plus, Bobby’s a thinker.”

The drummer liked them, too. “I hooked up with John, Elliott and Wayne because their general direction was the same as mine,” Previte says. “They were iconoclasts, very inclusive, which spoke deeply to something in me.

“John’s always composing and arranging; it’s inseparable from his playing. That’s where the duo is fun. The subtext is always, All right, what form are we doing? Are we doing an arch form? Just exactly where are we going with this? Sequentially? Doubling back on ourselves? Do we go AB, AB, AB and then C—a completely different section? Who has the theme? Who has the background? Who has a solo? It’s fascinating, because we’re making it up every single time.

“Wayne put music together more like I did, so we had immediate affinity, immediate bonds. He writes very subtle, self-effacing music. It doesn’t come and slap you in the face; it’s OK if you get it later. It resembles the way medieval composers used to hide stuff. Elliott was into the overtone series, another thing that I

“All sidemen are problem-solvers. The leader probably chose you because he likes the way you play, but you have to play in a manner that fits the leader’s vision of their music. This is the dance that the sideman has to do.”

would never in a million years have considered—and here it is, and it’s working! He could shape huge masses of sound with incredible density. I’ve hit heights with Elliott on stage that I’ve rarely hit. It’s the type of music that at times you think is the only thing that should exist.”

Previte’s raw form-building concept stimulated Horvitz and Sharp, each in the nascent stages of finding ways compositionally to blend rock with improvisation. “I enjoyed that Bobby was able to have a jazz sensibility of sophistication about music, but play in a very rhythmically powerful way that worked in electronic music,” Horvitz remembers. “He also worked off his tomtoms a lot, which I’ve always been a sucker for!”

“When I was doing my earlier, larger compositions,” Sharp adds, “I could give him very skeletal material, a picture, and know he’d read my mind and take off with it. Which is why I still love playing duo with Bobby; we go in and know shapes.”

Previte is delighted to renew his explorations of uncharted musical terrain on the Depth of Field releases. “I’d gotten away from free improvising. It keeps you aware and in the moment—and it keeps you composing! Improvising is spontaneous composition. What else is it? It doesn’t matter that you happened to be sitting at your instrument. It keeps the muscle going.”

He’s extracted further compositional protein during the past decade while performing the sideman function with form-benders like Marty Ehrlich, Tim Berne, Jane Ira Bloom and Ray Anderson. “All sidemen are problem-solvers,” Previte explains. “The leader probably chose you because he likes the way you play, but you have to play in a manner that fits the leader’s vision of their music. This is the dance that the sideman has to do. What happens? You find new things to play and think about, because you’re in

someone else’s universe now. You’re speaking a slightly different language, coming at problems from a different angle, and you learn a lot.

“Tim Berne’s Chaos Totale was one of my favorite bands. Everyone could pretty much do a solo concert, so there was a great feeling of calm in the chaos, because you knew someone would pick things up.

“Jane Ira Bloom, who I’m working with now, writes very open music. She’s very responsive, which allows me to play what I feel, to go most anywhere I want. She gives me actual solo space, which is rare for me, since my music doesn’t go that direction in my own bands.”

Maybe not, but Previte puts himself even more out front in his two most recent projects: Latin For Travelers, a sophisticated bar band with guitarists Jerome Harris and Marc Ducret plus keyboardist Jamie Saft that tackles groove full-bore; and the Horse, devoted to interpreting the music of Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew*. In a sense, they bring Previte full circle to his roots. He’s a self-taught drummer who by his teens was working blues, soul and rock gigs in the Buffalo–Niagara Falls area. He dug drummers who projected volcanic sounds and orchestral esthetics—Mitch Mitchell with Hendrix, Michael Giles with King Crimson, Ginger Baker with Cream. Gradually, spurred in great part by Tony Williams’ work on *Filles De Kilimanjaro* and the magic of Elvin Jones, his sense of artistic aspiration evolved.

“I started to understand that music went way beyond what I thought was there,” he says. “When I went to school, I was introduced to the classical and modernist canon—Cage and Harrison, all the percussion ensembles, like *Ionization*, which I got to play in. That collided with Miles and Mingus and Monk, after I’d had this base of blues–soul music. It changed me profoundly, I’m sure. For a while I got heavily into free jazz—Ornette, Anthony Braxton, the loft jazz scene, Andrew Cyrille’s highly orchestrated solo drum record, *What About?* Mostly that music told me, ‘Yes, Bobby, it’s all right.’ That’s Cage’s lesson. He gave me that feeling: ‘Don’t be afraid; you can do it.’ It’s a priceless lesson, and I carry it with me to this day.

“Musically, I learned that what might be the hippest and most beautiful way to communicate with someone is in a parallel fashion, moving along a time-line and throwing the sparks across it back and forth, as if you’re magnetically linked and repelled at the same time. You have



your own path, they have theirs, and you'll never merge. You can't really merge with anybody, even your wife. That's one of the great melancholies of life. This is the human condition."

The East Village-Soho scene in the pre-PC, cheap-rent, early Reagan years was a wild culture mix of burgeoning galleries, dance, performance art, pre-MTV video and an explosive music community in which improvisers, free-jazzers, New Music conceptualists, art rockers, punkers and rappers all intermingled fluidly. Previte drew on every bit of it in creating the richly textured corpus of music he revisited at the Knitting Factory—one that sounds like nothing contemporaneous.

Asked to detail his process, Previte is cagey, preferring to describe his work epigrammatically, through parable and metaphor. To wit, thumbnailing the sound of his mid-'80s band, Pushing the Envelope: "Stillness in the midst of motion. Very medieval. Well, very Faulknerian. I think that's what Faulkner does—stops time. It's an interesting problem. Especially in music, because music is very sequential. Trying to get to the feeling of the stillness at the core is a fascinating problem for me, and one that takes my breath away when I hear it. That's when the chills go up my back."

His collaborators are happy to fill in the gaps. "Bobby approaches his music as a group sound," comments multireedman Marty Ehrlich, a key member of various Previte ensembles since the early '80s. "The drums are integral, sort of the big structure, the underpinning of the piece. He's willing to use space, silences and transparency, which add a lot to the emotional palette."

"Bobby is interested in cycling," Horvitz elaborates, "building with simple ideas working against each other—like having three phrases of different lengths—that come around in new ways each time."

Previte and the Horse are off to Italy the next morning for two weekend concerts. There are logistics to iron out, so it's time to wrap. "I generally don't like memorials and tribute concerts," he

laughs. "And here I am doing repertory! I like to make little challenges for myself. I'm not sure why I did the retrospective. Zorn suggested it at a time when not much was happening. I revisited all my old scores early in the summer to get conversant with them again, to try to understand the guiding principles, what the composer intended, so I could get the music into shape and rehearse it. There must be a deeper reason, some kind of reconciliation for me—just clean it all up, put a nice bow on the package, and move on. But I'll never say it's that, because I don't know. It didn't wrap things up; it just asked more questions."

Which stirs Previte's juices above all else.

DB

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- MUSIC OF THE MOSCOW CIRCUS**—Gramavision 79466
CLAUDE'S LATE MORNING—Gramavision 79448
PUSHING THE ENVELOPE—Gramavision 79509
BUMP THE RENAISSANCE—Sound Aspects 008
DULL BANG, GUSHING SOUND, HUMAN SHRIEK—Koch 3-7821
- (John Zorn)
DOWNTOWN LULLABY—Depth of Field 2 (Zorn, Horvitz & Elliot Sharp)
IN THE GRASS—enja 9343 (Marc Ducret)
THE NEARNESS—Arabesque AJ0120 (Jane Ira Bloom)
THE FUCHSIA—Koch 3-7837-3 H1 (Peggy Stern—Thomas Chapin Quartet)
REMEMBERING TREE FRIENDS—Koch 7858 (Kirk Nurock)
DO YOU HEAR A MOTION?—enja 80522 (Marty Ehrlich)
THE TRAVELLER'S TALE—enja 79630 (Ehrlich)
PLIANT PLAIN—enja 5065 (Ehrlich)
NICE VIEW—JMT 314 514 013 (Tim Berne's Chaos Totale)
PACE YOURSELF—JMT 834-442 (Chaos Totale)
HIDDEN IN PLAIN VIEW: THE LEGACY OF ERIC DOLPHY—New World
 Co. intercurrents 80472 (Jerome Harris)
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Robert Dick

The Outer Limits



Known worldwide for his expertise beyond style, genre or repertoire, Robert Dick is especially hard on his chosen axe, the flute, since he knows what it can really do. Having turned it inside out, he's decided the flute lacks the vocal inflections that drive modern music.

"There really *is* a reason why nobody has played Chicago blues on the flute," Dick says. "I intend to change that."

Sure, Dick has recorded such deliberately showy Western classical works as the caprices of 19th century violin virtuoso Paganini. But his main passion and identity is with *new* music: 20th century composition, the ambitious American jazz, rock, r&b and pop of the 1960s in conjunction with the timeless, beautiful music of the ancient East and historic West.

As demonstrated most recently on *Jazz Standards On Mars*, a collaboration with violinist/composer/arranger David Soldier (see Page 47), Dick is master of flutes from contrabass to piccolo. He emits bamboo bansuri intimations to introduce Coltrane's "India," mouthy wah-wah imitations on Hendrix's "Machine Gun," faint yet distinct whistle tones, chordal multiphonics, flutter-tongued trills, reversed "cymbal splashes," percussive key slaps and loud howls, besides the slender wand's characteristic lissome sound.

"Robert is always stressing new ways of playing an instrument," says Soldier, leader of the Soldier String Quartet and the expanded cast accompanying Dick on *Mars*, which features violin soloist Regina Carter, bassists Mark Dresser, Kermit Driscoll and Richard Bona, drummers Steve Argüelles and Ben Perowsky and vibist Valerie Naranjo. Soldier claims that Dolphy's ode to the Italian avant garde flutist "Gazzelloni" and his "Something Sweet, Something Tender," Wayne Shorter's "Water Babies" (originally recorded by Miles' quintet) and Ornette Coleman's "Three Wishes" (from his '96 album *Tone Dialing*) deserve full recognition as jazz standards on Earth and every other planet.

Dick clearly agrees—as he's never been content to confirm the past or fulfill conventional expectations. He's authored *The Other Flute*, *Tone Development Through Extended Techniques* and *Circular Breathing For The Flutist* (available from his Multiple Breath Music Company) and designed new flutes of unusual materials (stainless steel bodies, silicon pads). He's developed original fingering systems and invented ingenious improvements like a whammy-bar for the flute: a telescopic headjoint (inside a teflon sleeve) that connects to two little arms on the lip plate that come around the chin, allowing the flutist to move his hands or head for way-bent pitches. But mostly, he plays from the gut.

By Howard Mandel
Photo by R. Andrew Lepley



Born in New York and directed from childhood toward musical virtuosity, Dick heard the path he'd take as a kid encountering the piccolo solo in singer Bobby Vee's hit "Rockin' Robin." Pop and rock were verboten in the Dick household; "my classical education didn't hold me back more than 15 years or so," he says with a rueful laugh. At age 19, the flutist made a "left turn" to evade a seemingly preordained fate of holding the first chair in a major symphony orchestra. From early experience, he meant to stretch the flute's so-called limits.

"Oh, yes, the flute's single-note limitation was incredibly annoying to me,"

do more than that then, I was still focused on the conventional orchestra. But eventually those seeds did sprout.

"Every wind instrument has a certain arrangement of the air inside the instrument," Dick explains. "On flute, there is no arrangement that does not have the potential to be overblown at least once, and usually from four to six times. You can catch the instrument at the crossover node, where two tones or three tones are vibrating, and that can be controlled and sustained. When I heard orchestra musicians' attempts to play this stuff in contemporary chamber pieces, the players would be making

Besides allying closely with David Soldier (first on *Third Stone From The Sun*, the revision of Hendrix tunes produced by Marty Ehrlich for New World Records), Dick has been a member of New Winds with reedists Ned Rothenberg and J.D. Parran, and the Klaus König Orchestra—in which he *does* get to stand and improvise his solos. But back to his breakthroughs:

"I was listening to rock & roll guitar players, and what impressed me most was the incredible range of sound that they had, like Hendrix creating universes. The classical flute players I knew were in a much smaller zone. They did

"I didn't want to switch to some other instrument. Therefore, the instrument had to change, the way of playing it had to change."

