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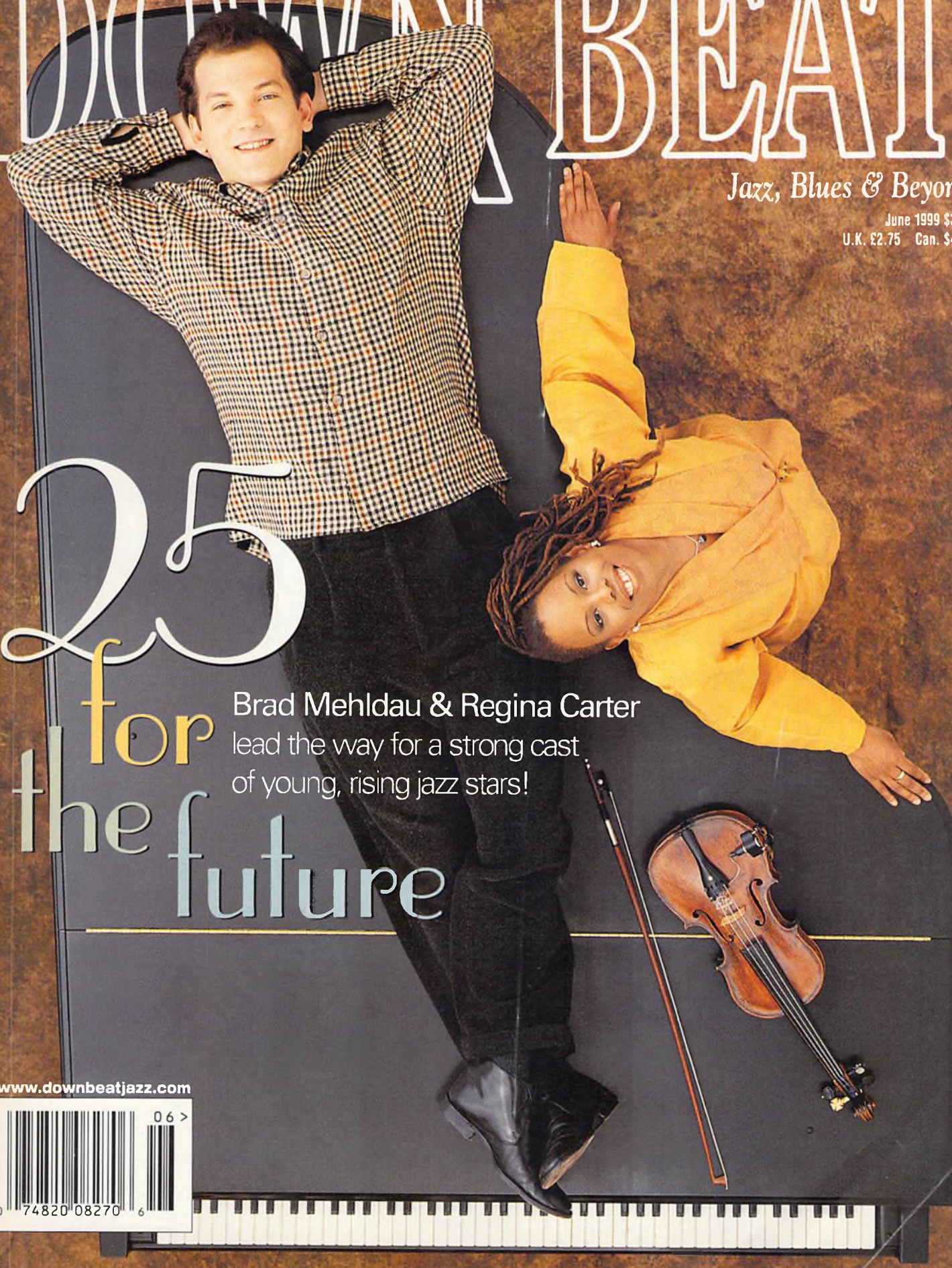
Jazz, Blues & Beyond

June 1999 \$3.50
U.K. £2.75 Can. \$4.30

25
for
the future

Brad Mehldau & Regina Carter
lead the way for a strong cast
of young, rising jazz stars!

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A cast of rising jazz stars, all under 40, promise to raise the music to higher levels of creativity and carry it to unforeseen frontiers. Regina Carter and Brad Mehldau lead the way.

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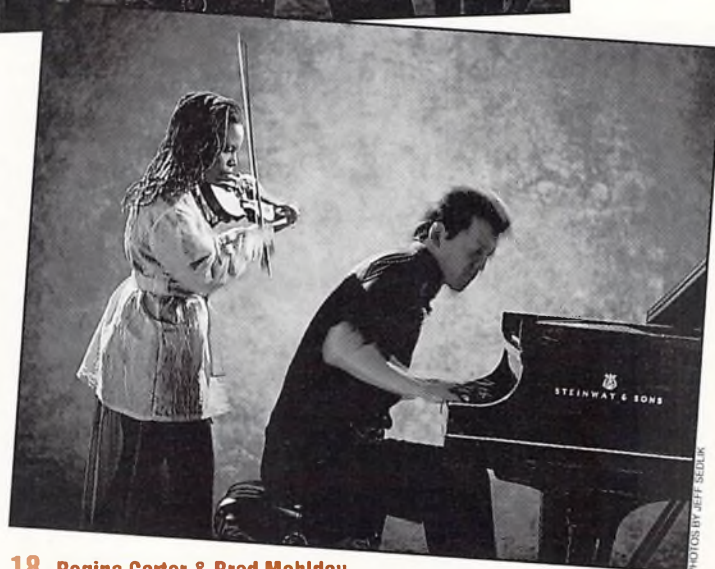
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more cerebral players. Contrast him with Jim Hall and you've got totally different things."

In Chicago, Dave Specter has moved well beyond an infatuation with the local blues guitar tradition. "I got into Texas guys like T-Bone Walker and Charles Brown," says Specter, whose most recent release is an outing with veteran jazz singer Lenny Lynn called *Blues Spoken Here* (Delmark). "This



turned me on to the jazzier, after-hours style of blues that really appeals to me."

Sometimes the jazz influence is unintentional. For West Coaster Rusty Zinn, his thirst for listening to old Blue Note and Prestige organ-based jazz records has caused jazz to leak "subconsciously" into his Chicago blues guitar. "I've really gotten into Kenny Burrell and Grant Green," says Zinn, who swings hard on tunes such as "If You Ever Get Lonesome" on his 1999 album *Confessin'* (Black Top). "I learned from a lot of the Chicago blues guys firsthand, like Luther Tucker and Louis Myers. And they were always talking about guys like Kenny Burrell. Burrell and Green didn't really bend a lot of notes, but they are very bluesy at the same time. And I love Bill Jennings, who was with Louis Jordan, because he bent notes."

Guitarists are also drawing from jazz and r&b horn licks, as Robillard quickly points out. "What really excites me and always did excite me is that kind of crossover period where a lot of guys were coming out of swing, swinging hard, boppish licks, but

also playing a bit on the r&b edge. Chicago tenor players were like that, guys like Gene Ammons and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis," he says. "I also quote things from Red Prysock and Lester Young every night I play, coming up with extensions of lines that I have picked up from listening to them over the years."

Baty is just as fired up over the great saxophonists of yesteryear. "Sonny Stitt, Dexter Gordon, all those kinds of

guys—I always listened to them because they could only play one note at a time," he raves. "They were forced to play more interesting lines. They developed chords in the lines they played. I play that way myself. I play chords but I try to intersperse them and just play single-note lines."

And some guitarists, like Californian Robben Ford, just go on their own creative paths, and let the music follow. "I started out as a blues player, and it is definitely the thread that runs through everything I do. At the same time, I really have a great love for jazz," says Ford, whose 1972 *Sunrise* album was recently re-released on Avenue Jazz. "The people I listened to were John Coltrane, Miles Davis and most of the music that came out of the early '60s. I took their harmonic concepts but kept the blues real strong. What I do is a combination of traditional blues and what I consider modern jazz. My recent *Handful Of Blues* record (Blue Thumb) represented a real synthesis of blues, r&b and the jazz that's influenced me."

—Frank-John Hadley

GIMME 5



Dave Holland

by Michael Bourne

"Gimme 5" asks a simple but often difficult-to-answer question: What are your five favorite records, albums you'd want to have if stranded on the proverbial desert island?

There's something down-to-earth about Dave Holland as a person and as a player. British-born, he first became known on the American scene playing with Miles Davis in the '60s. Recent gigs have included working with Herbie Hancock, Joe Lovano, Jim Hall and musicians of Tunisia. Holland's own working quintet is featured on the Grammy-nominated 1998 ECM album *Points Of View*.

Dave Holland: *Such Sweet Thunder*. It's wonderfully orchestrated and composed, tailor-made for a group of musicians who were unparalleled in the history of music and were together so long with one of the great composers—actually, two of the great 20th century composers, Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington.

***Affinity*, the Oscar Peterson Trio with Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen.** It's one of the first jazz records I ever bought, and the reason I started playing the bass, because Ray Brown just knocked my shoes off. The orchestration of the trio is exquisite.

The Bill Evans Trio. ***Sunday Night At The Village Vanguard*.** I was at a party in London in 1965 and someone said, "Come and listen to this. You won't believe it." I heard something done with the bass that I'd never heard before, Scott LaFaro playing with Bill Evans and Paul Motian. He redefined what could happen on the instrument in the same way Jimmy Blanton did.

***Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus*.** It was my introduction to his music. It has that great "Theme For Lester Young." The spirit of Mingus is everywhere on the record. This was a record that changed my whole idea about the bass and what kind of energy could be put into the instrument.

I need at least another half-dozen, but I have to say ***A Love Supreme*** had an amazing effect on me. I don't think people realize now how *A Love Supreme* sounded to virgin ears. When I heard Coltrane in 1964, those chords that McCoy [Tyner] was playing, I didn't know what the heck was going on, but I *needed* to know. There was a spiritual power on that record that transcended the notes. It made me realize something else about music—that it's not just about the notes. It's about the message as well, and the story that's being told.

DB

25 for the future

Violinist Regina Carter and pianist Brad Mehldau aren't thinking about the future right now. These two rising stars are too busy trying to find a way to connect musically after *Down Beat* threw them together in the same room for a photo shoot. They seem to like being lost in the moment, not dwelling on things to come.

But the future does remain a primary concern for many listeners and most of us in the jazz industry. Especially now, with the century drawing to a close and shakeouts taking place at major labels. We feel the need to take stock and watch for those young players who not only ensure the music's survival, but promise to take it to the next level. We present 25 of them in the following pages. Carter and Mehldau lead the way.

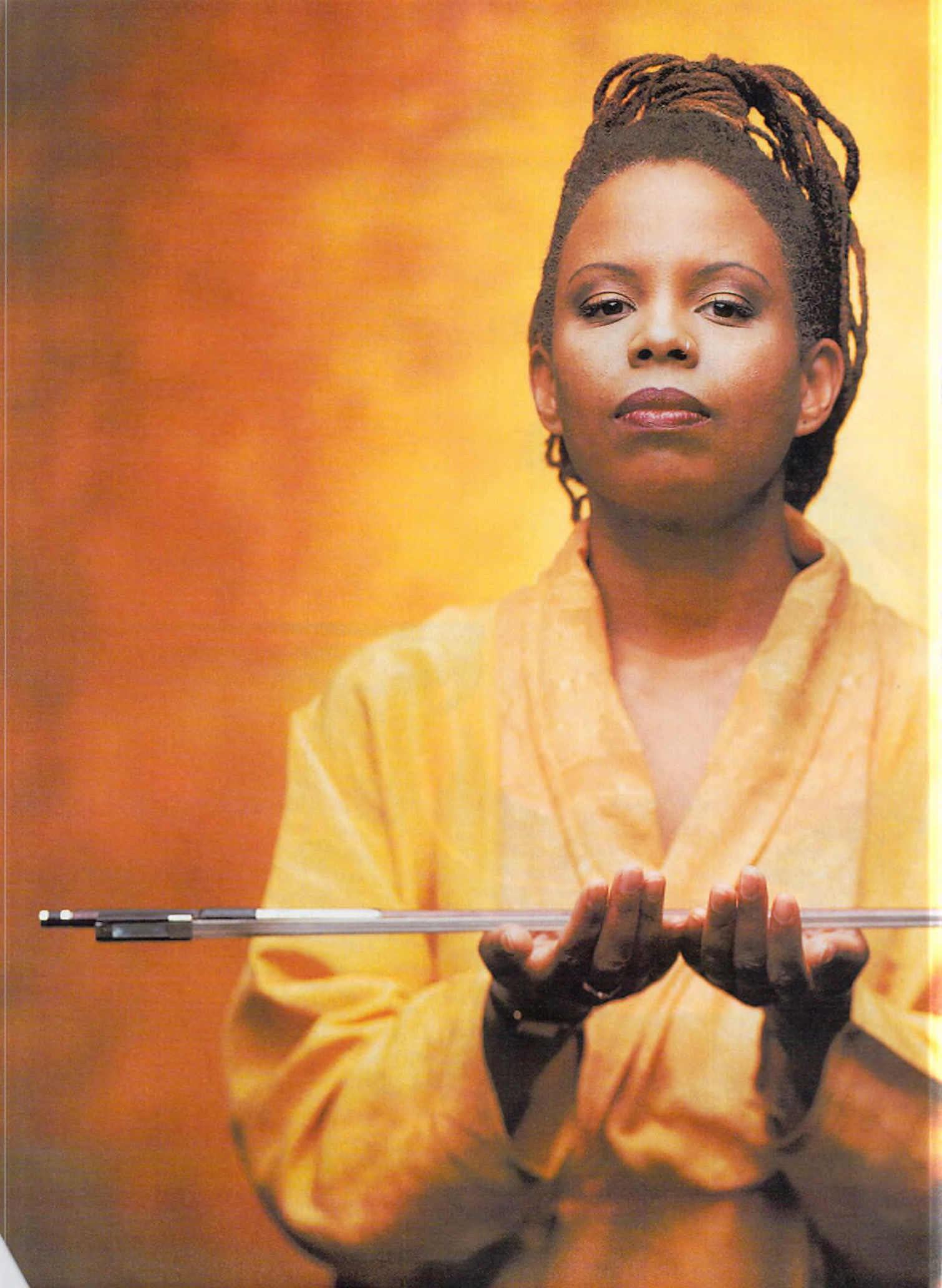
—Ed Enright

PHOTO BY JEFF SEDLIK






STEINWAY & SONS



Pulls The Rug Out

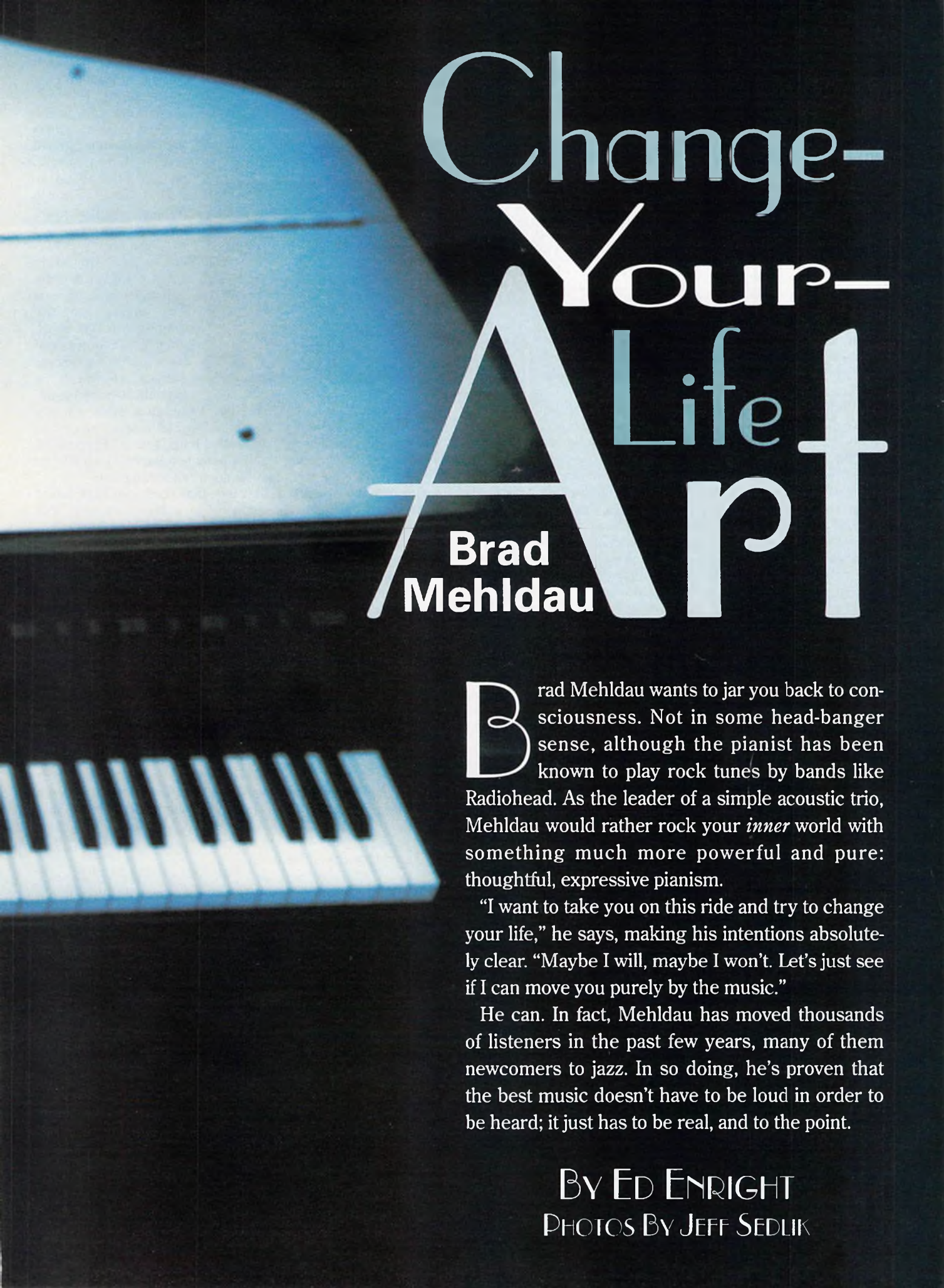
Regina
Carter

It's 1996, and Regina Carter is playing her first of many gigs with trombonist Steve Turre's group at Sweet Basil. She has released one smooth-jazz album under her own name and has another on the way, but she's still a relative newcomer among New York's jazz elite. Turre calls up "Blackfoot," a tune he wrote over the "Cherokee" changes. "How fast do you want it?" inquires drummer Lewis Nash. "Lickety-split," Turre says. Nash takes him all too literally. He roars into an impossible tempo that draws a look from Turre seeming to say, "Are you crazy?" But there's no turning back. When Nash counts off a tempo, it's a safe bet he'll stay right there.

