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Men At Work

Roy
Hargrove
QUINTET

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Go For The Jugular

Working jazz bands are a dying breed these days. But don't tell this to the Roy Hargrove Quintet, who have learned through constant playing and brutal honesty that unity is the ultimate inspiration.

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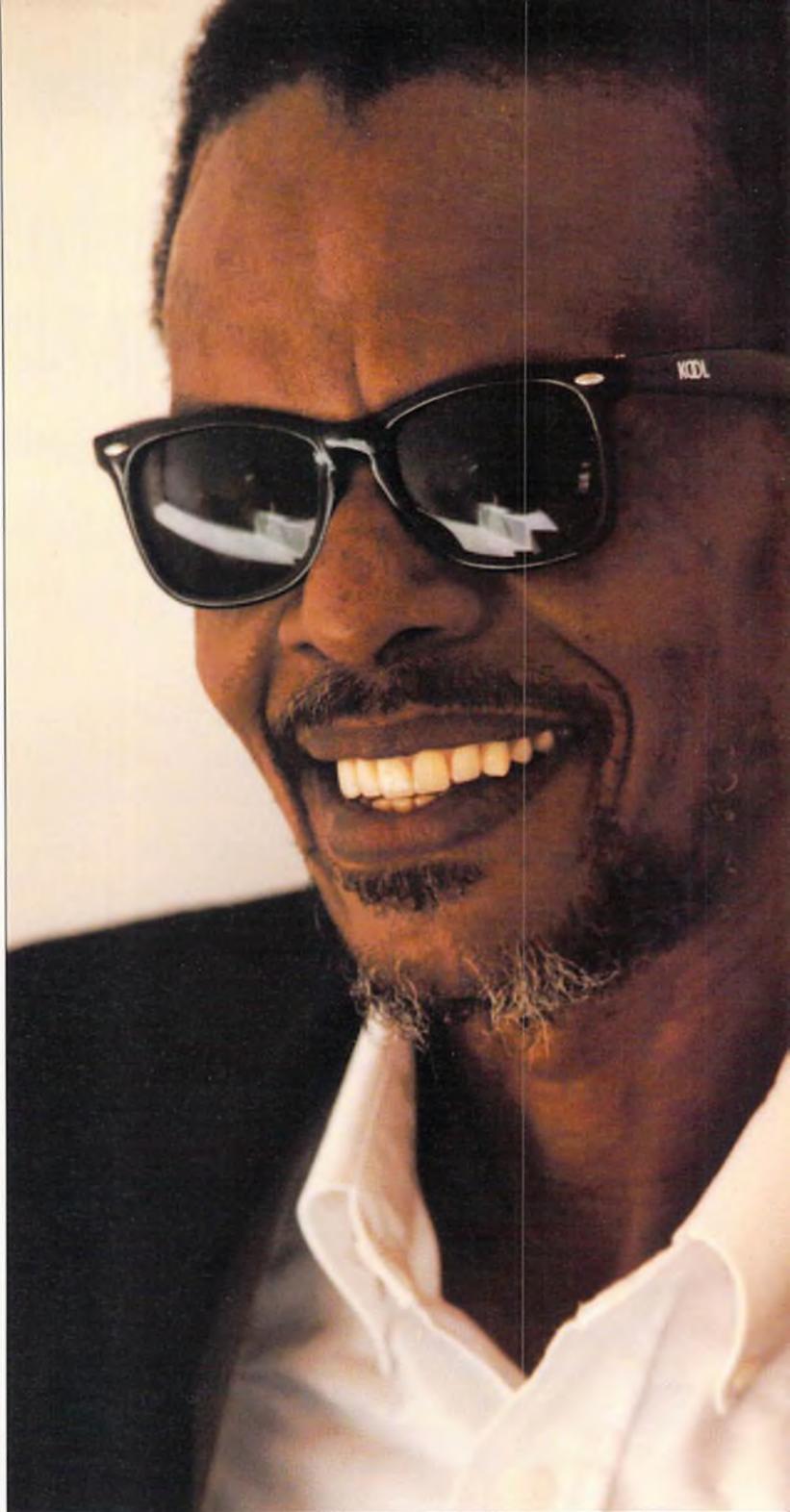
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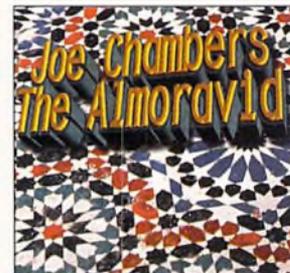
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Go For The JUGULAR

The Roy
Hargrove
Quintet
Finds
Inspiration
In Unity

Roy Hargrove and his quintet follow the same ritual night after night. Prior to going on stage, they huddle for a minute to set the focus for the evening's performance. Like a football team heading into the Super Bowl, they know that their greatest asset is ensemble unity.

"Before we go on the bandstand, we ask Larry Willis, 'So, what's the plan for tonight, Coach?'" says Gerald Cannon, Hargrove's bassist for the past four years. Willis, the group's pianist since late-'97, serves as elder statesman, philosopher and leader of the rhythm section. "He'll say, 'I want to take out the jugular vein.'"

Cannon turns to look Willis in the eyes. "The thing about that, Lar, is we take that seriously. We come to play, no matter where, what, how big or how small. If you say take out the jugular vein, then that's what we're going to do. And when we hit it on stage, it's the best feeling in the world."

The Roy Hargrove Quintet could be the hardest working band in jazz. Upon hearing that the legendary trumpeter Maynard Ferguson still performs 200 nights a year, Hargrove's manager, Larry "Ragman" Clothier, chuckles, "That's pretty good, but we do way more than that."

Hargrove and Ferguson seem to lead a vanishing breed in jazz—the working band. But while Ferguson may be treading toward the end of his career, Hargrove and company are young, hungry and ready to play anywhere. And when they play, they exhibit a tight, fresh, original and unified sound that has come from playing together night after night.

"Even if the people don't recognize when we're up there playing bullshit, *we* recognize it," Cannon says.

Hargrove likes to hear this kind of talk. It's affirmation that he's doing something right, that the momentous task of assembling and maintaining a road-tested ensemble serves a deeper purpose. "On and off the bandstand, we have a good camaraderie," the dreadlocked, 29-year-old trumpeter says. "To me, this is

By Jason Koransky

Photo By Rick Fowler/Universal Studios Florida

afraid to get on each other's case if we feel that something is not going right in the band," Irby, 30, says. "We bring everything into the open and squash it."

Have they ever had to beat the hell out of each other? Hargrove has to think for a moment. "We've been close. ..."

"Everyone's got a knife," jokes Clothier from the far end of the table.

"Not me. I'm a lover!" Hargrove responds.

"Roy, you'd just probably cut yourself," laughs Clothier, who has been with Hargrove since he was a trumpet phenom at Creative Arts High School in Dallas. He has worked hard in helping to guide Hargrove's career to its current heights. To Hargrove, Clothier is an integral member of the band. "He plays business," Hargrove remarks. And now, Hargrove is no longer a young phenom, but one of the world's top improvising trumpeters. This carries hefty responsibilities for all around him. He has a Grammy (for 1997's *Habana* with his Afro-Cuban group Crisol). He leads a big band (see January '97), which has several gigs already set for the summer, including the Atlanta Jazz Festival and the Ravinia Jazz Festival. He has the seedlings of a funk project sprouting with some of his friends down in Texas. Plus, he has a knack for becoming associated with successful projects, such as last year's Grammy-winning

Shirley Horn tribute to Miles Davis, *I Remember Miles* (Verve), and Down Beat's 1998 Readers Poll Album of the Year, *Monk On Monk* (N2K).

Part of Hargrove wants to get involved in production on the hip-hop and r&b side of the music industry. His friends in New York include rapper Q-Tip from Tribe Called Quest and r&b singer D'Angelo. "I'm not into it specifically for monetary reasons, but I'd do it moreso to bring that music up to another level," he says. "I know that if I hooked up with Q-Tip or D'Angelo for a project, we could really set the world on its ear. This is the music of my generation. I feel responsible to become a part of it in some way."

But for the time being, the quintet demands his full attention. From its early incarnations with the likes of alto saxist Antonio Hart, drummer Greg Hutchinson, bassist Rodney Whitaker and pianist Marc Cary, through all the personnel changes that have led up to today's lineup, he has been developing his vision of the perfect jazz ensemble. Always in search of the elusive bandstand nirvana, in 10 years he sees himself still on the road, blowing his horn, dancing and singing at clubs and festivals. And of course, he'll be practicing to make his range even greater, his tone clearer, his ballads sing with surer phrasing and poise, and his show ever

more entertaining.

"You always have to play with a certain amount of humility, because there's always someone else, that next cat coming up," says Hargrove, exhibiting a bit of the competitive spark that drives his work. "When you start thinking you're the cat, boy, you're in for trouble."

This quintet may not be actual nirvana yet for the men involved. But it's getting there. According to everyone in the group, it all locked into place when pianist Willis signed on.

"The amount of experience that this cat has [is amazing]," says Hargrove, referring to the years Willis has spent on the bandstand with the likes of Jackie McLean, Woody Shaw, Dizzy Gillespie, the Fort Apache Band and Blood, Sweat & Tears. "Every time, he has something to bring to the table that's worthy. I used to come and sit in at Caravan of Dreams in Fort Worth, and every time I came in, Willis was there playing with some other front-line cat—Jimmy Cobb, Bobby Hutcherson, David "Fathead" Newman, James Moody. One afternoon, these cats came to my high school and I played with him, Jimmy Cobb and Walter Booker. That was inspiration."

The 56-year-old Willis joined the band for the first time in Cuba on Dec. 15, 1997, and has since been called the

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"Coach," or "Professor," comping beautifully, writing tunes and providing the experience that keeps the group focused.

"I got tired of having to see Larry [Clothier] spend money on his telephone bill, because every time Roy had a piano player crisis, my phone would ring," laughs Willis, who also serves as director of music for Mapleshade, the Upper Marlboro, Md.-based record label. "The last time I told Larry, 'Look, your phone bill is getting awfully high. Why don't I just stick around a while?'"

"There are so few working bands, and fortunately, here we have a group of people who embrace the tradition of this music, and subconsciously this had allowed this band to stay together. And if you stick together, sooner or later you'll be successful."

It takes time for a rhythm section to gel—even this one.

"I have to be honest. I was a little hard-headed when Larry joined the group," bassist Cannon admits. "It took about two or three gigs for it to really click for me. But now, you can do anything in this section."

Cannon had joined the group three years earlier, in 1995, as a replacement to Reuben Rogers. "Actually, he gangstered the gig," laughs Hargrove about the broad-shouldered, shaved-head bassist with the nickname "Band Security." "Reuben was getting very busy, and finally he had a conflict with a gig. I was at Smalls (the New York club renowned for late-night jam sessions), and Gerald came in, muscle shirt on, looking hard core. He came up to me and said, 'Hey Roy! I want to play with you,' in this hard-ass voice. I was like, 'All right, cool.' I wasn't going to try to go against him. I told Larry [Clothier] that we better get this guy a tryout. He ended up doing the gig, in Seattle at Bud Shank's festival.

"Gerald is very skilled harmonically," Hargrove continues. "He uses a lot of substitutions. Sometimes when we play ballads, he'll have a different set of changes. It works right away because the rest of the section is right on it."

Rounding out the section is drummer

Jones, a Los Angeles native who was a member of the hard-bop group Black Note and worked with Arturo Sandoval prior to joining Hargrove. He used to jam with Hargrove at the club 5th Street Dick's in L.A. and show up at every gig whenever the trumpeter played in Southern California. When Jones decided to move to New York in early '97, he called up Clothier for an audition. Kareem Riggins had just left Hargrove.

"My timing was right," Jones says. "This was the gig I had always wanted."

"Willie is a very versatile cat," Hargrove says. "Being from the West Coast, he knows how to play a lot of different styles. Especially anything contemporary, as well as straightahead. I had some problems in the past where bass players and drummers didn't get along well. He's the type of cat who doesn't cause any friction. He just goes with what happens. Doesn't talk much, very quiet guy."

Surprisingly, the camaraderie fostered by this rhythm section has made the front-line horn players work harder, according to saxophonist Irby. "We listen a ton. Actually, you have to become a part of the

rhythm section," he says. "We don't know what they're going to do with us."

But you won't hear Irby complaining. He loves the challenge. Irby also has two solo albums of his own on Blue Note (1998's *Big Mama's Biscuits*, 1997's *Full Circle*) and doubles as the band's cook. If the guys stay in a hotel suite with a kitchen, Irby's sure to fry some chicken, broil some steaks or make a beef stew.

"He's a cat to get along with," says Hargrove about the Tuscaloosa, Ala.-born saxist, nicknamed "Tank." "He's a down-home kind of cat. Being around a guy like him keeps me in good spirits."

In summer '96, Irby was playing in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and jamming around New York. One night at Smalls, he and Hargrove shared the stage.

"We were playing Dizzy's 'Groovin' High,'" says Hargrove, singing the intro. "Sherman came right in with me, note for note. He matched my sound in an instant. We were like one horn. The minute I felt that vibe, I knew we were going to play together again."

Hargrove asked Irby to do a summer

Working Gospel

In the Church of Hargrove, one principal doctrine reigns supreme.

"Man, we have fun," Hargrove exhorts. "On and off the bandstand, we have a good camaraderie. We watch each other's back. This group, we've had our ups and downs. There have been personnel changes, but at the point we're at now, it seems positive all the way around."

Hargrove never stops preaching his gospel. Toward the end of his clinic at this year's Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in Moscow, Idaho, he opens up the floor for questions. A guy in the packed auditorium asks him what most impressed him about his collaborations with Cuban musicians, the inspiration for 1997's *Habana*. Hargrove has a quick answer.

"First of all, I was amazed by their virtuosity. Guys playing fourth trumpet would have a five-octave range. It made me want to practice. But even more than that, it was the vibe you would get when you walked into a club. A band like Los Van Van would be playing. They would be jamming! The crowd would be dancing, girls wearing skirts way up high ... well, we don't have to go there. But what I'm trying to say is that they're having fun with the music, and bringing this fun right to the people in the club. That's what we're trying to do with this band. And the longer we stick together, the more fun it gets."

—J.K.

gig with his big band in Washington Square Park, and soon the saxophonist was working with the combo. "I really dig his ability to play at medium tempos," Hargrove notes.

Until recently, trombonist Ku-umba Frank Lacy made this combo a sextet. But after securing a record deal of his own, Lacy took his slide acrobatics solo, focusing on completing his own projects. However, he's still a member of Hargrove's big band, and Hargrove says that the two remain friends.

Hargrove has yet to put together an album that represents the work of the current ensemble, but when he does, it will be sure to highlight more than just the trumpeter's tunes.

"The musical concepts of the cats in the band should be represented," Hargrove says.

Although their music begs to be recorded, the studio is not a main focus right now. As long as the group has momentum, they're playing clubs and festivals, night after night, without break, trying to take their art to a higher level.

"Recording is great, but our main concern is playing in front of the masses, interacting with them and each other," Irby says. "Jazz has never been about record sales. It's about playing the music and making it grow."

More talk of a working band. Another smile comes to Hargrove's face as he pushes his chair back from the lunch table and stands before his bandmates. When he has their full attention, he makes a proclamation.

