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Does Wynton Marsalis' volcanic musical output make him the most ambitious artist in jazz history, or just insane? Try readers' pick as Jazz Artist of the Year!

Bitches BREW

30 years after this classic recording, exclusive behind-the-scenes accounts

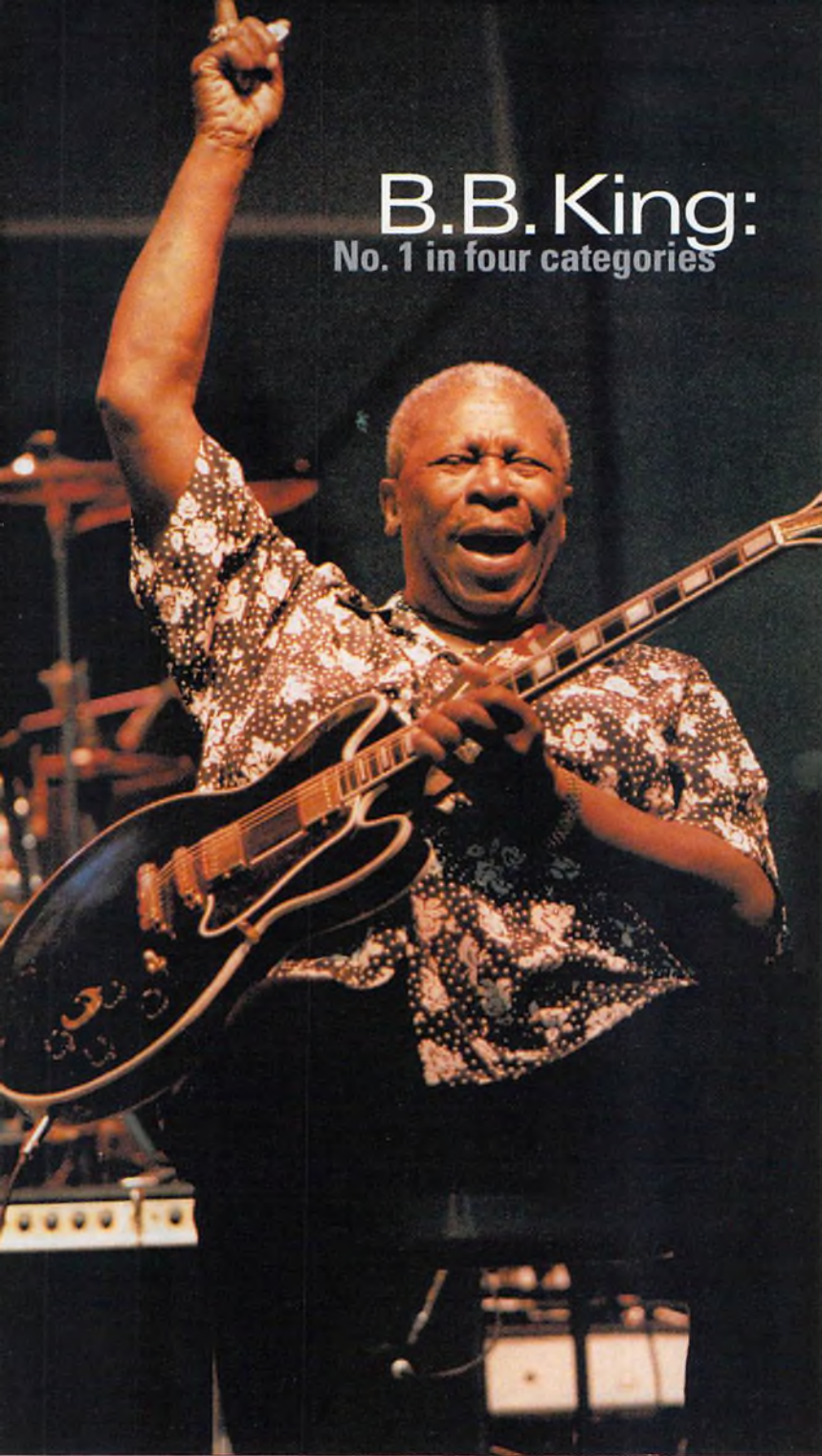
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December 1999 U.S. \$3.50
U.K. £2.75 Can. \$4.30

DIANA KRALL
BEATS HER CRITICS

B.B. King: No. 1 in four categories



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Composer of the Year**

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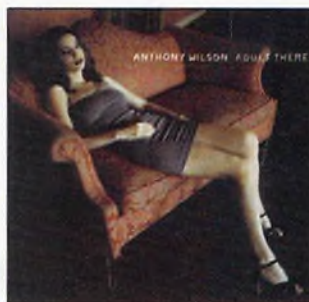
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SWING OUT THE CENTURY

Wynnton Marsalis was a true artist of the world this year. Leading the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra through its Duke Ellington tribute, the trumpeter graced prestigious international concert halls in the likes of Moscow, Paris and Tokyo; and then he led the band in unexpected U.S. jazz havens like Albuquerque, N.M., Ames, Iowa, and Muncie, Ind. And then, by no means an insignificant side note, Marsalis managed to release eight albums as part of his "Swinging Into The 21st" series. All this activity swung Marsalis to Jazz Artist of the Year in the Readers Poll for the third consecutive year, an accomplishment he discusses on the next page.

Few humans have ever *swung* like the late Milt Jackson. The vibist receives his long-overdue induction into the Down Beat Hall of Fame as well the top vibes award. He died Oct. 9 of cancer in New York. Check out a classic photo of "Bags" on Page 6, as he swings away during a classic Modern Jazz Quartet set.

Miles Davis' influence is forever, and on the 30th anniversary

of his seminal 1969 album *Bitches Brew*, reissued this year as the four-CD *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* (winner of Box Set and Reissue of the Year), we talk to the artists involved in creating this timeless masterpiece (Page 32).

Herbie Hancock's *Gershwin's World*, the critics' 1999 choice for Album of the Year, makes a clean sweep of Down Beat's polls as the readers' favorite album as well (Page 50). The pianist also captures the top spot in the electric keyboard category.

Readers Poll stalwarts B.B. King (a four-category winner), Sonny Rollins, Elvin Jones, Tito Puente, Pat Metheny, James Newton, J.J. Johnson, Toots Thielemans, Steve Swallow, Tom Harrell (Page 48) and Don Byron (Page 46) take home more prizes this year, while Diana Krall (Page 38) and Brad Mehldau (Page 42) earn significant first-time victories.

So in the following pages, we say farewell to a century of jazz and look forward to ushering in the next.

—Jason Koransky



Anything But Conventional

With This Year's Volcanic Musical Output,
Wynton Marsalis Leads The Way Into The Next Millennium

The phone won't quit ringing, the front door keeps swinging open and the parade of visitors never seems to stop.

The scene, however, is not Grand Central Station. But it's perhaps the second busiest spot in midtown Manhattan: Wynton Marsalis' high-rise apartment near Lincoln Center, where he directs the most sweeping jazz performance program in the country, if not the planet.

Exactly how Marsalis manages to get anything done amid the perpetual swirl of activity in this place remains something of a mystery, even to his admirers. Yet from this comfortable but unpretentiously decorated aerie overlooking Broadway, Marsalis on this autumnal morning is brainstorming the release of eight new CDs and a seven-CD box set, conceiving grand plans for Jazz at Lincoln Center and penning his most ambitious composition to date, a 12-movement work for symphony orchestra, jazz band and 60-voice chorus to be unveiled Dec. 29 and 30 in Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall.

This relentless pace has made Marsalis the most recognizable living jazz avatar of the '90s and helps explain why he has been voted Jazz Artist and Composer of the Year in the Down Beat Readers Poll. The miracle, though, is that he gets anything done amid the apparent mayhem.

"I'll go over to Wynton's house and there will be his kids in the den playing music, a football game on TV, two friends having a conversation, somebody in the kitchen cooking gumbo, and he's at the piano, very seriously, with a pencil in his mouth, writing music, totally focused," says Rob Gibson, executive producer and director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "And the phone will ring five times in the 20 minutes that I'm there, and he'll answer calls, and one of them will be about a record date, one of them will be 'Call me back later,' one of them will be some girl, and he's doing all of that at once. In most people's eyes it's kind of wacky, but it really is the way he lives his life."

By Howard Reich ■ Photography By Lee Crum

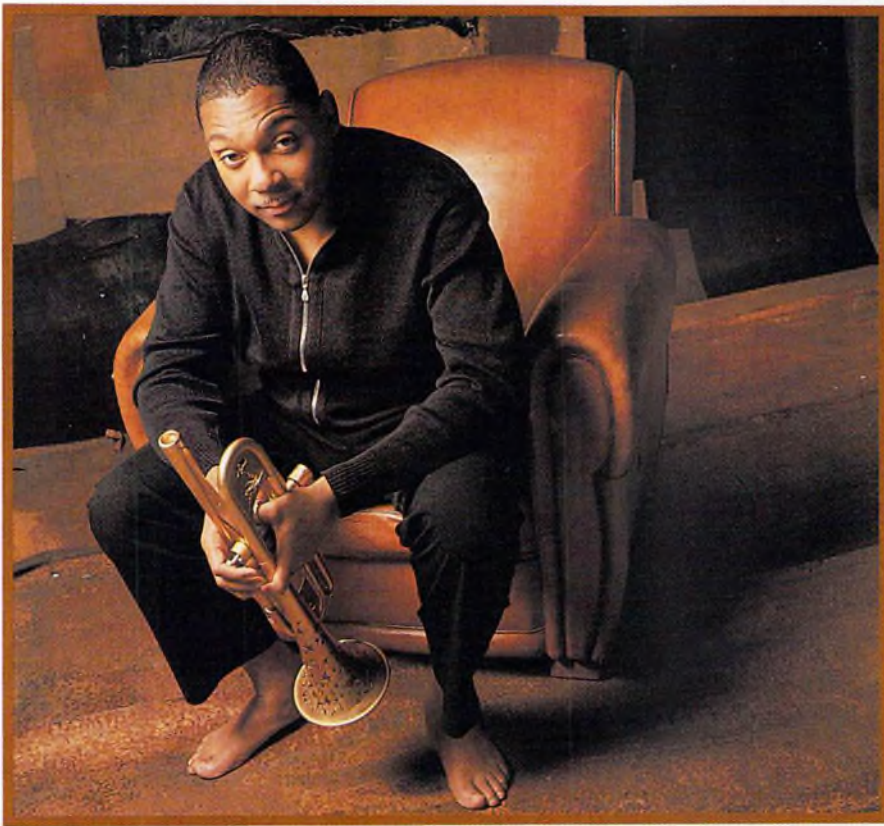


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Surely this lifestyle works for Marsalis, who draws energy from the seemingly chaotic forces gathered around him. Yet even by Marsalis' hyperactive standards, 1999 has been uniquely busy, yielding not only the aforementioned wave of recordings but a remarkable series of world premieres. These include Marsalis' elegant orchestrations for several Duke Ellington compositions, unveiled during a "Live From Lincoln Center" TV broadcast in April on public television; the dance score "Them Twos," performed by New York City Ballet in June; and the epic symphonic

[because] I had some of the music recorded, I knew that we were going to record more, and I just really wanted to get all my music out there," says Marsalis, settling into a soft-cushioned sofa in a sun-drenched living room, his trumpet resting comfortably in his hands. "Not everyone [at Sony/Columbia] thought it was a good idea, but they were willing to work with me.

"To me, it's a way of saying that it's important for us, as musicians, to constantly fortify our position with music, to let each other know that, yeah, we're still out here, putting out music," adds

Putting out all this music at once is a way for me and the guys in the band to give thanks for the opportunity to come out and play, to show that we're not squandering that opportunity."

The very range of the music represented on the "Swinging Into The 21st" series (which includes everything from Igor Stravinsky to Jelly Roll Morton) and the *Wynton Marsalis: Live At The Village Vanguard* box set (with approximately 50 pieces) certainly suggests that Marsalis and friends hardly have been slacking off. Albums featured in "Swinging Into The 21st" include the evocative *Mr. Jelly Lord: Standard Time, Vol. 6*, an historically informed yet ultimately contemporary reading of Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton's classics; *Big Train*, a tour de force orchestral tone painting performed by Marsalis and his Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra; and *A Fiddler's Tale*, Marsalis' cheeky reworking of Stravinsky's "L'Histoire Du Soldat" in jazz, swing and blues idioms.

Live At The Village Vanguard, meanwhile, documents Marsalis' septet (from 1990-'94), an outgrowth of the sextet that he had led in the late '80s. Drummer Herlin Riley articulates soulful rhythms, pianist Marcus Roberts (later replaced by Eric Reed) unfurls ancient-to-modern piano techniques, and reedists Wess Anderson and Todd Williams (the latter alternating with Victor Goines) create longing lyric phrases.

Without these musicians, as well as several others, Marsalis says, the strides he has made in his own music and at Lincoln Center would not have been imaginable. "The sound of the band is the sound of jazz. It's not the sound of

"The sound of the band is the sound of jazz. It's not the sound of one man. One man can only do so much."

work in progress, "All Rise."

Among these projects, none has bucked music-industry conventions more audaciously than the aforementioned new releases (15 CDs in all), surely a marketing executive's nightmare. Promoting one recording, after all, is hard enough; persuading listeners to shell out hard-earned dollars for more than a dozen poses a considerably greater challenge.

"I decided to do it this past year

Marsalis, whose eight-CD set, which alternated between the Columbia Jazz and Sony Classical labels, has been released one disc at a time under the overall banner "Swinging Into The 21st."

"It's important for me to make a statement of thanksgiving at this turn of the century," he continues. "And whether you believe in it (the hoopla surrounding the new century) or not, the fact that so many people believe in it makes it true.

one man," says Marsalis, who turned 38 on Oct. 18, while appearing with LCJO and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a week's worth of subscription concerts in Symphony Center. "One man can only do so much. That's the first thing Marcus Roberts taught me when he came into the band [in 1985]. He said, 'You can't make it out here alone. Period.'

"And that's the truth. We all need to be held up."



“This music is never going to go away because a large number of our top young musicians always are attracted to jazz.”

Roberts' departure from the septet in 1991 foreshadowed the ensemble's adjournment three years later: "It was almost like the heart of the band left with Marcus," Marsalis explains. But the years with the sextet and septet surely taught Marsalis volumes about forging human and musical relationships. In other words, the cocky, outspoken young trumpeter who had become the talk of New York by 1981, when he was signed by Columbia, eventually learned how to build bridges rather than burn them.

He applied these lessons shrewdly to the Jazz at Lincoln Center program, where Marsalis, Gibson and artistic advisers Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch transformed a fledgling jazz department into a full-fledged institution accorded the same status as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and New York City Ballet. But the most telling results of Marsalis' gradual realization that he needed

Readers' Choices.

HALL OF FAME..... Milt Jackson

JAZZ ALBUM..... Cassandra Wilson
(Marcus Baylor: drums)

JAZZ ELECTRIC COMBO Pat Metheny Group
(Paul Wertico: drums)

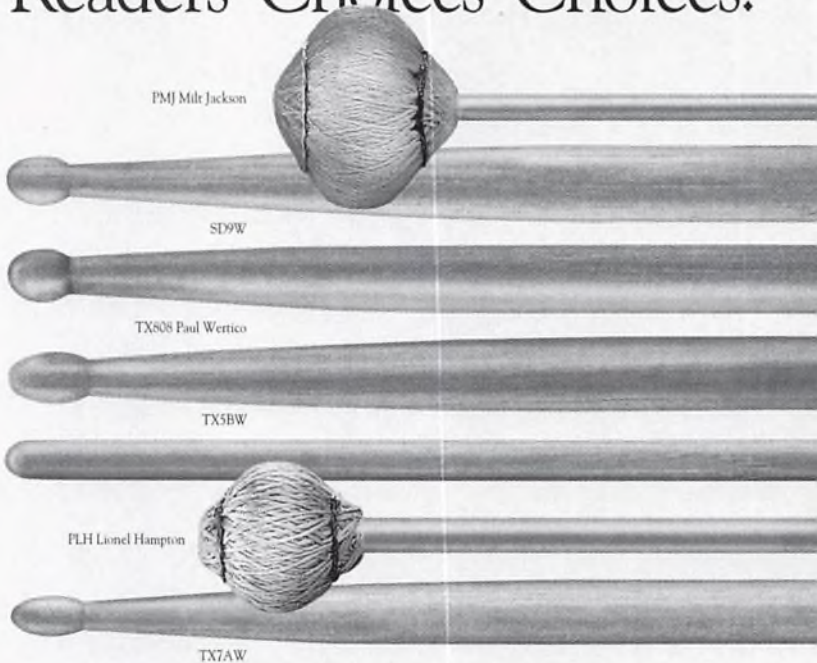
BEYOND GROUP..... Los Lobos
(Louie Perez: drums)

PERCUSSION..... Mino Cinelu

VIBES..... Milt Jackson,
Lionel Hampton

DRUMS..... Elvin Jones,
Brian Blade

Readers' Choices' Choices.



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the help of others to accomplish great things has been in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, an ensemble that in many ways represents a musical extension of Marsalis' much admired sextet/septet. The deep-blue shadings of the LCJO reed choir, the unusually lyric playing of the trumpet section and the propulsive swing energy of the rhythm section all evoke the sextet/septet—not surprising, since several alums of these bands (including Anderson, Goines, Wycliffe Gordon and Marsalis himself)

hold chairs in the LCJO.

But if Marsalis and the \$12 million-a-year Jazz at Lincoln Center program are well poised for the next millennium (with plans to open a new building at Columbus Circle in 2003), what about the precarious state of jazz itself in the MTV age? The most recent statistics collected by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), a not-for-profit record-industry group, suggest that jazz claims a mere 1.9 percent of the market (down from 4.7 percent in 1988).

"Those numbers are just a way to demoralize musicians," asserts Marsalis, not missing a beat. "Let's look at all of what jazz has sold. Let's tally up all of the sales of all jazz records from the beginning of time—why then you'll see some truly interesting numbers. Jazz today is like a big mountain that has a volcano with hot molten lava that's getting ready to pour out. And almost everybody acts like it's not there, but they all know it is there."

"This music has exerted tremendous moral and intellectual pressure on our culture, and it continues to do that," he adds, perhaps referring to the subtext of racial pride and affirmation that coursed through the music of Charlie Parker, the sense of optimism that marked recordings of Louis Armstrong and the unrepentant individualism that distinguished the work of Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and others. "This music is never going to go away because a large number of our top young musicians always are attracted to jazz."

Certainly Marsalis has done a great deal to nurture and promote young talent, with Roberts, Eric Reed, Nicholas Payton and Roy Hargrove just a few artists who have benefited significantly from association with the trumpeter. In addition, hundreds of youngsters across the country have been inspired by Marsalis' educational workshops and by the annual Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival at Lincoln Center.

If Marsalis seems unabashedly optimistic about the future of jazz in America, despite its slender sales figures, perhaps that's due, at least in part, to the energetic young musicians who perpetually hover around him. They can be found practicing in his apartment, darting around him at Lincoln Center and otherwise imbuing his life with promising sounds of rising talent.

Or perhaps Marsalis' optimism owes to the buzz of musical activity that seems to follow in his wake, the perpetual action suggesting that progress is being made. "He sleeps three or four hours a night," Gibson says, "and he spends about 20 hours working. That's how you get all those things done."

Certainly Marsalis' deep-in-the-trench-

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es approach to promulgating jazz has given the art form more visibility than it had in the two decades preceding his arrival in the '80s.

"I'll tell you why I'm optimistic," Marsalis says. "You just have to realize where we've been. And you can see where we're going, and we definitely are heading up. We've been down, and we are definitely going up. Now it's not perfect, that's for sure. We're constantly being told that we're doing wrong and none of this [music] sells and nobody wants anything of quality—don't be fooled by that.

"There's a lot available today. Don't think that all is lost. A few decades ago, everybody thought the world was going to end, that we were going to blow each other up. Now they realize we're going to make it to 2000.

"Or at least it seems like we're going to make it."

Just before the start of that signal year, Marsalis will be standing on the stage of Avery Fisher Hall, flanked by the massive forces of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Morgan State University Choir. They'll be performing "All Rise," as philosophical a work as any Marsalis has penned to date.

If Marsalis' "In This House, On This Morning" (1994) explored spiritual devotion and "Blood On The Fields" (1997) won a Pulitzer Prize for its insight into American racism, "All Rise" takes on an even vaster subject: the cycle of life itself. It confronts life's bitter conflicts and sweet resolutions, its personal pain and collective glory. Though it will have no text per se (with the possible exception of one passage), the working titles of its 12 movements—"We Are Born In Joy," "We Are Redeemed Through Sacrifice," "We Build Great Monuments To God"—suggest a kind of majestic sermon in swing.