Carter is head-tripping. *Oh my God, she thinks, they think I can't play, they probably think the only reason Steve hired me was because I'm a woman!* She wants to cry. She wants to lay out. Not an option. She's in the big leagues now.

BY JOHN JANOWIAK
PHOTOS BY JEFF SEDLIK





Change- Your- A Life rt

**Brad
Mehldau**

Brad Mehldau wants to jar you back to consciousness. Not in some head-banger sense, although the pianist has been known to play rock tunes by bands like Radiohead. As the leader of a simple acoustic trio, Mehldau would rather rock your *inner* world with something much more powerful and pure: thoughtful, expressive pianism.

“I want to take you on this ride and try to change your life,” he says, making his intentions absolutely clear. “Maybe I will, maybe I won’t. Let’s just see if I can move you purely by the music.”

He can. In fact, Mehldau has moved thousands of listeners in the past few years, many of them newcomers to jazz. In so doing, he’s proven that the best music doesn’t have to be loud in order to be heard; it just has to be real, and to the point.

BY ED ENRIGHT
PHOTOS BY JEFF SEDLIK

"I know that audiences are very savvy and hip to whatever spin the media or a record company marketing department puts on an artist, and they're sick of it," observes Mehldau, who grew up in Hartford, Conn., and studied at the New School For Social Research in New York. "What lasts is when someone can manage to say something compelling based on the strength of the music itself, whether it's original compositions or interpretations of other people's compositions. I think a hell of a lot can be done with just great old standards."

His days as a sideman with players like Jackie McLean, Jesse Davis, Peter Bernstein and Joshua Redman came to a close with the 1995 release of *Introducing Brad Mehldau*. Since then, the pianist has been steadily building a repertoire that not only connects with a growing, hungry audience, but also builds musical momentum with each tour or CD release. Mehldau's three *Art Of The Trio* discs with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy map the development of an ensemble that's discovered the beauty of stretching a standard to its absolute breaking point then letting the pieces all settle back into stability. Mehldau's original tunes and pop covers tend to search as well, but don't push the limits in the same way. Instead, they unfold with more distinct, often darker, melodies that linger in the shadows of the beat and quietly cry with classical romanticism.

Nowhere are Mehldau's classical piano influences more obvious than on his latest recording, *Elegiac Cycle*, a solo album of original tunes due out this month. Mood-wise, the disc presents him in an even lonelier, more intimate light than with the trio. It feels completely natural, the way you'd expect to hear him play in the privacy of his living room. Artistically and technically, though, the setting presented Mehldau with some challenges he wasn't ready to face until recently.

"It's a definite departure for me, when I listen back to it," Mehldau says of the recording. "A lot of it has to do with just dealing with the piano itself and what it implies, figuring out a way to accompany yourself and use the whole piano. I've been playing solo piano for a long time, but always at home. It took me a while before I felt like I had something valid to say, because I was never interested in recording something that was derivative of a tradition and that had already been done better than I could do it. I'm not a great stride player or anything like that, so I wanted to find something unique—and I guess that's a conglomeration of a lot of classical literature I've been studying and jazz improvisation. So, in that sense, it's a big departure from the trio, which doesn't cite that classical influence quite as strongly."

Mehldau began to play solo gigs this past winter during a stay in East Berlin, where he spent two months learning the German language. "My girlfriend and I rented a little place and a piano, and I wrote the bulk of the record there," Mehldau remembers. "I'd go on weekends and do some solo performances at festivals and concerts within Europe."

Despite the fact that he missed having his trio mates to bounce musical ideas off of, Mehldau says his solo journey led him to some important places. "You can really go wherever you want harmonically," he discovered. "Sure, we have a certain amount of telepathy going on harmonically in the trio, especially because Larry has such big ears. But solo, there's really nothing else there, and it's strictly up to you to go wherever you want. Although, in general, I haven't been inclined to just go out and



play off the cuff. What excites me about improvised music, whether it's solo or trio, is the process of taking a form and abstracting the hell out of it, but always staying within the form. I like to have a form to jump off from, to move away from, to refer back to constantly.

"Being the only rhythm person and the only timekeeper is what has taken me the longest to feel comfortable with, though. You have more of a responsibility to imply a rhythm that is constant

and forward-moving. And that takes some actual work, learning how to get my left hand to do any number of things from certain ostinato rhythms to arpeggiations that have to be going constantly and implying whatever the harmony is—and being able to do it in time while your right hand is doing something else."

The benefits of working through that challenge have found their way into Mehldau's trio performances, as well. For instance, on John Coltrane's "Countdown," a tune Mehldau's group has been playing for years, he runs the left hand with greater urgency and works the instrument's low end with newfound confidence; he climbs up and down the keyboard cross-hand, floating multiple lines that fall into place as perfectly as a glass unshattering on a backwards film. On tunes with slower-moving changes and more relaxed tempos, the illusion runs even thicker as Mehldau sustains layer upon layer of melody with both hands; he ties it all up with a simple cadence that seems to signal the end of a sonata, single notes rising in the right hand, descending in the left, resolving to a major third spanning octaves.

Mehldau reflects: "That's something I'm really thinking about a lot, trying to play more than one note at the same time and not get into this thing where jazz pianists tend to let their left hand become a claw. I'm really practicing voice-leading and melody in general. And when I say 'practicing,' that can be anything from working things out on the piano to studying music, reading literature about music, listening to albums, or any intellectual process. But when I sit down to play, I try to keep it as little of an intellectual experience as I can."

It takes intellect to produce thoughtful pianism, though, and Mehldau has spent a lot of time off stage exercising his. The 28-year-old's appetite for brain food has exposed him to a world of ideas that have had a direct influence on how he thinks and feels about music. And sometimes, Mehldau's literary thinking creeps into the music itself. Take, for example, "Minion's Song" from 1997's *Art Of The Trio Volume I*, based on a character from a novel by the 18th century German dramatist Johann Wolfgang Goethe. "There's a poem in that novel, and Schubert and Schumann and others set lieder, or art songs, to that poem. I sort of do the same thing." Mehldau also chose to print "The Sonnets To Orpheus, I, 3"—a poem by the early 20th century Austrian writer Rainer Maria Rilke—in the liner notes to the CD. "That poem definitely inspired me in terms of music in general and what it means to play music. The idea is that the music is sort of a timeless, never-ending thing."

The writings of literary critic Harold Bloom, who authored *The Western Canon*, have helped Mehldau reaffirm some of his own convictions about art. "He's influenced me a lot in terms of how we understand and confront greatness," Mehldau says. "For him, it's all about Shakespeare, but it could be applied to

Beethoven or Coltrane just as easily. His argument is that greatness has very little to do with the culture that's around it.

"There's a whole movement that's happened in criticism of music and literature in the last 15 years where we try to understand art in terms of a political realm, and try to deconstruct where it's coming from. I think what I love about Shakespeare and Beethoven and Coltrane is that they sort of deconstruct *you*. You can't go and try to break something like that down, because it already *contains* you."

Don't confuse Mehldau's heady reflections with over-intellectualization. He offers a solid assessment of today's jazz scene from an L.A. perspective, where he's lived since leaving New York in 1997. "I feel pretty fortunate, historically lucky, to be in this time. I'm able to work and make some money doing what I love, playing acoustic music and being creative. The only thing I feel negatively is the tendency for artists to try to be marketable in one sense or another. But one of the great things about jazz, for me, is that it's constantly reinventing itself. It never gets caught too long.

"The thing I like about Los Angeles is that there is no geographical scene like you have in New York, with the West Village and the East Village and Lincoln Center Uptown. In Los Angeles, it's all spread out. You can go to a club in West Hollywood where on any given night they'll have anything from brash metal to a big band with a torch singer. It's almost like nothing is sacred.

"I get real excited by a lot of singer-songwriters that I hear in Los Angeles. What I look for when I go to hear someone play is the element of surprise. That can come from jazz, classical or pop, but what makes it great is the feeling of not knowing what the hell someone's going to do next."

Mehldau has only a fair idea of what he's going to do next himself. He'll perform at several European jazz fests this summer, with bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz subbing on some of the trio gigs for Grenadier, who's taking two months to tour with Pat Metheny. He says he may take some time off this fall and perhaps return to Germany to resume his language studies. And later this year, Blue Note will release the rest of the Jazz Bakery sessions Mehldau recorded live over two nights in 1997 with Lee Konitz and Charlie Haden (which originally resulted in the Blue Note CD *Alone Together*).

With no particular plan for himself other than to continue making room for his trio to develop, Mehldau continues his ascent, and he remains the master of making it all look effortless. "I'm not too goal-oriented," he reveals. "That's probably my one spiritual mantra. It's something vaguely Eastern that has to do with being right here right now, and I've probably had to reaffirm that even more because it's such a zany time we live in now. Technology scares the hell out of me because it's growing and changing so fast. I need to account for things as they're taking place, and I can't grab hold of any of that technology because it's so damn transient. Consequently, the kind of music I listen to is usually acoustic, because you can never go wrong with that. Like the piano: It's been proven it works, and so it's still around. I like things with permanence. They make you feel comfortable." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Brad Mehldau prefers Steinway pianos.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

ELEGIAC CYCLE—Warner Bros. 47357
ART OF THE TRIO VOLUME 3—SONGS—Warner Bros. 47051
ART OF THE TRIO VOLUME 2—LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Warner Bros. 46848
ALONE TOGETHER—Blue Note 57150 (Lee Konitz/Charlie Haden)
ART OF THE TRIO VOLUME 1—Warner Bros. 46260
INTRODUCING BRAD MEHLDAU—Warner Bros. 45997

with various others
TIMELESS TALES—Warner Bros. 47052 (Joshua Redman)
IN THIS WORLD—Warner Bros. 47074 (Mark Turner)
TEATRO—Island 314 524 548 (Willie Nelson)
MOODSWING—Warner Bros. 45643 (Joshua Redman)
soundtracks
MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL—Warner Bros. 46829

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Mark Turner

On The Lookout

Mark Turner is ever on the lookout for fresh musical ways. Often, Turner's music today sounds like tomorrow's.

Inspired by a wide spectrum of forward-leaning artists, from John Coltrane, Warne Marsh and Brad Mehldau in the jazz community to Bartok, Schoenberg and Monteverdi in the classical genre, the 33-year-old tenor and soprano saxophonist reaches for the unexpected, perhaps unplayed idea.

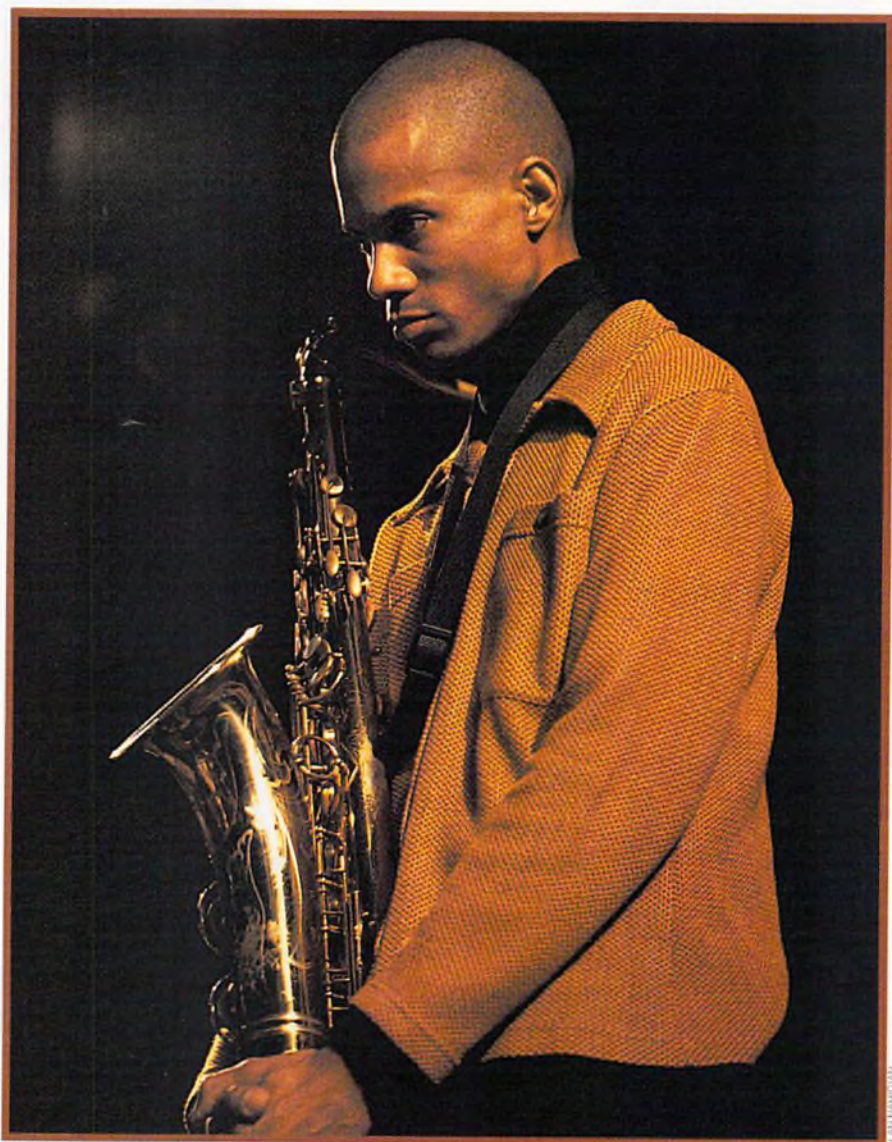
Listen to his most recent recording, *In This World* (Warner Bros.), and you hear the saxophonist striving for, and often attaining, such a goal. And when he talks about his forthcoming recording, an album of ballads and slow pieces scheduled to be made in the fall and released next February, you can tell this will be a *sui generis* project with a distinctive, decidedly 21st century stamp.

"I want to work out a combination of different ways of playing ballads," says Turner, a native of Fairborn, Ohio, who was raised in Southern California and graduated from the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1990. "I'd like to have a lot of freedom, doing intros and outros, and I'd also like some tunes that are reharmonizations of arrangements done by singers—just playing the arrangement exactly as it is, without solos. I also want to include a few short pieces that are not so jazz-sounding: through-composed, really short interludes. And maybe a tune like Carla Bley's 'Jesus Maria,' a great song that Jimmy Giuffre recorded, which I might play free on."

Hardly a *de rigueur* sample of sweet standards that often make up a ballad recording, Turner's next will also feature guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel. The saxophonist met the guitarist at Berklee and struck up what is now an abiding relationship that finds both men recording on each other's projects and playing in each other's bands. "I like the sparseness, the transparency, the openness with a guitar and saxophone," Turner says.

Just as he seeks the untold tale in his interpretations and improvisations, Turner looks for that elusive *je ne sais quoi* as a composer as well.

"I'm just trying to write things that I can't do anywhere else," he says. "There's a tune that I just wrote that has more space in the harmony. Many of my tunes have a lot of harmony, maybe a



chord a bar. I'm also writing some tunes with more of a fire element, like fire in the sense of '60s Miles or Trane."

Is Turner's approach getting him anywhere? You bet. Since he landed in New York just after graduating from Berklee, he's been working with such peers as Rosenwinkel, pianists Mehldau and Aaron Goldberg and trumpeter Dave Douglas as well as more established artists such as Akira Tana and Rufus Reid, Tom Harrell and Terence Blanchard. Of course, he's also active as a leader, both in performance and in recording.

This spring, Turner played the Village

Vanguard for a week with a quartet featuring Rosenwinkel, and in August, he boards the Queen Elizabeth 2 for the Newport Jazz Festival At Sea. Then in the fall is a possible date in Israel. As a sideman, he'll be featured on dates this summer with TanaReid, Blanchard and Rosenwinkel, with whom he's a semi-regular at Smalls in the Village.