"Listen: I have to say this," he says. "Here in this band, there's a tremendous amount of unity and love we have for each other, and when people come to see us perform, and see this love we have for each other, it will inspire them to go out and spread some more of the same. We just need more love and unity among musicians, and in the whole world. We need to spread this message. That's why you don't see any more bands in jazz."

Willis, Cannon, Irby and Jones nod in agreement. Willis has something to add.

"No matter what I've been through in the course of my day, when I'm able to get on the bandstand with you guys and play music on this level, everything else just fades away," he says. "Come June, I will have been playing professionally for 39 years. It takes a lot to get me on the road. I'm comfortable at home—have a big house, business to attend to, can make records whenever I want and can play with a trio whenever I want. So if it were not for all the elements that we have just talked about, there's no way that I would be on the road with you guys. I'm absolutely serious about this." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Roy Hargrove plays a custom-made Inderbinen Silver Art model trumpet and Inderbinen Model 500 "Wood" flugelhorn. Sherman Irby plays a Selmer Mark VI alto, Vandoren V16 #3½ reeds and an old Selmer mouthpiece. Willie Jones III plays a Maple Custom Absolute Yamaha drum kit, with a 14-inch snare, 18-inch bass, 14-inch floor tom and 12-inch rack tom; he uses Zildjian Constantinople cymbals: a 22-inch ride and 18-inch crash. Gerald Cannon plays a Rodier double-bass. Larry Willis prefers Fazioli pianos.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Roy Hargrove

THE COLLECTED ROY HARGROVE—BMG/RCA

Victor 68710

HABANA—Verve 537 563 (Crisol)

EXTENDED FAMILY—Verve 533 626

WITH THE TENORS OF OUR TIME—Verve 523 019

APPROACHING STANDARDS—Novus 3178

THE TOKYO SESSIONS—Novus 63164

(co-led with Antonio Hart)

OF KINDRED SOULS—Novus 63154

THE VIBE—Novus 63132

PUBLIC EYE—Novus 3113

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH—Novus 3082

Sherman Irby

BIG MAMA'S BISCUITS—Blue Note 56234

(with Cannon and Hargrove)

FULL CIRCLE—Blue Note 52251

Willie Jones III

L. A. UNDERGROUND—Red 123259 (w/Black Note)

Larry Willis

SOLO SPIRIT—Mapleshade 01432

PORTRAITS IN IVORY AND BRASS—Mapleshade

02032 (w/Jack Walrath and Steve Novosel)

BALLADS FROM THE BLACK SEA—Mapleshade

04332 (w/quartet and Datevik)

Charles Lloyd

Voice in the Night

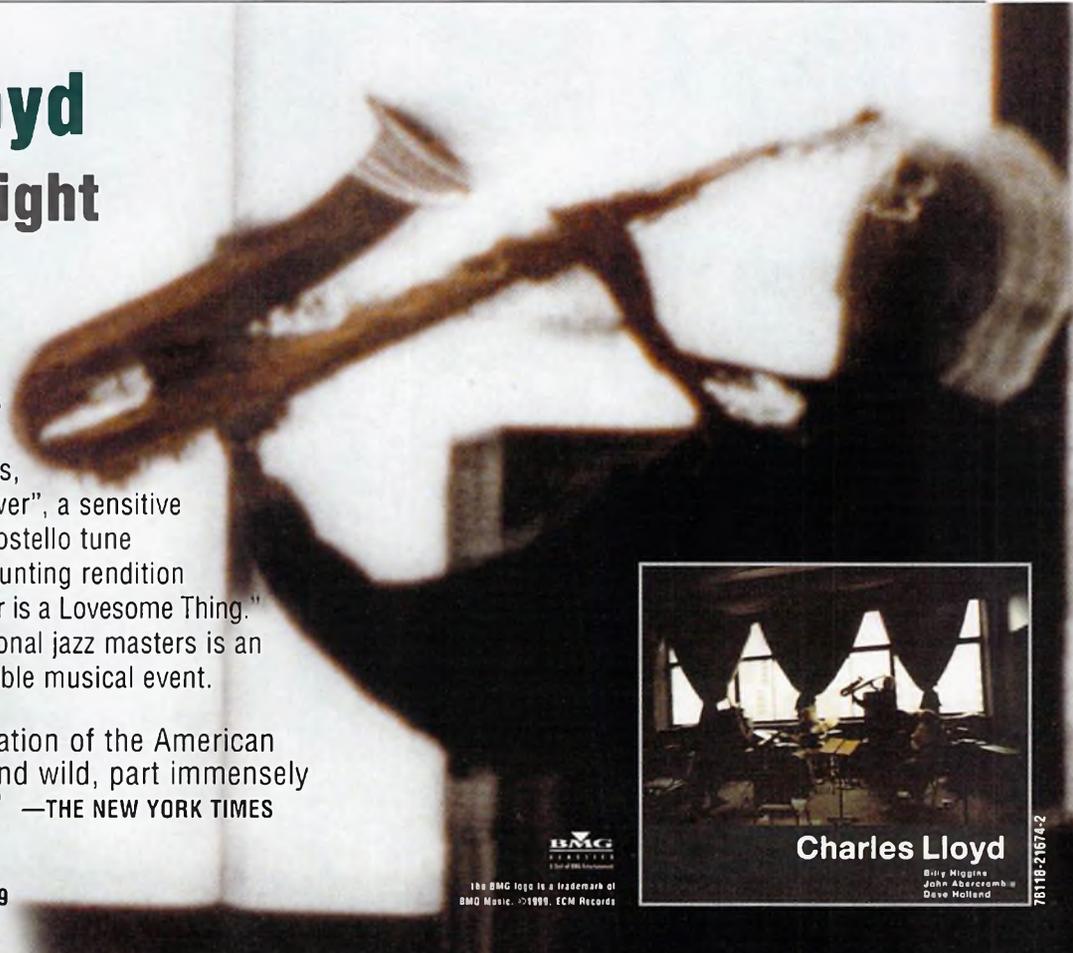
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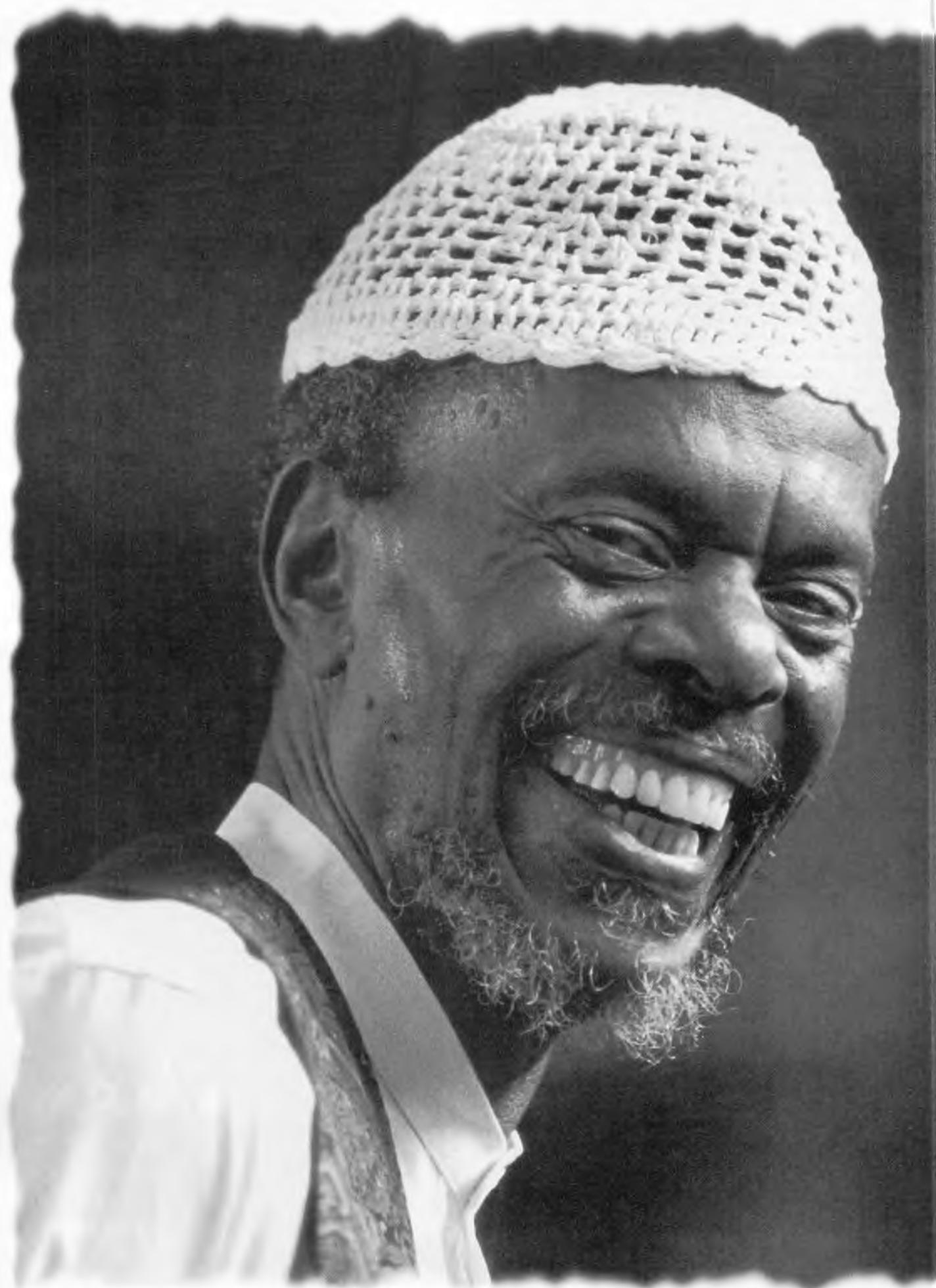


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Horace Tapscott

One February weekend in South Central Los Angeles revealed a festive devotion to longstanding traditions. As hundreds gathered in the Leimert Park section of the Crenshaw District to celebrate Mardi Gras and Black History Month, a bandstand and Caribbean/soul food stalls shared the sidewalks with a local cartoonist who sold his postcard caricatures of r&b and avant-garde jazz musicians. During this neighborhood heritage celebration, almost everyone had something to say about Horace Tapscott, the pianist and activist who spent most of his life just a few blocks away, but who couldn't make it this year.

Many musicians talked about playing in Tapscott's Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra big band, singing in his choir, or working for his Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension organization. The curator of Crenshaw's Museum In Black, an African-American history museum, discussed Tapscott's role in the social upheavals of the '60s. Succinct words of respect came from Don Muhammad, the executive director of the World Stage, a small but renowned jazz performance/education center. He praised Tapscott's crucial role in providing the conceptual and financial support that the center needed to get off the ground. Muhammad then said, "We all call him 'Papa' here."

In the national jazz media, stories about Tapscott often implied that his decision to spend his career on the West Coast—and not moving to New York—had been detrimental. Writers seemed to say that he should have accommodated himself to the music industry instead of staying in California. Tapscott preferred to be with his family and in a climate where outdoor festivals are possible in February. What's also important is that Tapscott's neighborhood always inspired him, and he always reciprocated.

After spending a few hours with Tapscott at his home, it became clear how much the people around him inspired his music, such as the exuberant odd time signatures in his compositions. Tapscott said that he always heard 3/4, 5/4 and 7/8 rhythms as dance beats, and his inclination to write them stemmed from an indelible observation.

"I remember going outside my house in Houston, Texas, before I came to Los Angeles," Tapscott said of an early memory. "Some guy would be whistling and dancing. And he'd be walking down the street, and somebody across the street would be whistling and keeping time with him. That's how they'd greet each other, and they may never see each other for a while. It got to be, like, sitting on my stoop, looking at an old picture show. It was all one big song to me, one big composition."

Unfortunately, the composition that was Horace Tapscott's life ended three weeks after this interview. He died of cancer on Feb. 27, at age 64.

Tapscott's freewheeling works drew from his thoughts about an inebriated woman named Mary who lived under his porch wondering about life in Tanzania's capital. Snatches from all over jazz history became touchstones whether he was leading a small group or his big band. And it didn't end there; on a solo recording of his "As A Child," Tapscott quotes from nursery rhymes and spirituals; the performance is seamless. Internal tension between his low-register ruminations and upper-octave forays, as well as his reshaping the lines separating composition and improvisation, are uncanny. Tapscott admonished classifications.

"I saw jazz, or so-called jazz, for what it was at the time," Tapscott said. "I couldn't get locked up in free-jazz, or new jazz, or whatever jazz. I couldn't get locked up in the word 'jazz.' I was writing music about the people in the community and what I had experienced. That's what I thought the music should be about. I was following behind Duke Ellington, and he was doing it so well—they wouldn't label him, it was just the thing that was done, and other people would take it and call it this or that."

The Los Angeles jazz scene of the '40s and '50s, of which Tapscott was a young contributor, has received more attention lately. Last year, the oral history book *Central Avenue Sounds* (University of California Press) presented a collection of testimonies from musicians who made their reputations in that musical hotbed. Tapscott said that as soon as his family moved to California, his mother took him around to the musicians' union and introduced him to his first teacher even before showing him their new home. He started out as a trombonist, and later, as a teenager, played in Gerald Wilson's big band. The bandleader

Papa's Optimism: The Final Interview

BY AARON COHEN

PHOTOS BY WARREN BERMAN

became a lifelong friend. Tapscott also played piano and studied composition under Dr. Samuel Browne at Jefferson High School. If other educational or economic opportunities were lacking at the time, musical teaching was often solid.

"I wanted to tell a story, so I knew what I had to do," Tapscott said. "Dr. Browne introduced me to Dr. William Grant Still, and I became interested in that. And so Dr. Browne said, 'Horace, what do you have to write? Write your setting, and then we could go from there. Write your composition.' I said, 'You mean I have to write a whole composition first?' He said, 'Yeah.' That's what I started doing, and it was all messed up from the jump. But I kept at it, and Dr. Browne helped quite a bit, since he was a composer himself. And I started to see how things would come together, like in old Black movies with music and dancing."

While Tapscott was a student at Jefferson, he met Lionel Hampton and shortly afterwards joined his band. Although some articles mention that he switched from trombone to the piano because of a car accident, Tapscott said it wasn't a sudden change—he occasionally had to play both instruments at Hampton's gigs as a substitute for less reliable musicians. By the time Tapscott left the band in 1961, Central Avenue had declined. Tapscott remembers that "racial harmony wasn't too cool at the time," and the Los Angeles City Council pressured clubs to close when reports came out that Lana Turner and Ava Gardner hung out at late-night jams.

So Tapscott decided to get a group together and create their own opportunities. He formed the Arkestra to "play music by Black American composers and by Black people from all over the world.

"We played in the neighborhoods for free, played in churches, schools, old folks' homes," Tapscott recalled. "We'd play music on the street corners, or get flatbed trucks and take the music to the people, move to the playground while the cats were playing ball. It's just the thing we had to do."

