

Closeup

AMARCORD NINO ROTA (I Remember Nino Rota), Hannibal HNBL 9301. Produced by Hal Willner.

His scores for Franco Zeffirelli's production of "Romeo And Juliet" and Francis Coppola's "The Godfather" remain the best-known works of the late Nino Rota, but for devotees of film music and cineastes alike, the Italian composer's most haunting and personal work evolved during the nearly three decades when he supplied the musical counterpoint to Federico Fellini's controversial and ultimately influential cinematic visions.

It's that partnership that provides the unifying thread for this offbeat and thoroughly charming survey of Rota's Fellini scores, as well as the probable draw for its provocative array of musicians. Dominated by jazz soloists and arrangers, the project also finds room for composer and generic provocateur David Amram as well as Blondie's Deborah Harry and Chris Stein. If that mix sounds unlikely, it works.

As such, "Amarcord Nino Rota" may be one of the most auspicious collaborations to be virtually guaranteed a blackout by most radio formats: some jazz programmers will shy away from its emphasis on classical elements and relative absence of improvisation, classical stations will be affronted by its vivid and frequent flashes of humor, and even the most "adventurous" AOR experimenter is unlikely to last through the set's jazz-inflected solos and larger ensemble pieces long enough to catch up with Stein and Harry on side two.

Hard-nosed pragmatists will doubtless ask, then, why this left field venture should attract such a startling surfeit of great players. Yet producer Willner has enlisted an impressive group of jazz players including Jaki Byard (piano), Dave Samuels (vibes), Steve Lacy (soprano sax, gong), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Steve Swallow (bass), Ron Carter (bass), George Adams (tenor sax), Henry Threadgill (flute), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet) and Jay Hoggard (vibes), among others. For arrangers, he's succeeded in convincing Carla Bley, Muhal Richard Abrams, William Fischer and Amram to provide charts, with Bley and Amram bringing their full groups into the picture.

The answer, by now, should be obvious—Rota's intoxicating music, which has consistently mirrored Fellini's shape-shifting imagery by incorporating a wide variety of ethnic elements and varied emotional attitudes into its solid compositional grounding. That means a pianist like Byard can tap blue chords and Debussy-tinged progressions in a single piece ("Amarcord").

Similarly, Carla Bley's droll humor as an arranger is letter perfect for a suite from "8½" that is faithful to the original score in instrumentation and key arranging elements, yet works equally well as an example of Bley's sophisticated, multi-national approach to acoustic jazz arrangements. Vibist Dave Samuels and guitarist Bill Frisell create separate, dovetailed homages to "Juliet Of The Spirits" differing in their instrumental timbre, of course, but alike in their dreamy mood.

Even the two refugees from Blondie immerse themselves in Rota's more ethereal musical provinces, Stein paring his work to a subdued acoustic guitar part and Harry's vocal a floating, wordless breeze amid the interplay of Michael Sahl's keyboards with guitar and accordion.

Amram's quintet allows the flexibility needed to move from the balladic jazz feel to the Third World harmonies and rhythms encompassed during his arrangement of a suite from "Satyricon." And Steve Lacy's daunting emotional range and pioneering technical mastery of the soprano sax, which he helped a generation of players rediscover in the '60s, yields a stunning solo triumph in his treatment of the theme from Fellini's "Roma."

Add a superb jazz sextet with Adams, Barron, Carter and Marsalis on board for William Fischer's arrangement of a medley culled from four earlier films, and Byard's closing solo on the bittersweet theme from "La Strada," and this tribute stands as an intriguing exercise in ignoring trends-of-the-day and commercial wisdom to explore a truly universal musical sense.

As such, this labor of love is much more than just a tribute to Rota—it's a brave and beautiful reminder of the sense of discovery that drives all truly original composers and players alike. **SAM SUTHERLAND**

General News

Two-Stage Country Promo Planned By Warner Label

LOS ANGELES—Warner Bros. Records is launching its most extensive country campaign via a two-stage push set to kick off this month and continue through April.

Themed "Deep In The Heart Of Country," the program will mark a major advertising, promotion and merchandising commitment to label acts John Anderson, Emmylou Harris, T.G. Sheppard, Frizzell and West, Con Hunley, Gail Davies and Gary Morris.

First phase begins at the end of January with a merchandising and advertising program for four albums. Artists are Anderson, Harris, Sheppard and Frizzell and West.

Merchandising material will include header cards for Harris, Sheppard and Frizzell and West along with three 24" by 36" posters, one for each act. Postcards with the campaign's special theme logo will be mailed to radio stations, retailers and WEA branch personnel.