In between, he's either tutoring students at the Manhattan School of Music or at home in New Haven, Conn., writing and practicing. "My career's in process," he says. "Things are moving and I really couldn't ask for more, except for maybe a little more time." **DB**

BY ZAN STEWART

Dave Douglas

Tale Of Whoa

Dave Douglas has given up trying to categorize the numerous groups he leads; instead, he tries to challenge conventional labels and create some musical ambiguity. Ask him if his Tiny Bell Trio is a Downtown group, a Balkan improv group or free-jazz ensemble, and he'll likely answer, "Yes."

"For critics and social theorists, it's necessary to think in terms of categories and labels," says the trumpeter, who just signed a multi-album deal with RCA Victor. "For musicians, it's not the real question. Musicians need to think about other things."

These words from one of the key figures in the under-40 crowd are indicative of how he views both his own groups and his creative process in general.

"Composition involves a lot of thinking," Douglas says. "Some is historical thinking, a larger part has to do with dreaming up larger musical challenges and figuring out how to integrate those in the performance moment. For each of my groups, I think very differently when I am writing. I try to stretch myself in as many ways as possible: considering the material, the players' styles and personalities, the intent of each composition.

"For example, my two sextet records are theme records. The first one, *In Our Lifetime*, was an exploration of trumpeter Booker Little's music, with an emphasis on the player as a composer. One of my goals on that record was to update the strategies for improvising, while still using the elements of vocabulary that Little was dealing with. I had been away from playing 'straightahead' jazz for some years, but that was the music I grew up playing and was trained to play. So, that was a way for me to get back to that.

"*Stargazer* was for Wayne Shorter. I wanted to take that process and do it again; for me, looking into a specific musical legacy is to challenge myself as a composer as well as a player. I was looking for connections through all of Wayne's career. It was about finding new and different ways for improvisers to interact with composition."

Douglas' musical vocabularies also include more recent figures. "I feel the '70s and '80s have been overlooked: composer/players like Anthony Braxton, Julius Hemphill, AMM, Henry Threadgill, John Zorn, Eugene Chadbourne, Fred Frith ... educated jazz musicians need to



know about these and other composers. Their music's not easy music to play."

The dismissive notion that more experimental music within jazz, usually free-jazz, has nothing to do with discipline, craft or "chops" doesn't hold water with Douglas. "The new music involves more than just making noise; it's hard to play. It involves new strategies for improvising with the written note. That takes a lot of discipline.

"I feel like there's a consensus these days that the music has to move forward. No one definition of this music can realistically expect to achieve complete dominance; this music can't be controlled or manufactured. It's in the hands of the thousands and thousands of musicians out there trying to express themselves."

Douglas has a hand in the musical worlds of those thousands and thousands. A somewhat complete list of projects he heads up includes the Tiny Bell Trio; the Dave Douglas Quartet, with drummer Ben Perowsky, bassist James Genus and saxist Chris Potter; his aforementioned Sextet, with reedist Chris Speed, trombonist Josh Roseman, drummer Joey Baron, Genus and pianist Uri

Caine; Sanctuary, Douglas' double-quartet with electronics, performing a kind of post-*Ascension* music; his Charms of the Night Sky quartet with accordionist Guy Kluseveck, bassist Greg Cohen and violinist Mark Feldman ("my first group without drums, it's more lyrical, like heart music"); and his Indian music group, an exploration with Myra Melford on harmonium, Samir Chatterjee on tabla, and Sanghamitra Chatterjee on tamboura and vocals—a group that recently played in India at the Jazz Yatra festival.

What's the idea behind keeping all these bands operative, especially when one considers that jazz musicians tend instead to lead bands in serial fashion? "I believe in keeping them all as working groups, even if it's rare that we play," he says. "Because what interests me is how the music develops over time."

Time. That seems to be the key with Douglas' music: It's happening all around him, all the time. He wants to avoid getting stuck in fixed ways. Concepts, yes; formulas, no. For Dave Douglas, categorizing music is like saying today's sky speaks for every sky that's ever been. **DB**

BY JOHN EPFLAND

Ellery Eskelin

Straight To The Source

Ellery Eskelin traces his jazz foundation directly to his mother, a bandleader and Hammond B-3 player in Baltimore with the stage name Bobbie Lee. "My earliest musical memories are of listening to her play," says the tenor saxophonist, perching his newborn son, Rami, on his knee.

In fact, while still an infant, Eskelin's mom and multi-instrumentalist/composer/arranger dad hosted a TV show sponsored by a music store in Kansas. His folks split when he was very young, but Eskelin says he feels the influence of his father, who made a series of esoteric, downright strange "send-us-your-lyrics" records in the '60s and '70s, compiled by Eskelin on *I Died Today* (Vzadik).

"I don't have any functioning recollection of him," says the 39-year-old, "but he's had a profound impact on my life that I'm now trying to figure out. Listening to my father's music has given me a license to make music with even less concern for convention. As a musician who works in improvised music or jazz, you can sometimes be the victim of constraints you're not even aware of."

In 1983, Eskelin settled in New York. Bored with the narrowing scope of the straightahead, he started charting his own path around 1987, playing original music with a core group of like-minded outcasts such as trumpeter Paul Smoker, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Phil Haynes, making self-produced recordings. "In retrospect, I've been able to bring a strong jazz feeling to my music," Eskelin suggests, "even though



I'm operating in circles that don't always have that much to do with jazz per se." For a good taste of this balancing act, check out his new duo with Dutch drum master Han Bennink, *Dissonant Characters* (hatOLOGY).

Over the last five years, Eskelin has focused much of his creative attention on his working band with Andrea Parkins on accordion and sampler and Jim Black on drums. "We have a unique view that combines my love of the jazz tradition with my love for all things non-jazz." He says he likes the fact that his accomplices don't necessarily function as a traditional rhythm section; their roles remain fluid and allow Eskelin to dip into a wide range of stylistic bags without seeming like he's channel surfing. The band has released three records, two on the hatOLOGY label, with whom Eskelin has an exclusive deal to release six projects supported by a private patron. Plans are afoot to augment the group with cello and tuba, and their upcoming CD includes tunes by Lennie Tristano, Gershwin and the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

A swath like that requires big vision and big ears: both testament to a good upbringing. **OB**

BY JOHN COFFEE

antonio
forcione

Trilok Gurtu
Kai Eckhardt
de Camargo

Ghetto Paradise

"There is a small town on a hill near the Adriatic coast called Montecifone, a farming community far removed from the fast world we live in today where I was brought up and from which I carry deep and colourful memories of my childhood... that magic period of our lives when tears and laughter merged into one." This was my inspiration, my 'Ghetto Paradise'.



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Stefon Harris

Gets Energized

In the midst of the Blue Note New Directions tour with Greg Osby, Mark Shim and Jason Moran, vibist Stefon Harris feels real excitement. Audiences nationwide are packing non-jazz venues to check out him and his labelmates. He finds the array of career possibilities ahead of him energizing, and he's committed to carrying the jazz torch into the next century.

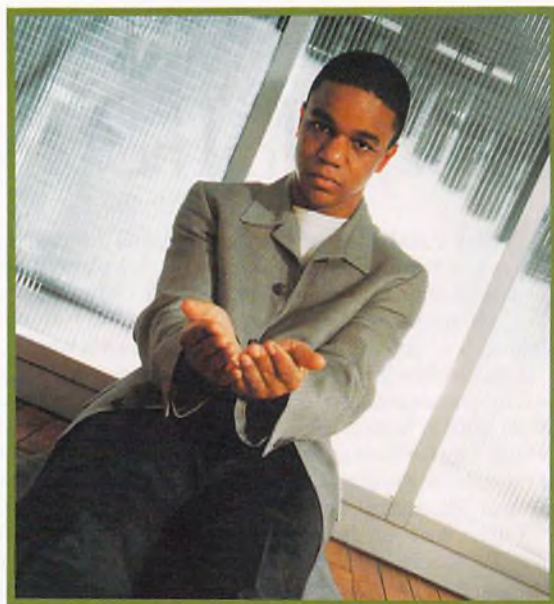
"First off, I want to expand the sonic potential of the vibes," says Harris, 26. "There are still so many alternative sounds to explore, techniques like using the back of the sticks to produce high-pitched notes and speeding up or slowing down the motor to get a vibrato effect."

Compositionally, Harris wants to veer away from a rigid solo format in favor of more compelling forms of group improvisation. "But no matter how far advanced a piece is rhythmically and harmonically, I want to keep a strong sense of melody. I

want to share my emotion with the audience. If I'm not touching someone, I'm not doing my job."

But most important to Harris is establishing his own voice on the vibes. He's met all the greats, studied their music and transcribed their solos. But, he cautions, "Knowledge is empowering only if you know what to do with it."

On *A Cloud Of Red Dust*, Harris documented the spiritual journey he embarked on in the years leading up to his signing with Blue Note. He likened the approach of making the album to writing a novel, linking the compositions together like chapters. On a followup record, scheduled for September release, Harris switches gears to focus on American rhythms with an r&b harmonic edge.



Ultimately, Harris aspires to be a painter of jazz. "Can you imagine seeing Monet paint a canvas in front of an audience? That's what I'd like to achieve on the vibes. I could hit a slash of green, then a slash of red. Wow! The wonderment of seeing a painting take shape in front of your eyes." **DB**

BY DAN CUELLETTE

Avishai Cohen

Global Vision

Avishai Cohen, the gifted Israeli native who lives in New York, is a jazz visionary of global proportions. The prodigious 28-year-old bassist's 1998 debut album, *Adama* (Hebrew for "earth"), was an engaging mix of jazz and a multitude of world musics. His new recording—a blend of funky hard-bop, warm ballad feels, modern acoustic jazz, classical instrumentation and Sephardic vocal music—further explores this open-minded concept. Titled *Devotion*, the CD generates a subtle-to-substantial Middle Eastern vibe, the result of Cohen's penchant for folk-like melodies and harmonies, traditional instruments such as the oud and exotic timbral combinations like flute and trombone with pizzicato bass.

"The new record is a wild boy," Cohen says from a London hotel room, where he was preparing to record with Chick Corea and the London Philharmonic this

spring. "*Devotion* stretches more. I managed to do some crazy things that I was hearing. Stuff that I was dreaming of came through."

Another aspect that distinguishes *Devotion* from *Adama* is that except for a few special guests, such as vocalist Claudia Acuña, Cohen employs only his



band members, giving the album a more cohesive stance than its predecessor. He's thrilled with his current colleagues, who include Jimmy Greene, saxophones and flute; Steve Davis, trombone; Amos Hoffman, guitar and oud; Jason Lindner, piano; and Jeff Ballard, drums.

Cohen built his career as a sideman, first with younger notables like Joshua Redman, Wynton Marsalis and Danilo Perez, then eventually with Corea as a member of the pianist's trio and his sextet Origin.

But Cohen's life as a leader has taken off in recent months. Upcoming performances include an appearance at the Litchfield (Conn.) Jazz Festival in August and a possible September gig in London at Ronnie Scott's.

As Cohen begins work on a new band recording, he says he'll continue to delve into his Israeli roots. "I'm always hearing the oud," he says. But those roots don't necessarily mean a concept album. "I just write down what I'm hearing. Right now, besides the oud, I'm hearing a big choir, so I don't know what's going to happen."

And as for the distant future, there's always his bass concerto. But that's another vision for another century. **DB**

BY ZAN STEWART

Susie Ibarra

Odd Jobs

About three-and-a-half years ago, Susie Ibarra quit working odd jobs to become a full-time jazz percussionist. But to see her play gigs like last summer's trio performance with William Parker and Roy Campbell under the street in the Times Square subway station, you might say she still works some pretty odd jobs.

A relative newcomer on New York's jazz and improvised music scenes, Ibarra is hungry enough to play just about anywhere but capable of playing with just about anyone.

Check out her drumming on the David S. Ware Quartet's *Go See The World*. Listen in particular to Ware's tune "Quadrahex,"

a fairly open-ended piece of music bereft of a pulse. Ibarra's exoticisms on cymbals and bells cut through the tenor saxophonist's insistent clarion calls like balmy breezes drifting through a cold subway tunnel. It's not about groove so much as it is the sound of the instruments themselves.

"I am really into dynamics and the role of percussion," says Ibarra, a former student of Milford Graves who was born in California and grew up in Southwest Texas. "I love subtlety, silence."

Ibarra was fortunate to be able to play in a Pauline Oliveros retrospective this past March at Carnegie Hall with the Deep Listening Band, the Cultural Heritage Choir and multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee. "Oliveros' accordion music was very new and inspiring to me, with her approach centered on deep listening and profound respect for silence and natural sound," Ibarra says. "I love to have that range, to play in different musical settings. I love to drive, to swing, but it's really important to listen."

So, what's in store for Ibarra? Projects include work with Chicago reedists Ken Vandermark and Fred Anderson with drummer Hamid Drake, more work with William Parker's Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra and In Order To Survive Quartet, and a regular spot in pianist Matthew Shipp's trio with husband/tenor saxophonist/bass clarinetist Assif Tsahar. In addition to running their new Hopscotch label, she and Tsahar will continue to perform in duo and trio settings.

Upcoming releases include one from Parker's In Order To Survive (FMP), the Derek Bailey & Susie Ibarra Duo (Incus) and *Home Cookin'* with Tsahar (Hopscotch).

As if to weigh in on her pan-percussion ecumenicism, Ibarra says, "Being Filipino and raised in America, I have been exposed to a mixture of cultures and also a mixture of music. As a result, I really appreciate the opportunity to play in a lot of great bands. And I love the whole kit in general, because it has all these different, beautiful voices." **DB**



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BY JOHN EDWARDS

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D.D. Jackson

Signs Up

More than two years have passed since D.D. Jackson made a CD as a leader. But as of this spring, the 32-year-old pianist finds himself doing double-duty in that role as he contemplates the simultaneous preparation and recording of two albums. After a year's negotiation, he recently signed a three-album, two-year contract with RCA Victor, and he begins work on both a solo and a group project for the label right away.

"The group is a special project," says the Canadian-born Brooklyn resident. "I hope to have Jack DeJohnette on drums, James Carter on sax and violinist Christian Howes."

Howes appears with Jackson, drummer Billy Kilson, bassist Kenny Davis, percussionist Kahlil Kwame Bell and trumpeter Hugh Ragin on the new *Live At Birdland* (RCA Victor) CD, also called *Cookin' In Midtown*. "We recorded my original compositions 'Easy' and 'For Monk's Sake' (which is a play on the obscure Monk tune 'Break's Sake'). But I haven't been doing so much with my group just now."

Other commitments have taken priority. Jackson's been on Broadway, performing onstage as jazz-organist Lord Hades in storyteller David Gonzalez's production *Mytholojazz* at the New Victory Theater; he serves as musical director and leader of the trio featuring Mark Dresser and Andrew Cyrille. He's been touring with baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett and Senegalese master drummer Mor Thiam and just released *Join Us*, the trio's third Justin Time album.

Jackson has also been working with David Murray. "I was playing in David's big band, performing 'the obscure side of Ellington/Strayhorn,' but he's weaned me off that now, going for more old-school pianists. I'm on his *Creole* album, too. And next month I'm going on his very exciting tour of Europe, a tribute to the music of Coltrane—David's octet with special guest James Carter, and on a couple of the gigs, Arthur Blythe. That band is steeped in the classic Coltrane quartet material, plus stuff David's done before—like a crazy version of 'Giant Steps' that takes on the implications of the harmony, segueing into total freedom."

Jackson's been Murray's right-hand man, too, on the long-awaited *Satchel Page* opera collaboration spearheaded by Bob Weir, former Grateful Dead gui-



tarist. "I transcribed and notated the entire piano-vocal score, numerous songs, 267 pages of material," Jackson reports. "It's coming together now. Everyone had taken a hiatus, but they're readdressing it. Avery Brooks (of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*) might become involved as a director and actor.

"But it's funny: With *Mytholojazz* I had my own pseudo-Broadway success first. In *Satchel Page* I'm supplemental. There's nothing like having that control and direct input, as a leader, rather than going through hierarchy for your ideas. And it's certainly easier than in an environment where you're taken as a co-leader."

Putting Broadway and his quartet, trio and duo experiences into perspective, Jackson feels he's ready to take on the challenge of his impending solo recording. "It's baring all," he says. "I'll be working to present something introspective with elements deep in the jazz tradition. I'll perform my compositions, which address a fairly broad range, but some standards, too, Duke's 'Come

Sunday,' Monk's 'I Mean You,' maybe my tribute to John Hicks, and 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' in honor of both Jaki Byard and Don Pullen. You know, a solo piano album is inherently a tribute album to various pianists.

"My group music will be very melodic, groove-oriented, and I'll probably play some organ as well. It'll have a more electric texture, with electric violin and maybe electric bass. Between these two, I hope to expose the breadth of my approach. I've been likened to Don Pullen, and he was a major influence, but I've always had the goal to be known more as a composer and a conceptualist than as a pianist and player. I hope I can make that more obvious to people.

"It's been a gamble, negotiating this record contract," Jackson sighs. "There's been a slowdown of my production. My last CD, *Pairings*, is a lifetime away from what I'm capable of now. But I have to try the major label experience. Perhaps it's cost me a little time, but I stand to gain, too."

