

CODA MAGAZINE

THE JOURNAL OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC * ISSUE 214 * JUNE/JULY 1987 * THREE DOLLARS

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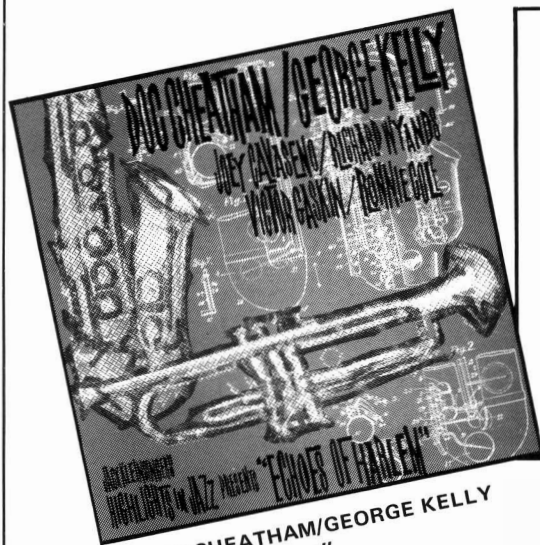
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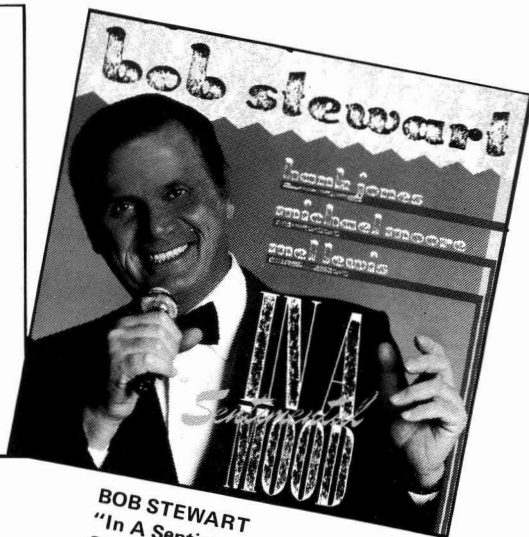
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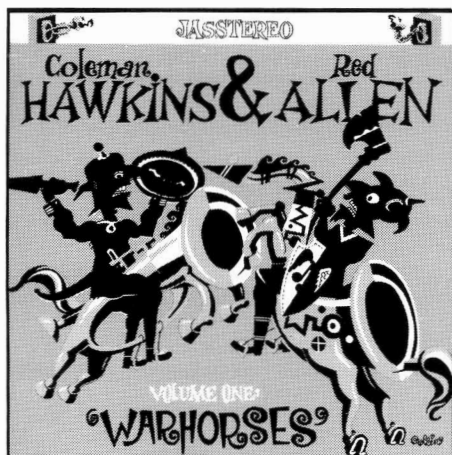
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ERRATA

The record reviews that appeared in the last issue on page 21 were written by Gerard Futrick, and *not* John Sutherland.

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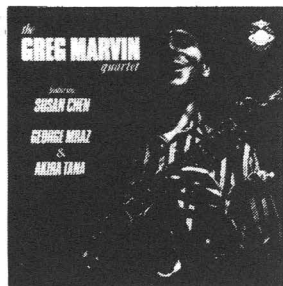
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ISSUE 215 * THE NEXT ISSUE OF CODA MAGAZINE WILL FEATURE THE CURRENT STATE OF THE IMPROVISERS ART, THOSE THAT INVENTED IT AND THOSE THAT CARRY IT ON. FEATURE ARTICLES ON ORNETTE COLEMAN, PAUL RUTHERFORD, DAVID MOSS, HUGH RAGIN, GRACHAN MONCUR, STEVE LACY AND LLOYD GARBER WILL BE THE FOCUS OF THIS UPCOMING ISSUE. PLUS RECORD REVIEWS, JAZZ LITERATURE AND NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

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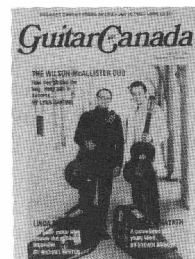
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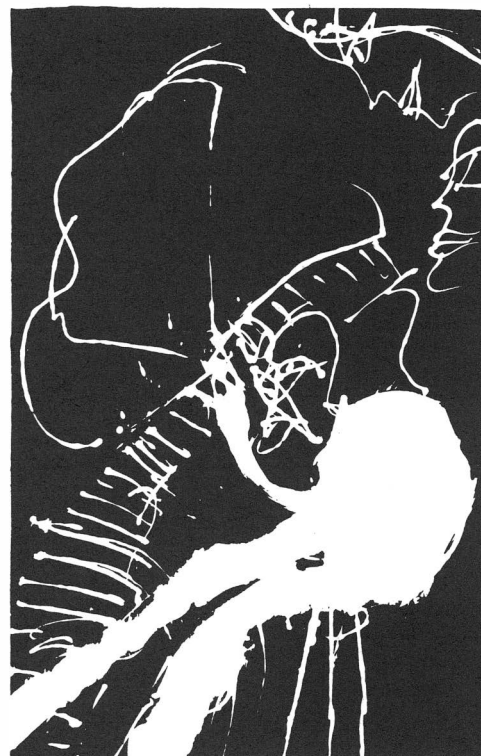
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TRUMPET PLAYER WOODY SHAW IN CONVERSATION WITH MONTREAL WRITER MARC CHENARD

Within the long and often remarkable history of jazz trumpet playing, many have been called but few have been chosen. Though there has never really been a shortage of able and talented trumpeters, only a handful of "stylists" have come forth, setting new standards, be they of a technical or conceptual nature. Satchmo, Little Jazz, Diz, Miles and Brownie are all names belonging to a special category of which legends are made.

To that list, one may add the name of Woody Shaw: after all, when both Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis wholeheartedly endorse him as an important contributor to that lineage, he has a right to see himself as one of "them". Now some ten years after his debut as a successful band leader with many critically acclaimed albums under his own name, he has now moved away from the spotlight to devote his energies towards further developing his own playing, be it as a sideman or as a freelancer, working with various "local" rhythm sections.

MARC CHENARD — *After having had regular working groups over the last ten years, you are now active as a freelancer. How did this change come about?*

WOODY SHAW — The main reason for that is simply to keep working... More importantly, though, is the fact that I broke off with my personal manager. As you know, I had a record deal with Columbia in the late seventies, just before going to Elektra Musician. When I look back at it, I made some pretty good records for Columbia... They never got less than three stars. Most of them had four or five star ratings and I am very proud of that. My records were a kind of "break even" type of seller for them, and when your albums sell from 35 to 50 thousand copies each, that is not bad in the jazz world.

Back in 1982, the whole record industry went through a metamorphosis of some sort; some impresarios even got crooked and burned some performers moneywise. So the whole scene got topsy-turvy. Then, a lot of people were dropped from these major record companies, including Freddie Hubbard and myself. We were considered to be a waste of money in terms of record promotions, overlooking the fact that we are legendary trumpeters.

As for myself, I believe that it is the lack of personal management that explains why I do not have any record deal, and which has now forced me to become a single artist. But don't get me wrong: I enjoy this status very much. Besides that, you really have to make it worthwhile to go touring with a band nowadays; just the prices of airfares are high enough....

In the early eighties, you did your first European recording as a leader for Soul Note in Italy, a label that seems to be attracting many American jazz musicians. Were you under contract with them?

One of the Italian promoters brought to my attention that none of my Columbia recordings were distributed there, except as high priced imports. I am very well liked over there, even if I had not done much touring over there for a while. But Italy is a soulful place. In any event, it just came about that one of my club dates in Bologna was recorded, and it just happened like that, on a very modest budget. But that was a one shot deal only.

Since that time, my record output is starting to become a little spotty. With regards to my Elektra period, I consider it to be an extension of my one on Columbia, because I followed Bruce Lundvall when he changed labels. But looking back at that period, no one every sup-

ported him jazzwise on either of those labels. As for the two albums I did for the Elektra label, "Master of the Art" and "Night Music", I must admit that I am not particularly proud of either of them. They come from a live session done at a now-defunct club called the Jazz Forum, which was a real nice place, almost like a loft. But I had just come back from a seven week tour in Europe and was really tired. I only had a day to prepare the whole thing. It so happened that I ran into Bobby Hutcherson who was just about ready to leave on a European tour of his own. In my estimation, I find that some of the cuts were really not worthy of release. But it was called "Night Music", and it was set-up like a jam session, of which both recordings are excerpts.

Given the fact there are not so many brand new recordings of yours available, have you purposely drawn away from that to concentrate on your own playing and composing, or do you want to do more things just as a sideman?

Well, I got rather involved in a couple of things that kept me away from my playing, and I even became a very miserable person for a while. Yet, my love of music hasn't changed. To me, music is a tie with the universe and it just gels with my own personal philosophies. But I am not a bitter person, even if I have learned lessons from overextending myself. In being a nice guy all the time, people will take advantage of you and stab you in the back when you turn around.

Nevertheless, the music is still what keeps me together. In fact, I consider myself to be one of the great trumpet players, because trumpet players try to imitate me now, and as a contributor to the legacy of the jazz trumpet, I am proud of that. Amongst the young cats coming up today, I can tell if there is a Woody Shaw influence and what it is exactly. The most important thing to me is to be able to hear one's personality coming through the instrument. Just as there is a Freddie Hubbard style, there is a Miles Davis, a Dizzy Gillespie and a Clifford Brown style, and also a Woody Shaw style.

As of now, I am more intent on developing my own style of playing. Very interestingly, the new Blue Note label, which is now under the auspices of Capitol-EMI, with Bruce Lundvall at its helm, has proposed that Freddie Hubbard and I do a date together. But with our conflicting schedules, we haven't been able to do the record. (Note: The session has now been released as of Fall, 1986). In my mind, it will

be a landmark recording.

For the moment, I am making myself scarce. But the agents in New York don't seem to consider me, just because I do not have a record deal, even though I am Woody Shaw, a legendary trumpet player Miles Davis critically acclaims as one of his favorites... and he does not say that about many! Dizzy Gillespie also says that I am one of the great innovators, not just trumpet stylists but *innovators* on my instrument. In the last couple of years, I have become a little salty, but now I think I am a much mellower cat than I used to be. You know, *Down Beat* last did an article on me three or four years ago. So, even if they overlook me, I'll still be polishing my craft every time I play.

Playing in a quartet, as I have been doing now, is very demanding, particularly for a trumpet player. Yet, it now gives me the chance to really work on my own playing. Being the only horn player is a challenge too; after all, a trumpet player cannot play as long physically as a saxophonist, for instance. But, in many ways, he says much more because his solos are somewhat shorter.

Even though I love the saxophone legacy, it tends to bore me sometimes, and I don't care how much technique they have. Now, I have studied with saxophone players, and it seems to me that some of their idiosyncrasies come out in my own playing, which makes my own playing unique in a quartet. I've been challenging myself in order to see if I can do a whole gig without another horn, not even with a flugelhorn or a mute. In this context, I can best work on my own sound and further develop my own style. So when I get together with other horns on some special occasions, I can carry on that Woody Shaw style. You see, I was achieving a sound in the groups I had with Steve Turre and Carter Jefferson, but the record companies clipped my wings by not giving me a chance to record.