Marsalis' challenge will be to channel these ideas through the massive, combined forces of a large classical orchestra, a traditional jazz band and an immense church choir. "He's attempting to solve the problem that many composers have faced when you put a jazz orchestra and a symphony orchestra on stage together," Gibson says. "Whether he solves it in this piece remains to be seen, but I do know

that in his vision of this music, he can see solving this problem."

Each vignette, says Marsalis, will be musically free-standing, the piece in its entirety ultimately covering several stylistic genres, "something like what you would hear if you'd go to a John Philip Sousa concert at the turn of the century," he says. "Every movement has its own integrity, and each one is different. Sousa might have played 16 pieces on a program—one ragtime, another opera aria, a march, and a minstrel song or a

cakewalk. That's our [American] form."

And that's how Marsalis and a small army of performers will swing into the next millennium.

"Not a night passes that I don't thank the Lord for these opportunities and hope I'm not wasting them by just doing something that would be detrimental," says Marsalis, who does not take his mission lightly. "And the older I get, the more precious it becomes to me, every concert we do.

"I'm just very grateful, man."

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Wynton's Wisdom On ...

Thelonious Monk: "With Monk, first you can feel his incorruptible integrity. Second, he created a model language that is not abstract. He was an eccentric, but his music is not eccentric at all. His music is very logical and very warm and humorous, soulful and swinging."

Igor Stravinsky: "It's interesting to work with Stravinsky's music, because he works in small units [of pitches]. It's not at all like a harmonic progression or even a theme, it's very different—it's a cell. What was intriguing was applying the language of the blues and New Orleans march rhythms to the type of traditional marches that Stravinsky used (in 'L'Histoire Du Soldat')."

Marcus Roberts: "He can play, but it's more than just his playing. It's his consciousness. He's very evolved, and he's funny, man. And then there's his attention to detail and themes, and the soulfulness of what he plays, and his belief in what he's playing. He learned all those long pieces [with my sextet and septet], and he would be playing them [from memory] better than we would be reading them. He hasn't yet been given his proper place out here, but he cannot be stopped."

Herlin Riley: "He was the soul of our septet. He is so consistent and so much of a man and so secure in who he is that a lot of times you could take Herlin for granted, because he doesn't force himself on you, but he's always there."

Joe Temperley: "That's how you want to approach music, to be in music as long as he's been in it and have that type of joy. And he gets that big beautiful sound on whatever instrument he's playing. He plays soprano [saxophone], alto, baritone—it doesn't make any difference what he's playing, it always sounds like Joe Temperley."

Teaching: "I love to teach the kids. My father taught kids. I'm grateful to be doing that. I don't feel like anybody owes me anything. I owe them."

Writing for ballet: "First of all, I do it because it keeps me from writing long pieces. You can't write three hours of music for ballet—they tell you 30 minutes. But I also like integration of the arts. It stimulates a different part of your creativity."

Televised jazz: "It's very important, but it's got to be on our terms. Every time you go on TV on other people's terms, it's better to not be on it. And most of the times when you're on TV, it's not on your terms."

Becoming a musician: "There are lots of ways to be a great musician. It's not that you have to be Charlie Parker. You're not going to be that, probably. But don't feel demoralized, because the achievement you want is to create your own sound. That sound can be spoken in any language. Clarinetist Michael White has his own sound. Marcus Roberts has his own sound. That's a great achievement." —H.R.

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Bitches

Brew

The Making
Of The Most
Revolutionary
Jazz Album
In History

Miles Davis shocked and rocked the jazz world in 1969 when he released *Bitches Brew*, arguably the most radically unorthodox jazz statement in history. Thirty years after *Bitches Brew* broke the sound barrier with its electronic sonic boom, the album is still in vogue. Columbia/Legacy issued the four-CD box *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* this year, and *Down Beat*'s critics hailed it the Reissue of the Year (August 1999). Likewise, *Down Beat* readers proclaimed the release a winner, crowning it both the Reissue and Box Set of the Year.

Not only does the box set offer a sonic upgrade of the original material, but there are nine previously unissued tracks, as well as other pieces that eventually found their way onto other Davis CDs. The sessions show Davis, 43 at the time, at a clear intersection in his career. Saxophonist Wayne Shorter was the last member of the classic '60s quintet still in Miles' touring band, and the release of *In A Silent Way* in early 1969 clearly showed how Miles was embracing the psychedelic rock sound sweeping the nation, while never losing the swing.

Far from sounding dated, the music has drive, weaves of multicolored, gripping moods. The tunes teem with cool dreams, hot fusion, introverted shyness and extroverted glee. The music is sinister, yet festive; turbulent, yet as placid as the surface of a peaceful lake; mysterious, yet simply joyful; enchanting but as threatening as an impending storm. The entire box set is one epic journey after another.

Here we open some windows on the creative process of the sessions by asking key players, including musicians and producers, for their insights.

Cast of Participants

Bob Belden—*The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* reissue producer
Jack DeJohnette—drummer
Dave Holland—acoustic and electric bassist
Teo Macero—original *Bitches Brew* producer
Bennie Maupin—bass clarinetist
Wayne Shorter—soprano saxophonist
Lenny White—drummer, percussionist
Joe Zawinul—electric keyboardist

Session Preparations

Shorter: Working with Miles was always being prepared for anything. Night after night, we played as a group. Miles enjoyed the vibe he created. He was entertained by us. He was tired of the "1-2-3-4" straight time thing, which was melting away during that period. Before the album, Herbie [Hancock] was playing without chords, going through a modal thing to a less modal, to a less modal to a less modal. Tony [Williams] wanted to break up the straightahead beat. Then, when Jack DeJohnette came around, and Tony went on to do his own thing, it started changing even more. Jack was dancing on the drums, mixing his playing with body movements. The bass player had

BY DAN OUELLETTE



another kind of sound going. It crossed into r&b, and then into what the rappers are doing today with beats. You hear a lot of gaps in the bass, and the rhythm falls in different places. It makes the body move.

DeJohnette: Miles assembled an experiment with musicians he liked. He wrote a few sketches, but the idea was to get the spontaneity down. It wasn't a stop-and-start recording. It was Miles conducting an orchestra in real time. He was like a painter changing the canvas by conducting his group.

Holland: The recordings were obviously a unified project, but it wasn't like we were going into the studio to record *Bitches Brew*. We were in and out of the studio a great deal in those days, usually in between road trips. We usually went to his house the day before and looked at some of his ideas.

White: The night before the first studio session, we rehearsed at Miles' house. I believe it was Jack, Dave and Chick [Corea]. All I had was a snare drum and cymbal. We only rehearsed the opening section of "Bitches Brew."

Zawinul: There was a lot of preparation for the sessions. I went to Miles' house several times. I had 10 tunes for him. He chose a few and then made sketches of them.

In The Sessions

Shorter: Everyone was less connected with what we were familiar with for playing on a record. It was not like: You play, the next person plays, you have a lineup of who was going to solo. There were basically no traditional harmonic chords for the keyboards. It was more an emotional experience. You played off of yourself in a sense. You played off of your sound, rather than a melody. This was where having a sound counted. The sound became the language.

White: We were set up in a semi-circle with Miles in the center. He had a tall music stand and he conducted everything. All the sessions in August 1969 started at 10 in the morning and lasted until 1 or 2 in the afternoon.

Macero: It was very tight in the studio. It was loud. No earphones. They sound the way they sound because they were together, they could hear each other. I used to isolate them as much as possible in the mix, and leave a little leakage.

Zawinul: Miles gathered together good musicians and set an atmosphere of mutual respect. We were all encouraged to put our best foot forward, yet no one stepped on each other's toes. We all enjoyed each other. We laughed a lot.

Holland: Before the tapes rolled, Miles spent a short time with each person, talking about things like voicings. But he was not a man of many words. He didn't like to discuss the music in great detail. He wanted the musicians to bring to the table their own understanding and creative ideas. He created a framework within which everyone could create. I got the sense from Miles that if he felt he had to explain to someone too much then he had the wrong musician for the project.

Macero: The equipment was very different than what's in a studio today. We had a lot of special equipment. One was a reverb machine, that you can't find, and another was a switcher. With the switcher, the frequencies would go back and forth. It was striking. The piano would go from the right to the left, almost spontaneously. It was like two guys playing at the same time. The engineering department made quite a few things for me. We used to use three inputs on Miles: the microphone on the bell, an input through an amp and a direct input into the board, so it was nice and clean. It was almost like having three trumpets. And we didn't have computers like they have today.

Maupin: Miles was in top form, and the condition of his life was so high that we each responded to his non-verbal communication. He never really stated what he wanted with words. Through his actions it was clear to me that everything he wanted from each of us should be based on trusting our intuition and the courage to move from one note to the next with total confidence in each other and the music.

Belden: In listening to the studio tapes, Miles didn't say much. Occasionally he'd complain about the headphone mix or he'd yell at Teo. For the most part he just sat there and soaked it all in. It's obvious he enjoyed himself.

Holland: Basically, we rehearsed in the studio and that was recorded. Some of that ended up on the record. Miles liked to have the tapes rolling all the time.

Shorter: This was more organic than other times in the studio with Miles. It was like a conversation. It was the lyric-less solo, the lyric-less improv. You'd improvise lyrics without saying anything. You were not improvising chord changes, or on an instrumental premise. How do you improvise Shakespeare without using the dialogue? That was the question here. There are millions of ways to do it, everything is infinite. Oftentimes people like to stop, to phrase something so they can sell it. It's then like frozen chicken. Frozen-chicken music. *Bitches Brew* is not a frozen chicken.

Maupin: Each morning Miles would say how pleased he was with the previous day's work. During the sessions he never played anything back for more than a few seconds. As a result, the ensemble members knew very little about the contents of the tracks.



Holland: Miles was a great band leader. He liked to incorporate ideas of those involved in his projects. He'd ask for suggestions. If he liked what he heard and felt it was appropriate to the tune, he'd say, "Let's do it." It was a very organic process. Of course, Miles was at the center with a guiding hand. As a result, the music developed in a very personal way. For example, Miles would sketch out short sections in terms of harmonies, but how those harmonies were to be interpreted was left up to the musicians themselves.



dave holland with miles

Zawinul: When we came into the studio, we had lead sheets with the main motifs for each tune. Miles let it be loose. We just started playing and the tapes rolled. I can't remember a time when Miles had us stop and start playing again. Miles pointed at each of us when he wanted us to take the lead.

Holland: When we used multiple keyboards, it was a challenge for the musicians to find ways to complement each other, to not get into each other's way. That led to a searching quality that's characteristic of some of the pieces. Working with another bassist wasn't alien to me. Since I had played in situations with two—and sometimes more—bassists, I had ideas for making that work. Harvey [Brooks] and I found roles to play. Most of the time, his bass line provided the support role while I played a counter line.



joe zawinul

DeJohnette: Whether you're playing with another drummer or 10 others, you need to make sure the sound isn't cluttered. One guy can take the groove and the other can improvise over it. It's important that two drummers working side by side have the right chemistry.



teo macero

Zawinul: Chick [Corea] and I had already played with Miles on *In A Silent Way*, so we knew how to play the keyboards together without stepping on each other's toes.



wayne shorter

Shorter: This was, for Miles, a celebration of sorts. He had just gotten married again (to Betty Mabry), and he was celebrating

his happiness. When you're happy in a relationship you want to do things. He was bringing to the table her generation, which he knew about, but with her being right there with him, he could see her reaction to the music. If she was moved by some idea he had musically, from her [younger] generation, he dug that. Miles was super-observant. He was a modern man, a master of taking something that he didn't write, and showing you a whole part that you didn't think of.

Specific Pieces

Holland: Miles would rework pieces Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul brought to the sessions. Sometimes he did so in dramatic fashion, transforming them into something completely different. Miles would give the compositions his distinctive stamp.

Macero: Some of the tunes were never even finished. Take "John McLaughlin." That was just a rehearsal, and it turned out to be a good piece. It sounded good, so we decided to put it in.

Shorter: The first thing you heard on "Bitches Brew," Miles was playing off of some lyrics, emulating them. The lyrics were written by his wife. You've heard the song "I'm A Down Home Girl"? That riff at the beginning is emulating those lyrics. I caught that right away at the session. Betty was there. It's an emotional hook. He was repeating those words. It was like revving up a car—he was announcing that here was something different.

White: On "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down," Miles wanted a funky groove. Now I had been playing that kind of James Brown music since I was 14. Coming from Jamaica, Queens, you had to play that if you wanted gigs. I don't know why, but I just froze up. Miles wanted a certain beat. He told me, "You got to get the chicken, you ain't getting the chicken." So Alias says, "I've got a beat that'll work." He played it funky and I ended up playing the shekere along with Jumma Santos. I was feeling down. Damn, I had the opportunity to play with Miles and I screwed up. I was despondent. But at the end of the session Miles told me to come back the next day. I thought he was going to fire me. I returned with more confidence. That's when I did my best playing on "Spanish Key." I was still apprehensive, but by then I understood the process Miles was working in.

Zawinul: Miles really liked "Pharaoh's Dance." I was thinking of the building of the pyramids when I wrote it. The beginning has a sense of busy-ness, where the workers were whirling around like ants. Miles brought his own imagination to the piece. He always gave the composer the privilege to rehearse his own piece with the band. So during "Pharaoh's Dance," for example, I was concentrating on keeping the band together. However, Miles also directed the piece, pointing to Wayne or Bennie for their contributions.

The Final Mix

Holland: The sessions were organized and well thought out. Then what we recorded was edited and pieced back together as a collage.

Belden: When we looked at the "Bitches Brew" quarter-inch

master, we could see the edits where Teo cut two to three bars at a time. They were spliced in. There's even a loop in there way before anyone was doing that kind of recording technology. I think this is Teo's finest moment. It's fascinating. It was pure brilliance on his part to get the most out of so little.

Macero: On "Pharaoh's Dance," I don't know how many splices we made. We made a ton.

White: After each session, Miles invited me over to his house to listen to what we recorded. I listened to it all. When the record came out, it didn't sound like anything that I had heard at Miles' place. Teo had gone in and done a Frankenstein with it. He created a monster. It was good, some of it was brilliant. But it was different. It was not the same as what I heard.

Zawinul: I didn't really like the sessions at the time. I didn't think they were exciting enough. But a short while later I was at the CBS offices and a secretary was playing this incredible music. It was really smoking. So I asked her, "Who the hell

Jazz Box Set

- 337 Miles Davis, *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* (Columbia/Legacy)
- 193 John Coltrane, *Classic Quartet—Complete Impulse! Studio Recordings* (Impulse!)
- 144 Duke Ellington, *The Complete RCA Victor Recordings* (RCA Victor)
- 128 Herbie Hancock, *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (Blue Note)

Jazz Reissue

- 301 Miles Davis, *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* (Columbia/Legacy)
- 217 Duke Ellington, *Ellington At Newport* (Columbia)
- 157 John Coltrane, *Classic Quartet—Complete Impulse! Studio Recordings* (Impulse!)
- 116 Herbie Hancock, *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (Blue Note)
- 107 Hank Mobley, *Complete Blue Note 1950s Sessions* (Mosaic)
- 90 Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington, *Ella And Duke At The Côte D'Azur* (Verve)

is this?" And she replied, "It's that *Bitches Brew* thing." I thought, damn, that's great.

Lasting Significance

DeJohnette: When we recorded the sessions, I knew we were doing something on the cutting edge. We knew that anything to do with Miles would be something special, but we had no idea how much historical value the album would have 30 years later.

Shorter: Miles was hipping that younger generation to themselves.

White: What came out of those sessions is a masterpiece. It set the trend for everything that came after.

Belden: Today some people listen to these sessions and say, "Oh, that's that *Bitches Brew* shit." But back when it was recorded, this stuff used to scare people.

Macero: We were revolutionaries. **DB**

Additional reporting by Jason Koransky.

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DIANA KRALL

FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

It's easy to dismiss Diana Krall's soaring popularity. At first glance, it appears that the singer-pianist plays the nostalgia card, given her penchant for covering classic tunes by the likes of Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra. Then there's the image factor, with the photo spread on her latest album, *When I Look In Your Eyes* (Verve), looking more like a DKNY clothes brochure than a stereotypical jazz shoot.

But once the music starts, the down-to-earth, girl-next-door Krall, who takes the Female Vocalist honors in this year's Down Beat Readers Poll, puts to rest those notions of having turned her back on her jazz upbringing for pop stardom.

"It's a really odd thing that people are calling me a pop star," said Krall, 34, after making her gala debut as a leader at Carnegie Hall during last summer's New York JVC Jazz Festival. "I'm not comfortable with that even though it refers to the fact that I'm playing popular music. But I'm not doing anything different than I was a few years ago. I'm still the same person playing the same style of music."

Call her a jazz artist, a song stylist or a pop musician, Krall brought the Carnegie Hall attendees to their feet with her reflective, passionate, wistful, spunky, romance-with-a-wink set. Three months later she achieved the same results, this time in front of a packed arena of 7,000 on the main outdoor stage of this September's Monterey Jazz Festival. Even though in the not-so-distant past the Saturday night crowd there was notorious for its inattentive chatter, you could have heard a pin drop this year as pianist Krall and her quartet (guitarist Peter Bernstein, bassist Paul Gill and drummer Joe Farnsworth) enthralled the arena with a sumptuous set of standards, ranging from the lighthearted "Devil May Care" to the gorgeous "Folks Who Live On The Hill" that she rendered solo.

Krall, one of the biggest selling recording artists in jazz, has hit on a certain magic that not only attracts her parents' generation weaned on standards but also young listeners being exposed to classic tunes for the first time. While her earlier albums showcased her in a trio setting, *When I Look In Your Eyes* finds her expanding her core group to a quartet (adding a drummer) and features legendary bandleader Johnny Mandel of Sinatra and Barbara Streisand fame contributing orchestral arrangements to several of the songs. It's not surprising that the mainstream press (including both Newsweek and Vanity Fair) has taken notice in a big way.

While some in the jazz crowd, always cautious of glamorous hit-makers, may

Female Vocalist

- 261 Diana Krall
- 178 Cassandra Wilson
- 150 Dianne Reeves
- 138 Nancy Wilson
- 121 Dee Dee Bridgewater
- 101 Abbey Lincoln
- 81 Rosemary Clooney
- 65 Sheila Jordan
- 63 Carol Sloane

BY DAN OUELLETTE



Los Hombres Calientes: Bill Summers, Irvin Mayfield, Jason Marsalis

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accuse her of selling out, there's a strong argument to be made that pop listeners are developing a taste for exquisite music. "At the risk of sounding sentimental, I look at my career at its simplest level," Krall says. "I'm excited about the music. I play it with integrity and I don't compromise my vision. I approach it from an artistic perspective. But I'm also aware of the market and the need to sell records so that I can continue to grow."

A couple of hours before making her grand entrance onto the Monterey stage, Krall, dressed casually in a black blouse and pants, takes a breather from her hectic schedule for a glass of chardonnay in her hotel lounge. She reels off her last few days: escaping from New York City on the last flight before Hurricane Floyd blew into town, off to a show in southern California, up to Monterey to do a CNN segment, off to northern California for another gig, then back to Monterey where she checked in after midnight the night before. "It's intense, but it's good," she says, then adds, "and I've been up since 6 this morning. I went horseback riding on the beach. You know, that's a big part of who I am."