DB

BY HOWARD MANDEL

Jimmy Greene

The Fast Track

Jimmy Greene portends an outstanding future for jazz saxophone. And judging by his fast rise to first-call sideman status and his recent major-label signing, that future is about to unfold before our ears.

After finishing his studies at the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, Greene's first major break came in 1996, when trumpeter Claudio Roditi called

Thelonious Monk Institute Of Jazz International Saxophone Competition. The house band at the Monk event included pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash. Since then, Greene has played some gigs with Nash's quintet, among them a week at the Village Vanguard last October. He's scheduled to do another week with Nash at the club this August.

When Greene moved to Manhattan in September 1997, he joined Jason Lindner's big band, where Avishai Cohen was the bassist. Last year, he

became a member of Cohen's sextet. Greene also played with bassist Larry Ridley's band, and hooked up with trumpeter Darren Barrett, who has become a steady colleague.

Greene recently recorded his RCA Victor debut as a leader, due out in the fall. It features Barrett, pianist Aaron Goldberg and others. "It will definitely groove a lot of different ways," Greene says. "It will swing but have an eye toward the modern. I want to say something that's very personal to me and my musical vision." **DB**



him to play a Latin gig in Hartford. That led to Greene appearing on Roditi's *Double Standards* CD.

Roditi felt confident enough in Greene to recommend him to Horace Silver for his *Jazz Has A Sense Of Humor* CD, recorded last December and due out in August. "Horace was meticulous in rehearsal, but in the studio, he was very laid-back," says Greene, 24.

About the same time that Greene was recording with Roditi, he was also runner-up to altoist Jon Gordon in the 1996



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BY ZAN STEWART

Larry Grenadier

Support Man

In a New York practice studio, Larry Grenadier is laying down rich bottom-end lines for Joshua Redman in preparation for an upcoming series of gigs with the saxophonist. A few months later, the tall, thin bassist is on the main arena stage at the Monterey Jazz Festival with Pat Metheny, helping to gird the rhythmic structure and providing velvet-toned melodies. Then he's at Yoshi's in Oakland with Brad Mehldau, in sync with the trio leader's well-of-emotion delivery.

Performing regularly with three of the most popular leaders in the biz ain't bad for someone who modestly claims, "All I try to do is satisfy by keeping the time and establishing the groove." The 33-year-old Grenadier, a San Francisco Bay Area native now based in New York, may not have a manager, a booking agent or a record deal, but he's got plenty of work. "Most importantly, I strive to maintain a consistency of approach to everything I

do. Hopefully what comes through in my bass playing is that openness, that sense of freedom I feel.

"When I play with musicians my own age, we don't have to spend much time talking about what we're playing because we have a shared history," Grenadier says. "We all listened to the same records, and most of us went through rock to get to jazz."

But does it bother Grenadier that he's been pegged into support status? "Not at all. That's all I ever wanted to do. I didn't start out playing the bass to be a solo performer. I've been able to get to the comfort zone in my playing where I don't have to make these big transformations as I go from gig to gig."

However, even though it's under wraps at the moment, Grenadier does have future plans. He's been composing new pieces that he'll begin recording within the year.

"Who knows, I'm not even sure if my album will be a jazz record," he says, noting some of the rock and roots music he's been listening to lately. "At this point, I'm envisioning a group that's fairly minimal, mostly bass and drum but also orchestrated. I want to layer the songs so a lot of



emotions will come out."

Grenadier plans to work on the record one step at a time without any label support. "My wife is a singer, and that's the way she recorded her album. I like that process because you have a lot of freedom to follow your own vision." **DB**

BY DAN OUELLETTE

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Matt Wilson

Tills The Soil

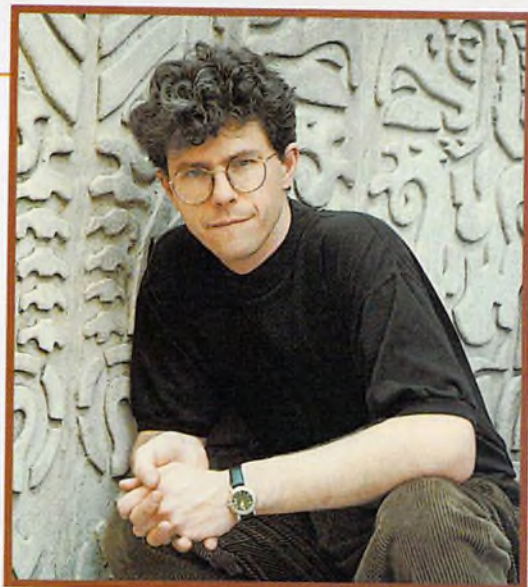
Michael Carvin was responsible for the most chilling percussion ploy I've ever seen, mouthing his snare and moaning "Euuubiee" as a farewell to pianist Eubie Blake back in '83. The most coercive drum move I've witnessed took place a few years later, when Freddie Waits strong-armed Cecil Taylor into following a backbeat that was blue million miles from the wobbly-rail glisses preceding it. And the funniest? That would be Han Bennink heading backstage in the middle of a solo, reemerging with an 8-foot-long cardboard fist, and cavalierly bouncing it off his snare for three minutes.

Over the last few years, during countless gigs around New York, Matt Wilson has conflated and amplified bits of all these maneuvers, effectively illustrating the greater attitude behind them: resourcefulness. The drummer and his omnijazz esthetic have lofted into sight just when an alliance of caprice, finesse and determination would seem to be exactly what the music, or at least its

audience, deserves. At age 34, Wilson's imagination drives an improv style utterly dedicated to avoiding predictable performance recipes. Catch Wilson at work, with eyes glowing and a big boyish grin on his face, and he's on your mind for a few days.

This whimsy was obvious when his debut for the Palmetto label nudged Dewey Redman and Cecil McBee (elder employers who have both signed the drummer's paychecks) into "Sweet Betsy From Pike," not exactly a Gershwin standard. Like Bill Frisell's music, Wilson's has heartland spaciousness stabilizing the jazz club smokiness. The Illinois native went to college in Kansas, and he fully embraces his rural upbringing. The auction block cover shot of his *Going Once, Going Twice* was keenly sympatico with breadbasket plights—I'm surprised it didn't land him a gig at Farm-Aid.

That festival would have worked out



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY AROCH

fine because Wilson's resolute in tilling a new demographic for jazz. "When you first start making records you want to make the jazz people happy," he says. "But after a few years I now know what kind of audience we're targeting, and it's more than just the usual crowd. I look out in the clubs and see a table of high school kids next to a table of older people. That's kind of thrilling, and it makes me realize that for better or worse we've created a vibe that's not the norm."

The Wilson Quartet has a great Frick and Frack front line in saxophonists Joel Frahm, whose new *Sorry, No Decaf* has just been released by Palmetto, and his pal Andrew D'Angelo. Bassist Yosuke Inoue and the leader give the horns a supple bottom over which to maneuver. Together for almost three years now, the quartet's rapport is exceptional.

The ensemble has just finished work on *Smile*, Wilson's third disc. As usual it contains a couple gleefully queer turns. Wilson's got a secret agenda of revealing the possibility in schmaltz, and the man who once covered Paul McCartney's "My Love" is now attempting "Strangers In The Night."

"Repertoire is always on my mind," he explains. "Not just choosing pop things to cover, like 'Turn, Turn, Turn,' but determining how I write. We occasionally need a different-flavored tune to balance out the book, so I write to fit the need. And these guys are courageous dudes. I've never had to convince them per se; they'll try anything. For me it's all music. Once we get going, the style thing is pretty much secondary if not irrelevant."

What the drummer does hold dear is a notion of consolidating the sometimes fractious views of avant-garde and mainstream jazz. Neither, he believes, are as restrictive as their naysayers would have you believe.

"It's cool to swing and it's cool to play open, and it's even cooler to put 'em together."

DB

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JUNE 21-JULY 9

BY JIM MACNIE

Ken Vandermark

Kaleidoscope

His ferocious technique probably throws a lot of people off his trail. But that's not Ken Vandermark's intent. Underneath the angry honks, tortured squeals and shronks of frustration, this Boston-born virtuoso who's made Chicago his home since 1989 is a humble, all-around nice guy. And his vast repertoire runs much deeper than the high-volume saxophone and clarinet ragings he's become known for on the avant-garde scene.

The most appealing aspect of Vandermark's musical world is that it is kaleidoscopic, integrating so much—from the wonder of avantists like Evan Parker and Albert Ayler to the pop worlds of James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone to Ellington, Monk and Stravinsky.

"Some of it is more aggressive, some more streamline, more melodic," Vandermark says. "The Vandermark 5 tries to unify those two worlds. Some

people seem to have problems with that, not that it is good or bad, but whether it is OK, that I've sold out or something, betrayed their musical trust."

For Vandermark, his musical appetites may get him into hot water with tried-and-true believers. But Vandermark doesn't care. "It's impossible to ignore all the rock music on the radio, the backbeat to so much that's out there. To ignore it, you are cutting yourself off."

For Vandermark, there is a seemingly endless hunger for interaction. In fact, he's developed a reputation for playing around Chicago with just about all comers, and at all age levels, his peer group taking in some mighty talents.

"It's a very exciting time for improvised music everywhere, a crucial time to move the music forward. The music I play embraces the diversity, all the developments in the world of music, and people are responding to it, especially young listeners. They can connect with it because it is their experience." **DB**



BY JOHN EPFLAND

Ben Allison

Open-Door Policy

On Sunday nights in Manhattan's East Village, Ben Allison leads a trio that has enough breadth to service all kinds of jazz fans: trad, rad, knowing, thoughtless. People who want to be tickled stand with those who wanted to be challenged, and both camps get something out of the bassist's work. With Michael Blake on reeds and Jeff Ballard on drums, the unit, a reduced version of the leader's Medicine Wheel ensemble, keeps all the doors open.

This kind of scope comes both from an inner muse and from sharing ideas. The 32-year-old Allison is a founder of the New York Jazz Composers Collective, a sizable alliance of musicians who play on each other's gigs and records. The power-in-numbers concept isn't anything new, but it's still an effective way to disarm frustration and nurture previously isolated notions.

Balance is key to the bassist's agenda. He admits that he likes to keep many balls in the air simultaneously. Yet his music has benefited from the juggling act. The gorgeous *Medicine Wheel* was one of last year's most alluring discs, a balance of composition and improv that offered vista after vista. The forthcoming *Third Eye* (Palmetto) follows nicely in its footsteps, refining some of the strategies.

"I don't want to say that the fully expressionistic days are over, but the feeling I get from the community right now is something closer to a middle ground," he says.

"Someone was asking me about traditional versus forward-thinking musicians. My response was that we're more similar than people probably believe. We both know the canon. It's just that a traditional player makes obvious the link between himself and the past. And the



forward musicians disguise those influences, using a subtle mix. To me jazz is an expansionist kind of music, where you're coming out of something but you're going somewhere, too. In a way the music will never be what it once was. Bop was of its time. But hot dogs aren't five cents, anymore, you know what I mean?" **DB**

BY JIM MACSIE

Marc Cary In Rhythm

"I'm a lucky woman," says Abbey Lincoln, "because I've got my hands on Marc Cary." The singer cackles as she offers the compliment, like she knows something the rest of the world doesn't. That may be so. Cary has designed several bands since cutting his first record as a leader back in 1995. Each has shown his growth as an orchestrator of jazz's basic elements. But of late he believes his ever-morphing esthetic has taken on a new coherence. Two discs by his Indigenous People band, *The Antidote* (Arabesque) and *Captured Live In Brazil* (Jazzateria), are closer to where Cary has wanted to go for a while.

Though he grew up in Providence, R.I., the 31-year-old pianist came of musical age in Washington, D.C. His dad was a percussionist, and being quite adept at a trap set, Cary considers himself a drummer of sorts. Including the leader's forays into congas and shakers, Indigenous People is

a quintet with four percussionists. Strategizing rhythmic campaigns is the ensemble's mandate. "If something's not rhythmically right, then it's not musically right," Cary says. "I sometimes break it down even finer: To me each note has a rhythm. There's a lot of action in an A-440: if you think about it, one note vibrates three piano strings. So the simplest melody has an intrinsic rhythm."

The go-go beats of the mid-'80s D.C. scene are the nucleus of Indigenous People's lilt and thrust. The band's excursionary interplay is also laced with a '70s sense of funk. Like Stefon Harris' units or the Fort Apache band, the group's main stimuli is born when a hand hits a drum.

The pianist hit New York in '88, falling into a circle of uptown elders that included Walter Davis Jr., Beaver Harris and Mickey Bass. His mind was blown when Art Taylor got his name. "He was pulling the Waiters back together," Cary recalls. "The phone rang, and he said, 'Hey, this is Arthur Taylor, whatchadoing? C'mon over and hit. I'm at 157th and St. Nick.' And I said 'I'm on 158th and Edgecomb, be there in 30 seconds.' I walked in, he called 'Gingerbread Boy' and luckily I knew it; we hooked up immediately."



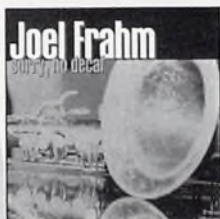
Stints with Betty Carter, Roy Hargrove and Lincoln followed. He recently finished a week-long stand with Indigenous People at Sweet Basil, one of Greenwich Village's most prominent clubs.

"I go for clarity. With all the drummers the challenge is to keep things in a context that steadily produces fresh rhythms and new forms. There's a trajectory at work: warm-up, pocket, socket, freaky-deke, back to warm-up. If you stray too far from that, it can get messed up quick. But my guys make it happen just right." **DB**

BY JIM MACNIE

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PM 2052



Ben Allison
Third Eye
PM 2054

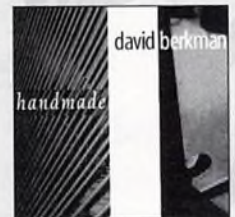
June
New Release

"Drummer Matt Wilson is a wizard of sounds, pulling from his bag of tricks a spectrum of musical colors and accents to fill whatever jazz moment he is in at the time."

Ken Franckling, UPI



Matt Wilson
Going Once, Going Twice
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David Berkman
Handmade
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Here are 11 distinctive, thoughtful originals (as well as Duke's "Take The Coltrane") from a pianist who's worked with Tom Harrell, Cecil McBee and Scott Wendholz. The A-1 crew includes Harrell, saxman Steve Wilson, bassist Ugonna Okwego and drummer Brian Blade; they're ideal for these intriguing tunes, where structure and freedom often meet."

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Events subject to change.

Matthew Shipp

Cools Out

Even though he's only 38, intrepid sonic explorer Matthew Shipp boasts a discography as leader and sideman that's larger than most musicians twice his age.

In a seven-year period, the pianist has been at the helm of 14 CDs, including his latest duo disc *DNA* with longtime partner and mentor bassist William Parker. As Shipp describes the last several years, he's been "massively recording." In addition to his solo albums, consider the two co-leader discs he's tracked with alto saxophonist Rob Brown plus the 11 albums he's participated in as a collective member of tenor saxophonist David S. Ware's quartet. He's also an integral member of Roscoe Mitchell's Note Factory, which just released the superb *Nine To Get Ready* CD, and a collaborator with the likes of Ivo Perelman and Joe Morris.

Add up all of Shipp's recorded appearances since breaking onto the scene in 1992, and the total comes to nearly 50. It's no wonder he's putting the word out that he's about to embark on a sabbatical, feeling strongly that he's completed the primary body of his recorded work.

In a rare moment's rest, Shipp takes a deep breath and sighs. "Yeah, I guess I have been prolific, although I'm not like Anthony Braxton, who is committed to documenting his every note," he says, then laughs. "Not to pat myself on the back, but my albums have been well-received. Yet I've been like a machine in the studio. I've been recording at such a manic pace I need time to step back, take a break and smell the grass."

It's not only for his own benefit that Shipp is slamming the brakes on the hectic tempo. He also figures the marketplace needs time to digest what he's recorded. "I've put my basic vision out there," he explains. "What comes next? I'm not sure, but I'm not going to change drastically. Look at Monk and Bird and Bud Powell. What they did throughout their careers basically didn't change. I'm not going to be switching formats like Miles. I have completed my opus. From here on out I'll be

extrapolating on my body of work, which reflects the visual images I've encountered from playing the piano."

Shipp delights in playing outside the lines: zipping, pouncing, rumbling and scrambling across the keys with strong dynamic sensibilities. Passionate instrumental conversation is his forte. He says he aspires to a Jimi Hendrix-like "rigorously sculpted discord," but while in the midst of his adventurous jaunts he's not beyond offering lyrical beauty. Case in point: the melodic read of the hymn "Amazing Grace" that closes *DNA*. He's recorded six CDs for hatART (an arrangement that he says gave him structure to explore) and also had a four-record deal with Black Flag rocker-poet Henry Rollins' label 2.13.61.



Even though he's going on hiatus, don't expect Shipp to disappear. "Hey, I'm a full-time musician who needs to eat," he says. "I'm not some millionaire jazz pianist who can take time off and not worry." He'll still be performing dates with his own groups as well as with Ware. He also notes that there are a few CDs already in the can (a trio session with Rob Brown and William Parker, a duo album with violinist Mat Maneri and a sideman spot with DJ Spooky) that will be released in the next two years.