Dick recalls. "As a child I observed my mother teaching piano, and students played one note at a time, then two notes, then chords. My older brother played cello, first one note, then chords. I assumed on flute you started playing one note and when you had that together, you played chords.

"There was always a moment in my lessons when I learned a new note or two. One day we reached the new note moment and there was no new note; my teacher just went on. I said, 'Don't we have a new note?' He said, 'No, you know all the notes.' I said, 'Then don't we go to two notes?' And he said, 'No, it's just one note.' Well, I was the most pissed-off 9-year-old imaginable! One note! It's a beautiful note, but everyone else has a beautiful note, and chords, too. That moment was where the whole thing I do got born.

"My first ideas came from a picture I saw of an old-time flute player who'd had an arm shot off in the Boer War. Someone had built him a flute with a mechanism so he could play it with one hand. I thought if he can play it with one hand, I can have a mouthpiece that goes to two bodies with a mechanism for each hand, sort of the Jimmy Page double-necked guitar thing. Later, when I studied acoustics, I found out that wouldn't work because the breath doesn't go left or right according to traffic directions. But for a 9-year-old, there was some thinking there.

"Then in high school—I went to Music and Art in Manhattan, the Fame school—Ben Lindeman, a teacher who'd been a big band jazz player, showed me an article in a 1965 *Perspectives in New Music* by John Heiss that detailed 15 flute double-stops [ways to play two tones at once]. I dutifully wrote them down and tried them. I wasn't ready to

faces and saying, 'Oh, this is terrible.' But I intuited that the real problem was they hadn't practiced this stuff. Even the C major scale sounds terrible before you learn it. I said to myself, 'I'll be the guy who practices it.' I believed there was something there. I didn't want to switch to some other instrument. Therefore, the instrument had to change, the way of playing it had to change.

"When I was 19 I was the first flute player in Tanglewood at the Berkshire Music Center orchestra, which showed me orchestra life at the highest level. You were supposed to leave with stars in your eyes, but I was in the phase of life when so many things are beginning, and was playing a lot of repertoire for the second and third time. Oh, my God, I thought, I'm in a holding pattern already?

"You know, orchestra playing varies a lot in terms of one's musical responsibility, but even in the solo flute or solo oboe or concertmaster chair, you don't stand up to play your solo, you don't improvise your solo. I've been lucky enough to sit in the absolute center of the orchestra and have a sonic experience no one else has. But aside from the incredible sound bath, there's not much I miss from symphony playing. Certainly not the frustrated personalities.

"When I first started meeting jazz musicians, I was impressed how much nicer they were to each other than classical musicians. Everybody was having such a hard time that they weren't going to be backbiting like crazy—something classical musicians would do really well to learn, because hard times have reached the classical world in a big way. Jazz people were mellowed out, and supporting each other. Not that people in jazz aren't competitive; we're all on the phone calling the same people for the same gigs. But it's different."

beautiful things within that zone, but often the classical music culture teaches a fear of going *outside* the zone. Supposedly, if you do that you'll lose what you've worked for. I think that's a sign of ignorance. The more you know, the better you know *all* the things you know. One reason my work has been accepted within the flute community worldwide is that flutists have come to realize if they do all the exercises, learn these kinds of sounds, it will make them better players even if they have *no* interest in doing something creative.

"When I was in high school one of my private teachers, an old guy named Henry Zlotnik, had heard a recording of Gazzelloni playing these pieces by Varese, Maderna and Berio, and, to his credit, told me about it. Gazzelloni had pioneered playing two notes at once—giant steps, though hearing it now, one realizes how tentative these steps were in the '50s. I went to the Lincoln Center library after school one day and got Gazzelloni's record on the Time label with a gold cover, put it on the turntable, and it blew my mind. I didn't know quite what to make of it, but I took it in.

"There's always a moment when you're really ready to hear something, and before, you're not. I'm one of the biggest Jimi Hendrix fans anywhere, but the first time I heard him it just bounced off. I came to Rahsaan [Roland Kirk] very late, in the early '90s. I should have heard him 20 years earlier, but I didn't. Finally, I enjoyed the vocal quality he gets.

"Rahsaan got those vocal qualities by singing, adding his voice to the flute. I do that some, but mostly use my lips, tongue and fingers to *fuse* with the flute, to make it an outgrowth of my lungs, my body. One of the great things about the jazz tradition is that it's expected each

individual come up with a signature sound. How long does it take to tell that you're listening to Sonny Rollins? A second? Less, usually. I can get Eric Dolphy in two notes—or one! There often hasn't been that distinction in jazz flute.

"Dolphy was on his way there; there's no question that had he lived, his flute playing would have reached the level of his bass clarinet and alto sax playing. James Newton has done a lot of nice things, and has his own approach to vocalese stuff, but I gather he's focusing on his teaching activities. He told me years ago that he wanted to concentrate on writing symphonic music, too. Lord knows that takes time. Composition is a slow, painstaking process."

Dick surely has his own sound, comprising decisive attacks and assured intonation, an impressive sweep of dynamics and a hefty yet pliant stream. His compositions often turn on his extended techniques: "Sometimes, Perpetually," Dick's one original on *Jazz Standards On Mars*, opens with airy overtones and breath that's sucked in through the blow hole.

He's published two sets of concert etudes, as well as a couple of different pieces that appear on such of his albums as *The Other Flute*, all solo, and *Steel And Bamboo*, a program of duets with Steve Gorn, Asian flutist extraordinaire. But Dick is modest about that repertoire, in comparison to such touchstones as the Martian jazz standards.

"I've got a book of little childrens' pieces featuring different weird new sounds on the way," Dick says. "For flute, of course. When I write for other instruments, it's generally because they're members of bands I'm in. I don't mind being known as a flute composer; whatever mark I make, it *will* be as that. Why not? Chopin wasn't ashamed of being known as a *piano* composer."

And think of how many notes Chopin had. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

"My concert flute is a custom stainless steel flute made by Danish Sheridan. The bass flute is the first open-holed bass flute ever, made by Eva Kingma in Holland. My piccolo is a very old Haynes metal instrument. My contrabass flute is made by Kotato in Japan, which specializes in low flutes—it goes two octaves below the flute."

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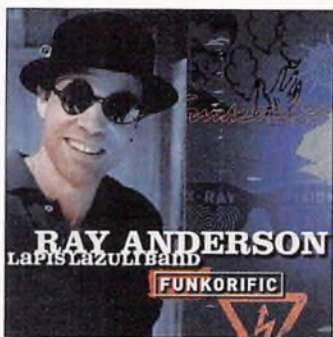
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CD REVIEWS

FEBRUARY 1999



Ray Anderson Lapis Lazuli Band

Funkorific
enja 9340

★★★

Ray Anderson and Amina Claudine Myers lose me when they start to sing. They both have bold voices, but their strongest suits lie elsewhere. Unfortunately, Anderson's been turning to songs more frequently in recent years, with his Alligator Band and in cameos on his own records dating back to his version of "Wine" on the 1985 enja record *Old Bottles, New Wine*. *Funkorific* is no exception, precariously perched as it is on the edge between a killing instrumental blues outing and a half-baked contemporary blues vocal record.

On voiceless tracks: ladles and ladles of blues, super-cool organ blues, blues blown by a man without an unswinging bone. Anderson's unaccompanied trapeze act midway through "Willie & Muddy" (also released on *Cheer Up* on bat ART, featuring the trombonist's trio with drummer Han Bennink and guitarist Christy Doran) is well worth the trek to the last track. Along the way, "Pheromonal" is pure pleasure. Anderson's seemingly effortless way with the horn deployed without distraction on a simmering blues; guitarist Jerome Harris plays nicely here, too, not succumbing to bend=blues banality but creating an economical little soul-jazz statement. "Runnin' Round" is a jumpy r&b number that could even be a swing revival hit, and Myers is out front on "Hammond Eggs," where she sounds relaxed and fab picking through its direct lines. Anderson goes for a Crescent City vibe on the title track, not hammering it too far into the ground, but letting the march-time breathe. Every week is Mardi Gras on Ray's bus.

The crooned ditties feel more like treading water than actually swimming anywhere. Another version of "Damaged But Good" wasn't called for—it already appeared a few years back on *Don't Mow Your Lawn* and wasn't that compelling even then. The band phones it in on the atrocious "Mirror Mirror," the record's vainest attempt at pop crossover. Anderson's goosball delivery—scatting, mugging, hamming and tossing a shard of his multiphonic vocalese into

"Monkey Talk"—sometimes comes off like a satchel-mouthed Loudon Wainwright III, and while Myers has vibrant pipes, she speaks more than she sings on this disc. A brief snapshot of untapped potential appears as they harmonize at the end of "I'm Not A Spy."

Far as I'm concerned, Ray Anderson sings clearly enough through his trombone. We wouldn't need any more than that.

—John Corbett

Funkorific: Pheromonal; Runnin' Round; Mirror Mirror; Damaged But Good; Hammond Eggs; Monkey Talk; I'm Not A Spy; Funkorific; Willie & Muddy. (54:44)

Personnel: Ray Anderson, trombone, voice; Amina Claudine Myers, Hammond B-3 organ, piano, voice; Jerome Harris, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Tommy Campbell, drums.



Phil Woods featuring Johnny Griffin

The Rev & I
Blue Note 94100 22

★★★★

Phil Woods, who is the most consistent and creative one-man preservation hall of bebop playing today, joins fellow bopper and contemporary Johnny Griffin for a bright and agile run through a batch of nine standards and originals.

I invoke images of Preservation Hall with a thought in mind. Bebop flowered in the late '40s, only 30 years after the first recordings of New Orleans music. During that time jazz traveled so far as to make its early music often sound quaint and museum-like. But today it's been more than 50 years since those early bop records came along. Yet, those who continue to work on its models seem to have no sense of themselves as preservationists. The form simply remains a cornerstone of today's jazz.

Woods has a rich, warm sound, full of lyricism but with an unsentimental edge of astringency that still carries a bit of the Charlie Parker spirit and can quote occasional Parker licks with startling conviction. Those familiar with the old Savoy, for example, will grin in recognition as Woods jumps into "We Could Make Beautiful Music Together" with the line from Bird's 1947

"Bluebird." Or there's the way "Cool Blues" falls so naturally into the last eight bars of Woods' first bridge on his own "Before I Left." And, of course, "Now's The Time" (which everyone quotes) is inside "Red Top."

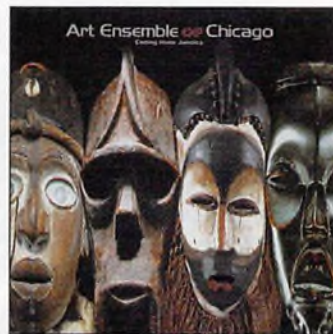
Not that Woods ever gives the impression that he is thinking, How would Bird do it? Bird wouldn't do it like Woods does it on "The Rev And I," with its bold and graceful minor key clusters. Woods has far too much confidence in his own resources, as his long career has demonstrated. The same can be said for Johnny Griffin, whose big romantic tenor sound is the constant counterpoint to Woods. The two roll into some elegantly raucous conversation on "Hand In Glove."

There are also some fine (and sometimes overdubbed) ensembles sprinkled through the solo work, which reminds us that this has cohesiveness as well as spontaneity. The rhythm section shadows everything with savvy.

—John McDonough

The Rev & I: The Rev And I; We Could Make Beautiful Music Together; Hand in Glove; All Too Soon; Red Top; I'm So Scared Of Girls; Loose Change; Dutch Morning; Before I Left. (67:14)

Personnel: Phil Woods, alto saxophone; Johnny Griffin, tenor saxophone; Cedar Walton, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Ben Riley, drums; Bill Goodwin, percussion (1).