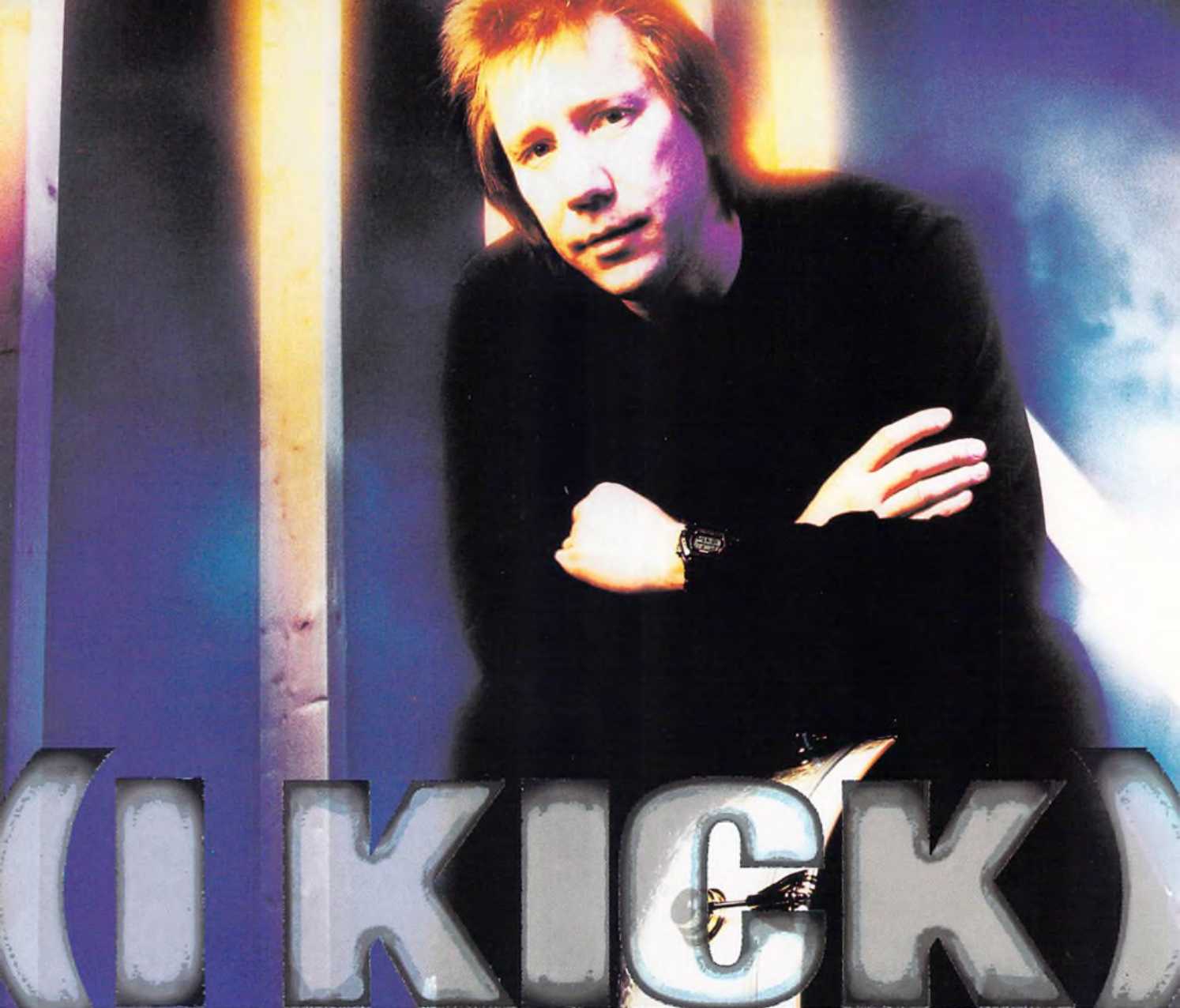
As for scoring the female vocalist prize in the Readers Poll, Krall comments, "It's a great honor and of course I'm happy. But winning isn't what this is all about for me. All I'm trying to do is make beautiful records that people enjoy. That's what counts."

Krall mentions the great respect she has for such peers as Cassandra Wilson, Nnenna Freelon and Dee Dee Bridgewater, and then even wonders aloud if she's a bona fide jazz vocalist.

"I was talking to Alan Broadbent recently about that, but he assured me I was," she says. "But I prefer not to be categorized. I have respect for the tradition, people like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing and Tony Bennett. I love Miles Davis and Bill Evans, I'm a student of the Great American Songbook and I love singing and playing the piano. I'm not trying to break new ground. I just love the music that I grew up listening to and I love telling my audience, 'Look, you guys, if you like these songs, check out Count Basie and Mose Allison, celebrate this art form.'"

Of course, Krall is well aware of the criticism. She placed a distant sixth behind front-runner Cassandra Wilson in this year's Down Beat Critics Poll and was the subject of a John Corbett slam in his Sept. 1999 "Hot Box" review of *When I Look In Your Eyes* (which also garnered a 5-star rating by John McDonough). "Oh, yeah, I saw that," Krall says. "I was disappointed in that comment, 'Is this a CD or a J. Crew catalog?' But that's life. Some people already have an opinion of who I am. Hey, I'm a cowgirl who loves to ride horses on the beach, but I'm also a girl who likes clothes and likes to look nice. So why shouldn't I have a beautiful cover? I'm confident enough in my music that I don't have to apologize for that."

As for labeling her music schmaltzy and the marketing calculated, Krall shrugs. "I'm passionate about the songs. What can I say? Why can't I sing the old tunes? *Death Of A Salesman* has been staged before. Does that mean Brian Dennehy can't do it again? It's old, but it's great. I respect the people who made the music and I'm humbled by the hard times they had when they were recording it. I'm thankful I get to do this. It's like what [drummer] Jeff Hamilton taught me back when I was a teenager: You need to approach music like it's Christmas morning. There's a red-sparkled drum set or a purple bicycle under the tree and you feel like the luckiest person alive."



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BRAD MEHLDAU

ACOUSTIC PIANIST OF THE YEAR

Brad Mehldau's career reached critical mass this year. He released two albums on Verve—*Elegiac Cycle*, a stunning, classically inspired solo disc, and the recent *The Art Of The Trio Vol. 4—Back At The Vanguard*, a live trio sequel recorded at the famous New York club this past February. A follow-up to the live trio sessions he did at the Jazz Bakery with Lee Konitz and Charlie Haden, with Konitz as leader, has been released as well, *Another Shade Of Blue* (Blue Note). The 29-year-old pianist was the subject of a cover story in the June issue of *Down Beat*, "25 For The Future," and he's been regaled in the mainstream press by *Time* magazine and *The New York Times*, the latter referring to him as "among the most celebrated jazz pianists of his generation." Mehldau even hit Hollywood, as his composition "Blame It On My Youth," was featured in Stanley Kubrick's posthumous film, *Eyes Wide Shut*.

So with all the attention he's been receiving, you might think Mehldau would be blasé about winning Acoustic Pianist of the Year in the Readers Poll.

Quite the contrary.

After the 29-year-old pianist heard he won, he was pumped. And, as usual for this *tres* intellectual cat, he had an explanation for his enthusiasm.

"It's great to be loved and appreciated by the critics," he observes from his Los Angeles home, "but it's nice, for a different reason, to be appreciated by the fans. The critics are one step ahead of people, but it doesn't necessarily mean that what they like is something everyone's enjoying. This is really cool, to know that people who love jazz are digging me."

Mehldau recently took a two-month break in Germany, studying the language and hanging out with his girlfriend. His affection for things German is reflected, among other ways, in the title of another tune on the new album, "Sehnsucht," which translates as "longing."

"Not longing for a specific thing, but in a metaphysical sense, a general longing that is said to be part of the human condition itself," he says. "It's a term that the German Romantics use, as well as one of my favorite authors, Thomas Mann. The title came about because the harmony is never resolved, which implies a kind of longing for resolution."

When Mehldau is reminded that German Romanticism, in its extreme and distorted forms, historically has led humanity into some nasty territory, he seems well aware of the irony.

"Something that's the most essential part of your spirit can also be destructive," he admits. "But that's kind of what music is about for me—that terror, getting in touch with your own mortality. Schopenhauer called that the Sublime. It's what I hear in Coltrane, or in any of the intense jazz that I love."

One of the most intriguing aspects of Mehldau's playing, especially on the last two albums, has been his penchant for dipping into the classical bag, much as Keith Jarrett did before him. In particular, the young pianist uses a device in which he sets up a regular figure with his right hand, then improvises with his left, which has become unusually strong.

"There was definitely a point about six years ago when I became re-interested in classical music," he says. "And I started to practice more stuff with my left hand."

He cites as specific influences the Bach Preludes and Fugues ("But not all of them. I can only work on three or four at a time! I'm a pretty slow learner.") and the Brahms *klavierstücke* (piano pieces), particularly Opus 116-119.

Is classical a regular part of his practice regime?

"The last three weeks, I've been doing pure practicing—no music, no paper, at most a metronome—just making up exercises on my own that, retrospectively, sound like classical."

But he stresses that it's a personal thing.

"A lot of times, friends of mine ask, 'Should I study classical?' But it's the wrong question to be asking," he says. "You should study what your passion is about. If it's about Led Zeppelin, then go for it. If you're not passionate about a Chopin etude, or Brahms, then it's not going to come out when you're improvising. If you love that music naturally, it will come out, because improvisational music is a weird mixture of conscious and unconscious processes. You're trying to forget everything you've practiced, yet it's there."

Word on the street—though it was apparently news to Mehldau—is that young piano players in New York have already started to cop his licks.

"That's great, if it's true," he responds. "That's the ultimate compliment. It's very flattering." **DB**

Acoustic Piano

217 Brad Mehldau
203 Kenny Barron
189 Keith Jarrett
183 Tommy Flanagan
167 Herbie Hancock
149 Chick Corea
90 McCoy Tyner
81 Oscar Peterson
81 Marcus Roberts
70 Hank Jones
65 Geri Allen
58 Benny Green

BY PAUL DE BARROS

RAY BROWN

ACOUSTIC BASSIST OF THE YEAR

It doesn't take a genius to know why Ray Brown stands out among bassists in 1999 as he did in 1946, when Dizzy Gillespie featured the 20-year-old phenom on the album *Two Bass Hit*. Brown's supple, insinuating sound, the way he gets notes to ring with bell-like clarity from the bottom of the instrument to the top, articulated with a full, elongated tone at any tempo, sets him apart from his peers. Equally effective in solo flight or navigating a rhythm section through uncharted currents, he creates lines unparalleled in blending harmonic acuity and heartfelt melodicism, swinging like a force of nature.

And most impressively, the 73-year-old pioneer continues to challenge himself, touring the world with a young working trio comprising pianist Geoff Keezer and drummer Kareem Riggins.

"At my age, the bass isn't something you can play two weeks and lay off six weeks, because it will kick your butt when you come back," says Brown, the Readers' choice as Acoustic Bassist of the Year, on the cusp of an eight-week sojourn. "If you want to play, PLAY! I started out 55 years ago with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, who played fast and long. I went from there to Oscar Peterson, and he played faster and longer. You have a choice when you get your own band. You can say, 'Well, I've had enough of that stuff; I won't do it any more.' Or you can say, 'If I want to do that, I'd better do it every night.' So I have a lot in the book that demands I play what I used to play! It's self-driven."

Though Brown and Peterson don't hit warp speed at quite the pace they used to, 1999's *The Very Tall Band* (Telarc)—culled from November 1998 performances at Manhattan's Blue Note by a collective quartet showcasing Brown, Peterson and Milt Jackson—finds the venerable improvisers playing at a peak of creativity.

Brown's past year has also been devoted to singers, a sub-

ject he knows a thing or two about—he was married to Ella Fitzgerald from 1948 to 1952, and was in the studio with everyone from Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby to Sarah Vaughan. He displays his arsenal of rhythm section strategies backing

the likes of Dee Dee Bridgewater, Etta Jones, Nancy King, Diana Krall, Kevin Mahogany and Marlena Shaw as they interpret a choice selection of standards on 1998's *Some Of My Best Friends Are ... Singers* (Telarc). He also elicits a Yuletide tribute from the same flock on the 1999 off-shoot *Christmas Songs With The Ray Brown Trio* (Telarc).

Trumpets will be featured in Brown's next *Friends* projects, and he's currently choosing a select group of trumpeters for the upcoming album. It's a good bet the proceedings will channel the spirit of the mentor who in 1944, on Hank Jones' recommendation, invited Brown to his apartment to rehearse with Parker, Bud Powell and Max Roach a few hours after the 18-year-old Pittsburgh native arrived in New York fresh from a two-day train ride.

"There's a lot of Dizzy Gillespie left in me," Brown laughs. "He taught so many of us how to voice chords, how to approach a song harmonically. If you asked him a question, he would get out the trumpet and play it, or go to the piano and show you."

With the *Friends* series, Brown perpetuates a lifelong dialogue with the life-blood of jazz that began when he was a teenage aspirant practicing to Jimmy Blanton records, and progressed to a string of remarkable real-time encounters with the likes of Louis Armstrong, Johnny Hodges, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Sonny Rollins, Cannonball Adderley, Roy Eldridge and Duke Ellington. "I've worked with almost everybody in this business," he concludes. "I've been overly blessed." **DB**



ALAN HARRINGTON

Acoustic Bass

201 Ray Brown
183 Dave Holland
183 Charlie Haden
168 Christian McBride
118 Ron Carter
100 George Mraz
82 John Patitucci
71 Gary Peacock

BY TED PANKEN

DON BYRON

CLARINETIST OF THE YEAR

A current that runs throughout Don Byron's expansive oeuvre is the rediscovery of America. This year's top clarinetist in the Down Beat Readers Poll (for the eighth straight year), Byron has created his own melange from such sources as '50s ethnic pop, Caribbean rhythms, Duke Ellington, '70s funk and silent films. He continues to shatter several connotations about his instrument, but he would hardly claim that it's all part of a scheme.

"I don't necessarily think that everything I've done is a question of what jazz ought to be," Byron says. "But within the framework of everything that we have available to us, and how much music a jazz musician can absorb, it's really a fraction of usable material that we use."

Byron says that his own curiosity resonates with prevailing sensibilities.

"I'm just trying to present a gestalt of who I am and what I'm interested in. But most people in their homes don't listen to one kind of music or are not entertained by one kind of visual entertainment," he explains. "They don't all read books that are on one subject. Maybe there are some people out there who only listen to trumpet players and they only read books by Dick Francis. But, most people are more well-rounded than that. Maybe people expect their jazz musicians to be much more provincial personalities than themselves."

Ever since his debut album eight years ago, Byron has confounded such expectations with each disc. Last year on *Nu Bluxploitation* (Blue Note), he adapted two compositions by the r&b group Mandrill, threw in some taped conversations and continued his music/spoken word collaboration with the poet Sadiq. Byron's recent *Romance With The Unseen* (Blue Note) focuses on his jazz quartet's flexible interplay. He says this CD is about "showing off less compositional trickery and relying more on a certain kind of rapport."

"It's a nice environment where everybody is fully listening and reacting," Byron says. "And things flow out of other things and not in a clumsy, proving-that-you're-listening way."

Byron pays tribute to the painter Jean Michel Basquiat on one track of *Romance With The Unseen*. He admires the artist's refusal to accept imposed boundaries.

"Basquiat's work really speaks to a kind of cultural way of looking at things," Byron says. "He was of color and made access for himself. Access to art, access to music, access to whatever he wanted to put in his world. And I think black people in this country are really encouraged to be kind of provincial folks who don't stray outside of a certain kind of cultural framework. They're not supposed to know about high art and heavy films. And like lots of great black artists, he accessed what he needed to access."

When he was growing up in New York, Byron created access for himself within the city's neighborhoods. He says that back then he could, "walk eight blocks and hear Machito's band play live. I could walk six blocks and hear an organ trio play. I could get on a train, ride 20 minutes, and play in an orchestra."

On stage and on disc, Byron connects his music with social observations and a political vision that is funnier and far more astute than anything heard from television pundits.

As the New York senate race approaches, he condemns likely Republican nominee Rudolph Giuliani, saying that the New York City mayor "seems to violate all the rules of civil rights." Byron also has affection for the probable Democrat.

"I always liked Hillary Clinton," Byron says. "She's a decent person and she's incredibly smart. Over the years I've seen her have to respond to people who are so much dumber than her. And I think she's sexy, just mentally. She's my type of woman—she's nerdy, she's smart, she doesn't wear bad clothes, excessive plaid or anything like that. She's classy, and she's not even WASPy classy. She's got a thing."

DB

**Clarinet**

281 Don Byron
191 Eddie Daniels
136 Buddy DeFranco
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BY AARON COHEN

TOM HARRELL

TRUMPETER OF THE YEAR

Tom Harrell's major accomplishment this year was recording the big band album *Time's Mirror*, his third release on RCA Victor and his first big band date for the label. Interestingly, given the schizophrenia the trumpeter/flugelhornist endures, one would think that it would be exactly this sort of large-scale, multiperson project from which Harrell would shy away.

"You have all the responsibility leading a big band, but it's good to experience responsibility," says the readers' favorite trumpeter for the fourth consecutive year, on the phone from his New York apartment. "It builds your character and it helps you learn how to relax."

Relaxation is not exactly the first thought that comes

to mind when thinking about a big band.

"It's relaxing because there's so much energy being generated," Harrell continues, slowly parsing through every phrase, meticulously constructing his thoughts. "You can just let the music happen; and then when you have a solo you have a really firm foundation on which to play. Also, I was lucky because I got to play with some great musicians. This took a lot of pressure off. It was beautiful."

Some of the musicians heard on the Bob Belden-produced album include saxophonists Don Braden, Craig Bailey and Mark Gross, trumpeters Earl Gardner and David Weiss, trombonist Conrad Herwig, and a rhythm section of pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Carl Allen. A talented group, indeed, but it was Harrell's precision arrangements on the eight tracks, done over a 35-year period from 1964 to 1999, that made a firm foundation for the album.

Time's Mirror opens with the lush soundscape of his composition "Shapes," reminiscent of David Amram's compositions for the *Manchurian Candidate* soundtrack, which quickly

builds into a poignant, swinging chart. Harrell explores various territories with his band, from his sophisticated arrangement of "Autumn Leaves" and the angular, multileveled "Daily News," to the bossa nova flavors of "São Paulo" and the melancholy and longing of the title track ballad.

The album ends on a high note, as the band darts

through the propulsive "Train Shuffle," which Harrell originally wrote and recorded for a small group, but expanded for big band when he was invited to perform with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra in 1992. As the horns explode through a swinging shout chorus to bring the album to a close, one gets the impression that Harrell has taken



BY ANDREW LEFLEY

the listener through a deliberate journey, from the subdued intro of the album to this explosion.

"I like the feeling of building through composition, telling a story," says Harrell, honored by his poll victory. "I was influenced by Duke Ellington because of his use of extended forms and through-composed structures."

Harrell's not doing very much writing these days, however, as he's been focusing on making his beautiful tone even stronger. "I like the freedom of being able to play a long phrase," Harrell explains. "I'm influenced by piano players especially, but also guitar players, saxophonists, other trumpeters and singers who can sustain a long melody. I guess it's like yoga in a way: You are relaxed but your body is working to produce the sound you want." **DB**

Trumpet

- 271 Tom Harrell
- 266 Dave Douglas
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- 193 Roy Hargrove
- 170 Terence Blanchard
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- 87 Art Farmer
- 73 Lester Bowie
- 70 Ruby Braff
- 62 Randy Brecker

BY JASON KORANSKY

HERBIE HANCOCK: GERSHWIN'S WORLD

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Depth, variety and passion run throughout the Readers' favorite recordings in this year's poll.

On paper, Herbie Hancock's conception for a Gershwin tribute—encompassing African percussionists, a chamber orchestra, jazz musicians, two pop icons and one certified opera diva—seems grandiose, perhaps even pretentious. But on disc, *Gershwin's World* is a joy. From the sultry Joni Mitchell-Wayne Shorter duet on "The Man I Love" to the sumptuous orchestration for "Lullaby," Hancock's vision of reflecting Gershwin's music in contemporary American culture never falters. The pianist, with producer Robert Sadin, manages to inspire some astounding performances.

The Dave Holland Quintet is a listeners' favorite, both in concert and on its debut recording, *Points Of View*. Anchored by the drumming of Billy Kilson, the quintet balances a dark-hued bottom end (the product of Holland's meaty bass and Robin Eubanks' trombone) with a ringing upper register, courtesy of vibist Steve Nelson and saxophonist Steve Wilson (Chris Potter replaced Wilson after the album's release).

A trio setting with Holland and drummer Elvin Jones leaves saxophonist Joe Lovano plenty of room to fill on *Trio Fascination* and he does so with huge, hearty gusts of sound. Freed from the harmonic confines of a piano, Lovano makes like Sonny Rollins and cuts a swath through the music with a sound large enough to comprise an entire reed section.

Cassandra Wilson takes Miles Davis' music

down to her native Mississippi on *Traveling Miles*, funneling songs like "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down," "E.S.P." and "Tutu" through her conjurer-woman esthetic and adding several of her own compositions. The connection to Miles might have been stretched thin at times, but Wilson remains true to his sense of musical adventure throughout.

Trumpeter Nicholas Payton's ebullient spirit infuses everything on *Payton's Place*, his third album as a leader. The New Orleans native and his young band love to party in the Crescent City tradition, and *Payton's Place* is a rockin' joint.

Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette celebrate 15 years together on *Tokyo '96*—their 12th set of standards. With Jarrett sidelined most of the year by chronic fatigue syndrome, the recorded performance is a reminder of how the three musicians redefined the limits for communication within a piano trio.

Working different territory than Jarrett's Standards Trio, Brad Mehldau's long-standing unit with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy takes a similar approach to exploring the possibilities of songs. The pianist's *Songs*, the third in

The Art Of The Trio series, continues his examination of quirky material.