A lot of people have been asking me of late what I think of Wynton Marsalis. Well, I met him when he came to New York, and I was looking forward to hearing a budding genius. And it was time for it too. I needed someone to inspire me. For a while everybody had been complacent and was busy making money. When Wynton appeared, I wasn't surprised. But, in the middle of all the publicity, those who had already established themselves were sort of cast aside for someone new in our society which is geared toward youth anyway. Nowadays, you

have musicians with phenomenal technique; but in the times I came up, only a few musicians had done their conservatory. And do you know why that is? Because the art of trumpet playing in jazz is a unique one. Louis Armstrong, even Harry James, they represent the art of jazz trumpet playing. And the same can be said for Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown, Chet Baker, Maynard Ferguson. No one plays like them in legit music.

Now as for this new breed of musicians with their "ultrasonic" conservatory technique, I say: So what? Tell me a story from the heart of your soul and what your existence in this universe is all about! I may be a little philosophical about it, but when people marvel at their technique, I have to say, So what? I've got my own technique. As a matter of fact, I get calls from students all over the country who want to come and study the way Woody Shaw plays the trumpet.

You said you were honing your craft as a trumpet player. Do you also devote as much time to composing as you do to your playing? I see you have a new album out where you are just playing standards.

I must admit that I have been rather lazy about composing and arranging. Now that I don't have a record deal I don't compose as much, but it's starting to bother me now, because I am a writer too. And people like my tunes too. I guess I lost faith and confidence in myself over the last couple of years, but now it is back stronger than ever. In a way, I can characterize myself as a subtly intense individual, and I am trying to work on that aspect of my personality.

But with all these problems that have affected me over the last couple of years, I feel that they have helped me to be more creative as a composer and to know what my place is in the music. I do feel a bit salty, as I said before, because I know I can sell records. I have a record produced by a low budget company which is up on the charts, so why don't I have a contract? In fact, I can do something commercial, and I would not mind to take a crack at it. But I resent people who tell me not to do that because they see in me a last vestige of someone who hasn't made any compromises. After all, I am here to make money with my recordings. But don't get me wrong: I wouldn't sell out either. Basically, there is nothing wrong with having a hit record. There was a time I put down cats who tried, but now that I am a little older.... Don't forget, it's called "the music business".

Earlier, I spoke about Wynton. To me, it is time we need a trumpet player like him. But, on the other hand, it is time for me to re-emerge. I am sure that when you listen to me, you hear more depth, more individuality, and more awareness. Now, if you want to base yourself on the appreciation of technique, it's not jazz. I don't use any of the standard trumpet methods to stay a good player, even though I did play out of them at one time. So if you are basing yourself on European standards, you are limiting yourself. But jazz isn't solely an American expression; here in Canada, there are some excellent jazzmen. Jazz is much more a universal language whose standards are just as demanding as any other genre.

I hate to say this, but Maurice André does not kill me. For one, I don't like his vibrato.



But that doesn't mean I don't like classical trumpeters; in fact, there are some who really amaze me. In essence, I check out the whole spectrum of trumpet playing. People ask me if I can play the Haydn trumpet concerto, but that is a corny piece, not because of the style, just simply because there are more interesting ones. Now the Hummel Concerto in E Flat, that one's a bitch! I can respect Wynton for recording that.

As for my own recording projects, I want to do something with Freddie, but I want to do this for the legacy of the trumpet and not just to have a cutting contest with him. Both of us knew Lee Morgan, and he was an important player in the tradition we represent. When I arrived on the scene back in the early sixties, I was at the tail end of an era when it was respected to have your own style.

And you think that is disappearing now?

Yes it is. The proof of that is in the new records they make and the people they put on them. It has no lasting value. I would like to have my place in the recording industry and I feel optimistic that I will have a record deal soon. I remember when I was working with McCoy Tyner in the late 60s: he did not have a record deal, and work either! McCoy used to tell me, he does not know what's wrong with a lot of these young cats: they want so much money and they don't want to pay any dues. So, when young guys come up to me and wonder why I don't hire them, I can tell you that I don't like such an attitude. When I first came up to Sonny Rollins to ask and play with him, my heart was in my throat. I was almost begging. He said yes and spaced out on me in his own particular way. Even though I've been very critical, I am still proud of the course that modern jazz has taken on in terms of education,

because it fortifies the future of the music. But I didn't learn to play in school, and I feel fortunate about that. When I wanted to know what a C7 chord was, I'd call up my friend Buddy Terry, and he was the one who made me aware about learning chords. I also was lucky to befriend a genius by the name of Larry Young, who was very important in Newark; he was truly one of the heroes of the jazz organ. I recorded with him on his second album for Blue Note (Unity BST-4221), and no one played the organ like he did. To me, all of those experiences culminated in my own self-awareness. I also hung out with Harry Edison and Doc Cheatham in Sweden; Doc is about 82 and he sounds so damn good! Those are the things and people who have to be admired.

The art of playing jazz is a unique one, and I don't care what technological wizardry is used. Take an example: the drum machine. Now that has to be an insult to mankind! But I keep myself abreast of this technological "robot music" they make now. I still prefer listening to some Beatles music of the sixties than any of the shit they make today. In fact, I am starting to get afraid of technology, especially when it deprives man of his creativity and his ability to exist with nature.

More recently, I have been involved with Tai Chi. As a form of holistic exercise and meditation developed by the Chinese some three thousand years ago, it is closely related to the Taoist philosophy, which says that nothing goes undone. The Tao is nature, God. This perspective on life rings so true to me, especially when you go and check it out for yourself. This philosophy helps me coexist with all this madness around us. I can just turn myself off for an hour, just walk in slow motion and breathe in deeply to cool off both mind and body. Now

I've been on the drug train. And I'm not ashamed of it either. In the long run, you have to fuse all the right elements together and set a goal for yourself, even if that is a very hard thing to do.

In a way, I feel sorry for these younger cats coming up today, because there are not as many record companies now. Those that are around really do not give the artist a chance to grow. You see, they wave big money in front of them and say: "If you do this, we'll make a star out of you!" Now when you look at people like Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock, they had to scuffle around a lot in the sixties before they ever reached their present status. They are stars today, but they had to pay their dues too.

You see I grew up in Newark, New Jersey, which is only thirty miles away from the Big Apple. I've been coming to New York City all my life. Originally, my parents are from South Carolina, and my father went to school with Dizzy Gillespie, which explains in part why Dizzy took some interest in me. I was born in the South too, but came north when I was a few months old. Since Newark is close to New York, it always had a pretty healthy orientation, at least musically. Also, my mother and father had a lot of those 78s with a lot of the music of the forties, Boogie-Woogie, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan singing *Black Coffee*, Dinah Washington, Billy Eckstine. From all of that, I guess I was destined to become a jazz musician. Moreover, I was steeped in gospel and spiritual music, because my father used to sing, so that too geared me towards music.

And what brought you to the trumpet?

There's no reason in particular, save to say that the first time I heard one, I said to myself that is what I had to play. But before that, I first wanted to play violin, then trombone — and I still do fiddle around with it from time to time, though I will never become a trombonist. I had trouble finding the instrument I wanted until I heard someone in my neighbourhood playing *Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White*. Then, I got involved in the local trumpet and bugle corps, and that was the first time I picked up the instrument. It just turned out to be a natural for me. I figured out all of the fingerings by myself, even though they were all wrong, but I still got the notes out.

In Junior High School my music teacher, who happened to be a trumpeter, took interest in me. He saw I had a natural gift. I have very fond memories of him, but he was tough: if you got out of line he would kick your butt, so I respected him for that. One day, he told me that he wanted to give me private lessons, and that I should even go to Juilliard. He was more into the legit aspects of trumpet playing, but what I liked about him was the fact he never put down any of my black jazz heroes, as most of those well-schooled musicians did. He even respected them. For instance, he used to say that Miles plays all right, but with a lot more practice he'd play much better. He thought that Dizzy Gillespie was phenomenal, but with a little more schooling he could also be a remarkable legit player. He got me to read a lot, and told me that if I wanted to get into jazz, I'd have to be able to learn to read syncopation.

Apart from those lessons, I did not take any from other people. However, my studies with him prepared me for the future. It was quite amazing, when I think about it, that this white

Jewish cat takes an interest in me, a young black kid, and tells me that I will be a great trumpet player one day. And it happened too! He even comes to my gigs and I say: "What are you doing here?" He was involved in a few dedications they gave me in Newark and it was just a gas when he came up and told me that he would never have known that I would play like I now do. But just hearing him play trumpet on that occasion and knowing how much he thought of me was like a fuel for me to just keep on going. In a strange way, I can relate to Wynton Marsalis because he represents the course that my teacher wanted me to follow. What got me away from that was when I heard Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham and Lee Morgan. I said: "No way!" Lee, for example, was amazing: at 18 he was playing in Dizzy's big band. He was a natural wizard. He also studied at Juilliard, and could read anything on sight.

I used to hang out with him and just listen to him play. Both Freddie and I relate to him because he was real hip. If you ever met him, he was very intelligent and quick witted. As a matter of fact, he was the first person who made me aware of the situation in South Africa. He just was on top of things. I feel that the reason Alfred Lion kept him for so long was on

the sheer strength of his personality and the knowledge he had. After all, when you think of Blue Note records, you think of Lee Morgan...

Speaking of Blue Note, tell me about that famous concert of February 22, 1985, the one which marked the rebirth of the label.

It was beautiful! There will never be anything like it. That night I heard Johnny Griffin, Curtis Fuller, Freddie Hubbard, Walter Davis in a special Jazz Messengers band. Now did you ever hear a band like that before? My own group had Jackie McLean, McCoy Tyner, Cecil McBee and Jack deJohnette, and that was great too. For me, that was the first time I had played with Jackie in quite a few years. Interestingly enough, I have always associated myself with people ten or fifteen years older than I, and I am proud of that.

When I think of bebop, I also think of Johann Sebastian Bach. To me both are like musical parables. Let me put it this way: in order to be a good jazz musician, you have to know how to play bebop. On the other hand, if you want to play Schonberg, Webern, Berg, even Stockhausen, you have to play Bach. It makes sense, doesn't it? These are the basics of both traditions.

Coming back to jazz, I must admit that I am



glad (and fortunate) to have been influenced by these people in bop. Another person who I particularly admire out of that tradition is the late Philly Joe Jones. We had been good friends and I remember the last time I saw him. It was in Amsterdam back in April of 85. He was just making the gig, lagging behind the time and what not. As I came in and waved to him, he perked up, announced me on the microphone and from then on he just played his ass off as I came up on the stand and joined his band. So we hung out all night, and he gave me a lot of insight. By the way, did you know that he gave Freddie Hubbard his first gig when he arrived in New York? To me, it was a great honour being with him. Another example was a gig I did with Dizzy in Verona: he let me play next to him and even set up my microphone! Now that is a compliment....

