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September 1999 U.S. \$3.50
U.K. £2.75 Can. \$4.30

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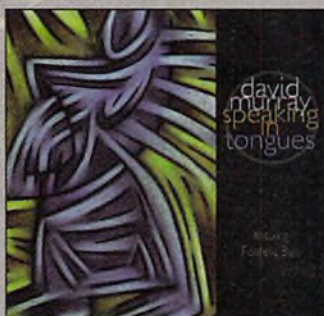
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by john mcdonough • photos by john abbott

Cheers

TO 50 YEARS OF OSCAR PETERSON

A jazz musician knows he's getting on when he walks on stage to a standing ovation before he plays his first note. In the last decade or so, this has become a regular occurrence for Oscar Peterson.

Jazz audiences tend to be adults. They offer their cheers with a certain sense of critical perspective. Standing ovations in jazz concerts are usually earned, unlike in rock concerts where nobody seems to have the civility to sit down in the first place. Applause like the kind Peterson received this summer at Ravinia Festival in Chicago or Carnegie Hall in New York runs deeper than rock itself.

Peterson's eminence at this point in his career may at first glance be controverted by the evidence of recent polls. For decades he was at the top or among the top contenders. In recent years, however, it would appear as if his name has dropped off the bottom rungs into whatever obscurity awaits former champs.

In reality, quite the opposite is true. Obscurity is the least of Peterson's concerns these days as he collects concert fees estimated in excess of \$70,000 a performance. It's not that Peterson has dropped off the polls; he has risen above them. Polls are report cards, unbecoming to legends such as Peterson, who is no longer a student subject to such periodic grading. His career speaks for itself. The cheers Peterson receives now aren't just for the music he plays on those particular nights. People now cheer his accumulated imprint on jazz history and on their own lives, for many of them as far back as they can remember.



Over the next few months, Peterson will be on the road, in the air or at sea almost continually. On Sept. 16 in Ottawa, Canada, he will kick off the Swing Magic Tour, the pianist's first venture outside his normal quartet setting since the last overseas Jazz at the Philharmonic tours in the early '80s, none of which included American or Canadian stops. The Swing Magic dates, however, will be exclusively American and Canadian and include an all-star small-group lineup with Clark Terry (who will join the tour in Vancouver, replacing Marcus Belgrave), Stanley Turrentine and James Moody, plus the Rick Wilkins big band drawn largely from the ranks of the Boss Brass, including Rob McConnell and Ed Bickert.

Then he will fly to Japan to collect one of the world's most prestigious arts awards, the 1999 Praemium Imperiale, a prize of 15 million yen (or about \$121,000) specifical-

ly established by the Japan Art Association to honor individuals in fields not considered by the Nobel Committee. These include painting, sculpture, architecture, theater/ film and music.

From Nov. 2-12, Peterson and his quartet take part in the first Floating Jazz Festival aboard Cunard's Queen Elizabeth 2. Then there's his composing work, which is currently centered on a commission from the Canadian government to celebrate the Trail of Dreams, a coast-to-coast wilderness path built on old railroad beds that will stretch north into the Yukon Territory.

It may be coincidence that such an intense cluster of present and future activity is coming at a milestone month in Peterson's career, one that he reflected on briefly as he left the stage at Carnegie Hall. "I was in my dressing room after the con-

cert," he said in a recent telephone interview from his home, "and I said to myself, 'Wait a minute, in a couple of months it will be exactly 50 years since I made my first American appearance right here in Carnegie Hall.'"

It was Sept. 18, 1949, to be exact, the official Carnegie Hall opening (after a shake-down concert in Hartford) of the Jazz at the Philharmonic fall tour. (The date is sometimes given as the 17th, but it was a midnight concert, so technically it's the 18th.) Peterson was then a player of some reputation in eastern Canada, but neither his name nor the 30-odd trio records he'd made for RCA Victor of Canada since 1945 had penetrated very deeply into the American jazz scene. All that changed when Norman Granz walked on stage and contrived a slight fiction (in order to appease the letter of union law) about how Peterson just happened to be in the audience, and that maybe he could "prevail upon him" to come out and do a couple of numbers. As the 24-year-old Peterson made his way to the piano center stage, Granz, who was not known for his "discoveries" of new talent, added prophetically, "We think he's going to be one of the coming giants of jazz."

Peterson sat down at the keyboard, accompanied only by young bassist Ray Brown. What followed was a cannonade of music that so startled not only the audience but Down Beat critic Mike Levin (Oct. 21, 1949) that the perimeter of possibilities for piano, already marked by the likes of Art Tatum, Nat Cole and Bud Powell, seemed to expand palpably before their eyes within the next 20 minutes. The entire drama of this historic moment can be heard on disc nine of the extraordinary PolyGram collection *The Complete Jazz At The Philharmonic On Verve, 1944-1949*, which richly documents the epic period of jazz's final encounter with the excitement of a truly mass general audience.

Today Peterson frequently finds occasion to reunite with Brown. Currently the two are in prime form with Milt Jackson on Telarc's *Very Tall Band Live At The Blue Note* (see Page 68). And Peterson remains in constant contact with Granz, who lives in Geneva, Switzerland, though he is no longer involved in Peterson's professional life. In fact, when the Swing Magic idea came up, Granz became a natural sounding board. What does he think? Peterson chuckles at the question. "Well, you know

Norman," he says, referring to his friend's natural skepticism toward anything but his own view of the world. "Actually, his reaction seemed to be favorable because he knows who we have in the lineup."

A story in the Toronto Star last May gave the impression that Peterson was so peeved by the recent neo-swing trend and by young musicians in double-breasted suits pretending to be Lester Young, he determined he needed to lead a continental crusade to show North America what swing really is.

Another Peterson chuckle. "I knew this was going to happen," he says. "That's not really the way it is. There's a producer in Ottawa named Marni Fullerton, and she and her company, Almadon Productions, have suggested various ideas over the years.

"Actually, it is true that I happened to be quite fed up with guys putting on porkpie hats, tilting their saxes like Lester, and calling it swing even though they still sounded like rock groups. Obviously, they haven't done their homework and wouldn't know Lester's sound if it rolled over them in a steam roller."

The pastiche that has become known as neo-swing doesn't translate well for Peterson because his contact with many of the original models remains direct, personal and thoroughly contextualized. He understands the relationship of those models in a way that many younger players can only see through the mediating distortions of several generations of shifting cultural sensibilities and attitudes.

"I think the models for a lot of these neo-swing bands are basically Louis Prima, Louis Jordan and the r&b scene after the war. But to me these people were entertainers more than musicians. The music was a prop. If the new swing groups could be more creative within this limited format, maybe I could accept the costumes and show business of it."

Peterson was sounding off to Marni Fullerton on these themes, when she suggested putting together a group of musicians who can really perform an evening's worth of the real thing. With Peterson heading the lineup, she reasoned, the proper venues should fall easily into place. And so they did—11 shows in six cities ending Oct. 3. Moreover, Fullerton's Almadon Productions will tape the New York performance at the Waldorf for later telecast and

By Norman Granz

I was brought up on Nat Cole. And contrary to what many believe, it was Nat that really made Jazz at the Philharmonic. Forget the saxophone players and all that. Nat was the prime support that I had in the beginning.

And when he gave up jazz, I couldn't find anybody that could do the things that he could do. I don't mean from a viewpoint of style. I mean the wonderful flexibility that he could bring to every performer.

Then I found Oscar, and he became my Nat Cole.

The basic story has been told many times and is fairly stale by now. Briefly, I had gone up to Montreal to make the technical arrangements for a concert with Artie Shaw I was presenting. And on the way to the airport in a taxi, I heard Oscar's group on the radio.

But there was really more to it than that. Before I had ever heard Oscar, there were three people who had told me that I should listen to him and hire him. Each was of a stature that I would have accepted their advice. One was Coleman Hawkins, who was loath to recommend anybody. The second was Billy Strayhorn. And surprisingly, the third was Duke Ellington. They must have heard him in the Montreal club where he was working.

Then one night I was some place with JATP, Vancouver perhaps, and we were eating in a joint that had juke box remotes at every table. One of Oscar's records was on the list. It was a boogie woogie piece. My reaction, frankly, was, "Jesus, I've heard so much about this guy, and he's playing boogie woogie. I can't see that." So I just neglected him.

Sometime later we did a concert in Montreal, and all the guys went after the concert to hear Oscar and jam with him. I went to the club, figuring this was my chance to finally hear him. But they wouldn't let me in. I threatened to pull out all the whole JATP band that was playing inside. They totally ignored me. So much for all the weight that I carried then.

After finally hearing him in the taxi and tracking him down, I understood what musicians had been talking about. By late 1949 I had been after Oscar for some months to join Jazz at the Phil. But he consistently refused because he thought he wasn't ready. I finally convinced him to come to New York and play without anyone knowing in advance. I didn't even tell any of the musicians on the tour.

A few days before Carnegie Hall I went up to Toronto and met with Oscar, partly to reassure him that I thought he could make it and partly to tell him my plan. Because I didn't want to go through the routine of getting union permission and become involved in the paperwork immigration might require for a performer coming into the United States to work, I decided it was better for all concerned if it appeared spontaneous. So I told Oscar that I would arrange for him to have an aisle seat near the front of the parquet section of Carnegie Hall. Then at the right time I would announce that there was a surprise I had for the public, and he would walk on.

I decided to introduce him at the start of the second set. A few minutes before, he came backstage and looked around for a bass and drums. Buddy Rich was the drummer on that tour, but he happened to be somewhere else at that moment. Ray Brown was nearby, though, so I asked him to play with Oscar, even if it's a duet. Ray was good enough even then so there was no need to rehearse or pick numbers. Everything was heads. As the lights went down, I went out on stage and made my introduction. Frankly, I cannot remember today whether he came up from the audience or out from the wings. In any case, he played three numbers and absolutely destroyed everyone.

I knew that the real pressure on Oscar in JATP would be how he could accompany so many different players. Guys like Lester would never sit down before a set and go over chords or other details. Coleman Hawkins, on the other hand, presented another problem, one of harmony. But Oscar was capable of playing for all of them, including Ella.

Later he said that as he sat in the audience watching Coleman, and Lester and Roy—all the heavyweights—he got very nervous and thought he wasn't going to make it. I thought I knew better, though. He was, and is, a great talent living inside the temperament of a seasoned and smart professional. Nerves were never going to get in his way.

Finding Oscar

produce a documentary on Peterson. An accompanying CD is also in the works.

"So we will do the quartet thing for the first part," he says, outlining the planned format of the shows. "Then we'll bring out the horns, not unlike JATP in some ways. Jon Hendricks and Ernestine Anderson will also sing. Then the band will play." Hendricks replaces the late Joe Williams, who was originally approached when planning first began.

The idea is not to do concerts in big auditoriums, but to play some of the old ballrooms like the Palace Hotel in San

Francisco, the Drake in Chicago and the Waldorf in New York, all of which are on the schedule. There will also be a big band set, during which Peterson will likely sit in. (Call 888-OSCAR-99 for tickets and information on the tour.) The last time he played with a band was on the 1967 JATP tour when he performed "Take The 'A' Train" with the Duke Ellington orchestra. "I was the maestro's assistant," he laughs. In between the jazz sets, the band will also play for dancing.

And what audience is the tour targeting? "Everybody," Peterson says. "I don't mean

that literally. I mean everybody who's ever turned on the boob tube and heard any of these idiotic [neo-swing] presentations. I'd like to have all these people come and be confronted with a true night of jazz and swing, of Basie and Duke.

"I want this music to connect with that audience and not just other musicians. I got my helping of some of the new music the other day at Saratoga. I must tell you, it did nothing for me."

Fundamentally Peterson remains faithful to the propulsive flow and driving power of eighth notes against a straightforward 4/4 time signature. And that is apparently not what he heard at Saratoga. "They had the audience screaming at certain points because of nothing more than musical gymnastics. That to me doesn't personify any kind of artistic success in jazz."


As Peterson spoke, the scent of irony was in the air. Suddenly he sounded remarkably like several Down Beat critics who reviewed Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts and records a half century ago.

"Right," he said without argument. "Critics did get teed off at Flip [Phillips] and Illinois [Jacquet], and they were right. Guilty as charged. I totally agree. But those same critics also gave credit to Ben Webster, Charlie Parker and Lester Young for what they did at those concerts."

And Peterson was in the epicenter of it all. But one gets the impression from him that once was enough. Today he travels a less exciting but far more comfortable road, always in the company of his wife and 8-year-old daughter, who, he admits, is one of his motivations to keep performing. That and a desire to keep her in this musical element during the formative years, he adds.

If children need their parents' approval, so, in a different kind of way, do parents need their children's. If true, Peterson is putting on one hell of a performance for his daughter, who is leading a privileged childhood traveling the world and hearing thousands cheer her father's music. "She seems to enjoy it," he says. "It's delightful to hear her come home singing some of the things we do. I rather have that than the Spice Girls." **DB**

equipment
Oscar Peterson prefers Bosendorfer pianos.



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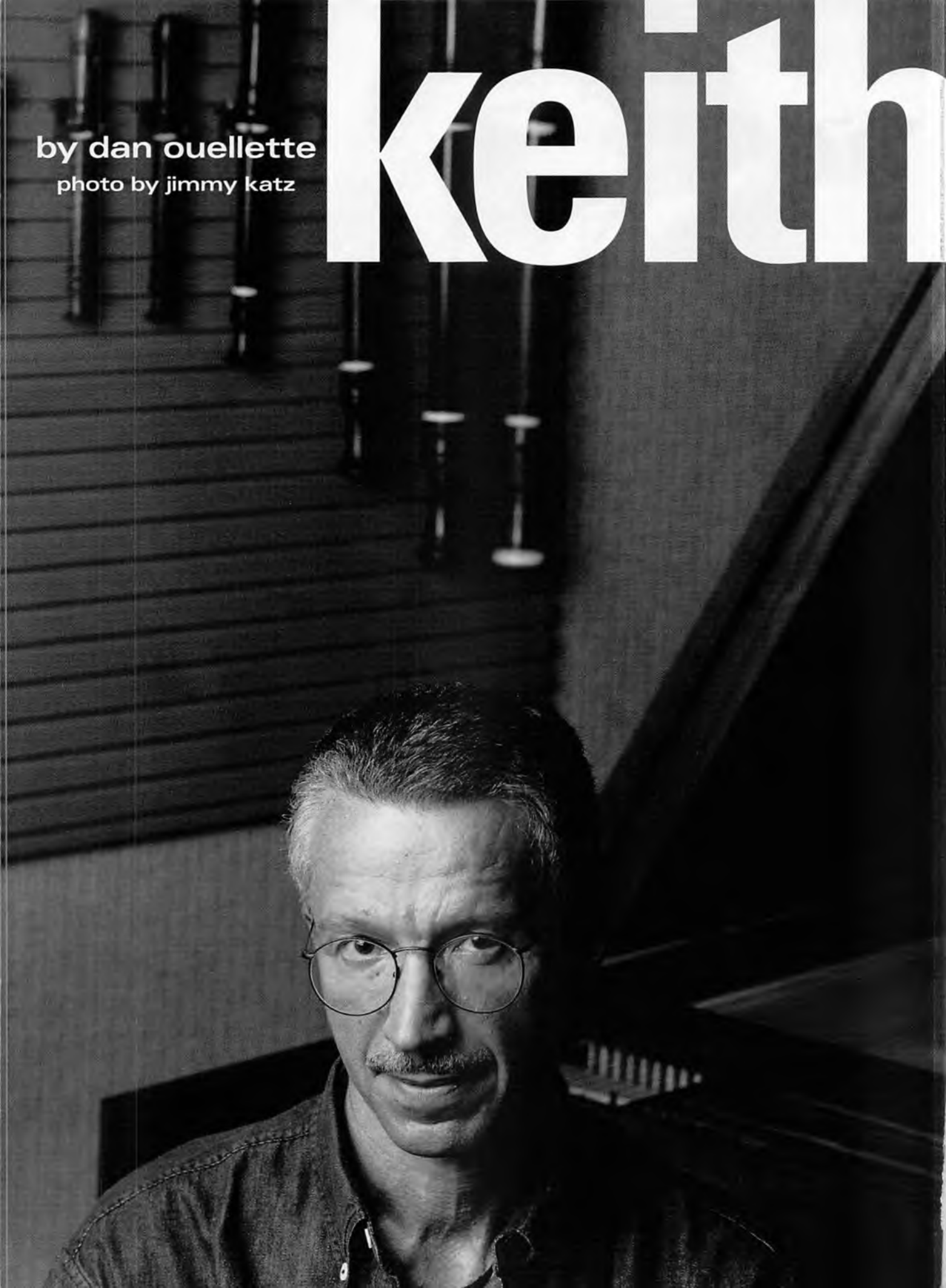
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by dan ouellette
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Keith



jarrett

COUNTS HIS BLESSINGS

In an ego-driven culture, too much gets taken for granted. Too little is appreciated until it's sorely missed.

Keith Jarrett can relate. Struck down by chronic fatigue syndrome in the fall of 1996 and confined to the sidelines by the debilitating bacterial disease, the pianist not only canceled all of his engagements but also seriously wondered whether he would ever be able to perform again. "Nobody learns to appreciate that time more than someone who was denied it," he says about the short intervals of practice he's only recently been able to handle. "Playing the piano has been my entire life."

It's difficult to imagine the dynamo at the keys stilled. One of jazz's most athletic pianists, Jarrett's concerts are unforgettable visual experiences. Case in point: the latest Standards Trio video, *Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette Tokyo 1996* (on RCA/BMG Video, a companion to last year's scintillating ECM recording). Recorded a few months before Jarrett fell ill, the video captures him soaring in ecstasy, restlessly throwing his entire body into improvisational torrents. In sync with the music, he stands, crouches, bends his knees, tucks his head close to the keys, swivels his hips and sprawls elastically across the keyboard.

"It's hard for me to remember playing that way since I got sick," Jarrett says with a laugh shortly before traveling to the West Coast to perform trio dates in Los Angeles and San Francisco. "I don't have as much to throw into it. I have to limit myself to the

keyboard a little more these days." He pauses, then adds, "Well, if I'm not really active on one number, that means I'm saving the jumping for the next."

Nearly four years since his last appearance in San Francisco, Jarrett took the stage at the sold-out Masonic Auditorium—only the third time he appeared in concert since contracting CFS—and it was quickly evident he was keeping the physicality of his performance in check. Instead of vigorously surrendering to the music as he did on his last visit, Jarrett, dressed head-to-toe in black, except for a white and black print vest, proceeded at a subdued pace, hunching over the keyboard, leaning back as if steering the notes into shape and a little later crouching as if ready to pounce. It was the first concert of the San Francisco Jazz Festival's Swing into Spring series, and while Jarrett's flamboyance was noticeably lacking, his engagement with the music was incandescent.