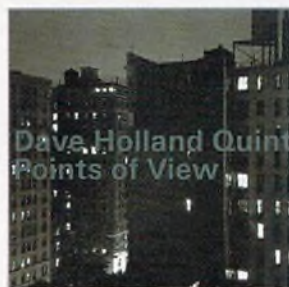
Prolific trumpeter Dave Douglas gave Down Beat readers much to choose from last year, and they favored the most traditional of his offerings: his quartet's *Magic Triangle*. Paired with saxophonist Potter, Douglas displays more of his Milesian side than he does in other settings.

DB



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BY JAMES HALE

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brad mehldau

WARRETT EHRMAN



kenny garrett

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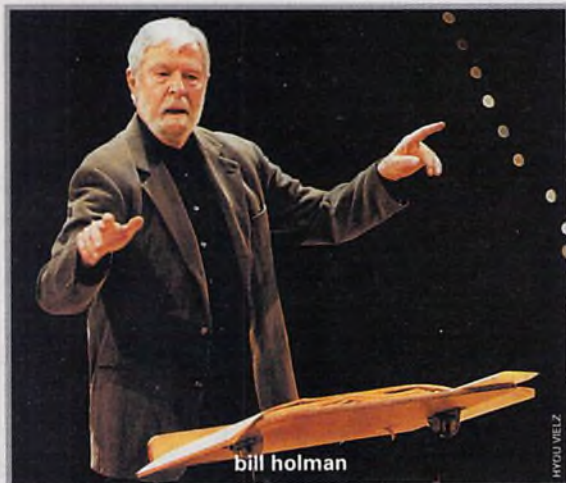
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kevin mahogany

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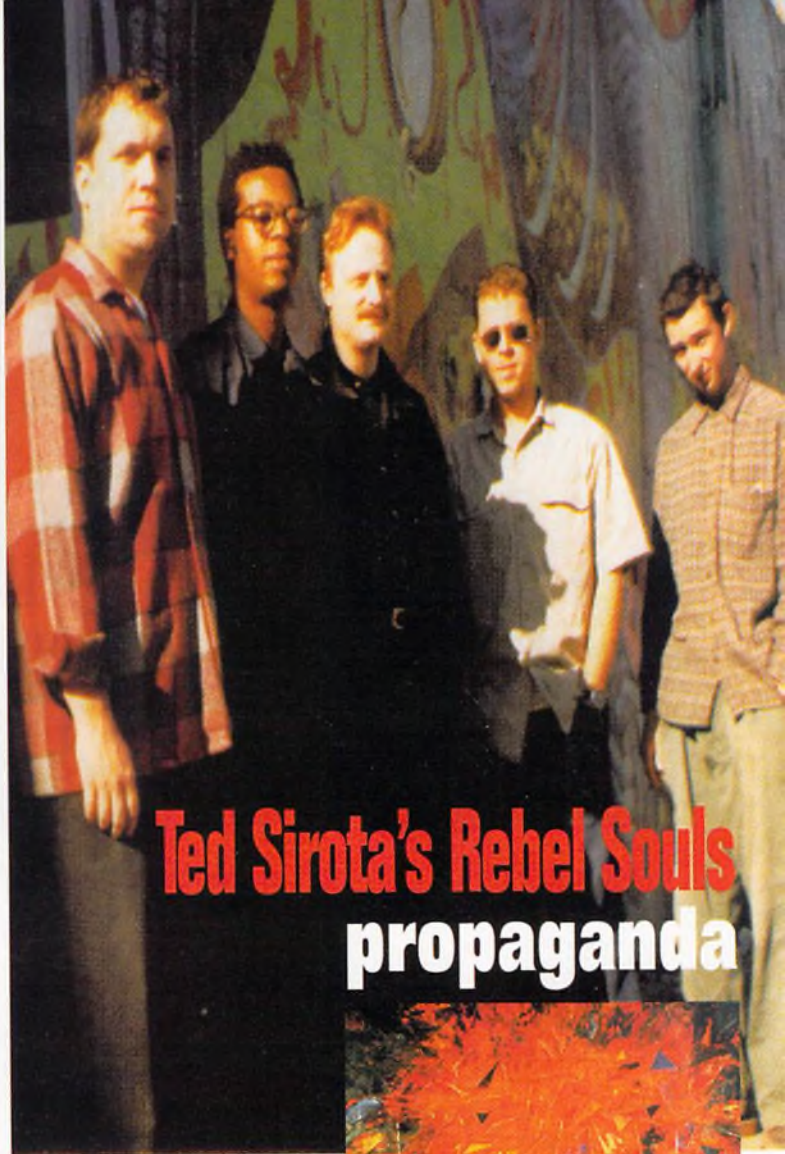
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tito puente

HYOU VELZ



Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls
propaganda



"There have been few jazz debuts of recent years which have shown such ability" – Phil Brett, The Listener.

One review of many that surrounded the release of drummer Ted Sirota's first album with The Naim Label. His second, Propaganda, is set to attract just as much attention.

All eight tracks have been written by Ted and other members of the band, and the album is a testament to their extreme talent as both musicians and composers.

Rebel Souls indeed; listen to this and treat yourself to inspiration through free jazz.

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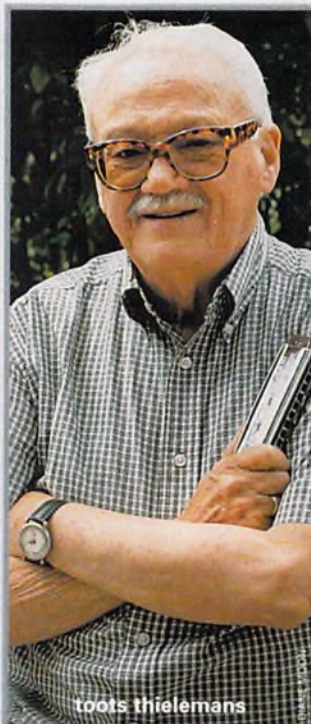
sting

CARTER SMITH



nick brignola

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toots thielemans

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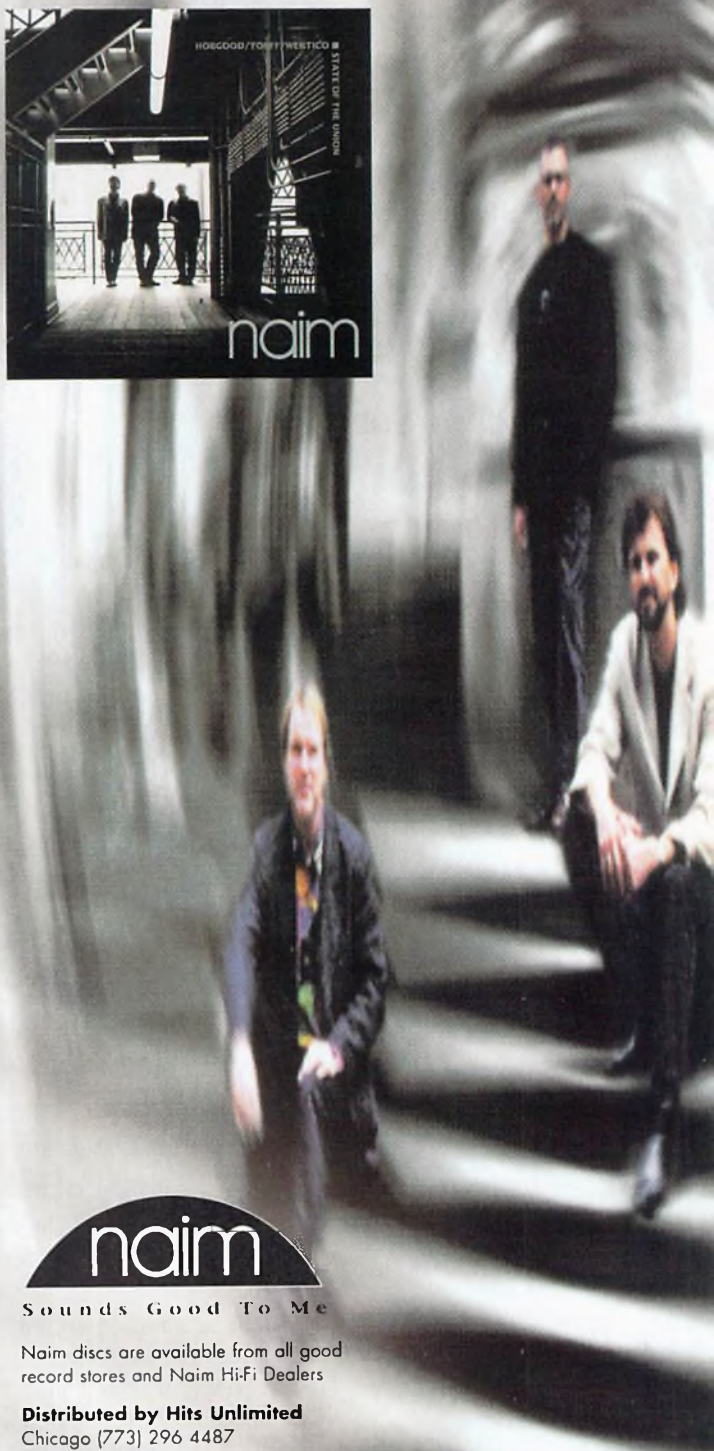
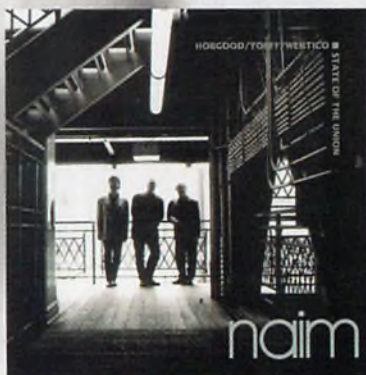
bruce lundvall, blue note president

ALAN HANIGAN

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“Music is the biggest proof that you can take people from different backgrounds, and they can communicate with each other on a high level.”



miri ben-ari:
making her
own scene

Miri Ben-Ari has captivating hair. Her thick brown curls shoot electricity out from their ends, flying around the violinist's head in reckless abandon as she rips into one of her hyperkinetic solos. And it's precisely when Ben-Ari lays into her groove that all thought turns away from her appearance and the attention shifts to her music—the originality, impeccable technique and playfulness of her swinging jazz. And to top off her sound, there's an exotic flair courtesy of her Israeli upbringing.

“I was influenced by the different flavors available to me when I grew up in the Middle East,” says the 27-year-old violinist, who grew up in Ra'anana, a small town outside of Tel Aviv. “Israel has this interesting desert vibe happening. A friend of mine calls me ‘Desert Honey Girl’ because of the Mediterranean sounds he hears. A lot of people say that it sounds gypsy:

It's the first thing that comes to their head, and to me it's a compliment.”

Ben-Ari oozes desert spirit on her appropriately titled debut album, *Sahara*, issued this year on the Blue Note club's new imprint, Half Note Records. The nine-track album of all originals finds Ben-Ari leading a group comprising guitarist Mark Whitfield, keyboardist/producer



"When I went into the Army (obligatory for all Israeli citizens), I was playing classical at a very high level," she says. "I belonged to a group of musicians in Jerusalem founded by the great violinist, Isaac Stern. The only people I knew were my colleagues, a very closed society of people into classical. In the Army, one of my friends told me about Charlie Parker. After I saw one of Bird's albums sitting at her place, I went to the record store and picked it up. The album was *Now's The Time*, and when I played the first track, 'The Song Is You,' I knew right away that this is what I wanted to do. It still blows me away every time I listen to it."

After her two years in the Army, and thoroughly infected with the jazz bug, Ben-Ari moved to the States in 1993 to study jazz at Mannes. Here, she became entrenched in the New York scene, and one night, while playing at a jam session at the now-defunct club Visiones, Betty Carter walked into the club.

"It used to be next to the Blue Note, and she had a gig at the Blue Note that week," she says about the chance encounter with the late singer about three years ago. "She came in after her gig, and was surrounded by all of her fans, all of these young musicians, and it was impossible to talk to her. She happened to walk in right as I was playing. When I was done, she left all of the people around her, walked straight to me and gave me this huge hug. I couldn't believe it. I had never met her. I told her then that I wanted to get involved in *Jazz Ahead*."

The legends of the instrument are taking notice of her original playing, such as Claude "Fiddler" Williams, who invited her to perform at his 90th birthday party in Springfield, Mass., a year ago. Other activities have included a gig this year at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., that was broadcast on Branford Marsalis' NPR show "Jazz Set" in November, and her work as a member of bassist Santi Debriano's group.

Ben-Ari's trying to make her own history as well, hosting a session every Tuesday night, along with pianist Eric Lewis, at the Upper West Side club Cleopatra's Needle. It's become quite a popular hang, with many of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra musicians such as Ted Nash (on whose new Arabesque album, *Rhyme & Reason*, she appears), Marcus Printup and Wycliffe Gordon showing up at times to jam. Wynton Marsalis, who has become her friend and mentor, even came into the club.

"It's hip, and the musicians like it because it's not like some of the clubs where it's uptight and tourist-oriented," she says. "It's very loose, and we can do seemingly whatever we want. It has a real party vibe—people sometimes even get up and start dancing, and I love that because music is all about loosening up. It's about unity."

Ben-Ari is taking similar sentiments to heart for her next album, for which she says she has plenty of material already written. "I'm going to dedicate my next album to peace in the Middle East," she

Desert Honey Girl

Ohad, bassist Boris Cozlov, drummer Steve Hass and percussionist Valtinho Anastacio. The songs have clearly pronounced melodies, combining a decisively contemporary, funky sound with a jazz fiddle sensibility emerging from early swing and hot jazz. The album builds upon the source of her first jazz inspiration, Charlie Parker.

Carter eventually invited Ben-Ari to join her jazz education program. Ben-Ari credits Carter, with whom she performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in '98, for giving her the push to find her own voice. "That's the whole idea behind *Jazz Ahead*: being original, yourself and not sounding like someone else."

explains. "Music is the biggest proof that you can take people from different backgrounds, and they can communicate with each other on a high level. I wish that the Middle East would come up with some other kind of communication that can transcend this fighting."

Now that's the talk of a Desert Honey Girl. —Jason Koransky



Don Byron
Romance With The Unseen
Blue Note 99545

★★★½

It's a pleasure to hear someone come at the theme of romance with more than one mood in mind. *Romance With The Unseen*, Don Byron's second Blue Note outing, is considerably more than a batch of love songs. In fact, its strongest moments are drawn from darker emotional areas—excellent terrain to probe with a clarinet—rather than the passing blush of initial infatuation or a superficial crush.

Two factors determine the basic sound of the record: the unusual combination of clarinet and electric guitar in Byron and Bill Frisell, a well-heeled pairing, and the musical personality of drummer Jack DeJohnette. For a taste of the unique frontline, look no further than the marvy Ellington rarity that starts things, "A Mural From Two Perspectives," on which the unison arrangement opens up into a give-and-take exchange of melodic parts. For his part, DeJohnette could dominate proceedings; he sounds great kicking his way through a bopish "Perdido," his punchy toms and ridiculous snare careening almost (never quite) out of control. DeJohnette is clearly keyed-in on what the others are up to, but his boisterousness finally threatens to overwhelm his comrades on the otherwise sensitive "Homegoing" and on "Bernhard Goetz, James Ramseur And Me."

Those are two of four substantive Byron originals on the disc ("Lude" is a minute-long ambient guitar morsel with looping clarinet part—interlude or qualude?—and "Closer To Home" is a static atmospheric particle that ends the CD). Personally, I don't like the slick, poppy direction "Bernhard Goetz" takes in its slower B section (something mirrored in the unfortunate choice of the cloying Beatles cover "I'll Follow The Sun"), but it does give Frisell a reason to leave soft-spoken comping, chording and coloring and spit some fire with a driving, shards-of-harmonics rock solo. "Sad Twilight" waltzes its way through a beautiful, bittersweet

melody, and "Basquiat" is also lovely in a melancholy way, DeJohnette adding rain stick and other textural percussion, and letting up on the powder keg kit.

A subtle little backwards guitar sound grounds a much extrapolated version of Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap," though one wonders what would compel Byron to make a totally incongruous, thoughtless clarinet quote of "Rhapsody In Blue" in this context? That's not the only instance on *Romance With The Unseen* where Byron seems a trifle bored. Then again, maybe even that is accurate: Even the most exciting romance sometimes loses its lustre, doesn't it?

—John Corbett

Romance With The Unseen: A Mural From Two Perspectives; Sad Twilight; Bernhard Goetz, James Ramseur And Me; I'll Follow The Sun; Lude; Homegoing; One Finger Snap; Basquiat; Perdido (Pegao); Closer To Home. (66:26)

Personnel: Don Byron, clarinet; Bill Frisell, guitar; Drew Gress, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.



Keith Jarrett
The Melody At Night, With You
ECM 547 949

★★★★

The album's title must come from pianist Keith Jarrett's longstanding love affair with standards. How else to explain the nature of this project? *The Melody At Night, With You* is Jarrett's return to form after some serious scrapes with chronic fatigue syndrome (see DB Sept. '99).

Not surprisingly, the playing on this solo-piano recording is subdued, but does not lack for earnestness, passion or focus. The music is exquisite, unnerving and disarming, as the virtuoso bypasses flourish, instead choosing to speak plainly. (Jarrett's characteristic vocalizations play no part here.) In fact, *The Melody At Night, With You* suggests lullaby music, with a starry night overhead ("My Wild Irish Rose"). What keeps everything "indoors" is the voice of the piano itself, having been recorded in Jarrett's somewhat arid-sounding home studio, leaving the listener feeling somewhat alone.

That sense of aloneness, with hints of melancholy, pervades such songs as the traditional "Shenandoah," here given a gospel, hymn-like quality, or the album's highlight, "Blame It On My Youth," beautifully embellished as it is by Jarrett's own "Meditation" coda.

Except for Ellington's "I've Got It Bad, And That Ain't Good" and his "Meditation," there is no real improvising here, only intimate brushes with melody. Missing are some of those chords that have become trademark Jarrett. Consequently, a plainness and stateliness is heard with some of these readings. "I Loves You Porgy" and "Something To Remember You By" carry such moments, as Jarrett seems to overwork the material, suggesting a stiffness that need not be there.

Yes, this is Jarrett's first solo "standards" album. Why he hasn't recorded one before, having such a tradition of solo-piano recordings, is a mystery. In a sense, this pared-down, iconoclastic approach is classic Jarrett: Simple yet radical, no one "just" plays the music in jazz these days; there "must" always be theme and variation. Not here.

—John Ephland

The Melody At Night, With You: I Loves You Porgy; I Got It Bad, And That Ain't Good; Don't Ever Leave Me; Someone To Watch Over Me; My Wild Irish Rose; Blame It On My Youth, Meditation; Something To Remember You By; Be My Love; Shenandoah; I'm Through With Love. (55:20)

Personnel: Keith Jarrett, piano.



The Vandermark 5
Simpatico
Atavistic 107

★★★★

Jazz works best when it throws a lasso around impulse, when it shows frenzy how to have a bit of finesse, when it manages an equilibrium between probing and personable. That's pretty much what Ken Vandermark's unit achieves on this, their fifth record. A tad more refined than the head-turning blare of the previous Atavistic discs, *Target Or Flag* and *Single Piece Flow*, *Simpatico* digs into the kind

of fertile middle ground that inside-outers often plow with more meager results. Like the leader's butch-waxed buzz cut, the music is audacious yet groomed. Having things both ways seems important to Vandermark, and here he's figured out various methods of getting exactly what he wants.

That "various" is important. It's not often fledgling bandleaders have more than one way to skin a cat (and even less often they have more than one cat to skin). But across *Simpatico's* perpetually shifting program, Vandermark and company demonstrate how sundry approaches enhance the music's dimension. The most vehement passages—and there are several—delight in the tactile whomp of expressionism. Subtler moments—and there are several—are marked by the expert distinctions the ensemble applies to the weight of each note.

"Vent," the record's aptly named salutation, is a clear-the-decks squall that lets you know you're in Chicago at the close of the century (though Jeb Bishop's guitar feedback also conjures notions of Monterey circa '67). By judiciously cross-hatching a mess of brass and reed riffs, Vandermark bridges din and design without shortchanging either. Interviews have found him positing that sharp compositions are what will earn aggressive musicians a wider audience, and several pieces on *Simpatico* are ready to woo listeners with keenly drawn abstraction. Many reviewers have attributed the record's title to the quintet's impressive empathy (the band worked weekly gigs at Chicago's

Empty Bottle for several years), but perhaps it's more representative of the relationship between tunefulness and truculence.

That said, it's little wonder that on three separate note-taking sessions, I scrawled *Out To Lunch* on my pad. *Simpatico* doesn't formally parallel Eric Dolphy's masterwork, but similarities float by. The themes to both "Cover To Cover" and "Fact And Fiction" swirl and swing in a way that made Blue Note's early-'60s prog-bop phase so satisfying. And while Vandermark's bass clarinet sound is a bit more brittle than that of Dolphy's, the way he uses it to distinguish the raucous ensemble sound is comparable.