On Feb. 10, the label will ship a

special sampler LP with 14 tracks from the seven artists above, along with Rodney Crowell. The disk will be serviced nationally to dealers and radio stations, with pop and adult contemporary format outlets to be promoted, along with country stations.

Warners will also make catalog sets derived from the campaign's artists available to selected stations for listener giveaways.

The campaign's second stage runs from mid-March through April, and will continue support for the initial volley of releases along with new LPs by Con Hunley, Gail Davies and new artist Gary Morris, whose label debut album is set for release March 10. Additional merchandising aids, included LP cover blow-up posters for Davies and Morris, will be distributed.

All artists in the campaign will be included in special impact sales programs, and both new and catalog titles will be pushed.

Applause Distrib Plans Unveiled By Artie Mogull

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as liquor stores, gift shops, pharmacies and other businesses where traffic includes older buyers who seldom visit record and tape outlets. "I think Applause will have to, as it already has, investigate every other avenue of selling these records—direct mail, tv, door-to-door if need be," he says.

Mogull denies outright recent rumors that one reason for Applause's hiatus in releases since last spring was a demand for production investments from his distributors. As for his commitment to indies, Mogull echoes the caustic pro-independent view he often pitched as head of United Artists Records.

"For 35 years, I've been hearing that you can't get paid by independents—a myth perpetuated by branch distribution, and usually by branch distribution created by independent labels," he says. "Somehow or other, Chrysalis, Motown and Arista are still in business."

The distribution lineup now in place comprises Pickwick (Atlanta, Miami, Dallas, Los Angeles, Min-

neapolis, San Francisco, Seattle); Zamoiskie (Baltimore); Schwartz Bros. (North and South Carolina); Piks (Cleveland, Detroit); Malvern (New York, Boston); Universal (Philadelphia) and M. S. (Chicago).

RFA's Address

LOS ANGELES—RFA Records, a new label recently formed in Albuquerque, N.M., has opened its central offices. New address is 8508 Rio Grande Blvd., N.W., Albuquerque, N.M. 87114. The phone number will be (505) 897-0770.

Bubbling Under The HOT 100

- 101—BE MINE, Grover Washington, Jr., Elektra 47246
- 102—KICKIN' BACK, LT.D., A&M 2382
- 103—TUBE SNAKE BOOGIE, ZZ Top, Warner Bros. 59865
- 104—ONLY ONE YOU, T.G. Sheppard, Warner/Curb 49858
- 105—SPIES IN THE NIGHT, Manhattan Transfer, Atlantic 3877
- 106—GOIN' BACK TO CHINA, Diesel, Regency 7343 (Atlantic)
- 107—DON'T YOU KNOW THAT, Luther Vandross, Epic 14-02658
- 108—WAIT FOR ME, Slave, Cotillion 46018 (Atlantic)
- 109—MY OLD PIANO, Diana Ross, Motown 1531
- 110—HIT AND RUN, Bar-Kays, Mercury 76123 (Polygram)

Bubbling Under The Top LPs

- 201—ROBERTA FLACK, The Best Of Roberta Flack, Atlantic SD 19317
- 202—SOUNDTRACK, Reds, Columbia BJS-37690
- 203—MINNIE RIPERTON, Greatest Hits, Capitol ST-12189
- 204—DORIAN DAMMER, Aerobic Dancing, Parade 100 (Peter Pan)
- 205—THE OHIO PLAYERS, Ouch, Boardwalk NBI-33247
- 206—JOHN KLEMMER, Solo Saxophone II-Life, Elektra 5E-566
- 207—TOMMY TUTONE, Tutone II, Columbia ARC 37401
- 208—BRUCE COCKBURN, Inner City Front, Millennium BXL1-7761 (RCA)
- 209—MARCY MUIR, 20 Aerobic Dance Hits, Parade PA-101 (Peter Pan)
- 210—LAMONT DOZIER, Lamont, M&M MM-104AE (R&L)

Lifelines

Births

Girl, Meredith Donlon, to Joan and Sam Lorber, Dec. 29, in Nashville. Father is songwriter for House of Gold Music Inc.

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Boy, Alexander Bowman Kantner, to Paul Kantner and Cynthia Bowman, Jan. 1, in Marin County, Calif. Father is leader of the Jefferson Starship. Mother is publicist for the group.

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Girl, April Ardelia, to Debby and Kevin Owens, Dec. 12. Father is a member of the group Revelation on Handshake Records.