It was a textbook display of intuitive musicmaking, the kind of seamless improvisation only possible when bandmates are tuned into the same wavelength (Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette have been playing together since 1983, making it one of the most stable—and popular—combos in jazz). Contorting his face and squinting his eyes at junctures of intensity, Jarrett uttered his trademark "ahhhhs" of satisfaction. He embarked on mesmerizing journeys while the rhythm team offered currents of support. It was a triumphant show, the strongest of Jarrett's three shows

"It's *stupid* to call it chronic fatigue syndrome. It should be called the *forever dead syndrome*."

thus far, according to his manager Stephen Cloud, and far more spirited than one might have expected given his near brush with retirement.

"It felt like forced cessation," says the 53-year-old Jarrett in reflecting on the sickness that kept him largely bound to his rural New Jersey house for over two years. "I wasn't on hiatus. That wasn't the case, because I had to come to terms with the prospect of never playing again. I was too sick to come to terms with anything else. A year and a half ago I'd go look at my pianos and think, yes, they're still here. Then I'd leave the room. I thought if you can't play, you can't play. I was not going to try to compete with myself after my lobotomy."

Hyperbole? Jarrett's not joking. "No one knows how debilitating this sickness is unless they have it. It's like if you get migraines, someone may say, 'Oh, I get headaches, so I know what it's like.' But you can't imagine how bad they are unless you've had a migraine yourself. But this is a much more horrible disease." So, it's more than just being tired or burned out, a common perception? "Are you kidding? I've met people who have had it for 10 years, 25 years. Some are bedridden, some can't walk across the street. It's stupid to call it chronic fatigue syndrome. It should be called the forever dead syndrome."

Jarrett contracted his illness during a tour of Europe. He was suddenly overcome by such a profound sense of fatigue that he told his wife he felt like aliens had invaded his body. He realized several months later that's precisely what happened, as CFS is caused by an airborne parasite. Back home, Jarrett heard about a doctor who was conducting a study, treating the disease aggressively as a bacterial infection and claiming to reverse the symptoms in a relatively short time—meaning a couple of years.

It's significant that Peacock and DeJohnette were on stage with him when Jarrett made his first concert appearance in two years at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark last November (see "Caught," March 1999). They've recorded more than a dozen projects together, including a six-CD set *Keith Jarrett At The Blue Note: The Complete Recordings*, which won the Down Beat Critics Poll as album of the year in 1996.

"I couldn't have done it without Gary and Jack," Jarrett said. "There are no better people to be on stage with. But knowing about my condition, they were both concerned I might push too hard. There's a low ceiling as to what you can do. If you hit the ceiling, you can have a relapse. The problem is you don't know where that ceiling is until it's too late. That's when you get hammered again."

That's what happened late last summer when Jarrett and his trio mates met together for the first time in a couple years to rehearse for an October date in Chicago. It proved to be too taxing for him, so he was forced to cancel the engagement.

As for the Newark concert, Jarrett expresses ambivalence. "The show came off really well considering I wasn't fully ready to play. I wish more of me could have been at that concert, but the music itself was great."

Even though Jarrett knew he wasn't in his prime, he was chomping at the bit to get back in action. "I heard this story about a race

car driver who had a bad accident. As he was recovering, people kept asking him when he was going to race again. He said not until he was 110 percent. For the last two years I've been mulling that over. I knew he was right, that I'd want to be in better shape, but I also realized I was getting older every year. That's why I decided to jump back in prematurely. All the shows I have set up for the near future are based on the hope that I can do more each time. Nine months ago, there was no way I was even thinking about setting up concerts. Let's just say that right now I'm cautiously optimistic."

In some ways, Jarrett's forced sabbatical is similar to his self-imposed withdrawal from the music world in 1985. Back then, it was a crisis time that forced him to reflect more deeply on his musical vision. Jarrett returned to action with the cathartic recording *Spirits*. Is there anything in his CFS experience that sheds such a positive light? "A lot of good things have come out of having this disease, but none that are expressible in art. Basically, it strips you to the bare bone, to a place where you have nothing to express. You find out what life is about, and that is survival. Plus, if I had been gigging all the time, I'd have never had the time to notice what I didn't like about my playing and make changes."

The new Keith is basically the old Keith with slightly different inflections. For example, he says his voice is much more tuned in to bebop now than it was before. "I've been trying to free up my left hand to play like the middle bop period where much of the real stuff of modern jazz was born. I'm adding in these little jagged things with my left hand that might get in Gary's way more. I'm trying to pay tribute to the bop-era pianists in every tune I play."

Jarrett chafes when asked who specifically he's paying tribute to. Still, upon a little prodding he responds. Bud Powell? "Well, if I had to name someone, sure. But I also think of Lennie Tristano even though I hate the way he played right on the beat all the time. But basically I'm trying to hear the history of jazz as well as play into the future while playing the stupidest standard tunes. If that helps some people understand why Gary, Jack and I have a zillion recordings of standards, then good. All three of us love melody and don't like playing clever."

Having been so sick and having to consider the very real possibility of a relapse, Jarrett counts his blessings. He's content working with the trio and prepared to resign himself to never writing any new material again. "It's too much to think about right now. If I write something that requires rehearsals, well, that's way in the future because of the energy it requires. It really doesn't matter if I ever do anything new again, because the act of making music is so important. If I'm able to only do that a few times, I won't ask for more."

Jarrett's slowly on the mend. But he's cautious. "The parasite isn't gone. These days I'm thankful if I can practice a half hour in the morning and then another half hour later in the day. I'm testing my limits and hoping I won't overdo it. It's pretty scary because I could wake up tomorrow and say, oops. But so far so good." **DB**

equipment

Keith Jarrett has one Steinway piano made in Hamburg, Germany, and another made in the United States. These days he prefers the latter.



down for Jon Hendricks & Annie Ross

Double

"We took a long vacation," Jon says.

"Yeah, 36 years," Annie adds.

Except for a brief reunion in the mid '80s, Jon Hendricks and Annie Ross hadn't sung the Lambert, Hendricks and Ross classics together since 1962. Hendricks worked as a singer and songwriter. Ross also sang, but she worked more in the movies as an actress. And tragically, Dave Lambert was killed in a 1966 auto accident.

But in their prime, Hendricks, Ross and Lambert perfected and popularized vocalese, the art of singing lyrics to jazz instrumentals. On their 1957 album *Sing A Song Of Basie*, they not only sang lyrics to the heads and solos, they vocally recreated entire arrangements. Hendricks sang saxophone, Lambert filled in as trombone counterpoint and Ross provided the trumpet voice of Buck Clayton.

In total, Lambert, Hendricks and Ross recorded six albums between 1957 and 1962. Ever since they've continued inspiring generations of jazz singers, such as Manhattan Transfer, Al Jarreau, Bobby McFerrin and New York Voices.

And now Hendricks and Ross have come back as a twosome. Their Jan. 26 opening night at the Blue Note in New York was extraordinary: "Down For Double," "Come On Home," "Centerpiece," "Cloudburst." Hearing those songs again by those voices was thrilling, and one could almost hear the audience, in the heads and their hearts, singing along.

MICHAEL BOURNE: *I've rarely felt emotion in the audience and from the stage like your opening night.*

ANNIE ROSS: That's a big statement, because you've seen everybody.

MB: *Dave Lambert is gone, but he's up there with you.*

JON HENDRICKS: We've always missed Dave before now, but never so much as he's missed now. We have Paul Meyers, the guitarist, playing his lines, to give us a sound like he's there.

MB: *Dave will always be a presence in your lives. When you first*

came together to rehearse, the emotions must have been extreme, to be singing again with the other voice that you haven't sung with in so long, only Dave's voice isn't there.

JH: We did all those things with three voices, and we could've used at least another one, but how were we going to do these things with two? But when we started singing ...

AR: Yeah!

JH: It was like everything was there. It was amazing. I don't know how it happened.

AR: It was weird, wasn't it?

JH: The music has a strength of its own.

MB: *Do you have memories, flashbacks to moments when you sang these songs all those years ago?*

JH: Oh, yes.

AR: And not only that. I'll remember, "Oh, I used to take a breath right there. It helps me on the next note."

JH: And you hear lines that you actually forgot. We're trying to do Dave's solos whenever possible.

AR: And you don't get any rest. You're off of one solo and into another solo, and don't forget that little thing that goes *there*.

MB: *I only heard Dave Lambert on the records, but I've always felt that he was the flat-out best scat singer ever. He could improvise vocally like the greatest instrumentalists.*

JH: Dave was the single voice who took scat singing from the realm of Louis Armstrong into bop.

AR: I didn't know until Ira Gilter told me that Dave recorded an album where he would scat and then leave the room for whoever was listening to the record to scat the next eight bars, a sort of "Scatting Minus One."

MB: *What's the definitive legend of how Lambert and Hendricks came together with Ross?*

AR: I was over at Bob Bach's house. Bob and I were just schmoozing, and he asked me if I knew Dave Lambert. I said that I'd met him very briefly, and he said, "Well, why don't you stick around, because he's coming over with a guy called Jon Hendricks, and they have an idea to make a record with words

by michael bourne

to Count Basie instrumentals, and since you've done 'Twisted,' it might be interesting to hear." Dave came over with Jon, they put on the Basie record and I sang along with it. I thought it was all right, and that was that.

JH: Dave and I, and whoever else had ears at the time, knew that Annie had done "Twisted" and "Farmer's Market." Annie was hip to vocalese before anybody that we knew. We were going to have these Dave Lambert Singers, about 13 singers, and we figured, Why don't we put Annie among them? Annie was hip to what was going on, and when these other singers don't show the right idea, she could be there to say, "Hey, it's like this!" We figured she'd be a great help to us, because these singers just didn't dig Basie.

AR: Dave asked me to come down and coach the female singers for the Basie feel, and I said to myself, "Is he out of his mind?"



the original vocal trio of dave lambert (left), annie ross and jon hendricks.

DOWN BEAT ARCHIVES

JH: As we were afraid of, in the studio these people were a disaster. They didn't understand.

AR: They hit all the notes.

JH: But they didn't have any of the subtleties or the nuances to be able to approximate the Basie sound. This was Creed Taylor's debut in the music business, and

his job was on the line. In desperation, he asked, "What should we do?" Dave, speaking up like the genius he was, said, "Let's multitrack. We'll use Annie; and Annie, Jon and I will multitrack."

AR: And we said ...

JH: "What's multitrack?"

AR: I had no idea what he was talking about, but I was saying yes to everything then.

JH: Dave explained, "Well, we put three voices on the tape, and we take that tape off, and you put the other voices on until we've got all 12 of Basie's instruments, and then we combine all those tapes on one tape." We started doing that. It took about three months.

We did the lead voices first, then

the second three, but the result was you heard only the last six voices. It was a hodge podge, so we had to start over. We took another three months, but we did the last voices first and the first voices last, so that the first voices would be out front.

MB: *Certainly you sang harmonies, but the group wasn't really about three-part harmony so much as about counterpoint, or sections riffing like in a big band.*

AR: Exactly. I'll be singing a line and Jon will be singing another line, but with different lyrics. It makes for intense concentration.

MB: *It's not only that you're singing lines with horns, but, Jon, when you scat, you finger the air like you're playing a saxophone.*

JH: I do it involuntarily. My hands just go up automatically. I'd love to be a saxophone player. That's my secret ambition.

MB: *You were both friends of Charlie Parker. Bird appeared in your life, Jon, when you were going to be a lawyer.*

JH: I was getting a 3.5 average at the University of Toledo. I was working with a group downtown at night, but I had no ideas of pursuing music further. I'd been in music already all my life. I was going to be a lawyer and donate my services to the legal arm of the NAACP, to try to help with the racial situation at that time, which was very acute. But one night, when he came to town, I sat in with Charlie Parker. I was so nervous. I took about 10 choruses. And when I started to leave the bandstand, I felt this tug. Charlie had pulled my coat. Kenny Dorham was soloing, and Charlie and I had this conversation. He asked me, "What are you doing?"

"I'm studying law."



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"You're not a lawyer."

"What am I?"

"You're a jazz singer."

"What do I do about that?"

"You've got to come to New York."

"I don't know anyone in New York."

"Well, you know me."

"Where will I find you?"

"Just ask anybody."

And I thought, "This cat is crazy." But two years and four months later, I went to New York, got off the Greyhound bus, called Joe Carroll, and said, "Where is Bird?" And he said, "The Apollo Bar, 125th Street and 7th Avenue." I went that night, and he was playing "The Song Is You." I walked past the bandstand, and he stopped right in the middle of a solo and said, "Hey, Jon, how you doing? Want to sing something?" And then he picked right up on the chord. Amazing, the mind this cat had.

MB: Will the two of you be recording?

JH: Absolutely. Annie's written a great lyric to a song of Russ Freeman's called "Music Is Forever." We've got to get that done with strings and woodwinds. Real lush.

AR: That's my dream.

JH: That song deserves the best possible treatment, the most high-class string section, some good woodwinds.

AR: And a harp.

JH: Yeah!

MB: Going back can be iffy. What finally brought you two back together?

JH: We had a catalyst, a young man named Jonathan Cohen, who was managing me. He said, "All my friends, their parents turned them on to Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. They're all hip to you guys, and I think you guys ought to get back together and get this new young audience." I said it was OK by me. Annie was working at Birdland, and I went, and Annie called me up on the last tune, "Jumpin' At The Woodside." We did this number and I never saw anything like it in my life.

AR: They went crazy.

JH: Everybody on their feet.

AR: They were running outside, trying to find those instant cameras, and saying this was jazz history.

JH: I said something is in the wind, and it's stronger than either of us. I called Annie the next day and said, "Hey, something is going on beside the rent."

MB: There must've been so many moments when you thought about singing.

AR: When you want something so much, you can't live for it all the time. You have to

put it somewhere for a while. Otherwise, you drive yourself crazy. You can't talk about it, because you have to deal with things at hand. But it's always there.

JH: Everytime I would perform, people would always say, "Do you think Lambert, Hendricks and Ross will ever get back together?" I think we created something that is eternal, because the fact that we could reunite after 35 years and get the reception we got means only one thing: that what we did is good, and good is forever.

MB: So now the road awaits. How much will

you do this?

JH: Everywhere!

AR: Absolutely!

JH: For everybody. Forever. You know, we were the No. 1 group in the world for five years, and yet there are lands and nations where we were No. 1 but we've never been to.

AR: We've never been to Japan.

JH: South Africa.

AR: South America.

JH: We've never been to Russia. Australia.

AR: There are all these places to go. **DB**

Bob Mintzer



Bob Mintzer brings his music to life on his latest TVT Records release, "Quality Time" & Hudson Music Ltd. release, "The Abercrombie/Erskine/Mintzer/Patitucci Band" with Vandoren V16 #3 1/2 tenor saxophone and Traditional #4 clarinet reeds.

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a good deal of what is unique and important in American culture has an African-American origin, according to Sheldon Meyer, an editor who came to Oxford University Press in 1956 with a specialty in American history and a passion for jazz. It wasn't long before he was adding books on African-American history to Oxford's list, which, he says, "came out of my jazz interest and my own strong feelings on civil rights issues."

Jazz literature has burgeoned in the past three decades, displaying a level of scholarship and a depth of insight that few books on jazz had earlier attained. On both counts Meyer, formerly vice president of editorial at Oxford University Press and this year's Down Beat Lifetime Achievement

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sheldon meyer

Award recipient, is at the head of the column of those who have helped realize this phenomenon.

Of all the publishing houses, Oxford University Press has by far the largest catalog of books on jazz and related idioms. Principal credit goes to Meyer, who persisted until he had established his jazz list as a major source of pride to the world's oldest publishing house—a firm that keeps in print the corpus of Greek and Latin literature, periodically revises the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary and imprints its seal on academic tomes in dozens of disciplines.

Meyer officially retired in 1996, at which time he still had a dozen or so books awaiting his editorial expertise. He has in his time handled such authors as literary critic Edmund Wilson, historian James M. McPheerson and biographer Louis R. Harlan. The docket he was left with three years ago compelled him to retain his Oxford connection as a consulting editor, a role that he expects to wind up a few months hence.

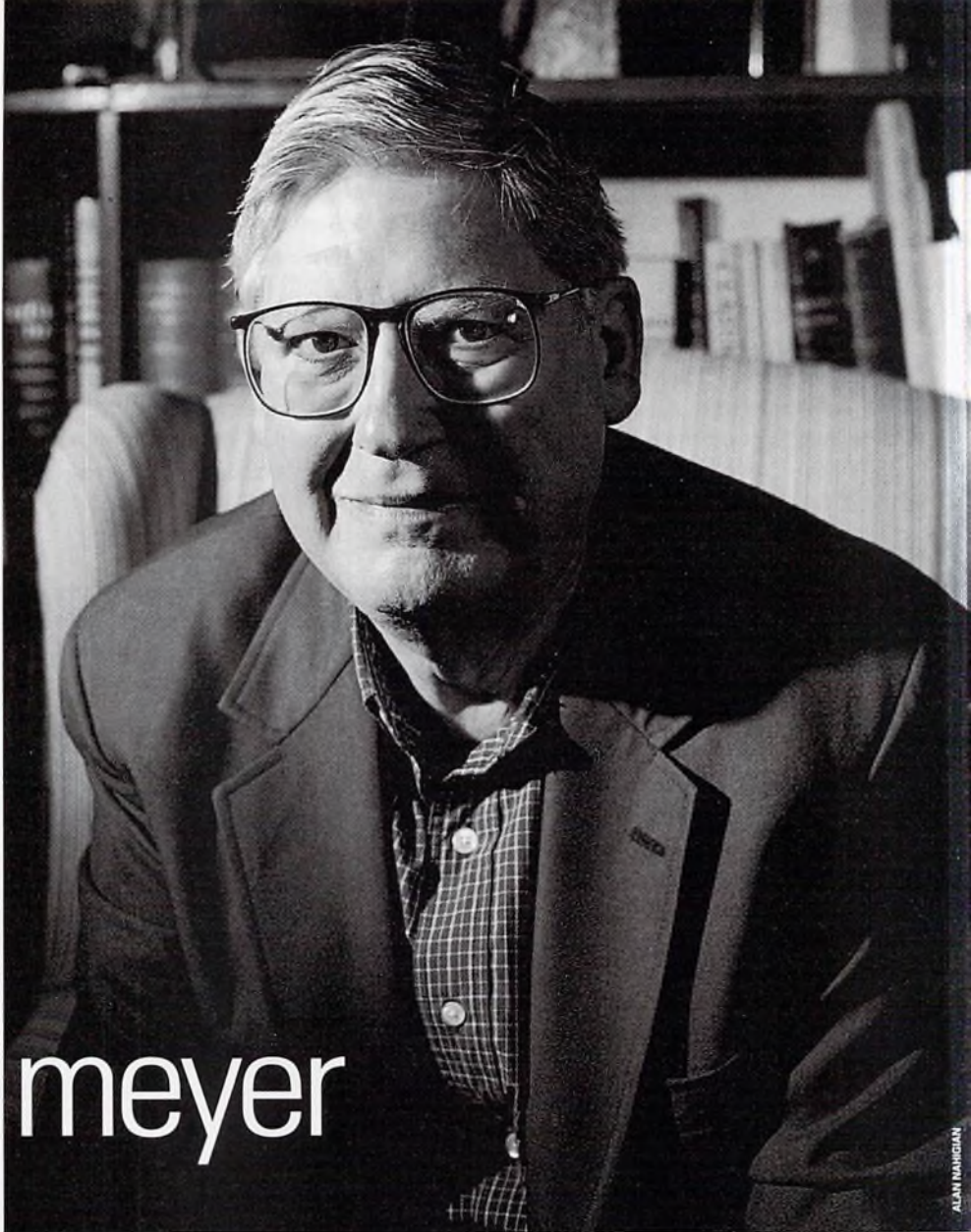
"Sheldon is not only an incredible scholar of general world history, he is a man with a remarkable knowledge of jazz," says Gene Lees, four of whose books Meyer has edited for Oxford. "He is patient with writers and paternal without being patronizing. He's the greatest editor I've ever worked with. Finally, he is something

that, alas, is too rare: a gentleman."