Though his street rep is that of a blustery avantiste, Vandermark's way with delicacy may more accurately define his character. Those who have heard him in trio with Joe Morris and Hans Poppel know how wisely he negotiates fragile pieces. Here, "Anywhere Else" and "Encino" are dependent on the band's gentle side. The latter is a clarinet nod to John Carter, and I dare say that its sentiment comes close to the minimalist majesty of Carter's writing. Each piece assures that congestion isn't the 5's only suit.

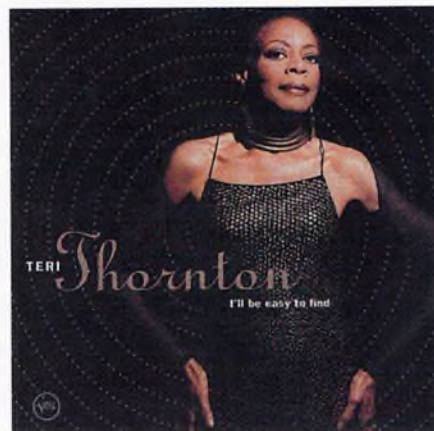
And about the 5: Though it's littered with solos, *Simpatico* is a band statement. While capability is obvious throughout the program, virtuosic moments are few and far between. Yet somehow that furthers the sense of unity the quintet's jazz-rock depends on. Even the solo-strewn Blakey update "Full Deck" turns out to be more about sharing than showboating. That ain't easy.

But like Vandermark's overall achievement

with this dazzler, it's damn impressive.

—Jim Macnie

Simpatico: Vent; Fact And Fiction; Full Deck; Anywhere Else; STHLM; Cover To Cover; Point Blank; Encino. (65:35)
Personnel: Ken Vandermark, clarinet, bass clarinet and tenor sax; Dave Rempis, saxophone; Jeb Bishop, trombone, guitar; Kent Kessler, bass; Tim Mulvenna, drums.



Teri Thornton
I'll Be Easy To Find
Verve 547 598

★★★½

I must have missed Teri Thornton the first time around, and I cannot plead youth. I was in college when she made her first LP for

NEW

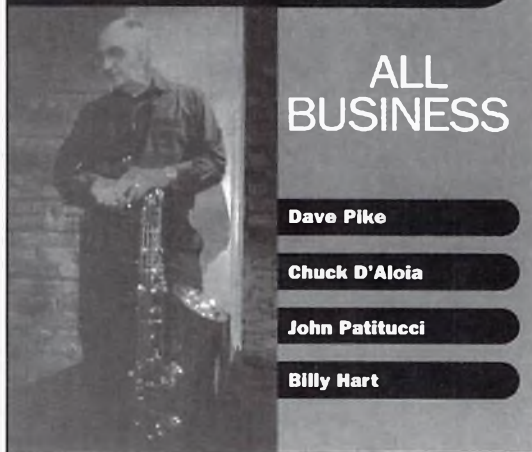
Reservoir

Nick Brignola All Business RSR CD 159

In the esteemed company of legendary vibraphonist Dave Pike, new star guitarist Chuck D'Aloia, bassist John Patitucci, and drummer Billy Hart, baritone saxophonist Nick Brignola has crafted his most dynamic session to date. Nick states, "The concept of this album is simple: to make the same kind of music that I play with my own group in a club or concert. Looseness and spontaneity are very important. I like to vary the material with a mix of originals, jazz classics, and standards." And this is exactly what Brignola has created with this 66 minute program of ten selections.

Visit Nick's website brignola.com

Nick Brignola



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CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
Don Byron <i>Romance With The Unseen</i>		★★★★	★★★1/2	★★★	★★★★1/2
Keith Jarrett <i>The Melody At Night, With You</i>		★★★★	★★★1/2	★★★1/2	★★★★
The Vandermark 5 <i>Simpatico</i>		★★	★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★
Teri Thornton <i>I'll Be Easy To Find</i>		★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★

critics' comments

Don Byron, *Romance With The Unseen*

At first it seemed unbalanced, because weight-wise the leader's clarinet is no match for Frisell's cobwebbed fuzz or Jack DeJohnette's tempest in a teapot. But it quickly grows on you, and points should be awarded to Byron for choosing a blowing session after all those "projects." —*Jim Macnie*

Forget the hard edge, the heavy backbeats: This is yet another side to Byron (clarinet only) that may catch some people napping. And not because the music's a snooze. Imaginative renditions of Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap" and two from the Ellington book nicely complement a heady slew of Byron originals. —*John Ephland*

Hints of Ellington—some overt, some implicit—flit through this fine, straightforward helping of Don Byron in quartet form. Byron's playing is more centered than on, say, *No-Vibe Zone*, but still plucky and occasionally downright hot with its own peculiar edgy gracefulness. —*John McDonough*

Keith Jarrett, *The Melody At Night, With You*

A large shelf of Jarrett's classic song inventory gets larger still with this CD, but with a change. Here he goes solo. The result is a series of Tin Pan Alley sonatas that offer a wistful basis for Jarrett's caressing, rhapsodic skills. His pace and tone throughout are placid, leaving the melodies to gleam in still waters. —*John McDonough*

What's most noticeable in this collection of songs of tenderness, first, is how dry the mix is, and then how in his playing Jarrett avoids excessive gushing. The songs are precious, sentimental and sweet. But they are lacking in a grandioseness. Which makes them that much more grand. —*John Corbett*

Jarrett says he's been trying to amend his sound, and he's accomplished that. Single notes, make that single notes dedicated to sentimental melodies, seldom sounded so lush. This new tack showcases his romantic side. It also underscores his mastery. —*Jim Macnie*

The Vandermark 5, *Simpatico*

There's a curious blend of big-band jazz with wild-haired sensibilities on *Simpatico*. Huh? Vandermark's band tends to move over and through their horn charts like a land rover working the fields. Granted, this is not swing music, and not a big band, but the impact and spirit of these eight tunes is strangely reminiscent of days gone by. —*John Ephland*

Though I find some arresting and pulsating interludes here and there, none are worth the price of avant-blather and screeching one must put up with to reach them. In short, the currents here are so at odds and polarized as to produce a work without a reliable focal point. —*John McDonough*

I'm friends with Ken Vandermark and we work together booking a jazz series at a Chicago club. Full disclosure out of the way, allow me to say how much I love this music. V5 is Vandermark's most active band and the primary vehicle for his compositional perspective. —*John Corbett*

Teri Thornton, *I'll Be Easy To Find*

Singer Thornton has a company-wide, heavy-hitting lineup scattered across a nice mix of her originals and standards. She sounds like she's been around the block, which lends more body to such fare as "Somewhere In The Night" and "Salty Mama." The woodwinds and brass employed are a good call alongside her sometimes blustery voice. —*John Ephland*

The roller coaster phrasing and constant fireworks display shouldn't work as well as they do. But the blues usually befriends those whose zest for living is obvious from a couple miles away. That's the rediscovered vet's modus operandi in a nutshell: Her mess-around is refined, and she's got a dramatic authority that's hard to ignore. —*Jim Macnie*

I've not found too much durable earwear in the recent rash of jazz singers; it seems they relish clichés, look for a gimmick to give 'em a leg up, and forget about the fundamentals. Nothing like that with Teri Thornton. She builds this long overdue reappearance on a solid foundation of vocal know-how. Check out her flexible phrasing on the title track. —*John Corbett*

Riverside, her last for Columbia and one in between for Dauntless, all in 1961-'63. But none seemed to score, and she has had an on and off career around New York since, unlisted in current jazz reference sources and among that group of pianist-singers whom the better critics like to say deserve a wider audience.

Verve now gives her a shot, perhaps in the hope of producing another unexpected career extension in the manner of Abbey Lincoln. Thornton is quite a different kind of performer, however, with a voice more in the Sarah Vaughan-Carmen McRae tradition than that of Billie Holiday.

Her intent here seems to show the diversity of her talents, to produce a kind of Thornton sampler that moves from torch song to gospel to Broadway to blues. The result is a good sampler but a less than effective album.

She strikes a compelling mood in the first tune, "Somewhere In The Night," a reprise of the high water mark of her impact back in '62. Backed by an intimate Howard Johnson arrangement, it sets the listener up for an anthology of essays on nocturnal loneliness and related emotions.

But then we switch to Broadway ("I Believe In You"), folk opera ("It Ain't Necessarily So"), religion ("Lord's Prayer") and blues of assorted hues before returning to the keynote theme and mood in "I'll Be Easy to Find" and "I'll Be Seeing You."

Thornton has a big, clear and resonant voice, but she is inclined to push it when she might better hold back, especially on ballad material. This is a fairly inherent component of the blues-cum-soul style, of course, as is the penchant to shape melodic and lyric material into assorted swoops and dips. With various exceptions, it's a method I personally find miscast when it comes to framing songs whose structure impose a role upon the performer, although Thornton is too smart a singer to ever take it beyond the pale. More important, it's the way she works, and within the genre she's clearly a master in control of her tools.

Given that, it's no surprise that the blues pieces here give her the widest latitude to do what she does best.

"Knee Deep" may be just another blues on paper, but with press rolls pumping she gives it the momentum of a classic blues. And "Feels Good" and "Salty Mama" take on essentially the same material with a funky, r&b strut.

Her own accompaniment on piano is to the manner born, but also inquisitive, especially on the rhythmically loose "Nature Boy," where she works off Jerome Richardson's flute. —*John McDonough*

I'll Be Easy To Find: Somewhere In The Night; I Believe In You; It Ain't Necessarily So; Lord's Prayer; Knee Deep; I'll Be Easy To Find; Nature Boy; Wishing Well; Where Are You Running; Feels Good; I'll Be Seeing You; Salty Mama. (52:20)

Personnel: Teri Thornton, vocals, piano (7, 10-12); Howard Johnson, cornet, saxophone (1, 3, 5, 7-9); Dave Barger, trombone (1, 7-9); Jerome Richardson (1, 4, 7-9), saxophones; Ray Chew (1-6, 8, 9), Norman Simmons (12), piano; Lonnie Plaxico (1-11), Michael Bowie (12), bass; J.T. Lewis (1-11), Grady Tate (12), drums.

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D.D. Jackson

...so far

RCA Victor 09026 63549

★★★★½

Those who have been fortunate enough to watch D.D. Jackson grow from young classical virtuoso to Don Pullen-esque jazz phenom to confident free jazz stylist know this is a record that was a long time brewing.

As well as being his major-label debut, the musical setting and program for *...so far* mark a dramatic departure from his four recordings for the Canadian label Justin Time. Jackson was wary of recording standards before this, determined as he was to establish himself as an original voice, and his decision to record solo is akin to taking the gloves off for someone who has sparred with such dominant partners as David Murray, James Carter and Hamiet Bluiett.

The Gershwin-influenced "Suite New York" establishes Jackson's keyboard credentials from the drop with handfuls of his trademark rolling dark chords and brightly arpeggiated high notes. The multithematic structure of a suite suits the pianist well, allowing him to follow his natural instinct to move things into the chaotic realm suddenly and then resolve back to a more melodic conclusion. He keeps that instinctive move to the outside in check elsewhere, even using his newfound restraint as a tension-building device on the stately "Sweet Beginnings." Written for the nuptials of his younger brother, the piece grows rapturous but the dam Jackson has constructed never bursts.

Restraint is not an option on pieces dedicated to influences Michel Camilo, Thelonious Monk, Vladimir Horowitz and Bud Powell. His "Camiliano" sounds like a war between left and right hands with neither side giving an inch, while "I Mean You" finds Jackson refusing to be cowed by the composer into playing like anyone but himself. He uses Monk's theme when he needs it and goes his own way from there. If ever there was a statement of artistic freedom, this is it. Dedicated to Horowitz, "Round And Round" has the dizzily bustling motion of Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse" and overflows with quirky energy. The brief "Poco-LoCo-Moco" is nothing but a stops-out romp—a stirring example of technical bravado.

Jackson has always had a way with memorial

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songs (his tribute to his late older brother was one of his strongest early compositions) but he tops himself with a moving version of "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," dedicated to teachers Pullen and Jaki Byard. The use of Mingus' great eulogy to pay homage to two of the composer's pianists is brilliant, and Jackson's right-hand articulation is stunning. Ellington's "Come Sunday" is only slightly less moving, with Jackson calling on his gospel roots but overplaying a little on the fills.

If *...so far* has any major flaw it's that Jackson—who also produced the recording—was unsure of how to end it. After the emotional tribute to Pullen and Byard and the jaw-dropping nod to Powell, the pretty theme of "Home" sounds anti-climactic; a case of too much icing on the cake. —James Hale

...so far: Suite New York; Camiliano; Come Sunday; Maybe Not; Playground; I Mean You; Sweet Beginnings; Round And Round; Waltz For Mr. Hicks; Goodbye Pork Pie Hat; Poco-LoCo-Moco; Home. (55:46)
Personnel: D. D. Jackson, piano.



Nat King Cole Trio
Live At The Circle Room
 Capitol 21859

★★★★

In September 1946 the Nat Cole Trio settled into Milwaukee for an engagement in the Hotel LaSalle. The hotel enjoyed a prime downtown location at 4th near Grand Ave., and its showroom, the Circle Room, had a wire into WEMP, which broadcast the trio in a series of 15-minute remotes. The transcriptions are the source material for this delightful CD.

Although Cole had been recorded live by Norman Granz in the original JATP concerts of 1944, these are the first live examples I've heard of the trio in action. The ambiance of the venue, the announcer's introductions and lyric references ("Now that we won the war, what are you waiting for") add a sense of the period to the music's generally relaxed tempos.

Of the 17 titles, only four are instrumental. "I Found A New Baby" and "Sweet Georgia Brown" are the only tracks that show the clarity of Cole's rhythmic power at driving tempos. But Cole was in the midst of a long transition from jazz to pop singing at this moment. He had already scored his first commercial hits, and "Route 66" was on the charts as he arrived in Milwaukee. Two weeks before coming to the

LaSalle he had recorded "Christmas Song" and "For Sentimental Reasons," soon to become his breakout classics.

In prime early form here, Cole cleared a new path for the black singer by avoiding the signature elements that had defined blackness. The swank sophistication of his voice and the intelligence of his trio eschewed the booming baritone of the black crooner and the primitive vernacular models of the blues.

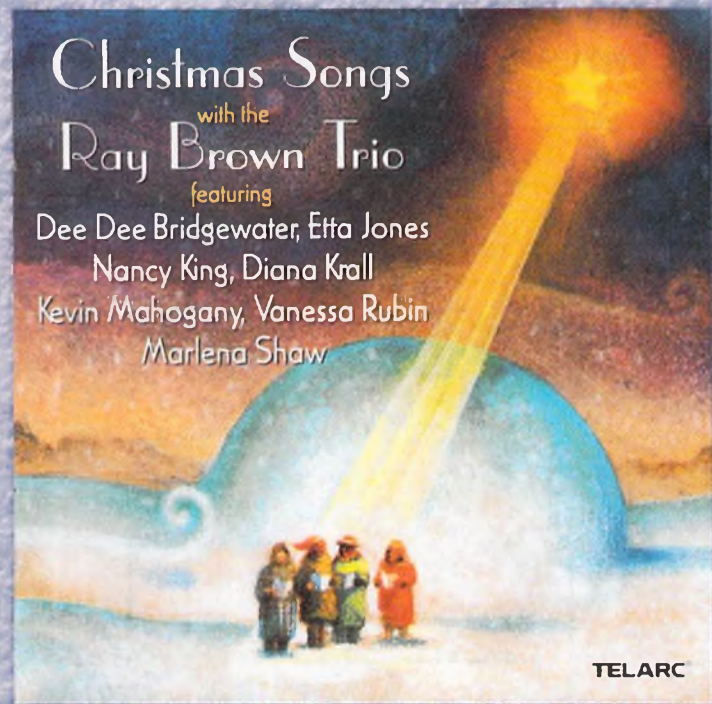
There were many male singers between the '40s and '60s who were as popular as Cole. But most have faded now. The ones who are still a presence—Sinatra, Bennett and Cole—have survived because of the quality of the songs

that defined their work. Though it is not quite evident yet in the tunes on this CD (he was still pushing trifling novelties like "Oh But I Do" and "If You Can't Smile" and relying on standards for quality), Cole was on the threshold of being able to demand and get the finest work from America's best songwriters. That's a major reason he still speaks to us today.

The sound is generally good, although the level and character of a subtle hiss changes more than it should. Still, those who enjoy history and music in equal proportions will want this one. —John McDonough

Live At The Circle Room: Theme (FST); Oh But I Do; I'm Thru With Love; C Jam Blues; My Sugar Is So

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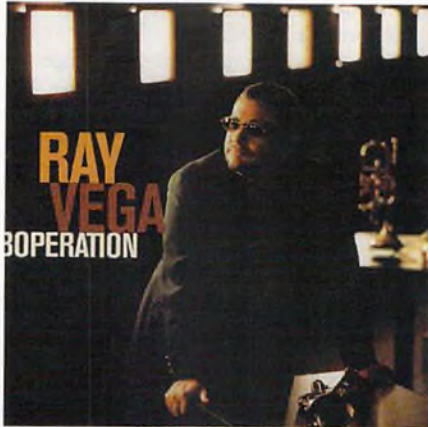
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Refined; I'm In The Mood For Love; I've Found A New Baby; I Don't Know Why; If You Can't Smile And Say Yes; Sweet Georgia Brown; Sweet Lorraine; It's Only A Paper Moon; One O'Clock Jump; Everyone Is Saying Hello Again; Oh But I Do; My Sugar Is So Refined; Theme (FST). (49:16)

Personnel: Nat King Cole, piano; Oscar Moore, guitar; Johnny Miller, bass.



Ray Vega Boperation Concord 4867

★★★★

Trumpeter-flugelhornist Ray Vega pays respect to his musical mentors by adding a Latin rhythmic spin on his second Concord release, a fairly mature statement with a decid-

ed nod in the direction of Freddie Hubbard and, to a lesser extent, Miles Davis.

The album's dedications, in addition to Hubbard and Davis, honor Kenny Dorham, Fats Navarro, Howard McGhee, Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Henderson, Clifford Brown, Woody Shaw, Chet Baker, Art Farmer, Donald Byrd and Lee Morgan. Vega is clearly in good company, with some very large spirits looking over his shoulder.

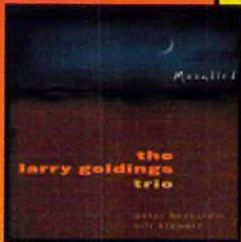
Even though this CD doesn't put his music in the same rarefied region as that of the Fort Apache Band or Ray Barretto's combo, it certainly speaks volumes for his potential and is a step forward from his previous self-titled release, which was promising but somewhat more involved with Latin roots. For those listeners not hip to Vega, he's a New York City native of Puerto Rican ancestry who has played with Barretto, Mongo Santamaria and Tito Puente.

As if Vega's solid playing weren't enough, he has made some very nice choices for sidemen. Saxophonist Roger Byam, present on all but one track, adds something to the proceedings every time out, particularly in his tenor solos. Igor Atalita, the pianist from Curacao, keeps the backgrounds bright and ever-changing while soloing in fine fashion. Joe Locke and Steve Khan are guest performers who bring some strong playing to the table, and the rhythm team keeps things cooking. Producer Nick Phillips plays keyboards on a couple of tracks.

—Will Smith

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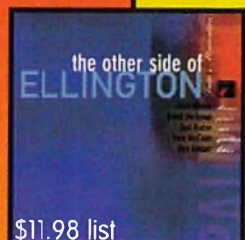
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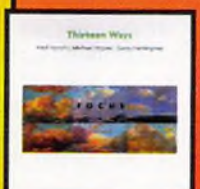
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Writer and former Down Beat editor Ralph J. Gleason, whose jazz performance TV series *Jazz Casual* in the early '60s enjoys a new lease on life on Rhino home video, used the word heroes for those special singers and musicians who provided him with "the magnificent highs of listening." Sure enough, various jazz and blues heroes encountered on recent releases have the capacity to induce degrees of euphoria in viewers.

Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual—John Coltrane (Rhino 2581; 30:00) ★★★★★ Coltrane erects a cathedral of spirit performing before National Educational TV cameras with his famous quartet in 1963. His tenor on "Alabama" and "Impressions" and his soprano on "Afro Blue" overflow with creativeness, humanism and eloquence. The piano playing of McCoy Tyner has moments of surpassing beauty. Working together as a unit, the two plus Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones evidence a keen sense of pacing and strike a balance between finesse and urgency.