Art Ensemble of Chicago

Coming Home Jamaica
Atlantic 83149

★★★

I'll always have a place in my heart for the Art Ensemble. Back in the mid-70s, when I first heard jazz's call, the quintet secured my interest by bringing a mix of elation, mystery, subversion, irony, invention and pride to the stage each time they performed. That was when the quintet was constantly touring, and both its inner and outer communication levels were sublime enough to support their status as eloquent renegades. No question: The band's insurrectionist rhetoric was bolstered by a keen playfulness. Just when you thought they were going to rip your head off with a half hour's worth of commo-

KEY

Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor

★★★★★
★★★★
★★★
★★
★

tion, they'd squeeze out a sentimental parlor tune like "Walking In The Moonlight." Their forte was fucking with us.

But like Bob Willis says, time changes everything, and *Coming Home Jamaica* is a record about the pros and cons of longevity. Stay the course over three decades and you're likely to nurture an extraordinary rapport. You're also likely to see that old wolf called formula at the door. When Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, Malachi Favors and Famoudou Don Moya (Joseph Jarman, a Buddhist priest, split to run a Brooklyn dojo in '93) set up shop in the Caribbean to record their first studio record in six years, they didn't bring many new ideas with them. *Coming Home Jamaica* finds a handful of funk, groove and calypso sketches sharing space with a few thoughtful and intricate abstractions. The former live or die on the level of élan generated; the latter are defined by their plush intricacy. It's generally the same schematic that drove the band's ECM studio discs of the early '80s.

Critics who bemoan the awkward manner in which the Art Ensemble addresses "straight" tunes turn a deaf ear to the band's inherent sense of whimsy. The group has long embraced standard jazz schematics with tongue in cheek. "Grape Escape," which opens the new disc, is a cookie-cutter blues blast that brings plenty of caprice to honking and shouting clichés, just like "Funky AEOC" did on *The Third Decade*. But mere esprit, which also drives "Strawberry Mango," "Lotta Colada" and the latest update of their infectious outro, "Odwalla Theme," is something the band has patented over the years, and this late in the game, these tracks are hobbled by a sense of predetermination that may just evoke

shrugs in seasoned fans. Indeed, "Mama Wants You" easily evokes "Dreaming Of The Masters," "Charlie M," or any of the classic walking bass ready-mades their garden has grown. Maybe that should be expected after 37 albums.

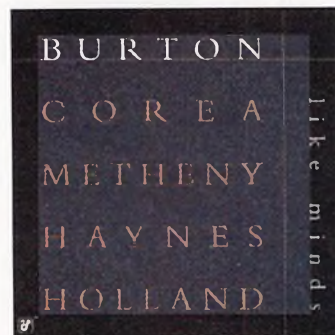
Richer are those pieces avoiding recipe. You can call "Jamaica Farewell" an abbreviated tone poem; for 1:56 Mitchell's idiosyncratic vocabulary waxes poignant, not unlike one of those *Scurdy McGurdy* ballads or *Urban Bushman's* "Peter And Judith." Ditto for Bowie's "Villa Tiamo" (1:47), another wistful lament. Of course, age brings refinement as well, and the disc's most gorgeous moments come during "Malachi," a piece that spotlights one of the band's strengths: making a mere trickle of music seem tantalizing. With just cerie trap plinks, solitary bass plunks and a blend of murmuring reeds and brass, the foursome create an alluring landscape.

So: no expectations dashed, no dreams fulfilled. *Coming Home Jamaica* is both predictable and pleasant, a somewhat meager album with moments of beauty made by a troupe that now seems more wry than radical. It's good to see them return to the mound. Let's hope that next time out they throw a few more curves.

—Jim Macnie

Coming Home Jamaica: Grape Escape; Odwalla Theme; Jamaica Farewell; Mama Wants You; Strawberry Mango; Villa Tiamo; Malachi; Lotta Colada. (41:40)

Personnel: Lester Bowie, trumpet, flugelhorn, bass drum; Roscoe Mitchell, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, soprano, flute and piccolo, bamboo sax, bamboo flute, percussion (bells, gongs, woodblocks, chimes, whistles); Malachi Favors, bass, percussion; Famoudou Don Moya, trap drums, congas, bongos, timbales, bass pan drum, bendir, percussion; Bahnmous Bowie, keyboard on "Strawberry Mango."



Gary Burton

Like Minds

Concord Jazz 98018

★★★½

As with so many all-star collaborations, the main challenge is for everyone to settle down and really hear each other and, in '60s parlance, to check one's ego at the door. Vibist/leader Gary Burton—maybe because he's the most self-effacing one here—manages to do just that, namely, get everyone to sound like they've been a band. This actually shouldn't have been too hard, given that all five of the players have been longtime musical companions in one form or another.

Like Minds succeeds as an event, and as the expression of old friends showcasing true musical empathy. Solos are just the right length all

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THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
RAY ANDERSON LAPIS LAZULI BAND <i>Funkorific</i>		★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
PHIL WOODS FEATURING JOHNNY GRIFFIN <i>The Rev & I</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½
ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO <i>Coming Home Jamaica</i>		★★★★½	★★	★★★	★★★★½
GARY BURTON <i>Like Minds</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½

CRITICS' COMMENTS

RAY ANDERSON LAPIS LAZULI BAND, *Funkorific*

Earthy and blustery, Anderson often seems fonder of the trombone's more novel and guttural sounds than the capabilities for which it was created. Though there are some passages of considerable zip ("Funkorific"), this is no triumph. Vocals on the all-original material seem to get worked up over very little.—JMD

Because funk is a social music at heart, the virtuoso trombonist's pop moves always feel more natural on stage. That said, this may well be his most convincing groove disc ever. The band kicks ass on the delirious uptempo bits and moans lasciviously on the slow blues. Great to hear Amina Myers singing again.—JM

Like so many sides of the past, the trombonist gives a good dose of himself through the collective wisdoms of jazz, blues and funk. This time out, the added features of Myers' organ and vocals send the proceedings into another, thoroughly delightful realm. His crack band helps get brother Ray's rare-in-jazz message of humor mixed with attitude across.—JE

PHIL WOODS FEATURING JOHNNY GRIFFIN, *The Rev & I*

Old pal vets join for a thoroughly enjoyable bop & blues romp. And with such a rhythm section, who wouldn't sound good? Griff: at once so majestic and nimble (check "All Too Soon"); Woods: piquant and gritty (check "Red Top"). The Little Giant may not be lining up for as many 50-yard dashes, but he's not looking over his shoulder much either. Cedar Walton's superior taste wins bonus points.—JC

I use the word piquant to describe the alto vet's sound; he's usually reveling in the zesty side of mainstream. With Griff at his side, this studio date gets a boost in ardor. But a bit more thoughtfulness in the layout or material might have given it a little extra juice.—JM

There are no real surprises with Phil Woods and Johnny Griffin: just solid musicianship. Highlights include "All Too Soon." Walton's swinging uptempo reworking of "Love For Sale" (titled "Hand In Glove") and the lovely ballad "I'm So Scared Of Girls." Woods sounds irascible, Griffin alternately rambunctious and boozy.—JE

ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO, *Coming Home Jamaica*

Always ready to surprise us, the Ensemble provides a cheerful package of wit, camp and crackle, all slightly but sufficiently off balance to keep us wondering which is which. Lester Bowie is the soloist of the hour here.—JMD

Ferocious independents, here's the Art Ensemble back on a major label brandishing their Down Beat Critics Poll Acoustic Jazz Group of the Year badge, and naming tunes after flavors of beverage: Fanfare for the warriors, indeed. If it was rivetting music, one could forgive the overt commercial conceit and the embarrassing titlage. But these are paste-on names for throwaway tunes. Flagging imaginations or sun-stroked commercial wilt-down? Either way. *Coming Home Jamaica* lacks the real juice that made 'em what they were.—JC

While virtuosity is not one of the AEC's strengths, pacing, development and storytelling are. With this album as a whole, they do a good job of combining wit, tenderness and a real sense of mystery. That they are referred to, and voted for, as a jazz group says much about their impact on the meaning of the music.—JE

GARY BURTON, *Like Minds*

The best of intentions without pretensions are rewarded here with some sparkling all-star rapport. Each man is at the top of his form, and undergirded by that drummer's drummer, Roy Haynes. One non-musical reservation: Corea's piano sometimes sounds curiously detached.—JMD

Some supergroups make good on the sum-of-parts expectation. This quintet shows the overlapping territories explored by Burton, Metheny and Corea—bright, impressionistic and not averse to poppy or folksy melodies. Fans of the ensemble's earlier partial amalgams won't be disappointed, particularly with Haynes' undeniable lift. And it's a very good setting for Metheny, if you dig his more head-on mainstream blowing.—JC

The content and interplay are fine. But between the leader's vibes, Chick's piano and Metheny's guitar, there's too much tonal overlap, and whatever sparks hit the air become somewhat muted. That makes this star quintet forsake some of its individuality.—JM

around, and the arrangements are imaginative. Corea's busy comping is held in check (at times, his piano sounds like it was recorded down the hall), and Metheny's light yet penetrating touch cuts through the swirl of musical personalities. Haynes plays it a little on the light side himself, busy but restrained, offering up a fair amount of expressive brushwork on Corea's extended piece "Futures" and Metheny's "For A Thousand Years" and superb stickwork on just about everything else. Holland's truly bright moments come on Burton's blues "Country Roads," when trading fours with Haynes on a rosy, swinging rendition of Gershwin's "Soon" and on the album's closer, Corea's "Straight Up And Down."

This vet quintet plays the emotionally cool program flawlessly (Burton's impeccable production certainly helps). Despite some fairly colorless material, compositional gems are spread across *Like Minds*: Metheny's dreamy "Tears Of Rain"; two of Corea's more notable, time-tested compositions, "Windows" and "Straight Up And Down"; and "Country Roads," the latter three dating back to the '60s. In fact, the uptempo, straightahead closer "Straight Up And Down" outlasts them all, both then and now, as all five members sound like they finally broke a sweat.

Call it aging gracefully, *Like Minds* suggests five eminently contented gentlemen of jazz who've "made it," and are having some fun. Like a bunch of country pickers going down memory lane, with a few twists and turns, they enjoy the simple comforts of a common musical agenda as well as a confidence in each other's artistic abilities, and with nothing to prove, to boot. There's no one upstaging anyone else, least of all the leader. Like minds, indeed.

—John Ephland

Like Minds: Question And Answer; Elucidation; Windows; Futures; Like Minds; Country Roads; Tears Of Rain; Soon; For A Thousand Years; Straight Up And Down. (68:23)
Personnel: Gary Burton, vibes; Chick Corea, piano; Pat Metheny, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.



Herbie Hancock

Gershwin's World
Verve 314 557 797

★★★★½

Gershwin's *World* is the rare grand slam, an important album that's also fun to hear. It repays every kind of listening—easy, close and even (especially) frequent, with pleasures that are accessible, sensuous and engrossing.

The highlights start with the "Overture (Fascinating Rhythm)," a snippet of percussion discussion that's clear as a compass pointing to the heart of the Jazz Age matter: that rhythm gives rise and shape to melody, leading to previously unexplored harmonic extrapolations. Skip not lightly over "It Ain't Necessarily So"; this cut (and the similarly cast "Here Come De Honey Man") with trumpeter Eddie Henderson slyly insinuating Miles' muted signature sound, James Carter rising up bodacious, Kenny Garrett stretching soulfully, Herbie Hancock unfolding brilliant if self-deprecating piano licks—all tethered by bassist Ira Coleman, upswept by African drums and Terri Lyne Carrington's traps—is an ultra-sophisticated realization of what Gershwin and other visionaries in the '20s foresaw as jazz's potential.

Get set, then, for one of the year's outstanding single tracks: Joni Mitchell, more noir, heart-breaking and worldly wise than ever. She simply slays "The Man I Love." Her voice is intimately recorded: Its thick and thin and hard-earned character cracks are captured in all their glory, while her phrasing is as narratively cogent yet evidently casual as Billie Holiday's. Wayne Shorter's tenor wafts in to wrap around her like cashmere—and after all these years, doesn't their partnership beg comparison to Pres and Lady Day's? Repeat track 3 as often as necessary, but don't get hung up there—you still want to hear Shorter on tenor blast through "Cotton Tail" and rail on soprano on the second Mitchell star-turn (with a Stevie Wonder jazz harmonica solo!), "Summertime."