"As a pre-teenager I got into jazz, because it was the swing era, and I got into Benny Goodman, of course," recalls Meyer, who grew up in Geneva, Ill. "I bought original 78s of all those great Ellington sides. Then by the mid '40s I was really into bop. The first things I heard were the Coleman Hawkins/Dizzy Gillespie sides, and then I bought all the Bird and Diz sides."

When Meyer arrived at Oxford in 1956, the firm had that very year just published its first jazz book, Marshall Stearns' *The Story Of Jazz*. "Marshall wrote about everything from ragtime to '50s jazz," he says. "It was the first history of jazz that avoided all the stupid feuds of the '40s. And I think that's one of the reasons why it was such a big success." Although Meyer clarifies that he had "absolutely nothing to do" with the book, its success opened up doors for him.

At Oxford, when he eventually began bringing up jazz titles, "people didn't really object," he says. And in 1958, Stearns invited him to join a panel discussion at the Newport Jazz Festival. It was there that he met the late Martin Williams. "Martin was really my



by w. royal stokes

key connection in getting into the jazz world and meeting jazz writers," Meyer affirms. "In the end, we published five of his books." Williams opened more doors for him, referring him to other writers, including Gunther Schuller and Gary Giddins.

"By the time Gunther's *Early Jazz* was published in the '60s, we had begun to do a few jazz books. With Martin's great classic *The Jazz Tradition* in 1970, the dam broke and, by the '80s, my jazz list was the list from America that was doing best for them. So they were very positive about it in England, and I think now really quite proud of it. Whenever I have met anybody from the U.K. side, they always ask about the list. So what started as something that was almost like a pariah movement has become very, very much a part of the whole Oxford University Press publishing program." Under Meyer's guidance Oxford became, in a word, a very hip house.

The many authors that Meyer introduced to Oxford, and then edited, include Whitney Balliett, Samuel A. Floyd Jr., Alec Wilder, Lees, Giddins and Schuller. Of the many other authors he has handled, he cites Ted Gioia, Mark Tucker, Leslie Gourse, James Lincoln Collier, Dick Sudhalter, David Rosenthal, Thomas Owens, Bob Thiele and Mel Tormé.

A number of his Oxford authors' books have won ASCAP-Deems Taylor Awards. "Perhaps 12 or 15," he says proudly. "In 1987 Oxford received the Carey Thomas Award, which is the top award in book publishing, for its jazz and popular music list, which was really the first formal recognition of this area. Just this past spring both the National Book Critics Circle and the Jazz Journalists Association gave their awards in criticism to Gary for his *Visions Of Jazz*." Regarding the former, Meyer points out, "That's the first time a jazz book has received a major award from one of the various prize committees.

"All the areas of jazz should certainly get their due," insists Meyer, pointing out that his list begins with ragtime and comes up to the present. "We've just now published a book by Howard Mandel called *Future Jazz*, which is about the '70s to '90s. So I've tried to have a big tent and cover it all."

Still to come from that docket Meyer took with him into semi-retirement are Ira Gitler's *Biographical Encyclopedia Of Jazz* (a thorough revision of his and Leonard Feather's encyclopedia); biographies of Dizzy Gillespie, Harry James, Clifford Brown, Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk; *The Jazz Reader's Companion*, edited by Bill Kirchner; and photographer Frank Driggs' book on Kansas City.

"For more than three decades now, Sheldon has been the head curator of the jazz literary wing in American publishing," says Mark Tucker, whose *Duke Ellington Reader* was issued by Oxford. "He believes deeply that jazz is an important artistic tradition deserving a serious literature. In a way, Sheldon is the Louis Armstrong figure in the world of jazz publishing—someone whose impact has been so broad and pervasive that it's impossible to take its full measure." **DB**

Oxford University Press published W. Royal Stokes' 1991 book *The Jazz Scene*, and next spring will publish his *Jazz Profiles*.

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When they say black or negro, it means you're not an American.
You think I'm jiving?"

- Charles Mingus

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One of today's strongest voices on baritone sax insists that he's an alto player at heart. And so, an alto player he'll be ... unless, of course, he changes his mind again.

"The alto, it just has so much punch, so much power," says **Steve Wilkerson**, 48-year-old leader of the West Coast-based Shaw 'Nuff band. "I don't play it like a normal alto sound; I play it with a rich, fat bottom end.

"Each horn has its little musical vocabulary. I can soar with the alto. The bari is more smoky and sultry, and if it's recorded right, it can be an awesome horn. But I'm not saying I'm not going to play the bari anymore, because I love it."

A native of Iola, Kan., who grew up in Bartlesville, Okla., Steve Wilkerson has had a stormy career of trying to be discovered. And he's picked up a few different saxes along the way in pursuit of his voice. After a failed boyhood attempt at trumpet, Wilkerson started playing alto professionally alongside his stern father, trumpeter/bandleader Whitey Wilkerson, at age 11. He stayed with the little pipe through college at Tulsa University, and after that did a brief stint with Stan Kenton's band.

"I ended up getting a scholarship to the Stan Kenton clinic," Wilkerson remembers. "The last day I was there, I was playing in the section and this old guy from Tulsa, Earl Maples, came up and said, 'Why don't you play? Let 'em hear you play!' I told him they didn't ask me to play. He said, 'This is ridiculous,' and he told the guy who was calling off the solos to let me blow. So they let me have a solo, and I started going. And man, the band just started going wild. I got through and opened my eyes, and there's this huge guy at the edge of the stage looking up at me. He said, 'What's your name?' I said, [*in a squeaky voice*] 'Steve Wilkerson. It's an honor and privilege to be at your camp, sir.' [*in a gruff voice*] 'You're the kind of people we're looking for. Give your name to Dick Shear.' It was Stan Kenton. Scared me to death!"

In his mid-20s, Wilkerson moved to Los Angeles, where he was encouraged to play tenor. There, he played both alto and tenor on the mid-'70s Shelly Manne album *Jazz Crystallizations*. But having studied privately with Cannonball Adderley, and remembering some consultations he'd had with Phil Woods, Wilkerson was compelled to go with the alto.

"'You're a real lead alto player,' Phil told me. 'You're only the second alto player who's been at my house.' I asked him who was the first. 'Gene Quill,' he said. He started telling me about Gene and how they used to play together in the late '50s. And he said I could be the best there ever was. 'Just don't be a dumb shit!' he said. Phil would get nasty."

Adderley helped Wilkerson achieve the big sound he was looking for by giving the young saxman a few breathing pointers. "'When you play, don't bend over so much,' he told me. 'Let your stomach completely fall forward. Relax. Play like the saxophone's playing into your navel. When you do that, that's the solar plexus. You let your real psyche or consciousness take over.'"

The six-foot, four-inch Wilkerson's big sound on alto translates well to baritone, which requires a large air supply in order to keep it from sounding like a rusty lawnmower. In 1998, he recorded a solo project titled *Shaw 'Nuff* on the big pipe fronting a nine-piece band. And it's not just his bari sound that makes this CD stand out from so many saxophone-led indie recordings; his tough-sounding articulation and speed on the horn leave even more-committed bari players in the dust.

Since then, Wilkerson, a Selmer clinician and artist-in-residence at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif., has switched back to alto. He still fronts the Shaw 'Nuff band, which includes his wife, vocalist Andrea Baker. They recorded again this year under Baker's name on a CD titled *Table For One*. Wilkerson frequently plays with the Frank Capp Juggernaut, and he has an instructional jazz saxophone video that's distributed by Hal Leonard.

"I would like to play the horn on a bigger scale," Wilkerson says of his future goals, which include a possible date with organist Joey DeFrancesco. "When I go around and do clinics like at IAJE, if I could get into that *and* play concerts, I think I could reach a lot of people. I think something like that is coming. It feels good." —Ed Enright

"Let your stomach completely fall forward. Relax. Play like the saxophone's playing into your navel."



After more than two decades of obscurity working as a teacher, ethnomusicologist and even as a nurse, **Roswell Rudd**, the 63-year-old avant-tailgate trombonist who came to prominence in the 1960s with Archie Shepp, is once again touring and making new albums. In January, Rudd did a 17-city West Coast tour, selling out every venue, including Yoshi's in Oakland and Seattle's Jazz Alley. Last year, he released two albums on CIMP, *Unheard Herbie Nichols, Vol. 1 & 2*, featuring never-recorded music by the ill-fated pianist. More recordings and club dates are in the works.

Rudd has emerged out of the woodwork from his home in the Catskills, where he has "been taking care of my family," reports the trombonist, whose wavy hair and beard have now gone silver. He was also honing his straightahead skills on a six-year gig playing in a show band at the Grand Hotel in Kerhonkson, N.Y.

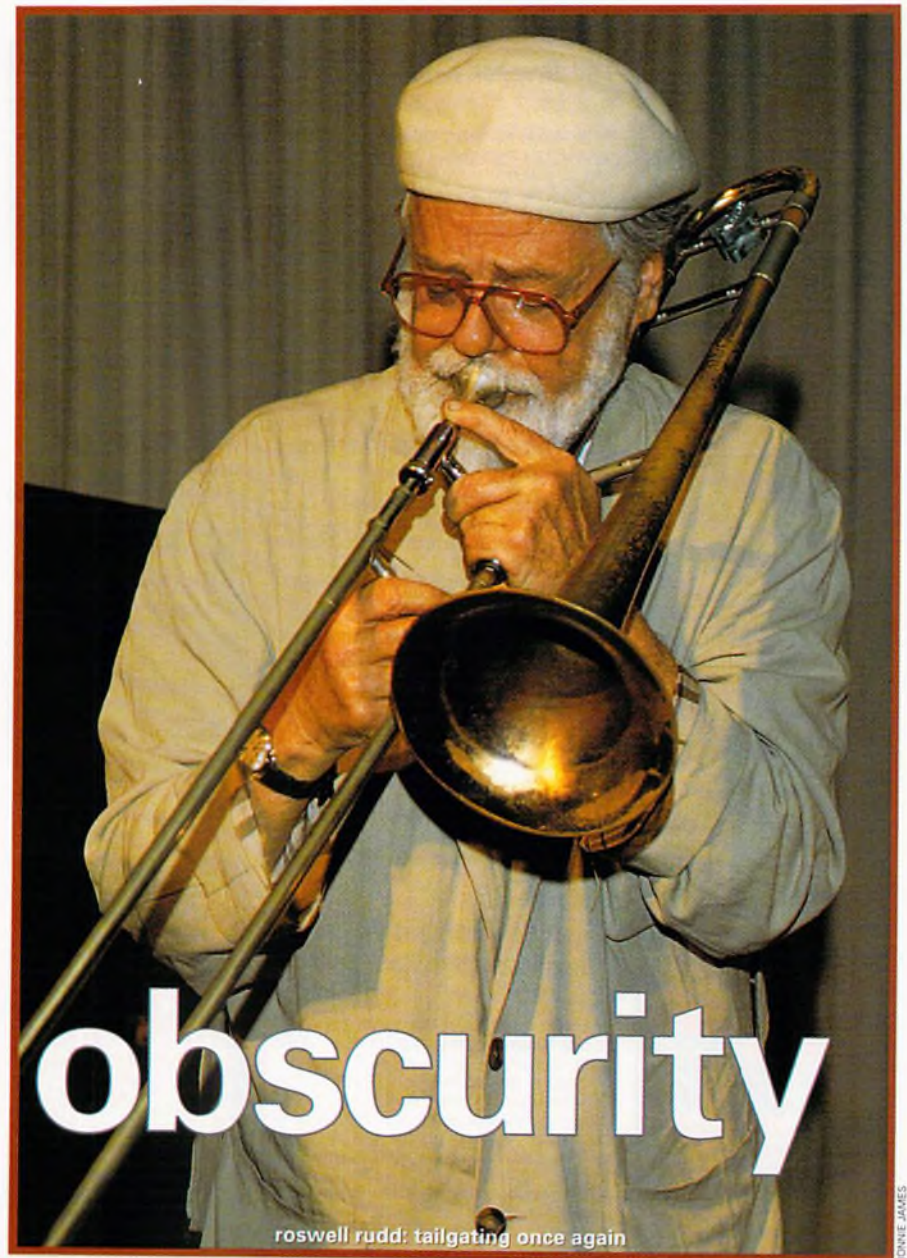
"It's hard when you're not visible all the time through touring and recording," he explains. "People right away think you're gone. But it was just the opposite with me. I had never played so much when you least heard about me."

backfrom

obscurity

In his prime, Rudd was restoring some of the old-time jazz flavor to an instrument that had lost some of its character during the bebop era. With trad roots from his days playing at Yale, Rudd put New Orleans low-jinks back into the bone, farting and glissing and trumpeting like a wild elephant. His brush with the gutter—plus another page out of the trad book, group improvisation—set the standard for the next generation.

For a while, Rudd played everywhere—with the New York Art Quartet (see Page 51), Robin Kenyatta, Lee Konitz, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra—but then came the '70s jazz drought. The trombonist took a teaching job at Bard College, followed by a long stint at the University of Maine. He also did computer work for ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, who was working on his last



(still unfinished) project, the Global Jukebox, a compendium for interactive CD-ROM of 400 song and dance traditions from around the world.

In 1983, perhaps buoyed by the success of *Regeneration* (Soul Note), which reunited him with longtime companion Steve Lacy, Rudd headed back to New York, but no further than the Grand Hotel. When that job dried up six years later, he decided to take a degree in basic nursing.

Portland, Ore.-based tenor saxophonist/flutist Rob Scheps, who worked with Rudd in the Grand Hotel band, took Rudd out of the New York region. For the January

tour, Scheps, 33, put together a quartet using Portlanders Dan Schulte (bass) and Alan Jones (drums).

Elated to be back on the road, Rudd is even more pleased to have finally made the Nichols albums.

"In 1962, Herbie knew the direction I was going in, and he wasn't that thrilled about it, to tell you the truth. And he was right. He wanted me to keep working on my foundation. And I have, and that's why when I went back to recording these tunes, I approached them from the foundation. I was telling him, 'I did my homework, the way you wanted!'"

—Paul de Barros

Tom Rainey has been a mainstay drummer in New York's creative music community for so long, his colleagues could easily take him for granted. But they don't, as they marvel at his intense ear and intuitive ability to execute any idea.

"When I met Tom around 1988," recalls trumpeter Dave Douglas, a bandmate of Rainey and Andy Laster in the workshop ensemble New and Used, "he opened new vistas for me in terms of what I could write for percussion and drums in an improvising ensemble. Tom is an incredibly thematic player; his development of rhythms and polyrhythms is extremely logical and organic, not only in his solo playing, but also accompanying and improvising with other musicians."

What might seem preternatural stylistic flexibility is no big deal to the 41-year-old drummer. Style isn't the issue; it's personal chemistry, mutual affinities. "You immediately know how to play someone's music because of your relationship with them," remarks Rainey, whose recent affiliations include Fred Hersch, Paraphrase (a collective trio with saxist Tim Berne and bassist Drew Gress), Laster's Hydra and Mark Helias' Open Loose. "When it's flowing, it's flowing; when it's not, it's not. Those are the only two distinctions in how it feels to play music."

That's basic enough, but it doesn't tell you what Rainey brings to the table. "Tom's reaction time is pretty instant," says Hersch, who played with Rainey in the late '80s in the Jane Ira Bloom Quartet and has employed Rainey steadily since 1992. "He's a spectacular reader, an orchestrator, has great concentration and presence, and plays certain grooves uniquely. He's very creative with sounds, and, because he plays a lot of new music, he responds to the idea of spontaneous composition, thinking of each tune as a piece and finding what we can do with it that's new."

Perhaps no musical partner knows Rainey more intimately than Gress, who the drummer estimates has stood beside him on half his gigs in the '90s. "Tom combines swinging and abstraction, looking for a middle ground—the best chance to yield something personal," Gress says.

Rainey will take the compliments, but he has a different agenda. It still boils down to listening, internalizing and interaction. "When I know a complex piece well enough to play it comfortably without having to read it, at that point to me it isn't any different than a standard," he explains. "You can get easy with reading, where you totally still express yourself, but it's always different than not reading music. What bothers me when I play is the chatter of my own brain; I feel best when I have the least amount of interference. Then I'm not judging myself, I'm not worried about how it's going—it's just going."

—Ted Panken



tom rainey: creative mainstay

not for granted

Steve Wilkerson

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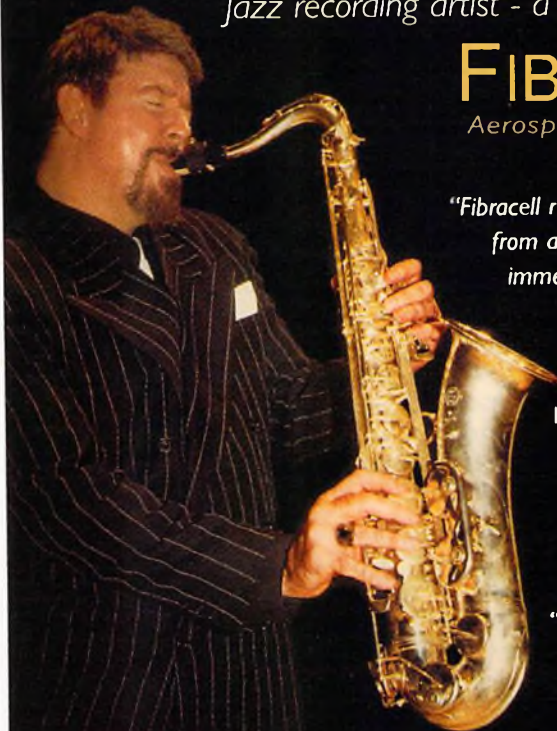
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Diana Krall

When I Look In Your Eyes

Verve 304

★★★½

There is pure artistry here, and there is a work in progress. Diana Krall is perhaps the most captivating of newly established singers. But her sucker punch is her piano. She is, like her idol Nat Cole, really a piano player who sings.