So I feel enriched despite that salty state of mind I am gradually overcoming. You see, I have always looked up to these older cats, and for that they respect me. When that happens, I learn to respect myself and now I can better see my place on the contemporary jazz scene. I have been going through a period learning who I am within the music. I can say this, not egotistically, but with pride, that I am one of the important jazz trumpet players. When I see a younger player coming along, I want him to establish an identity of his own, and one that fits in with the rest of us. I don't care how much technique a cat has; he has to tell me a story. After all I have gone through, I think I can tell a story now. And I still enjoy the road; to me it is a way of life, as though it is in my blood.

Are you thinking of forming your own band now, or do you just want to keep on working as a solo performer for the moment?

Actually, I would like to do both. On the one hand, I like the freedom of working as a solo artist, but on the other, I'd like to have my own group to do some writing for. But in order to do all of this, one needs a good manager to watch out for one's own interests. I don't mean an agent, because I do my own bookings. In fact, my phone is ringing all the time. I think they miss me. That's good, because not too long ago I was not doing a thing. I was even wondering if they had forgotten all about me. I was getting so depressed, I stopped practicing. All of this is due to that phenomena I was describing earlier, something new versus something old, or established at least. We talked about Wynton: he's good, but he's no Woody Shaw!

In such a competitive business, which jazz is, it's nice to know that people come to see me because they want to hear my unique sound. When I arrive in any city, it takes all the doubts away when they fill up the club every night.

The strange thing when you play an instrument is that when you play mediocre — or badly — people still love it. But when I am at my best, they don't say a word! Other musicians have told me the same thing, but I haven't figured out why that is. Maybe I am making people feel good with this talent I have, and I might be telling something in a "mesmerizing" way.

Between sets you told me that you had changed trumpets. How did this come about?

I thought I would play Bach trumpets for the rest of my life. But it is a very demanding

horn. It's a good horn to train on, because it demands certain things from you. For instance, you must practice 2 to 3 hours every day. When I was in California some years ago, I spent a lot of time woodshedding, playing up to six hours a day, just building up my technique and chops.

Interestingly enough, most young trumpeters use Bach today, but they have no individuality, the reason for that being that it's such a rigid training horn. If you have a Bach, there is no doubt about it, you own a Cadillac. But, on the other hand, it tends to stymie your individuality. Freddie told me that he loves Bach but it's just killing him. We are getting older, so we need something to make it easier.

That is why new brands of trumpets are being developed. For my own part, I have switched to Yamaha and I am starting to break it in now. Now, what these new companies are doing is that they are taking the characteristics of the well established brands, but making instruments that are easier to play. I am all for that! I am over 40 now, I do not have as much wind as I once did.

Recently, I encouraged the young trumpeter Wallace Rooney to try something else than Bach if he wanted to sound like himself. He did that, and you should hear him now. Sure, it's always good having a Bach, but if you want to play yourself, you have to find an instrument that *is* you.

Now I have two models of Yamaha, a standard one and one with a wide bore. But some staunch Bach supporters put me down for my switch, but as soon as they try my horn, they are impressed. Another reason for my change was my getting tired of playing silver horns: they leave me cold now. As for my new horns, they have both brass and silver, which give them a certain warmth. It has the rich, dark quality of the Bach, but it is easier to play.

What has helped me a lot in this transition was the Tai Chi. You see, it helps you build up your internal organs since it is based on deep breathing exercises. This, in turn, is related to a basic energy which I have felt coming through my own playing. So I have done a fair amount of these exercises to strengthen me and to put me in a better shape than I once was. If you noticed my older pictures, I was much fatter. Now, I am both stronger and have much more energy. Through Tai Chi, I am much more relaxed and it also keeps my mind and body in better shape.

There is another reason why I got this horn: I am breaking it in in preparation for my date with Freddie. People can say all they want about him, but he's one of the great trumpet innovators in the history of jazz. Freddie Hubbard has taken the instrument up to the level of it being "conservatory-wise". Freddie Hubbard innovated it in that sense, and not Wynton Marsalis.

That I belong to the lineage of Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard makes me feel good, and I am also glad to be associated with those players, more so than those of today. On Monday nights I usually go to listen to Mel Lewis' band at the Village Vanguard, because I want to see and hear those new cats coming out from conservatories. Man, what they can read on those charts, I can't. What they read on sight I would have to bring home and work on. That's to be admired, for sure, but that leaves me cold too. Bob Brookmeyer did an arrange-

ment of *My Funny Valentine* that almost sounds like it's out of Bela Bartok. When Mel tells me that's the tune, I say: Where? In any event, I like listening to big bands but I don't really like playing in them. I even had my bit of experience in big bands and it was invaluable. To me, any musician should play in a big band or orchestra setting, that's essential for one's own training.

I tell a lot of young players that I *had* to earn the right to play jazz. Some complain that they have to do this latin gig, but I used to do some of those too, but they are all surprised to know that. I even did commercials. But since my eye sight has been affected by retinitis pigmentosa (a.k.a. tunnel vision), I cannot do much reading now. But I am confident of regaining my sight, and there are even some signs pointing to that.

In my own career, I have come to the point where I can use my horn to express my innermost feelings. I just do not play music now, I play me! I try to make people feel good. I do not like to play when I am angry, because I become very volatile. To me, I don't want the trumpet to be a stereotyped high-note screech instrument. In fact, listening to Chet Baker has been very enlightening to me.

Recently, I did a gig in California with Freddie Hubbard and Terence Blanchard. I hadn't been playing for two weeks, though I did a little practicing in between. To make the gig, I had to use some psychology. I mean, I didn't want to psyche myself out, so that I would be inferior to them. On the night of the concert, I could not play any high G's, so I played what I could, and sounded very pretty. I saw something similar happen at the Village Gate when Miles once sat in with Dizzy's band. Diz was in rare form that night: playing up high and running all over the horn. Miles joined him on the bandstand, played just a few long tones and it was all over! He did not blow Dizzy's cool or anything like that, he just upstaged him in a way. This goes to show you that it all has to do with psychology of trumpet playing, or any instrument for that sake. I've heard a lot of people say they do not like the trumpet but the saxophone.... at least until they hear me play. I am proud of that, especially when they say I play differently.

What strikes me in your playing is the way you use silence. To me, it is not only a simple pause for breath, but an integral part of your musical discourse.

I see it like that too, but I had to learn how to do that.

In fact, Dizzy once said that the most important thing in playing is what you leave out.

Exactly! And that is what is missing in the development of today's musicians. It is all so technique oriented, and they try to put it all in by filling up all the holes. When I listen to my earlier records, I was like that too and I am a bit surprised: I must have had a lot of things on my mind then. So space is indeed a very important ingredient in music.

When I was young, I listened a lot to Miles Davis, but I only fully appreciated him when I became a mature man. So I have reached a point where I am aware of that in my own playing. We shouldn't forget that music has to tell a story and that the listener has to feel that he is "reading" a story. And to me that is what North American music is all about. ■

THE MATCHBOX BLUESMASTER SERIES

The Matchbox Bluesmaster Series is certainly the most significant reissue phenomenon of the 1980's. With 20-plus LP's in their catalogue, the series covers a wide range of diverse pre-war artists and stylistic approaches drawn from the early evolutionary years of blues development.

The original, and reaquently rare, recordings are drawn from private collections and organized by artist(s), by date in a chronological and complete order. Across the catalogue the sound quality ranges from near excellent to awful, the latter being the minority situation. All have good, informative liner notes by Paul Oliver.

We shall start with the flagships of the catalogue. As illustrative complements to Paul Oliver's *"Songsters and Saints"* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), Matchbox has issued a 2-volume double LP collection of non-blues race recordings primarily from the late 1920s. **Volumes 1 (MSEX 2001/2002)** and **2 (MSEX 2003/2004)** also draw their title from Oliver's indepth study. The material as detailed in the book is a mix of medicine show hokum, string band dance tunes, minstrel show novelty ditties, ragtime and folk songs, plus a welcome heavy dose of raw, uncompromising sermons and gospel work.

Some of the more hokum material is of a racial self-parody nature. Call me liberal, but I find titles like *Mysterious Coon* and *Under The Chicken Tree* distasteful, and still somewhat dangerous given White Supremacists running around Canada and Alabama crackers still longing for the 1950s. From a sociological or ethnomusicological perspective there may be some merit to this material. However, titles such as *Mr. Crump Don't Like It* (Beale Street Sheiks - Frank Stokes and Dan Sane), *Furniture Man* (Lil McClintock), *The Panic Is On* (Hezekiah Jenkins) and *I Heard The Voice Of A Porkchop* (Bogus Ben Covington) might just be more palatable folk expressions of that hard time period.

Included among the 72 titles are non-blues offerings by more familiar blues artists like Blind Blake, Henry Thomas, Jim Jackson, Hambone Willie Newborn, and Charly Patton; plus jug/string band collectives like the Memphis Sheiks, Mississippi Sheiks and Cannon's Jug Stompers.

The real killers from the two volume set come from the 36 spiritual sides. This is uncompromising go-for-the-soul stuff. It includes rhythmic preaching from the Reverend Jim Beal, uninhibited holy dancing from Reverend J.E. Birch, the strident street playing of Blind Willie Johnson, and some hardcore performances from women preachers/gospel singers like Arizona Dranes, Missionary Josephine Miles, Mother McCallum, the Memphis Sanctified Singers and the Reverend Leora Ross, who along with the Living God Jubilee Singers turns in a strong topical ditty *God's Mercy To Colonel Lindbergh*. Willie Johnson connoisseurs will no doubt also favour the titles by Edward Clayborn (The Guitar Evangelist), Blind Willie Davis, Blind Nesbit, and Eddie Heard and his Family. Great Stuff!

COLEY JONES AND THE DALLAS STRING BAND were for Texas what the Mississippi Sheiks were for their namesake state. **Coley Jones and the Dallas String Band (1927-1929) (MSE 208)** packages their

complete Columbia (and only) recordings. Their primary role as entertainers is well demonstrated on the 16 cuts included here. Vocalist Bobbie Cadillac joins Jones and possibly Alex Moore for three hokum style tunes much lighter than her heavy hitter *Carbolic Acid Blues* cut in 1928. Jones contributes four solo vocal/guitar tunes including an irreverent *The Elder's He's My Man*. The remainder are string band tunes featuring Jones' hot mandolin work. The string ensemble sides range from the smoking *Dallas Rag* through an obligatory *Hokum Blues* to a barbershoppish *I Used To Call Her Baby*. Real period stuff guaranteed to get them gigs with both white and black audiences of the day.



Great Harp Players (1928-30) (MSE 209) showcases the complete recordings of obscure harp players William Francis teamed with Richard Sowell, El Watson with Robert Cooksey, Palmer McAbee Freeman Stowers, James "Blues Birdhead" Simon, and Alfred Lewis. "Great" might be somewhat overstating the case. I would say this collection of 18 rarities is primarily for the real country harp nut who thrives on novelty workouts imitating barnyard animals, fox chases and trains. All in all a bit too back woodsy for my tastes. On the urbane side, however, is the interesting jazz influenced blowing of Blues Birdman. On his 2 cuts, *Mean Low Blues* and *Harmonica Blues* he demonstrates a smooth lyrical technique influenced by jazz blowers of the day. The piano accompaniment reinforces the nice urbane feel. One Palmer McAbee also turns in a strong workout in the form of *Lost Boy Blues*. Also a welcome departure from the trains, animals, and John Henrys.