Arkestra records *Flight 17* and *The Call* show why the group was so distinctive. The band used polytonality and enormous crescendos, but their cohesion, tunefulness and sheer joy were widely approachable. Tapscott regularly encouraged the members of the group to contribute their compositions, but he retained authority as a conductor. This combination of freedom and discipline attracted musicians like saxophonist Arthur Blythe, who made his recording debut as a featured player on Tapscott's 1969 *The Giant Is Awakened* (partially reissued on West Coast Hot).

"Most of the time, the Arkestra would be playing 24 hours a day," Tapscott said.



"We played in the neighborhoods for free, played in churches, schools, old folks' homes. We'd play music on the street corners, or get flatbed trucks and take the music to the people, move to the playground while the cats were playing ball. It's just the thing we had to do."

"At [pianist] Linda Hill's house, the music would be going on at all times. And she'd look at the problems of why we couldn't have rehearsals. If we had babies, we'd open up a baby house. Just providing those things so we could keep the music going. And the poets, and people writing and learning how to write, would come into the music. It was all hooked up into one little ol' hook-up. That's how it works to this day."

In the '60s and '70s, Tapscott's cultural advocacy scared some authorities. The Arkestra was playing outdoors in Watts when the 1965 riots erupted, and he remembers a cop got on the bandstand and blamed the band for triggering the furor. Needless to say, the work that Tapscott did to rebuild the community went uncredited. And because he presented different political views from the South Central neighborhoods at this time, Tapscott was blacklisted.

"The Arkestra had such a hard time socially in the community as far as being on the FBI's lists and things of that nature," Tapscott said. "Yeah, I was, even though I didn't carry one piece of a gun. Naturally, the music brought all groups together. I didn't hook up just to the Black Panthers or to the Black Muslims. The words that hooked up to us were 'Freedom Music.' Cats in the community like H. Rap Brown would give speeches before concerts, and they were allowed to speak. A lot of non-work because of it. Yeah, it was a rough time."

Tapscott also chose to keep a low profile. Saxophonist Sonny Criss' landmark *Sonny's Dream* album is made up of Tapscott's compositions and arrangements, but he did not appear on it, simply because he liked the way pianist Tommy Flanagan played his charts. He made decent money ghostwriting for pop acts like Sonny & Cher, and along with Count Basie-alum saxophonist Preston Love, Tapscott toured with West Coast Motown stars. As he stood well over six feet and resembled movie hit-man Samuel Jackson, Tapscott once used his commanding presence to keep a young family of singers in line.

"Those Jackson Five kids were always messin' round in the toilets and stuff," Tapscott said. "But they'd take one look at me and I'd scare the bejesus out of them."

During the past few years, the press acknowledged Tapscott's accomplishments when the supportive independent label Arabesque released two excellent small-group discs: *aiee! The Phantom* and *Thoughts Of Dar Es Salaam*. In a way, the discs are Tapscott's distillation of his lifelong experiences while he looked back at such early influences as Art Tatum and Erroll Garner.

Just when he started to get this deserved recognition, cancer struck him in 1998. The illness hit severely just before Tapscott played a week-long stint at New York's Iridium in August.

"I got off the plane and I couldn't move my hand," Tapscott said. "It couldn't be utilized, and I played 14 sets with one hand. I'd never done that before in my life. [Drummer] Billy Hart and [bassist] Ray Drummond came out quite a bit. It was a nightmare. I couldn't believe what was happening: It was like being in the Twilight Zone."

The usually abrasive pundit Stanley Crouch was in the audience that week, and Tapscott's performance amazed him.

"He played extraordinary harmonies with his left hand and just a few fingers on his right," Crouch says. "He was swinging, too. It was extraordinary magnitude on a musical and human level. Few people would've had the heart to do that. On that particular night, he embodied everything great about jazz, believe it."

When I spoke with Tapscott, his fight against cancer had continued to weaken him, but his eyes emanated vitality. At home his wife, Cecilia, and family provided him with devoted affection, and while we talked, a few of his 21 grandchildren checked up on him. He must have known how little time he had left, but his optimism had not completely vanished.

"I talk to cats I haven't talked to in years," Tapscott said. "Steve Lacy, Randy Weston called up from Japan. Mal Waldron called me up saying, 'What you talkin' about Horace? I got five kids!' I say, 'What?!' I want to play at least one more time. Other than that, I've had a great time and have two great-grandchildren. Terrible things have occurred, but I wake up happy every morning. On my way out of this millennium and out of this planet, the word still is to make a contribution toward whatever I want to make a contribution for. If you ask me, 'Why are you in music?' It's because I love music, I love the way people react to it and what people do because of it." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Horace Tapscott preferred Bosendorfers and old Steinway pianos.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THOUGHTS OF DAR ES SALAAM—Arabesque Jazz 128

AIEE! THE PHANTOM—Arabesque Jazz 119

THE TAPSCOTT SESSIONS VOL. 0—Nimbus 2258

THE TAPSCOTT SESSIONS VOL. 1—Nimbus 1581

THE TAPSCOTT SESSIONS VOL. 2—Nimbus 1692

THE DARK TREE—VOLUME 1—hatART 6053

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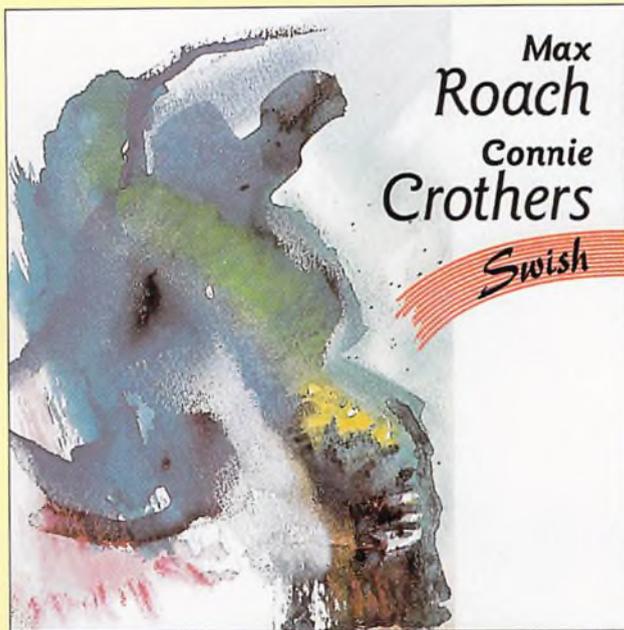
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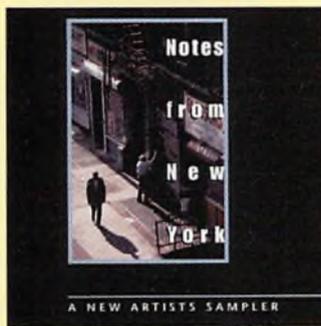
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Chris Potter's

Spin Tale

By Julie Jarema

Photo By Alan Nahigian

A direct line extends from the center of Chris Potter's head through the bell of his tenor sax. Behind the gray and glass divider of Systems 2 Studio in Brooklyn, Potter twists and bends his body as he digs into a solo. Although his figure is contorted, the connection from his head to his horn stays steady and strong.

Last year, Potter was diagnosed with Meniere's disease, a disorder of the inner ear. Symptoms included attacks of vertigo and ringing in the ear.

"I can definitely tell when I listen to the album now," Potter says of the 1998 recording of *Vertigo*, his sixth CD for Concord Jazz. "There's a certain urgency that comes through that couldn't be manufactured. Naming the album *Vertigo* was a dark joke. It's pretty autobiographical."

Potter wrote the album's title track last February while on tour with guitarist Jim Hall in Copenhagen, just after he had undergone his first surgery to correct what was initially diagnosed as a dysfunctional oval window in his inner ear. He superimposed a 5/4 time signature over another in 4/4. "It sounds like it's speeding up and slowing down, when the actual tempo stays the same," says the 27-year-old former Red Rodney sideman and graduate of the Manhattan School of Music. "There's a topsy-turvy, unbalanced quality to it."

After touring later that year with Mike Mainieri and Dave Holland, Potter underwent an endolymphatic shunt surgery in August to drain all the excess fluid from the inner ear. "About five weeks after the surgery, I felt awful," Potter remembers. "They measured my hearing, and it was worse. That was the end of Western medicine.

"After the doctor said there is nothing more we can do, I said, 'I'm going to do whatever I can to bring things into harmony.' I've lost a lot of hearing in my left ear."

Since September, Potter has used a medicinal treatment of Chinese herbal teas and acupuncture, and his attacks of vertigo have diminished significantly. "Deciding that this is going away makes it really feel like it is going away," Potter says.

His recording schedule would indicate the same. Fresh dates with Holland, Dave Douglas and Paul Motian are all scheduled for release this year. "Dave Holland's band is really into using odd meters," Potter notes, "so the music ends up being fairly difficult. It's been inspiring to work with someone who really puts that much effort into how the band sounds."

Potter's performance schedule is pretty full, as well. Besides working with Douglas, he is touring in both the States and in Europe with Holland, Steve Swallow and Hall. He expects to expand his own work as a leader and work more with the group he assembled for *Vertigo*, which includes Joe Lovano on tenor, Kurt Rosenwinkel on guitar, Scott Colley on bass and Billy Drummond on drums. And he plans a collaboration with Colley and drummer Bill Stewart in a collective trio. His first European tour as a leader is scheduled for the year 2000.

In Systems 2, Potter slides his headphones off during Dave Hazeltine's piano solo and sways standing with his hand on his hip. He rubs his hand briefly across his forehead and then slowly down the sides of his chin. As bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Byron Landhan accompany Hazeltine, Potter glances at the wooden stool behind him and sits down next to trumpeter John Swana.

When Swana speaks to him, Potter leans in to listen with his left ear; then the saxophonist quickly stands, switching to his right.

"It's a little bit of an adjustment because I can't hear as well in one ear,"

says Potter. "But it's not a major thing. There's a knob that controls the balance for the headphones, and I just turn it a bit to the left."

With each new experience, Potter is pushing the sound in his head to different levels. In learning to deal with the disease, he has found a peaceful personal space that helps him focus harder on the music.

"The sound in your head is always growing, and it shouldn't be a stable thing," Potter says. "Otherwise, it'll die."

Potter steps back toward the mic and nods along with the music. He puts horn to mouth and softens his knees. Although his first few notes are low and long, they become lighter and quicker as Potter soars into his second chorus. His body dances, but his head and his horn remain in sync. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Chris Potter plays Selmer Mark VI tenor and alto saxes, and he recently acquired a Yamaha Custom soprano. Potter also plays a Selmer USA bass clarinet and a Gemeinhardt alto flute. He uses Rico Jazz Select 4-Hard or 4-Medium reeds on all horns. His tenor mouthpiece is a rubber Otto Link 9 that was worked on by Francois Luis. On alto, he uses an old Selmer Soloist mouthpiece. He uses a Bari 66 mouthpiece on soprano.

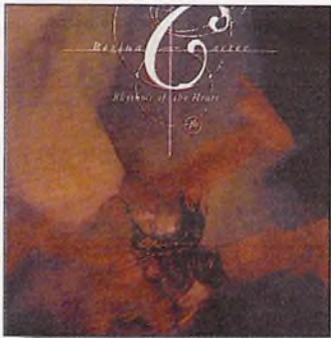
DISCOGRAPHY

VERTIGO—Concord Jazz 4843
UNSPOKEN—Concord Jazz 4775
MOVING IN—Concord Jazz 4723
CONCORD DUO SERIES, VOLUME 10—Concord Jazz 4695 (with Kenny Werner)
PURE—Concord Jazz 4637
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES—Concord Jazz 4595

with various others

ANCESTORS—Blue Note 34634 (Renee Rosnes)
AS WE ARE NOW—Blue Note 56810 (Renee Rosnes)
FLIGHT OF THE BLUE JAY—Winter & Winter 9 (Paul Motian)
DECONSTRUCTED—ECM 1 23209 (Steve Swallow)
MAGIC TRIANGLE—Arabesque 139 (Dave Douglas)
OCEANS OF TIME—Arabesque 129 (Billy Hart)
IN MY LIFE—Concord Jazz 4561 (Marian McPartland)
ONE MORE ANGEL—Concord Jazz 4753 (John Patitucci)
NOW—Concord Jazz 4806 (John Patitucci)

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



Regina Carter

Rhythms of the Heart

Verve 314-547-177

★★★★

The spine of the advance disc says Verve, but Regina Carter's best record thus far could have been issued by Whitman as well. The violinist and her producer Richard Seidel have concocted a sampler for her label debut. And it's a fairly nifty little sampler at that.

Striving for diversity is a common tack in a modernist era where genres steadily bump into each other. But danger awaits those who flit from branch to branch without a thoughtful game plan: Their stylistic choices may seem hollow, mere stop-off points instead of integral links. This kind of contrivance is fatal in most cases, making the programs amusing, not compelling.

Rhythms Of The Heart avoids such a pitfall: Each of its tracks demonstrates its own validity. While swooping through the rhythmic diaspora—bossa, reggae, swing, funk, bop, etc.—Carter and company create pieces that stand on their own while relating to their kin. The segue between Kenny Barron's "Cook's Bay" and the Temptations' "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone" (with a very evocative vocal by Cassandra Wilson), is typical of the logic. A Caribbean lilt drives the former; light-hearted skanking marks the latter.

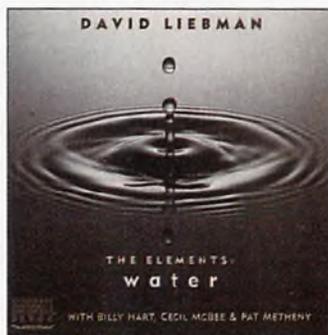
Actually, that light-hearted feel pretty much distinguishes the record. Anyone who caught Carter during her early '90s stint with the String Trio of New York knows she's a rigorous and capable musician. But she also worked with the r&b band Brainstorm early on as well, and I've always gotten the feeling that her heart is in pop as much as jazz. That has a downside: Her last outing for Atlantic was a meager NAC romp long on the synth atmosphere. Though flecked with electrokeybs, *Rhythms* is much more mainstream, built around acoustic instruments and true improvisation. Listen to her bandy ideas with Barron, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash on her own "N.Y. Attitude," and you'll be hard-pressed to deem her anything but jazz. But overall, the choice of material has a tail-wagging vibe geared to seduce the commercially crucial dabbler demographic.

Those hobbyists will likely agree with more hardcore listeners on one thing: The violinist's tone is gorgeous. Rightly, it's at the center of the disc. From "Lady Be Good" to "Our Delight" to "Skeeter's Blues," Carter's rich timbre draws your ear to her sharply conceived lines. While never shying away from exclamatory passages, she finds a way to provide a great equilibrium as well. It's not all crescendo. That's a mark of a player who's coming into her own. From top to bottom, *Rhythms Of The Heart* suggests quite the same.

—Jim Macnie

Rhythms Of The Heart: Lady Be Good; Cook's Bay; Papa Was A Rollin' Stone; Mojito; Our Delight; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; Mandingo Street; N.Y. Attitude; By The Brook; Skeeter Blues. (53:30)

Personnel: Regina Carter, violin; Rodney Jones, guitar; Kenny Barron, piano; Werner Gierig, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Cassandra Wilson, vocal (3); Mayra Casales, percussion; Richard Bona, electric bass, acoustic guitar, African percussion, vocals; Romero Lumbambo, acoustic guitar.