This album's repertoire is consistent with previous Krall albums: sultry standards, bouncin' swingers, a contemporary tune thrown in for fun. Guitarist Russell Malone is still by her side, as is bassist Ben Wolfe (sharing duties with John Clayton). The big news, though, apart from the fact that Krall is now a Verve artist (thanks to corporate shenanigans), is that orchestrator Johnny Mandel is already working with her.

Mandel's work, actually, is heard on most, not all, of *When I Look In Your Eyes*. Too bad. Everything he does here is so damn economical, subtle and powerful, with his strings and the odd horn touch. Especially nice are his soft supports to the delicate samba of "Let's Face The Music And Dance" or the emotional rapport he creates wrapping his woodwinds and strings around Krall (like the sweater wrap she wears on the cover) on the title track.

When I Look In Your Eyes, unfortunately, doesn't go far enough. What Krall intimates with her ballads, with that sexy, smoky, close-mic phrasing, sure rhythmic sense and vibrant delivery, has the potential to reduce you to flat-out, head-in-your-hands wonder. Her piano playing, so rhythmically deft and melodically sure, is almost quarantined in the mix of so many instruments, not to mention her voice. (How about a piano-only album, to take a page from Cole?) Second, the mood of too many songs here is one of sunshine, not enough blues or rainy days. But then, maybe that's not her temperament.

There is a tendency to revert to ever-so-cute

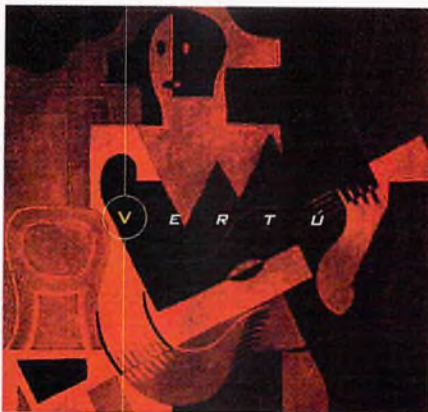
numbers like Michael Franks' "Popsicle Toes" or the standard "Pick Yourself Up," which suggest a top-notch lounge act. All this talk about song selection raises the question: How durable are standards like Cole Porter's "I've Got You Under My Skin"—played here with a very dreamy Latin lilt in another great, understated, powerful arrangement by Mandel—when the lyrics sound dated in today's world of cautious, cynical love? As great as Krall takes this repertoire and makes it her own, it is still the exception that we find a rarity like "I'll String Along With You," which suggests a certain imbalance concerning affairs of the heart. There is tension, if ever so slight, and mystery.

Here's to Krall stringing along with Mandel for more of what has made this record a very worthy work in progress. (A brief note: There are actually 13 songs here, not 12, as listed in the CD booklet. The additional song is "Why Should I Care?")

—John Ephland

When I Look In Your Eyes: Let's Face The Music And Dance; Devil May Care; Let's Fall In Love; When I Look In Your Eyes; Popsicle Toes; I've Got You Under My Skin; I Can't Give You Anything But Love; I'll String Along With You; East Of The Sun (And West Of The Moon); Pick Yourself Up; The Best Thing For You; Do It Again; Why Should I Care? (54:34)

Personnel: Diana Krall, vocals, piano; Russell Malone, guitar; Ben Wolfe, John Clayton, bass; Jeff Hamilton, Lewis Nash, drums; Larry Bunker, vibes; orchestra under the direction of Johnny Mandel (1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13).



Vertú

Vertú

550 Music/Legacy 69871

★½

Gotta give 'em credit at Sony. The marketing line for Vertú's debut is "The Second Coming of Fusion," and that's just what this new super group's self-titled disc sounds like. You've heard it all before.

Hey, no biggie. Reiteration has become a standard jazz strategy. The music never gets the props it believes it deserves, so updating sacred texts is seen as an enabling act. Even

perfection is fucked with. As I write, *Kind Of Blue* is being cast as a repertory piece at George Wein's JVC Jazz Festival.

Of course the reunion of Stanley Clarke and Lenny White is a big deal for fusion zealots. And given the fact that plugged-in keybster Rachel Z is on board, Vertú's marquee value pretty much transcends the music itself. Which isn't too hard. Ten seconds shy of an hour, *Vertú* is teeming with banal textures, musty tempos and muso wank. Mucho, mucho muso wank.

Harking back to the days when the seventh galaxy warranted its own hymn and the emerald beyond provoked singular visions, *Vertú* treats its sacred texts like construction paper. The Mahavishnu Orchestra and Return to Forever are omnipresent here. And grandiose nimrods like Emerson, Lake and Palmer float by, too. Clarke, White and company (guitarist Richie Kotzen and violinist Karen Briggs round out the ensemble) rumble and roar, flail dramatically, and paint jazz-rock as a two-headed monster draped in garish threads. Same as it ever was for those who believe that RTF's original work was generally hollow.

It's hard to decide what *Vertú*'s key problem is: the cloddish rhythms or the pompous thematic material. They run neck and neck throughout the disc, thrilling fans of calculus-based improv and seldom subsiding to allow room for more graceful maneuvers. Hard to believe, but it's stiffer than that new Jeff Beck record.

The most alluring passages come when the ladies flutter alone together. With White's bells adding color, the opening section of "Danse Of The Harlequin" is the program's most whimsical moment. No surprise that both Z and Briggs are playing acoustic and that the bombast that dominates most of the record is momentarily squelched.

The most charismatic bits arrive with a sonic soundtrack that funks around with Middle Eastern clichés. "Marakesh" turns martial beats into a bedrock of drift samples and skittish guitars. Compared to the corny pieces that surround it, like Kotzen's vocal track for instance, it's a daring stab at experimentalism.

There was once a time when I called this stuff Godzilla rock—sinister sounds with overly deliberate strategies that never got out of their own way. Even the rhythmic change-ups thrown by the mildly interesting "Toys" finale can't negate that designation. A confluence of sharded-out Zorn 'n' Zappa riffadelics, it attempts to show breadth while breathing fire in several directions at once. Just one problem: By the end you realize that batteries aren't included.

—Jim Macnie

Vertú: V-Wave; On Top Of The Rain; Anouche; The Call; Topasio, Part One; Topasio, Part Two; Danse Of The Harlequin; Start It Again; Marakesh; Toy. (59:50)

Personnel: Stanley Clarke, bass; Lenny White, drums; Karen Briggs, violin; Rachel Z, keyboards; Richie Kotzen, guitars and vocals.

Charles Lloyd

Just Before Sunrise

32
Jazz



Charles Lloyd

Just Before Sunrise

32 Jazz 32117

★★★★½

The title here is misleading, as it is not the name of either of the two Atlantic LPs collected on this two-disc reissue set, *Dream Weaver* and *Love-In*, released in 1966 and '67 respectively. Musically, these records are attempting to chart post-Trane terrain: lengthy modal meditations, brooding impressionism and pseudo-Eastern themes are the rage, and in this earlier context Lloyd's got a precise bead on Coltrane's tenor sound and concept, as is clearly evident on the ballad "Love Ship." A bit too close for comfort sometimes, perhaps, though played with authority and

pluck. But these outings also come saddled with some attempt to bridge a gap with the pop crowd, as one can see from the groovy cover to *Love-In*—recorded at the San Franciscan psych-headquarters Fillmore Auditorium—and one can hear from that record's atrocious Beatles-cover, "Here There And Everywhere." Keith Jarrett won't be listening back to that performance—square, lifeless comping for Lloyd's saccharine flute—with any glee. Drek.

Jarrett is in his early 20s on these recordings, and he's consistently inventive, pushing hard into startlingly dissonant, rhythmically rugged areas, diving inside the piano to swipe a harp-like wash. DeJohnette, too, sounds great in these dawning days—he can be driving or coloristic, as called for. A very un-Coltrane, gospel-tinged tune like "Is It Really The Same?" is a welcome change-up; its blues feel, along with the post-soul-jazz grinders "Sombrero Sam" and "Love-In," wouldn't be out of place on a market-minded straightahead jazz record coming from New York these days. These juke-oriented tunes are attempts to take Lee Morgan's rumprolling funk to a broader pop audience.

Just Before Sunrise is a typically bare-bones 32 Jazz reissue, with no extra material or detailed new liner text putting the records in a contemporary context. Focus is on the music; most of it stands on its own just fine. —John Corbett

Just Before Sunrise: Autumn Sequence/Autumn Prelude/Autumn Leaves/Autumn Leaves/Autumn Echo; Dream Weaver—Meditation/ Dervish Dance; Bird Flight; Love Ship; Sombrero Sam. (44:05) Tribal Dance; Temple Bells; Is It Really The Same?; Here There And Everywhere; Love-In;

Sunday Morning; Memphis Dues Again/Island Blues. (45:25) **Personnel:** Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone, flute; Keith Jarrett, piano; Cecil McBee (1-5), Ron McClure (6-12), bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.



Cedar Walton

Roots

Astor Place 4010

★★★★½

A flock of established Cedar Walton tunes is the musical business of this unusual 1997 session, which hits the high ground quickly but produces nothing that could be called inspired. It's unusual because this time the pianist has the chance to fatten up some old tunes and fill them out with something close to a big band, his first such opportunity since a 1986 session for Dicos.

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CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
Diana Krall <i>When I Look In Your Eyes</i>		★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★½
Vertú <i>Vertú</i>		★★	★	★½	★★
Charles Lloyd <i>Just Before Sunrise</i>		★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½
Cedar Walton <i>Roots</i>		★★★★½	★★★	★★★★★	★★½

critics' comments

Diana Krall, *When I Look In Your Eyes*

A great collection of fireside adult date music—literate, jazzy, worldly, smart, sexy and wonderfully musical. Strings mingle discretely with Krall's silky piano on the ballads. On the snappier pieces, her conferee is Russell Malone in superb form. Their rapport is a love match of its own. Johnny Mandel's arrangements of strings and muted brass never lose the mood—or force it. —*John McDonough*

Is this a CD or a J. Crew catalog? Very sad how this music is marketed; as a friend of mine put it, it's what someone thinks someone wants. Calculated. As is the music, which can't completely douse the flame of Krall's rather nice voice (huskier than the gauzy cover imagery makes one imagine). But the word "schmaltz" was made for music like this. —*John Corbett*

She's the "it" girl of the era, neck and neck with Cassandra Wilson for coolness. That status can only be bolstered by the ethereal Johnny Mandel arrangements that mark this swerve away from a pure trio sound. And her voice is getting more confident, too. —*Jim Macnie*

Vertú, *Vertú*

This is strictly science fiction music—processed guitar and violin sounds savaged by the filterings of circuit enhancers. This is the work of pros of long standing and known talent; presumably they get what they set out for and there is an audience for it. If so, "Marakesh" surely takes the award for the sloppiest spliced ending since the invention of tape. —*John McDonough*

Pomp and little consequence. In its best moments, a couple of shards of Zappa texture; other spots, it's the return of the most objectionable aspects of fusion. Lots of show, lots of badass posturing, not much music. —*John Corbett*

Vertú suffers not for a lack of musicianship, but because the format trumps the pens of those involved. Backbeats and orchestrated tension via electronics aren't enough, as most of latter-day Return To Forever and Mahavishnu Orchestra proved. —*John Ephland*

Charles Lloyd, *Just Before Sunrise*

Lloyd's music comes back as a period item, certainly not campy or dated, but vaguely remembered and separated from the giddy but transient cultural context that persuaded so many he was so great. Cut to the fun track, "Memphis Dues Again." —*John McDonough*

32 Jazz has been showing its value and integrity with its twofers series of secondary titles that Rhino had no interest in issuing. The Lloyd titles are a trove because they were recorded during a stretch when bending and stretching was par for the course. Mainstream music with an almost devotional take on experimentation. The leader may still be living in Tranetown, but Jarrett is on his way to pure singularity. —*Jim Macnie*

Lloyd's best playing comes via his flute on "Autumn Sequence," his fiery, peppery stick driving the cookin' rhythm section of Jarrett, McBee and DeJohnette. My favorite part is hearing early Jarrett and DeJohnette mix it up. —*John Ephland*

Cedar Walton, *Roots*

I loved *The Composer*, Walton's last Astor Place disc, and this continues musically in the same vein, but I can't get past the terrible sound. Rudy van Gelder's old magic touch certainly isn't here; it's one of the most artificial sounding recordings of jazz I've heard in a long time, particularly the ensemble horn parts. Like fine music on steroids. —*John Corbett*

Precision has a place in jazz. It helps sharpen the edges, amplify the impact, rock the house. Which is exactly the kind of clout Walton's arrangements display. Listen to Josh Redman gallop through "Boliva." He's inspired. And listen to Mark Whitfield trot along the banks of "Mode For Joe." I think we sometimes forget how hip Walton really is. —*Jim Macnie*

This large-ensemble all-star date is interesting to a point. Another example of young and old demonstrating that jazz does not discriminate according to age, *Roots* could have been better served simply as a platform for the rock-solid talents of its leader. —*John Ephland*

The ensemble potential is sometimes used so sparingly, though, one wonders why it was brought in at all. The feeling exuded in the end is essentially that of a small-group bop date with lots of solos.

Not that solos by men of this caliber aren't their own reward, but when you've got a crew like this on hand, why not flaunt it a bit? On "Boliva," to take just one example, the band is confined to little more than one four-bar fragment of melody at the beginning, middle and end. There are no solo beds, no ensemble counterpoint, no dialog or interaction. While some of the collective interludes run longer than a few bars, they are essentially bookends of book-marks. On "Mode For Joe" there is not even a closing ensemble. It just fades indecisively.

Arranged and voiced by Walton in a soft, almost Four Brothers texture, his saxes swing nicely for 24 bars on "Blue Monterey," only to disappear. Perhaps the best of the charts is "Fantasy In D," which achieves, however briefly, the closest interaction between Walton, Mark Whitfield and the band. Terence Blanchard is also well served on "When Love Is New," in which his rounded trumpet sound creates a full bodied blend with the reeds.

Bop has rarely been about big bands, of course, which is why Walton is probably most in his element with his core trio. He turns in a consistent, inventive and generally stellar performance, thoroughly at home in his own repertoire. Joshua Redman plays with a poised drive on two fast pieces, "Ojos De Rogo" and the finale track, "Firm Roots," which also brings back Blanchard. And Whitfield's fine tone and melodic lines are never out of sight on his three tracks. —*John McDonough*

Roots: Boliva; Ojos De Rojo; Where Love Is New; I'll Let You Know; Mode For Joe; Blue Monterey; Fantasy In D; Fiesta Espanol; Firm Roots. (59:43)

Personnel: Cedar Walton, piano; Don Sickler, Terence Blanchard (3, 4, 9), trumpet; Scott Whitfield, trombone; Bobby Porcelli, Willie Williams, Gary Smulyan, Joshua Redman (1, 2, 9), saxophones; Mark Whitfield (5-7), guitar; Ron Carter, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Ray Mantilla, percussion.



Joe Lovano Greg Osby *Friendly Fire* Blue Note 99125

★★★★½

There's reason to be wary of recordings that pair high-profile artists. Too often, there's no true synergy, and the encounter sounds contrived. In this case, *Friendly Fire* persuades you that Joe

Lovano and Greg Osby are kindred spirits. Listeners expecting the raucous energy of a jam session, perhaps a cross between Osby's *Banned In New York* and Lovano's *Quartets*, will be surprised by the thoughtful, collegial tone of their meeting. No participant gets "cut," and the atmosphere of this studio session is more often friendly than fiery.

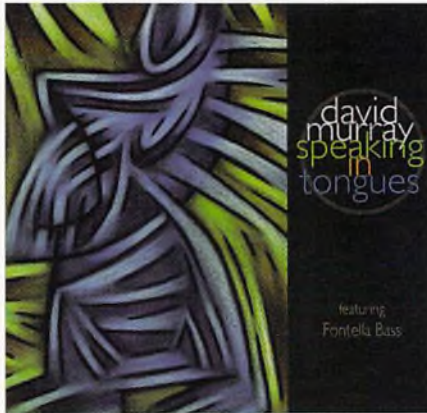
The clean tone and sharp edges of Osby's alto sax lines contrast with the breathy, rough-edged tone of Lovano's tenor. Consider Lovano the romantic in this duo, particularly on "Monk's Mood" and Osby's lovely "Silenos." Lovano also contributes a buoyant, sensitive flute solo to Eric Dolphy's "Serene." Osby plays the role of unsentimental modernist. He negotiates the unusual, serpentine melody of his "Geo J Lo" on alto, and delivers a searching solo on the soprano horn for Lovano's "The Wild East." Each saxophonist supplies three original tunes, but a triptych of compositions by Dolphy, Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman establishes their common ground and forms the centerpiece of the CD.

The co-leaders benefit from a strong rhythm section drawn from their working groups. Pianist Jason Moran duets with Lovano on "Monk's Mood," beautifully enhancing Lovano's bluesy, yearning performance on tenor. Drummer Idris Muhammad consistently provides a strong, swinging foundation. With fine playing and enjoyable, mostly mid-tempo tunes, *Friendly Fire* generally hits its target.

—Jon Andrews

Friendly Fire: Geo J Lo; The Wild East; Serene; Broad Way Blues; Monk's Mood; Idris; Truth Be Told; Silenos; Alexander The Great. (67:57)

Personnel: Joe Lovano, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Greg Osby, alto and soprano saxophones; Jason Moran, piano; Cameron Brown, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums.



David Murray
Speaking in Tongues

Justin Time 118

★★★★

Seasons

Pow Wow 7468

★★★½

Calling tenor saxophonist/bass clarinetist David Murray prolific is sort of like referring to Bill Gates or Warren Buffett as wealthy. Is there anyone in any musical genre with more albums

released in fairly rapid succession? John Zorn might come close and maybe Steve Lacy, Chet Baker, Paul Bley or Sun Ra.

And Murray does keep things varied. For instance, take these recent offerings. Both are, at least to a degree, changes of pace for him, although one should recall a couple of DIW releases from early 1988: *Spirituals* has a slight link to the Justin Time, and *Ballads* has similar connections to the Pow Wow CD.