Oh, yes—Stevie Wonder. He tears wildly into "St. Louis Blues," taking its eternal complaint back to pre-blues roots and forward to right now. It's Wondertime—a tour de force—another album-stopper! But don't fail to note what Hancock plays on piano on these tracks and all the others. You can slink to his tantalizing cross-rhythms, or sink into the opulence of his renditions of Gershwin's so-called "legitimate" pieces: "Lullaby" (with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra), "Prelude In C# Minor" (with soprano Kathleen Battle, cello, bass, African guitarist and a spare Brazilian rhythm part), and the ruminative movement of Ravel's "Concerto For Piano And Orchestra In G."

On these through-composed works, Hancock can turn too ruminative, to a degree losing the composition's thread—like a man who's never met a harmonic resolution he likes to let stand. But on the smoking combo tracks he commands the jazz business, comping to inspire and enhance, never contain or control. He sparkles in duet with Chick Corea on a "free stride" version of James P. Johnson's "Blueberry Rhyme." Their chops are up, their danders, too, and though the track's not long, it's satisfying. Hancock's finale, a four-minute solo "Embraceable You," is a piano ballad performance as tenderly lyrical as you're likely to encounter anywhere, its ending a snowflake that simply melts away.

This estimable success follows several earnest, ambitious but flawed attempts by Hancock to reassert his all-genres musical vision. Maybe it's ironic that *Gershwin's World* makes good on his intent for new standards—to refresh the jazz world's habits regarding repertoire, arrangements and interpretation. By bringing current thought and practice to some of America's most long-treasured materials,

rather than imposing jazz aspirations and strategies on songs of distinctly pop-rock genesis, Hancock lends weight to Ellington's dictum that there are only two kinds of music, good and bad (not to say pop rock's bad, but rather that the old standards don't have to prove themselves fit for improvisation, so can stand up to radical revision and juxtaposition with chamber group renditions, too). Kudos to conceptualists Hancock and producer Robert Sadin for appraising the Gershwins' (George and Ira's) world as an embraceable heritage; the result is an in-depth and enlightening evocation of the American century's musical sources, one of the best to celebrate the composer whose centennial occasioned a couple dozen such high-concept tributes in 1998. But from first listening,

Gershwin's World is even better than that: a CD to turn both jazz and non-jazz pals on to, to have near your bed, play in your car and recall with delight in your mind. —Howard Mandel

Gershwin's World: Overture (Fascinating Rhythm); It Ain't Necessarily So; The Man I Love; Here Come De Honey Man; St. Louis Blues; Lullaby; Blueberry Rhyme; It Ain't Necessarily So (Interlude); Cotton Tail; Summertime; My Man's Gone Now; Prelude In C# Minor; Concerto for Piano And Orchestra In G, 2nd Movement; Embraceable You. (67:23)

Personnel: Herbie Hancock, piano; Madou Dembelle, djembé (1, 2); Massamba Diop, talking drum (1, 2); Cyro Baptista, percussion (1, 4, 8, 11, 12); Bireyima Guiye, Cheik Mbaye, percussion (1); Eddie Henderson, trumpet (2, 4, 8); Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone (2, 4, 8); James Carter, tenor saxophone (2, 4); Ira Coleman, bass (2-4, 8-10, 12); Terri Lyne Carrington, drums (2, 3, 5, 9); Joni Mitchell, vocal

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Omar Hakim • Drums

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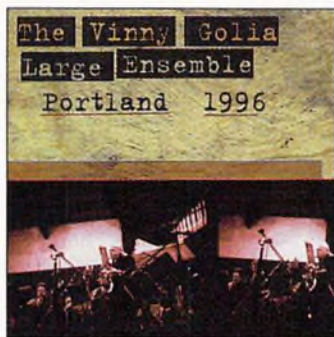
February 9th, 1999

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(3, 10): Wayne Shorter, tenor saxophone (3, 9, 10); Marlon Graves, guitar (4), percussion (11); Robert Sadin, percussion programming (4, 11), producer; Stevie Wonder, vocal (5), harmonica (5, 10); Alex AI, bass (5); Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (6, 13); Chick Corea, piano (7); Bakithi Kumalo, bass (11), guitar (12); Kathleen Battle, soprano (12).



Vinny Golia Large Ensemble

Portland 1996
9 Winds 0180

★ ★ ★ ½

Who besides Vinny Golia would even attempt to amass an ensemble of nine woodwinds, seven brass, six strings, three percussion and keyboards for a one-night stand of original music in Portland, Ore.? God bless him. And while the live recording quality on this "as-is" album leaves a lot to be desired, there's some good listening here.

Golia is an unconventional autodidact who works in a grand style, with broad, messy strokes, mixing take-no-prisoners improv with rigorous composition. He takes obvious delight in the range of sounds at his command in the Large Ensemble, from tuba to piccolo—a sort of Mingus meets Stravinsky at the Hollywood Bowl. Of the three compositions on this disc, "Surrounded By Assassins" is the most consistent. Full of nightmarish angst, evoking your choice of apocalyptic political tragedies, it moves from an angular theme for strings to solos that include Charles Fernandez playing achingly sad bassoon, accompanied by eerily vocal string glissandos, and Golia in a high-energy soprano squall.

"Blue Hawk (For Ben, Pres And The Hawk)," a bit long at 26 minutes, is a dream excursion to the smoke-filled clubs of yesteryear, with Bill Plake doing tenor saxophone honors, with appropriately warbling vibrato, followed by several solos in unruly swing time, with a wonderfully Ellingtonian riff erupting occasionally in the background. All well and good, until an unrelated brass fanfare, dark and chattering, enters near the end, and the piece melts into the next composition, with no apparent resolution or conclusion.

"Heighten: A Mini Suite In 4 Sections" returns to the nightmare, though not before exploring a New Orleans brass band pulse under an impassioned Jeff Gauthier violin solo, a section of splintered woodwind cacophony riding on an ominous bellow of Wagnerian brass,

some random, Kabuki-like percussion and a pipe organ outing that borders on Gothic parody.

I don't know. I guess it's a good idea to grab 'em when you can, but I'd love to hear a clean and considered studio take on these pieces someday. (And no doubt Golia would, too.)

—Paul de Barros

Portland 1996: Surrounded By Assassins; Blue Hawk (for Ben, Pres And The Hawk); Heighten: A Mini Suite In 4 Sections. (64:41)

Personnel: Vinny Golia, conductor, woodwinds; Kim Richmond, Steve Adams, Steve Fowler, Bill Plake, Charles Fernandez, woodwinds; Sal Cracchiolo, John Fumo, Rob Blakeslee, trumpet and flugelhorn; Michael Vlatkovich, George McMullen, trombone; Robie Hioki, bass trombone; William Roper, tuba; David Johnson, chimes, timpani, vibraphone, marimba; Brad Dultz, marimba, timpani, bells, hand percussion; Wayne Peet, keyboards, piano; Harry Scorzo, Jeff Gauthier, violin; Jonathan Golove, Peggy Lee, cello; Ken Filiano, Joel Hamilton, bass; Alex Cline, drums, percussion; Stephanie Henry, conductor.



Eric Marienthal

Walk Tall
i.e. Music 314 557 740

★ ½

It was said in the '40s and '50s that saxophonists, particularly altoists, had to wait for the next Charlie Parker record to know what to play. It could be said of Eric Marienthal that he probably waits for the next David Sanborn CD to know when to take a breath.

Marienthal, who supposedly intended this effort as a tribute to Cannonball Adderley, says he saw Cannon at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, Calif., in 1975, the year of his death. Eric, who was in high school at the time, says in his liner blurb that "this record was a true labor of love because the music of Cannonball Adderley has always been so inspiring to me." One would tend to think, however, that Marienthal never really "heard" Cannon or his blistering intensity and funkiness, at least from the evidence on this CD.

Marienthal continues that "Harvey [Mason, the drummer and producer of this album] and I like to think that this could possibly be the kind of record Cannonball might make if he were with us today." Adderley might not roll over in his grave at that statement, but his fans would probably demand an apology—if they listened to this CD, something they likely wouldn't be caught dead doing. His soprano work is only a slight improvement.

So Marienthal probably sells more product

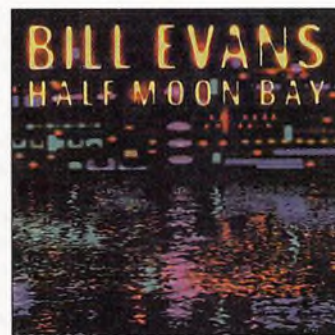
than Cannon ever did. That's a sad statement, but one that's undoubtedly true.

What to say about this music? It's lightly funky, although without that committed soulfulness that Cannon had in every fiber of his being. This CD is perhaps not a travesty, just so slick and pleasantly sappy that one listen will put most jazz listeners into sugar shock.

—Will Smith

Walk Tall: Mercy, Mercy, Mercy; Work Song; Walk Tall; Skylark; Imagine That; The Way You Look Tonight; Here In My Heart; Sunstone; If You Need Me To; Country Preacher; Unit 7; Groove Runner. (55:20)

Personnel: Eric Marienthal, alto saxophone (1–4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12), soprano saxophone (5, 8, 10); Chris Botti (2), Chuck Findley (3), trumpet; Rob Mullins (2, 3, 5, 7, 10), Russell Ferrante (6, 8, 11), Harvey Mason Jr. (3, 9, 10), John Beasley (4), Ronnie Foster (11), Jeff Lorber (12), keyboards, bass and drum programming; Lee Ritenour (1, 6, 11), guitar, bass, drum and keyboard programming; Michael Thompson (3, 5, 7, 12), Alan Hinds (2), guitar; Ralph Morrison III (4, 8), violin; Melvin Davis (2, 7, 10), Chuck Domanico (4, 8), Stanley Clarke (6, 11), Vail Johnson (12), bass; Reggie Hamilton (3), acoustic and electric bass; Harvey Mason (2–11), drums, (9), keyboards; Luis Conte (8), percussion; Heather Mason (1, 8, 9), Philip Ingram (1), Kevyn Lettau (8), Michael Mishaw (8), Steve Russell (9), vocals.



Bill Evans
Half Moon Bay
Milestone 9282

★ ★ ★

Piano Player
Columbia/Legacy 65361

★ ★ ★ ½

Fred Hersch
Evanessence
Evidence 22204

★ ★ ★ ½

Bill Evans has been dead for more than 18 years, but his reputation as a seminal figure in music (and not just jazz) continues to grow. His music keeps getting released, reissued and re-released. At least one major biography is due out soon. And the number of Evans tributes, both recorded as well as spoken, written and played live seem undiminished.

The reissue of pianist Fred Hersch's *Evanessence* (from 1990) grouped with Evans' performances on *Piano Player* and *Half Moon Bay* cover the gamut of potential Evans material

available: A tribute, reissued Evans music and unreleased material. The latter two discs contain music not previously released (eight of *Piano Player's* 11 tunes are new to the market, all of *Half Moon Bay* is new).

It's instructive to hear the heartfelt *Evanescence* next to Evans himself. Evans is heard in many contexts throughout. *Piano Player* is a record-company creation of material available to Columbia through many guises, starting with a great George Russell chart from 1957 ("All About Rosie") and running through music recorded during his tenure with the label in 1970-'71. *Half Moon Bay* is a live club date from just a little more than two years later.

Hersch is clearly in Evans' thrall, but still retains his own musical personality. He plays Evans' songbook with a delicacy not found with Evans himself, especially later Evans. And hats off to Hersch for the great assemblage that helps take him through a decidedly informed, personalized set that includes such rarities as Evans' "My Bells" and "We Will Meet Again." While Hersch's take on Evans is authentic, it lacks the emotional reach that Evans gave us. However, there is room for his voice in such standout material as "Turn Out The Stars," "Remembering The Rain" and even his own medley of Ornette meets Miles ("Nardis/Lonely Woman") and his title track.