Leroy Carr (1928) (MSE 210) provides 15 cuts by Carr with his musical buddy Scrapper Blackwell from 1928. A nice complement to the Yazoo and Columbia releases on Carr. Included are 3 versions of his great hit *How*

Long How Long Blues, plus further examples of his laid back, sophisticated blues approach in titles like *Truthful Blues*, *My Own Lonesome Blues*, and the classic *Prison Bound Blues*. Blackwell is usually there with unobtrusive, subtle backing.

TOMMIE BRADLEY-JAMES COLE GROUPS 1920-32 (MSE 211) is a real gem. It focuses on the string/washboard band works of the obscure guitarist Tommie Bradley and violinist James Cole. Even Paul Oliver's soul searching liner notes cannot shed much light on these artists. Both were obvious talents, and seemed to have the knack of drawing strong sidemen like the equally obscure mandolinist Eddie Dimmitt and pianist Sam Soward around them. Program wise there is a touch of hokum and sentimentality, some fluid, driving instrumental workouts like *Sweet Lizzie (Sweet Sue)* and *Runnin' Wild* (both recorded as James Cole's Washboard Four), and some superb blues in the form of *Four Day Blues*, *Pack Up Her Trunk Blues*, and *Windowpane Blues* recorded under Bradley's name. A very effective guitar/mandolin duet is laid down on Bradley's *When You're Down And Out* with the help of Dimmitt. Another string band blues gem was waxed as *Undertaker Blues* under guitarist Buster Johnson's name. Johnson gets good ensemble backing from Cole on violin, Dimmitt on mandolin, Bradley on second guitar, and an unknown washboard player. Now this is certainly a superb blues reissue package.

Next along is Barbeque Bob Hicks' older brother who recorded under the name **CHARLEY LINCOLN**. Like his brother's, Charley's playing had a full, ringing 12-string sound to it. His vocals as evidenced by the 12 Columbia sides included here were strong, clear and expressive. His overall style is very similar to that of his brother's recognizable Atlanta pre-war sound. There is some good stuff here, especially in solo titles *My Wife Drove Me From My Door*, *Jealous Hearted Blues*, *Country Breakdown* and *Depot Blues*. To round things off there are two hot cuts by a mean mama vocalist by the name of Nellie Florence. Both *Jacksonville Blues* and *Midnight Weeping Blues* featuring unrelenting guitar backing by Charley or his brother Bob. Although some blues fans might label the work of Charley and Bob as lacking variety, I strongly recommend **Charley Lincoln (1927-30) (MSE 212)** as a thoroughly enjoyable and generally clean collection of expressive Atlanta blues.

Memphis Harmonica Kings 1929-30 (MSE 213) is aptly titled. Featured are 7 cuts by the highly influential **NOAH LEWIS** and 10 cuts by **NED DAVENPORT**. Most of the material is performed in a jugband setting. However, Lewis does 3 solo workouts. On the Noah Lewis Jug Band sides he is joined by Sleepy John Estes on guitar and Yank Rachell on mandolin, who certainly leave their stylistic imprint. Mrs. Van Hunt is featured on a 1930s rendition of her theme song

Selling The Jelly. Van Hunt's vocals coupled with Lewis' harp make this the high point of this set. From the Davenport sides come familiar titles like *Cow Cow Blues*, *I'm Sittin' On Top Of The World* (featuring a great vocal by Too Tight Henry Castle), *The Dirty Dozen*, and *How Long, How Long Blues*. The last cut finds Davenport blowing Carr's vocal part to this all time classic. The full throttle *Beale Street Breakdown* and the blues *You Ought To Move Out Of Town* help to reinforce the value of Davenport's contribution to this most enjoyable collection. Both these guys were first class, tasty blues harp players.

TEXAS ALEXANDER Vol 2 (1928-29) (MSE 214) carries on from where Vol. 1 left off. Alexander's vocals receive backing from guitarists Lonnie Johnson and Eddie Lang - both solo and as a duet. Johnson was so fluid and at ease on these 1928 cuts. *Boe Hog Blues*, *Blue Devil Blues*, and *Penitentiary Moan Blues* are phenomenal examples of deep Texas blues. To add some spice there are two cuts with trio backing from Clarence Williams, Lang and King Oliver. Oliver's clarinet provides a good response to Alexander's low down vocals. A further variation is added with solo country guitar backing from Little Hat Jones (in the Lil' Son Jackson vein). This collection weighs in at 6 stars out of 5. A real must.

Also from Texas is **RAMBLIN' THOMAS, 1928-32 (MSE 215)**. Willard "Ramblin'" Thomas was a somewhat mysterious Texas bluesman who concentrated much of his solo accompaniment on a haunting slide technique. He sang with a low down Texas moan, and was a clever lyricist focusing most of his alley themes on hard times and wandering. Real period stuff. With the exception of *So Lonesome* and *Lock And Key Blues*, all of the Paramounts presented here came out years ago (1969) on Biograph 12004 - "Chicago Blues". As a further bonus there are two clean 1932 Victor sides, *Ground Hog Blues* and *Shake It Gal*. Thomas' material certainly has a spacious, open Texas feel to it. Some may find too little variation to his formula, but real connoisseurs of blues poetry will find a wealth of clever, striking imagery. Instrumentally there are also beautiful moments. Listen to his playing on *Jig Head Blues* and *Hard Dallas Blues*.

Country Girls 1926-29 (MSE 216) serves up 18 sides from 6 pre-war women vocalists. The program starts with a low down *Kitchen Blues* recorded by Lillian Miller in 1929 with backing by pianist Hershale Thomas. She also turns in a vampish *You Just Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* with strong interactive backing by George Thomas on piano and Charlie Hill on guitar. Hattie Hudson and Gertrude Perkins are up next with 2 blues each. One Willie Tyson provides the piano backing for each vocalist. Hudson is particularly good on *Black Hand Blues*. Perkins is a particularly strong vocalist who seems to have little or no trouble with sustained high notes. Pearl Dickson turns in a pair of gems with some great guitar duet work from the Harney Brothers. Catch some of the instrumental moments on *Little Rock Blues*. Gospel singer Laura Henton contributes 6 gospel titles from 1928/29. The 1929 sides come from Kansas City with backing from Bennie Moten on piano

and Eddie Durham on guitar. Bobbie Cadillac's *Carbolic Acid Blues* closes the program out in a serious low down mood.

RUFUS AND BEN QUILLIAN 1929-31 (MSE 217) takes us abruptly back to the double entendre world of hokum. The Quillians were a pair of house party hokum entertainers from the Atlanta area. Spiritually they were linked to the early hokum of Georgia Tom and Tampa Red. Their sound centred on their vocal duet and sometimes trio harmonies with guitarist James McCrary over guitar and piano. The guitar throughout has a nice Tampa Red ring to it. I must confess that I cannot get as excited over titles like *Jerking The Load* and *Work It Slow* as I can over the real blues poetry on the Texas Alexander or Ramblin' Thomas reissues mentioned above.

Now on to an LP I really like. **Harmonica Showcase (MSE 218)** does measure up to its title. Included are 11 solo instrumental pieces recorded in 1927 and 1928 by one of the all time great harp blowers, **DeFORD BAILEY**. Generally these Brunswick and Victor sides come from good 78 stock offering a clean sampling of Bailey's superb playing. Listen to his *Pan American Blues*, *Dixie Flyer Blues* (he loved train rhythms), or *Up The Country*. Even his *Fox Chase* is considerate of the limitations of my urbane ears. *John Henry* offers appeal to the popular element, while the durable *Cow Cow Blues* sneaks in under the guise of *Davidson County Blues*. Bailey certainly came by his title "The Harmonica Wizard" honestly.

In addition there are 5 cuts by hillbilly harp player D.H. Bert Bilbro. Bilbro performs as a solo and with a string band, and, as with Bailey, loved trains - *C & N.W. Blues* and *Mohana Blues*. His two string band sides have a blackface minstrel and hillbilly flavour. If you like country harp, Bilbro will also have an appeal.

Now we move back to some serious Texas blues from one of the pillars of prewar blues. **BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON 1926-27: The Remaining Titles (MSE 1001)** was planned to serve as a complement to 3 earlier Roots and a Collector's Classic reissues in bringing all Jefferson's recordings to light. As I have yet to avail myself of the Yazoo double LP of Jefferson material, I cannot comment on duplication there. Included are Jefferson's first blues recordings, *Got The Blues* and *Long Lonesome Road*. Also included is a fresh, clean Okeh version of the Texas classic *Matchbox Blues*. The program expands to include a dance ditty more from a songster tradition, *Hot Dog*, and a spiritual, *He Arose From The Dead*. The serious focus of Jefferson's blues poetry comes out strong in *Hangman's Blues* and *Empty Home Blues*. It certainly is sad that Jefferson did the vast majority of his work for Paramount.

FRANK STOKES was a good-time player. His guitar work had a solid ragtime feel to it. **Frank Stokes 1927-29 (MSE 1002)** provides 20 cuts to serve as a complement to Yazoo 1056 and Biograph BLP-12041. Mind you there is some duplication with some material presented on a couple of Yazoo anthologies. Stokes is formatted as a solo performer and as a duet with Will Batts on violin and Dan Sane on second guitar. Two good solo sides include *It Won't Be Long Now* and *I Got Mine*. Two

particularly good pairings with Batts are *Right Now Blues* and *Shiney Town Blues* (clean reproduction). A good Stokes/Sane workout is found on *T'Ain't Nobody's Business But Mine - Part 2*.

BLIND BLAKE 1926-29 (MSE 1003) was put out to serve as a complement to 4 Biographs and one Whoopie reissue. Again, we find some duplication with some Yazoo efforts. In particular, 5 of the 18 Matchbox sides appear on Blind Blake's double LP release (Yazoo 1068). On this Matchbox collection the focus is on Blake as a featured artist and not as a sideman. Eleven feature Blake as a solo guitarist and vocalist. Tour de force instrumental workouts like *Guitar Chimes* and *Blind Arthur's Breakdown* are traded off with *Detroit Bound Blues*, *Back Door Slam Blues*, and *You Gonna Quit Me Blues*. Then there is the usual as in *Doggin Me Mama Blues* and *Southbound Rag* with Jimmy Bertrand on xylophone. Clarinetist Johnny Dodds joins in on the latter plus *C.C. Pill Blues* and *Hot Potatoes* on which Bertrand blows a slide whistle. As an accompanist, Blake backs vocalist Bertha Henderson on *That Lonesome Rave* and *Terrible Murder Blues*. Blake was one hell of a Piedmont blues guitarist. Sound quality is clean for Paramounts.

Another great and surprisingly overlooked pre-war guitarist was **BILL BROONZY**. His superb, hardcore pre-war blues is often overshadowed by his folksy image. Broonzy was a fluid, urbane picker. **Big Bill Broonzy 1927-32 (MSE 1004)** offers some real rarities. Matchbox claims that 15 of the 16 cuts have never been out on LP. The program starts with a 1927 *House Rent Stomp* (Broonzy's second session), and works up to some ensemble sides from 1932 including *M and O Blues* and *Rukus Juice Blues*. In between there is some great solo work on *Police Station Blues*, *Too Too Train*, and *Mistreatin' Mama Blues*. He is joined by Georgia Tom for some guitar/piano duets and by guitarists John Thomas, Frank Brasswell and Bill Williams for some guitar duet workouts. Actually Bill Williams has the vocals on *Mr. Conductor Man* and *No Good Buddy*. There is some light hokum, some rag inspired workouts, and plenty of blues to showcase Broonzy as a pre-war blues pillar.