David Liebman

The Elements: Water

Arkadia Jazz 71043

★★★★

The liquid theme of this first in a four-part set of elemental tone poems seems more a jump-off point than genuine uniting concept—in fact, one could easily hear an "earthiness" in the "fiery" tenor feature "White Caps" or an "airy" quality in Pat Metheny's lovely "Guitar Interlude" intro to "Baptismal Font." But sometimes having an arbitrary, buried theme like this helps make a project coherent, and this record succeeds wonderfully on that count. *Water* has a programmatic feel without being pedantic (Dave Liebman's liner text and superfluous—there's a fluid term for you!—last track of "reflections" on the project aside). Most importantly the bulk of the music is simply terrific.

Water is Liebman's first recording with Metheny, and it's a solid combination. The leader composed all the pieces as permutations constructed out of a single musical gesture, a melodic germ that the guitarist states outright, solo, at the disc's outset. On the record's most obviously watery track, "Reflecting Pool," spec-

tral sweeps on the harp-like 48-string guitar rebound like rings in a puddle, Liebman's wood flute and pastoral soprano echoing around them. The saxophonist adds a welcome bite to his intro on "Storm Surge," which includes the mercurial, playful kind of Metheny solo that makes his fans swoon, as well as a forceful solo from drummer Billy Hart. The rhythm team is supportive throughout, Cecil McBee mixed low enough to sound natural (too many jazz mixes pump up the bass like it's on steroids these days).

"Heaven's Gift" has a light swing—buoyant, flowing; "Ebb And Flow" is speedier, Metheny's screeching guit-synth soaring with the leader's soprano like a couple of hungry swallows in a field at dusk. Switching to tenor, Liebman pulls fascinating lines out of his harmonic imagination on "Baptismal Font." Listening to him lock together with Metheny's evil synth sounds on the surprising, gritty, swaggering "White Caps," I wish Liebman would play more tenor; he's got such a personal sound on the deeper horn. But if he just keeps making records as engaging as this one, that'll be libation enough: a tall glass of water.

—John Corbett

The Elements: Water: Water; Giver Of Life; White Caps; Heaven's Gift; Bass Interlude; Reflecting Pool; Storm Surge; Guitar Interlude; Baptismal Font; Ebb And Flow; Water Theme (Reprise); Dave Liebman's Reflections On "Water." (58:03)

Personnel: David Liebman, soprano and tenor saxophones, wood flute; Pat Metheny, acoustic and electric guitars, guitar synth (2, 9), 48-string Picasso guitar (5); Cecil McBee, bass; Billy Hart, drums.



Terence Blanchard

Jazz In Film

Sony Classical 60671

★★★★

By now, trumpeter Terence Blanchard's film credits (especially with filmmaker Spike Lee) place him at the top of jazz composer/players. In fact, his film work seems to have made *Jazz In Film* inevitable: A tribute of sorts to many of those who have come before him, this album reflects Blanchard's taste and knowledge of significant jazz scores by some of Hollywood's best, along with "outsider" Duke Ellington.

THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
REGINA CARTER <i>Rhythms Of The Heart</i>		★★★★	★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★★★
DAVID LIEBMAN <i>The Elements: Water</i>		★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2
TERENCE BLANCHARD <i>Jazz In Film</i>		★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2	★★★★
FREDDIE HUBBARD <i>Above & Beyond</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★1/2

CRITICS' COMMENTS

REGINA CARTER, *Rhythms Of The Heart*

Almost as if to formally claim Stephane Grappelli's fallen baton, Carter pointedly opens her first Verve CD with a declarative performance of the Grappelli anthem "Lady Be Good," the tune that inaugurated the Hot Club's recorded history in 1934. This lady's golden. —JMD

Carter sounds great in basic settings like "Lady Be Good," "Our Delight," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most," "N.Y. Attitude" and the Latin sound of "Mojito"—she's got a warm, full sound, she's rhythmically dextrous and melodically imaginative. Heck, she burns it up in places. But half this record is mired in dull tunes ("Cook's Bay") and gross overproduction. —JC

Blessed with great technique and improvisational savvy, Carter touches down on swing, a little bebop, some reggae and blues, just to mention a few genres. The impression that remains is of a nice pop album reminiscent of '70s-era Noel Pointer. —JE

DAVID LIEBMAN, *The Elements: Water*

I can't remember a CD more specific in its intentions than this discourse on water, which, in case we miss the point, includes a nine-minute explanation by the composer on the final track. I appreciate the intellectual and emotional precision with which Liebman lays out a listening context, even if I'm at a loss to react to music set forth in such a didactic manner. I kind of think it's a little boring. —JMD

His suite flows with the kind of spontaneity and fluctuation the title would have you assume. And lyricism follows it into every tidepool and tempest. —JM

Working thematically, Liebman calls listeners to hear connections, use their imagination and appreciate the jazz esthetic that ties this music all together. The writing/playing is at times pretty, turbulent, cool or hot; and, like water, sometimes bland, colorless or wayward. Metheny, Hart and McBee make for inspired choices. —JE

TERENCE BLANCHARD, *Jazz In Film*

By taking on a program of jazz-influenced film scores—curiously ignored by jazz musicians over the years—Blanchard and his all-star front line have given both jazz audiences and film buffs a rare and intelligent treat. Especially for those familiar with the New Orleans of *Streetcar Named Desire* or the stark Michigan landscapes of *Anatomy Of A Murder*, these performances will evoke familiar images and emotions and then bend them in fresh directions. Joe Henderson is particularly alert to the possibilities. —JMD

A pleasurable thematic program, well-conceived and well-executed on the combinations of orchestral material and small ensemble jazz (hear 'em meld on "Anatomy Of A Murder") to the selection of tunes, both obvious ("Taxi Driver") and not (Ellington's "Degas' Racing World"). —JC

Great to hear him back in the jazz mode, and great to see he's found a way to incorporate his new love. Melodramatic moments are overshadowed by the hip playing of Donald Harrison and Joe Henderson. —JM

FREDDIE HUBBARD, *Above & Beyond*

This is exactly the kind of archival treasure that one hopes will be excavated, dusted off and commercially released. A thrill ride that will scare the bejesus out of many fellow trumpeters. —JC

Because the rhythm is deep-sixed in the mix, it vibes like a bootleg. But people are buzzing because it proves how massive Freddie's imagination is. On this night he had the world by the balls. —JM

An early '80s blaze of glory for the by-then-veteran Hubbard. Is it vast quantities of air escaping? A non-stop flight of the bumblebee? No, it is the ever-inventive, long-winded Hubbard literally blowing the top off mostly high-octane, straightahead numbers with stunning improvisational fury and imagination. —JE

A nice side effect to the trumpeter's work in this regard has been a unique journey toward maturity as a player, leader and arranger. There is much feeling throughout, even as his arrangements allow for others to express themselves. This is no prima donna trying to prove himself: He knows his talents are spread across the studio. In addition, Blanchard's selective use of strings is intelligent, unobtrusive and compelling, not a pastiche somehow trying to convince the listener that this music demands a large score. Another example is how he uses the late pianist Kenny Kirkland to great advantage, on tender ballads such as Jerry Goldsmith's "Chinatown" or something packed with urgency like Ellington's "Anatomy Of A Murder." And the band is great, loaded as it is with tenorist Joe Henderson, trombonist Steve Turre, bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Carl Allen and the return of former partner Donald Harrison on alto saxophone.

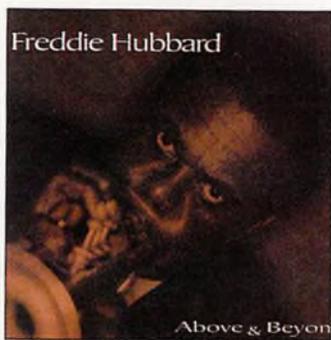
Blanchard's trumpet at times conveys a formal, recital style, one that brings a shine to scores that could have used a little dirt from his horn on, say, Andre Previn's "The Subterraneans." Fortunately, Blanchard's recital sheen is countered by Henderson's seasoned tone. For Henderson fans, by the way, *Jazz In Film* represents some of his best playing in years.

The best work comes during the quieter moments, on the ballads, the more introspective material that doesn't necessarily result in a blues chase or a song that railroads the players into any number of almost-too-sweet chord changes. Fortunately, that's how most of the album plays out. Bernard Herrmann's "Taxi Driver," for example, while lacking the ominous edge of the original, still manages to convey a convincing sense of yearning with sentimentality. Here is a good example of Henderson reading the score's mood as a followup to one of Blanchard's best showcases as a ballad player. Another great example comes from Ellington's music for a movie never completed, "Degas' Racing World." Ellington's piece is full of romance, and with Blanchard pouring all kinds of feeling into his duet with bassist Veal and Henderson (once again, following on his heels), this sultry swinger ironically conveys the best of what jazz has done for film.

Jazz In Film ends with Blanchard's own "Clockers," theme music to one of his Spike Lee scores. A medium-tempo swinger, "Clockers" finds its strength in a set of repeated chords that communicate a somber, reflective mood, despite Blanchard's fortissimo siren song of a solo. It is reminiscent of Coltrane's classic quartet in its searching for resolution only to find more searching. "Clockers," like most of the tunes on *Jazz In Film*, may not have you thinking of movie stars or the big screen, but the expansive qualities of Blanchard's esthetic still manage to convey a bigger picture than what jazz is used to hearing. —John Ephland

Jazz In Film: *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *Chinatown*; *The Subterraneans*; *Anatomy Of A Murder*; *The Pawnbroker*; *Taxi Driver*; *Degas' Racing World*; *Man With The Golden Arm*; *Clockers*. (68:19)

Personnel: Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Joe Henderson, tenor saxophone; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Steve Turre, trombone; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Carl Allen, drums; with orchestra.



Freddie Hubbard

Above & Beyond
Metropolitan 1113

★★★★½

This live San Francisco club date catches Freddie Hubbard in the spring of 1982, about three weeks after he recorded *Face To Face* with Oscar Peterson, an album that stands as one of the finest albums of his career. And the spirit of that session carries over and engulfs this like a typhoon.

This is the kind of post-bop, Charlie Shavers-style muscle trumpet on which he built his reputation as perhaps the leading trumpeter of his generation in the late '60s, a reputation often obscured by attempts to reconcile it to passing funk and fusion fads. No such problems here, though. The Shavers comparison seems quite apt, actually, even though it may be a little arcane to some. Hubbard appropriated the staccato strut and dense, piercing sound that Shavers deployed in the pre-bop early '40s and applied them to hard-bop models such as Clifford Brown to produce one of the most striking trumpet sounds of the post-bop period.

With that as his basis, he moved on to produce, when permitted, music of the sort heard here. The heat and ramming intensity is evident literally from the first jawbreaking stabs of "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise," which takes off at such a high level of intensity, Hubbard leaves himself almost no space to grow. So he goes off in all directions in fierce, impatient sprints of brutal, burning authority that are dazzling but emotionally static.

His barreling tempos give his playing something of the reckless abandon of free-jazz, as if Hubbard was listening to avant-garde saxophonists of the '60s more than most trumpeters were. Stanley Crouch makes this point in his notes, and it's a good one. After all, he was in on the movement's two big Kodak moments: Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* and Coltrane's *Ascension*. But the sometimes frenzied shrieks and plethoric trills (a full 15 seconds on "Little Sunflower") are about as far as Hubbard indulges the excesses of the avant-garde saxes. It was as if the trumpet itself had some inherent immunity to self-immolation. Besides, what avant gardist would quote from "Sonny Boy" not just once but twice (on "Softly" and "I Love You")?

When it suits his purpose to take his time, he can, even at brisk tempos. "I Love You" finds him on flugelhorn playing at a more restrained level, which lets listeners approach the fine detailing and precise arpeggios of his lines

more closely. "Thermo" swings less directly than the version Hubbard recorded with Peterson, but there are moments of impressive rapport. Listen to Billy Childs and then Louis Hayes pick up neatly on Hubbard going into the third drum break at about 9:50 into the cut.

This is mature Freddie Hubbard, pretty much at the top of his considerable form. His fans should treasure it. —John McDonough

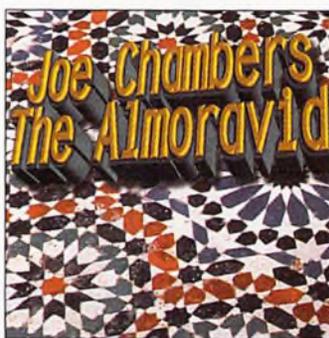
Above & Beyond: Softy As In A Morning Sunrise; I Love You; Thermo; Little Sunflower; Byrdlike. (68:13)

Personnel: Freddie Hubbard, trumpet, flugelhorn; Billy Childs, piano; Herbie Lewis, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

Joe Chambers

Mirrors
Blue Note 96685

★★★★



The Almoravid
32 Records 32099

★★★★½

As a mainstay of Blue Note recordings in the '60s (particularly with Bobby Hutcherson), Chambers was valued for his compositions as well as his drumming prowess. Apart from his participation in the M'Boom percussion ensemble, he's been sighted less frequently in recent years. *Mirrors*, Chambers' first Blue Note session as a leader, offers polished, straight-ahead performances of his diverse tunes, many previously recorded with Hutcherson or M'Boom. Though the drummer rarely solos, he's a constant presence. It's clear that the New Orleans beat of "Tu-way-pocke-way," the exotic, inexorable rhythm of "Caravanserai" and the Latin verve of "Mariposa" all grow directly out of Chambers' drumming.

The title track offsets saxophonist Vincent Herring's relaxed, fluid phrasing with sharp, terse commentary from trumpeter Eddie Henderson. Herring's wistful performance on soprano and alto saxophones becomes the centerpiece of Chambers' tender ballad "Ruth." The drummer plays a pivotal role on "Mariposa," driving the tune's galloping rhythms, and on "Circles," which multitracks his vibes and drums. With its graceful, understated swing, *Mirrors* recalls the work of Tony Williams' quintet of the '80s and '90s. That perception is enhanced by the presence here of pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Ira Coleman.

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Recorded in 1971 and 1973, *The Almoravid* is one of the lost treasures of the Muse catalog, issued on CD for the first time by 32 Jazz. The two sessions are unified by Chambers' interest in North African and Moorish influences. The earlier dates feature a front line including Woody Shaw's trumpet and Harold Vick's flute. Their performance of Zawinul's "Early Minor" creates a mysterious, spacy atmosphere heightened by George Cables' electric piano, and evokes Zawinul's compositions for Miles Davis. The exotic "Medina" suggests Arabic sounds, prominently featuring Shaw and bassist Cecil McBee.

The fascinating 1973 sessions build around a core of four percussionists, augmented by key-

boards and electric bass. Chambers plays drums exclusively, joined by fellow M'Boom founders Omar Clay on marimba and Ray Mantilla on congas. Tracks like "The Almoravid" and Andrew Hill's "Catta" layer marimbas and congas atop Chambers' drum set, creating rich patterns and tightly meshed interplay among the percussionists. Richard Davis' Fender bass helps to contour the constantly shifting drum patterns. This sadly overlooked album ranks with Chambers' most ambitious efforts.