As for Evans himself, the results are mixed with "his" two releases. Of the releases when he was alive, 1974's *Since We Met* (Fantasy) is Evans' best live recording with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell. *Half Moon Bay* approximates *Since We Met's* emotional tenor and program, but lacks its balance, execution and pristine recording quality. Still, for

Evans fans (or should I say fanatics?) the inclusion of such Evans standbys (all from Nov. 4, '73) as "Very Early," Denny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now," "Who Can I Turn To" and "What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life" are transformed and re-energized. Morell's drums get the job done, while Gomez almost seems to be the co-star with Evans, getting ample solo space and a prominent place in the sound mix. His solos on "Autumn Leaves" and "Who Can I Turn To" are songs in themselves, with great, swinging support from Morell. (One note: Two songs are mislabeled. "How My Heart Sings" is incorrectly identified as "Elsa," while "Time Remembered" is given the title "Sareen Jurer.")

Piano Player is another animal altogether. Made up of material that covers a great deal of his career (with sizable gaps), there is much to rejoice in here. The bulk of the material comes from when Evans was a Columbia artist in the early '70s. The highlights, however, are the first two numbers: Evans with George Russell and orchestra on the aforementioned "All About Rosie" (Evans demonstrating his penchant for large-ensemble interplay) and a live 1958 version of "My Funny Valentine" when the pianist was with Miles Davis (a definitive, exquisite rendition that leaves the two romantics—with a solo from bassist Paul Chambers and drum accompaniment—alone to ruminate).

Two hip cuts from a Dave Pike album previously reissued on CD (and now out of print) lead up to the duets and trios with Gomez and Morell. Gomez's normally lush, acoustic bass sounds lightweight, thin throughout; and his attempt at electric bass on "Morning Glory" wrecks an otherwise pretty melody. "Django" is interesting, "Gone With The Wind" and "Fun

Ride" offer looks into rarely heard renditions. "T. T. T. (Twelve Tone Tune)" and "Comrade Conrad" are strong, definitive takes on intriguing harmonic material. The remaining songs are alternate versions of tunes originally released on *The Bill Evans Album* (Columbia).

What stands out among everything that Evans played and recorded is the emotional weight he gave to his performances. He never strayed too far from his roots, which, actually, were quite eclectic at times. But what he did with those roots continues to be the stuff of dreams, musical and otherwise. —John Ephland

Half Moon Bay: Waltz For Debby; Time Remembered; Very Early; Autumn Leaves; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life; Quiet Now; Who Can I Turn To; How My Heart Sings; Someday My Prince Will Come. (52:38)
Personnel: Bill Evans, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Marty Morell, drums.

Piano Player: All About Rosie (Third Section); My Funny Valentine; Vierz Blues; Besame Mucho; Morning Glory; Django; Waltz For Debby; T. T. T. (Twelve Tone Tune); Comrade Conrad; Gone With The Wind; Fun Ride. (72:14)
Personnel: Bill Evans, acoustic and electric pianos, with: (Track 1) Art Farmer, Louis Mucci, trumpet; Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Jim Buffington, french horn; Robert Di Domenico, flute; John LaPorta, alto saxophone; Hal McKusick, tenor saxophone; Manuel Ziegler, bassoon; Teddy Charles, vibes; Margaret Rose, harp; Barry Galbraith, guitar; Joe Benjamin, bass; Teddy Summer, drums; (Track 2) Miles Davis, trumpet; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums; (Tracks 3, 4) Dave Pike, vibes; Herbie Lewis, bass; Walter Perkins, drums; (Tracks 5-10) Eddie Gomez, bass, electric bass (5); (Track 11) Eddie Gomez, bass; Marty Morell, drums.

Evanescence: My Bells; Turn Out The Stars; You Must Believe In Spring; Evanescence; Nardis/Lonely Woman; We Will Meet Again; Peri's Scope; Time Remembered; I Wish I Knew; Remembering The Rain; Alice In Wonderland. (62:01)
Personnel: Fred Hersch, piano; Marc Johnson (1, 2, 4, 8).

C. G. Conn

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Michael Formanek (3, 5, 6, 9-11), bass; Jeff Hirschfield, drums; Toots Thielemans, harmonica (3, 6, 10); Gary Burton, vibes (1, 4, 7).

Hamiet Bluiett & Concept

Live at Carlos I: Another Night
Just A Memory 9136

★★★½



Hamiet Bluiett D.D. Jackson Mor Thiam

Same Space
Justin Time 109

★★★★

These aural snapshots—the former from a weeklong 1986 engagement at a defunct New York City club and the latter a mid-1997 studio session—offer the usual displays of ferocity and technical skill by Hamiet Bluiett, as well as a mellowing and growing awareness of communicating with his audience.

The wide interval leaps from his baritone's roaring, foghorn bottom tones to pinched, high-note squeals, and the drivingly intense but more mainstream middle-register playing remain stylistic hallmarks. His work on contrabass clarinet is an extension of that, while the wood flute is a quieter essence.

In the effort with Concept, Bluiett exhibits his usual high-energy work in a solidly swinging fashion, mixing a couple of standards with three of his originals. It is the second of three CDs from that club date.

Don Pullen is nicely controlled, only occasionally getting into the slashing style where he pummels the piano with knuckles, the back of his hand, forearm, etc. The flurries and clusters of notes remain. Fred Hopkins and Idris Muhammad are rock solid, but Chief Bey fits in only while playing African drums. His work with shakers is annoyingly static and intrusive.

The best track on the *Carlos I* session is the blues "John," in which Bluiett offers a forceful, swinging and well-conceived solo and enters into late-in-the-performance duo commentary with Muhammad.

The cooperative venture with D.D. Jackson and Mor Thiam is more laid-back and surprisingly listener-friendly. It is a more Afrocentric outing, with Thiam's singing and rhythmic emphasis clearly felt. Jackson, a Pullen protege, is more lyrically oriented here, showing his classical roots and even a touch of Keith Jarrett on his solo track.

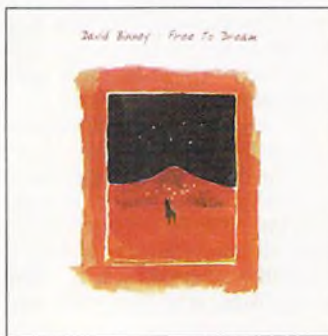
Each member of the trio contributes tunes, with Bluiett's compositional role by far the smallest. Jackson's "Titled-Un" and "Peace-Song," and Thiam's "Mon Dieu" stand out. —Will Smith

Live At Carlos I: Another Night: I'll Close My Eyes; Wide Open; Autumn Leaves; John; Sobre Una Nube (aka Nali Kola). (64:49)

Personnel: Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone; Don Pullen, piano; Fred Hopkins, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums; Chief Bey, African percussion.

Same Space: Aseeko; Closing Melody; Titled-Un; Can't Help It; Peace-Song; Jamm'd; Gnu Tune; Kasima; Spirit; Moment; A/B Original; Mon Dieu; Conversation. (59:58)

Personnel: Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone, contrabass clarinet, wood flute, poetry, rap; D.D. Jackson, piano, keyboards; Mor Thiam, djembe, vocals.



David Binney

Free To Dream
Mythology 10983

★★★★½

David Binney is one of many accomplished, free-thinking horn players associated with the downtown New York scene whose name regularly turns up as a sideman on cutting-edge projects. But Binney is more than a fearless saxophone warrior. He is a strikingly original composer/leader/conceptualist.

His most recent release, *Free To Dream*, provides Binney the designer with more tools and textures than ever before. There are 12 players here, and Binney uses them like a dramatist to set up revelatory moments, pivotal insights and breakthroughs. For example, only Binney could have thought up the two minutes of "I Lie Waiting" It begins with Edward Simon's widely spaced piano figures, which hang in the air like desolate hopes until crushed by a unison ensemble repeating a held note four times, like sighs of denial. In "Sea Of Allurement," 12 voices are mixed upon a broad nine-minute canvas in pointillistic details such as percussive chimings, juxtaposed small horn runs and piano meanderings. Gradually, these random elements cohere into a formal pattern, with the piano and horns rising and falling together in trance-inducing repetitions.

Free To Dream contains more soft, subtle

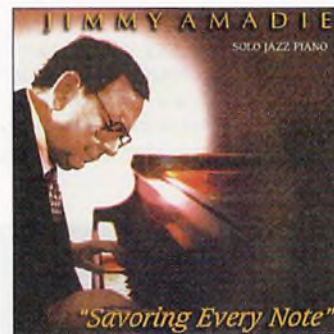
tones than anything in Binney's earlier work. "One Year Ago," for example, is composed chamber music, a study in rich voicings laced with Adam Rogers' classical guitar. But for Binney, these quieter passages create the opportunity for dramatic impact through contrast. Pieces like "Girl Of The Southern Sky" encompass huge dynamic swings, from the gentleness of Simon's lyrical piano lead-in over restrained percussion to shattering moments when all the horns assemble in collective shrieking while three drummers churn.

Aside from Binney's own passionate alto, Simon's strong, clear piano is the most dominant presence in this music. But all 12 players are deep inside their roles in realizing Binney's vision. *Free To Dream* proves that the capacity for surprise is alive and well in jazz. (If you have trouble finding it, call (888) 684-2968.)

—Thomas Conrad

Free To Dream: Goddess; Jalama; Oddman; One Year Ago; Girl Of The Southern Sky; Voice Of Reason; The Mondello Line; Where The Rain Shines; Free To Dream; I Lie Waiting ...; Sea Of Allurement. (66:55)

Personnel: David Binney, alto saxophone; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Alex Sipiagin, flugelhorn, trumpet; Clark Gayton, trombone; Jamie Baum, flute, alto flute; Doug Yates, bass clarinet; Adam Rogers, classical guitar; Edward Simon, piano; Scott Colley, bass; Jeff Hirschfield, drums; Kenny Wollesen, Daniel Sadownick, percussion.



Jimmy Amadie

Savoring Every Note
TP Recordings 101943

★★★

Always With Me
TP Recordings 92213

★★★

Dick Wellstood

Live At The Sticky Wicket
Arbor Jazz 19188

★★★★★

Solo jazz piano is a sound indigenous to bar rooms and lounges everywhere. Yet many of the best pianists have been reluctant to record extensively in the form, maybe because the risks are high. Earl Hines, Oscar Peterson, McCoy Tyner and others all dipped in to it, but sparingly.

If so, Jimmy Amadie, who played with Mel

Tormé and Woody Herman in the 1959–60 period, may be the biggest risk-taker of them all. He suffers from a chronic case of tendonitis, and he had to record these tunes in one four-to-five minute sprint at a time followed by four weeks recovery.

That instantly makes the two Amadie CDs (TPR, 407 Levering Mill Road, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004; (610) 667-0887) as much a human interest story as a musical one. I'll leave those details to Francis Davis' excellent notations and the Billy Taylor profile on *Sunday Morning* that was rerun in November.

Setting aside that special knowledge, Amadie's playing is clearly expert, fluent, earnest in its harmonic erudition and mildly virtuosic in character. But purely on its merits and absent that special knowledge, it's not the stuff of Hines, Peterson or Tyner. His swing and touch are light in the Teddy Wilson manner, and he is able to visualize familiar melodies with insight and musicality, all qualities equally evident on both CDs. But this is not enough for a breakthrough effort in a competitive piano scene.

Amadie's solo limits are clear in the first firm, confident notes of Dick Wellstood, recorded live in 1986, nine months before his death at 59. On this two-CD set, his left hand is a ferocious rhythm section to his right, and the register is always perfect. This is a rigid form. You don't get the luxury of missing a note or slipping out of tempo.

Wellstood's roots in stride predate Amadie's concerns with harmonies, but he made himself a master of many vocabularies and honed them all to perfection after swing and bebop forced neo-traditionalists to tighten their technique. Hear him graft the bass vamp from Ellington's "Dooji Wooji" onto "St. James Infirmary" or work "Groovin' High" and "Giant Steps" into idiosyncratic stride works. And for the kind of extravagant physical flash that seems so natural and easy, there's the second half of nearly every tune he plays when he switches tempo.