Even though he's firm about his cool-down period, Shipp can't help but imagine a new possibility. "You know, maybe over this next year I'll delve into playing solo, something along the lines of what Keith Jarrett and Cecil Taylor do, manifesting archetypes of spontaneity on the piano." He pauses to let the idea sink in, then continues. "Yeah, I think I'd like to do solo things. That is, if I do come back from my sabbatical." **DB**

BY DAN OUELLETTE

Ingrid Jensen

Plays Herself

Ingrid Jensen is a player in motion, on the run as a brass anchor, soloist, guest artist and clinician of diverse ensembles. Consistently, the 30-something trumpeter and flugelhornist is making her mark—with clear and clean horn lines, earthy, blue and energized, recalling the great ones in the '60s.

Her upcoming CD, *Higher Ground* (enja), features the playing and writing of a circle that's been spinning around each other's gigs: drummer Victor Lewis, reedsman Gary Thomas, bassist Ed Howard and pianist Dave Kikoski. Jensen also likes working with drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, who drummed in Lewis' stead at a Kennedy Center performance last May. That gig was sweet: Jensen had gained some significant attention early on as a Canadian-born (and arts-financed) Berklee College graduate in the Kennedy Center's 1997 Women in Jazz festival all-stars.

Not that Jensen's rhetorical or doctrinaire; she'll hang with anybody. Just happens some of her best friends are women. Like Maria Schneider, in whose orchestra Jensen has become a front-line regular, and who's written an hour-long work for her to record with the Metropole Orchestra.

Is their hour with the Metropole Orchestra like Miles with Gil? "Different, because I did some things on flugel, with a Kenny Wheeler approach. Recording live, in concert, it was hard to get all the voices clearly. I'd like to do it in the studio. I want to work with an orchestra again."

Frank ambitions aside, the Vancouver, British Columbia, native is a modest, cool, straightforward, practical and confident freelancer—successful enough to be casual about it. "I've been taking what comes," she claims. "I'm more focused these days, having just moved and gaining a good writing situation. I also work to keep myself strong, healthy, prepared for the road."

To do so, Jensen maintains discipline. "Playing the trumpet," she says dryly, "is



like keeping a jealous woman, because you must pay so much attention, daily. You have to make a total commitment—there's no cutting corners. You can't have a half-assed sound and play heavy music."

By age 30, Jensen had already stormed New York once, bailed out for a teaching gig in Austria, built a reputation in Europe that's helped her maintain opportunities there, and returned to New York for her second, winning attempt. She knows there's no one right way. "I did one seminar at Berklee on developing your own voice," she says. "I said what my teachers said: 'The masters—they're all great. Learn 'em all. Then forget it. Play yourself.'" **DB**

BY HOWARD MANDEL

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Richard Bona

Bass Ace

It's clear Richard Bona's going to be a star, from first exposure. A young African electric bass player of Pastorian fluidity, shining soul, deep roots and easy sophistication; an angelic yet masculine voice up there with Youssou N'Dour, Baba Maal or Salif Keita; an open face, luck and grace that's led him from a tiny town in East Cameroon to his island's capital, to jazz, to Paris and to New York City.

With Joe Zawinul and Harry Belafonte among his early supporters, in just two years Bona's caused a bidding war between major labels and honed his multi-culti concept and well-tempered band in the fires of downtown New York.

"You saw me at Dharma?" Bona says. "You should have come to Izzy Bar last night—I'm there almost every Tuesday." Having broken into Manhattan's clubs through a circuit of late-night jam sessions, Bona's as savvy a businessman as

he is an artist.

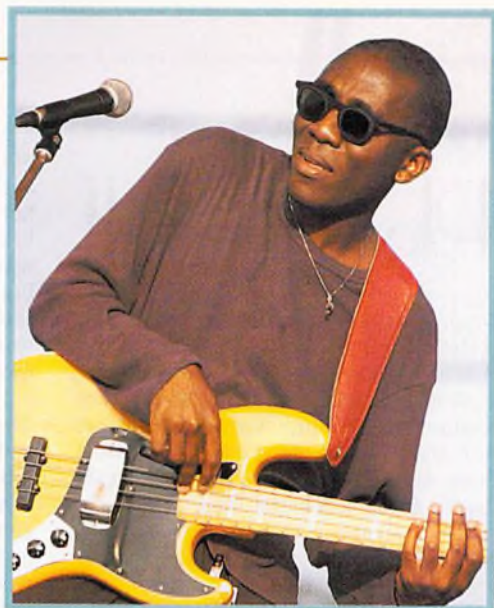
"Well, I'm 31," he laughs, "not so young any more! Old and experienced! No, I'm kidding. I wonder what's happening next.

"I signed my contract with Sony/Columbia and finished recording my first album, *Scenes From My Life*, in January. I was born in Minta, East Cameroon, close to the pygmies. I started playing balafon when I was 4 years old."

At age 11 Bona moved to Douala, the capital, and started playing guitar and bass. He fell in love with Jaco Pastorius' playing while listening to tapes provided by a club owner who hired Bona for a long-term jazz gig.

It wasn't easy to meet other jazz musicians in Cameroon, so in 1990 Bona went to play with European musicians in Paris. "But I didn't have a great feeling about staying in Europe," he says. "I moved to New York in '96 because this is the land to exchange ideas, to meet people."

Once in New York, a songwriter on Belafonte's staff caught Bona during one of the many jam sessions the bassist used to participate in. "Harry hired me as musical director, and we worked for a year-and-a-half."



Bona soon found himself in a position to negotiate for a recording deal with several jazz labels. Based on an experience working with Branford Marsalis, Bona chose to sign with Columbia.

"I've made a singing record," he says. "People expect me to do a lot of solo things, but I wanted to start this way, with my roots. I have the freedom to do whatever I want, to play jazz, jazz-funk—and maybe next will be a bass album." **DB**

BY HOWARD MANDEL

Anthony Wilson

Surprise Tactics

Ask Anthony Wilson his opinion on the state of jazz today, and the 31-year-old doesn't mince words. Frankly, he opines, the ferment and revolution once so vibrant in jazz is sorely missing. "Jazz is too concerned with the past," he says. "Sure, it's important to learn the history and how to deal with harmony and improvisation. But eventually something has to shift. If I felt required to sound like the past, I'd be really depressed. It's a dead end."

The son of big band maestro Gerald Wilson, the Los Angeles-based guitarist and bandleader is recording his third CD for the MAMA label (tentatively titled *Adult Themes*), due out this summer. It fits into his plan to not stand pat musically. Three albums in three years, he says, and you can trace the movement.

"The first record is very classic sounding and swinging, with a Freddie King cover and an Art Blakey-type shuffle," he

says of his self-titled debut CD, recorded in L.A. with a large band that included a five-piece horn section.

For his second album, *Goat Hill Junket*, Wilson went to New York to record a set marked by strong arrangements he wrote for his 10-member ensemble. "My writing had matured. I had been studying Gil Evans and as a result was feeling more confident to explore texture. The sound was more sophisticated, and I featured myself on guitar more."

Wilson's third outing focuses more on originals, and he's feeling even freer to investigate different moods and textures. "I'm less intimidated by form," he explains. "I'm trying to get away from predictability. For example, one piece has a folk-like melody. Another is a structured composition that incorporates improvisation in such a way that you never know where the soloing comes from. I'm trying to find different



ways to keep the musicians inspired.

"I believe some of today's high-profile musicians are afraid of being raw and naked in their music." Wilson sees them hiding behind a veil of other people's music. "Look at Gil Evans. You knew him through his music. As I continue to mature, people are going to find out about me through my music, not from others in the past." **DB**

BY DAN OUELLETTE

Axel Dörner Into Form

Axel Dörner has a panoramic perspective on the trumpet. In his hands, it can sing with all the glorious history jazz has invested in it. Or, alternately, it can be reduced to an improviser's *objet trouvé*—twisted clump of plumber's refuse, metal tube of given length with several holes and plugs given over to variances in hissing and whistling.

"It's different points of view," says the soft-spoken 34-year-old from his flat in Cologne, Germany. "I think there are different laws in all these styles of music. If you compare playing bebop to certain kinds of new music, for instance, it's really a completely different way of thinking. I'm interested in understanding these different musical languages."

Along with being an extremely nimble jazz trumpeter, Dörner has, in short order, become one of the leading free improvisors in Europe. He works regularly with Fred van Hove, Sven-Ake

Johansson, Radu Malfatti, Phil Minton, King Übü Orchester and numerous other settings. In this capacity, he's currently extending the trumpet's material resources, adding a host of new, extended techniques to the proverbial trick-bag.

"There are still many possibilities in exploring the sound world of the instrument. This comes more into the area of electroacoustic music—it can sound like electronics sometimes, except it's done with an acoustic instrument."

But the cultivation of new sonic material is always put at the service of musical logic: "First of all, I try to think like a composer. It has to do with form, structure—bringing the possibilities of the trumpet into form." For examples of this realm of Dörner's work, look to the quintet record *Lines* (Random Acoustics) or the upcoming series of solo CDs he'll be releasing on his own Two Nineteen Records label.



Dörner says he thinks playing Monk tunes alongside super young bass-clarinetist Rudi Mahal in the quartet Die Enttäuschung indirectly enhances his understanding of how to play completely improvised music. "In a way, they're very similar, but they sound completely different," he muses. "The problem is that if you want to connect these it may lose much of its quality and its meaning. You need to mix things to get new results, but *how* to mix is the question." **DB**

BY JOHN CORRETT

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Jeff Parker, Rob Mazurek & Chad Taylor

True To Their Situation

There's an uncommon communal spirit at the core of the Chicago Underground Orchestra, a spirit that favors group processes over unitary leadership mentality. "I don't work well in those situations," says guitarist Jeff Parker. "I'd rather be in a situation where everybody is an equal part of it. It makes me uncomfortable to be singled out. I'm the lesser part of a whole."

The Orchestra, which issued its debut *Playground* (Delmark) early in '99, is a collective with Parker, cornetist Rob Mazurek, drummer Chad Taylor, trombonist Sara P. Smith and bassist Noel Kupersmith, but it also breaks down into smaller particles; the Chicago Underground Duo (Mazurek and Taylor) released *12 Degrees Of Freedom* (Thrill Jockey) last year, followed by *Possible Cube* (Delmark) from the Chicago Underground Trio (Mazurek, Taylor and Kupersmith). Parker makes cameos on both those records. "I think a lot of what I do is try to make other musicians sound good," offers the 32-year-old Parker. "I try to blend in to whatever situation I'm in."

In Chicago these days there's plenty of blending going on. Parker and Mazurek (and Smith) are members of the popular group Isotope 217, a funky ensemble with strong electric Miles musk about it; they're set to release their second disc, *Usonian Automatic*, on the adventurous, supportive rock label Thrill Jockey. Indeed, explorations in the world of avant rock abound: Parker's a member of the dub-inflected group Tortoise, Mazurek played on a record by Gastr del Sol, and he and Taylor play in the wonderful new group of Sea & Cake singer Sam Prekop.

But that cross-pollination seems natural to Parker, who was a student at Berklee in the latter half of the '80s. Gigging four nights a week with Antonio Hart, he was also living in a house with

and playing with the members of the outward-oriented Fully Celebrated Orchestra. He took classes with saxophonist George Garzone in which they played totally improvised music. "To me there's no difference between bebop and free improvising—if you're confronted with a musical situation, that's your objective: Be true to that situation."

"I always found it strange that it's different to be versatile," Parker continues. "I don't really think that's a new way of looking at things, but when you're out there that's sort of against the rules. That was a big reason why I moved from Boston and why I didn't move to New York. *Everyone* moves from Boston to New York, and I was fed up with that institution, didn't want to be subjected to that way of thinking, so I chose to move away from all of it."

Shortly after relocating to Chicago in '91, Parker first worked with Mazurek—a straightforward gig playing standards. Mazurek, age 34, was born in Jersey City, N.J., and moved to Chicago when he was 17, by way of Naperville, Ill.; he, too, has never been interested in moving to New York. In this respect, the 26-year-old Taylor differs; he returned to Chicago in '97 after a five-year stint in the Big

Apple. A drummer with lovely feel and a powerhouse Higgins-like polygroove, he can even imbue a rock outing like Alan Licht and Loren Mazzacane-Connors' *Hoffman Estates* (Drag City) with an irresistible jazz undercurrent. Duetting with Mazurek, a Don Cherry/Edward Blackwell vibe is undeniable.

A fluid player not averse to ragged or punchy phrasing, Mazurek began his career trajectory with three hot hard-bop outings on the Scottish Hep label. "Growing up, I used to be up in my room, listening for hours, taking solos from Lee Morgan or Miles," he recalls. "But the point is to have your own shit—what's



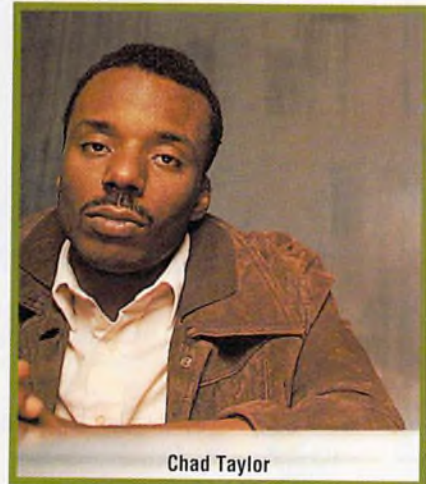
Rob Mazurek



Jeff Parker

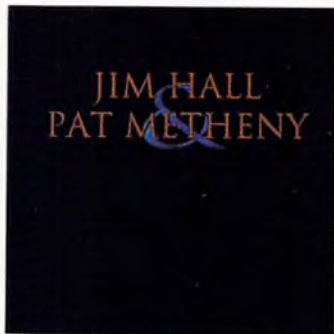
wrong with *your* personality?" The journey into the vanguard outback was in a way a return trip for Mazurek, whose first records were Ornette Coleman, Art Ensemble and Lester Bowie. After loving that music, he got deeply involved in Blue Note hard-bop, which seemed destined to steer his course. But hanging out with Parker reintroduced him to his early interests. Coupled with mounting boredom of conventional mainstream, this in turn changed his own musical orientation, and before long the Chicago Underground Orchestra was playing Sundays at the Green Mill.

"I came across more and more super open people who weren't interested in just one thing," says the cornetist. "Meeting Jim O'Rourke, everyone hip-pping each other to great records. And it seems almost impossible to tap it out. People I'm working with, it's a group of maybe 10 people, but there are so many others: I've never actually played with Fred Anderson, Ken Vandermark, Ernest Dawkins. But those 10 people I'm working with, every minute there's another idea, another recording opportunity, another playing opportunity, touring. It's impossible to keep up on, almost overwhelming. Chicago's ridiculous right now." **DB**



Chad Taylor

BY JOHN CORRETTI



Jim Hall & Pat Metheny

Jim Hall & Pat Metheny
Telarc 83442

★★★★½

There is a lot of give-and-take on this recording. Most of the giving comes from Metheny, as he not only pays tribute to a major influence but reflects that influence as well. During a casual listen, it's easy to forget which one is which.

The tones are very similar, there is no grandstanding virtuosity, no overt signatures. One of the delights of listening to *Jim Hall & Pat Metheny* is realizing these two guitarists are playing not only for each other, but for anyone else who cares to listen: jazz from the inside-out, rather than something for the initiated insider-type who prefers jazz to be a closed circle.

Hall and Metheny both have spent time with a wide array of stylists, and avoid easy pigeonholing. Thus, it is interesting that they take a more conservative, gentlemen's fireside approach, with no apparent challenges being thrown down. This is intimate jazz, with some swing, touches of waywardness and definite periods of lush chromaticism. But what makes this album special is that—unlike similar pairings of jazz guitarists of the past, who come from primarily swing and bop backgrounds—Hall and Metheny, who have been known to go anywhere, offer up a collection of casual, attractive songs (some recorded live) that feature mainly original material. Gershwin's "Summertime," Kern's "All The Things You Are," Atila Zoller's "The Birds And The Bees" and Steve Swallow's lovely "Falling Grace" are literally surrounded by a variety of improvisations and songs that long-haired Pat and nearly bald Jim share like food with each other, breaking new ground on familiar-sounding territory.

Hall's touch, more methodical, open-ended, is contrasted by Metheny's more penetrating, almost classical tone. Hall's (relatively) more conservative sense of time, and syncopation, runs in delicious contrast to Metheny's swingful, this-way-and-that darting. By way of contrast, Hall's angular lines mesh nicely with Metheny's sweet, loyal adherence to scales,

It is jazz, improvised music that draws anyone in who dares to listen. On the surface, these guys may sound like a pair of old farts, but underneath, they're a couple of sentimental, sly dogs havin' a good old time. —John Ephland

Jim Hall & Pat Metheny: Lookin' Up; All The Things You Are; The Birds And The Bees; Improvisation No. 1; Falling Grace; Ballad Z; Summertime; Farmer's Trust; Cold Spring; Improvisation No. 2; Into The Dream; Don't Forget; Improvisation No. 3; Waiting To Dance; Improvisation No. 4; Improvisation No. 5; All Across The City. (73:57)

Personnel: Jim Hall, electric guitar; Pat Metheny, electric guitar, acoustic guitars, fretless classical guitar, 42-string guitar.



Chuck Mangione

The Feeling's Back
Chesky 184

★★★★½

There is no outline of intent accompanying this attractive new CD from Chuck Mangione, who has spent the last 21 years enjoying the dividends of his 1978 one-of-a-kind hit "Feels So Good," which he has surely had to play every night since for every audience. It was a tune that became one of those signature sounds that seemed to be everywhere that year and thus lingers as one of the most powerful musical markers of the late '70s. Jazz, however soft its edge, rarely reached such a broad audience.