—Jon Andrews

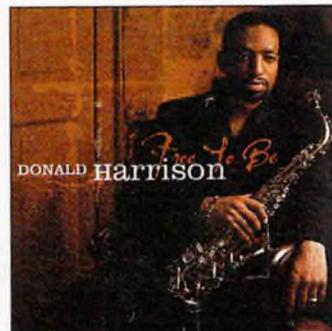
Mirrors: Tu-way-pock-e-way (New Orleans Street Beat); Mirrors; Caravanserai; Ruth; Mariposa; Lady In My Life; Circles; Come Back To Me; Ruthless. (53:26)

Personnel: Joe Chambers, drums, vibraphone (6, 7); Eddie

Henderson, trumpet; Vincent Herring, alto and soprano saxophones; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ira Coleman, bass.

The Almoravid: The Almoravid; Early Minor; Gazelle Suite; Catta; Medina; Jihad. (38:11)

Personnel: Joe Chambers, drums, vibraphone, percussion; Woody Shaw, trumpet (2, 5); Garnett Brown, trombone (2, 5); Harold Vick, flute, tenor saxophone (2, 5); George Cables, electric piano (2, 5); Cedar Walton, acoustic and electric pianos (1, 4); Cecil McBee, acoustic bass (2, 5); Walter Booker (3, 6); Richard Davis (1, 4); Fender bass; Omar Clay (1, 3, 4, 6); David Friedman (1, 4); Doug Hawthorne (3, 6), marimba, percussion; Ray Mantilla, congas, percussion (1, 3, 4, 6).



Donald Harrison

Free To Be
Impulse! 283

★ ★ ★ ½

If it's slow-cooked jazz gumbo you want, go no further than Donald Harrison's latest outing. The basic ingredient is straightahead stuff, but there are also bits of funk, blues, ballads, hip-hop, salsa and more.

It's not news that, like most of the now-grown-up young lions, he's not the most distinctive player on the scene, yet he is a solid and skillful saxophonist with strong roots and the right intentions. He has a very good grasp on the rhythmic inflections of the music and has been wise enough here to build in a strong and varied blend of material and support to keep listener interest from wandering.

He doesn't play that much soprano here, which is a good thing. The lone soprano track, "Smooth Sailing," is a nod that gets a bit too close to smooth jazz. It and the rap/hip-hop/scat-oriented vocal track "Nouveau Swing," which is built on the same tune as "Mr. Cool Breeze," are the throwaways in an otherwise worthwhile CD.

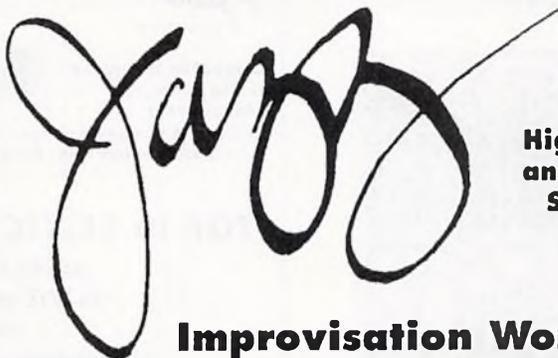
Harrison turns up the heat fairly often, particularly on "Cissy Strut" and "Indian Blues," a track he shares with labelmate tenor saxophonist Teodross Avery. Avery blows hard and well, then Harrison sears through the rhythm, stoking the flames even higher. Also noteworthy is "Slowvisor," the track with Harrison's sometimes boss Eddie Palmieri and another member of the Palmieri band, trumpeter Brian Lynch. By the way, Lynch is grand on that track and in support on "Again, Never." Also distinguishing themselves in sideman roles are pianists Andrew Adair and Mulgrew Miller.

This may not quite get Harrison into the gourmet cooking ranks, but it's got a fairly nice flavor.

—Will Smith

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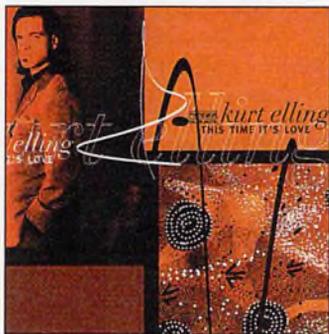
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Free To Be: Free To Be; Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise; Cissy Strut; Blue Rose; Again, Never; Duck's Steps; Indian Blues; Mr. Cool Breeze; Smooth Sailing; Slowvisor; Nouveau Swing (Reprise); Feelin' Jazzy, Baby. (66:58)
Personnel: Donald Harrison, alto saxophone (1-8, 10-12), soprano saxophone (9), vocal (11); Brian Lynch, trumpet (5, 10); Teodross Avery, tenor saxophone (7); Andrew Adair (1-3, 8, 9, 11, 12), Mulgrew Miller (4-7), Eddie Palmieri (10), piano; Rodney Jones, guitar (8, 9, 11); Reuben Rogers (1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 12), Christian McBride (4-7, 10), Vicente Archer (3), bass; John Lamkin (1-3, 8, 9, 11, 12), Carl Allen (4-7, 10), drums; José Claussell, percussion (8-11).



Kurt Elling

This Time It's Love
 Blue Note 93543

★★★★½

Kevin Mahogany

My Romance
 Warner Bros. 47025

★★★★

From time to time, we all need to be reminded that less is more. The rewards of such a tempered approach can be heard on these two recent male vocal albums.

As is his wont, Chicago ace Kurt Elling goes after a lot, and gets it on this recording that's clearly inspired by his wife, Jennifer. He's not often given to doing a tune the way it came out of the box, but more and more he seems to understand how far to go, so his hip-leaning direction is almost always on the money. An example is his somewhat stretched version of "My Foolish Heart," which is affixed with the same delightful quasi-rumba beat with which drummer Vernel Fournier buoyed Ahmad Jamal's "Poinciana." And there's "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing," where Elling adds an over-dubbed Four Freshmen-meet-the-Hi-Los chorus.

Again, the singer reveals his grand gift for vocalese lyrics, and he sings those words to recorded solos with fervor. He turns Freddie Hubbard's pensive-to-sizzling "Delphia" (from *Red Clay*) into a superb love paean, and does the same with Lester Young's small masterpiece "She's Funny That Way" (available on *The Complete Aladdin Recordings*).

For proof that "Kurtski" can be strong when simple, there's a touching "Too Young To Go Steady," his own "Where I Belong" and the sweet bossa "Rosa Morena" done in Portuguese.

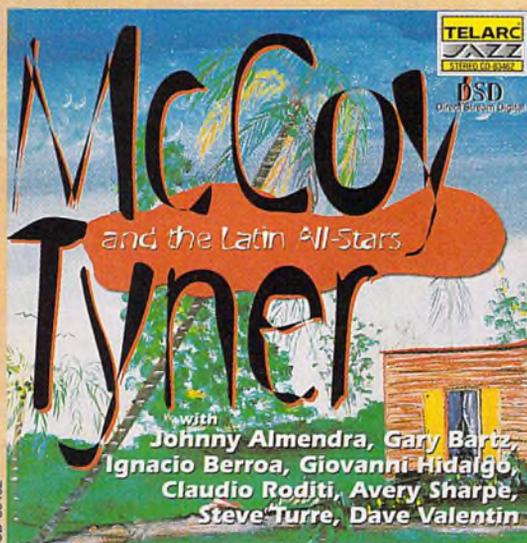
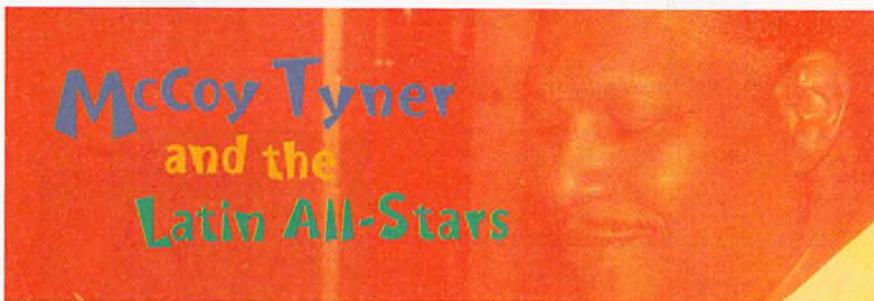
Pianist Laurence Hobgood remains Elling's devoted, A-1 accompanist, fitting in superbly behind everything and making his solo spots count. The other musicians are likewise first rate.

The only thing lacking here is a good program order. It was a waste to position two ballads after "She's Funny That Way," the last track in an emotional and musical sense; those ballads would have worked better if followed by a corker like "My Love, Effendi."

Kevin Mahogany, as the title suggests, is also into love songs here, and not just the ones we hear every day. Even those we do hear have a special spark. Credit goes to Bob James for his just-so arrangements and tasteful accompaniments, and the other musicians' ace contributions.

Everything is slow, or close to it, and that relaxed pace allows aural room for Mahogany's massive instrument; he emphasizes its upper reaches. As with Elling, his pitch never wavers, and there's no hint of strain. The moods range from upbeat to desolate, and Mahogany makes them all believable.

There are many gems here, like the opening "Teach Me Tonight," at once seductive and innocent. Mahogany delightfully elasticizes some of the phrases as he makes it swing. Tenorman Kirk Whalum, in a Gene Ammons frame of mind, rounds out the rendition with fat, warm tones. Another is the subsequent "Everything I Have Is Yours." The subtle Latin pulse is perfect, and the singer's understated



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delivery gives the lyrics even more power. The likewise uncluttered "My Romance," done with just piano and tenor, is equally persuasive.

"May I Come In?" a winning ballad that is done far too infrequently (Lorez Alexandria used it for the title track of her latest Muse album), has a compelling quality and a dandy Michael Brecker solo. "I Apologize," Billy Eckstine's signature song, sounds as if Mahogany were the only one to sing it, so personal is the interpretation. On these and on "Lush Life," the vocalist lets the material rather than vocal pizzazz impart the drama.

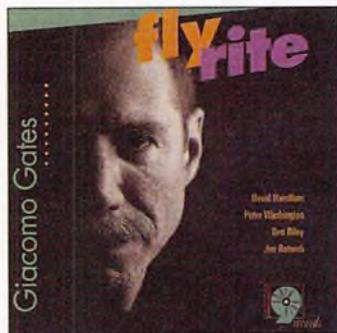
James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" and Van Morrison's "Wild Honey" are given solid treatments by Mahogany, but the tunes themselves aren't in the same league with the others; Lyle Lovett's bluesy "I Know You Know" is, however. —Zan Stewart

This Time It's Love: My Foolish Heart; Too Young To Go Steady; I Feel So Smoochie; Freddie's Yen For Jen; My Love, Effendi; Where I Belong; The Very Thought Of You; The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing; Rosa Morena; She's Funny That Way; A Time For Love; Every Time We Say Goodbye. (55:14)

Personnel: Kurt Elling, vocals; Laurence Hobgood, piano (1-8,10-12); Rob Amster, bass (1-9,11); Michael Raynor (1-5,7-9), Paul Wertico (6,11), drums; Dave Onderdonk, guitar (3,6,9,11); Brad Wheeler, soprano saxophone (6,11); Eddie Johnson, tenor saxophone (2); Johnny Frigo, violin (3).

My Romance: Teach Me Tonight; Everything I Have Is Yours; My Romance; I Know You Know; Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight; Stairway To The Stars; May I Come In?; Wild Honey; I Apologize; How Did She Look; Lush Life. (48:36)

Personnel: Kevin Mahogany, vocals; Bob James, piano, arrangements; Charles Fambrough, bass; Kirk Whalum (1, 3, 5, 8), Michael Brecker (4, 7), tenor saxophone; Laura Seaton, Yevgenia Strenger, violin. Sue Pray, Nick Cords, viola. Sarah Seiver, Eugene Mayo, cello (8).



Giacomo Gates

Fly Rite
Sharp Nine Records
CD10011

★★★★

One description for this richly toned bass might be "bebop crooner." Giacomo Gates' bare-bones nakedness on "You Go To My Head" is deeply affecting—while, on the other hand, listening to his fully personalized rendition of Dizzy's "Night In Tunisia" leaves no doubt as to this swinger's roots in jazz. This quality is also exemplified on Horace Silver's "Señor Blues" and Duke Pearson's "Jeannine," on which he brings out fresh and vital nuances.

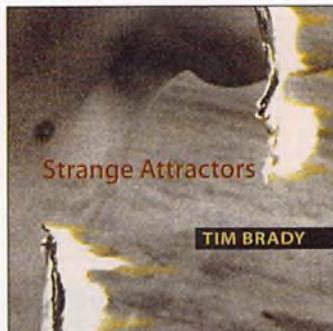
David Hazeltine is a marvelous foil for a vocal-

ist, while being more than capable of stretching out in any tempo, as he does on "Jeannine" (mid-tempo) and the oh-so-slow "You Go To My Head." Trumpeter Jim Rotondi delivers searing, right-on-the-mark punctuations and fluent solos. Peter Washington and Ben Riley are past masters at the art of holding down any rhythm section, and perform this role to perfection here.

In Gates' recent live performances, he wowed his audience with stunning "instrumental" solos: percussion, trombone, trumpet—all coming from his vocal cords. Maybe he'll include this aspect in his next recording.

—Francesca Nemko

Fly Rite: Señor Blues; Girl Talk; But Not For Me; Spinnin' (Speed Ball); I Cover The Waterfront; Baby, You Should Know It; Jeannine; You Go To My Head; Fly Rite (Epistrophe); How I Wish (Ask Me Now); Night In Tunisia. **Personnel:** Giacomo Gates, vocals; David Hazeltine, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Ben Riley, drums; Jim Rotondi, trumpet/flugelhorn.



Tim Brady

Strange Attractors
Justin Time 8464

★★★★

Montreal-based guitarist Tim Brady calls the compositions on *Strange Attractors* "auditory hallucinations," and with as many as 22 electric and acoustic instruments on some tracks, it can indeed seem as though the music is throbbing with surreal intensity. Wisely, just this side of sensory overload, Brady leaves the program with some virtuoso solo guitar, albeit in an ear-bending tuning.

Recorded between 1994 and '96, the six-part suite is completely through-composed, although the lengthy romp on "Difference Engine #1, #2, #3" has the flow and crackle of an improvisation and a theme that wraps around itself as the piece unfolds. With his electric guitar tuned C-A-D-G#-B-D#, Brady alternates between rapid picking and ringing chords in a central section that resembles an Indian raga, and resolves the piece with some chunky flamenco-style strumming.

The heavily layered "Linear Projection In A Jump Cut World" features sudden edits between snippets of various sound textures, but retains the open-sky feel of a Pat Metheny tune. Space is also part of the compositional makeup of "Collapsing Possibility Wave," a piece for electric guitar and live digital electronics. Huge, swooping electronic waves shimmer and peel like a carillon.

Not all of Brady's electronic explorations are

as effective. The relatively brief "Minimal Surface" holds out promise in its mix of slide guitar and taped sound, but the combination of sonic possibilities never quite gels. Structural repetition is the goal on "Pandemonium Architecture," but the computer-generated sound is the least musical element on the recording and quickly becomes ponderous. When creating electronic sounds, Brady can be discursive, undercutting the power of his own constructions by overplaying his hand.