As old-fashioned, showboating piano that plays to melody and rhythm, not harmony, this is about as good as it gets. Not a lot of first-string musicians are working it today—Ralph Sutton and Judy Carmichael. But who else can play you "Melancholy Baby" in a real saloon?

—John McDonough

Savoring Every Note: Just Friends; You're My Love Of Life; Swinging Prez; Like Someone In Love; The Gospel As I Know It; Tenderly; If I Were A Bell; Are You There; Blue Bossa. (52:00)
Personnel: Jimmy Amadie, piano.

Always With Me: What Now; I'm Getting Sentimental Over You; Always With Me; Green Dolphin Street; My Lady; Yesterdays; Who Can I Turn To; Bossa/Swing; This Can't Be Love; Don't Blame Me; Autumn Leaves; Fly Me To The Moon; It Could Happen To You. (58:54)
Personnel: Jimmy Amadie, piano.

Live At The Sticky Wicket: Lullaby Of Birdland; How About You; If Dreams Come True; St. James Infirmary; Birmingham Breakdown; Ain't Misbehavin'; Snowy Morning Blues; Carolina Shout; There Is No Greater Love; Fidgety Feet; The Entertainer; Handful Of Keys; You Go To My Head; I've Got A Feeling I'm Falling; Zonky; Ain'tcha Got Music; Old Fashioned Love; Keep Off The Grass; Ring Dem Bells; Sophisticated Lady; Jumpin' Pumpkins; Someone To Watch Over Me; How Long Has This Been Going On; Liza; Maple Leaf Rag; Russian Rag; Caravan; Limehouse Blues; Diane; Giant Steps; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?; Groovin' High; The Pearls; Like Someone In Love; Shoeshine Boy; Lulu's Back In Town; Prelude To A Kiss; Pitter Panther Patter; My Melancholy Baby; Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now; March Of The Musketeers. (72:10/73:23)
Personnel: Dick Wellstood, piano.



Harvey Wainapel

The Hang Spirit Nectar 002

★★★★

In the course of the last decade, several young jazzers skipped over their dues-paying duties and graduated straight to the top of the class, scoring major label deals and thrusting themselves into bandleader roles prematurely. Plenty of bland jazz ensued as weak spins on bop classics were followed by tepid head-solo-head originals. On the flip side of the coin, work horses like reedman Harvey Wainapel patiently settled for support status. The San Francisco-based saxophonist played sideman gigs and studio sessions until he had something important to say at the helm of his own projects. His perseverance has paid off richly.

After two fine outings, the San Francisco-based Wainapel delivers his best recording to date, the cut-above bijou appropriately titled *The Hang*. It's relaxed, stirring and sumptuously swinging. There's nothing banal, ostentatious, flagrantly defiant or faux hip about Wainapel's organic set. Instead, it succeeds for all the right jazz reasons: impeccable straightahead arrangements, highly expressive execution and radiant ensemble fellowship.

Wainapel's band is a dream team that includes former Bay Area session aces Phil Grenadier on trumpet, Larry Grenadier on bass and Kenny Wollesen on drums. But the key player enlisted for the project is pianist Kenny Barron, who sparkles throughout. (While Barron could merely have played through the motions here, the veteran digs in and delivers an ardent performance as payback for Wainapel paying tribute to him on his last CD, *Ambrosia: The Music Of Kenny Barron*.)

A soulful and eloquent performer on tenor, alto and soprano saxes, Wainapel offers four of his own impressive compositions, including three divine tunes each infused with a different style of Brazilian music (bossa nova, samba and the baião folk rhythm). He also swings into the blues-steeped number "The Buzzard" (inspired by the charter plane owned by Ray Charles with whom he toured several years ago), romancing with his tenor while Barron responds with a fleet-fingered light touch.

Wainapel deals well in covers, too. He takes on Cecil McBee's "Wilpan's" with rollicking brio, Wayne Shorter's "Pinocchio" with upbeat zeal and dances a soft shoe on the sweetly swinging standard "Beautiful Love." Wainapel tosses in some jazz hilarity on his soprano sax/drum/bass rendering of Jimmy Heath's

"CTA" and closes the set with a gleefully melancholic interpretation of Carlos Oliveira's "Choro Da Gafeira." It's a clarinet/piano duo that floats with joy. It's the perfect end to a highly recommended album.
—Dan Ouellette

The Hang: Beautiful Love; The Buzzard; Hadd-Apple Beach; Wilpan's; Blues For Sophia; Bueno Y Perfecta; CTA; La Lausanneoise; Pinocchio; Choro Da Gafeira. (69:44)

Personnel: Harvey Wainapel, soprano, alto, tenor saxophones, clarinet; Kenny Barron, piano; Phil Grenadier, trumpet; Larry Grenadier, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.



Bobby Previte Elliott Sharp Wayne Horvitz John Zorn

Downtown Lullaby Depth Of Field 2

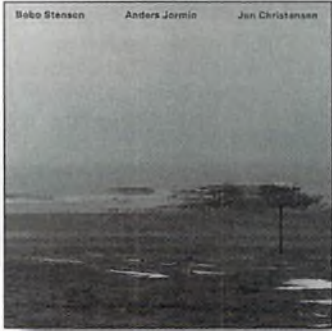
★★★★

It's hard to believe that these four haven't worked as a group previously. Each ably represents a downtown NYC esthetic that values composition and improvisation equally, while espousing noisy blasts of energy and intense, obsessive soloing. Recorded live in the studio, *Downtown Lullaby* won't disappoint adventurous listeners. Because each of the players is a composer and group leader in his own right, improvisation levels the playing field. Bobby Previte's drumming grounds these pieces, providing a unifying reference point as well as variety. Wayne Horvitz's keyboard work gives the pieces color and atmosphere, as he adds samples including steel pans and gongs. Elliott Sharp acts as a wild card, providing bass lines in some instances, but also distorted, post-Hendrix guitar solos. John Zorn's alto sax lines, sometimes keening, sometimes clean and dexterous, inevitably become the focal point of the listener's attention.

Some tracks coalesce better than others, but the most successful combine power with finesse. "228 West Broadway" matches Zorn's Middle Eastern riffs, reminiscent of Masada, with Sharp's processed space guitar. Sharp's long, involute solo steals the show. On "Bleecker & Bowery," Previte's drums and Horvitz's greasy organ riffs (recalling Zony Mash) signify funk, but Sharp heads out on another knotty, turbulent exploration with Zorn's alto shrieking encouragement. In con-

trast, "Eighth Between B & C" offers a quieter, spacious sound with ritualistic drumming from Previte.
—Jon Andrews

Downtown Lullaby: 484 Broome; 500 West 52nd; Eighth Between B And C; 77 White; 228 West Broadway; Bleecker And Bowery; 1 Morton St. (Downtown Lullaby). (47:42)
Personnel: Bobby Previte, drums; Elliott Sharp, electric guitars; Wayne Horvitz, keyboards, Hammond organ, piano; John Zorn, alto saxophone.



Bobo Stenson Trio

War Orphans
ECM 21604

★★★★

There is a sadness to so much music that comes from Northern Europe. Maybe melancholia, to quote Ellington here, is a better term. Not that *War Orphans* is laden with depressing gray and endless night. Rather, what comes through is a willfulness as sure as the sun's rays on a cloudy day. But it's still as gray as the cover to the album.

Sonically, we may hear dinner trio music, or a kind of get-away-from-it-all set list. Upon closer inspection, however, the melodies, rhythms and temperament point less to a lush life and more to invention and a combined sense of wonder, wistfulness and wandering. The two Ornette Coleman tunes, "War Orphans" and especially "All My Life," pull and push ever so gently around and through melodies oblique and transparent, ripe for mining and rediscovery. The tempos on *War Orphans* are all medium to slow, and "All My Life," for one, lends

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itself to all kinds of roaming, expanding and contracting. Anders Jormin's and Jon Christensen's playing following Bobo Stenson's lead only to move beyond it. It's an elastic, swinging, almost harmolodic kind of playing, melodies building on top of melodies, with an implied rhythmic center.

"Eleventh Of January," one of three numbers by Jormin, is, in a sense, controlled by Stenson's right-hand lines. It has a soft, marching cadence to it, at times briefly turning toward a sunny disposition not unlike something one might hear in the United States. Coleman's "War Orphans," written in the early '60s, sounds like it was written for this trio, what with its extended lines, airy feel and room for invention.

All three musicians sound like a band and yet are so distinct from each other. Credit that elastic rhythmic sensibility allowing for tons of rummaging, all held together by Stenson's right hand. In fact, it is the pianist's right hand that defines so much of this album, creating the illusion of continuous improvisation all while he periodically makes his thematic statements, "unhindered" by chords that play such a predominant role with other pianists.

There is swing throughout, and a pulse, all the while building on the explorations first started by the Bill Evans trios of the '50s and early '60s. But this is European music for all the reasons stated above, Coleman's influences notwithstanding. Or perhaps partly because of them. The "modal lyricism" found in this band is a result of something other than the tunefulness found in so much of America's pop-turned-jazz music. Perhaps this explains the uncharacteristic reading of Ellington's "Melancholia." Normally heard at a tempo similar to everything else here, the trio's rendition is the most upbeat performance on *War Orphans*. The tune is there, but it is spun around with the playfulness of three playing until Stenson alone takes the song to a more "traditional" end.

As for the exquisite production, it brings home the intimacy of Christensen's drum heads, the independence of each limb, the deli-

cate overtones of his cymbals. Likewise, Jormin's resonant bass and the strings of Stenson's keyboard (hear him pluck on "Bengali Blue") draw the listener in. And drawing the listener in seems to be what this music is all about, gray moods notwithstanding.

—John Ephland

War Orphans: Oleo De Mujer Con Sombrero; Natt: All My Life; Eleventh Of January; War Orphans; Sediment; Bengali Blue; Melancholia. (54:36)

Personnel: Bobo Stenson, piano; Anders Jormin, double-bass; Jon Christensen, drums.



Ernest Dawkins' New Horizons Ensemble

Mother's Blue Velvet Shoes
DAWK Music 001

★★★½

Ernest Dawkins is one of the best saxophonists to emerge from the AACM, and he is still waiting for the critics' accolades bestowed upon some of his predecessors. But Dawkins is not one to linger passively until he gets his due; his recent *Mother's Blue Velvet*

Shoes is a DIY production that exemplifies his own strengths as well as the fortitude of the New Horizons Ensemble.

What Dawkins shares with other notable Chicago improvisers is a dexterity on a number of reeds, as well as a skill in crafting compositions that are ideal for bands of like-minded navigators. On this disc, Dawkins exclusively plays alto and tenor without reaching into his other array of woodwinds—he's also a proficient flutist. The results of this concentration on the saxophones is a warm and stalwart timbre that's as reminiscent of Von Freeman's self-assured vibrato as much as the oblique tones of Wayne Shorter and Eric Dolphy. On the extended suite "Proof That The Evidence Was Missing," Dawkins unleashes a particularly torrential unaccompanied alto solo.

Another prime showcase for Dawkins, as well as trombonist Steve Berry and trumpeter Ameen Muhammad, is the succinct title track. The piece is an "un-written, un-rehearsed, intuitive, spontaneously conceived ballad," according to Dawkins in the liner notes. Taking his word for it, this incredibly mellifluous tune defies any claim that collective improvisation only results in dissonance.

And Jeff Parker continues to prove how cutting-edge jazz guitar can embrace, without drowning in, effects and distortion. Parker blends in with the ensemble, but he also stands out for his fragmented edginess inside melodic linear solos—capturing the spirit of Grant Green more than any other of his contemporaries.

This disc was recorded live at Chicago's Velvet Lounge. While the venue's magic usually does not include acoustic perfection, this CD's sound is notably lucid.

—Aaron Cohen

Mother's Blue Velvet Shoes: 10-16-if; Many Favors Part I; Many Favors Part II; Mother's Blue Velvet Shoes; Proof That The Evidence Was Missing Intro; Proof That The Evidence Was Missing. (63:21)

Personnel: Ernest Khabeez Dawkins, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, percussion; Steve Berry, trombone, percussion; Ameen Muhammad, trumpet, percussion; Jeffrey Parker, electric guitar; Yosef Ben Israel, bass; Vincent Davis, drums; Kim Ransom, poetry.