Lowell Fulson/Percy Mayfield: Mark Naftalin's Blue Monday Party, Volume 1 (Winner 111; 30:00) ★★★ Singer Mayfield

the car on the way to the gig, Waters gets down to business singing in his dark, distinctive voice and playing slide guitar out front of his touring band. On the mend from a recent car accident, Waters doesn't push too hard but still he has commanding presence on "Hoochie Coochie Man," "Mannish Boy" and six more favorites of white college crowds.



muddy waters:
gettin' down
to business
BOB RICHARDS

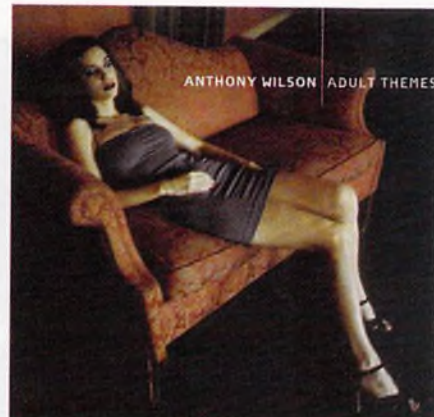
ON THE jazz & blues WATCH

and guitarist Fulson, supported by pianist/DJ Naftalin's fine house band, project some of the authority that made them key figures in the story of West Coast blues. It's clear Mayfield has deep insight into emotional pain when he wraps his pipes around his uncommonly thoughtful, wise lyrics to signature song "Please Send Me Someone To Love." Fulson fires up "Guitar Shuffle" and three others with guitar lines that crackle like electrical discharges.

Muddy Waters In Concert 1971 (Vestapol 13085; 42:00) ★★★ Following a short interview filmed in

Jim Hall: A Life In Progress (Rhapsody 9042; 60:00) ★★★★★½ Produced and directed by Bruce Ricker, this celluloid account of Hall's estimable career and the making of his album *By Arrangement* seizes one's attention straight off and holds it all the way through. Series of shots from the contemporary session (with Pat Metheny, Tom Harrell and Joe Lovano) switched off with footage on the past (assorted remembrances and concert clips with Jimmy Giuffre and Sonny Rollins). The film certainly does justice to a remarkable instrumentalist who's still in pursuit of his muse. **DB**

Green/Four; Stepping Stone; Tangerine; Whisper Not; Social Call; Mr. Kenyatta. (64:21)
Personnel: Ray Vega, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion; Roger Byam, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones (except 10); Igor Atalita, piano (except 10); Nick Phillips, keyboards (4, 7); Joe Locke, vibraphone (5, 8, 10); Steve Khan, acoustic and electric guitars (1, 5, 10, 12); Bernie Minoso, bass; Vince Cherico, drums, percussion; Wilson Corniel, congas, percussion.



Anthony Wilson *Adult Themes* Mama 1026

★★★★★

Smooth and tasty as a \$20 cigar, *Adult Themes* is the rare kind of disc that immediately welcomes the listener and satisfies to the very end. Think of Wilson's themes as "adult" not in the sense of adult bookstore, but in terms of mature, witty and wise. The guitarist's arrangements strike a pleasing balance between nostalgia and freshness, delivered in a little-big-band format that swings hard but conveys hints of classical and lounge music combined with the immediacy of modern-era pop.

The songs are not only intriguingly arranged and well-recorded, but they're rehearsed and directed with superb attention to detail. The horns throw jabs and hooks, prod soloists along with soft-spoken melodies, trade riffs with Wilson's hollow-bodied guitar and ride the rhythm section's peaks and valleys with remarkable sensitivity. Song endings carry subtle surprises, like a guitar chord where it's least expected. Yet there's hardly an extraneous note to be found. While there are a few incidents of stretching out—"Danny Boy," for example, is basically a feature for baritone saxophonist Jack Nimitz—most solos are seamlessly woven into the larger tapestry. Breaking free of tired head-solo-head formats, the soloists, in some cases, emerge at the get-go of a song, gracefully leading into horn parts that blur the line between where the solo ends and the arrangement begins.

"Idle Blues" is a fine example. Despite being a long track with a slew of solos, the excitement never lags. It begins with tenorist Pete Christlieb, who solos brilliantly throughout the album but conveys exceptional heart-wrenching warmth here. The other horns have already eased into a richly voiced melody by the time he reaches his last lyrical phrases. Wilson accompanies them on a new line, counters them and

winds up on a tag played in tandem with clarinet, paving the way for Joe Baggs's lounging organ, some toned-down riffing and still more solos.

The ambitiousness of the arrangements would mean little if the songs themselves weren't so inviting. On this front, Wilson doesn't disappoint. His soaring original "Chorale," with impassioned blowing by altoist Jeff Clayton, is in itself worth the price of admission, as is "Invention In Blue." His version of "Because" is an exemplary interpretation of a Beatles tune thanks in part to the instrumentation, which includes electric sitar, udu drum and a sly plunger trombone played by Ira Nepus.

The disc is named for its finale, a five-part suite that alternates a cheerful shuffle with sections that include prayerful meditations on guitar and piano. Even when the band picks up velocity or volume, it retains a laid-back West Coast coolness, steering clear from jarring dissonance or in-your-face rage. There's a kind of rebelliousness at work here, but it's more covert than that. Largely, it's an experiment with form and style, and the results are overwhelmingly positive. —John Janowiak

Adult Themes: Barry's Tune; Maxine; Chorale; Idle Blues; Invention In Blue; Because; Danny Boy; Adult Themes: I. Unfinished Situation, II. Impermanence, III. The Impasse, IV. Lullaby, V. Integration. (68:50)

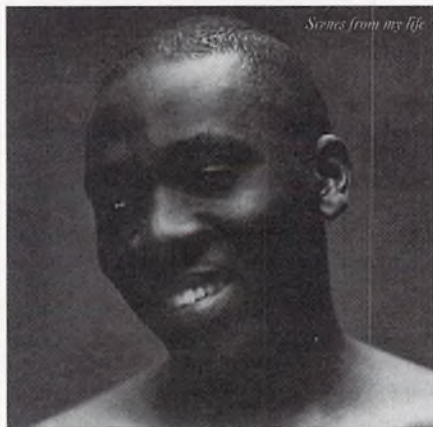
Personnel: Anthony Wilson, guitar, electric sitar, kazoo; Carl Saunders, trumpet, flugelhorn; Ira Nepus, trombone; Jeff Clayton, alto saxophone, clarinet, flute; Pete Christlieb, tenor saxophone; Jack Nimitz, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Donald Vega, piano; Joe Baggs, organ; Danton Boller, bass; Mark Ferber, drums; Greg Ellis, percussion, tamboura.

Henri Dikongue

Wa

Shanachie 66022

★★★★



Richard Bona

Scenes From My Life

Columbia 69768

★★★★½

Back in the early 1970s, saxophonist Manu Dibango put Cameroon on the world-music radar when he had a smash hit with "Soul Makossa." But there's always been a lot more rhythms from this nation than that horn-based dance riff. Henri Dikongue and Richard

Bona are two Cameroonian vocalists who embrace jazz and Western pop, among other African influences, and sing in the Douala language. Their combinations work best when they're at their most subtle.

While Dikongue has spent time in makossa bands, and continues to draw inspiration from them, *Wa* features his heartfelt, low-key acoustic-guitar-driven ballads. When the focus is on his high tenor voice, his duets with his cousin Cathy Renoir, or ace guitarist Toto Guillaume, the results are sublime. An a capella vocal coda on the title track is especially moving. Dikongue's interpretations of reggae sound surprisingly fresh. This disc was recorded in

Paris a few years ago and had been officially unavailable in the United States until now.

Bona has a fan base among American jazz musicians—Joe Zawinul has been in his corner, he's recording on Branford Marsalis' label, and Michael Brecker contributes to one track on *Scenes From My Life*. It's not difficult to hear why he has so many prominent admirers. His voice has a slightly lower pitch than Dikongue's, but it's equally appealing. What's particularly interesting is that he retains this sense of sweetness even though his lyrical themes are often horrifying—prison, insanity, kidnapping and orphans. Even though the disc works best when the emphasis is on his stun-

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ning voice, some of the instrumental experiments on the disc are successful. Part of the string section of the New York Symphony back Bona on "Muna Nyuwe," and he's so skillful at arranging them, it would be great if he could use them more often. But a few other instrumental directions don't work as well: The saxophone on "Souwedi Na Wengue" is syrupy and the diluted funk on "Djombwe" sounds kind of demeaning. Still, with a voice as alluring as Bona's, these flaws don't take too much away from the disc's value.

—Aaron Cohen

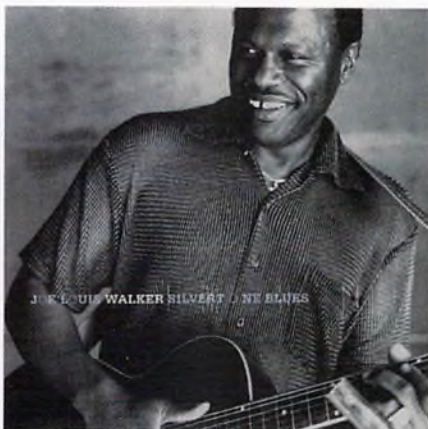
Wa: Ho A Muto; Alasso; Africa; Ndolo; Ndotam Nya Longue; Ndedi Namba; Wa; Nabolane Wa Mbobe; Nama Poula Ndena; Missodi. (41:20)

Personnel: Henri Dikongue, vocals, guitar. Various musicians including Manuel Wandji, percussion, keyboards;

Cathy Renoir, vocals; Serge Rahoerson, saxophone (2, 5); Etienne M'Baye, bass (2,6,8); Armand Sabal-Lecco, bass (4,9); Jean-Paul Flores, guitar (2); Paolo Ponde, guitar (9).

Scenes From My Life: Dipita; New Bell; Souwedi Na Wengue; Eyala; Djombwe; Te Dikalo; One Minute; Muna Nyuwe; Na Mala Nde, Konda Djanea; Eyando, Messanga. (53:03)

Personnel: Richard Bona, vocals, guitar, bass, keyboards, organ, percussion. Various musicians including Omar Hakim, drums (1,7); Jean-Michel Pilc, piano (1,3,4); Aaron Heick, alto saxophone (3,5); Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (10); Mokhtar Samba, drums; Edsel Gomez, piano (6); Alune Faye, sabbar (2); Etienne Stadwijk, keyboards (5,9).



Joe Louis Walker
Silvertone Blues
Blue Thumb 314 547 721

★★★★

If Joe Louis Walker were a stock car racer, he'd be the clear favorite who laps the field again and again. When upstarts roar into the corners and try to close in on him, he just pulls farther and farther ahead. Walker, for certain, has been out front of the pack ever since his three Hightone albums in the last half of the '80s gave notice of his uncommon affinity for the electric blues of Magic Sam and Buddy Guy. But while Walker's established himself as a major contemporary blues player, he hasn't offered more than just a couple recorded songs in evidence of his ardor for acoustic traditional blues.

Well, at long last, here's an album's worth of unplugged goods. The San Franciscan shows how his individuality as a singer and guitarist is intact away from his Boss Talkers band. "Runnin' From The Devil," an affecting homage to preacher-bluesman Son House, has his strong and direct tenor voice torn between "fast life" impulses and those of the church. Singing and playing harmonica and guitar, Walker smiles on another past master, Jimmy Reed, with "Born In Mississippi," his affection for Reed's "sweet" strain of Delta blues echoed measure for measure by guitar-playing Bay Area friend Alvin Youngblood Hart. Walker, now playing a killer slide guitar, and Hart, handling vocal duties, bring their equally strong powers of conviction to their interpretation of Robert Nighthawk's "Crying Won't Help You."

The album has no weak spots. James Cotton adds his trademark harmonica squalls to three good numbers and Walker goes it alone twice, playing dobro on Delta-oriented blues "Talk To

Me" and sitting down at the piano for "Bad Luck Blues." Changing things up, Walker enlists pianist Kenny Wayne, drummer Chris Sandoval and string bassist Joe Thomas to help him kick along "Trouble On Wheels" and two others. Throughout, the main man displays copious amounts of emotional honesty in his music.

—Frank-John Hadley

Silvertone Blues: Runnin' From The Devil; Kenny's Barrelhouse; Change My Ways; Do The Walkin'; Trouble On Wheels; Letting Go; Talk To Me; Silvertone Blues; Born In Mississippi; Crying Won't Help You; It's You, Baby; Bad Luck Blues. (50:03)

Personnel: Joe Louis Walker, vocals, guitar, slide guitar, dobro, harmonica, piano; Alvin Youngblood Hart, guitar (1, 9, 10), vocals (10); James Cotton, harmonica (3, 6, 11); Kenny Wayne, piano (2, 4, 8); Joe Thomas, acoustic bass (2, 5, 8); Chris Sandoval, drums (2, 5, 8).



Jazz Is Dead
Laughing Water
Zebra 44019

★★½

Joe Gallant and Illuminati
Terrapin
Which? 15656

★★★½

On a good note, with *Laughing Water* the concept band Jazz Is Dead has produced a far superior product than their 1998 debut disc, *Blue Light Rain*. But it's the concept behind this band—transforming Grateful Dead songs into high-intensity instrumental fusion jams—where they run into a problem.

The Dead could intoxicate their fans (when the fans were not intoxicating themselves) with a sound fusing the languid pathos and longing of Jerry Garcia's vocals and sparse guitar, with a healthy dose of high-intensity rock & roll. Jazz Is Dead appears to have gone to a psychiatrist and been prescribed a major dose of Prozac to remove this pathos from the music. In turn, they've removed the very essence from the Dead's music and sound eternally happy.

On *Laughing Water*, a song-by-song re-creation of the Dead's 1973 studio album *Wake Of The Flood*, the band's on-the-beat, peppy versions of "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodleo" and "Eyes Of The World" are rushed, shallow covers of the originals. But when not perceived as a cover band, there are

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Per Henrik Wallin Trio: *Blues For Allan* (Flash Music 8; 68:32) ★★½ One of the great heroes of post-'60s Swedish jazz, pianist Wallin is only now returning from a debilitating injury almost a decade ago. Brilliant the way Misha Mengelberg is—all-encompassing ear, total music historian—he's able to make formal deviations and splay tradition in order to investigate it deep in its guts. Listen for elements of Monkish clunk and Tynesque bottom-end open chording. Playing standards ("Spring Is Here" is particularly wonderful), Monk's "Thelonious," and his own tunes, Wallin is consistently enthralling. Ditto this live date's young bassist Peter Janson and veteran drummer Leif Wennerström. More, please!

Bosse Wärmell: *The Golden View* (Flash Music 7; 78:33) ★★½ Wärmell only released one 7-inch single in his short lifetime (he died at 30), but he possessed a very sophisticated, rhythmically concentrated approach on tenor sax. All but one track of this superb, well-recorded set features lithe trumpeter Rolf Ericson soloing on hard-bop warhorses like "Pent-Up House" and "Five Spot After Dark" alongside the saxophonist from a glorious gig in '62.

Eje Thelin: *Bits And Pieces* (Phono Suecia 9; 34:51) ★★½ Trombonist Thelin was one of the most international figures of new Swedish jazz in the '60s. A decade before he died in '90, Thelin recorded the six compositions issued for the first time on this disc, which feature mixed groupings and two short solos. The settings aren't all very inspiring—"Castor & Pollux" is nothing but tasteless jazz-pop—but there are flashes of excellence and "Gloomy," with five overdubbed trombones amid its 16 silky voices, shows that Thelin could be a sharp arranger.

Per "Texas" Johansson: *Alla Mina Kompisar* (Kaza/EMI 97519; 59:46) ★★½ A West Coast influence is evi-

dent on the second outing from this exceptionally creative young quartet, though these aspects are laced with more raucous strands of grunge rock (check the distorted bass bed on "Farornas Hav") and pneumatic free jazz. With a dynamic twin-horn front line—Johansson on tenor and bari sax, and the clarinets (down to contrabass), and Fredrik Ljungkvist on the sax family—and Dan Berglund (bass) and Mikel Ulfberg (drums) as a sensitive rhythm section, the group works primarily on Johansson's tunes, with special guest Johan Lindström adding a fascinating country touch on pedal steel guitar (Leon McAuliffe meets Trane on "After The Rain").



eje thelin: sharp arranger

A BOX OF swedes

Anders Jormin: *Silvae* (Dragon 338; 67:21) ★★½ On this collection of 10 very Scandinavian-sounding originals, Jormin's huge bass sound and dizzying facility serve as catalysts for a colorful sextet that features Marc Ducret on guitar, Severi Pyysalo on vibes and bass marimba, Arve Henriksen on trumpet, brother Christian Jormin on drums, and Ljungkvist on soprano and tenor sax and clarinet. Jormin's integrative compositions reference traditional musics—check Henriksen's impressive shakuhachi-like vibrato on "Koto"—rock and freer jazz.

moments when the group shows it has jelled since its inception.

After all, guitarist Jimmy Herring (Aquarium Rescue Unit), bassist Alphonso Johnson (Weather Report, Santana), keyboardist T Lavitz (Dixie Dregs) and drummers Jeff Sipe (Leftover Salmon) and Rod Morgenstern (Dixie Dregs) all have impressive chops—Billy Cobham was the original drummer in the group, and the joke goes that they had to find two drummers to replace Cobham's intense playing. They inject an appropriate Southern sensibility into "Let Me Sing Your Blues Away," and work up dramatic crescendos to the mellow "Row Jimmy" and "Weather Report Suite, Part One."

The band attempts to connect by drawing a couple of the Dead's collaborators into the mix. One guest works: bluegrass fiddler Vassar Clements, who played with Bill Monroe in the early '50s and appeared on *Wake Of The Flood*, provides a down-home jamboree authenticity to "Mississippi Half-Step" and the "Sunshine Jam." On the other hand, when the band uses Donna Jean Godchaux, who sang with the Dead in the '70s, for vocal intros on "Mississippi" and "Here Comes Sunshine," they unearth one of the Dead's all-time blunders.

The more I listen to *Jazz Is Dead*, the more I like the instrumental energy they generate. However, perhaps they should start focusing on performing their own material and trash the whole Dead concept.

You can't blame bassist Joe Gallant for skimping on the creativity and hard work in producing his re-creation (and expansion) of the Dead's 1977 album *Terrapin Station*. This amalgamation of jazz, spoken word, rock, electronica, bluegrass, jug band, funk, Irish folk, lounge—you name it, it's on here—combines into a mind-blowing, twisted and distorted trip through Gallant's comically deranged head. More often than not, I find myself asking, "How the hell did he think to do this?"

For instance, to kick off the album, Gallant conceives a driving drum and bass beat, a spiral through a horrifying musical peephole, over which Bill Walton (yes, the former basketball star), performs a Vincent Price-like recitation of the lyrics. As the string section comes in behind Walton with angular lines, I cannot help but laugh out loud with the visual of a hulking 7-footer, who looks more like moose than man, hunkered over a studio microphone. How often does an album provoke this sort of reaction?

With a total of 71 musicians contributing to this album, including Patricia Barber's expected sublime vocal performance on "Lady With A Fan," a full horn line and a six-piece string section, *Terrapin* feels like an elaborate party, or as Gallant writes in his liner notes, "My intention was ... to view the work on *Terrapin* through a lens set firmly in midtown Manhattan on the eve of the millennium."

The album is challenging, but it retains the Dead's melodic quality throughout, even through Gallant's space-like interludes between many of the songs. It answers a recurring question in improvised music: Why re-create pop music in a new vernacular if it already has a profound emotional effect in its original format? The answer is simple: To have fun. —Jason Koransky

Laughing Water: Vocal Intro→ Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodleo; Let Me Sing Your Blues Away; Row Jimmy; Stella Blue; Vocal Intro→ Here Comes Sunshine→ Sunshine Jam; Eyes Of The World→ Two Sisters; Weather Report Suite, Part 1; Weather Report Suite, Part 2: Let It Grow. (62:45)

Personnel: Jimmy Herring, Steve Kimock (4), guitar; Alphonso Johnson, bass; T Lavitz, keyboards; Rod Morgenstern (2, 4, 6, 7), Jeff Sipe (1, 3, 5, 6, 8), drums; Vassar Clements (1, 5), violin; Derek Trucks (3, 5), slide guitar; Donna Jean Godchaux (1, 5), vocals.