Mississippi Sheiks 1930 (Vol. 1) (MSE 1005) presents 18 cuts of which 14 are claimed to have never appeared on LP before this very release. For these sessions the Sheiks basically consisted of Walter Vinson (guitar), Bo Carter (violin), Sam Chatmon (guitar), and Lonnie Chatmon (violin). Understandably there is a string of double entendre ditties and dance tunes. But there is a good dose of blues ranging from the Tommy Johnson inspired *Stop and Listen* to *Wintertime Blues* and *River Bottom Blues*. Depression themes are considered in *Times Done Got Hard* and *West Jackson Blues*. The Mississippi Sheiks tend to be my favourite string band. Instrumentation was kept simple and purposeful. Just check out the guitar/violin interplay when they "step on it" in *We Are Both Feeling Good Right Now*. Every blues collection needs a good Sheiks compilation like this one.

For a full catalog write Matchbox Records, The Barton, Inglestone Common, Badmington, Glos. GL9 1BX, England. — **Doug Langille**

CONVERSATION WITH KENNY BURRELL

Kenneth Earl "Kenny" Burrell (b. 7-31-31 in Detroit, Michigan) is a guitarist, a composer and a leader of small groups. His identification, with the bop movement, the Blue Note cadre, and with a concert program that is a tribute to Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington has led him into great prominence in jazz.

Burrell received a bachelor's degree in music from Wayne State University in 1955. The type of jazz environment established in Detroit in the 1950s produced a wave of, what would now be categorized as, jazz giants. Most of these musicians migrated to New York in that period and quickly became established in the jazz network.

The musical activity of Kenny Burrell, to date, includes studio work, small group and larger unit experiences, the Broadway pit orchestra scene, recordings on which he plays both plectrum and classical guitars, concertizing where all of the selections come from the pen of Duke Ellington, teaching a course in Ellingtonia at the University of California at Los Angeles, and an appearance with the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra. The musical career of Kenny Burrell is truly a varied and eclectic one.

On April 18, 1985, Kenny Burrell gave a concert, "Ellington Is Forever", at Moorhead State University (Minnesota). His group included such jazz stalwarts as Al Aarons, Buster Cooper, Sherman Ferguson, John Heard, Llew Mathews, and Jerome Richardson. Mr. Burrell granted the interview for the public radio station, KDSU (North Dakota State University, Fargo), to be aired on a weekly program, "Condell's Corner".

JAMES F. CONDELL — *I know that you have done a lot of talking about where you are going, who you are, and other kinds of things. Detroit has done so much for jazz, in terms of the kinds of musicians who come from there. What did that mean to you when you were growing up? Were you aware that Detroit was that kind of Mecca for the development of great jazz musicians?*

KENNY BURRELL — Not really in terms of comparing it with other cities. I was there, in the pocket of Detroit, and I had not traveled. We are talking about my teens now — in the development years. I had not traveled to other parts of the country, so I really was not in a position to compare it as to its importance in relation to how many musicians were coming up or about to come up. Later on, I began to realize, after I moved to New York, that I was able to see and compare Detroit with other cities for output and product. Just being there in that young group, and they are pretty well known by now.

Growing up with all the musicians that came out of Detroit, in the fifties, and early sixties, and a part of the forties, what I do realize, and what we all realize, just by way of our seriousness and our involvement in playing, was that we were right on top of everything that was developing. We felt that we were approaching a level of performance that compared with our heroes. The general level of our musicianship was rising and we felt competent enough to go to New York and become a part of that scene. Much of this was further enhanced through our relationship with the many musicians who

would come through Detroit, sit in with us, and stayed around. I can just think back to some of the bands and persons who came through — Charlie Parker, for instance, Miles Davis, Roland Kirk, Clifford Brown, Harold Land, Max Roach, Art Blakey, and all the groups that he had, came there, and we would end up in jam sessions with these guys. It was not a competitive situation. The outsiders felt that we were good enough for them to seek us out after their gigs and sit in with us. We exchanged compliments and all of that boosted our confidence.

A few of the musicians even stayed in Detroit, for a while. Miles remained. Sonny Stitt, Frank Foster, and all, were Detroiters for a brief period of time. Being with these people, exchanging ideas, and receiving their compliments, all seemed to give us a sense of worth and a feeling that we were on the right track. When we went to New York we felt ready to compete on their level, due to the kind of exposure to others, outside of Detroit, who had national names, and also because we had something almost like a university system going amongst us. We had a great workshop. We would jam a lot. We would exchange records, ideas, and music. It was a deep love and a real set of dreams about achieving this goal.

I understand how pianists, drummers, bass players and horn players can move into this realm, if they have that much talent, but in that period the guitar was not a household word in jazz except for a few stars. Did you recognize some unusual gifts then, or did people see something different in you? I am wondering how you emerged from the pack. You are the rare one for your time.

I would say that I did not think so much in terms of the instrument itself, and I believe that the other musicians did not either. Certainly, you had to use your particular instrument to get this music out. We were thinking in terms of the advancement of music, and however you applied it to your music worked.

In other words, as you say, the guitar was rare. Well, I didn't like a lot of guitar players either. To me, the level was not up to the other instruments. To put it simply, I was as much influenced by Charlie Parker as I was by Charlie Christian, or even more so. Not to have anything against Charlie Christian, because he was a strong influence on me, but I was concerned with music *period*, and not just with music played on the guitar. So I had influences all over the place — Bud Powell, Art Tatum, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. All of these people influenced me in the playing of my music. It just so happened that I was a guitarist. But the same thing applied to the other instruments.

In addition to this university of the club, so to speak, you did have the advantage of a university education.

Yes, I did have a formal education at Wayne

State University.

Do you relate those two or were these separate worlds?

Basically, I think that they were two separate worlds, especially in the early fifties. You know, as an educator, that we have come quite a way and we have a long way to go to treat the educations of our American music properly in academia. It was not treated properly back then. It was separate. Basically, we were studying European music. Very little was taught about jazz. The connection with jazz occurred when a few students and I would give jam sessions in the student center. We would do that maybe twice a week. This was because we thought we wanted to do it, and also we thought, well, let's bring some jazz on this campus. The students loved it. The instructors did not want anything to do with it. Like I say, we have come a long way, and we have a long way to go.

I remember a couple of times, in studying music, and I am not putting this particular school down, it is just that I know now, upon looking back — and this applies to many universities — that the subject of jazz is almost taboo. A few of us, the young ones, would try to bring up the subject, and it was not recognized, not treated well and we almost got into trouble trying to force the issue. Part of that was done from ignorance. The educators did not, at that time, know much about jazz, and it was not something in the design of the course, and I can understand their position. However, there were some other instructors who, I feel, were very important to me and my development, who really admitted that they knew very little about jazz, and who went so far as to even ask me to substitute and become a guest lecturer in their courses, once or twice during the semester, so that they could further learn about American music, knowing that I was involved in this development called jazz. I even got paid to do a couple of lectures. Unfortunately, this was not in the Department of Music. It was in the Humanities Department. I bring that up to say that it gave me an insight. It gave me some confidence that there was hope. It has helped me to further what I am doing.

There was a problem between the formal education process, and what we called our workshops. There was a problem where jazz was concerned. As you know that is a problem that has yet to be solved properly. I can only say that I am glad that it is being solved. Evidence is right here today. Here you are, a university professor, who is really concerned with jazz.

And here you are performing on a university campus.

Right! So things are improving.

We have a program on our station — Jazz at the Institute, from the Detroit Institute of Art — from which we hear a lot of local jazz musicians and some who return. Where do you think

Detroit is in jazz now, compared to when you were working all of your changes? Does a Kenny Burrell in Detroit have the same opportunity you had to learn jazz?

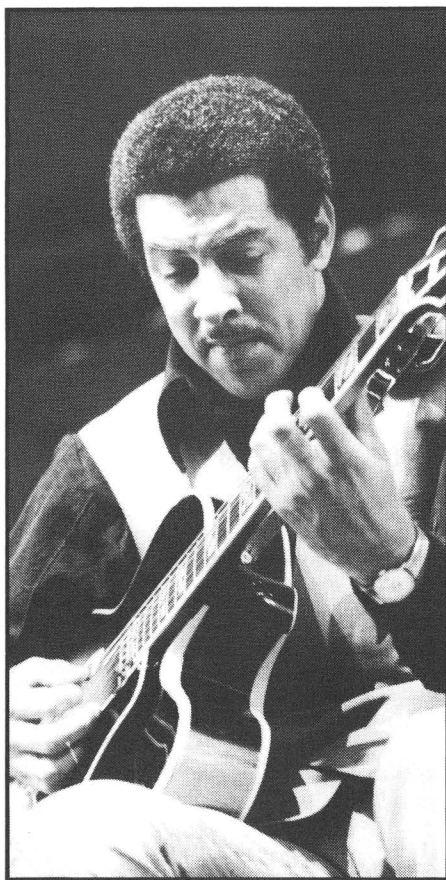
I would say yes — the opportunities are there. I see that the audience is still there. I do not know if there are that many musicians coming up in jazz like those who came up when I did. But, on the other hand, I am not sure for I have not lived there. When we came up in the 1950s that was kind of a rare era also. A lot more youngsters are playing jazz. So, it is not too unique anymore to have one group come from one city. It may be a little more difficult, just in terms of making it on the overall scene, for a young musician because there are so many more musicians. It may be easier in the first stages of learning the music; getting things accessible to you. There are many more tools available now. More music, more records, more equipment, but as far as making it on the national scene as a jazz star or a well known performer, I feel that it is probably more difficult, because there are more musicians out here doing it.

You moved from Detroit to New York, and I gather that you had a long period in the studios and the theater. Was that a formative stage or was that an end result? That is, when you moved into the studio, was that something you were passing through to get to where you are now as a leader, or did you think that was it? Was that where you were going to stay in the period?

That is a very good question. In order to answer that, I have to tell you where my head is, or was. Moving into the studios was part of what I felt would be success as a musician, and I had prepared myself.

I worked hard to learn how to sight read and to learn the different styles of playing the guitar; while becoming as flexible and adaptable as possible. Again, back to your earlier point, there were not a lot of guitarists around in New York who could play jazz, as well as the blues, and also read. I fell into a good situation for I could play the blues. That was a part of my background and heritage. I went to New York and was playing clubs and jam sessions. I began to get a few calls to come to do some studio jobs. I did and I enjoyed it, but I had an advantage in that I could read. A lot of the guitarists, for some reason which I do not know, and I have not analyzed it yet, were slow readers in general. But I had tried to get as prepared as possible, so that worked for me. Then, when people found out that I could read, I got a lot more work as a studio musician. In fact, I got so much work that I became too busy for my own well being. I began to feel as if I were slipping behind in achieving my musical goals. I felt that I was doing fine, making a lot of money, and was successful as a craftsman; as one who could adapt to many things in the studio. As a performer I felt myself slowing up in developing my career as a performer. I became kind of frustrated. I thought about how to make a better balance of all of this and eliminate some of the studio work and get more into building a career on my own style and sound — performing as a leader — projecting my own personal idea of music.