Brady has become the leading proponent of gaining acceptance for the electric guitar as a legitimate instrument in new music (his multi-city Body Electric festival in 1997 presented a veritable who's who of avant-garde guitarists), and *Strange Attractors* is a strong bridge between the freedom of jazz and the structure of formal composition. —James Hale

Strange Attractors: Linear Projection In A Jump Cut World; Collapsing Possibility Wave; Difference Engine #1, #2, #3; Pandemonium Architecture; Minimal Surface; Memory Riot. (67:32)

Personnel: Tim Brady, electric, acoustic and bass guitars, electronic devices.



Gonzalo Rubalcaba & Cuban Quartet

Antigua
Blue Note 37717

★★★★

Gonzalo Rubalcaba has thrown a curve ball into the mix of piano-grounded discs he's recorded for Blue Note. On *Antigua*, he takes an intriguing collection of Afro-Cuban/Afro-Caribbean-infused compositions and spins them into orbit with the latest sequencer, sampling and synthesizer technology.

Recorded over a two-year period in 1995 and '96 and released late last year on Blue Note under license by Japanese label Somethin' Else, *Antigua* harkens back to earlier Rubalcaba electronic excursions on *Messidor* in the '80s and to a degree the Blue Note disc *Rapsodia*. But instead of exhibiting flash-and-dazzle improvisational flex, Rubalcaba goes after color and texture when employing plugged-in instruments. In lieu of jams, he delivers a suite of meticulously arranged music that flows from a conceptual center of gravity: adapting authentic Afro-Cuban traditions into a contemporary "universal music language." In layman's terms, the ancient meets the future as computer-generated sounds are buoyed by

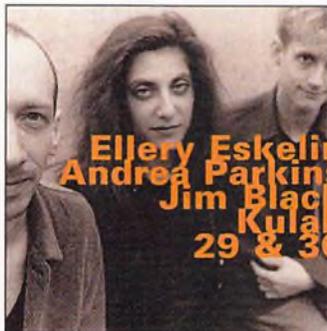
infectious polyrhythms as organic as the congas and bata drums they're played on. Such an experiment is fraught with danger (witness the lame amalgams that flood the world music bins), but Rubalcaba pulls this project off with satisfying results.

Bracketed by short, whimsical keyboard fragments, the collection consists of eight compositions that run a stylistic gamut from the sublime "Coral Negro" featuring the divine vocals of Dominican Republic singer Maridalia Hernandez to the funky jaunt "Oddi Lobbe." The mysterious "Circuito III" brims with rhythms while Rubalcaba and trumpeter Reynaldo Melian engage in a vibrant instrumental chase. Santeria chanter Lazaro Ros leads a call-and-response choir on "Ellioko," which also features Rubalcaba scampering with percussive verve on the keys. And for those Rubalcaba fans who prefer his acoustic side, there are two piano-driven tunes, "Intermitencia" and "Circuito IV," the latter infused by Dagoberto Gonzalez's electric violin flares. The only disappointment comes on "Eshun Agwe" (the Yoruban word for "party"), where the synth tones sound tinny and detached from the festive atmosphere. Otherwise, Rubalcaba presents a strong case for treating tradition to a new shine.

—Dan Ouellette

Antiguo: Opening; Circuito III; Ellioko; Desierto; Intermitencia; Coral Negro; Circuito IV; Oddi Lobbe; Eshun Agwe; Homenaje; Closing. (73:38)

Personnel: Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano, keyboards; Reynaldo Melian, trumpet; Felipe Cabrera, bass; Julio Barreto, drums; Giovanni Hidalgo, percussion; Dagoberto Gonzalez, electric violin (7); Lazaro Ros (3), Maridalia Hernandez (6), vocals.



Ellery Eskelin
Andrea Parkins
Jim Black

Kulak, 29 & 30
hatOLOGY 521

★★★★

From Ellery Eskelin's postmodern perspective, there's no need to lock a composer, or even a composition, into a paradigm such as "traditional jazz" or "free-jazz." *Kulak, 29 & 30* continues this unconventional trio's investigations of Eskelin's "multifarious" compositions that touch base with organ jazz and r&b influences but also accommodate open exchanges

among the performers. This cut-and-paste esthetic leads him to assemble episodic tracks like "Departure Lounge" and "Visionary Of The Week" by incorporating infectious grooves formed by Andrea Parkins' sampler and Jim Black's drums alongside open-textured improvised sections. With a warm, expressive tone on the tenor sax, Eskelin operates within these confines, leading the listener from one segment to the next, and moving confidently from soul-jazz licks to emotive cries.

The versatility of Black and Parkins, whose sampler emulates organ (including bass pedals) and piano, assures that the context for Eskelin's horn frequently changes. "Departure Lounge" starts out as a swaggering organ-trio groove, eventually transforming into a gloomy soundscape fit for a horror or sci-fi soundtrack. On "Fifty Nine," tenor and accordion lines mingle over a beat implied by Black, before the composition shifts into introspection, as Eskelin plays moody, searching melodies over Parkins' ambient drones. On one level, Eskelin's writing emphasizes interplay in varying environments, but on another, he challenges the listener to follow the composer's logic to connect a series of seemingly disparate events. Anyone interested in Eskelin's music should investigate his thoughtful, informative web site (home.earthlink.net/~eskelin/).

—Jon Andrews

Kulak, 29 and 30: Departure Lounge; Fifty Nine; Rhyme Or Reason; Organum; Visionary Of The Week; Expubidence. (62:29)

Personnel: Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Andrea Parkins, accordion, sampler; Jim Black, percussion.

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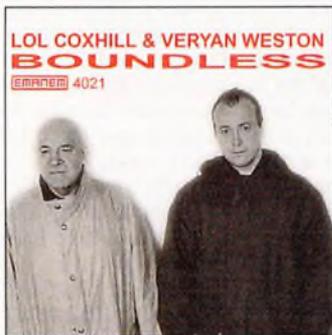
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**Lol Coxhill
Vervan Weston**

Boundless
Emanem 4021

★★★★

Steve Lacy

Saxophone Special +
Emanem 4024

★★★★½

One of the most exciting events in improvised music over the last few years has been producer Martin Davidson's revival of his important Emanem label. A model outlet for creative music from Europe and America since the '70s, Emanem's current output includes new recordings like *Boundless*, which was recorded on a single afternoon early in '98 as a celebration of the quarter-century partnership of two stalwart members of the British free music community.

Over his 40-year career, Coxhill has earned a reputation as a surreal clown (and his one vocal moment, which gives the record its name, on "Coxhill's Major Demand," is a tiny taste of his wit). But in this duet setting he leaves more overt Vaudevillian tactics on the shelf and shows why he should be regarded as one of the major figures of saxophone improvising: Dry, skittering flourishes run into extreme harmonic long-note forays into rapid-tonguing sputters into ripe full notes slurred in

a way that's drawn reasonable comparison with Pee Wee Russell. On "Sneeze," shattered remnants of a bebopper's rhythmic vocab show up in the askew lines. As well as having an incredible ear for harmonic possibilities amid tone-centerless free play, Weston locks in with Coxhill's time feel with uncanny precision; in places they create phrases together, with little joint pauses between sounds, aligning the way two people walking astride might subconsciously adjust their gait to step in tandem.

Emanem also specializes in first issuance of dormant tapes and now the CD-ing of its own uncompromising back-catalog. Lacy's *Saxophone Special +* augments the named LP—a live recording from London, 1974, featuring saxophone quartet and what Lacy called "noise section" of Dutch electronic musician Michel Waisvisz and guitarist Derek Bailey—with three (of six) tracks from *The Crust*, also recorded in London, a year-and-a-half earlier, with Lacy's cohorts Kent Carter on bass and Steve Potts on saxes, Bailey and a fellow-Brit, drummer John Stevens. Sound on the earlier record is mono, documentary in feel; it's one of Davidson's first efforts. But the music is extraordinary, Lacy's bright tunes serving as a fixed ground against which Bailey improvises brilliantly (hear especially "Flakes"). Here's hoping that the fidelity doesn't keep Emanem from issuing the rest at a later date.

In addition to having the novelty element of Evan Parker's only waxed performance on baritone sax, *Saxophone Special +* is a unique and fascinating record. Contemporaneous with Braxton's sax quartet on *New York, Fall 1974* and predating the ensuing wave of sax four-somes, its deeply exploratory sound is clearly the germ for ROVA. Lacy, Potts, Parker and Trevor Watts convene on a sopranos-only free improvisation titled "Sops," while the other tracks sport Lacy's multidimensional charts, icy, percussive guitar superimpositions and Waisvisz's parabolic electronics intrusions. At once an oddball item and a true classic.

—John Corbett

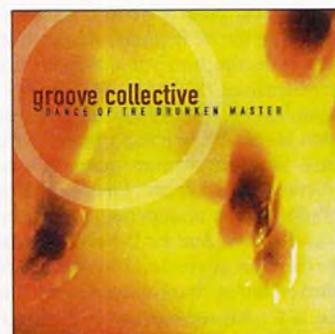
Boundless: School Test; Slurry; Flying By St Fred's; Straight On; Blues In Suspense; Coxhill's Major Demand; Jabs & Rings; Grey Day At Mumbles; Different From The Rest; Should Fit In Well With The Rest; Sneeze; Weston Lingers Longer; Jaunts & Meanders; Slightly Tippy Turvy; Epilogue. (70:15)

Personnel: Lol Coxhill, soprano sax; Vervan Weston, piano.

Saxophone Special +: 38; Flakes; Revolutionary Suicide;

Staples; Dreams; Swishes; Sops; Snaps; Snaps (Alternate). (76:55)

Personnel: Steve Lacy, soprano sax; Steve Potts, Trevor Watts (4-9), soprano and alto saxes; Evan Parker, soprano, tenor and baritone saxes (4-9); Derek Bailey (1-6, 8-9), electric guitar; Kent Carter (1-3), bass; John Stevens (1-3), percussion; Michel Waisvisz (4-6, 8-9), synthesizer.



Groove Collective

Dance Of The Drunken Master
Shanachie 5045

★★★½

With the collapse of the acid-jazz movement, Groove Collective is virtually the last band standing. The group now refers to its style as "jazz-funk," and its sound, like most so-called acid jazz, is deeply rooted in the funky fusion of the 1970s. *Dance Of The Drunken Master* has a strong retro feel, with influences like Miles Davis' post-*Bitches Brew* albums, Patrick Adams' vintage disco productions and Ronnie Laws' jazz-funk classic "Always There," but there are also contemporary-sounding Latin and Middle Eastern flavors as well as the inevitable rap.

The tracks lay complex, jazzy arrangements over radio-ready beats, with uneven results. What sets Groove Collective apart is its strong soloists—vibraphonist Bill Ware, saxophonists Jay Rodriguez and David Jensen, trumpeter Fabio Morgera, flutist Richard Worth—but here they're often buried in the mix. The music sounds conflicted between artistic and commercial aspirations, fluctuating between the fresh and the stale. Yet even without mem-

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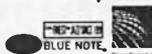


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orable melodic hooks, the richly textured tunes manage to achieve dance-floor transcendence on remarkably sophisticated terms.

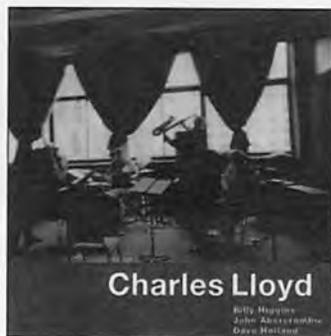
Disco, funk and fusion respectively color the first three tracks, with Worth's flute hovering over Ware's shimmering vibes on "Out The Door" and Morgera buttering up a Miles-style trumpet solo on "Floating." Gordon "Nappy G" Clay delivers a clean and clever rap on "Bionic," but the wordplay is its own reward, without any meaningful message. "Que Te Pasa'ti" is a percussive salsa workout, while "Tangenziale" offers a less-than-authentic Arabic tinge. "Sending" ratchets familiar funk-fusion licks over exotic Cuban syncopations, and the closing "Hey" uses Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* as an improvisatory springboard, hinting unmistakably at the origins of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints."

Overall, the performances are meticulously precise; the rhythms are relentlessly propulsive, and the densely intricate charts are kaleidoscopically colorful, but the material itself is too derivative to make a lasting impact. The band is still best appreciated live, preferably from a vertical position, with feet and hips in motion.

—Larry Bimbaum

Dance Of The Drunken Master: Out The Door; Deal With It; Floating; Bionic; St. Gallen; Peep Show; Que Te Pasa'ti; Anna Christina; Drunken Master; Tangenziale; Runaway Child; Sending; World Bank; Hey. (70:59)

Personnel: Richard Worth, flute, piccolo, kalimba, vocals; Jay Rodriguez, baritone, tenor and soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, vocals; David Jensen, tenor saxophone, vocals; Fabio Morgera, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals; Bill Ware III, vibes, vocals; Jonathan Crayford, keyboards, vocals; Jonathan Maron, bass, guitar, synthesizers; Gordon "Nappy G" Clay, timbales, bongos, percussion, vocals; Genji Siraisi, drums, vocals; Chris Theberge, congas, percussion, vocals.



Charles Lloyd

Voice In The Night
ECM 1674

★★★★★

Charles Lloyd's first five ECM albums constitute a body of work unique in the century's last decade. They are deeply felt unfoldings, personal and universal, sustained esthetic wholes.

Lloyd's sixth ECM recording, *Voice In The Night*, is as serious as its predecessors in its search for musical truth, but its textures are more accessible. The reason is new personnel. Lloyd's previous rhythm section contained pianist Bobo Stenson, bassist Anders Jormin and drummer Billy Hart. They are brilliant and

ambitious individual voices who, in the maelstrom of their collective inspiration, carried Lloyd's quartet in myriad, far-flung directions. But on *Voice In The Night*, John Abercrombie, Dave Holland and Billy Higgins move Lloyd's music forward in progressions that, for all their fresh creativity, are essentially linear. Lloyd responds to this new, supportive musical environment with playing of transfixing power.

In his 60th year, Lloyd has reached a level where it is possible to convey profound emotion in simple lines and spare gestures. This expressiveness begins with his sound, a welling up of the spirit, dark and rapt, with a lighter sheen of overtones on the surface, like hope. Lloyd can play in a near whisper, and yet draw upon the heat of unseen sources, like an underground fire.

It is an interesting fact about Charles Lloyd that so many important players have created their finest work in his company. It has been true of Michel Petrucciani and Bobo Stenson and Billy Hart, and now, clearly, it is true of John Abercrombie. This guitarist has always pursued an individual tonality and astringent lyricism. But here, as the second voice in the night, Abercrombie's direct, pristine clarity is a revelation. He introduces "Dorotea's Studio" alone, the pinpoint of his notes like distant stars, then Holland and Higgins push the piece into motion and Lloyd follows them in, spilling song.

On his previous ECM recordings, Lloyd has used his own compositions exclusively. In keeping with this album's more extroverted attitude, he plays a song that moved him when he heard it on the radio, "God Give Me

Strength," by Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach. He also offers up Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing," and precedes it with his own standard, "Forest Flower." Lloyd has recorded "Forest Flower" only once (in 1982, with Michel Petrucciani, on an LP that has never been reissued on CD) since he played it at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1966 on an album that sold a million copies. Here it is a whirling, piping incantation that prepares for Abercrombie, alone, bathing Strayhorn's flower in praise. Lloyd enters and traces decorations around the song's edges until he breathes its theme. Holland and Higgins stir and circle before settling into time, then Lloyd, Holland and Abercrombie take fervent turns in a performance extraordinary in its quietness.