Terrapin: Passenger; Dancin' In The Streets; Estimated Prophet; Sunrise; Samson & Delilah; Terrapin Station Suite: Lady With A Fan, Terrapin Station, Region 1, At A Siding—Orchestra, Region II, At A Siding—Voice, Region III, Region IV; China Doll; Jerome John. (71:42)

Personnel: Joe Gallant, bass, percussion; Denise Stillwell, Jeffrey Ellenberger, violin; Julia Kent, Martha Colby, Dan Barrett, Ann Kim, cello; Ron Henke, trumpet; Barbara Cifelli, soprano saxophone; Jody Espina, alto saxophone; John Isley, tenor saxophone; Squantch, trombone; Rolf Sturm, Rob Wolfson, guitar; Evan Gallagher, piano, organ; Diana Herold, vibes, percussion; Grisha Alexiev, drums; George Hooks, electronic drums; Bill Walton (1), Ellen Christy (1), Lex Grey (2), Jen Durkin (2), Ike Willis (3), Lisa Shaw (4), Catherine Russell (5), Patricia Barber (6), Phoebe Legere (6), Rob Wolfson, (7), Tuesday May (11), Pat Boone (13), Maggie Roche (14), vocals.



Darren Barrett

First One Up

J Curve 1006

★★★★½

Introducing a new young lion of trumpet, *First One Up* is the freshman release of Darren Barrett, winner of the 1997 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. In his original compositions, which comprise the bulk of the disc, the Berklee-educated Brit leans toward the fabled tradition of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, but far from sounding stale, he brings enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the medium.

The barnstorming title cut, for instance, weaves its way through acrobatic phrases that pave the way for dissonant tags and a solo by guest altoist Kenny Garrett. Graceful melodies like "2 To 4," "Grand Ravine" and "A New Day Comes" are augmented by sophisticated harmonies between Barrett and saxophonist Jimmy Greene, while John Lamkin's hard-swinging drums propel them forward with a dramatic edge.

Barrett's trumpeteering, too, shows promising creativity for a relative newcomer. Though he owes a debt to trumpeters like Clifford Brown and Kenny Dorham, he attacks his solos

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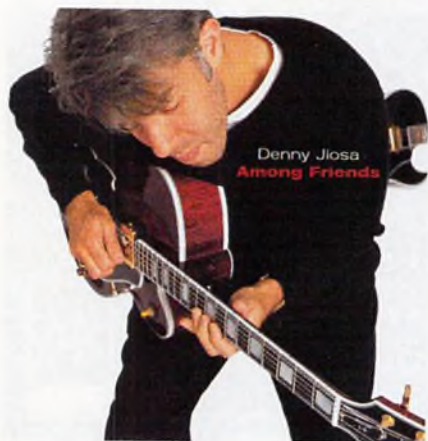
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by frank-john hadley blues

Jimmy Johnson: *Every Road Ends Somewhere* (Ruf 51416; 50:35) ★★★½
A solid Chicago guitarist and good songwriter, Johnson grounds every aspect of his music making in authentic emotion. On this French session from early 1997, we find him proffering seven impressive originals, including the reggae-spiced "The Street You Live On," and a few choice covers like Jessie Mae Robinson's "Black Night." This time around his guitar language doesn't always flow steadily but his vocals retain their magic and his band is a good one.

Eddie Kirkland: *Movin' On* (JSP Records 2131; 57:18) ★★★½
An occasionally inspired journeyman, Kirkland digs into the sensual meaning of the blues here with a degree of understanding that's beyond the reach of most musicians on the circuit. Proficient at singing and playing guitar or harmonica, he brings a swaggering confidence to the funky "Don't Monkey Around With Me" and an appealing program of originals.

Big James: *Funkin' Blues* (Jamot Music 1000; 55:45) ★★★½
Big James Montgomery and the Chicago Playboys like to keep their blues joyous and funky in a way masters George Clinton and James Brown would approve of. Montgomery's a gritty, big and bold singer at his most effective on the heart-stopping slow blues original "I'll Never Be The Same" and on a persuasive treatment of Magic Sam's "All Your Love." He's also a powerhouse on trombone, taking the occasional solo and joining sax player Charles Kimble in igniting fiery riffs.

Ray Bonneville: *Gust Of Wind* (Stony Plain 1256; 43:30) ★★★½
Bonneville, a French Canadian who frequents Nashville, works the blues-rock-country vein better than most anyone. He sings engagingly, but with more spunk than a Clapton, and both his guitar and harmonica pack quiet power. Bonneville writes tunes that are enterprising of melody while telling smart, surprising little tales of emotional dislocation. The title track, riding on organ swells and goosed by an infectious guitar figure, is a minor miracle.

Little Milton: *Welcome To Little Milton* (Malaco 7500; 52:04) ★★★
Making a bid for mainstream approval, Malaco teams up the great soul blues singer and guitarist with several



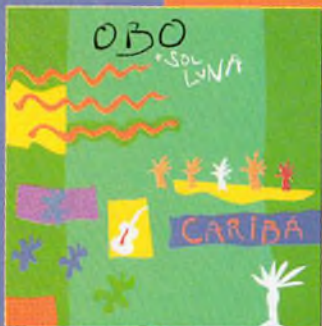
peter green: focused and lyrical

blues/r&b artists who've enjoyed pop success. The result is generally likeable, if a bit schizoid. Milton and Keb' Mo', in sync like a top-rated quarterback and wide receiver, bore right into "Right To Sing The Blues" and "Gimme' My Broom." Milton's studio encounters with Dave Alvin, Peter Wolf and Susan Tedeschi provide good entertainment, too. However, his meeting with Lucinda Williams disappoints—the song "Love Hurts" reeks to high heaven—and the less said about his collaborations with G. Love and Delbert McClinton the better.

Peter Green Splinter Group: *Destiny Road* (Artisan/Snapper 128172; 66:14) ★★★½
The 1997 return of the former Fleetwood Mac guitarist to blues (and the real world) wasn't too convincing. But on his latest recording, Green is far more comfortable with himself. His singing's warmly inviting and his guitar is focused, even lyrical at times. Moreover, the Splinter Group (with Nigel Watson providing some crackerjack lead and rhythm guitar) breathes around the nominal band-leader as one.

DB

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with ease and a swagger all his own.

An encouraging debut from someone we'll no doubt hear from again. —*John Janowiak*

First One Up: First One Up (Take 1); Word! Dr. Byrd; Impossible; 2 To 4; Grand Ravine; Up Down—Inside Outside; Conceta Elfreda; A New Day Comes; Reflections; First One Up (Take 2); Dee's Theme. (65:31)
Personnel: Darren Barrett, trumpet; Aaron Goldberg, piano; Jimmy Greene, tenor sax (2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11) and soprano sax (5); Kenny Garrett, alto sax (1, 6, 10); Reuben Rogers, acoustic bass; John Lamkin, drums.



Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Inner Voyage

Blue Note 99241

★★★★

The popularity of projects such as Ry Cooder's *Buena Vista Social Club* (the CD and, more recently, the film) demonstrates that a new generation of North Americans has discovered the music of Cuba. Acclaimed pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba is another example of this discovery. While Rubalcaba's eclecticism and musical erudition place him in a separate category from ethnic Cuban musicians like Rubén González, he shares with them many qualities that are central to the special appeal of Cuban music: lush tropical passion, rhythmic energy like the pulse of life itself and a genuine, unsentimental sweetness.

Supported by bassist Jeff Chambers and master Cuban percussionist Ignacio Berroa (with tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker guesting on two numbers), Rubalcaba developed a unifying theme for *Inner Voyage*, a piano trio date in the grand tradition of the genre and his ninth recording for Blue Note. After all the ambitious cultural syntheses that motivated his earlier albums, he intends this one as a journey inward to the self and its most intimate affiliations. Accordingly, it contains seven originals dedicated to his children and friends.

Rubalcaba is a rarity, an artist not directed by his enormous technical resources, but one who distills them into the communicative power of essential simplicities. The opening track, "Yolanda Anas," is for his 3-year-old daughter, a lullaby of surpassing gentleness and crystalline musical form. The second track, "Promenade," a tribute to Ron Carter and his "elegant ordering of elements," is also understated and unhurried, yet cumulative in its revelations.

The most stunning example of Rubalcaba's

gift for embodying emotion with undecorated directness is "Here's That Rainy Day." In keeping with the album's theme, it is an encounter with another aspect of the self's reality—if not a dark night of the soul, then a very gray day. The song proceeds with aching slowness, its melody coaxed from stillness with the greatest reluctance. Rubalcaba's touch on the keyboard is as miraculous as that of Bill Evans.

Inner Voyage contains copious rewards, yet it is difficult to escape the intimacy that Rubalcaba has yet to make an album that fully expresses the extravagance of his talent. He usually produces his own recordings. Perhaps an objective perspective would have pointed out

that his strongest performances come out of his startling interpretations of great songs from what Keith Jarrett has called "our tribal language," and that a ratio of seven originals to two standards is backwards. Perhaps an outside producer would have pointed out that, strong as they are as stand-alones, the two pieces with the declamatory Michael Brecker ("The Hard One" and "Blues Lundvall") disrupt the atmosphere of this inner journey. —*Thomas Conrad*

Inner Voyage: Yolanda Anas; Promenade; The Hard One; Sandyken; Here's That Rainy Day; Caravan; Joan; Blues Lundvall; Joao. (73:06)

Personnel: Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano; Jeff Chambers, bass; Ignacio Berroa, drums; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (3, 8).

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Honky-tonk is both a song and a style that features the Hammond B-3 organ, but there is another more pianistic approach to play the instrument. This selection of recent releases and repack-ages illustrates the best of both styles.

Charles Earland: *Slamming & Jammin'* (Savant 2008; 59:36) ★★★★★ From the rollicking "Honky Tonk" to the repetitive dance groove of Brass Construction's "Let The Music Play," Earland demonstrates that the key to a successful party is the guest list. Whatever the groove, whatever the style, drummer Bernard Purdie makes himself at home, equally entertaining on the slow funk of "Mercy Mercy" and the martial intro of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Guitarist Melvin Sparks takes that cut into overdrive with his double-time solo, while his rhythmic comping shows him to be all ears with regards to what Earland has to say. Earland makes those Leslies wail on "Blues For Sheila." It's quite a party.

Hank Crawford/Jimmy McGriff: *Crunch Time* (Milestone 9287; 53:10) ★★★ On this, their seventh recording together, alto saxophonist Crawford and organist McGriff set the tone for this date from the first notes they play. On the loosely swinging "Bow Legs," Crawford struts through the intro to guitarist Cornell DuPree's bluesy solo, while McGriff guides them with a walking bass line. But McGriff can also make his Hammond B-3 sing in the plaintive

"What's Going On?" The key to these sessions is the interplay of drummer Purdie with McGriff's left-hand bass figures.

Don Patterson: *Steady Comin' At Ya* (32 Jazz 32092; 47:58) ★★★ Patterson's early training as a pianist shows in his approach to the organ. This selection of the late organist's recordings for Muse



joey defrancesco: not just greasy blues

MITCHELL SEIDEL

BURNIN' at the B-3

features guitarist Pat Martino. They state the melody of "These Are Soulful Days" in unison. Patterson's solo is filled with fleet single-note runs across the changes, while Martino comps. Good players can make most anything into jazz, even "Whistle While You Work." Patterson toys with the harmony, and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath bebops over the changes.

Joey DeFrancesco: *All Or Nothing At All* (Big Mo 2029; 52:58) ★★½ A decade ago, DeFrancesco was a high school kid with a prodigious talent on the Hammond B-3 who would soon join Miles Davis' band, sign a major label contract, tour with John McLaughlin, and take up the trumpet and ballad singing. While the flash is past, he's proven to be a grossly under-ranked organist able to hold his own with the cats who once stalked Atlantic City's legendary Kentucky Avenue. He gets all these stars for his organ playing on standards like "I'm Confessin'" and Wayne Shorter's "Yes Or No," as well as his own tender "Young Love," demonstrating that the Hammond isn't all greasy blues and beefy chords.

Mel Rhyne: *Remembering Wes* (Savant 2016; 41:58) ★★★★★ In the 35 years since Rhyne played with Wes Montgomery, he hasn't lost the "piano player's touch" the guitarist credited him with. When funky organ combos were the rage, Montgomery formed a trio to skip lightly through ballads like "Days Of Wine And Roses" or "Yesterdays." "For All We Know" is a good example of

Rhyne's approach to these ballads, single notes with occasional sustained notes for emphasis. His technique on "Geno" is more staccato, jabbing at notes during his solo, at chords while comping for guitarist Royce Campbell. The gem of the date is Campbell's stately "I Remember Wes," in which Rhyne's solo is less pianistic and based more on gliding long tones. **DB**



Ellery Eskelin
Andrea Parkins
Jim Black
Kulak
29 & 30

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



Ellery Eskelin
Andrea Parkins
Jim Black
Five Other Pieces
(+2)

As with *One Great Day...* (hatOLOGY 502) and *Kulak 29 & 30* (hatOLOGY 521) this recording was made upon the culmination of a combined US and European tour lasting about a month. It's been a pleasure bringing our music to points far and wide and we look forward to continuing that process. Maybe we'll meet you at a future concert, if so, please say hello ...
Ellery Eskelin



Ellery Eskelin &
Han Bennink
Dissonant Characters

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 keep 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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Irvin Mayfield Sextet

Live At The Blue Note

Half Note 4905

★★★★½

The advantages of being a jazz trumpeter in New Orleans, a city currently rediscovering and re-energizing its legendary music scene, are counterbalanced by the degree of difficulty in getting noticed while working in such a deep and distinguished talent pool. But Irvin Mayfield, yet another youthful New Orleans virtuoso with skills and sensibilities seemingly beyond his years, has managed to quietly surface onto the national scene with a musically mature and enjoyably enlightened live effort.

Mayfield, while undeniably evocative, is not an especially dramatic nor demonstrative player,

but his warm tone and precise articulation allow him to produce a sound compatible with a variety of jazz contexts. He's played in the usual array of New Orleans situations, most notably with Bill Summers and Jason Marsalis in the Latin funk project Los Hombres Calientes, but he's most effective in a straightahead format where he can add inventive embellishments around the edges.

And that's exactly what happens on this disc. Mayfield opens the action with a sextet take of Bobby Timmons' Jazz Messengers hard bop blues classic "Moanin'," infusing a bit of bayou bop into the proceedings. "Cherokee" finds him swinging hard and fast with a fluid feel that avoids being facile while his handmates, a cohesive aggregation of peers and kindred spirits, ably support and answer his solos. Mayfield slows things down for a soulful "West End Blues," demonstrating his expertise in roots music reconfiguration. But his most impressive playing probably comes on a duet rendition of "On The Sunny Side Of The Street," as he and pianist Eric Reed, who is exceptional throughout, take a satisfying stroll through the changes. Reed threatens to steal the show from the first note of every tune but the ensemble contributions of trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis, who produced Mayfield's debut disc, and saxist Wessell Anderson are just as crucial to the music's success.

Mayfield, a composer of much merit, decided to stick to standards for the live disc and listeners' familiarity with the originals makes it easier for them to recognize his own creative contributions to the music. It's a characteristically low-profile, high-impact approach as he and the

band present tried and proven material expertly, yet adventurously, played. —Michael Point

Live At The Blue Note: Moanin'; Cherokee; On The Sunny Side Of The Street; West End Blues; Did You Call Her Today?; You Don't Know What Love Is; Be Bop. (71:13)

Personnel: Irvin Mayfield, trumpet; Eric Reed, piano; Wessell Anderson, alto sax; Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone; Carlos Enriquez, bass; Jaz Sawyer, drums.



Mahavishnu Orchestra

The Lost Trident Sessions

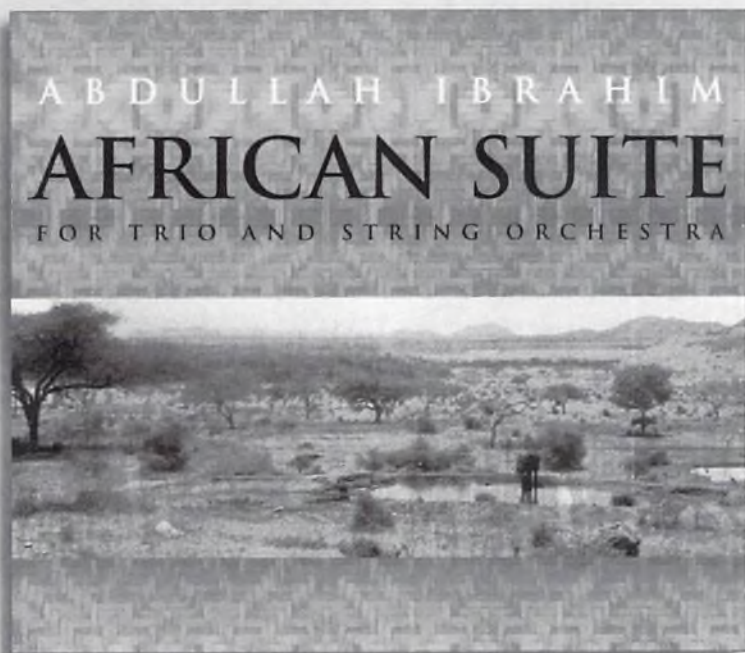
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Of the original Blue Note boppers, pianist Horace Silver has outlasted them all. A rugged architect of hard-bop and soul-bop, the 71-year-old Silver is still a formidable presence on today's jazz scene. But these Blue Note repackages celebrate the great songwriter/bandleader/arranger of yore.

The Horace Silver Retrospective (Blue Note 95576; 75:00/67:27/74:06/67:40) ★★☆☆ covers the years 1952-'79, upwards of 24 albums, and includes 45 selections. Silver's first recording as a leader was made on Oct. 9, 1952, in a trio format. Hearing him in this setting (with Art Blakey) on "Safari," "Ecaroh" and "Opus De Funk," one wishes there were more trio albums to pick from: While he was no virtuoso, his novel, heavily rhythmic and soulful attack still combined with an already keen knack for melody. Like label contemporaries Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell, his piano could be an orchestra unto itself.

But Silver had other plans, which no doubt included a larger band to flesh out his

prettiest melodies, "Peace."

While Silver clearly excelled with uptempo straight-ahead swing, his Latin bent proved to be just as significant. "Song For My Father," from 1964, represents the typical ease with which Silver's bands took the bossa nova form into jazz. With tenorist Joe Henderson on board, this song is likely to be the pianist's most lasting achievement.

As Silver moved from the late '60s and into the '70s, a bent for singers and singing entered his music, some-



horace silver:
shot of soul

silver mining

songs as an arranger. Enter tenor saxist Hank Mobley and trumpeter Kenny Dorham, heard here on Silver's "Doodlin'" and "The Preacher." Blakey is still on board throughout, helping to push Silver, Mobley and trumpeter Donald Byrd through "Señor Blues."

It took what is arguably Silver's strongest lineup, featuring tenor man Junior Cook and trumpeter Blue Mitchell, to cement his reputation as a leader of a bona fide movement. This band, which also included bassist Gene Taylor and a series of drummers, recorded from 1958-'64, when hard-bop as a form was ripe for fresh ideas. Silver's shot of soul heard 'round the world found ideal expression in this band on such utterly delightful material as "Cookin' At The Continental," "Sister Sadie," "Nica's Dream," "Filthy McNasty" and one of Silver's

times with mixed results. That familiar left-handed grunt disappeared with a piano style less funky, more orchestrated. And yet, his career with Blue Note remained important as he continued to swing hard and shepherd great young talent.

Blowin' The Blues Away (Blue Note 95342; 43:00) ★★★★★ features that classic front line of Cook and Mitchell, along with bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Louis Hayes in recordings made during August and September of 1959. Cook's soulful, tenor was the perfect foil for Mitchell's bright horn. We are treated to a couple of trio tracks in the poignant "Peace" and mysterious "Melancholy Mood." And this band's front line seemed created to play pieces like the title track, "Sister Sadie" and "The Baghdad Blues." **DB**

at the turn of the century. And while differences of opinion exist on the apogee of fusion's creative arc, there's general consensus no band did more to elevate and popularize the genre than John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra.

So, when the long-lost tapes for the third and final of the original Mahavishnu Orchestra's studio recordings were recently unearthed by producer Bob Belden, fusion fans, both old and new, had their expectations raised to an almost mythic level.

The Lost Trident Sessions, a succinct and exciting reprise of the Mahavishnu Orchestra in full flight, isn't quite fusion's Holy Grail, but it's a riveting and rewarding ride. The 1973 sessions were the product of a real working band ducking into the studio between tours. Tensions within the group were already stretched to the breaking point, and sometimes the solos and rapid-fire interchanges seem to carry a confrontational, almost violent tone. But the band's empathic musical communication prevails, focusing the primal power it generates while infusing an aura of deftly organized chaos to the proceedings.

Creatively confident to the point of reckless bravado, the Orchestra uses the fire and fury of McLaughlin's angular guitar logic as its starting point. Keyboardist Jan Hammer, despite his rock star posturing and overindulgence in electronics, has a background including European classical training and American jazz experience backing the likes of Sarah Vaughan. Violinist Jerry Goodman's contributions, occasionally exhibiting a sort of jazz naivete, are always technically advanced.