Finally one day I got a call from Elliot Lawrence, a Broadway conductor. He wanted me to do one of the Broadway shows. At first



it did not sound very attractive. Then I thought that here was an opportunity for me to have steady hours each week, steady income, lots of time to practice, think, sleep and eat on a regular basis. A studio musician, many times, works from six to nine hours a day and, sometimes, jobs at night. It is not set. Each week is different. Your schedule is kind of messed up. It is hard to put in regular practice hours. I took the offer on the basis that it would give me a kind of personal workshop period. I took that first show, which was called "Bye Bye Birdie". I stayed for a year and a half. I took a second show with Elliot Lawrence, called "How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying". I stayed, altogether, about two and half or three years.

Elliot knew that I was a jazz musician. He had other jazz musicians in the pit band, and would allow us to take off whenever we wanted. At one time he had a jazz band. He understood how it was and what we liked to do. He said that whenever we wanted to take off, to just send a good substitute. During the course of that three years I put in some hard practice, hard preparations, hard thinking, a lot of reading, and a lot of composing, in order to try to determine a direction for improving my improvisational skills.

Then an opportunity came in 1963 to make a special album, and I was ready. I had a good concept, I thought, for the album. I wrote all the music. I got a concept for the instrumentation and I felt that I had really come up with something that spoke of musical thoughts precisely. I went so far as to even design the cover. That was how intense I was about it. It was

because I had time to prepare for it. The album was called "Midnight Blue". It came out in 1963. It opened the door for me as a band leader. It sold very well.

Before that I had been recognized as a jazz musician but, in general, people were not buying records. There were no hot sales. This album took off in sales. I could now go to a club in Rochester, Detroit or Chicago and people would pay money to come see me — Kenny Burrell's Band or Kenny Burrell and his Quartet. This was a first step for me to become a performer. I felt that the work and the time that I put in was worth it. Up to that time I was not in the position to demand anything as a performer. I was a studio musician and popular within that. I did a lot of jazz records and lots more popular records than most people realize. I backed up many persons in the studio — pop sessions, blues sessions, and some rock sessions. I was not satisfied, so I had to find a way to get out of that. Not that anything was wrong in particular, but I was not fulfilling my dreams. I guess that is the story of how it began for me as a performer, and as a band leader.

You are into Ellington Is Forever. This is your concert theme. You also teach a class on Ellington. How far are you going into the whole perpetuation of the Ellington music, and the Ellington life? What is going to be your role in keeping Ellington in the forefront?

Well, I don't think that my job is too difficult! Like any good piece of artwork, like any great art, it will be forever. As long as we have music, we will have Ellington, or Ellingtonia, which will involve the music of Strayhorn and all of the people who collaborated with Duke.

Initially, when we did the first album, "Ellington Is Forever", I felt so strongly that this master — the grand master of the 20th century music — had passed, that I must do something with my two cents worth, so I could say here's our contribution. I called up Jerome Richardson, who is with us tonight, Jimmy Jones, Jimmy Smith, Jon Faddis, Ernie Andrews, Thad Jones, Joe Henderson, Snooky Young, Stanley Gilbert, Jimmie Smith, Mel Lewis, Richie Goldberg, and some other musicians in and around the west coast at the time. This was in 1975. Duke died in 1974, as you know. We wanted to make a tribute and to show how we felt and displayed our love for Ellington and his music. We did that. We still feel the same way.

But given what has happened since Duke's death, I don't think that my job is too difficult, and I think that there are many other persons around who feel that it is important that, simply, the truth should be known about Duke Ellington.

Basically, that is all I am doing when I teach the course. I try to explain to the students what he did and analyze, to some extent, the music, and let them understand the depth of the materials — to get into some of the philosophy by which he lived and produced his music. The truth speaks for itself. I think that more and more people are beginning to realize the genius of this man.

What else can I say? It will be forever.

James F. Condell is a professor of psychology at Moorhead State University in Minnesota, where he teaches Psychology and the Arts and Afro-American Music. He is working on a biography of Justin Holland.

BOOK NOTES

A REGULAR COLUMN BY PUBLISHER JOHN NORRIS REVIEWING A VARIETY OF SPECIALTY BOOKS

A revised and updated second edition of **Monk On Records** has been published. The discography was compiled by Leen Biji and Fred Cante and is available from The Golden Age Records, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 51-53, 1012RD Amsterdam, Holland at a cost of Hfl 30, — plus postage. The sticker on the cover announces 80 new performances as being listed — most of these are live sessions now available. The major updating is the addition of tune times and the many more issues of Monk's recordings. Even with all this there is an addenda page at the end of the book. Also missing, for some reason, is the session where Monk recorded a solo version of *Round Midnight* which was on Columbia CS9775 "Greatest Hits". Presumably this was an oversight.

They also point out that the first pressing of the Miles Davis Chronicle Box set on Prestige contained a duplicate of the first take of *Lover Man*. Later pressings corrected this and a replacement disc is still available from the company. The additional information and corrections make this a valuable updating of the original edition.

Adrian Ingram's book on **Wes Montgomery** (Ashley Mark Publishing Co., Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead NE8 3AJ, UK, £7.95) is the first major work about the influential guitarist. It includes a biography, an assessment of his recordings, a discographical listing and an analysis of his style. The book is visually most attractive with the high quality of the printing and the many excellent photographs enhancing the overall impact. However, it soon becomes apparent that the information for the book has been obtained almost exclusively from second hand sources (newspapers and magazines) and the opinions offered on the constantly recurring theme of Wes' struggle between artistry and growing commercial success seem as much conjecture as fact. At the very least, it seems to me, the author should have been able to interview the guitarist's wife as well as musicians who worked and traveled with him. The discography does not follow the standard layout methods but is clearly laid out. A major error in the discography concerns the Fantasy recording of "The Montgomery Brothers in Canada". Despite what Jepson says and what is repeated in this book the music was not recorded in Toronto. The Milestone reissue of some of these titles states that it was recorded in The Cellar Club in Vancouver in the

spring of 1961. More minor, perhaps, is the omission of the original Japanese issue of the Paris Quartet date which later appeared on Affinity. The Japanese issue was on BYG YX 4016-17. The US release number of the Small Group Recordings two-lp set on Verve was VE2-2513. Also incorrect is the statement (p. 23) that Fantasy was a subsidiary of Riverside. They were separate companies in the 1950s. Much later, in the 1970s, Fantasy acquired the Riverside catalog.

This Is Jazz by Jack Litchfield is a discographical listing of the thirty-five 30 minute radio broadcasts heard over the Mutual Network in 1947. A small portion of the music from these programs has been available, in one form or another, since the early 1950s. The most recent releases have been on Jazzology — who control the rights to Rudi Blesh's material. Blesh was producer and announcer for the series which, each week, painted a musical picture of America which was already, by then, fading into the distance. The music was exceptional and featured basically the same band for its duration. Muggsy Spanier (or Wild Bill Davison), Albert Nicholas (or Edmond Hall), George Brunis (or Jimmy Archey), Ralph Sutton, Danny Barker, Pops Foster and Baby Dodds were there most of the time. Sidney Bechet was the most frequent guest. Others included James P. Johnson, Louis Armstrong, Leadbelly and Chippie Hill. Kid Ory and Lu Waters were the West Coast bands who each had a guest slot when the program originated from California for two weeks. All soloists are identified and all issued records are cited. Following the discographical listing there are notes on all the broadcasts by the author who managed to hear twenty of them when they were first broadcast in Canada by the CBC. This listing was published originally in Matrix Magazine. Since then Jack Litchfield has not only heard all but one of the shows on tape but has also accumulated all the necessary data to complete this listing. **This Is Jazz** was an unique series. Rehearsal time the day prior to the show ensured that each week's program was organised, well paced and high in musical quality. The book is available from Oak Lawn Books, Box 2663, Providence, R.I. 02907 for \$13.45 including postage and insurance.

The King Labels: A Discography is the most recent of Michel Ruppli's comprehensive documentations of major labels producing jazz and other associated forms

of black popular music. The discography comes in two volumes and there are 900 pages of listings and indices. This discography, like Ruppli's previous listings of the Chess, Savoy, Atlantic and Prestige labels, is published by Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, Ct. 06881 and retails for \$95.00. King Records, based in Cincinnati, was started in 1945 by Syd Nathan to record country music. This was soon expanded to include other forms of indigenous community music and remained the basic philosophy of the company for the next fifteen years. During that period the company enjoyed increasing success recording such artists as Wynonie Harris, Lonnie Johnson, Earl Bostic, Bull Moose Jackson and Tiny Bradshaw. They hit the jackpot with James Brown but it also brought to an end their innovative drive and the company was eventually sold to Starday Records.

The discography lists recordings in master number sequence and three different series separates the country, rhythm 'n' blues and popular sessions until around 1960 when they became merged in a general master series. King, like other companies of the time, absorbed other labels and the original source of these sessions is clearly indicated. King recorded little jazz music even though it employed jazz musicians on many of its sessions. Buried in the listing are unissued sessions by Hot Lips Page, Sir Charles Thompson, Al Sears (with Johnny Hodges) and Herman Chittison.

The second volume lists recordings on the DeLuxe, Federal and Bethlehem labels (all of which were purchased by King) as well as listings of various small group labels distributed by King. There's a numerical listing of 78, 45 and lp releases including foreign issues. An artist index completes the documentation.

The major strength of King Records was their ability to record and distribute music which reflected the tastes of newly urbanized Americans who remembered their roots. Country, rhythm 'n' blues and gospel were the core of the label's economic strength. Jazz recordings seem to have been an accidental aside and even after Bethlehem was acquired they rarely initiated further sessions.

King was a major company and this is a comprehensive reference source.

James Son Thomas is a catalog published by University Art Gallery, New Mexico State University, La Cruces, N.M.

88003 at the time of its exhibit, in 1985, of thirty clay sculptures (heads, skulls, animals) by the Mississippi artist who is also noted for his talents as a blues singer/guitarist. The catalog includes two lengthy essays: the first, by William Ferris, gives a detailed insight into Thomas' life, his artistic conception and what motivated him in the creation of his distinctive, yet self-taught sculpture. The second essay, by Maude Southwell Wahlman, traces the "Religious Symbols in the Art of James Ford Thomas" back to its African origins and how these have changed through Creolization in the Americas. Seven black and white photographs hint at the quality of the originals — all of which are hand painted in bright and distinctive colours. Copies of this catalogue should still be available from the gallery as its publication was designed to allow those "unable to view the exhibit to become more familiar with his (Thomas') artwork and life".

For more than fifteen years Dick and Erik Bakker have been offering an invaluable service to collectors. **Micrography** is an irregularly published magazine which has now reached 68 issues. It consists of listings of lps currently available on a worldwide basis. What makes these invaluable is the research provided into previous incarnations of the tunes on other lps. Each issue usually contains detailed listings of a particular artist's activities with cross references to various lp issues of the material.