Voice In The Night was recorded at Avatar Studios in New York by James Farber. It sounds different from Lloyd's previous ECM albums, which were all recorded in Norway by the great engineer Jan Erik Kongshaug. Farber's style is drier and more objective than Kongshaug's, but it is also beautifully lucid and natural. The music comes through as itself.

On *Voice In The Night*, there is a sense of consummation. Charles Lloyd plays the music behind the notes, the music that has always been there.

—Thomas Conrad

Voice In The Night: *Voice In The Night*; *God Give Me Strength*; *Dorotea's Studio*; *Requiem*; *Pocketful Of Blues*; *Shade Tree/Little Sister's Dance/Island Blue*; *Homage*; *Forest Flower*; *A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing*. (68:23)
Personnel: Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone; John Abercrombie, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

"WOW, I can't believe you have that CD!"

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JAZZ

Thriving On Riffs

by John McDonough

The following CDs have no pretence to any higher purpose than foot-tapping fun. So we jazz snobs must first set aside our natural proclivity to distrust anything anybody else likes and address these specimens of '90s neo-swing relative to each other and on their own terms. Personally, I welcome it. It's good to hear the unexpected return to the pop lexicon of the classic four-four beat and cymbal triplet, a time engine that always seems in motion and heading some place good. But one soon observes that much of the neo-swing sound is a mile wide and an inch deep, feeding off the energy of a small inventory of simple riffs.

Buddy Bregman: *Swing* (Varese Sarabande 5979; 59:02) ★★★★★ The young prodigy who conducted Ella Fitzgerald's classic Cole Porter and Rodgers & Hart songbooks in the '50s, Bregman has produced a superb magnum opus of pop swing. By treating the canon creatively, Bregman gives us a dozen instrumentals that take the material to new places without losing the spirit or drive of the originals or letting singers get in the way. Good old "In The Mood" starts in the familiar manner, then turns into a series of clever modulations, contrapuntal riffs and variations. Bregman finds similar opportunities in "Take The 'A' Train," "Opus #1" (though he could have tossed the banjo solo) and especially Les Brown's "Leap Frog," which stretches into a charging little swing concerto grosso. This characterizes the whole CD. With solos brief and the sound centered on ensembles, Bregman the arranger has done it the hard way and put his signature on nearly ever bar. Engineer Vince Cirelli, by the way, has crafted the eight brass and five reeds with a big, dense sound to keep the speakers booming at swing dances. Let's have a volume two.

The J Street Jumpers: *Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby* (Maple 05452; 55:22) ★★★ The Jumpers is an octet-strength swing unit of solid musicality and musicianship that strikes some heat here with an addictive version of "Topsy" based on the 1958 Cozy Cole version. Jeff Lodsun handles the rocking drum work with authority. There are also consistently good solos from Don Lerman (tenor and alto) and Steve Shaw (trombone) and fine ensemble blends on "Onion." Singer Marianna Previti, heard on most tracks, sings in a light sound reminiscent of Helen Humes. The '40s sensibility extends to Pierre Sprey's engineering, which nicely catches the 1949 Mercury studio

sound. (2301 Crain Hwy, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774)

Lavay Smith And Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers: *One House Mama* (Fat Note 0001; 48:03) ★★★½ The Dinah Washington influence is palpable here in Lavay Smith's phrasing and intonation. To her credit she carries it off nicely indeed in front of an eight-piece group whose three saxes and one trom-

bone provide mellow ensemble support and top solo turns. The result is an intimate, small-band quality that pays off consistently. "Devil And The Deep Blue Sea" is a standout in the midst of a lot of blues. The rhythm section is easy and never strains or pushes, and the music speaks for itself without the usual period costuming. (30 Glover St., San Francisco, CA 94109)

Chris Daniels & the Kings: *Louie Louie* (Moon Voyage 77624; 39:40) ★★★½ The three Louies are the musical topics considered here: Jordan, Prima and Armstrong. Daniels and his Kings (a.k.a the R&B Kings)



Chris Daniels & the Kings: a jump on the jump revival

bone provide mellow ensemble support and top solo turns. The result is an intimate, small-band quality that pays off consistently. "Devil And The Deep Blue Sea" is a standout in the midst of a lot of blues. The rhythm section is easy and never strains or pushes, and the music speaks for itself without the usual period costuming. (30 Glover St., San Francisco, CA 94109)

Big Time Operator: *High Altitude Swing* (BTO 001; 61:23) ★★★½ With three saxes, two trumpets and a trombone, Big Time Operator aspires beyond the jump category to full dance band status, and delivers the illusion well. Titular leader is Warren Lovell, who croons on most of the tracks in the manner of '40s boy vocalists, though his suave style is not well served by the Cab Calloway and Joe Williams numbers he favors. The band has spirit, though, on high-gear drives through standard readings of "Bugle Call Rag," "Lunceford Special" and "Sing Sing Sing." The solo work tends toward caricature, but fills the

have been around long enough to get the jump on the jump revival, and it shows. The music and sensibility is retro, but not specifically derivative. The septet has a point of view of its own expressed to some extent in its taste for the kind of catchy obscurities that Leon Redbone manages to dig up. Arcane antiquities such as "Sure Had A Wonderful Time Last Night" and "Chartreuse" are offered in a spirit of good two-beat fun and never condescended. And some of the vocal blends have fine color as well as bounce. (2035 Jasmine, Denver, CO 80207)

Mighty Blue Kings: *Live From Chicago* (R-Jay Records 51826; 47:11) ★★★ Definitely more r&b than swing, the Mighty Blue Kings have the sound and feel of a mighty bar band in action on Saturday night. The main ingredients include two high-grit tenors, Gareth Best on guitar, the blues singing of Ross Bon (who wrote five of the pieces), and a demonstrative crowd drinking it all in. No-frills, party blues here. **DB**

BEYOND

Latin Impurities

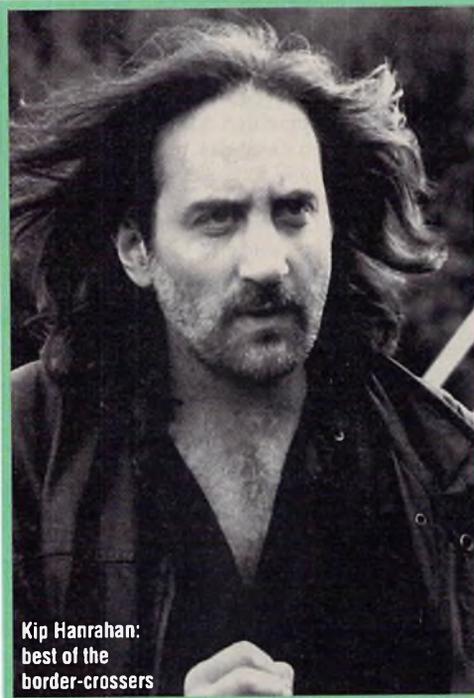
by John Ephland

North and South America share a rich history of musical intermingling. Bauza, Dizzy, Jobim, Tjader, Mongo, Chucho—the list is long. New releases emphasize that certain restlessness that keeps things far from pure.

Gilberto Gil: *O Sol De Oslo* (Blue Jackel 5031; 51:16) ★★★★★½; **Joyce: *Astronauta—Songs Of Elis*** (Blue Jackel 5029; 59:32) ★★★★★½ Veterans Gil and Joyce emerge from Brazilian pop to forge blends and hybrids that showcase an eclectic love for jazz, among other musics. Vocalist/guitarist Gil's program is all over the map, stylistically, even as it maintains a certain folksy, backwoods flavor. On board are Indian percussionist Trilok Gurtu, accordionist Toninho Ferragutti and vocalist Marlui Miranda. The writing is superb, with instrumental touches here and there that remind that Gil's vision goes beyond his native land (e.g., electric pianist Bugge Wesseltoft's jazzy playing on "Eu Te Dei Meu Ane" and Gurtu's punctuations to the haunting "Kao"). Vocalist/guitarist/songwriter Joyce pays tribute to the late Elis Regina, the legendary Brazilian singer who was the first major interpreter to draw attention to Joyce's pen. The program highlights Joyce's clean, evocative voice and Spanish guitar in the company of jazz and Latin players like saxist Joe Lovano, pianists Mulgrew Miller and Renee Rosnes, singer/guitarist Dori Caymmi and guitarist Romero Lubambo. Her vibrant songs, mixed with Jobim, Baden Powell, Milton Nascimento and Gil compositions, at times echo Sergio Mendes & Brazil '66 at their jazziest.

Kip Hanrahan: *Days And Nights Of Blue Luck Inverted* (Justin Time 1012; 51:27) ★★★★★; ***Vertical's Currency*** (Justin Time 1010; 40:37) ★★★★★½ Both

Days And Nights and *Vertical's Currency* are mid-'80s documents of composer/producer Hanrahan's unique blend of avant-garde jazz, Latin music and poetry. His talents include the rare knack of organizing players from different worlds into one realm, giving the impression of a group sound. Between them, these two recordings highlight, among others, saxists David Murray and George Adams, bassist/vocalist/pianist Jack Bruce, bassist Steve Swallow, percussionists Milton Cardona and Jerry Gonzalez, singer Carmen Lundy and trumpeter Lew Soloff. Kip's pen also strings together elements of Ellingtonia, soul and much pop. *Days And Nights* holds



Kip Hanrahan:
best of the
border-crossers

more suspense, with better writing, more diversity. And yet, Bruce's dramatic execution on *Vertical's Currency* is not to be missed.

Kip Hanrahan: *A Thousand Nights And A Night (Shadow Nights 1)* (Justin Time 1042; 64:07) ★★★★★; ***Deep Rumba: Esta Noche Se Vuelve Una Rumba*** (Justin Time 1024; 63:19) ★★★★★ With

A Thousand Nights and *Esta Noche*, Hanrahan comes even closer to an instrumental (and vocal) Latin expression of his muse. This blend and overlapping of some serious percussion enclaves, layered with piano, saxophone and voice (both spoken and sung) suggest Hanrahan is perhaps the best of the batch of border-crossers. *A Thousand Nights* (from 1995) builds from a kind of flamenco dance of hands and congas amidst sultry vocalizing and loose-limbed acoustic piano. The "story" that's told (the second in a projected series inspired by the ancient *Arabian Nights* tales) is invigorating as we hear, among many others, the "voices" of pianists Michael Cain and Don Pullen mingle with saxists Henry Threadgill and Charles Neville, bassists Swallow and Andy Gonzalez, vocalists Lundy and Jennifer Resnick, and percussionists Robbie Ameen and Richie Flores. The Cuban-American band Deep Rumba keeps the heat on with 1998's *Esta Noche*, a project conceived by Hanrahan that also features poetry and a dynamite ensemble of percussionists and voices, most of whom are heard on the titles under Hanrahan's name.

The Songs Of Almodovar (Metro Blue 59544; 77:30) ★★★★★ The romance and humor of Latin American and Spanish culture are all over this compilation from the recent films of director Pedro Almodovar. Afro-Cuban salsa, the bolero, mambo, Latin pop and elements of jazz are called upon in various guises to enhance the various plots of satire, tragedy and farce.

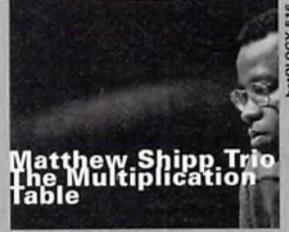
Poncho Sanchez: *Afro-Cuban Fantasy* (Concord Picante 4847; 66:47) ★★★★★½ Perhaps the best exponent of mainstream crossover is percussionist Sanchez, this time using singer Dianne Reeves on three cuts. Rickey Ricardo one moment, the best in salsa groove the next, Sanchez's amalgamation of jazz and Latin is exemplified by strictly "Latin" tunes (e.g., "Guapacha") and jazz standards ("Darn That Dream" and "Willow Weep For Me") in one mix. His octet includes his regimen of horns with hot percussion and pianist David Torres. **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 Ran 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.

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REISSUES

Ocean Of Atlantics

by Ted Panken

Until recently, the enormous Atlantic Records catalog has been sporadically represented on CD. Now Rhino offers comprehensive reissues of the iconic Mingus-Coleman-Coltrane material, and 32 Jazz is steadily reissuing '60s classics by Eddie Harris, Roland Kirk, Yusef Lateef and David "Fathead" Newman. That leaves lots of intriguing pickings; Koch has licensed more than 30 dates for projected issue in the next year or so. Here are reviews of the first six.

Milt Jackson/Coleman Hawkins:

Bean Bags (Koch 8530; 35:34)

★★★½ It's invigorating to hear masters of different generations engage each other; it affirms the universality of jazz discourse. On *Bean Bags*, from 1959, Coleman Hawkins ("Bean") and Milt Jackson ("Bags") reprise their initial recorded encounter from 1946. It's a no-frills, head-arrangement type of date, enhanced by a first-class mainstream rhythm section comprising Tommy Flanagan, Hawk's pianist of the time, Kenny Burrell, recently arrived from Detroit and ubiquitous on record sessions, Basie bassist Eddie Jones and MJQ drummer Connie Kay. It's about the ensemble from start to finish, reflecting what a live set at, say, Manhattan's Metropole might have sounded like. No revelations, no let-downs, solid blowing and swinging all the way.

Clifford Jordan: *These Are My Roots*

(Koch 8522; 38:45) ★★½

Having Clifford Jordan, the Chicago-born tenorman with a sound drenched in sophisticated blues connotations, perform an instrumental tribute to Leadbelly probably seemed like a great idea. But like teams with all-star personnel that lack chemistry, the band on *These Are My Roots* (1965) falls flat on the field of play. Things start promisingly with a rousing version of "Dick's Holler," and Sandra Douglass contributes nice vocals on "Take This Hammer" and "Black Girl." The rest is mostly a mess. For one thing, virtuoso bassist Richard Davis, Jordan's DuSable High School classmate, seems to get increasingly bored as the session continues, sounding more like he's dialoguing with Eric Dolphy or counterstating time signatures with Andrew Hill than performing the bass function on a blues session. Well, maybe it wasn't supposed to be idiomatic. But there's no organizing focus to give this thematic album

any identity at all. Jordan seems increasingly non-plussed as the tempos ratchet up; entropy descends despite his and drummer Tootie Heath's best efforts.