The intent in this 1999 CD is probably in the keyword of the title, for the matrix of this music is essentially "Feels So Good." It employs all the basic ingredients of that defining Mangione piece, and assembles them with the skill of a seasoned pro, then lays them over a soft Brazilian shuffle.

Mangione is precisely the musician you would want and expect here, a gentle melodist who rarely breaks ranks with the letter of the material. But the melodies he picks are eminently approachable and adhere easily in the memory. He invests them with such a consistently calm tranquility and ease, and makes the music hard to resist. His horn acquires a bit of an edge toward the end of "Manha De Carnaval," but only in relation to the overall lulling musical context.

It will be easy, I suspect, for many writers to write all this off as bloodless pop-jazz walking an emotional range as narrow as a tightrope. But the fact remains that Mangione possesses a fine and

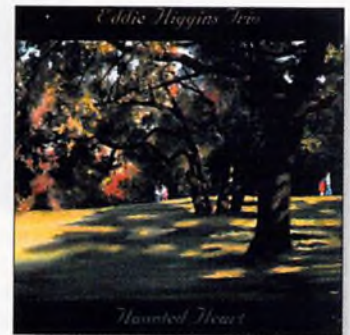
KEY	Excellent	★★★★★
	Very Good	★★★★
	Good	★★★
	Fair	★★
	Poor	★

vaporous sound that is his pretty much alone, and he deploys it on a flock of tunes (four of them his own) that lend themselves to his clear-eyed lyricism and cover ground from pleasantly simple ("Mountain Flight") to catchy ("Maracangalha"). There is fine acoustic guitar work by Jay Azzolina, and Sarah Carter's cello moves quietly in and out of several pieces, leaving a vapor trail of melancholy in its wake. Only the occasional vocal accompaniment seems a bit intrusive.

It may not be the most ambitious of ventures, but it produces a generally lovely hour of music with a soft pop sensibility in which there's not a lot to dislike. —John McDonough

The Feeling's Back: Mountain Flight; Consuelo's Love Theme; Leonardo's Lady; Fotografia; Quase; Aldovio; Once Upon A Love Time; Manha De Carnaval; Maracangalha; Le Vie en Rose. (56:59)

Personnel: Chuck Mangione, flugelhorn; Sarah Carter, cello; Gerry Niewood, flute; Cliff Norman, piano, keyboards; Jay Azzolina, guitar; David Finck (1), Kip Reid (3, 7), bass; Paulo Braga, drums; Cafe, percussion; Maucha Adnet, Jackie Presti, Annette Sanders, vocals.



Eddie Higgins

Haunted Heart
Sunnyside 1080

★★★

Regionalism has defined the persona of many jazz talents, and like Horace Tapscott and Los Angeles, or Dave McKenna and New England, Eddie Higgins has long been associated with Chicago. Why not? It's there he made his mark during the '50s and '60s, bringing grace to sideman duties for such names as Coleman Hawkins and Freddie Hubbard, and it's there he was a scene stalwart for two decades, leading the stage trio at the London House for over half that time.

Pushing 70, the naturally glib pianist now splits his time between Cape Cod and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., playing local clubs in both locales. If you wandered into a remote bistro and heard someone with Higgins' casual authority at the keys, it would be a lucky evening indeed. His well-gauged moves promote a consolidation of ideas that gives his standards a bit of extra savoir-faire. Originality may not be his forte—idiosyncrasies are all but

erased in the pianist's parlance—but the refinement he banks on is always going to be a marketable jazz element.

The reissue boom hasn't particularly found a spot for Higgins' earlier VeeJay and Spinnster work, so Sunnyside single-handedly provides the pianist with the bulk of his current visibility. *Haunted Heart* is his fourth disc for the label: a minor gem from a minor talent that impresses with its amiable nonchalance.

Going with the flow at each new juncture, Higgins effects a blend of introspection and might—he's an astute middle man if there ever was one. Through a program of very obvious pieces, Higgins caters to the inherent lyricism of the tunes. He cuddles melody, tickling it under the chin when he feels it a bit too somber. "My Funny Valentine," a brave way to open a record in 1999 given the song's ubiquity, is neither a forlorn mood piece nor quick-paced romp. But through nuance—thank a very inspired rhythm section of Ben Riley and Ray Drummond who simply glisten throughout the record—it becomes a medium-tempo essay that insinuates itself into both of those categories.

Haunted Heart is no big record; it'll unquestionably slip under the radar of most jazz fans. But I bet most of those fans could find a use for such a date. Doing the best with the tools at hand, an average improviser comes up with a session that offers a bit more than the usual juice. If Higgins becomes best known for his Sunnyside era, he'll have real reason to be proud. —Jim Macnie

Haunted Heart: My Funny Valentine; Haunted Heart; Stolen Moments/Israel/Lush Life; How My Heart Sings; Someone To Watch Over Me; I Should Care; Lover Come Back To Me; Isn't It Romantic. (50:16)

Personnel: Eddie Higgins, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Ben Riley, drums.



**Cecil Taylor
Elvin Jones
Dewey Redman**

Momentum Space
Verve 314 559 944

★★★★½

A big surprise—who would have expected this combination? At first glance, it's actually a bit dubious, a producer's high concept bringing together folks from too different spheres (Taylor and Jones, arguably more distant in recent years) and a player who's been very uneven of late (Redman). Redman and

Jones worked together in the late '60s, making two records with Ornette Coleman—*Love Cry* and *New York Is Now*—but other than that the combinations are a first.

Even better surprise, then, that *Momentum Space* is such a pleasure to hear. In fact, it's an extremely approachable program, perfectly designed to win over listeners who have been scared off by Taylor's demonic reputation. The lineup has an obvious model in Cecil's '60s unit with drummer Sunny Murray and alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, but where Lyons dove headlong into the fray, Redman tends to soar over his partners, surfing the tremendous forward drive (yes, the title *does* ring true), laying

skewed blues phrases like he's painting lines on a freeway or singing into the horn in his patented way. The trio, which convenes on two tracks ("Nine" and the 20-minute "Is"), is remarkably focused—there's absolutely no all-star slacking going on, just top-level organic improvising.

The program is mixed. Breaking the record into solos and different groupings allows it to avoid being Cecil's date—he's such a strong presence with such a unique approach that he can easily overwhelm and dominate a situation. Jones and Redman swing openly and quite joyously on "Spoonin'," Jones gives a lesson we could all stand to listen to repeatedly on his solo spot "Bekci," and Redman—whose great tone

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THE HOT BOX

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephraim
JIM HALL & PAT METHENY <i>Jim Hall & Pat Metheny</i>		★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2
CHUCK MANGIONE <i>The Feeling's Back</i>		★★★★1/2	★	★1/2	★★1/2
EDDIE HIGGINS TRIO <i>Haunted Heart</i>		★★★	★★	★★★	★★★
DEWEY REDMAN/CECIL TAYLOR/ELVIN JONES <i>Momentum Space</i>		★★★★	★★★★1/2	★★★	★★★★1/2

CRITICS' COMMENTS

JIM HALL & PAT METHENY, *Jim Hall & Pat Metheny*

A quiet, cozy, elegant, sophisticated and unmediated conversation between two virtuosos with nothing to prove, except that the best jazz crosses generational boundaries easily. Both Metheny and Hall are adept at such bridge-building and find an easy and warm rapport. —JMD

Terrific idea and a consuming record. Mixing tunes and improvisations, with Metheny using a wide range of colors on different instruments and Hall conjuring a wide range of hues on one, it's a nonstop idea factory. Two people who've been waiting a long time to talk to one another and stay up all night shooting the shit. —JC

If anyone can forego a rhythm section, it's these two lyrical experts. But this duet contains moments so dedicated to discretion that intermittent lulls crop up in the program. Luckily, fantasias such as "Into The Dream" enhance the dynamics, and the masterful to 'n' fro of the untitled improvs creates a near poetic counterpoint. —JM

CHUCK MANGIONE, *The Feeling's Back*

Oh no, the feeling's back! Slick pop pabulum for those who like it totally predigested. Wait five years and hear it in elevators everywhere. —JC

Thirty years ago I caught my parents doing the deed to Herb Alpert's "The Lonely Bull," and was scared silly. The other night I took a hot bath while listening to this disc and was bored stiff. The bottom line is simple: Nothing really happens. —JM

Mangione appears to be aging gracefully. The easy chair is a lilting samba, with Mangione playing it soft and cool. The added cast makes a difference, with charts that avoid the cliché, and with songs that, by and large, are rare. Nonetheless, the pleasant, somewhat tepid playing tends to go in circles. —JE

EDDIE HIGGINS TRIO, *Haunted Heart*

An intimate and unceremonious trio recital of mostly standards, easily taken for granted, perhaps, for its contented sense of domesticated familiarity. But nonetheless, one of high craftsmanship and taste that draws its strength from the accomplished pedigree of the repertoire, which Higgins treats with respect. —JMD

Nothing interesting happening here; lackluster lounge piano drowning in clichés, including Higgins quoting "Rhapsody In Blue," or should I say the United Airlines theme? —JC

In the September of his years, Higgins' repertoire remains the same. There's that familiar touch, and a certain coyness seems to have crept in. Both Drummond and Riley play as if they've known Higgins for years, and the swingful pairing of Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments" with John Carisi's "Israel" seemed inevitable. Higgins' improv skills may be limited, but he still makes me feel like a privileged member at the bar. —JE

DEWEY REDMAN/CECIL TAYLOR/ELVIN JONES, *Momentum Space*

Those who have failed to find rewards in free-jazz probably won't find much in this all-star plunge into the '60s avant-garde. The fundamental antagonism of atonalism will remain as intractable as ever to many ears. There is, nevertheless, something ironic in seeing the New Thing on display in its own Preservation Hall. Time has put this music into context and perspective and eased its iconoclasm. The establishment, if there is one now, need not feel assaulted or fear this music might take over the world. What is left is a performance of some considerable meat and muscle, not to mention some of the most well-crafted and focused Cecil Taylor in years. —JMD

Bumpy rides can produce giddy animation, but the interplay of this superstar session offers just as much banality as it does depth. Each player works a somewhat exclusive, decidedly idiosyncratic style, and the action is marked by both coherence and collision. —JM

A bold move for Jones to line up with Redman and Taylor, given his post-Trane work. And yet, the drummer plays like he always does. And it fits marvelously. Redman is the most malleable, swinging, breaking off, playing lyrical when the situation calls for it. The biggest surprise (outside of the project itself) is Taylor's lyricism, use of space and, yes, a very discernible pulse; qualities I haven't heard linked with the pianist since his early years as a rabble-rouser. —JE

and fire make calling this a triumphant return seem reasonable—settles on a neat, growling harmonic device in his wee 50-second solo "Dew," which puts a period on the end of the disc. The sequence emphasizes contrast and productive comparison; following the buoyant "Spoonin'," Taylor's solo "Life As" begins with explicitly tonal harmonies, betraying his often unremarked-upon tender side. The Taylor/Jones duo ("It") displays no incompatibility at all; like Cecil's celebrated duet (recently restaged in London) with Max Roach, the pianist's acute and highly personal rhythmic sense makes him an ideal partner for a master drummer, even one who loves triplets like Jones does. And Jones is indeed masterly here—completely relaxed, at home, but also listening and adjusting, not just imposing himself.

Momentum Space has a seriousness and lack of gimmick that one finds too seldom lately. It's a shame that Verve seems to be hiding it, almost as if it was something of which they should be ashamed or embarrassed. They shouldn't. —John Corbett

Momentum Space: Nine; Bekei; Spoonin'; Life As; It; Is; Dew. (60:00)
Personnel: Cecil Taylor, piano; Elvin Jones, drums; Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone.



John Pizzarelli

Meets The Beatles

RCA Victor 61432

★★★★

John & Bucky Pizzarelli

Contrasts

Arbors 19209

★★★★½

Harry Allen

Meets The John Pizzarelli Trio

RCA Victor 37397

★★★

Jazzing the Beatles is nothing new. In the '60s, cut-out bins were full of attempts to do for the Lennon-McCartney songbook what jazz musicians had always done for the American Popular Song, but few were done

with the taste and humor—as well as instrumental chops—that guitarist John Pizzarelli and arranger Don Sebesky bring to *Meets The Beatles*. “Can’t Buy Me Love” with Ken Peplowski’s hot clarinet solo and “I’ve Just Seen A Face” are bouncy, uptempo. Pizzarelli pushes these numbers with strummed comping behind his vocal and then takes a fleet and fluid solo based on single-note runs. “Get Back” is a boogaloo, and “When I’m 64” is a variety show vaudeville, both with a little lyrical license in the coda. “Here Comes the Sun” and “For No One” are lush, string-laden ballads with their sax breaks blown by Harry Allen. Pizzarelli’s poignant reading of “You’ve Got To Hide Your Love Away” has only his guitar for accompaniment. The trio makes “Eleanor Rigby” into a lightly swinging instrumental with a walking bass, Pizzarelli and pianist Ray Kennedy trading licks. Only “Oh Darling” actually sounds like something from Tin Pan Alley played by a jazz band. These are jazzy, pop confections reminiscent of wide ties and bell-bottom suits, paisley and polka dots, fun, not profound.

To the A list of guitar duos like Lang/Johnson, Kress/Barnes and Ellis/Pass add Pizzarelli/Pizzarelli. The father/son combo zips through “Three Little Words,” trading off choruses the way old couples finish each other’s sentences. And on “The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea” and “Two Funky People,” they don’t just trade choruses but also techniques from single-string to chordal solos and back. But it’s not all pyrotechnics. This is mostly Bucky’s session, with solo performances of “The Very Thought Of You,” “The Bad And The Beautiful” and “My

Romance” that show him to be adept at milking a ballad for all its emotional worth, letting each single note shimmer into silence before picking the next.

Saxophonist Harry Allen could be a cousin of the Pizzarellis. He shares that family’s love of the American Popular Song and respect for the concept of jazz-as-entertainment. His playing is based on the classic models of Lester Young and Stan Getz, and there are no surprises in his choice of material. “Pennies From Heaven” and “I Want To Be Happy” bounce along. “Dear Old Stockholm” is wistful, as if nostalgic for his sojourn in the Swedish capital; maybe he was there in “Early Autumn.” The sole original is “When Harry Met Martin,” a sax solo over a power-walking bass. Pizzarelli’s liner notes refer to “the feel of a jam session,” but that’s not how it sounds. Not that it sounds overly rehearsed; more like well-acquainted. —Dave Holland

Meets The Beatles: Can’t Buy Me Love; I’ve Just Seen A Face; Here Comes The Sun; Things We Said Today; When I’m 64; Oh Darling; Get Back; The Long And Winding Road; For No One. (46:04)

Personnel: John Pizzarelli, guitar and vocals; Martin Pizzarelli, bass; Ray Kennedy, piano; Harry Allen, tenor sax (3, 12); Ken Peplowski, clarinet (1,8); Don Sebesky, accordion (8); Andy Fusco, alto sax (10); Barry Ries, trumpet (9); Scott Robinson, contra bass sax (10).

Contrasts: Three Little Words; Coquette; Jersey Bounce; The Bad And The Beautiful; The Minute Samba; Contrasts; Test Pilot; I Hadn’t Anyone Till You/The Very Thought Of You; The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea; Two Funky People; Stage Fright; Phantasmagoria; My Romance; Emily; Guess I’ll Go Back Home This Summer; For Whom The Bell Tolls. (63:20)

Personnel: Bucky and John Pizzarelli, acoustic and 7-string electric guitars.

Harry Allen Meets The John Pizzarelli Trio: Pennies From Heaven; Dear Old Stockholm; P-Town/You’re Driving Me Crazy; Early Autumn; I Want To Be Happy; These Foolish Things; Blue Lou; Body And Soul; Sunday; Dot’s Cheesecake; When Harry Met Martin; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; Limehouse Blues.

Personnel: Harry Allen, tenor saxophone; John Pizzarelli, guitar; Ray Kennedy, piano; Martin Pizzarelli, bass.



Jason Moran

Soundtrack To Human Motion
Blue Note 97431

★★★★

Pianist Jason Moran’s debut is an encouraging indication that inventive compositions and collective dialogue are shaping a new jazz mainstream.

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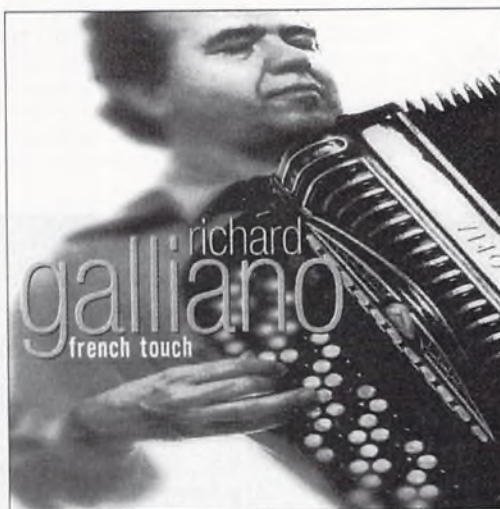
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Last year, Moran's dynamic performance became a crucial part of saxophonist Greg Osby's *Banned In New York*. Osby returns the favor and is prominent on this disc as a player and producer. But Moran also absorbed lessons from some of his own instrument's visionaries. He studied with Andrew Hill and Muhal Richard Abrams and shares their belief in the importance of solid writing—Moran penned all but one of the tunes on this disc. According to the liner notes, his "Retrograde" is a backwards version of Hill's "Smokestack," but a back-to-back playing reveals no obvious similarities. Another of Moran's teachers, the late Jaki Byard, would have been gratified to hear his student's surprising tempo and stylistic shifts on "Snake Dance."