Micrography's success led to the publication of individual discographies. Notable among these was the four volumes on Charlie Parker and the Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday/Teddy Wilson microgroove listings. In the past year a steady flow of new volumes has appeared — all catering to the needs of the jazz enthusiast. Part two of Jean-Francois Villetard's **Coleman Hawkins Discography** covers the years 1945-1957. It sorts out the many location recordings which have found their way onto record and all the various microgroove issues of Hawkins' sessions are detailed. **Dizzy Gillespie: Volume 1 1937-1953** by Piet Koster and Chris Sellers includes all microgroove issues as well as the original 78 release numbers — something which is omitted from many of these discographies. **Where's The Music: The Discography of Kai Winding** by Piet Van Engelen is a two volume effort chronicling the trombonist's recordings. **Man Of Many Parts** is a discography of Buddy Collette by Coen Hofman. There is an extended interview with the artist as well as detailed listings of all his recordings. In addition there is a separate volume of his compositions pub-



lished under the title **The Buddy Collette Songbook**. Tony Middleton's **Vic Lewis Discography** is a detailed account of the English bandleader's recordings. They began in the 1930s with small group swing sessions with Lewis on guitar to the post-war Kenton styled efforts.

All the above mentioned discographies, except for the Dizzy Gillespie, have photographs as well as other illustrations.

Names & Numbers is a new magazine published by Dicrography which addresses discographical matters not within the range of the parent publication. It is much more than listings of issued records and it is the publication's intention to provide a forum for discussion and opinion as well as publishing discographical listings covering the entire jazz field.

All these publications are available from The Golden Age Records, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 51-53 NL-1012 RD Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Vocal Groups in Modern Jazz 'Vocalese' contains biographical information, record listings and additional information on artists who fall into the broad category of "jazz vocalese". It begins with the Mills Brothers, the Boswell Sisters and the Golden Gate Quartet and continues

through such diverse artists as Jackie & Roy, Mel Torme, King Pleasure, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, The Double Six, Eddie Jefferson, The Pointer Sisters, Manhattan Transfer and Bobby McFerrin. The 300 page, soft cover book is clearly laid out and well printed. It is available from Vladimiro Lupi (the author), Corso Porta Reno 36, 44100 Ferrara, Italy for US \$25.00 postpaid.

Many books devoted to jazz photography have been published in the last decade but few have the dramatic impact of Herman Leonard's **L'Oeil du Jazz** published by Filipacchi in France. There are close to 150 pages of exquisitely printed photographs of the major musicians of the day. Leonard managed to capture the intensity of the music through the starkness of his lighting, the dramatic nature of his shots and his empathy with the subject matter. This collection contains well known photographs which have appeared on album covers as well as lesser known ones which appeared in the pages of various magazines. It is an essential acquisition for anyone interested in jazz photography. A good source for this book is Pierre Voran, Pan Musique, 35 Rue de France, Nice, France.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

OTTAWA WRITER DAVID LEWIS REVIEWS RECORDINGS ISSUED BY INDEPENDENT COMPANIES

BORBETOMAGUS & FRIENDS / BORBETO JAM / CADENCE JAZZ RECORDS CJR 1026

Concordat No. 12 / No. 13 / No. 14 / No. 15

HOWLAND ENSEMBLE / THE HOWLAND ENSEMBLE / HOWLAND RECORDS 1

Bedouin Song / Blues For Jan / Roses For Reinhardt / Riddle Witch / Above The Fold / Princiotto 1st Of 8 / The Book Of Answers

PETER KING / NEW BEGINNING / SPOTLITE SPJ 520

Blues For S.J. / Fourth Emergence / Before The Dawn / Dolphin Dance / New Beginning / Dream Dancing / Three Blind Mice / Gingerbread Boy / Confirmation

PETER KING / EAST 34th STREET / SPOTLITE SPJ 624

Reverse Thrust / East 34th Street / 3/4 Peace / Evans' Song / Solitaire / Warm Breeze

PETER KING / 90% OF 1% / SPOTLITE SPJ 529

Old Folks / 3/4 Peace / Eye Of The Hurricane / Gingerbread Boy

MICROSCOPIC SEPTET / TAKE THE Z TRAIN / PRESS RECORDS P4003

Chinese Twilight Zone / Wishful Thinking / Take The Z Train / Mr Bradley - Mr Martin / Pack The Ermines Mary / I Didn't Do It / A Strange Thought Entered My Head

MICROSCOPIC SEPTET / LET'S FLIP / OSMOSIS 6003

The Lobster Parade / Second Avenue / Why Not? / Let's Flip / Lazlo's Lament / Boo Boo Coming / Johnny Come Lately

BILLY PIERCE / WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR / SUNNYSIDE SSC 1013

Blue Nostalgia / Pannonica / Color Blind / Over The Edge / William The Conqueror / Sudan Blue / We'll Be Together / Nature Folksong

SPIKE ROBINSON QUINTET / IT'S A WONDERFUL WORLD / CAPRI RECORDS 72185

Seems Like Old Times / Poor Butterfly / Have You Met Miss Jones / What Am I Here For / A Fine Romance / The Man I Love / The Touch Of Your Lips / Indian Summer / It's A Wonderful World

ALAN SIMON QUARTET / RAINSPASH / CADENCE JAZZ RECORDS CJR 1027

Rudy's Tail / Reflets Dans L'Eau-Lush Life / Scourin' / Rainsplash / Daydream / Speak Like A Child

PAUL SMOKER TRIO with ANTHONY BRAXTON* / QB / ALVAS RECORDS AR-101

Slip-Slot / Song For Andrew / Gemini-Scorpio / Saeta / Blue Jungles / Baps* / QB**

"... numerous young White musicians... come to New York every year and play so very well, play beautifully, and they out-number the young Black musicians like 98% to 2%. And they get no recognition at all by the critics, never get their names mentioned, never get a pat on the back. And the minute a young Black musician comes in, he's immediately written about... It is reverse discrimination... And they're angry about this; they feel *rejected*... Because it's becoming a White art form. The young blacks have turned their back on their own heritage. We don't see them anymore".

— Red Rodney, in an interview with Doug Long on 30/12/85 in Chicago, *Cadence*, Vo. 12, No. 12, December 1986, pp. 10-11.

Red Rodney is talking with honest concern straight from the heart. It's clear that he hasn't read *Downbeat* for years and I suspect that his percentages are wrong but they do emphasize a serious fact, one that John Norris has pointed out in reference to dying traditions: the stride piano tradition, for example, which threatens to become as defunct as ragtime, and this is a colossal loss to music, not just the jazz tradition. While hundreds of names can/could/should be recited to refute Red Rodney's observations, I think that that would be to deny the fact that the general thrust of what he has to say is an inaccurate reflection of current trends: "I'm just calling it like it is. Not like I want it to be". (ibid, p. 11) and as he goes on to say: "... I don't want to see it become what it's becoming — a white art music form. That's what it's becoming. And I don't want to see it become that way — I think we need all colors and all flavors". (ibid, p. 14)

Certainly what Red Rodney says is borne out by the evidence of this latest batch of records that I've received to review for *Coda*.

Ten of the eleven records are by white musicians (although one does feature a black artist as guest soloist) and, with the definite exception of Peter King who is a white master of a black music tradition, they all create a "white art music form" based on the black cultural expression which we call jazz. For it is clear that jazz is now perceived as a minority music for both black and white audiences — the great success of summer festivals notwithstanding — and it is marketed as such, when it is marketed at all.

At the outset of this project Bill Smith outlined the direction for this review with these words: "I mean, who are these people — they are not famous household names — yet they play good music". So Red Rodney and Bill Smith provide the context for what follows:

"Borbeto Jam" offers more freeform experimentation by Borbetomagus and friends from a session recorded in New York on October 18, 1981. The album "Industrial Strength" on Leo Records (LR 113) was the initial release from this session which features Toshinori Kondo (trumpet), Tristan Honsinger

(cello, voice), Peter Kowald (bass) and Milo Fine (piano, clarinet, drums, whistle) as well as the core trio of Borbetomagus: Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich (reeds) and Donald Miller (guitar). Certainly this is not jam for the mainstream palate. Don Dietrich asks "how much can you screw up an instrument and still play it?" As the provocative noises on this release prove, it's possible to screw up an instrument completely: an orientation designed to provoke outrage, scorn and incomprehension especially whenever Donald Miller scrapes his amplified guitar strings with various files and vibrators. His sounds bring eerie dissonance to *Concordat 13* while in *Concordat 15* he erupts into the free-form ensemble as though touring an adjacent studio on a dirt bike. Certainly Miller is the most audacious presence here as he engages an aesthetic of technical desecration. Believers in systematic anarchy should relish this, but it's not an album I'll go back to often.

In contrast "The Howland Ensemble" sound tame and sedate. This is a superior supper club act that is closer in spirit to the Modern Jazz

Quartet or Gary Burton than the radical experimentation posed by "Borbeto Jam". The Howland Ensemble are an example of contemporary white college jazz and their first album covers all the bases, from the moody *Bedouin Song* to the bright and snappy *Blues For Jan*, from the Latin feel of *Riddle Witch* to the funky *The Book Of Answers*. This commercial formula reveals the players' limited range in the most positive light.

Peter King provides the kind of verve, passion and individual expression that is lacking on the previous two albums. He is a master musician whose brand of contemporary bebop is a revelation, for here is the fire of that music with *no* commercial concessions. This brilliant English alto saxophone player led his first band at Ronnie Scott's in 1959, yet his first album session as a leader was not recorded until 1982. King has a distinctive tart tone and an exuberant rhythmic drive and on "New Beginning" he gives outstanding performances on *Before The Dawn*, the duet *New Beginning* with John Horler (piano) and Cole Porter's *Dream Dancing* which he transforms into an accelerating tour-de-force. Significantly these are all ballad performances that collectively display a convincing span of passions. *Before The Dawn* features him with his regular quartet: John Horler, Dave Green (bass) and Spike Wells (drums), and they are featured throughout King's second album, "East 34th Street", his definitive release to date. On six original numbers this regular working band really stretches out. King creates dazzling improvisations on *Reverse Thrust*, *Evans' Song* and the Latin exuberance of *Warm Breeze*, while the zest and buoyant interplay of the rhythm section reveals their masterful control of dynamics in the meditative ballad *3/4 Peace* by John Horler. *Solitaire* is another example of King's masterful ballad style (just listen to how he is inspired by Horler's excellent piano solo to produce a ravishing solo in conclusion). If I had to choose just one of these three Peter King albums, this would be my choice. His most recent album, the 1985 release "90% of 1 Percent", features his quartet live at University College, Oxford, joined by special guest Henry Lowther (trumpet). The addition of the trumpeter gives this performance the air of a loose pickup date. There is a leisurely flow to this music that is attractive although the final impression is diffuse. The relaxed airiness of Horler's *3/4 Peace* sounds pedestrian in comparison to the studio version. Yet Lowther does provide the ensemble with colour and solos well on *Eye Of The Hurricane*. King is brilliant throughout *Old Folks* and his impassioned solo on *Gingerbread Boy* is more intense and compelling than the briefer version on "New Beginning" (which featured another trumpet player Dick Pearce on flugelhorn). There is great music here and real integrity in its presentation. If Peter King's recording debut has been long overdue, it's been well worth the wait, for he is a major artist, no anachronism.