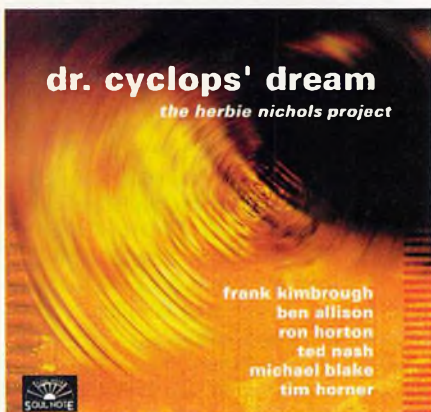
Drummer Billy Cobham, oddly enough sounding jazzier than normal while playing in a semi-rock context, hammers home the beat with a physical but precise manner. Bassist Rick Laird, the calm center of the raging sonic storm, grounds the high-flying explorations without actually limiting them.

All the aspects of the band's supercharged sound are prominently displayed. Its bombastic but explosive reliance on rock dynamics and its penchant for overly complex compositions are matched by an ability to create sections that radiate breathtaking beauty with stunning simplicity. Strong structural echoes of classical music, both European and Indian, mix in with spaced-out blues vamps, country/folk riffs and an assortment of minor modes and convoluted rhythmic cycles.

The rock mini-suite "Dream," led by Laird's elastic bass lines, opens the album and the band quickly hits full stride and never looks back. Hammer's "Sister Andrea" pumps up the funk a bit but McLaughlin's hyperkinetic "Trilogy," the launching pad for the album's most stratospheric improvisational passages, and the sublime, almost surreal, "John's Song #2," are the most representative and enjoyable tracks. —Michael Point

The Lost Trident Sessions: Dream; Trilogy; Sister Andrea; I Wonder, Stepping Stone; John's Song #2. (39:45)

Personnel: John McLaughlin, 6- & 12-string electric guitar, acoustic guitar; Jerry Goodman, electric violin, viola and violow; Jan Hammer, keyboards; Rick Laird, bass; Billy Cobham, drums.



Herbie Nichols Project

Dr. Cyclops' Dream

Soul Note 121333

★★★★

While Herbie Nichols is an obscure jazz figure from the '50s and early '60s, the New York-based Jazz Composers Collective ensemble that bears his namesake has recorded an album that not only celebrates his compositional brilliance, but also helps bring to the fore how much he has to offer for creative young jazzers in the coming decade. The under-recognized composer/pianist, who died of leukemia in 1963 at the age of 44, recorded a scant few recordings for Blue Note and Bethlehem (reissued on CD to critical acclaim) and garnered almost no success during his lifetime. Nonetheless he left behind a significant body of work valued for its highly unorthodox and beguiling compositional qualities.

Nichols may be relatively unknown, but he's not been forgotten as such devotees as Misha Mengelberg, Roswell Rudd and Buell Neidlinger have paid tribute to the composer. The Herbie Nichols Project—co-piloted by pianist Frank Kimbrough and bassist Ben Allison—ups the ante with *Dr. Cyclops' Dream*, a thoroughly captivating collection of Nichols' material dominated by previously unrecorded compositions (including the beautiful melody "Swan Song") and fragments of tunes delivered as vignettes (highlighted by Ron Horton's sassy trumpet duet with drummer Tim Horner on "I've Got Those Classic Blues"). And while Nichols never recorded his works outside of a trio format, the six-member Project takes liberties to manifest his orchestral vision by arranging the tunes for saxophones, flutes, trumpet and bass clarinet.

Like Nichols' intriguing compositions, the sequencing on the CD is asymmetrical, which was initially bothersome to me. The album starts off on a highly charged note with the tempo-shifting "Bartok" and the bouncy, horn-rioting "It Didn't Happen." Then the mood submerges into a dark and at times even haunting and eerie space that continues for several tunes before Allison and Horner take wing in the middle of "Beyond Recall," which in turn frees the horns to soar. This bolt of energy is revisited in the rousing "Riff Primitif," delivered with torrid horn heat. On early listenings, the long stretch of slow-tempo music in the middle made me antsy for a mood change, but on subsequent

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spins the descent into grim territory (especially the dark-blue and maroon-toned "Valse Macabre") made emotional sense and proved to be appealingly powerful.

The importance of this disc is that the Herbie Nichols Project keeps the Herbie Nichols flame burning. Odds are that in the coming years this singular composer's legacy will shine brightly thanks in part to the Jazz Composers Collective's commitment to exposing his work. —Dan Ouellette

Dr. Cyclops' Dream: Bartok; It Didn't Happen; Dr. Cyclops' Dream; Swan Song; Dream Time; Valse Macabre; I've Got Those Classic Blues; Beyond Recall; Bebop Waltz; IDH; Riff Primitif; Cro-Mag At T's. (56:30)
Personnel: Frank Kimbrough, piano; Ron Horton, trumpet, flute; Ted Nash, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, alto flute; Michael Blake, tenor and soprano saxophones; Ben Allison, bass; Tim Horner, drums.

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Paquito D'Rivera

Tropicana Nights

Chesky JD 186

★★★

Paquito D'Rivera blows a nostalgic kiss to pre-Castro Havana, where the rum flowed as fast as the roulette wheels and the music played till the sun came up. The center of the action is the fabled Tropicana, a Paradise Under the Stars with "multiple moving stages and flying footbridges, all hidden within the exuberant vegetation," writes Paquito, and where musical director Armando Romeu held forth for 25 years, hosting the likes of Carmen Miranda, Sarah Vaughan and Nat King Cole.

D'Rivera re-creates this fabulous scene with a program of classic boleros, mambos, chachas, danzones and Latin jazz numbers that evoke the spirit of the age, though for some reason—a hasty session? less than ideal studio circumstances?—the result, in spite of some great arrangers, is somehow only ordinary, nothing like the sparkling triumph one expects.

Dario Eskenazi's dense arrangement of the

title Latin jazz tune manages to sizzle, with D'Rivera's keening soprano solo nicely topping it off, as does "Old Miami Sax," a quick but stately cha-cha, where Paquito soars on alto; Mario Bauza's "Mambo Inn," another Latin jazz number graced by D'Rivera's liquid licorice stick (is there a better clarinetist out there?); and Chico O'Farrill's brassy, pachanga-like setting of his own "El Coronel Y Marina." Arranger David Oquendo's folkloric mating of "A Mi Que" and "El Manisero," with his guitar accompaniment, is very clever, given the tunes' mirror-image melodies, and vocalist Lucrecia's torchy vocal on the classic bolero, "Como Fue" ("your eyes, your mouth ... there was no explaining ...") reeks with the passion, glamour and luxury one expects from old Havana.

But by and large this album feels slightly flat, with an often crowded sound that lacks definition in its discrete parts. Two danzones-cum-cha-chas, "Cicutita Tibia" and "Sustancia," with subtone sax parts, would have been more interesting as the background music for a romantic black and white film. The classic 1929 bolero "Siboney," with an operatic vocal by Brenda Feliciano, is no doubt *muy autentico*, but today sounds like a campy novelty. If you're looking for Latin romance and nostalgia, better to try Paquito's much more satisfying *100 Years Of Latin Love Songs* (Heads Up).

A coda: The liner notes would have been a lot more useful had they dealt with the tunes (and identified the soloists), instead of extolling the virtues (while admittedly acknowledging the deficits) of Cuba under Batista.

—Paul de Barros

Tropicana Nights: Mambo A La Kenton; Chucho; Cicutita Tibia; Siboney; Old Miami Sax; Tropicana Nights; Sustancia; Como Fue; El Coronel Y Marina; Mambo Inn; A Mi Que/El Manisero (The Peanut Vendor). (49:35)

Personnel: Paquito D'Rivera, clarinet, soprano and alto saxophone; Noah Bless, Jimmy Bosch, Luis Bonilla, William Cepeda, trombone; Mike Ponella, Diego Urcola, Gustavo Bergalli, Adalberto Lara, Alejandro Odio, trumpet;

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Manuel Valera, alto saxophone; Andres Boiarsky, Oscar Feldman, tenor saxophone; Marshall McDonald, baritone saxophone; Joe Santiago, bass; Ralph Irizarry, timbales; Joe Gonzalez, bongos; Milton Cardona, congas; Mark Walker, drums; David Oquendo, guitar; Oriente Lopez, Dario Eskenazi, piano; Brenda Feliciano (4), Lucrecia (8, 11), vocals; Beatriz Hernandez, Oquendo, Lopez, D'Rivera, Feliciano, chorus (11).



**Frank Kimbrough
Joe Locke**
Saturn's Child
OmniTone 11901

★★★½

There's an unfortunate tendency among critics and listeners to dismiss instrumental music that is quiet and melodic as "background music." These luminous duets between pianist Frank Kimbrough and vibes player Joe Locke offer plenty of substance and creativity. The duo establishes and maintains a consistent, introspective mood with originals that are mellow but interesting, complex but not cluttered, and frequently lovely.

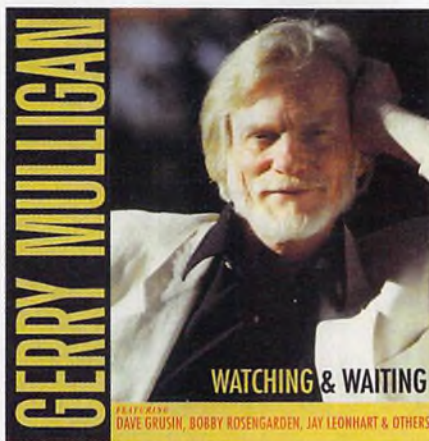
The title track creates a subdued, languorous atmosphere as the players alternate lead roles, extending and ornamenting Locke's pretty, wistful melody. Locke's "Trouble Is A Gorgeous Dancer" sounds dynamic by comparison, with swinging rhythms and strong solos, especially by Kimbrough, whose sprightly turn suggests Chick Corea in the company of Gary Burton.

Saturn's Child may inspire new appreciation for the importance of balance and touch, particularly in the case of Locke's "Empty Chalice," which seems so fragile that a single misplaced note might shatter the mood. Charlie Haden's "Silence," the single outside composition on the program, serves as a dramatic centerpiece for *Saturn's Child*. It whets the listener's appetite to hear what Kimbrough and Locke might accomplish with one or two more familiar tunes, perhaps a Wayne Shorter composition or a standard. The CD is a good showcase for two inventive, melody-oriented players who deserve further investigation.

—Jon Andrews

Saturn's Child: 727; Saturn's Child; Trouble Is A Gorgeous Dancer; Silence; Waltz For Lee; Empty Chalice; Sanibel Island; I Still Believe In Love; Midnight. (63:07)

Personnel: Frank Kimbrough, piano; Joe Locke, vibraphone.



Gerry Mulligan
Watching & Waiting
DRG 8475

★★½

The problem with film soundtrack music is, too frequently, that it's subjugated to the needs of the movie's dramatic content rather than to the creation of a substantial musical work.

Gerry Mulligan's music for the 1977 French film *La Menace*, which starred Yves Montand and was directed by Alain Corneau, was initially released domestically on LP by DRG in 1982 with the odd title *Jazz Master Series*. This CD reissue supposedly includes additional music written for the film that was edited out due to time constraints.

Reviewing the music without the film is, of course, somewhat of an incomplete gesture. It is clear, however, that a certain repetition in the themes is required for continuity in the film's scenes, action, nuance and resolution. What Mulligan has written is pleasant, if far from captivating.

An interesting aspect of the creative process employed by Mulligan is that he wrote musical sketches for the film while listening to Corneau describe the scenarios. And he told the director that he needn't send the film for viewing, just the length of each scene. Then Mulligan completed the score and its recording in 15 days, a neat trick and fairly successful from a musical standpoint.

The best parts of this offering are those moments with Mulligan in the spotlight on baritone and Derek Smith's piano work. Less inspired and occasionally detracting from the overall quality are the synthesizer parts (particularly the tinny-sounding strings) and the electric keyboards of Dave Grusin and Tom Fay.

While this may be a good soundtrack recording from the viewpoint of a film buff, Mulligan fans won't find that much of interest. One also wonders how much of this music was not on the original soundtrack, especially considering that with additional material it only clocks in at slightly more than 37 minutes.

—Will Smith

Watching & Waiting: Dance Of The Truck; Introspect; Watching And Waiting; Trucking Again; New Wine; The Trap; Theme From "La Menace"; Vines Of Bordeaux; The House They'll Never Live In; Watching And Waiting (reprise); The Pantomimist; Introspect (reprise); Vines Of Bordeaux (reprise). (37:03)

Personnel: Gerry Mulligan, baritone and soprano saxo-

phones, keyboards, synthesizers; Derek Smith, piano; Tom Fay, piano, electric piano; Dave Grusin, keyboards; Peter Levin, Edward Walsh, synthesizers; Jack Six, Jay Leonhart, bass; Bobby Rosengarden, Michael Di Pasqua, drums.



**Marc Ducret
& Bobby Previte**

In The Grass
enja 9343

★★★★½

There is some major romping going on in *In The Grass*. Not that it's all bombast or fireworks. A few of the pieces are more reflective and show us sides of guitarist Marc Ducret and rhythmist Bobby Previte that indicate a penchant for subtle nuance and the ability to express it.

The press notes indicate there was no overdubbing on this session. That's surprising when one considers the sonic overlay on certain tunes and the instruments involved. In addition to drums, Previte plays a controller as well as acoustic and electric keyboards. The Frenchman Ducret—who returns after collaborating with Previte's Latin for Travelers band on *My Man In Sydney*—mainly hunkers down with a rhythm-section vibe, favoring effects and textures over melody on his three different guitars. Needless to say, both artists are improvising with little or no net; most pieces seem to unfold more than replicate what may have been written down ahead of time.

There is humor and whimsy here ("Du Du Du"); a guitar rave-up combined with (samples anyone?) piano and drums ("Fifty Is A Hundred, A Hundred Is A Thousand ..."); a haunting

melancholy reminiscent of those old Nordics, mixed with a little freezer-burn coda ("... And The Rest Are What They Are"); some funk ("Tight Lipstick"); elements of mystery and suspense ("Qui Parle?") as well as a few Hendrixian spasms ("Very Handy").

In *The Grass* shows us a more abrasive Ducret, suggesting more open-ended stylists such as Derek Bailey and Eugene Chadbourne. Hear him in exquisite quietude on "7 Familles" as he and Previte wind their way through the music's netherworld to get an idea of how his guitar improvisations can build and sustain interest without the aid of chords or even a pulse. As for Previte, *In The Grass* is more proof

that the deft drummer remains a triple threat that includes keyboards and the mighty pen.

The album is fun and engaging, but sputters at times simply because the sounds of the instruments themselves seem to be all that recommend sustained listening. This potential hazard of more open-ended playing aside, *In The Grass* documents accomplished kindred spirits at work.

—John Ephland

In The Grass: Fifty Is A Hundred, A Hundred Is A Thousand ...; 7 Familles; Handy; Very Handy; Tight Lipstick; Du Du Du; Walking In The Dust; Very Handy Indeed; ... And The Rest Are What They Are; Qui Parle? (58:36)

Personnel: Marc Ducret, electric guitar, fretless electric guitar, baritone electric guitar; Bobby Previte, drums, keyboard, controller, piano



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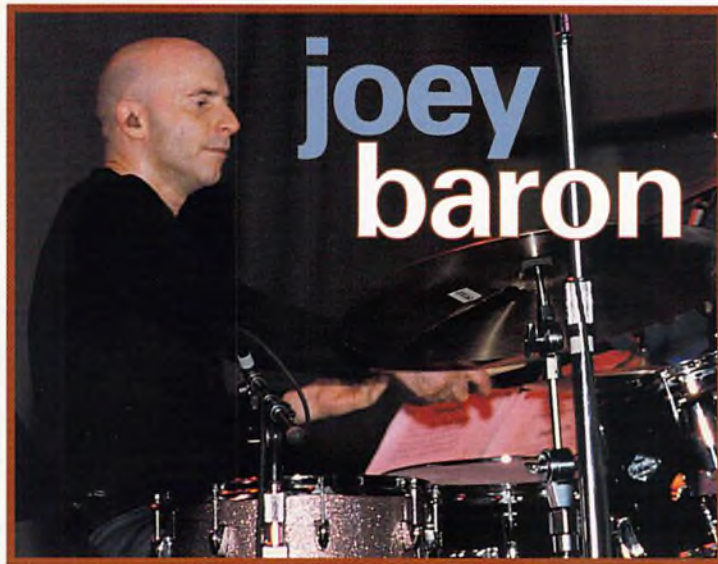
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blindfold test

Joey Baron is a man with a happy beat—a drummer/composer/bandleader whose taste, wit, speed and infectious rhythm have graced ensembles led by Carmen McRae, Lou Reed and John Zorn; he also leads his own Down Home (featuring Arthur Blythe, Ron Carter and Bill Frisell on *We'll Soon Find Out*, coming from Intuition), and Baron Down (with Josh Roseman and Ellery Eskelin). Baron's first Blindfold Test was administered at the Chicago Jazz Festival, where he performed with Zorn's



Masada. At the Tower Records booth, with New Orleans' Algiers Brass Band blowing a few yards away and a parade of jazz enthusiasts flowing by, Baron was all ears and smiles.

Gene Krupa Orchestra

"Swing Is Here" (from *More Fabulous Swing*, BMG/RCA Victor, rec. 1936) Krupa, drums, leader; Roy Eldridge, trumpet.

What a band! I don't know who it is. Ellington? But it's fierce, the way they all move as one, which is really rare these days. It's where I started, listening to Chick Webb, Count Basie, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich—bands where the drummers were prominent. The way the rhythm section plays together, it's not like a fiery drummer and mother-of-a-bassist coming together in the studio, a session of egos. They're a unit, with great thrust. 5 stars. (after being told) It's Krupa? I couldn't really hear his big kit sound on this. Roy Eldridge always had a direct, emotional immediacy to his playing, he could really excite a whole band.

Miles Davis

"Salt Peanuts" (from *Steamin'*, Original Jazz Classics, rec. 1956) Davis, trumpet; Philly Joe Jones, drums; John Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Red Garland, piano; Paul Chambers, bass.

This is heaven! 5 stars! Philly Joe with Miles on Prestige. With Red Garland playing a very nice piano break. It's amazing that got documented, the way the world is. Listen to that spirit! Miles and Philly Joe are a textbook example of great musical interac-

tion. Philly Joe was both an incredible time keeper and soloist. Miles left a lot of space for both those aspects of him, and Philly responded in a way more revealing than any way he ever found for himself. Philly Joe's every gesture, and all his ideas, were so sophisticated and articulate, technically stellar. Most people don't recognize what a genius he was.

Bassdrumbone

"Fictionary" (from *Hence The Reason*, Enja, 1999) Gerry Hemingway, drums; Mark Helias, bass; Ray Anderson, trombone.

Well, the trombone player isn't a shy guy. It sounds like Ray. The bass player has a beautiful sound, but I'm not sure. I don't know this record, don't recognize the drummer, but I probably know him. Would it be Gerry Hemingway? This is Bassdrumbone? Gerry's funny. He's into a lot of things you wouldn't think of, and he can pull them all off. He's had his own sound for years—the resonance of his drums, his orchestration of the set and particularly his touch. Look at his compositions, too—very complex and serious, then you go to his house and find out he's an aficionado of all this country music! He encouraged me to find my own sound, too. 5 stars.

Thelonious Monk

"Epistrophy" (from *Monk's Music*, Original Jazz Classics, rec. 1957) Monk, piano; Art Blakey, drums; John Coltrane and Coleman Hawkins, tenor sax; Gigi Gryce, alto sax; Ray Copeland, trumpet; Wilbur Ware, bass.

Mr. Blakey. You know from his very first hit, from his time feel, the very wide beat—he's so sure and deliberate about everything—and what his left foot did, juxtaposing odd figures or unusual rhythms when most of the drummers were just using it to mark the two and four. 5 stars. Blakey was an enormous influence on me, not just with what he played, but for what he said. When I was a kid I read a *Down Beat* interview with him where he told the young guys, "Go find your own sound."

Joanne Brackeen

"Tico Tico" (from *Pink Elephant Magic*, Arkadia, 1999) Brackeen, piano; Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, drums; John Patitucci, bass.

It reminds me of Hampton Hawes' trio, but it's not. I hear Al Foster-type hi-hat, a little Billy Higgins, too, but overall the approach to the rhythm is sort of standard. 4 stars.

(after being told) Joanne? She's one of the first American women to be on the post-bop scene before it was politically correct, and she's consistently out there pushing, which is inspiring, given the sexism in this business. That was Horacio Hernandez? I've heard about him being great in a hot Cuban context, which this wasn't: He's playing here to complement the pianist. **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 howard mandel