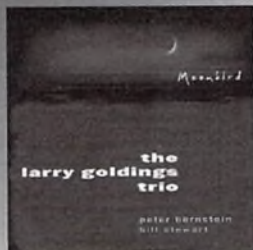
The success of *Speaking In Tongues*, recorded in Paris in late 1997, turns on the singing of Fontella Bass and the tight intensity of a Murray backup team that puts a soul-drenched rhythm & blues spin on much of this spiritual/gospel-oriented material. On the really shouting tracks, the band packs the punch, power and precision of the "Saturday Night Live" band—and with a lot more authenticity and authority.

Murray solos with his usual smelly, wailing swagger, although offering somewhat more control of his passionate side—which can occasionally tend toward wildness. His solos don't go on too long, a practice that often dissipated the energy he was seeking to build. Let's not forget that Murray has roots in this music, having grown up in the Missionary Church of God and Christ in Berkeley, Calif. His only non-tenor track is the bass clarinet feature "Amazing Grace."

What new can be said about Fontella Bass? She did "Rescue Me" in 1965, was married to Lester Bowie for a time, worked with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and is in the midst of a comeback. And she is grand here, particularly

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on the driving and very funky opener, "How I Got Over," "Don't Know What I Would Do" and "A Closer Walk With Thee."

Hugh Ragin sounds better in these circumstances than he has with Roscoe Mitchell or Anthony Braxton or on his own, playing brightly and with some fire. The rhythm team keeps it all together, with pianist/organist Jimane Nelson particularly noteworthy. Watch out for this guy.

Seasons, from mid-1998, is clearly a different story and seems to be more the idea of producer Herbie Miller than Murray. With the exception of the album's opening title track, a Hanna original, the works are standards with seasonal titles.

Although Murray slightly modifies his style

for these conventional works, he occasionally falls short of melding with his rhythm section. This is most obvious on "The Summer Knows," "Indian Summer," "Autumn In New York" and "September In The Rain." At times their differences make it sound as though this is a pickup rhythm section—a tough judgment considering the quality of the players. The merger seems to work best when the rhythm section manages to play in a loosely impressionistic vein.

Murray's two outings on bass clarinet, "Snowfall" and "Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year," work well, with the former getting a particularly sensitive and attractive reading that adds a Duke Ellington aura to the beautiful

Claude Thornhill composition. Murray's best efforts on tenor are the title track and "Spring Is Here."

The album is basically worth three stars, but Hanna plays with such grace under pressure that he alone adds an extra half-star. The rhythm section sounds much more comfortable with the leader away from the microphone. —Will Smith

Speaking In Tongues: How I Got Over; Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen; Jimane's Creation; Missionary; Don't Know What I Would Do; Amazing Grace; Blessed Assurance; A Closer Walk With Thee. (57:28)

Personnel: David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Hugh Ragin, trumpet; Jimane Nelson, organ, piano, synthesizer, vocal (5); Stanley Franks, guitar; Clarence "Pookie" Jenkins, electric bass; Ranzell Merritt, drums; Leopoldo F. Flemming, percussion; Fontella Bass, vocals.

Seasons: Seasons; Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year; Spring Is Here; The Summer Knows; Indian Summer; September Song; Autumn In New York; September In The Rain; Snowfall; Let It Snow. (71:11)

Personnel: David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Sir Roland Hanna, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

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Evan Parker/Georg Gräwe
Unity Variations
Okka Disk 12028

★★★½

It's never easy with Evan Parker. No one demands more of audiences and fellow musicians than this uncompromising saxophonist does. *Unity Variations* documents a 1998 concert by the improvising duo of Parker and pianist Georg Gräwe. Parker, who alternates tenor and soprano saxophones, operates in one of his most abstract and rigorous modes. He starts with a simple theme, then reiterates and embellishes it, ultimately breaking it down and expanding the component parts. The four improvisations reminded me of Coltrane's *Ascension*, but with just two musicians at work. Parker's deconstructions seem likely to polarize an audience into two camps: those dedicated to listening carefully as Parker follows the process, and those who feel alienated and shut out.

Blending Parker's elliptical phrasing with piano can be a challenge. Gräwe is a creative, highly energetic player who should be better known, but he's not an optimal partner for Parker. He initially tries to align himself with Parker's variations through unceasing volleys of notes, but the effect becomes a little claustrophobic. Gräwe plays with increasing confidence as the set progresses, achieving a real symbio-

sis with the soprano saxophone on the exhilarating "Unity Variations 2."

Parker plays the tenor saxophone about twice as long as the soprano horn. I would have reversed the ratio, preferring to hear more from the soprano sax, his most compelling voice.

Unity Variations may not be an ideal introduction to Parker's explorations, but will reward the listener's patience and close attention. —Jon Andrews

Unity Variations: Unity Variations 1; Unity Variations 2; Unity Variations 3; Unity Variations 4. (54:48)

Personnel: Evan Parker, soprano and tenor saxophones; Georg Gräwe, piano.



**Milt Jackson
The Clayton-Hamilton
Jazz Orchestra**

Explosive!
Qwest 47286

★★★★½

Good to have Bags, at age 76, still amazingly vital and persuasive, back with a big band. He was a member of one—Dizzy Gillespie's in the late '40s, from which the MJQ emerged—and has recorded with others, like Basie's in the '70s. His unmistakable, ringing sound really stands out when paired with the bombast, and caress, offered by a large ensemble.

The L.A.-based Clayton-Hamilton outfit, where the remarkable bassist John Clayton does all the writing, is ideally suited for Jackson. It's a modern evolution of the Basie approach, with such Count arrangers as Quincy Jones, Billy Byers, Benny Carter and Thad Jones serving as obvious Clayton influences.

The program is straightahead and swinging. The tempos range from slow to medium-fast, and while it's not a blues album, there's still no shortage of blues richness—both from Bags, one of the great blues players in jazz history, and the band (which gets four tunes to itself). The aptly titled "Revival Meeting" is a sextet track.

The opener is a felicitous amble through Jackson's classic "Bags' Groove," where the leader delivers quietly crackling lines. Then we hear cooking statements from tenorman Rickey Woodard and trombonist George Bohanon—with tones slightly raspy and gleaming, respectively—and a bust-out shout chorus. Up next is an emotive look at "Since I Fell For You," with the vibist in deep blues space. Appealing thoughts from Charles Owens' tenor also arrive. Clayton colors things with an opening band shout and background parts

that slither in and around the vibist's lines.

For consummate balladeer Bags, there's the heartstring puller "The Nearness Of You," where his thematic statement and impassioned solo contrast the pastel-hued backdrops. The closing "Recovery" is tender at first, Jackson hitting choice notes, backed by muted brass and Hamilton's brushwork, then soloing with vigor over more robust orchestration. Monk's "Evidence," which he recorded with the composer in 1948, begins with intermittent horn colors, then heads into medium-up territory with Bags telling a song-like story.

The Clayton-Hamilton tracks are highlighted by "Along Came Betty," with its bravura trumpet effort by Oscar Brashear, "Emily," where Clayton

exhibits his ne plus ultra arco art, and "Back Home Again In Indiana," a showcase for both Clayton's writing and more Hamilton brush mastery.

—Zan Stewart

Explosive! Bags' Groove; Since I Fell For You; Evidence; Back Home Again In Indiana; Deed I Do; The Nearness Of You; Major Deagan (Blues For Dan); Emily; Along Came Betty; Revival Meeting; Recovery. (64:17)

Personnel: Milt Jackson, vibes (1-3, 6-7, 10-11), John Clayton Jr., arco bass, arranger; Jeff Clayton, alto sax, flute, clarinet; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Byron Stripling, Snoike Young, Oscar Brashear, Clay Jenkins, Bobby Rodriguez, trumpets (1-9, 11); George Bohanon, Ira Nepus (1-9, 11), Isaac Smith (1-9, 11), Maurice Spears (1-9, 11), trombones; Keith Fiddmont (1-9, 11), Ricky Woodard, Charles Owens (1-9, 11), Lee Callet (1-9, 11), saxes, woodwinds; Bill Cunliffe, piano; Christoph Luty (1-9, 11), bass; Jim Hershman, guitar (1-9, 11).

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McCoy Tyner
And The Latin All-Stars

Telarc 83462

★★★★½

Pianist Tyner, one of jazz's few true singular stylists, has had an abiding interest in Latin music since his youth in Philadelphia. Until recently, the artist with the lion's roar of a sound—mellifluous and magisterial—hasn't often revealed that fascination. These days, though, he's making occasional appearances with a Latin-based ensemble and has issued this consistently scintillating document.

The throbbing rhythms and winsome melodies of this vital and expanding genre are ideal for the sonorous, percussive pianist, who, with help from a crew of first-rate compadres, clearly has another avenue down which to stride with his characteris-

tic vitality. As he says in the informative liners, he's not offering salsa or Cuban music, but his style of jazz, underpinned with a Latin beat. It's fresh stuff.

Take "Blue Bossa," where an irrepressible Afro-Cuban pulse serves as a vibrant platform for the leader's typically persuasive mix of hard-hit chordal statements, pinpointed right hand lines and muscular left hand thoughts. Then Dave Valentin, Gary Bartz, Steve Turre and Avery Sharpe improvise in turn with substance and elan before Claudio Roditi and Turre exchange enticing ideas with rhythm ace Ignacio Berroa, Giovanni Hidalgo and Johnny Almendra, who keep the groove alive throughout.

On the crackling "Festival In Bahia," Tyner exhibits his knack for rich orchestrations—voicing bass, trombone, trumpet and piano closely for maximum wallop—and dynamics. At first, there's an airiness around the solos of the rhythmically crisp Valentin, the ardent leader and the sweet-toned, articulate Turre, then more band heat raises the intensity level.

The medium-uptempoed "Poinciana" is a feature for Tyner's potent pianisms, while the slower-paced "A Song For Love" showcases his lyrical writing. "Afro Blue" stays true to its original Afro-Cuban intent, and Sharpe's "We Are Our Father's Sons" reveals the bassist as ace composer as well.

—Zan Stewart

McCoy Tyner And The Latin All-Stars: Festival In Bahia; Poinciana; Afro Blue; A Song For Love; La Habana Sol; We Are Our Father's Sons; Blue Bossa. (61:54)

Personnel: McCoy Tyner, piano; Avery Sharpe, bass; Ignacio Berroa, drums; Johnny Almendra, timbales; Giovanni Hidalgo, percussion; Gary Bartz, alto, soprano saxophone; Claudio Roditi, trumpet, flugelhorn; Steve Turre, trombone, shells; Dave Valentin, flute.



Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls
Propaganda

Naim 036

★★★★½

With his sophomore outing on Naim, drummer Ted Sirota and his fine quintet the Rebel Souls (composed of members of Tortoise, Isotope 217 and the Chicago Underground Orchestra) disseminate their jazz ideas with the kind of fun-loving gusto and grit that makes for an immensely satisfying listen. It's that simple: This CD bears repeated spins, which is a rare triumph for any recording these days. The title states "propaganda," but the only doctrine at work here is free instrumental expression in service to the songs. The outing owes its success both to the

strength of the melodies across the board and the highly engaged ensemble interplay. Bottom line, you get the sense that these guys enjoy playing together because they're so comfortable conversing with each other on their instruments.

With Sirota propelling the proceedings from his drum kit command post, the Rebel Souls open the CD with a gem, "Geronimo's Free." Written by Sirota, it's a fun jaunt with a head that's singable. The sturdy groove is driven by a bouncy ska-ish beat (with tenor saxophonist Kevin Kizer and cornetist Rob Mazurek playing the catchy rhythmic motif that fuels the tune) and the gleeful solo action is top-notch with guest Ryan Shultz wah-wahing on his

trombone and Jeff Parker picking out guitar grit then spinning off into a Blood Ulmer-like growl. Plus Sirota himself has an exclamatory smash-knock-crash good time.

The second number of the collection, "Ten," by Mazurek, starts off promisingly with Parker's guitar in quiet mode, Mazurek's cornet muted and Sirota deliciously high in the mix. But it stalls momentarily in the angular tenor sax improv until the composer rescues the piece by playfully blowing a spirited cornet passage that paves the way for bassist Noel Kupersmith's solo spot. Likewise on Sirota's composition "Propaganda," when the band departs from the boppish melody for ruminative collective improv, the momentum drags. In contrast, the free-for-all at the close of Sirota's percussive "La Danse de Janvier" makes more sense because it supports the effervescence of the piece.

With Sirota at the helm, rhythm, especially the mid-to-uptempo brand, figures prominently. Yet the ballads—including Kizer's slow dance in threes "Carolynn's Blues" and Mazurek's reflective "Lonely People"—work splendidly. That says a lot. The brawn is impressive, but ardent music played with a tender touch is always so much harder to pull off. Sirota's band may be Rebel Souls, but they have big hearts too.

—Dan Ouellette

Propaganda: Geronimo's Free; Ten; Carolynn's Blues; Propaganda; Lonely People; La Danse De Janvier; Little Spots; Hemiola. (61:02)

Personnel: Ted Sirota, drums; Kevin Kizer, tenor saxophone; Rob Mazurek, cornet; Jeff Parker, guitar; Noel Kupersmith, bass; Ryan Shultz, bass trumpet (1); Rick Gehrenbeck, Fender Rhodes (6); Ruben Alvarez, percussion (6).

international platform. A recent hit documentary film (see Page 59) offered them a chance to tell their stories, and solo discs from vocalist Ibrahim Ferrer and guitarist Eliades Ochoa proclaim that this explosion is just beginning.

With his quiet determination and charm, Ferrer emerged as a hero of the movie. His voice is as inspiring as his personality. Ferrer sang for years with Benny More, and although his voice is softer than the legendary bandleader's, he definitely inherited the magic. On the son montuno "Mami Me Gustó," Ferrer sets up his elongated lines in contrast to the crisp uptempo beat. Guitarist Manuel Galban adds a funky edge to his quiet pleas on "Nuestra Ultima Cita." But the disc's absolute beauty is in such ballads as the bolero "Como Fue," where Ferrer breathes joy and longing through each word. Several of the outstanding musicians from Buena Vista surround Ferrer, and the top-notch arrangements recall the era of big band & crooner combinations. Rubén González's piano introduction to "Aquellos Ojos Verdes" is ideal in its oblique delicacy. Guest singers Teresa García Caturia and Omara Portuondo show that there are plenty of other Cuban stars who may someday receive the international audience they deserve.

While Ferrer sings in front of lush, urbane orchestrations, Ochoa sticks to leading the basic (two guitar, two percussion, and a bass) Cuarteto Patria. Along with preserving the traditional sound from rural Santiago, this line-up puts the focus on his dazzling instrumental technique and fine voice. The Cuarteto Patria readily moves with him among such indigenous Cuban song forms as the guaracha, bolero and son, while Ochoa reveals their roots through his Spanish flamenco-inspired improvisations. Although his quick fingers are what will make listeners notice him initially, his slowly moving "Pedacito De Papel" leaves the most lasting impression. A few American guests drop by the sessions, and Los Lobos guitarist David Hidalgo blends in effectively with the group. Ry Cooder and his percussionist son Joaquim also enhance "La Comparsa."

—Aaron Cohen


Buena Vista Social Club Presents Ibrahim Ferrer: Bruca Maniguá; Herido De Sombras; Marieta; Guateque Campesino; Mami Me Gustó; Nuestra Ultima Cita; Cienfuegos Tiene Su Guaguancó; Silencio; Aquellos Ojos Verdes; Qué Bueno Baila Usted; Como Fue. (52:09).

Personnel: Ibrahim Ferrer, vocals; Rubén González, piano; Manuel Galbán, electric guitar; Orlando "Cachaito" López, bass; Amadito Valdés, trmbales; Angel Terry, congas; Roberto García, bongos; Carlos González, bongos; Alberto "Virgilio" Valdés, maracas; Ibrahim Ferrer Jr., clave; Ry Cooder, electric guitar; Joachim Cooder, drums; Teresa García Caturia, vocals (3); Omara Portuondo, vocals (8); José Antonio Rodríguez, vocals (7); Gil Bernal, tenor saxophone (4, 9).

Sublime Ilusion: Ay Papacito; Pintate Los Labios María; Cariño Falso; Sublime Ilusión; Volver; Saludo Compay; Qué Humanidad; Jn Negro En La Habana; Mi Sueño Prohibido; Mi Guajirita; Teje Que Teje; El Trio Y El Ciclón; Mi Magdalena; Pedacito De Papel; La Comparsa. (58:07)

Personnel: Eliades Ochoa, lead vocals, first guitar; Humberto Ochoa, second guitar, vocals; Eglis Ochoa, clave, maracas, backing vocals; William Calderón, double bass, backing vocals; Roberto Torres, percussion, backing vocals; Ry Cooder, guitar (15); David Hidalgo, guitar (7, 11); Charlie Musselwhite, harmonica (11); Joachim Cooder, drums, percussion (15); Luis González, horns (2, 6).

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Ibrahim Ferrer
Buena Vista Social Club Presents
World Circuit/Nonesuch 79532

★★★★½

Eliades Ochoa
Sublime Ilusion
Higher Octave 47494

★★★★

The Buena Vista Social Club disc conquered the world two years ago. When American guitarist Ry Cooder brought the musicians (some of whom had given up on performing for decades) into the studio to record the disc, they played with the enthusiasm that can be expected from sages who are given an



Carlinhos Brown

Omelete Man

Metro Blue 97402

★★★★

Tom Zé

Postmodern Platos

Luaka Bop 9561

★★★

Even if too many North Americans still primarily associate Brazilian sounds with serene bossa nova, the country's musical diversity and constant innovation are finding several new receptive listeners in this part of the world. Percussionist Carlinhos Brown and singer Tom Zé have shown how a wide appeal can result from creating music without limits.

"Afro-Brazilian popular music without prejudice" are the accurate words that Brown uses to discuss his creations. He has composed for several Brazilian stars—including Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa and Marisa Monte, who produced *Omelete Man*. A few identifiable Brazilian touches do appear on the disc; aside from the Portuguese lyrics, Brown occasionally uses bossa nova voicings or samba beats. But the whole project is such an enthusiastic cross-continental stylistic thrill ride, that those are just a few ingredients. High-octane funk reverberates throughout the disc, which is not surprising since James Brown inspired his name. P-Funk keyboardist Bernie Worrell shows up on a Hammond B-3 for "Vitamina Ser." If The Beatles used stronger percussionists, the results might have sounded like "Soul By Soul." Thrash-metal meets soccer chants in "Cachorro Louco," and "Mae Que Eu Nasci" is a warm string-laden ballad. Stylistic jump cuts may seem passe nowadays, but Brown's infectious enthusiasm and non-ironic humor throughout *Omelete Man* breathes new life into the concept.