Art Ensemble of Chicago: *Bap-tizum*

(Koch 8500; 45:21) ★★★★★

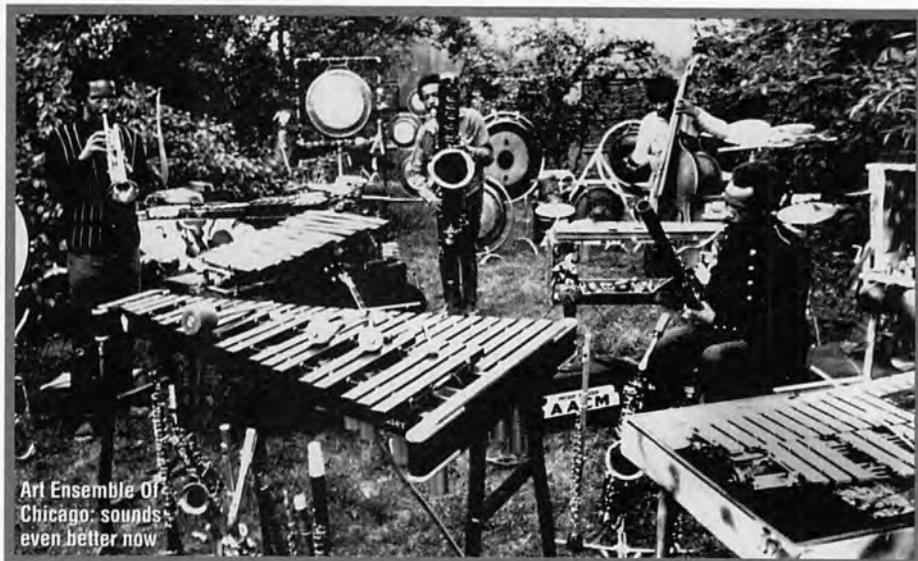
Fanfare For the Warriors (Koch 8501; 38:45)

★★★★★ This pair of releases, long out of print, were the first American releases by the Art Ensemble of Chicago with drummer Don Moye. They affirm that for all the acolytes the sui generis quintet has spawned over 30 years, there's nothing like the real thing. *Bap-tizum* documents a 1972 outdoor concert at the Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival before a fueled-up young rock audience. As with numerous live AEC recordings, the absence of visual accompaniment removes a vital theatrical component from the mix. That said, it's a strong, concise performance (compare the sprawling Mandel Hall concert [Delmark] from later in '72). There's an opening ritual drum chant, a recitation, morphing into an extended duo between Roscoe Mitchell's tenor and Malachi Favors' bass on

piccino, prefigures the AEC's later preoccupation with Afro-Caribbean forms. Mitchell's ominous "Tnoona" conjures deep drama from long tones, breaths and pedal points, with a welcome release at the end. It's their defining date, one of the most distinctive recordings of the '70s.

Gil Evans: *Svengali* (Koch 8518; 40:41)

★★★ As synthesizers and electrified instruments infiltrated the jazz vocabulary at the cusp of the '70s, Gil Evans, the master sound painter, kept searching for ways to blend them into his inclusive tonal palette. *Svengali*, a long-deleted live recording from 1973 with good sound, is a mixed bag that shows the strengths and weaknesses of Evans' music from this highly experimental, fluid period. There's strong solo work from tenorist Billy Harper ("Blues In Orbit" and "Cry Of Hunger"), trumpeter Marvin Peterson ("Zee Zee") and guitarist Ted Dunbar ("Thoroughbred" and "Summertime"), and luscious horn voicings as only Evans could do them. Electric bassist Herb Bushler and drummer Bruce Ditmas sound



a lyric Mitchell theme, then a blowout hornweb, a Lester Bowie trumpet fanfare, a dramatic collective improv on Joseph Jarman's "Ohnedaruth," winding down with the now-iconic AEC signoff, Mitchell's jaunty "Odwalla." Sounds even better now than it did then.

So does *Fanfare For the Warriors*, cut one year later, when the AEC with AACM patriarch Mulhal Richard Abrams entered the studio armed with a superpower's arsenal and emerged with a program representing a full range of compositional interests. It starts with "Illistrum," an evocative Jarman myth poem narrative interwoven with piano strings and percussion. A rubato Abrams rumination explodes into Bowie's gutbucket "Barnyard Scuffel Shuffel," which transitions into the stark logic of Mitchell's "Nonaah," featuring staccato horns engaged in call-and-response with Abrams. Jarman's title track epitomizes freedom with structure; his "What's To Say?" featuring the composer's flute and Mitchell's

chunky, rushed and out of sync; much of the music has a loose feeling that bespeaks not relaxed command but sloppy carelessness.

Andy Bey: *Experience And Judgment*

(Koch 8520; 42:07) ★★

Fans of the accomplished baritone singer Andy Bey have always favored the sanctified tinge he imparts to a song. They may enjoy this deservedly obscure 1974 paean to New Age eschatology. Bey is in excellent voice, and William Fischer produces interesting orchestrations and keyboard textures for a primo backup band that's heavy on the funk. That's about it. The earnestly banal lyrics, primarily Bey's, are in the vein of the soulful homilies his frequent employer Horace Silver was churning out at the time—minus the maestro's light touch. A period piece. **DB**

Original Down Beat ratings:

- *Bean Bags*: ★★★★★ (10/27/60)
- *Svengali*: ★★★★★ (2/14/74)

BLINDFOLD TEST

MAY 1999

Randy Brecker

by Dave Helland

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.

In the past year, Randy Brecker has won a Grammy for his Brazilian-seasoned *Into The Sun* (Concord), toured jazz venues with a new combo and continued to be in steady demand in a variety of repertory projects, including the Mingus Big Band and Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. All the while he has been writing wry lyrics and music for his next release.

"It's interesting, this repertory trend," says the trumpeter, 53. "There are all of these great masters who have passed away who deserve to be remembered and constantly tributed. But on the other side of the coin, I'd like to see more of an emphasis just on the music, especially in the recording industry. Just push the music rather than thinking it's necessary to have a specific idea for each record. There are always these little fads that kind of wind their way through the industry."

Freddie Hubbard

"Struttin' With Some Barbeque" (from Satchmo Legacy Band's *Tribute To Pops, Vol. 1, Soul Note, 1987*) Hubbard, trumpet; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Alvin Balliste, clarinet; Al Casey, guitar; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Red Callender, bass; Alan Dawson, drums.

Unless I'm crazy that was Freddie Hubbard and Curtis Fuller, maybe Michael White on clarinet. Those two brass players are so identifiable that even in this somewhat strange context—that was "Struttin' With Some Barbeque"—that was definitely them. They have their personalities so ingrained in their playing that even playing under somewhat unusual circumstances their personalities show through. I think that is really important in the great players. It was fun to listen to: 3½ stars.

Jon Faddis

"Dizzy Atmosphere" (Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars' *Dizzy's 80th Birthday Party*, Shanachie, 1997) Faddis, trumpet; Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Antonio Hart, alto sax; John Lesh, bass; Ignacio Berroa, drums; Duduka Da Fonseca, percussion; Gabriel Machado, congas.

Jon Faddis and Paquito are clearly identifiable, but I must admit that occasionally I have the pleasure of playing with this group presenting the music of Dizzy Gillespie, which is always an honor. 4 stars.

Wynton Marsalis

"So This Is Jazz, Huh?" (from *Thick In The South*, Columbia, 1991) Marsalis, trumpet; Marcus Roberts, piano; Joe Henderson, tenor sax; Bob Hurst, bass; Jeff Watts, drums.

I'm familiar with a lot of Wynton's stuff; this tends to be earlier but not one of his first records. That's a great tune. His solo is improvised very compositionally, very logical. Occasionally I hear a little Miles influence, but he has his own sound. Also, there's a certain inescapable New Orleans influence soundwise and rhythmically that I find very refreshing. I don't want anyone to take this the wrong way, but I hear a little Al Hirt in his playing. Al Hirt is a great trumpet player in the New Orleans tradition, and you hear that a little. 5 stars.

Art Farmer

"Ain't Necessarily So" (from *Meet The Jazztet*, Chess, 1960) Farmer, trumpet; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Benny Golson, tenor sax; McCoy Tyner, piano; Addison Farmer, bass; Lex Humphries, drums.



I haven't heard this before. It certainly sounds like Benny Golson, probably Curtis Fuller and Art Farmer. This again is a really good example of guys whose personalities are so strong, you could tell them from just the sound of the head. That's a place where I'm always hoping to get in my playing. I don't think I'm quite there. That's McCoy—you can hear him in two seconds, too. He was real young here. It's probably one of the Jazztet records I heard when I was a kid. 5 stars.

Don Cherry

"Poise" (from *This Is Our Music*, Atlantic, 1960) Cherry, pocket trumpet; Ornette Coleman, alto sax; Charlie Haden, bass; Ed Blackwell, drums.

You can spot Ornette and Don immediately. They had a certain way of playing over time, and, coming from Texas, there's a lot of country swing. The way they improvise as a group I found really interesting. I was a big fan from the get-go; I was 12 years old when I read about them in the *New Yorker*. The critic was pretty much flabbergasted, but I really liked it. It was funny and fresh. The tunes were melodically oriented and fun to learn as a little kid by ear. They tend to play well on trumpet because they are naturally thought out. 5 stars.

Dave Douglas

"Everyman" (from *Magic Triangle*, Arabesque, 1998) Douglas, trumpet; Chris Potter, tenor sax; James Genus, bass; Ben Perowsky, drums.

That's a hard one. I really liked the tune—5 stars—everyone was really creative. I don't know if the drummer was Jack [DeJohnette], but he played in that style. Bass, maybe Dave Holland. The trumpeter could have been Franco Ambrosetti, but it didn't sound quite like him. The tenor player might have been Seamus Blake, Chris Potter, Joe Lovano; but it's not quite the sound of any of them. The tune and the improvising were very good. They all listened and really fed off each other and it was swinging.

DH: It's *Dave Douglas*.

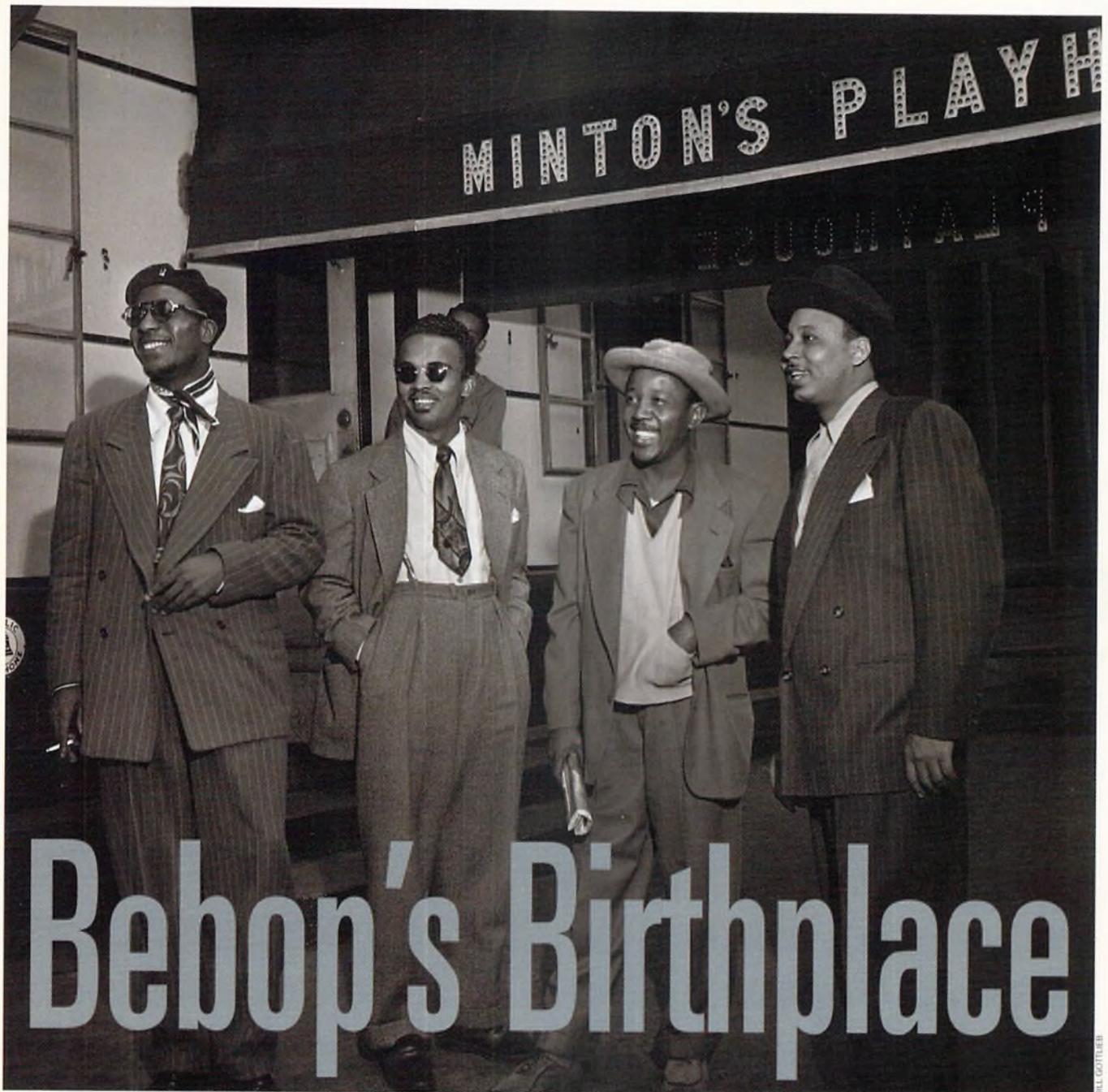
I usually get him. I'm a big Dave Douglas fan, but he had me fooled.

Kenny Dorham

"Ruby, My Dear" (from *Art Of The Ballad*, Prestige, 1953) Dorham, trumpet; Jimmy Heath, baritone sax; Walter Bishop, piano; Percy Heath, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums.

This is a really good record: Kenny Dorham. Definitely 5 stars. I forget the title of this disc; I've been carrying it around with me. I have the original record on the Time label. Kenny's chops were really up for this session, at his peak.

DB



Bebop's Birthplace

In August of 1947, writer/photographer Bill Gottlieb made it his mission to find Thelonious Monk. Having kept off the scene and out of sight for nearly a year, the enigmatic pianist's whereabouts remained a bit of a mystery.

After checking with Monk's family and talking to the manager of the club where he'd last worked, Gottlieb finally got a lead from pianist Mary Lou Williams, a close friend of Monk's.

"You want Thelonious?" she asked Gottlieb. "You'll get Thelonious."

Sure enough, within a week, Monk showed up at Gottlieb's New York office for an interview. Sensing that the pianist felt nervous, Gottlieb suggested they take a cab ride down to Minton's Playhouse, the club where Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and others had invented bebop earlier that decade. Monk would feel much more comfortable in that setting, the quintessential musician hangout.

Gottlieb's instincts were right that day: Not only did Monk relax for a nice photo shoot while playing on the house instrument, but he gave Gottlieb enough material to write several articles that helped get the pianist's career going again.

While they talked, some notable cats happened to drop by and stick around. In the right place at exactly the right time, Gottlieb snapped a shot of them with Monk in front of the club that was their ultimate musical playground. In addition to Monk (shown at left), the image captures trumpeter Howard McGhee, trumpeter Roy Eldridge and Minton's manager Teddy Hill, a former swing band leader, all as relaxed and at-home as ever.

"What a sight," Gottlieb remembers. "And here it was the middle of the day, when good jazz musicians should be asleep."

Gottlieb says he never did find out where Monk had spent those previous months of recluse. "But it didn't matter," he says. "I had accomplished my mission and found Thelonious Monk."—*Ed Enright*