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JAZZ

Should-Be-Better-Knowns

by Zan Stewart

They're the backbone of jazz: the not-well-known but highly skilled journeyman players who work with the big names or make their living doing shows, or maybe even doing club dates. When they're in charge, it's usually at a low-profile room or a late-night set. Often as not, such deserving musicians record for a little label, possibly their own.

Bill Charlap: *All Through The Night* (Criss Cross 1153; 47:37) ★★★★★ Charlap, a vet sideman currently with Phil Woods, is a modernist with deep ties to the past. His mix of, say, Bud Powell, Ahmad Jamal and Bill Evans, is a perfect style for this delightful set of not-often-heard standards and show tunes, where he fits hand-in-glove with the grand team of Peter and Kenny Washington. "Roundabout" is luxuriously slow, Charlap's notes pristine yet emotive. The Porter title track whizzes by, the pianist flowing, while "It's So Peaceful In The Country" is taken at a Sunday-park-stroll pace, with ambling yet elegant piano statements. The bassist and drummer accompany, and solo, with customary panache.

Los Angeles Jazz Quartet: *Family Song* (Not Two 705; 60:07) ★★★★★ The third album by this five-year-old band of L.A. regulars who've collectively played with Joe Lovano, Bobby Bradford and Billy Childs is refreshing and invigorating. The original music by guitarist Larry Koonse, saxophonist Chuck Manning, bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz and drummer Kevin Tullius balances intimate moods with those favoring heat. The medium-slow title track starts sweet, then Manning issues long streams of notes; a firm-noted Oleszkiewicz solo brings it back home. "Briggs" starts softly, but then there's a sudden free-for-all. "Message From Roit" swings straightforwardly, while "Resurgence" has an ECM-ish burn.

David Berkman: *Handmade* (Palmetto 2039; 56:29) ★★★★★ Here are 11 distinctive, thoughtful originals (as well as Duke's "Take The Coltrane") from a pianist who's worked with Tom Harrell, Cecil McBee and Scott Wendholt. The A-1 crew includes Harrell, saxman Steve Wilson, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Brian Blade; they're ideal for these intriguing tunes, where structure and freedom often meet. "Handmade" becomes a delicate conversation between Wilson, Okegwo and Blade; the subsequent "Pennies" finds Berkman inserting coins into the piano for a kalimba effect. "Tom Harrell" is a lyric set-

up for winsome spontaneous melodies from the brassman, the leader and Wilson.

Conrad Herwig: *Heart Of Darkness* (Criss Cross 1155; 60:16) ★★★★★ Trombonist Herwig, whose resumé lists tenures with Joe Henderson, Buddy Rich and Eddie Palmieri, was inspired to assemble this sextet after a tour with Henderson that included vibist Stefan Harris. Walt Weiskopf occupies the tenor chair here; the two horns and vibes are molded into a dynamic sound in Herwig's hands, backed keenly by the ace *All Through The Night* trio of Charlap and the two Washingtons. Everything here has allure, from the fleet title track to the relaxed "Lamp Is Low" and the edgy "Tilt." In his solos, the leader—that gleaming, grand sound up front—offers both crack ideas and technique; his bandmates do no less.

Bill Mobley: *Jazz Orchestra* (Space Time BG9805; 60:45) ★★★★★ Former Memphis-ite, now New Yorker and colleague of James Williams and Billy Pierce, trumpeter/writer Mobley documents his first-class mid-'90s New York rehearsal band in its lone recording thus far. Taking cues from Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown and Woody Shaw, Mobley percolates, his fluid drive shining on "49th Street" (based on "Lover"). The leader's writing is hip, too: Thad Jones-ish with muted brass moving sleekly on "49th Street," a bit darker on Harold Mabern's "Alex The Great." Other exceptional charts are by Geoff Keezer and Josh Schneider. Solid guest spots from Pierce, Mabern, Mulgrew Miller and Williams add to those by such band members as altoman Jon Gordon and trombonist Mike Fahn.



Bill Charlap: pristine yet emotive

Jerry Weldon: *Midtown Blues* (Amosaya 2535; 64:17) ★★★★★ This tenorman has been on the New York scene since the early '80s, hitting it with Lionel Hampton, Jack McDuff and the New York Hard Bop Quintet, three of whose members—pianist Keith Saunders, trumpeter Joe Magnarelli and bassist Bim Strasberg, plus ace drummer Andy Watson—are on board on this live-at-Fat Tuesday's date from 1995. Weldon's large, gusty tone and hip-pocket swing make for appealing solos on the upbeat "J&B," a waltz-time version of "Two Different Worlds" and Saunders' Horace Silver-like "Raving Lunatic," where the pianist is tuneful and cooking. Magnarelli, as always, is first-rate throughout.

Dan St. Marseille: *Departure* (Resurgent 120; 59:35) ★★★★★ California tenorman Marseille, who founded Resurgent to document people like pianist/composer Cecilia Coleman, bassist Henry Franklin and himself, keeps getting better. On this quartet/quintet date, he's in fine company with Franklin, pianist Kirk Lightsey, drummer Carl Burnett and, occasionally, conga drummer Poncho Sanchez. Here, he happily reveals more grit in both tone (Warne Marsh-ish) and approach, soloing with gusto on Lightsey's "Leila In Blue," Franklin's buoyant "Little Miss Laurie" and others. The trio is outstanding. Lightsey's inventive drive backed with both muscularity and sensitivity by Franklin and Burnett. **DB**

BEYOND

Tin Pan Alley '99

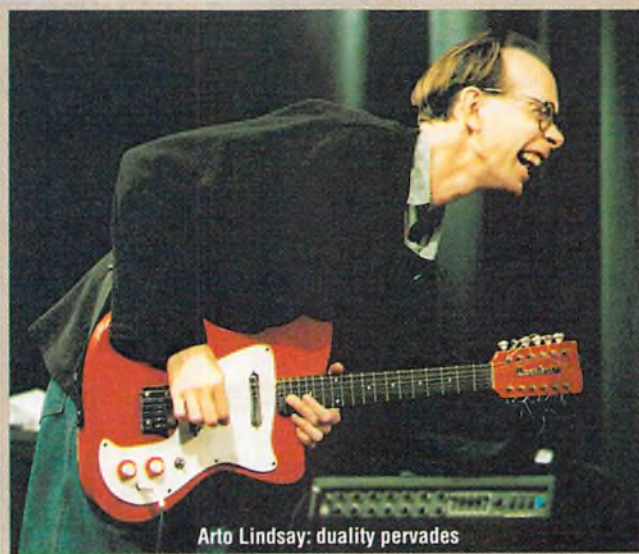
by Jon Andrews

Once a job description, "singer-songwriter" has become a genre. The need to tell a story, or offer insight into the human experience, drives these artists. The singer-songwriter creates an illusion that he or she lives the story. The listener becomes an empathic shoulder to cry on, or else a voyeur. With a few bright, joyful exceptions, these songs are about trouble.

Elvis Costello with Burt Bacharach: *Painted From Memory* (Mercury 314 538 002; 52:26) ★★★½ Costello delights in upsetting expectations, and the onetime new-wave icon's collaboration with Bacharach demonstrates genuine commitment to a vanishing tradition of pop (vs. rock) songwriting. These new, bittersweet love songs were co-written by the duo, though Bacharach's signature hooks, rhythms and arrangements are conspicuous. His touch is instantly recognizable on "I Still Have That Other Girl" and "In The Darkest Place." Costello's craggy voice complements Bacharach's smooth, tasteful orchestrations remarkably well, and his expressive vocals rank with his best performances. There's nothing retro about *Painted From Memory*. Only "Such Unlikely Lovers" sounds dated, evoking the early '80s. The CD misses the mark only occasionally, when Costello indulges a taste for histrionics and prolix wordplay.

Joni Mitchell: *Taming The Tiger* (Reprise 9 46451; 44:19) ★★★½ Confiding secrets, telling stories and espousing opinions, Mitchell is an archetypal singer-songwriter. Adaptation to change runs

through *Taming The Tiger*, itself a transitional project. In "Love Puts On A New Face" and "Taming The Tiger," characters struggle to adjust to changes in careers or relationships. Other songs vent anger, primarily at men, while "Taming The Tiger" laments the recording industry's infatuation with teen angst and gangstas. *Taming The Tiger* reflects Mitchell's new enchantment with synthesizers, particularly Roland's VG8, which digitizes her guitar tunings. For some, the electronics will detract from the intimacy of the songs. Wayne Shorter returns as Mitchell's alter-ego, weaving graceful soprano sax solos through six tracks.



Arto Lindsay: duality pervades

Bruce Hornsby: *Spirit Trail* (RCA 07863 67468; 48:06/42:45) ★★★½ Hornsby won over new listeners with his last two projects by emphasizing high-profile soloists and a jazzy vibe. *Spirit Trail*, an uneven double-CD, is a different proposition, as Hornsby goes back to basics with a roots-oriented approach. Most tracks emphasize his earnest vocals backed by organ and a chugging rhythm section. There's a distinctly Southern ambience to *Spirit Trail*, and songs like "Sunflower Cat" and "Sad Moon" may suggest influences like Dr. John, the Neville Brothers or the Grateful Dead. Though Hornsby's

piano is less of a presence, his playing has never sounded better. Several tracks feature ringing, lyrical piano codas, which upstage the songs.

Arto Lindsay: *Noon Chill* (Bar/None Ahaon-102; 66:05) ★★★★★ Duality pervades Lindsay's music. He's best known for jagged vocals and "skronk" guitar improvisation. He's also deeply rooted in Brazilian music, and his pop sensibility surfaced with the *Ambitious Lovers* and in his solo CDs. The moody songs on *Noon Chill* transmit mixed signals, scrambling tenderness and romanticism with aloof detachment and cryptic lyrics. The rhythm section of Nana Vasconcelos and Melvin Gibbs enhances a Brazilian undercurrent. Keyboard textures offset that lilt, giving the music its edge. Strongly influenced by Caetano Veloso, Lindsay's reedy vocals withhold as much as they express. With its insinuating melody and strutting rhythm, "Blue Eye Shadow" would get airplay in a better world. On "Mulata Fuzarqueira," Lindsay loosens up, singing in Portuguese and offering unqualified bliss.

Lucinda Williams: *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road* (Mercury 315 558 338; 51:50) ★★★★★

There's no easy categorization for Williams' music, which links country, rock and blues. She matches solid melodic hooks with keen observations, giving her stories about loss and love in the South both realism and bite. She delivers these lyrics with a strong persona and an unmistakable voice quivery, sometimes frayed and loaded with attitude. Her temperament may be disillusioned, hurt or laconic, and it owes as much to rock singers like Patti Smith and Lou Reed as it does to country and blues. Men are a recurring problem in songs like "Greenville." They're prone to be drunk, violent or jailed. Tight, compelling performances including country-rockers Steve Earle and Buddy Miller frame Williams' vocals, adding punch to the songs. **DB**



Jazz is a collective enterprise, a give-and-take among musicians that generates a larger, more complete statement than any leader could elicit through a rigid, closed system. ... Joe Maneri has accumulated some of this aura as his music has begun to be heard over the past decade, and not simply because the music he creates is so fresh.



The world of Rap Blake beckons once again in these performances and, once again, we cannot resist being drawn into that world. ... The cinematic content of Blake's music, its use of montage and dramatic dissolves, has long been acknowledged. ... Extra-musical allusions are unavoidable when music evokes all five senses, as Blake's music inevitably does.



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

REISSUES

Maiden Voyager

by John Ephland

Herbie Hancock's trajectory during the 1960s is one of American music's great success stories. On the one hand, you had Hancock the sideman, playing on any growing number of Blue Note, Verve, RCA dates (to name three), and, especially, as Miles Davis' most important pianist of that era. On the other, there was Hancock the leader. That's what *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* is all about.