Brazil's tropicália movement of the late '60s opened doors that helped make Brown's expansive mixture possible. Despite widespread opposition, the tropicália musicians added psychedelia and avant-garde surrealism into their love of 20th century pop and samba. A key figure from this era, Tom Zé, also contributed his knowledge of modern classical composition and new uses for blenders and typewriters. His terrific *Fabrication Defect* from last year showed how his creative spirit is unabated. *Postmodern*

Platos is primarily composed of remixes from that disc, but it also includes the previously unreleased "Canudos." Zé's hip American rock musician disciples are at the controls. While it seems to be intended for listeners who are already fans, it's an enjoyable tribute. Rhythm tracks are pulled out and isolated and then reconfigured with snatches of melodies and random electronic noises; it shares a wavelength with Jamaican dub productions, such as records by Lee "Scratch" Perry. Even though massive parties are a famous part of Brazilian culture, this disc works best on headphones.

—Aaron Cohen

Omelete Man: Omelete Man; Vitamina Ser; Hawaii E You; Irará; Soul By Soul; Water My Girl; Tribal United

Dance; Cachorro Louco; Faraó; Amantes Cinzas; Busy Man; Cold Heart; Mãe Que Eu Nasci; Musico; Hino De Sto. Antônio. (46:14)

Personnel: Carlinhos Brown, bateria, baixo, guitarra, timbales, surdo virado, organ, piano, wood block. Various other musicians include Marisa Monte, vocals; Bernie Worrell, organ, clavinet; Davi Moraes, guitarra; Dadi Carvalho, baixo; Erik Friedlander, cello; Mark Feldman, violin; Luciano Silva, saxophone.

Postmodern Platos: Defect 2 Curiosidade High Llamas Remix; Defect 2 Curiosidade John McEntire Remix; Defect 5 O Olho Do Lago Sean Lennon Remix; Defect 2 Curiosidade Amon Tobin Remix; Defect 1 Gene-Gene To Gene Remix; Canudos. (30:00)

Personnel: Jar Bas Mariz, mandolin; Marco Prado, guitar; Gilberto Assis, bass; Siba, violin; Zé Miguel Wisnik, keyboard; Lauro Léllis, drums; Marcos Suzano, percussion; Luanda, Nilza Maria, vocals.



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Harry Connick Jr.

Come By Me

Columbia 69618

★★★★½

Harry Connick Jr. has produced a sharp and shiny collection of originals and standards, leavened by a few finger-snapping piano solos played with a fine transparent clarity within what is essentially a solid popular vocal outing.

It's common to link Connick with Sinatra, which is fine as far as it goes; some of these titles are more or less in the swinging Sinatra tradition. But it does account for the range of Connick's persona. A more accurate antecedent might be Bobby Darin or, better still, Bing Crosby, who used jazz to put enough emotional distance between him and his material to produce a malleable style credibly negotiable from Tin Pan Alley to San Antonio to Hawaii. Songs that would have fit the urbane and sophisticated Sinatra like a plaid zoot suit became in Bing's hands appealing specimens of mainstream pop singing. Connick has that same easygoing musicality and lack of emotional commitment. We don't look for high sophistication in Connick, who could proba-

bly wear a plaid zoot suit if he wished. Like Crosby, he has traded depth for breadth.

The main rewards here come in the hip medium tempos that Connick writes so well to and settles into with facile comfort. Among his own tunes, which have a traditional pop catchiness about them in the best sense of the word, none is better than his homage to nonsuccess, "Nowhere With Love." Tune, lyric and arrangement jell nicely. Soft brass figures mix with discrete strings, and Connick's ambling, laconic piano chorus, backed by a pillow of strings against riffing saxes, is among the album's most affecting pleasures. "Come By Me" is another good pop boogie tune.

The standards are a diverse lot. The chart for "Time After Time" is a curiously methodical abstraction of woodwinds and piano in which the band, which enters briefly at first, seems an intruder. Connick's late blooming vocal at the end is a bit of a non-sequitur, leaving the earlier musings stranded and inconclusive, not to mention sounding just a little too serious to be taken seriously. "Next Door Blues" is the album's one instrumental and features some fine, sonorous sax writing.

Then there's "Love For Sale," whose first-person lyric, clearly intended for a woman, becomes in Connick's hands an ode, without apparent irony or intent to commit camp, to male prostitution, a pastime which not even our present embrace of sexual tolerance has managed to rehabilitate, and one that, unless I've missed something, seems inconsistent with Connick's career history. If this seems a picky and non-musical red herring, I refer the reader to a 1993 Columbia CD called *Art Deco*, a collection of 1930s performances assembled on precisely this premise. Perhaps 60 years ago the level of social consciousness of a gay subculture was so invisible, no one cared if a man sang "Can't Help Lovin' That Man." Today we are so attuned to sexual definition,

we can't help but notice. —John McDonough

Come By Me: Nowhere With Love; Come By Me; Charade; Change Partners; Easy For You To Say; Time After Time; Next Door Blues; Easy To Love; There's No Business Like Show Business; A Moment With Me; Danny Boy; Cry Me A River; Love For Sale. (62-53)

Personnel: Harry Connick Jr., piano, vocals; Arthur Latin, drums; Charnette Moffett, bass; Mike Smith, Jon Gordon, alto sax; Gerry Weldon, Charles Goolid, tenor sax; Dave Schumacher, baritone sax; Roger Ingram, Dan Miller, Leroy Jones, Jeremy Davenport, trumpet; Mark Mullins, Craig Klein, Lucien Barbarin, trombone; Joe Barati, bass trombone; plus strings and other additional musicians.



Chick Corea & Origin

Change

Stretch 9023

★★★★½

The album's title is Chick Corea's artistic philosophy. It follows, then, that the second Origin release (assuming the live six-CD set and the single album drawn from it are counted as one) is a solid outgrowth of its predecessor.

The tracks here are shorter, averaging seven minutes rather than 10-11, but in those briefer time spans, Corea and his colleagues pack plenty of musical excitement and vigor. All the numbers are originals and offer tremendous variety in terms of moods and feelings; the leader in both an evolved '60s vein and a more contemporary mode, evincing 20th century classical influences.

From the opening "Wigwam," a tasty minor blues where Corea plays both marimba and piano, to the vibrant closer, "Awakening," *Change* makes for rewarding listening.

Each track has some form of surprise to enliven it. "Wigwam" starts almost like a pastoral with marimba stating the theme, and horn lines that gradually build in volume. Then Steve Wilson raises the heat with some rigorous choruses. Steve Davis displays his big sound, and finally Corea is in with hard-hit chords, fleet lines and edgy arpeggios. The climactic horn parts are a zestful shout.

"Before Your Eyes" is another number that evolves dramatically. First there are warm bass clarinet tones from Bob Sheppard amidst piano lines, all with a lot of space. Other horns come and go, then the number segues from a soft ballad to a more robust, yet still slow piece. Silence follows, then a more energized feeling for a rousing close.

There are many other highlights. "Armando's Tango" reveals the leader's capacity to concoct interesting arrangements for this ensemble, with clarinet, bass clarinet, trombone, piano, bass and

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drums all combining to deliver richly textured lines. Sheppard's bass clarinet solo is a delight. Avishai Cohen has several core moments in "Home," another multimood composition, and his muscular "Lylah" solidly sets up the final "Awakening." "Compassion (Ballad)" is a feature for the ever-inventive Corea, showcasing his lyricism.

—Zan Stewart

Chick Corea & Origin: Change; Wigwam; Armando's Tango; Little Flamenco; Early Afternoon Blues; Before Your Eyes; L.A. Scenes; Home; The Spinner; Compassion (Ballad); Night (Lylah); Awakening. (70:39)

Personnel: Chick Corea, piano, marimba; Steve Wilson, soprano and alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; Bob Sheppard, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Steve Davis, trombone; Avishai Cohen, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

others linger on mellifluous tones. Wall's solo shows he can play pretty and still stay modern and cliché-free.

Two other high points: the medium-slow "The Tomb," where Bergonzi ranges from dream-like to ebullient, and the telling ballad "Invisible Light," where the leader and Wall tell tender stories.

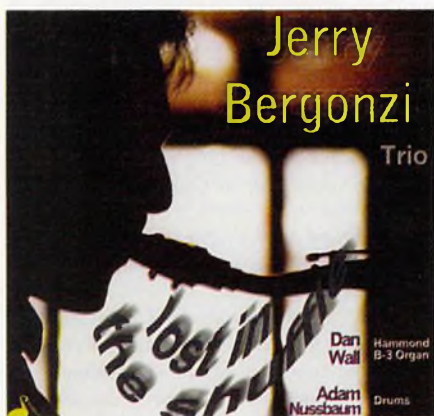
Dave Santoro has teamed with Bergonzi for 20 years and appears on such CDs as *Standard Gonz* (Blue Note). For his A-1 debut, the bassist gathers a band of favored colleagues for some classics—reworked and otherwise.

One of the former is "Green Dolphin Street," with its surprising modulations—there are four key centers. The Barron-esque Bruce Barth

works with a flexible time concept and mixes long lines that curve with shorter, punched thoughts. Bergonzi, being himself, ranges from insistent bursts to economical utterances. Another reharmonized number is "I Love You," which here recalls "Giant Steps." As you'd expect, Bergonzi is on familiar ground and works with zeal.

More true-to-form is "Time After Time," where the tenorman adheres to some chords, ignores others. Santoro solos with a full tone, and his lines boast architectural design, be they a group of separated repeated notes or convoluted tumbling descents.

"Stairway To The Stars" is a welcome ballad.



Jerry Bergonzi
Lost In The Shuffle
Double-Time Records 142
★★★½

Dave Santoro
Standards Band
Double-Time Records 151
★★★★

Boston-based Jerry Bergonzi seems destined to carve out a lasting niche in the super-competitive East Coast tenor saxophone scene.

Gonz's second recording with Dan Wall, a very hip Hammond B-3er, and firestarter Adam Nussbaum, is chock full of play-me-again cuts. A typical killer is "Have You Met Miss Jones?" a speedy romp with an added key change for increased challenge and complexity. The leader issues both brief ideas and longer, go-stop-go, hard-swung lines, some sweet to the ear, others tart as hell. Wall, emitting that buoyant, luminous sound associated with Larry Young, is likewise on target. Nussbaum, the high-spirited basher, pushes his partners perfectly.

Another cooker is the title track, indeed a shuffle but not a blues and based on either a foot-tapping eighth-note feeling or a pushing-the-edges 16th-note pulse. Bergonzi adamantly makes his case with evocative shrieks, feverish twist-turn lines and volatile arpeggio variants. Here, Bergonzi indulges in a troubling tendency: playing way more notes than he needs.

On "Different Places Together," a dulcet bossa, Bergonzi is lower-keyed yet still effervescent: Some of his ideas are so fast the notes blur,

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"Autumn Serenade" has a zesty Latin frame. And "The More I See You" motors along nicely, the pianist ever-tuneful, Bergonzi ever-boisterous, the leader fat-toned and supple-lined.

—Zan Stewart

Lost In The Shuffle: The Tomb; Different Places Together; Sound Advice, Lost In The Shuffle; Invisible Light; Simultaneous Looks; Wind Print; Have You Met Miss Jones?; Different Places Together (Alt.); Invisible Light (Alt.). (69:23)

Personnel: Jerry Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Dan Wall, Hammond B-3 organ; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

Dave Santoro Standards Band: Green Dolphin Street; Time After Time; Autumn Serenade; I Love You, Stairway To The Stars; The More I See You; For All We Know. (57:20)

Personnel: Dave Santoro, bass; Jerry Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Bruce Barth, piano; Tom Melito, drums.



**Roscoe Mitchell
and the Note Factory**

Nine To Get Ready

ECM 1651

★★★★

Roscoe Mitchell Quartet

In Walked Buckner

Delmark 510

★★★½

The esteemed multi-reedist straddles the fence on these discs, leaning toward avant-garde for the duration but showing, in glimpses, an affinity for traditional realms of jazz as well.

The ECM project comes across as the more ambitiously orchestrated of the two. It develops in a well-paced procession, starting out with

prayerful, broad-toned pieces and picking up steam as it goes along. With a horn section that teams him with trombonist George Lewis and trumpeter Hugh Ragin, Mitchell paints lush, richly voiced harmonies that are served well by ECM's pristine sound quality. In "Leola," the horns repeat a simple theme as if it were a mantra. The less-is-more approach continues into "Dream And Response," where they trade plaintive whinnies and whale calls but still evoke an air of minimalistic restraint.

"For Lester B," while remaining in a tranquil mode, offers a stylistic contrast, combining the feel of a traditional romantic ballad with a melody that peers into the future. Mitchell displays a nice alto tone on the Ornette-ish ballad "Jamaican Farewell," and then, with the advent of "Hop Hip Bip Bir Rip," all Armageddon breaks loose. The horns ring in a climate of change when they repeat hypnotic gong-like tones. Mitchell leads them into a convoluted theme on soprano, then spews circular-breathed sheets of noise, to which Lewis and Ragin add their own bluster. It's no longer revolutionary, perhaps, but this kind of chaos works to maximum impact here because we're allowed to dwell calmly in the eye of the hurricane before the storm flips our boat over.

"Bessie Harris" stands out because, like "For Lester B," it combines a vaguely traditional jazz flavor with a progressive melody and harmonies. And, if I'm hearing it right, both drummers are playing simultaneously, in separate channels and slightly at odds with each other, creating an off-kilter but enticing pulse. Lewis and Ragin step out with their own solos here, chops a-blaring, calmly spurning anyone who doubts that free music requires discipline.

Finally, "Big Red Peaches" is an apparently tongue-in-cheek heavy-metal/funk number that sounds like the theme to a blaxploitation flick no one would admit to watching. It's always refreshing to hear an avant-gardist display a touch of humor. Once again, the element of surprise works in Mitchell's favor.

If the ECM disc flows like a suite from beginning to end, the Delmark outing is more of a mixed bag. There's less emphasis on orchestration, more on improv involving little bells and big flutes. "Three Sides Of A Story" dishes up the kind of jarring tenor madness that first brought Mitchell to prominence, and on "Squeaky," he makes his soprano yelp like a coyote caught in a fur trap. Other material is far more traditionally rooted. On the title track especially, Mitchell blows in a beefy, lounging style that, for a split second, could be mistaken for a chilled-out Sonny Rollins. He employs pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath as his rhythm section, guys who share one of Mitchell's own marked characteristics: musical breadth.

—John Janowiak

Nine To Get Ready: Leola; Dream And Response; For Lester B; Jamaican Farewell; Hop Hip Bip Bir Rip; Nine To Get Ready; Bessie Harris; Fallen Heroes; Move Toward The Light; Big Red Peaches. (55:18)

Personnel: Roscoe Mitchell, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, flute and lead vocal; Hugh Ragin, trumpet; George Lewis, trombone; Matthew Shipp, piano; Craig Taborn, piano; Jaribu Shahid, bass and vocal; William Parker, bass; Tani Tabbal, drums, jembe and vocal; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

In Walked Buckner: Off Shore; In Walked Buckner; Squeaky; The Le Dreher Suite; Three Sides Of A Story, Till

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Autumn; Fly Over; Opposite Sides. (64:49)

Personnel: Roscoe Mitchell, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, piccolo flute, baroque flute, bass recorder, clarinet, small bells and whistles; Jodie Christian, piano and small bells; Reggie Workman, bass, small percussion and whistle; Albert "Tootie" Heath, drums, Egyptian flute, didgeridoo and small percussion.

Larry Goldings

Moonbird

Palmetto 2045

★★★★½



The Matt Wilson Quartet

Smile

Palmetto 2049

★★★★

In less than a decade, New York City-based Palmetto Records has established a reputation for providing jazz players a vehicle for music that defies easy categorization.

Keyboardist Larry Goldings' Palmetto debut showcases the mellow side of his trio with six originals and two folk classics from the heyday of the singer-songwriter. The bluesy "Crawdaddy" sets the tone with its sensuous, slow-grind rhythm and languorous-but-beefy drumming by Bill Stewart. Stewart also keeps a slow fire burning under "Empty Oceans" with an economical solo that is constructed around a bass drum pattern.

Elsewhere, on the title track, "Christine" and "Comfort Zone," Goldings sets a breezy pace, sliding through some tasty changes, but never really churning up the funk he made his reputation on with Maceo Parker and John Scofield. Guitarist Peter Bernstein also seems to be skimming the surface, singing but seldom stinging.

Joni Mitchell's 1970 anthem "Woodstock" is a moody change of pace, ushered in by Stewart's gongs and cymbals, but the piece hardly seems to warrant the 10-plus minutes allotted to it. Goldings plays some effectively surging organ washes, and Bernstein turns in a pretty solo, but—like Miles Davis' extended interpretation of David Crosby's "Guinnevere" from the same era—the slight melody is overwhelmed by the exotic treatment.

Nothing is drawn out or overwrought on the third Palmetto release by drummer Matt Wilson's band. Although his compositions tend to be episodic in nature, each section is succinct and tailored for maximum impact. Wilson's

drumming style involves being in constant motion, altering volume and speed to reflect what's going on around him, and his writing takes the same approach. Chaotic passages jump-cut to strong thematic statements and then resolve back to more manic activity. Even his atmospheric pieces, like "Dusting Of Snow" and "Day Maker," are shot through with a distinctive sense of energy and movement.

Humor is another constant in Wilson's music. On the frenetic "Go Team Go," saxophonists Andrew D'Angelo and Joel Frahm recreate the organized mayhem of a sports stadium, capped by the ascending "charge" theme and a wildly squealing tenor chorus. Then, as if the batter has humiliated himself by whiffing, Yosuke Inoue

enters with a mournful bass solo.

John Coltrane's "Grand Central" fits well into Wilson's world, and the horns capture the rush of commuters as Wilson alternately drives and responds to his soloists.

The most impressive aspect of Wilson's drumming is the sense of surprise he generates by refusing to do what's expected. Occasionally, his concept can seem as whackily perfect as Spike Jones', as on D'Angelo's "Big Butt." Against the stuttering funk of the tune's theme, Wilson mimics the percussive sounds of a woodwork shop, alternating sawing, hammering and sanding effects. At other times, he can sound like he's having fun reinterpreting the drumming of his forebears; just listen to him drop a Krupaesque



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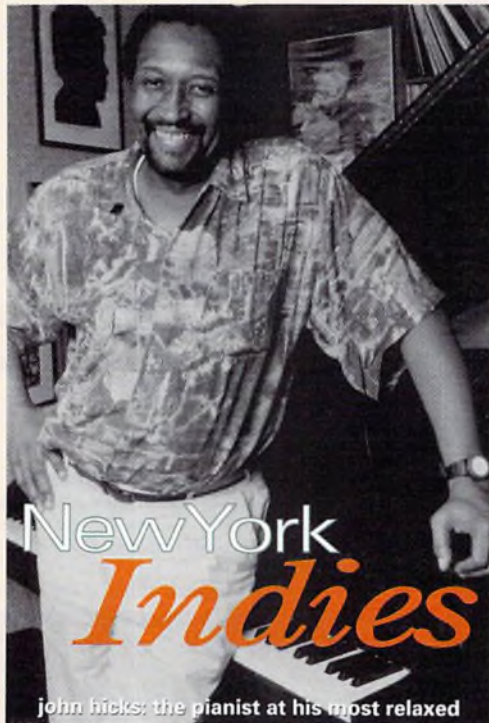
John Hicks: *Hicks Time: Solo Piano* (Passin' Thru 41211; 59:52) ★★★★★ Playing Bradley's was a rite of passage for most of New York's elite pianists. John Hicks seemed more than anyone to embody the essence of the joint, which closed in 1996. In fact, you might describe Hicks—a 360-degree improviser with a romantic sensibility equal parts down-home and urbane—as the quintessential New York pianist. This intimate 1998 recital comprises nine originals by Hicks and two by producer and sometime collaborator Oliver Lake, capturing the pianist at his most relaxed and lyric, as though playing for family.