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Boy, Brandon Charles, to Rozelia and Benny Diggs, Dec. 2. Father is also a member of Revelation.

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Girl, Alicia Nicole, to Peter Lopez and Merle Hoffman, Dec. 25. Father is a management consultant to GRP Records and Roaring Fork Music; mother is the royalty manager of a film company.

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Boy, Anthony Joseph, to Charleen and Anthony DiCarlo Jan. 6 in Los Angeles. Father is owner and producer at Golden Boy Productions.

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Boy, Brett Mitchen, to Gaye and Mitchel Crane Jan. 3 in Los Angeles. Father is guitarist-vocalist with Handshake group Sneaker.

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Girl, Briana Renee, to Susan and Gene Dunlap Jan. 8 in Detroit. Father records for Capitol

★ ★ ★

Boy, Kevin Andrew King, to June and Dennis King Dec. 24 in New York. Father is staff engineer for Atlantic and producer of group Kleer.

Marriages

Gary Culpepper, director of legal affairs for Capitol Industries, to Joyce Edelstein, formerly with Casablanca Records, recently in Los Angeles.

Deaths

Thomas C. Bryant Jr., 51, jazz bassist and member of the Ink Spots, Jan. 3 at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia after a long illness. Surviving are his parents and three brothers.

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Abe Turchen, 66, concert promoter and former manager of Woody Herman, Jan. 7 in San Diego. Surviving are three sons, three brothers and two sisters.

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Vido William Musso, 68, former tenor saxophonist with Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Harry James, Woody Herman and Stan Kenton, Jan. 9 in Los Angeles. Born in Sicily, he was a member of AFM Local 47 for almost 50 years. His solo performance on Kenton's "Sorrento" record was a best-seller in the 1940s. Recently, he played in Las Vegas show orchestras. He is survived by his wife, Rose; three daughters; three grandchildren; and two brothers.

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Dean Poulain, 27, musician and part owner of Tracks By Tracks recording studio in Las Vegas, Jan. 3, of a gunshot wound to the head at Sam's Town casino/hotel. A suspect was arrested.

Rock'n'Rolling

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don't announce it in advance."

Acts on Ralph include Snakefinger, Tuxedo Moon, Yello, Fred Frith and Renaldo & Loaf, but it is the Residents, who formed the label 10 years ago, who define the Ralph Records style. No other band, save maybe Pink Floyd, plays with the same kind of skewered and hypnotic style as the Residents.

They do other strange things. Like putting out an album with 40 exactly one-minute songs, or putting together an album of orchestral music interspersed with snatches of '60s rock'n'roll oldies and calling it "Third Reich & Roll" with swastikas on the cover. They got into trouble on that one, and released the album again with a more acceptable cover.

The Residents do not show pictures of themselves, they don't reveal their identities, and they do not play live shows. Except, says Clem, they want to go out in the summer or fall, with a special show to support "Tunes Of Two Cities," their ninth album, and second in their "Mole"

series. First was "Mark Of The Mole."

"The live performances will not be rock concerts, as such," says Clem. "They will be legitimate theatre as much as rock, with dancers and a story line based on 'The Mark Of The Mole.'"

Clem says that the seven-person operation that is Ralph Records is already sorely tested by the demands of putting the Residents out on tour, and he says that the label would welcome help from a booking agency to get it together.

Ralph currently has six or nine video shorts in its repertoire, says Clem, the number being variable, he explains, because four of the shorts are sometimes treated as one (each is only one minute long, corresponding to the one-minute songs of the Residents' "Commercial" album).

Two more are in production, a Renaldo & the Loaf film and one on Yello. Yello, a Swiss electro-dance band, incidentally, is the focus of Ralph's current new affiliation with Stiff Records. Ralph has a deal

where Stiff is merchandising its T-shirts, but also the two labels now have an arrangement where the next Yello 12-inch EP will come out through Stiff.

Ralph, incidentally, is no longer owned by the Residents. Clem, Ralph chairman John Kennedy, and two other partners bought the label from the Residents in 1976, and then signed the band a longterm exclusive contract. The first couple of years were tough, admits Clem, but now the label is showing a profit.

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Some notes on the Jacksons: The group has just finished a 39-city tour, where they were seen by 600,000 people. Gross was \$5.5 million.

The group's world record sales are estimated at 96 million units. Michael Jackson helps out on Paul McCartney's upcoming album. McCartney is expected to return the favor on Michael's next solo album, to be produced by Quincy Jones this year.