The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions (Blue Note 95570; 71:11/72:01/75:06/63:16/52:37/62:56) ★★★★★

It should be mentioned at the outset that this is not the complete Herbie Hancock on Blue Note. He appeared on too many sessions to be covered in six CDs. So, the title may be a tad misleading. Instead, what we have here are all seven of his albums for the label along with 12 alternate takes (seven of which have never been released), a cut from a later attempt at r&b, five originals from albums Hancock made with significant others as a sideman and his movie tune "Theme From Blow Up."

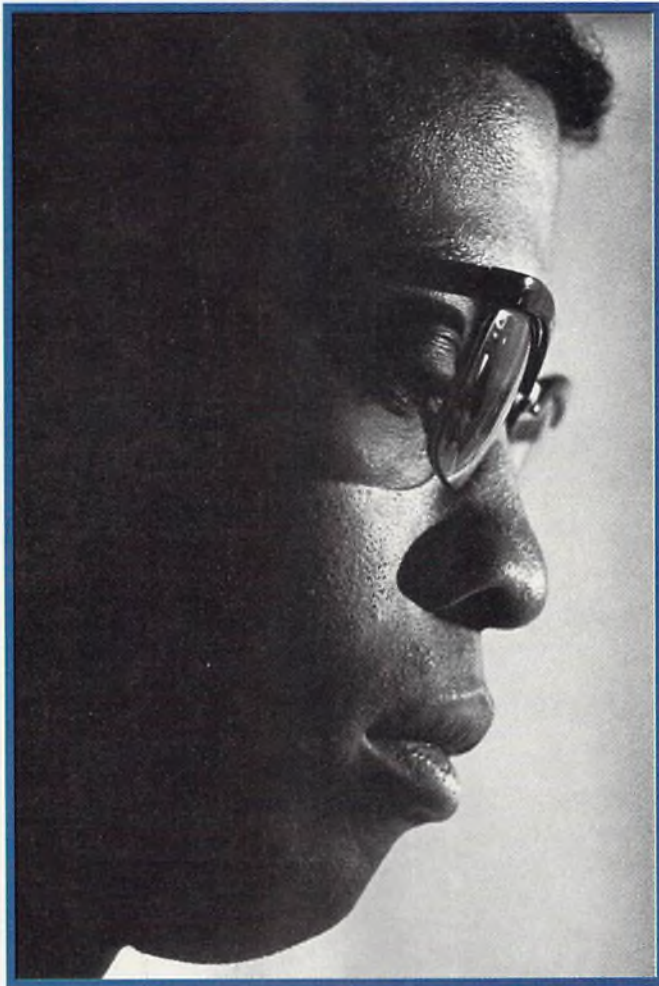
As it was with so many other jazz musicians of this time (e.g., Freddie Hubbard, Eric Dolphy and Elvin Jones), it is practically impossible to hear what Hancock was doing with Blue Note apart from his work with others. And, yes, the key contrast was his work with Davis' quintet alongside saxophonist Wayne Shorter, drummer Tony Williams and bassist Ron Carter.

Incidentally, Bob Belden's delightful, anecdotal, chronological notes—mixed in with reprints of the original liner notes to all the albums as well as photos in the 60-page booklet—give the proper context for Hancock's slowly emerging art. Be on the lookout, however: Belden mentions many of Hancock's '60s collaborators and the songs they recorded together. Consequently, songs mentioned aren't necessarily in the package.

For those familiar with the original LPs, songs from those albums are presented chronologically, not as they appeared as finished albums. The results make for an interesting, not slightly disjunctive, listening experience from track to track. All the better to enjoy Hancock's music as it unfolds.

The package starts off with Hancock as a 21-year-old sideman, in his first session with

former employer/talent scout/trumpeter Donald Byrd on Hancock's "Three Wishes" (1961). Then we are treated to tenorist Dexter Gordon, among others, from Hancock's 1962 debut as a leader, *Takin' Off*. Already, after only two cuts, the sound of drummer Billy Higgins' left-hand snare work is a dominant, if distracting, presence. One of the highlights to *Takin' Off* is having Gordon on board. His relaxed, seasoned and succinct solo work on the tender "Alone And I" is a defining presence for all. Disc 1 closes with "Yams," from Jackie McLean's 1963 recording *Vertigo*. It's a halting blues offered in an uncharacteristically



Herbie Hancock: invention and dimension

straightforward manner (for Hancock) and featuring the debut recording session of 17-year-old Tony Williams.

It wasn't long before Hancock's prowess came to the attention of Davis, who first worked with the pianist in 1963. "The Sorcerer," from disc 5, is also the title track to one of Davis' albums on Columbia. The differences in both takes could not be more striking. With Davis, Hancock plays with more economy and intensity, against and with a tempo more abrupt and darting. By way of contrast, the Blue Note version, with Carter and drummer Mickey Roker, is looser, a tad slower, a trio version obviously built around Hancock's piano.

Hancock was (and is) many-sided. And, even though most of his work for Blue Note could

easily fall into the category of fun (or, certainly, is deemed less "serious" than his work with Davis), a great deal of this material is far from being "Watermelon Man" music. Take "Little One," "A Tribute To Someone," "The Pleasure Is Mine" and practically all of his *Inventions And Dimensions* record. Then there's *Speak Like A Child* and, especially, Hancock's swan song for the label, the remarkable 1969 recording *The Prisoner*. Most of *Speak Like A Child* is played with a sextet, while *The Prisoner* utilizes a nonet, both albums showcasing the pianist's early knack for large-ensemble voicings. *Maiden Voyage*, from 1965, is positioned in such a way as to suggest the drama of hurricanes and a survival of the fittest as well as dolphin dances.

Another favorite along these lines is "The Egg," a 14-minute composition from 1964's *Empyrean Isles*. "The Egg" is not a song so much as it is a series of events that pronounce moods and marked contrasts from Hubbard, Hancock and Williams, all the while displaying form and content driven by tons of talent.

Speaking of *Speak Like A Child*, one of the most eloquent statements to come from this period in jazz is heard on the title track, as Hancock the orchestrator deftly uses the colors of flugelhorn (Thad Jones), bass trombone (Peter Phillips) and alto flute (Jerry Dodgion) along with the rhythm section of Carter and Roker. There is a bitersweet quality to the music from this album that, conversely, also includes "The Sorcerer" and "Riot" (the latter also covered by the Miles Davis Quintet, in a much more frenetic, true-to-the-song's-title fashion).

One of the disappointments to this collection is the realization that Wayne Shorter, a major collaborator of Hancock's all during his career, is nowhere to be heard, apart from Hancock's role as a sideman on "The Collector" (disc 5, from Shorter's *Adam's Apple*). On the bright side, there's my preferred version of "Maiden Voyage" (disc 4) from Bobby Hutcherson's *Happenings*.

One gets the impression from *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* that Herbie Hancock couldn't lose. If he'd gone elsewhere, he still would have made it big. It's just that with Blue Note he probably got there faster, and with better company. **DB**

Original Down Beat ratings:

- *Takin' Off*: ★★★½ (1/17/63)
- *My Point Of View*: ★★★ (11/7/63)
- *Inventions & Dimensions*: ★★★½ (7/30/64)
- *Empyrean Isles*: ★★★★★ (2/25/65)
- *Maiden Voyage*: ★★★★★ (5/5/66)
- *Speak Like A Child*: ★★ (10/17/68)
- *The Prisoner*: ★★★★★ (6/11/70)

BLINDFOLD TEST

FEBRUARY 1999

Nick Brignola

by Fred Bouchard

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.

Nick Brignola admits having listened attentively to few baritone players, other than Cecil Payne, Pepper Adams and Gerry Mulligan, but rather drew inspiration from trumpeters, tenor players and altoists, such as Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Paul Desmond and Miles Davis. He lists Adams and Harry Carney as baritone role models.

New Brignola albums include one with the Metropole Orchestra (Koch), duets with Kenny Barron (VanDyke) and the consistently swinging *Poinciana* (Reservoir). "I'm a survivor, I still enjoy playing hard, for 20 or 5,000. I've been lucky to make a living at it and meet lots of great people," Brignola, 62, says. "I love it. If it became a routine, I'd be bored."

This is his first Blindfold Test.

Randy Weston

"Once in A While" (from *Jazz à la Bohème*, Riverside OJC, 1956) Weston, piano; Cecil Payne, baritone sax; Ahmed Abdul-Malik, bass; Al Creases, drums.

5 stars for Cecil Payne, one of the few guys with whom I can identify as a former alto player. I love the way he plays, and he's a beautiful guy. As a ballad feature, he didn't get a chance to stretch out. He was one of the first guys I heard live [with Randy Weston at Cafe Bohemia in 1958], and may have influenced me. In fact, after working with him, I realized just how much he influenced me. He knows how to play melody, and elaborate on the melody in the tradition.

Duke Ellington

"Agra" (from *Far East Suite*, RCA Bluebird, 1966) Harry Carney, Jimmy Hamilton, Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope, Paul Gonzales, reeds; Cootie Williams, William "Cat" Anderson, Mercer Ellington, Herbie Jones, trumpets and flugel horns; Lawrence Brown, Buster Cooper, Chuck Connors, trombones; Ellington, piano; John Lamb, bass; Rufus Jones, drums.

Harry Carney. I'm not familiar with that cut. Was it from the '50s? Not one of his best efforts, but from the way he plays and controls the horn, I have to give him 20 stars. Only Joe Temperley has that round, full sound today. Harry's sound is so warm, you knew he had to be that kind of guy. No wonder Duke liked to hang out with him. When I'd show up at Duke's concerts, Harry would invite me into their dressing room. He always encouraged me to stick with bari and not revert to alto. Every time I want to quit baritone, I think of Harry. Since he was my primary mentor, let's give him 200 stars.

Ronnie Cuber

"The Scene Is Clean" (from *The Scene Is Clean*, Milestone, 1994) Cuber, baritone sax; Geoff Kaefer, piano; George Wadenius, guitar; Tom Barney, bass; Victor Jones, drums; Manolo Badrena, percussion.

Ronnie Cuber. He's a hell of a player, one of those guys who transcends all the music from the '50s and '60s, with all kinds of experience in salsa and big bands. The playing was good, and the pianist was good, but the arrangement just lays there, a play-if-safe chart. 4 stars.



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Gerry Mulligan All-Star Tribute Band

"Line For Lyons" (from *Thank You, Gerry!*, Arkadia, 1998) Lee Konitz, alto sax; Bob Brookmeyer, valve trombone; Randy Brecker, trumpet and flugelhorn; Ted Rosenthal, piano; Dean Johnson, bass; Ron Vincent, drums.

That was "Line For Lyons." Could've been Lee Konitz and Bobby Brookmeyer. They didn't really get a chance to solo for two or three bars. It didn't go anywhere. I could tell they were all good musicians by the way they put their lines together. 2 stars: These guys can play much more than they did here. My complaint with tribute albums is they always wait 'til the cat died! We have giants among us now and nothing's being done. We should be doing tributes now for Cecil Payne, George Coleman, Carl Fontana, Lucky Thompson—stir the pot of respect, and get some juices flowing.

Gary Smulyan

"We've Got A Sure Thing" (from *Gary Smulyan With Strings*, Criss Cross, 1996) Smulyan, baritone sax; Mike LeDonne, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Kenny Washington, drums; string sextet; arranger/conductor, Bob Balden.

That was Gary. It's nice to hear baritone in that setting. Usually it's the tenor or alto players who get this call. Gary's another helluva player, directly out of Pepper Adams. The tune wasn't all that interesting, but a pleasant, almost pop tune. 4 stars for the arrangement and Gary's good playing.

Gerry Mulligan/Paul Desmond

"Blues Intime" (from *Mulligan/Desmond Quartet*, Verve, 1957) Mulligan, baritone sax; Desmond, alto sax; Joe Benjamin, bass; Donald Bailey, drums.

Desmond was my first influence as a young alto player growing up in Upstate New York [Troy]. His clarity and melodicism got to me. When I told him that my favorite album of his was Brubeck's *Jazz At Oberlin*, he laughed: It's his most energetic playing—listen to "Perdido." Mulligan did for the baritone what Gene Krupa did for the drums. Gerry's real forte was arranging, great big band charts, and that pianoless quartet, with great organizing. 5 stars. This music is dated, but it's still fun to listen to with all that counterpoint. **DB**