Ned Rothenberg/Sync: *Port Of Entry* (Intuition 3249; 65:13) ★★½ Debuting the trio Sync (tabla virtuoso Samir Chatterjee and panidiomatic Jerome Harris on acoustic guitar and bass), which bats ideas around like major leaguers in a pepper game, Rothenberg finds an ideal frame to explore within a melodic context his abiding interest in multiphonics, overtone control, circular breathing and complex rhythmic signatures. It's one thing to mix genres, another to create coherent narrative from the hybrid.

Jim Nolet: *Syzygy* (Cathexis 93-006; 53:36) ★★½ Ex Jazz Passenger Nolet claims his niche in the upper echelon of jazz violinists. Trumpeter Tim Hagans and vibraphonist Bryan Carrott alternate as inspired front-line foils, while bassist Darryl Hall and drummer Reggie Nicholson provide appropriately turbulent backdrops. Nolet and Hagans get a pleasing as-one blend on the title track, an "Impressions" variant, and on "Love Can See," an original ballad with Nolet on viola; vibes and violin interweave sinuously on Ellington's "Angelica" and the Nolet waltz "Tycoon." Nolet slaloms through Coltrane's "Countdown" like a downhill champion and keens feelingly on "Central Park West."

Bill Ware, Y2K Jazz Quartet: *Keeping Up With the Joneses* (Cathexis 93-005; 56:33) ★★★★★ Jazz Passenger Ware

reaffirms hardcore jazz props with a strong Marty Ehrlich-produced vibraphone and rhythm date, elevated by ferociously swinging bass-drum tandem Brad Jones and Victor Jones (hence the title) and interactive pianist Jonathan Crayford. Ware's references to usual suspects Milt Jackson, Cal Tjader and Roy Ayers avoid the photocopier; they're jumping off points for interpretations that reflect an encyclopedic range of techniques and timbres.



Mark Elf: *New York Cats* (Jen Bay 0005; 65:45) ★★★★★ For his fourth self-produced CD, the guitarist offers an elegantly paced bop 'n' blues trio session, matched beat-for-beat by bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Dennis Mackrell. Elf produces a resonant, cleanly articulated sound on his hollow-body instrument, thinking orchestrally at all tempi. He brings out his third hand (joke) for the encore, a pair of bravura unaccompanied recitatives.

Frank Kimbrough: *Chant* (IGMOD 49807; 52:23) ★★★★★ Pianist Frank Kimbrough, bassist Ben Allison and drummer Jeff Ballard offer a one-take trio recording from sessions in 1992 and 1997. The music reminds you of some of Paul Bley's tabula rasa efforts, referencing (among others) in a unified continuum Andrew Hill, Herbie Nichols, Herbie Hancock and Bley's harmonic channeling of Ornette Coleman. **DB**

tom-tom fill into a hilariously juiced-up take on "I Found A New Baby."

Wilson's quartet does leave the postmodernist shenanigans for some gorgeous ballad playing. On a meditative version of Sinatra's "Strangers In The Night," D'Angelo and Frahm plaintively deconstruct the dooby-doo melody, while Inoue meanders around them and Wilson splashes accents, and the leader's melancholy "Dusting Of Snow" provides a showcase for his fluid brushwork.

Like fellow youngblood drummers Jim Black and Susie Ibarra, Matt Wilson sets out to carve new territory for traps players. Not content to be timekeeper, Wilson is succeeding as timesetter.

—James Hale

Moonbird: Crawdaddy; Moonbird; Woodstock; Christine; Empty Oceans; Xoloft; Comfort Zone; I Think It's Going To Rain Today. (54:55)

Personnel: Larry Goldings, organ, piano; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Bill Stewart, drums.

Smile: Wooden Eye; Boo Boo's Birthday; Dusting Of Snow; Big Butt; Grand Central; Strangers In The Night; Making Babies; Day Maker; Go Team Go; Cinderblock Shelter; I Found A New Baby. (46:29)

Personnel: Matt Wilson, drums; Joel Frahm, tenor and soprano saxophones; Andrew D'Angelo, alto saxophone and bass clarinet; Yosuke Inoue, bass.



Doron Johnson
Stride Ways
Doron Enterprises

★★★

To get truth-in-packaging issues out of the way first, this is decidedly NOT a stride piano outing and should not be acquired on the assumption that it is. You can relax, Judy Carmichael.

What it is is an solid middle-of-the-road trio recital by a pianist who, like a kind of latter-day Marcus Roberts, appears to be a keen observer and editor of the jazz piano tradition but not one interested in carrying the banner for James P. Johnson or any other icon of old. The album notes claim that the young (23) pianist seeks to "move stride piano into the 20th century." Setting aside the fact that stride is already in the 20th century, there are barely enough left-handed 10ths here to get Johnson's card punched. "Nobles Dance," a short Johnson original, is the only sustained stride piano on the album. And don't be fooled by a track like "Boogie Man," whose eight-to-the-bar bassline goes flat-out

funky after 12 bars and never looks back. This contrasts with a relaxed run through Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz," which shifts back and forth between moderate tempos without ever evoking Waller.

Five of the pieces are Johnson's own, and it's clear that he's drawn on more than the sustained melodic models of 1920s piano for inspiration. His compositions favor short, quirky, Monkish figures ("Stride Ways," "Sacrifice"), which tend not to get in the way as he spins off into the real business of playing. "Peter Wheat" sets Johnson against a simple bass vamp by Carlos Henrequez that sometimes suggests a Bill Evans-Paul Chambers dialog, à la "So What." His virtuosity is clean and sharp at the fastest tempos, and his lines are smartly phrased, full of variety and shifting voicings, and all fitted together in a tight trio format. Greg Tardy and Darren Barrett fill out a front line on "Boogie Man."

There is a command and confidence in Johnson's work that is impressive for a first CD, though at this level of playing command and confidence are a given and not scarce. Johnson may not offer us a particularly distinctive voice, but it is an accomplished one worth hearing, and watching.

—John McDonough

Stride Ways: Stride Ways, Jitterbug Waltz, Where or When, Sacrifice, Watch What Happens, Boogie Man, Peter Wheat, Nobles Dance. (42-33)

Personnel: Doron Johnson, piano; Carlos Henrequez, bass; Rodney Green, drums; Greg Tardy, tenor saxophone (6); Darren Barrett, trumpet (5, 6).



Jane Ira Bloom

The Red Quartets

Arabesque 0144

★★★★½

Soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom, never one to make a surfeit of recordings, can add another solid outing to her slowly growing discography. Her interplay with Fred Hersch is long established, but is less so with Bobby Previte and, particularly, Mark Dresser—an amazing bassist who adds so much to this date.

Together these players create a discourse of such empathy that they seem to breathe in unison. This is especially true on "Monk's Rec Room" (in which several of the master's themes are suggested), "Five Full Fathoms"

(where Bloom recalls Steve Lacy at times), "Climb Inside Her Eyes" (a sensitive reading that seems to be about a breakup) and "Emergency" (a fragmentary, stop-and-start item that deals with acceleration, deceleration and a reading of the theme by Hersch and Bloom that at times is almost an echo).

The leader, of course, has her own sound, as well as a stylistic device that has the quality of an electronically smeared or extended tone, although there is no mention of the electronics she has employed occasionally in past recordings. While she gets a bit shrill in spots on "Always Hope," that quality is not a major part of her sound oeuvre. And "Jax Calypso" seems to be a nod in the direction of Sonny Rollins from both a rhythmic and slightly stylistic standpoint. The standards, "Time After Time" and "How Deep Is the Ocean," are handled with a mellow and loving respect.

Hersch is far more adventurous than on his own recordings, offering jagged lines that move away from his Bill Evans roots much of the time. Only in a lyrical situation such as "Diamonds" does the Evans link come to the fore. He has, of course, worked a lot with Bloom, so their understanding and musical closeness is never in question.

Suffice it to say that Dresser's responses in support and solo situations here will never disappoint listeners. Previte is both subtle and edgy, an excellent player for pushing things along with a loose propulsion.

The notes indicate that the music was

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Buckwheat Zydeco: *The Buckwheat Zydeco Story* (Tomorrow 70002; 73:43) ★★★★★ Stanley "Buck" Dural knows exactly how to coax terrific jubilation from his large piano accordion, and he owns a voice that has a wise, relaxed, deeply soulful quality. As shown by this stellar 15-track career retrospective, Dural gives a sharp edge of feeling to both traditional Creole dance music and pop material and creates a most vibrant strain of blues-drenched zydeco that affirms his integrity, creativity and individuality throughout. Band manager Ted Fox's selection is gangbusters, starting with the quick-stepping "Zydeco Boogaloo" (cut in the Rounder early '80s) on to the outstanding interpretation of the Stones' "Beast Of Burden" and ending with the extreme in-concert merriment of "Hey Baby," recorded last summer and not issued till now.

Boozoo Chavis: *Who Stole My Monkey?* (Rounder 2156; 44:28) ★★★★★ Zydeco grand duke Chavis doesn't so much play songs as possess them, spouting out notes on accordion, swooping and swerving



boozoo chavis:
zydeco wizard

louisiana grooves

heatedly around the heavy beat thrown down by his fellow revelers the Magic Sounds. Chavis' latest album of two-steps, blues and waltzes rates among the most pleasing of a long recording career going back to the mid '50s. When his ever-spry fingers on the buttons take a respite from "sock[ing] it to you," Chavis relies on his scratchy singing voice to help put over the likes of the juiced-up Delta folk blues "Bottle Up And Go" and the title-says-it-all "Dance All Night."

Murphy Richard: *Doin' The Zydeco* (Zydeco Hound 1006; 55:12) ★★★ Over the course of a dozen selections, the main man and his Zydeco Kings ride happy or pensive moods of rhythm in a raw, natural way that suggests stylistic fidelity to masters Boozoo Chavis and Clifton Chenier. (800-738-8668.)

Rockin' Jake: *Badmouth* (ZuluZu 3002; 43:34) ★★★ Jake is probably the best harmonica player in New Orleans. Well

beyond an early infatuation with Little Walter, he has a clear, sweet tone that gives an infectious sense of lilt to his bursts in the original blues/funk/rock songs and cover of War's "The World Is A Ghetto." As a songwriter, Jake has a flair for melody—"Soul Connection" and "It's All Good" stand out—and he's supported by alert, simpatico local musicians such as guitarist Brian Stoltz. The

one problem is Jake barely gets by as a vocalist.

The Iguanas: *Sugar Town* (Koch 7996; 46:30) ★★★ New Orleans, of course, is a melting pot, and the Iguanas seem to have caught every musical suggestion tossed their way. Although the two lead vocalists avoid rather than engage the emotional content of lyrics, this band makes a good overall impression for its imaginative bent and its integration of rhythms. Catchiest tune "Captured" leads off the album, their fourth release to date.

Keith Frank: *Live At Slim's Y-Ki-Ki* (Shanachie 9018; 70:39) ★★★ Singer and accordion player Frank, 25, is a leading contender for the zydeco throne, as this sweaty gig in an Opelousas dancehall with his Soileau Zydeco Band makes clear. Even though Frank and cohorts have the right rhythmic sensibility and energy to spare, their shuffles and breakdowns just don't conjure the touch of ecstasy that typifies the most sublime dance parties. **DB**

recorded in two sessions, one from mid 1997 and the other from early 1999. It would have been interesting to know which tracks were done at which sessions. —Will Smith

The Red Quartets: Always Hope; Time After Time; Monk's Rec Room; Tell Me Your Diamonds; Jax Calypso; Chagall/How Deep Is the Ocean; Five Full Fathoms; It's A Corrugated World; Climb Inside Her Eyes; Emergency; Einstein's Red/Blue Universe. (62:19)

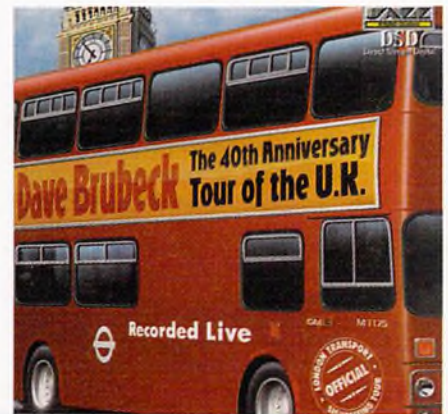
Personnel: Jane Ira Bloom, soprano sax; Fred Hersch, piano; Mark Dresser, bass; Bobby Previte, drums.

Oscar Peterson Milt Jackson Ray Brown

*The Very Tall Band
Live At The Blue Note*

Telarc 83443

★★★★



Dave Brubeck *The 40th Anniversary Tour Of The U.K.*

Telarc 83440

★★★★

One of the deficiencies of the CD is the need to fill it, lest customers feel skunked by a bottle half full, a fact that leaves *The Very Tall Band Live At The Blue Note* sounding very stretched. How much better this might have been clocking in at a respectable one hour.

The cotton in the jar mostly belongs to Ray Brown, who is indulged by his colleagues (or himself) with a nearly three-minute a cappella introduction to "Blues For JR," then an eight minute solo showcase, briefly shared with a little brush work by drummer Karriem Riggins. It takes nothing away from Brown's stature generally or his wonderful performance with the group here to point out that the bass was neither equipped nor intended for public solo responsibilities extending much beyond 32 bars. The result is a couple of curious holes in what Telarc rightly regards as a major musical event.

Although Oscar Peterson and Milt Jackson have appeared and recorded together numerous times, notably for Pablo in the '80s on *The Few* albums, this 1998 club appearance harkens back to their original 1961 meeting, *Very Tall*, on Verve, though no tunes from '61 are reprised. The formats have always been loose and conversational, as they are here, but

British jazz critic **Alyn Shipton** has penned the exhaustively researched *Groovin' High: The Life Of Dizzy Gillespie* (Oxford University Press), the first full biography of the trumpeter since his death in 1993. Without diminishing his subject, Shipton strives to separate fact from fiction, unlike earlier accounts he claims lacked the necessary critical perspective.

Shipton left no stone unturned in compiling this very complete portrait. He has mined every imaginable source for his book, interviewing musicians, pouring over articles in the music press, and even checking musicians union records. Shipton argues that Dizzy was the true bebop pioneer, transitioning the music to a big band environment. Shipton points to Gillespie's work with Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo and the breakthrough George Russell composition "Cubano Be, Cubano Bop" as an example of his virtuosity. Shipton also downplays the

tiated. Reports of the tour's kickoff date in Iran noted that as the show progressed, "These Arabs, who were completely ignorant of what jazz was and how to act at a jazz concert, started to catch the beat, awkwardly clapping in time with the music. Soon, whistles and screams reached the



Diggin' On Dizzy

famous rift between Dizzy and Charlie Parker, noting that verbal jousting aside, they were on good terms during the famous 1953 Massey Hall concert in Toronto. Despite what is at times an overwhelming amount of detail, there's plenty here for the casual reader. Shipton starts with Gillespie's impoverished childhood in South Carolina where he first taught himself to play, continuing through the big bands of the '40s and '50s, and finally the '80s and '90s as an "elder statesman" of jazz.

Most captivating are Shipton's descriptions of Dizzy leading the State Department band on goodwill tours of Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. Dizzy could always electrify the unin-

stage. By intermission ... the theater was as hot as any American spot where Dizzy performed for long-standing fans."

Genius and humility are rarely found in the same person. Dizzy had both, and throughout his career was a gracious and often self-effacing jazz ambassador. "Jazz is our own American folk music that communicates with all peoples regardless of language or social barriers," he wrote President Eisenhower after a 1956 tour. "I urge you to do all in your power to continue exploiting this valuable form of expression of which we are so proud." Dizzy's virtuosity and persona has guaranteed him a place above the jazz world, truly in a league of his own. **DB**

never slapdash. As Jackson solos on "Jada," Peterson doesn't just comp. He constantly pushes, probes, crowds, teases and stimulates his partner. The real pleasure comes around the 4:30 mark when they start tossing choruses and then eights back and forth across the net. Peterson permits no coasting or boilerplate. He is a dynamo of invention, wit and well-turned lucid quips, and Jackson rises to his challenge.

Peterson takes a rare solo piano turn on a superb new piece of his called "When Summer Comes," recorded earlier this year in quartet form on *A Summer Night In Munich* (Telarc). Jackson charts his own a cappella lines through a statuesque "Nature Boy."

Whatever the requirements of bandstand protocol regarding solo showcases, though, the real prizes are buried in the group encounters and dialogs: Peterson's and Jackson's flowing fours on a scintillating "Sometimes I'm Happy" and Peterson's expansive, fiercely intricate drive on "Caravan." And, to give Brown his due, he is elegant indeed in a diminuendo that closes down "Blues for JR."

Dave Brubeck's working quartet is in bright and fertile form in a composite CD of three different U.K. concert performances at as many locations last fall. We aren't told which tunes were done where, but if you listen for the tunes done on the piano tuned at A442 (vs. A440), you'll know they were from the Northampton concert. (Iola Brubeck will explain in her note on the frustrations of dealing with stupid clerks.)

The material is mostly new for Brubeck, as

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Most often, the "world music" bins in the local record store don't represent much of the world's music. That's unfortunate because today's most innovative, influential sounds have their roots in the region once known as the Near East.

Talvin Singh: *OK* (Island 314 524 559; 60:48) ★★☆☆ Singh delights in joining the sound of tablas with modern rhythms and electronic beats. *OK* opens with "Traveller," an ambitious suite that provides an overview of Singh's musical landscape. Ambient interludes featuring flutes suggest the meditative alap section of a raga, while other episodes present urgent drumming and orchestral strings. Somehow, it all comes together. Throughout the CD, Singh finds ways to bring the delicacy of the flutes and bent notes of the veena together with uncharacteristic rhythm tracks.