The group on *Soundtrack To Human Motion* creates an atmosphere where subtle interplay and an awareness of silence are emphasized. Their finesse and camaraderie are striking. On "Aquanaut" drummer Eric Harlan and vibraphonist Stefon Harris work together for a unique percussive vibe that's melodic and understated. Lonnie Plaxico's arco basslines lend a quietly fervent introduction to a probing discourse between Moran and Osby, who occasionally recall Hill and Eric Dolphy. Moran himself sounds like he's constantly testing and encouraging his teammates by tossing off a stream of surprising ideas, such as the way his few sparse notes respond to his chordal cluster on "Kinesics." His technique is prodigious without show-off clichés; Moran seamlessly blends Ravel's "Le Tombeau De Couperin" into his own "States Of Art."

While Moran and Osby have a winning exchange, it will be interesting to hear the pianist as the only melodic lead instrument in a smaller group or solo. Moran sounds more than ready for that challenge. —Aaron Cohen

Soundtrack To Human Motion: Gangsterism On Canvas; Snake Stance; Le Tombeau De Couperin/States of Art: Still Moving; JAMO Meets SAMO; Kinesics; Aquanaut; Retrograde; Release From Suffering; Root Progression. (52:47)
Personnel: Jason Moran, piano; Eric Harlan, drums; Stefon Harris, vibraphone; Greg Osby, saxophone; Lonnie Plaxico, bass.



Rhythm & Brass

More Money Jungle ... Ellington Explorations

Koch 3-6990

The concept seems self-explanatory, but I'll explain it just the same: They're a brass band with two trumpeters, a trombonist, a french hornist who doubles on piano and a drummer/percussionist. The bass lines are played on tuba. Their mission on this CD, as its subtitle would tell us, is exploring the music of Duke Ellington. They deliver on that mission for about half the duration of the disc. Another portion might be dubbed Your Basic Ellington Repertory.

They put their best foot forward. The first five tracks are the strongest, and they're the most exploratory of the bunch. "More Money Jungle" is said to be inspired by Duke's tune as well as Kool and the Gang's "Jungle Boogie." The horns belt out fat, dissonant chords over a funkified groove, and trumpet soloist Rex Richardson covers some harmonic ground that would have started riots in Duke's day. "Money

Jungle" itself is an exciting, ambitious arrangement with a loose, devil-may-care attitude. Tubist Charles Villarrubia lays down a foundation of boisterous octave-spanning trills, and behind the solos, the other horns play echoing spills that cast a psychedelic edge. "Fleurette Africaine (African Flower)" is done as a mood piece, with pianist Alex Shuhan playing the melody sparsely over dark pedal tones and mysterious percussion effects.

After "Amad," the scenery suddenly shifts. Recorded live at the Eastman School of Music, tracks 6-9 draw from more old-timey material like "Cotton Club Stomp" and "Concerto For Cootie." The band plays these songs fine. They're tight and in tune. They sound like they've gone to college and done their homework. Yet for some reason, I think someone removed that interesting CD I was listening to and popped in the Canadian Brass.

Toward the end, they get back down to business with some fairly hip arrangements of "Caravan" and "Blue Pepper—Far East Of The Blues." Alas, there's also some spoken-word stuff and do-it-yourself deejaying that rankles me for reasons I won't even get into. Suffice it to say that I'd like to hear more of those cool arrangements, please. —John Janowiak

More Money Jungle ... Ellington Explorations: More Money Jungle; Money Jungle; Fleurette Africaine (African Flower); A Little Max (Parfait); Amad; Cotton Club Stomp; Concerto For Cootie; Jungle Nights In Harlem; East St. Louis Toodle-oo; Ellington Indigos; Mood Indigo; Caravan; Blue Pepper—Far East Of The Blues; Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love. (63:36)
Personnel: Wiff Rudd, trumpets, flugelhorn; Rex Richardson, trumpets, flugelhorn; Alex Shuhan, horn, piano; Tom Brantley, trombone; Charles Villarrubia, tuba; David Gluck, drums, percussion, mallets; Kurt Elling, vocal (10).



Orange Then Blue

Hold The Elevator

GM Recordings 3040

Against all odds, the experimental collective called Orange Then Blue has survived for 15 years to become a postmodern underground big band institution. Only two original members remain from the band that was started in Boston in 1984—reed player Matt Darriau and drummer George Schuller. But, through all the personnel changes, the defiant, erudite, unpredictable personality of OTB has been sustained.

Hold The Elevator is their sixth album on Gunther Schuller's GM label. The music here,

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recorded at German and Dutch festivals and also at Fez and the Knitting Factory in New York, is now three to five years old. As fast as these players move, they are already well beyond these points recorded in '94 and '95. But OTB in person is a visceral/intellectual experience worth preserving, even if the undistinguished sonic quality of these live recordings dulls the music's edges.

The paradox and fascination of OTB is how players so inclined to individual insurrection can fit themselves into big band charts at all. But OTB arrangements (contributed here by five different band members) feel as structurally liberated as the solos they provoke by Chris Speed, Andrew D'Angelo, Cuong Vu and Andy Laster. OTB pays tribute to the big band tradition even as they mock and torture and twist it. Time-honored elements—precise section work, textural variety, the sheer amplitude with which a big band can roar—are reimagined as startling new formal devices. Backgrounds are alive with complex figures. Counterlines and cross rhythms collide head-on.

OTB's tone is always caught between dry wit and a sincere engagement with the material at hand. The strongest voices here are Speed and D'Angelo, austere and rigorous and sometimes forbidding reed players who sound like no one else. But the total *gestalt* of this band transcends individuals. OTB makes you laugh out loud as you run for cover. —Thomas Conrad

Hold The Elevator: Alino Oro; Smada; Rufus 7; Peregrinations; RE.Scatter; Nem Um Talvez; Bloodcount; Stentor; Sich Reped. (73:29)

Personnel: Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Andrew D'Angelo, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Peck Allmond, soprano saxophone, trumpet, E♭ alto horn; Cuong Vu, Dave Ballou, trumpets; Tom Varner, french horn; Jim Leff, trombone; Andy Laster (except 4, 6), alto and baritone saxophones, flute; Jose Davila (except 4, 6), Marcus Rojas (4, 6), tuba; Matt Darriau (3, 4, 6), alto and soprano saxophones, clarinet, flute; Rufus Cappadocia (3), cello; Seido Salistoski (1, 3), dumbek, percussion; Jamie Saft (except 4, 6), piano, accordion; Tim Ray (4, 6), piano; Reid Anderson (except 4, 6), Ben Street (4, 6), bass; George Schuller, drums, percussion, tiny bells.



Gianluigi Trovesi

Around Small Fairy Tales

Soul Note 121341

★★★★½

Virtually unknown in the United States and only slightly less obscure outside of his native Italy, reedman Gianluigi Trovesi ranks as one of the most compelling musi-

cian/composer/bandleaders in contemporary jazz. Earlier this decade he and his octet recorded two masterpieces, *From Go To G* and *Les Hommes Armés*, both on Soul Note. On these discs, Trovesi succeeded in achieving a rare freshness of voice with his surprise-around-every-corner music informed by European classical and Italian folk, spiced by Balkan and Caribbean rhythms and fueled by the African-American jazz tradition. In addition to delivering primo compositions, Trovesi and company also displayed a whimsy that made for a jubilant listening experience.

On his latest offering, Trovesi makes his return sans octet (except for drummer Vittorio Marinoni). He also downplays the romp. Instead

of a spree across genres, the maestro settles into a gorgeous Third Stream affair, Italian-style, accompanied by his hometown Nembro Chamber Orchestra Enea Salmeggia. Unlike so many classical-meets-jazz albums characterized by what sounds to be tacked-on orchestration, *Around Small Fairy Tales* triumphs thanks to the organic nature of the meld.

It helps that Trovesi comes from a classical background and has been striving to discover common ground between jazz and his Mediterranean music roots throughout his career. On the opening track, "Sia Maledetta L'Acqua" (literally "Water Be Sweared"), he adapts a lyrical 16th century folk tune by leading on clarinet, then engaging the orchestra to

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take the plunge into the jazz realm with call-and-response exchanges. He again trades fours with the strings and wind instruments on the beautiful waltz "C'era Una Strega, C'era Una Fata," where this time the elegant conversation turns a tad gritty as Trovesi soars on clarinet and the strings play into an edgy frenzy.

In addition, Trovesi effortlessly integrates swing into the mix. On the pastoral ballad "La Pazzia," a piece written by conductor and arranger Bruno Tommaso, the tune transforms from a classical melody into a slow jazz dance when the rhythm section kicks in during trumpeter Emilio Soana's solo. The jazziest tune of the collection is Trovesi's "Verano," a sprightly piece spotlighting the leader on alto saxophone and vibes player Andrea Dulbecco. The orchestra cooks on the lush but upbeat "Dance For A King," Trovesi's tribute to Eric Dolphy (which the octet previously recorded), and it expertly negotiates all the stylistic twists and turns of the seven-movement "Ambulat Hic Armatus Homo," also introduced on *Les Hommes Armés*.

A superb improviser whose deep-souled clarinet tones resonate throughout, Trovesi deserves fuller recognition. The proof of his genius is in the music, which radiates on *Around Small Fairy Tales*. —Dan Ouellette

Around Small Fairy Tales: Sia Maledetta L'Acqua; Le Maschere; Pierrot; Dance For A King; La Pazzia; C'era Una Strega; C'era Una Fata; Verano; Illimani; Ambulat Hic Armatus Homo. (58:38)

Personnel: Gianluigi Trovesi, clarinets, alto sax; Ombretta Maffei, flute; Giuseppina Gerosa, oboe; Emilio Soana, trumpet; Stefano Montanari, Stefania Trovesi, Cesare Zanetti, Anita Anghelova, Ettore Begnis, Agata Borgato, Alessia De Filippo, Marina Valota, violins; Graziano Spinnato, Flavio Ghilardi, violas; Flavio Bombardieri, Giovanna Cividini, cellos; Elena Corni, harp; Andrea Dulbecco, vibes; Roberto Bonati, Riccardo Crotti, bass; Marco Esposito, electric bass; Vittorio Marinoni, drums; Stefano Bertoli, percussion; Bruno Tommaso, conductor.



Branford Marsalis Quartet

Requiem
Columbia 69655

★★★★

Don Braden

The Fire Within
RCA Victor 63297

★★★★

These discs are joined in spirit by the late Kenny Kirkland, who appears on most of *Requiem* and who died a week before he was to record on *The Fire Within*. There are other common links, such as Jeff "Tain" Watts (he's on all of *Requiem*, part of *Fire*) and the fact that Marsalis and Braden are hard-blow-

ing jazz saxophonists who have moonlighted on the TV circuit (Braden lately as musical director of *Cosby*, and Marsalis, well, we all know about him). Both discs include songs called "Doctone," inspired by Kirkland and carrying his nickname, though they're otherwise unrelated.

Aside from these incidental hooks, the music itself is divergent, yet equally satisfying on different levels. Marsalis explores darker, more adventuresome and less mainstream ideas, as Braden treads a brighter, more straight-ahead path. Marsalis favors the soprano on more than half his songs, while Braden blows tenor all the way through.

Another difference is their approaches to time. Braden's arrangements dish out interesting flourishes and abrupt shifts of gear, but for the most part his various sidemen paint a tight, snappy, straightforward backdrop. The Marsalis rhythm section, meanwhile, gets footloose and fancy-free, often forsaking a discernible pulse altogether. This is most apparent on the Keith Jarrett-inspired "Lykief." After Marsalis states a cheerful, almost classical-sounding theme on soprano, things take a turn for the chaotic as the band cascades behind him with an increasingly plastic sense of time. Throughout, there's a sense of playfulness and discovery.

Tone-wise, each saxophonist sounds in top form, and well-recorded at that. Braden solos with amazing consistency. No matter what the register or velocity, and whether he's ending a phrase or beginning another, his bold, clear sound always shines through. In his liner notes, he praises Kirkland's improvisational flow, and it happens to be a trait he shares. Whether blowing fiery, as titles like "Incendiary" and "The Boiling Point" suggest, or laying back on a walking tempo like "Where There's Smoke," he exudes a confident, accessible stream of ideas.

Marsalis, the somewhat elder lion, comes across as the more introspective soloist. He tends to leave more space among his phrases and takes things more outside. He adds a three-dimensional quality to his sound at times by stepping back from the mic for a "room" effect. In his tenor solo on "Doctone," there are spots where he comes across as a well-versed student of early '60s Coltrane. But he takes his own chances, too, and conducts nifty experiments with sound. I especially like his sustained soprano cry at the beginning of Paul Motian's "Trieste." It conveys lots of emotion with a single, well-expressed idea. Also steeped with emotion is "A Thousand Autumns," a ballad Marsalis penned in honor of Wayne Shorter and initially recorded on *The Dark Keys*. His solo, as well as the melody, deliver surprising and gripping note choices.

As for Kirkland, his piano solo on "A Thousand Autumns" is as poignant a farewell as any fan could ask for. —John Janowiak

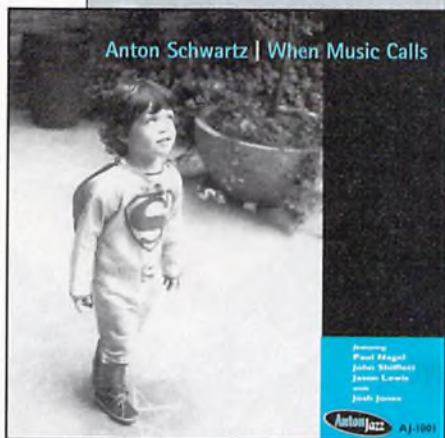
Requiem: Doctone; Trieste; A Thousand Autumns; Lykief; Bullworth; Elysium; Cassandra; 16th St. Baptist Church. (69:40)

Personnel: Branford Marsalis, saxophones; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Eric Revis, bass.

The Fire Within: Incendiary; All Or Nothing At All; Solar; The Boiling Point; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Thermo; Where There's Smoke; The Fire Within; Fried Bananas; Doctone. (63:33)

Personnel: Don Braden, tenor sax, with (on tracks 1, 4, 5, 7, 8): Darrell Grant, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; Cecil Brooks III, drums; (tracks 2, 10): Julian Joseph, piano; Orlando LaFleming, bass; Mark Mondesir, drums; (tracks 3, 6, 9): Christian McBride, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

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JAZZ

Mr. Berne's Neighborhood

by Ted Panken

Between 1979 and 1981, saxophonist/composer **Tim Berne** released four intriguing recordings on Empire, his imprint, featuring artists like Olu Dara, John Carter and Paul Motian. He's taken care of his own business ever since, emerging as a key figure in creative music, a do-it-yourself rugged individualist.

Berne recently reissued his early oeuvre on *The Empire Box*, a five-CD set on Screwgun, his vehicle for documenting current output and projects by distinguished cohorts. From the packaging—pointed jokes, metaphoric impossible-to-cook recipes and graphics à la Polke and Basquiat (courtesy of sister Betsy Berne)—to the musical content, he's fully the auteur. (Disks are available from ScrewgunRecords, 104 St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217; www.screwgunrecords.com.)

Julius Hemphill: *Blue Boyz* (Screwgun 70008; 43:10/40:04) ★★★★★½ In 1977 Berne helped produce Hemphill's *Blue Boyz*, long out of print, issued on Mbari, Hemphill's signature label. It's a suite for solo and overdubbed soprano and alto saxophones and flute, showcasing Hemphill's vocalized tone, alternately sere and pungent. Blending abstract and elemental notions, Hemphill created memorable melodies from extended structures that always left room for improvisational elaboration. A singular landmark of the '70s.

Bloodcount: *Saturation Point* (Screwgun 70004; 52:47) ★★★★★; *Unwound* (Screwgun 70001; 69:50/62:44/63:27) ★★★★★½ Influenced by mid-'70s Hemphill, Sam Rivers and Oliver Lake, Berne is interested in the illusion of a tabula rasa, using extended techniques and elaborate textural and rhythmic episodes to springboard free improvisation. The flow, as Hemphill once put it, circles from vigor to reflection to vigor. While in earlier bands Berne used trumpet, guitar, cello or violin as counter-voices, he employs quick-witted tenorist/clarinetist Chris Speed to fill that role in *Bloodcount*, moving the sonic terrain closer to Hemphillian saxophonecentrism. That setting makes it tough to sustain variety, but bass giant Michael Formanek and interactive drummer Jim Black are co-equal information generators; the programs on these live sets are dense, intense, fascinating and a-brim with virtuoso playing. Berne's a chance-taker, and trusts his bandmates to do the same, but he doesn't make it easy; melody isn't his strong suit, and when inspiration lapses, the music backslides along predictable routes. Invention is never dormant for long; the band unflinchingly recoups, finds new moods to articulate, locutions you haven't thought of.