Natacha Atlas: *Gedida* (Mantra 1014; 60:53) ★★½ Best known for her ululating vocals and undulating belly-dances with Transglobal Underground, Atlas recorded with an Egyptian string section, which adds swirling, exotic textures to tracks like "Ezzay" and "Aqaba." Arabic pop music informs most tracks, though Atlas sings in French and English as well. You don't need the lyric sheet to translate the exhaustion and heartbreak she expresses on "Kifaya" or the fervor of "The Righteous Path." Concessions to Western pop, including ill-advised experiments with Arabic rap, account for some inconsistency.

Djivan Gasparyan & Michael Brook: *Black Rock* (RealWorld 46230; 44:13) ★★☆☆ Armenia's most famous musician, Gasparyan is a virtuoso of the



hamza el din:
entrancing

Eastern rebellion

duduk, a double-reed pipe carved from apricot wood. In lieu of the traditional accompaniment of drones or hand drums, producer/guitarist Michael Brook gives Gasparyan a modern context. "Fallen Star" augments multi-tracked duduks with keyboard textures and guitars, including the spacey twang of Brook's infinite guitar. Gasparyan contributes soft, worldly-wise vocals on some tracks, including "Immigrant's Song," the most austere, compelling song on this CD.

Hamza El Din: *A Wish* (Sounds True 110; 56:40) ★★½ Nubia isn't a nation so much as a state of mind. A master of the 12-string oud, El Din makes the instrument's darkly beautiful sound the focal point of entrancing songs like "Sunset" and "Griffin 2," though also supplies vocals and frame drum percussion. Howard Johnston recorded the depth and resonance of the instrument exceptionally well on this date. "Nagrishad" uses layers of percussion and handclaps to create intricate, interlocking rhythmic patterns. **DB**

far as I can recall, save for "Someday My Prince Will Come," which he recorded in 1957 and 1992. It emerges here fresh with a percussive, connect-the-chords introduction before settling into a lovely and lyrical piano variation. Some of the most interesting Brubeck unfolds on "I Got Rhythm," whose simple melodic figure has always had the advantage of never getting in the way of a player. He starts economically, even coyly; then widens into a phase of punchy chords and riffs before finally heaving into a full-blown stride climax. One of the old saws about Brubeck back in the days when everybody had to swing was that he never did it. Well, he did in his way, but not often with this kind of two-fisted oomph.

"All Of Me" is quite a beautiful exploration at an uncharacteristic and extremely slow tempo, and one so oblique the tune is rarely confronted head on. Brubeck thinks like an orchestrator when he takes on these old tunes, searching out fascinating substitutions and harmonies by which to dodge clichés. On "In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town," though, he's content with its old-fashioned, crying-in-your-beer connotations and works them cleverly while building to the big finish.

His front-line man is altoist Bobby Militello, whose penetrating, note-chewing drive and way of sailing easily in and out of modes invite no comparison to his smaller, softer and more linear predecessor, Paul Desmond. On board for most of the decade, his energy has helped Brubeck create a distinct quartet, of which this is a very good sampling.

Offered as a bonus track, "Goodbye Old Friend" is a short piano solo reflecting on Gerry Mulligan, Brubeck's quartet partner in the late '60s and '70s. —John McDonough

The Very Tall Band Live At The Blue Note: Jada; SKJ; Clifford; Piano Solo (When Summer Comes); Blues For JR; Nature Boy; Sometimes I'm Happy, Bass Solo; Caravan. (71:33)

Personnel: Oscar Peterson, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraphone; Ray Brown, bass; Karriem Riggins, drums.

The 40th Anniversary Tour Of The U.K.: Someday My Prince Will Come; The Time Of Our Madness; Oh You Can Run; In a Shanty in Old Shanty Town; I Got Rhythm; Deep Purple; All Of Me; The Salmon Strikes; Goodbye Old Friend. (70:53)

Personnel: Dave Brubeck, piano; Bobby Militello, alto saxophone; Alec Dankworth, bass; Randy Jones, drums.



hatLOGY 529

This latest example of Mat Maneri's music, like its superb predecessor *Acceptance*, gives cause to celebrate the young violinist as one of today's most commanding improvisers regardless of instrument or musical genre. The program here, a blend of originals and Miles Davis compositions performed by a trio of uncommon shape and talents, conveys the lucidity and spontaneity that are coming to define Maneri's music.



hatLOGY 532

We could consider this reissue of a 1979 Steve Lacy Trio concert recording along any of several (conceptual or contextual) lines, from analytical to historical—for example, by simply pointing out that this concert was a reunion between Lacy and drummer Dennis Charles (they worked together in Cecil Taylor's quartet circa 1956-57 and recorded as members of Gil Evans' orchestra in 1959. Charles was the drummer in the legendary early '60s Lacy/Rudd band that concentrated solely on Monk tunes, heard on *School Days*, hatArt 6140 ...



hatLOGY 534

Maybe it helps to know that Han and Ellery are both good chess players. Bennink favors an offensive game to be sure, but Eskelin is conspicuously untraumatized, knowing that with Bennink (switched metaphor ahead) the idea is not to steer the bull but to get from being thrown. And Han, to his audible pleasure, discovers a rare, fully equipped improviser he can't scare off, wear out, bury or give the slip.

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Tony Williams: *Life Time* (Blue Note 99004; 38:27) ★★★★★ Williams plays drums on four of the five cuts (all written by the drummer). The approach is open, intense, structured, wild and swinging. A confounding, beautiful and remarkable album.

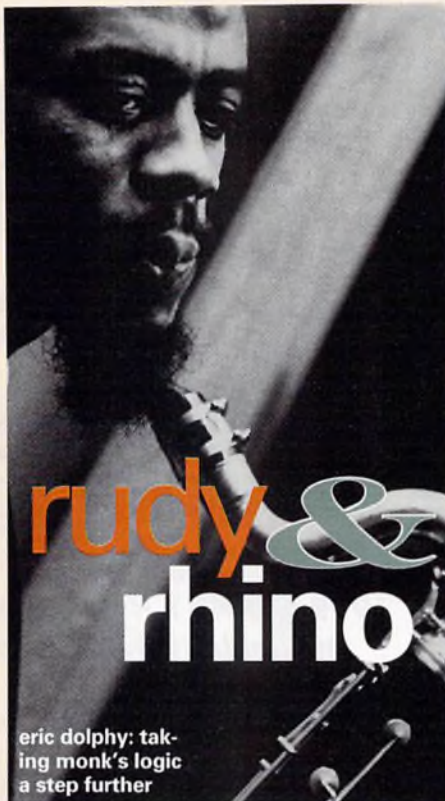
Cannonball Adderley: *Somethin' Else* (95329; 44:00) ★★★★ Recorded less than a month before Adderley made his first studio date with Miles Davis, the trumpeter joins the altoist in this legendary 1958 session. The set is relaxed, in a post hard-bop Milesian mode, featuring pianist Hank Jones, Sam Jones and Art Blakey.

Wayne Shorter: *JuJu* (99005; 56:48) ★★★★★½ *JuJu* represents tenorist Shorter writing his way out from under Coltrane's long shadow in this powerful all-original program from 1964. Shorter's strengths as a robust, lyrical player are matched by his brilliant pen.

McCoy Tyner: *The Real McCoy* (97807; 37:09) ★★★★★ Considered by many the best album the pianist ever made, 1967's *The Real McCoy* (his label debut) is brimming with marvelous compositions and performances that simmer, sway, sing and swing. Joe Henderson, Ron Carter and Elvin Jones help take Tyner's tunes up and down, emotionally, technically and spiritually.

Eric Dolphy: *Out To Lunch* (98793; 42:20) ★★★★★ A bit more mainstream, 1964's seminal *Out To Lunch* still gives Williams' *Life Time* a run for Blue Note's first "avant-garde" album ever. Dolphy's compositions essentially take Monk's logic one step further. Dolphy is heard on alto, flute and bass clarinet.

Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers With Thelonious Monk* (Rhino/Atlantic Jazz



75598; 64:36) ★★★★★½ This is Blakey's '57 edition, featuring tenorist Johnny Griffin, playing an all-Monk program plus one from Griffin. It's one of many visits together for Blakey and Monk, this one key because of the hearty Griffin, but also because the dynamic, chatty headliners are hitting their stride.

Charles Mingus: *The Clown* (75590; 56:50) ★★★★★½; ***Oh Yeah*** (75589; 67:03) ★★★★★ Along with *Blues And Roots*, Rhino continues to mine the individual titles from Mingus' powerful first Atlantic period. These two albums, recorded in 1957 and 1961, respectively, feature a total of 16 Mingus tunes. *The Clown* plays like one long blues lament, in all its moods. *Oh Yeah's* mood is looser, but more ominous and sardonic.

John Coltrane: *Coltrane's Sound* (75588; 50:35) ★★★★★½ Recorded in 1960 and featuring two bonus tracks, this is where we first hear Coltrane's classic arrangement of "Body And Soul," the plaintive "Equinox" and the wonderful, lonesome "Central Park West." McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and bassist Steve Davis help the tenorist walk, stroll and run through what is now very familiar territory: hard-bop transformed, somewhat untangled but no less mysterious. **DB**

SAM RIVERS'
RIVBEA ALL-STAR ORCHESTRA
INSPIRATION



Sam Rivers'
Rivbea All-Star Orchestra

Inspiration

RCA Victor 64717

★★★★½

Sam Rivers
Alexander von Schlippenbach

Tangens

FMP 99

★★★★½

Picture this. Sam Rivers, age 67, is operating out of Orlando, recording only infrequently. He's revered by cognoscenti for intense, marathon improvisations on reeds and piano, as well as complex big band compositions, but he's never enjoyed popular recognition. His adventurous '60s and '70s recordings are sporadically available, if at all. Suddenly, after decades of undeserved neglect, he records his compositions with a dazzling, well-rehearsed, 17-piece band. Bracing and distinctive, *Inspiration* is his first date for a major U.S. label in a quarter century.

With Steve Coleman as producer and patron saint, *Inspiration* aims to find a wider audience for Rivers' challenging but exhilarating music for jazz orchestra, and, to establish Rivers' place in a jazz continuum extending back to Dizzy Gillespie. Rivers' compositions, drawn from four decades, contemplate spontaneous solos by Rivers, Coleman, Greg Osby, Chico Freeman and others, over fixed arrangements. The bristling horns state the swirling melodies and unusual harmonies of "Vines" and "Nebula" with precision and urgency. "Beatrice" and "Solace" are among Rivers' most accessible pieces, offering sunny, inviting melodies. All compositions were greatly shortened for this CD, but *Inspiration* may be the best realization of Rivers' concepts on record. I only wish that the soloists, especially Rivers, had lengthier opportunities to develop their ideas. It's impossible to fault a record that succeeds so well on so many different levels. A second CD drawn from these sessions will be forthcoming.

Listening to *Tangens* completes a portrait of the artist by emphasizing his abilities as an improviser. Documenting a 1997 Berlin concert, *Tangens* pairs Rivers with pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach. Often associated with large

ensembles like the Globe Unity Orchestra, Schlippenbach proves to be a remarkably tasteful, sensitive duet player and an ideal match for Rivers. The sense of empathy or intuition between the two is so strong that the players seem to be completing and expanding each other's thoughts. In the case of the delicate "Tangens (alpha)," the pianist's spare melodies seem to moor Rivers' airy flute meditations. In the liner notes, Rivers describes his playing as a stream of consciousness. His solos are organized and thoughtful, perhaps reflecting an inner calm. It's possible to hear these performances as journeys, though "Tangens (beta)" might qualify as an odyssey. Clocking in at about 32 minutes, the episodic piece lets Rivers solo at length on all three reeds, while Schlippenbach provides shifting, complementary settings. —Jon Andrews

Inspiration: Vines; Nebula, Beatrice; Inspiration; Solace; Whirlwind; Rejuvenation. (70:33)

Personnel: Sam Rivers, soprano and tenor saxophones, flute; Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, alto saxophones; Chico Freeman, Gary Thomas, tenor saxophones; Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone; Ray Anderson, Joseph Bowie, Art Baron, trombones; Ravi Best, Ralph Alessi, James Zollar, Baikida Carroll, trumpets; Joseph Daley, baritone horn; Bob Stewart, tuba; Doug Mathews, bass; Anthony Cole, drums.

Tangens: Tangens (alpha); Tangens (beta); Tangens (gamma); Tangens (delta); Tangens (epsilon). (70:08)

Personnel: Sam Rivers, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Alexander von Schlippenbach, piano.



Various Artists

Live At Birdland!

RCA Victor 63325

★★★★

Made over a month's course last year at a recent incarnation of a fabled Manhattan club, this celebrates five bands of mostly 30-ish, deserving talents. The album's producers smartly mix expressive stuff that's not that outside with Latin and damn-sure-not-nostalgic mainstream-ish grooves.

Showcasing each group on two tracks, *Live At Birdland!* opens well with pianist D.D. Jackson's come-hither "Easy," which spotlights the leader's gently ambling piano and an empathetic turn from violinist Christian Howes. Then there's "Driftwood," an adventurous, transparent number from trumpeter Dave Douglas' foursome, where tenorman Chris Potter and Douglas deliver the crescendoing line, setting up drummer Ben Perowsky's textured solo.

On "Rampa Arriba (Up Ramp)," from timbalero Ralph Irizarry's *Timbalaye*, hard-hit horn lines dance with go-stop-go rhythm figures, then pianist Louis Perdomo and trombonist Joseph Fielder take crafty, compelling solos. More tough, dynamic horn riffs close it out.

Guitarist Peter Bernstein's subsequent, galloping "Jet Stream" offers melody-rooted, hard swinging stuff. Bruce Barth's piano solo finds warm ideas played with crisp time; a similar stance is employed by bassist Paul Gill's pliant arco effort and the leader's heated, ringing-toned improv. Then there's "Half-Steps," by saxophonist Jimmy Greene and trumpeter Darren Barrett's quintet, which avers an edgy, mainstream slant. Pointed dissonances are dropped in

alongside sweeter tones in cooking outings from the leaders and pianist Aaron Goldberg.

—Zan Stewart

Live At Birdland! Easy; Driftwood; Rampa Arriba (Up Ramp); Jet Stream; Half-Steps; The Frisell Dream; For Monk's Sake; Piesotes (Giant Feet); Re-Affirmation; Booker's Little Blues. (60:29)

Personnel: D.D. Jackson (1, 7), Aaron Goldberg (5, 9), Bruce Barth (4, 10), Louis Perdomo (3, 8), piano, keyboards; Hugh Ragin (1, 7), Dave Douglas (2, 6), Richard Nant (3, 8), Darren Barrett (5, 9), trumpet; Chris Potter (2, 6), Antonio Malaby (3, 8), Jimmy Greene (5, 9), tenor saxophone; Joseph Fielder (3, 8), trombone; Kenny Davis (1, 7), James Genus (2, 6), Waldo Chavez (3, 8), Paul Gill (4, 10), Dwayne Burno (5, 9), bass; Billy Kilson (1, 7), Ben Perowsky (2, 6), Joe Farnsworth (4, 10), John Lamkin (5, 9), drums; Kahilil Bell (1, 7), Ralph Irizarry (3, 8), Robert Quintero (3, 8), percussion; Peter Bernstein (4, 10), guitar; Christian Howes (1, 7), violin.



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blindfold test

While working six nights at Manhattan's Iridium, **Terence Blanchard** spent his days writing the score for *Having Our Say*, a forthcoming film starring Ruby Dee and Diahann Carroll as the centenarian Delaney sisters. Somehow, the ever-gracious 37-year-old trumpeter/composer found 90 minutes to listen to a selection of trumpet tunes for his first Blindfold Test.

"When you watch Ruby Dee," marvels Blanchard, who recently released *Jazz On Film* (Sony Classical), "you forget you're watching a movie, and get into her character. That's what happens to me when I listen to Bird or Coltrane or Monk or Miles or Dizzy, and it's what I aspire to in my music. It's time for musicians in my generation to throw away the shackles of the past, to investigate other areas."

Dizzy Gillespie

"Africana," (from *Gillespiana*, Verve, 1961/1993), Gillespie, trumpet; Lalo Schiffrin, arranger.

It's Dizzy, obviously, but I don't know the tune or the arranger. 5 stars for Dizzy and the arrangement. Lalo incorporates some elements that are distinctly like jazz big band and some are very orchestral; he only brings the trumpet in for certain big moments. Dizzy played with such command of his instrument. It's a good pick, because he's playing unlike Dizzy, but you identify him by his sound and phrasing. It sounds like they recorded everybody live in one room, and you hear Dizzy playing over the band. The sound is huge.

Ornette Coleman-Don Cherry

"Sound Manual (#8)" (from *In All Languages*, Harmolodic, 1987) Coleman, alto saxophone; Cherry, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

I always loved that band. 5 stars. That was recorded in '87? Get out of here! It's obvious how they influenced Miles' band. Don had a way of reinventing lyrical lines; they aren't in any specific meter, they're freed up in time and space, and they flow. Those guys were renegades. Just think about the time they did this stuff, the crowd of people they were surrounded by; they had to be brave. I've never thought of them as free musicians, and I don't know why people do.

Art Farmer

"Raincheck" (from *Listen To Art Farmer & The Orchestra*, Mercury, rec. 1962/1997) Farmer, flugelhorn; Oliver Nelson, arrangement.

It's a wild recording; I don't know the trumpeter or arranger. Art Farmer and Oliver Nelson? The arrangement threw me off; the harmonies and orchestrations, with the woodwinds and electric guitar, sounded like some West Coast stuff. Art sounded great. He hit all those notes right on the head, played

them in tune and phrased them beautifully. 5 for the performance, 4 for the arrangement.

Freddie Hubbard

"Thermo" (from *Above And Beyond*, Metropolitan, rec. 1982/1999) Hubbard, trumpet; Billy Childs, piano; Herbie Lewis, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

That was "Thermo." I remember busting my lips trying to play it. Freddie Hubbard is one of the all-time greats in this music, not just a trumpet player but a great composer as well. I did a gig with Freddie and Woody Shaw when I was really young. It



was wild, because nothing I played belonged to me—it belonged to one of them. Every time I played something, "Whoa, can't do that." [laughs] I always admired his facility, the weight of his sound and phrasing, right in the middle of the beat. 5 for the performance and the composition.

Wynton Marsalis

"Spring Yaounde," (from *City Griot*, Columbia, 1991) Marsalis, trumpet; Eric Reed, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums.

Obviously Wynton. It's nice. Wynton has developed his own sound, and he's had it for a long time. He's a serious technician, with a unique way of twisting lines and rhythms. Anything he plays you've got to give him a 5. The composition I don't feel as strong about; I'll give it a 4. To me subtext has always been his thing; you've always got to check out what's going on underneath the melody. I've known him since elementary school; he and Branford and Kent Jordan all influenced me to practice and want to be better.

DB

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 is given to the artist prior to the test.

by ted panken