Michael Formanek: *Am I Bothering You?* (Screwgun 70006; 49:43) ★★★★★½; **Tim Berne, Michael Formanek: *Ornery People* (Little Brother 013; 61:36) ★★★★★ Formanek's four '90s releases on enja captured a free-spirited composer/bassist who grounds the wide-open forms with a swinging foundation. On the vigorous 1997 solo recital *Am I Bothering You?* he compresses his conception, finding insinuating melodies and hypnotic timbres, developing them thematically, always with amiable gusto and impeccable technique. Formanek's irrepressible melodicism is a felicitous match for Berne. Throughout the commanding *Ornery People*—comprising two compositions by Formanek, three by Berne and one improv—they're bursting with ideas, in complete sync, landing inevitably in the same place. Inspired.**

party on *Big Satan*, recorded in France (1996); he and Berne offer three compositions each. Where Gress in *Paraphrase* is the supreme team-player, tossing off suggestions, implying possibilities, soloing organically from the flow, Ducret thrusts his voice to the fore, throwing down spiky counter-lines and timbral postulations that dramatically shape the contours.

Marc Ducret: *L'Ombra Di Verdi* (Screwgun 700010; 64:35) ★★★ Ducret plays with his ebullient working trio (Bruno Chevillon, bass; Eric Echampard, drums) in Paris in 1998. The tunes incorporate free improvising, electric jazz, post-Hendrix blues—and not a little of Berne's episodic *mise en scène*. Lacking Berne and Rainey as foils, Ducret tumbles into certain guitaristic



Tim Berne: rugged individualist

Paraphrase: *Visitation Rites* (Screwgun 70002; 73:57) ★★★★★; *Big Satan* (Winter & Winter 910-005; 77:29) ★★★★★ Berne goes for the tabula rasa concept; the collective trio *Paraphrase* (bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey) intuitively imposes form on wide-open spaces. There isn't a false note on *Visitation Rites*, a 1996 concert. The saxophonist, unleashed, plays with tremendous drive and imagination. Rainey hasn't met the rhythm from which he can't extract melodic protein; he matches wits with Berne, exchanging ideas that build with inevitable logic, conjuring patterns from thin air.

Electric guitarist Marc Ducret is the third

noise-distortion cliché-pits; the grooves are clunky and bashing. But whatever the meter, tempo or vocabulary, Ducret improvises compositionally, with lucidity.

Django Bates: *Quiet Nights* (Screwgun 70007; 44:54) ★★★★★ The English composer/keyboardist/peck hornist (he played with Berne on 1994's *Nice View*) imprints his stamp on six rearranged jazz and songbook chestnuts and two original compositions. Bates' working band *Human Chain* is on top of the change-the-ambience-on-a-dime arrangements that never descend into eccentricity, ever congruent with the song's message.

BEYOND

Men Without Hats

by John Ephland

Not every picker of note has been known to wear a cowboy hat. This latest batch of pop notables celebrates trailblazers who've shared more than a touch of disregard for convention, all in the service of music.

Johnny Cash: *The Man In Black: His Greatest Hits* (Columbia/Legacy 65752; 41:16/46:55) ★★★★★ He's only had about two rhythms and three chords, but Johnny Cash has made it all count. Whether singing or talking, his rich and relatively flat baritone has been all about stories, seemingly autobiographical, thoroughly convincing and full of feeling. Cash has always sung/talked his lyrics clear, making up for limited melodic invention and vocal range. But when the songs are American classics like "Ring Of Fire," "I Walk The Line," "If I Were A Carpenter" (with June Carter Cash), "Girl From The North Country" (with Bob Dylan), "The Man In Black" and "Folsom Prison Blues," it doesn't matter. The sounds of freight trains and dusty roads mingle with losers and people of faith. Simple, direct, powerful. Points off for surprisingly poor annotation and packaging; a slight to a great artist.

Willie Nelson: *The Very Best Of* (Legacy 65825; 51:33/51:14) ★★★ The genteel Nelson has had a penchant for overreaching, stylewise, sounding without a focus. Still, it cannot be denied that he possesses one of the truly distinctive and evocative voices in American popular song. The standards here (culled from his fine early '80s *Stardust* sessions) are convincing, as are the anthems he made via movies ("My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys"), in collaboration ("Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys," with Waylon Jennings) and as a guy all alone, down on his luck ("Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain"). Like the Cash set, this one loses points for poor packaging.

Houndog: *Houndog* (Legacy 65861; 39:28) ★★★★★½; Latin Playboys: *Dose* (Atlantic 83173; 34:55) ★★★★★½ The heart and soul of historic rock & roll/r&b past and future may reside with Houndog. The hearty vocals, shuffle beats and searching attitude are fleshed out with funky violin, raunchy electric guitar and garbage-can drums. Mike Halby (Canned Heat, John Mayall) and David Hidalgo (Los Lobos, Latin Playboys, Lucky Sevens) combine for an exhilarating assortment that sounds like a full band, but is just a duo! Like Houndog, Latin Playboys has ties to Los Lobos (Hidalgo and Louie Perez with Tchad Blake and Mitchell Froom). And like Houndog, Latin Playboys regales in provocative rhythms and recording techniques ("Tormenta Blvd" is recorded on basically one channel, "Minor Blues" is 37 seconds of Hispanic organ with fuzz bass); rock & roll



Johnny Cash: all about stories

turned inside-out. Junkyard sonics meet genius in this followup to their first on Slash.

Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions (Grateful Dead 4064; 49:03) ★★★ For Deadheads who want some real history, this live mono set from 1964 includes Jerry Garcia on guitar, banjo and kazoo; Bob Weir, guitar, kazoo, jug and more; Pigpen on harmonica (all three sing), along with three others. Nothing like Garcia's authentic bluegrass romps with *Old and In The Way* 10 years later, this band still holds charm, fun and a solid sense of professionalism—despite the silliness—playing blues, folk and more (e.g., "Memphis," "Big Fat Woman" and "Beat It On Down The Line"). (Mail order only: 1-800-CAL-DEAD)

Stevie Ray Vaughan: *Texas Flood* (Legacy 65870; 59:06) ★★★★★; *Couldn't Stand The Weather* (65871; 54:58) ★★★★★; *Soul To Soul* (65872; 57:20) ★★★★★; *In Step* (65874; 70:10) ★★★★★ The one exception to our halless theme, blues guitarist Vaughan was remarkable as a key figure in the blues "revival" of the '80s, but more so because of his splendid technique, inspired, in part, by Jimi Hendrix, Albert King

and T-Bone Walker (not to mention jazz). Being from Texas, his mix also included elements of country swing. These first four titles, with a ton of hot bonus tracks and interviews, reflect an artist who started out firmly in the blues camp, eventually moving toward rock by the time of 1989's Grammy-winning *In Step*. Double Trouble, with drummer Chris Layton and bassist Tommy Shannon, is the band throughout (at times, augmented by various instruments). *Texas Flood*, from '83, already shows Vaughan taking the guitar well beyond the standard blues clichés. *Couldn't Stand The Weather* ('84) features a great run at Freddie King's classic "Hideaway" and a definitive reading of Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)." Speaking of Jimi, check out *Soul To Soul's* "Little Wing/Third Stone From The Sun" ('85) for a real taste of an inspired talent stretching himself beyond the blues. *In Step* documents Vaughan's triumphant return to form after drug and alcohol abuse. Despite its pop-rock departures, Double Trouble still plays hard, and the bounty of bonus live cuts at the end of the CD—including sizzling takes of "Texas Flood" and Willie Dixon's "Let Me Love You Baby"—are a joyous windfall. **DB**

RELEASES

Profoundly Blue Note

by John Ephland

Blue Note digs deep into its archives as it celebrates its 60th anniversary. Let's work our way backwards, starting with the Connoisseur Series titles.

Bobby Hutcherson: *Medina* (Blue Note 97508; 68:34) ★★★★★ With music from 1968 and '69, *Medina* may remind of vibist Hutcherson's collaborations with tenorist Joe Henderson, but it's Harold Land ably sharing the front line. Drummer Joe Chambers is still with Bobby, turning in some superb, at times raucous, drumming. Five of the 11 tracks (all originals) are bonus cuts. Check out the sound of early pianist Stanley Cowell, as he lends a sense of late-'60s urgency to the proceedings.

Lee Morgan: *Infinity* (97504; 41:22) ★★★★★ From 1965, trumpeter Morgan pushes his aggregate of alto saxophonist Jackie McLean, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Billy Higgins through three energetic, soulful hard-bop vehicles countered by an easygoing blues waltz ("Miss Nettie B.") and the set's lone ballad, McLean's lovely "Portrait Of Doll." With the other four tunes by Morgan, the trumpeter's chemistry with McLean is exceptional.

Hank Mobley: *Third Season* (97506; 38:03) ★★★★★½ Tenor saxophonist Mobley sports a septet on this date from 1967. It's a side of Mobley I didn't know existed, as he parades young guitarist Sonny Greenwich before an all-star lineup that features Morgan, Higgins and pianist Cedar Walton. This was Mobley's 21st (!) date for Blue Note, and it boasts six of his tunes, ranging from blues to bossa nova to even some gospel; and, of course, there's some signature Hank hard-bop.

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: *Africaine* (97507; 45:56) ★★★★★ It's 1959, and a (relatively) early Messengers unit with tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter and, once again, Morgan along with bassist Jymie Merritt, pianist Walter Davis Jr., and trumpeter Dizzy Reece playing congas on two cuts. *Africaine* is notable, in part, because it was the first to showcase the Morgan/Shorter front line as well as Shorter's compositions.

Sonny Clark: *Sonny's Crib* (97367; 70:00) ★★★★★½ Featuring some truly amazing blowing by trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Clark's 1957 *Sonny's Crib* holds everyone in close on a set of standards and Clark

originals (with three alternate takes). The band also includes tenorist John Coltrane, trombonist Curtis Fuller, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. For Coltrane fans, *Sonny's Crib* is a real find, documenting yet another chapter in his growth during the last years of the '50s. The music is alternately hard-driving and blues-based, with a ballad thrown in for good measure. Intimations of Coltrane's classic *Blue Train*, recorded just two weeks later.

Gil Mellé: *The Complete Blue Note Fifties Sessions* (95718; 69:23/70:23) ★★★★★ A sleeper among the Connoisseur 10" Series, this double-CD at times comes across as part small-group Lex Baxter mixed with Henry Mancini, part Jimmy Giuffre mixed with Gerry Mulligan and, alternately, Eddie Bert and Urbie Green (playing the



Chet Baker role). Accomplished tenor/baritonist Mellé mixes standards with mostly self-penned material, which swings one moment, dwells and broods the next.

George Lewis: *And His New Orleans Stompers* (21261; 62:28) ★★★★★½ Even though he was way past his prime, clarinetist Lewis was still heads above the competition in 1955. There is little in the way of innovation, but Lewis' technique once again gives way to pure expression in this program of traditional New Orleans standards.

Sidney Bechet: *Runnin' Wild* (21259; 60:50) ★★★★★½ While this band featured Bechet cornetist/compatriot/shadow Wild Bill Davison in the billing, it was the virtuoso soprano saxophonist Bechet who truly shined on these recordings from 1949 and '50. Like the Lewis recordings, this is not prime Bechet, but you'd never know it, as he and

Davison—playing their renegade trad jazz—are aided by, among others, pianist Art Hodes and bassist Walter Page.

***The Blue Note Swingtets* (95697; 64:15) ★★★★★** Wow. It's the mid '40s and a collection of sides for Blue Note that feature the bands of guitarist Tiny Grimes, tenorists John Hardee and Ike Quebec, trombonist Benny Morton and clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton. This is small-group swing, not far from Louis Jordan's jump blues. On hand to help ease the transition from postwar big-band jazz to (almost) bop in these various groups are drummer Sid Catlett, bassist Milt Hinton, trumpeter Buck Clayton and a big bite out of the Ellington band.

***The Blue Note Jazzmen* (21262; 67:17/55:39) ★★★★★** From 1943 into

'44, this double-CD set stands in marked contrast to the *Swingtets* in one major respect: The link to traditional jazz, and its polyphonic and rhythmic sensibilities, is expressed, but not without an exit sign or two. Unlike Lewis' sides a little more than 10 years later, bands led by clarinetist Edmond Hall, trumpeter Sydney de Paris and pianist James P. Johnson show musicians who were not settled but straddling.

Edmond Hall: *Profoundly Blue* (21260; 65:15) ★★★★★ What a great title to a great set of 17 tunes! Recorded in 1941 and '44 with three different bands, we hear a truly superb, innovative clarinetist sharing the mic with such stars as guitarist Charlie Christian, Meade Lux Lewis on celeste, pianist Teddy Wilson, baritonist Barney Bigard ... shall I go on? Sporting a few alternates here and there, the mood changes like the weather, but always seems to return to medium and slow blues. **DB**

BLINDFOLD TEST

JUNE 1999

Marty Ehrlich

by Howard Mandel

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.

Multireedist Marty Ehrlich is one of New York City's most valuable players. Born and bred in St. Louis, Ehrlich may be best known for collaborating with Muhal Richard Abrams, Myra Melford, John Zorn and the late John Carter. He also leads his own Dark Woods Ensemble and the Julius Hemphill Sextet, which keeps alive the music of a beloved mentor. He's an exciting soloist (on alto sax and clarinet, especially), working with groups ranging from the (John) King Kortette to Randy Sandke and Ken Peplowski's Outside In ensemble.

Ehrlich was eager to do his first Blindfold Test. "There's a notion that you can't recognize people unless you've just been listening to their records," he says. "But how can someone not recognize Kenny Wheeler? A personal sound is a major goal."

Johnny Dodds

"Wolverine Blues" (from *Jazz Classics In Digital Stereo*, BBC Records, rec. 1927) Dodds, clarinet; Jelly Roll Morton, piano; Baby Dodds, drums.

Johnny Dodds and Baby Dodds; I'm not sure who's on piano. It's a great example of how many ideas the musicians of that era could compress into a short take. The orchestration is great. From this to Art Tatum with Louie Bellson and Benny Carter to Cecil Taylor with Jimmy Lyons and Andrew Cyrille, there's a trio lineage. 5 stars.

Benny Carter

"Round Midnight" (from *New Jazz Sounds: The Urbane Sessions*, Verve, 1952) Carter, alto saxophone; Oscar Peterson, piano; Barney Kessel, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Buddy Rich, drums; chamber orchestra arranged and conducted by Joe Glover

I'm almost sure it's Benny Carter playing "Round Midnight," maybe his chart, with his touches like the french horns and the ending reharmonization of the melody. He's one of the great spontaneous improvisers; hear in the last chorus how he weaves lines through the whole compass of the instrument, resolving the melody in his own style. His alto playing is very modern, but also classic. People call it elegant, but the sound has a certain introspection that's also passionate. 5 stars.

John Carter/Alvin Batiste/Jimmy Hamilton/ David Murray

"Sticks And Bones" (from *Clarinet Summit Vol. 1*, India Navigation, 1984).

I was at the concert. Tony Scott, Kenny Davern—not. It's the clarinet quartet John Carter put together. John is an artist and friend who continues to be a great inspiration to me. His playing combines true Midwestern-Southern relaxation, blues sensibility and the desire to stretch limits of the instrument texturally and expressively. As a composer he was very interested in layering voices. David did a great job holding the bass role while also adding his personal voice, and I like how John set up the improvs: He and David take a modernist texture and multirhythmic approach, Alvin and Jimmy stay with their lyrical, melodic approaches. It all fits, and flies in the



face of those who say how music must be set in styles. 5 stars.

John Zorn

"Lonely Woman" (from *Naked City*, Elektra/Nonesuch, 1989) Zorn, alto saxophone; Bill Frisell, guitar; Wayne Horvitz, keyboards; Fred Frith, bass; Joey Baron, drums; Yamatsuka Eye, vocals.

That's my neighbor John Zorn and Naked City with Bill Frisell, Joey Baron, Wayne Horvitz, Fred Frith. I really like that version of Ornette's "Lonely Woman"; playing it like an anthem, John brought out some different emotions than usual.

His use of hard-core rhythm with Ornette's melodies hasn't always worked for me. But this rendition works. It's so expressive. Zorn plays the melody beautifully, and to have the guitar wailing through it all. Isn't that bass line from Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman"? It's a totally different lonely woman here, who's not staying inside her house, moping around. 5 stars for pushing the envelope.

Kenny Wheeler/Bill Frisell/Lee Konitz/ Dave Holland

"Nicollette" (from *Angel Song*, ECM, 1996) Wheeler, trumpet; Frisell, guitar; Konitz, saxophone; Holland, bass.

It's Kenny Wheeler with Dave Holland, Bill Frisell and Lee Konitz, four great musical poets. I've played with Kenny off and on over about 20 years, and his playing and writing makes him a greatly realized artist, in whom everything connects. I recognize his tunes right away, his sound in two notes. 5 stars.

World Saxophone Quartet

"Lush Life" (from *WSQ Plays Ellington*, Nonesuch, 1986) Julius Hemphill, alto saxophone; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; David Murray, tenor saxophone; Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone.

God bless Julius Hemphill. There's so much love in that rendition of "Lush Life"; in the melody he reharmonizes almost every chord, yet it feels totally like Strayhorn's tune. Then Julius goes off on this beautiful imaginative second chorus; I don't think he ever sounded prettier on the alto sax than here. The World Saxophone Quartet gets a tremendous blend on this whole record. It's a masterpiece. All the stars. **DB**