The Microscopic Septet should also become better known on the exhilarating evidence of their first two albums. *Chinese Twilight Zone* exhibits the zest, energetic spirits and fun which characterize the boisterous ensemble playing on *Take The Z Train*. This is great party music, from the vibrant *Wishful Thinking* to the highly stylised *Mr. Bradley / Mr. Martin*. The four saxophones of the front line take extended

solos on *I Didn't Do It*. Yet they are heard at their best on "Let's Flip", the live record. The exuberance of this band can be measured in the sure ways they explore the contradictions between the smooth precision polish of the ensemble arrangements and the rough, wild, adventurous abandon of their solo improvisations. They are most compelling on piano player Joel Forrester's driving *Second Avenue* and Phillip Johnson's *Let's Flip* and *Lazlo's Lament*. As a collective this group has the sort of spirit which allows them to surpass individual expectations.

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"William The Conqueror" is the debut session by Billy Pierce, a recent graduate of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, who produces solid, unpretentious music. Like other recent Blakey alumni — Wynton Marsalis, Donald Harrison and Terence Blanchard — Pierce's music is characterised by its conservative nature. There are no surprises here beyond the impressive competence of the musicians, and there is much that sounds predictable even though the vivacious hard bop of *Blue Nostalgia* and the relaxed swing of Monk's *Pannonica* are hard to fault. The trio setting of the title track is by far the best showcase for the tenor player. This is fiery improvisation that sustains a far greater drive without the piano. The second side of this record is superb and displays Pierce's authoritative voice in a fine interpretation of *We'll Be Together*, the pretty mid-tempo *Sudan Blue* and *Nature Folk Song* where Pierce develops a lyrical and inventive solo on soprano saxophone. Yet there is a dimension in the single trio performance that the quintet does not attain, despite many excellent moments. Food for

thought.

If you enjoy the mainstream cool lyricism of the Stan Getz/Zoot Sims (by way of Lester Young) style of tenor saxophone then Spike Robinson's good-natured romp with trombone player Roy Williams through nine standards could well be your idea of good jazz. Yet, what is fresh to some ears is dated and familiar to others. If I'd taken a blindfold test and listened to *Poor Butterfly* I would have said this was Stan Getz on a laconic day. More excellent supper music, lighthearted and refined. Sweet, inoffensive, generic jam.

"Rainsplash" by the Alan Simon Quartet is another mainstream date out of the Art Blakey hard bop tradition. This fine working band create intelligent, inventive, lyrical music especially on the originals *Rudy's Tail* and *Rainsplash* where Alan Simon reveals a mature musical intelligence. His delight in impressionistic flourishes is balanced by Ralph Lalama on tenor saxophone whose robust tone recalls Dexter Gordon. Lalama takes strong solos on Wayne Shorter's *Scourin'* and the lovely lilting interpretation of Billy Strayhorn's *Daydream*, the former Johnny Hodges vehicle. Once again this release underlines the essentially conservative nature of the music being packaged for consumption during this period.

This is not true of "QB", a recent release by the Paul Smoker trio recorded at Voxman Hall, Iowa, February 10 and 11, 1984. This is white college jazz of the freeform school. *Slip Shot* is a frantic workout, indicative of this trio's relentless energy level. The raw growl of Smoker's trumpet is well suited to the funky riff of the garrulous *Blue Jungles* by drummer Phil Haynes. One of the values of this release is the opportunity to hear Anthony Braxton stretch out and improvise on alto saxophone on three compositions that he did not write: *Baps* and *QB* are by Paul Smoker and *Saeta* is by Phil Haynes. *Baps* begins with Ron Rohovit's striding bass over cymbal flourishes before the memorable march theme. Braxton's presence makes a significant difference. He lets fly on *QB* the uptempo stop-go line with the sudden suspension where he and Smoker trade flurries of sound. There is mounting tension in the monotonous dirge of *Saeta* where Braxton adds sombre ensemble colour with the alto's low register which blends well with Smoker's rasping style. Overall this music produces more tension than release. Even so, this album is recommended on the strength of the second side, especially as the fiery version of *Blue Jungles* is the Paul Smoker Trio's most compelling recording to date.

What all these artists share in common is the fact that they are virtually unknown on the music scene even to the "jazz audience". In the case of a musician as marvellous as Peter King this is indicative of the sort of neglect which the jazz artist has to persevere against. For Peter King is a brilliant talent. Yet all of the records reviewed here are worthwhile, for while these reviews were written over six months of listening, and from no other perspective, I trust that they will serve as some small antidote to what Red Rodney identifies as the "reverse discrimination" of the jazz critics. That's an easy tendency to fall into. In the end there are only two kinds of music — as Duke Ellington would stress with eloquence and wisdom — there's either good music or bad music.

RALPH BOWEN • OUT OF THE BLUE

NUMBER SEVEN IN A SERIES OF CANADIAN ESSAY / INTERVIEWS BY PETER LAWSON



Where do good young Canadian musicians go to play jazz?

Probably New York would be the immediate answer, and that rite of passage still seems to be a most travelled path for young players. For Ralph Bowen, a good young Canadian, finds himself perched near those legendary streets which have bred many a fine musician. Currently living in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Ralph Bowen is a tenor saxophonist working hard towards a jazz future.

After having spent his youth in Acton, Ontario and his early jazz years in Toronto with a couple of bands (Manteca for two years and solo projects), Ralph Bowen headed south four years ago to pursue an education and practical experience in music.

His first stop was Indiana University where he engaged in a non-degree program for two years. The opportunity to study with Dave Baker was the attraction of Indiana University, but Bowen also acknowledges the tutelage of classical saxophonist Eugene Rousseau for developing a profound understanding of the instrument's technical boundaries.

After Indiana, he moved closer to New York because of his work with the group Out Of The Blue and to assume studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey. At present he is enrolled in his first year of a Bachelor of Music program and enjoys the flexibility and curriculum of this liberal arts college. Along with the required studies of the rudiments of

"classical" western music, an emphasis on jazz and the jazz player is most fulfilling for this young saxophonist.

When Ralph Bowen is not expanding his musical repertoire in school, he strives to fulfill his life's ambition, playing jazz. His talents have delivered him into the Blue Note family with the new band Out Of The Blue. Created through auditions in 1985, OTB is a project through which Blue Note hopes to develop a superstar group or superstar players for the music's future. After replacing two members (Kenny Garrett - now with Art Blakey and Robert Hurst - now with Wynton Marsalis), Bowen believes the latest team to be cohesive: Kenny Davis (bass), Steve Wilson (alto), Ralph Bowen (tenor), Ralph Peterson (drums), Michael Philip Mossman (trumpet) and Harry Pickens (piano). Already armed with two records, "Out of the Blue" (BT 85118) and "Inside Track" (as yet unreleased in Canada), OTB will propel themselves into the future, though they certainly cannot be confined by the view of a band waiting to happen; their brief past certainly has merits.

During the 3-day Mount Fuji Jazz Festival in August of 1986, Out Of The Blue shared the billing with former and current Blue Note artists such as Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Shaw and Art Blakey. OTB has success in the Japanese musical charts, finding their records selling on the same charts as Grace Jones and others. The second record, "Inside Track", outsold the first

release, OTB, which has sold over thirty thousand copies.

Upon returning to the States, Ralph Bowen began his first semester at Rutgers where he has not simply pined away behind books. For two weeks in November of 1986, he toured Europe with Michel Camilo's Latin Sextet. Their musical journal took them through Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

At present he is fascinated with ethnic, African and Latin rhythms, tuning his ear to rhythm sections, especially the percussion instruments, and hopes to apply those newly inspired motifs to his own playing. By studying "classical" harmonies, he wishes to enhance his inner ear which now guides his sense of cohesion. Musicians like Lester Young, Sonny Rollins, and Joe Henderson have implanted in him this musical vision.

During a sizzling evening of jazz at Philip's Restaurant in London Ontario, with friends Steve Wallace on bass and Keith Blackley on drums, he spoke of a forthcoming recording session with OTB, and of anticipation for the summer jazz festivals. He sports a positive attitude towards his music and views every project as a means of getting a foot in the door. Simply stated, "Hello, I am Ralph Bowen, and I am available. Let's play."

Ralph Bowen can be contacted at 101 Memorial Park Way, Apt. 4A, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901 USA.

MIKE NOCK • JAZZ DOWN UNDER

THE NEW ZEALAND PIANIST IN CONVERSATION WITH BILL SMITH AT THE EDMONTON FESTIVAL

BILL SMITH: *People don't think of New Zealand as a jazz country, so I'd be curious to find out how people become involved in jazz in New Zealand.*

MIKE NOCK: Actually, New Zealand is part of the region they call Australasia which includes Australia, which is much bigger. It has a population base of about sixteen million as opposed to New Zealand's three million. But New Zealand has always had the reputation of supplying a very high percentage of the best musicians to Australia. There are a lot of New Zealanders who do really well overseas in all the arts, and the sciences. It's an interesting country from this perspective. Along with this, there has always been a real healthy interest in the arts generally, I mean on a street level as well as a supportive level. But on a street level there have always been a lot of garage bands, people just playing music, everyone's a guitar player or a pianist or writes music, it's like that. It's a do-it-yourself country. When I grew up there was no television, we were late getting T.V. down there. Because of its isolation people are forced into doing it themselves.

B.S.: *Just recently there's been a film from New Zealand which is making quite an impact on the world, so perhaps it also has a late-developing film industry. Is the playing environment of New Zealand a healthy one for you, and for generations to come?*

M.N.: Not really. I played a festival in New Zealand about a month ago. It was a jazz and blues festival. As everywhere else in the world, jazz is going through hard times at the moment, except for a favoured few. Well, at this festival they had nothing but local bands. Music from two bands at once a lot of the time, for three days starting at two in the afternoon until twelve at night. The place was sold out; number one, that's the kind of attendance they got. There must have been 1500 people a day there. It was privately sponsored. The music was great, the camaraderie and the whole support was fantastic. It felt like being in New York. Because you see, just like New Zealanders going overseas, there are a lot of people living in New Zealand who have had overseas experience. I don't live there, I live in Sydney, but there were a lot of New Zealanders who lived in England for a while who have all gone back. And there are a lot of English musicians who have immigrated, and there is such a wide interest in all sorts of music there. You heard everything at this festival from traditional bebop to dixieland, from the blues to the avant garde, it was all there.

B.S.: *I found that at the two festivals I've been to lately, in Vancouver and in Edmonton, that similarly to what you said about New Zealand, there are a lot of Canadian bands playing in these festivals and they sound great to me. Mixing with people like you, from different countries, and Canadians like Peter Leitch, who is living in New York these days, and Pat LaBarbera, I find it quite fine. It used to be that if you couldn't play like an American, you couldn't play, but I think that has changed. There seems to be a feeling that*

there are more musicians in a world sense than there used to be, it's not just New York City anymore.

M.N.: That's true, absolutely, and I think that, let's face it, it's so unhealthy in New York for the music. New York City is squeezing out all the middle income and poor people basically, which includes most musicians.

But there are always people who want to play music so maybe the seed has been sown and has taken root and has flowered. Like the New Zealand band I was telling you about earlier, the Primitive Art Ensemble. Not the Chicago art ensemble, but the Primitive one. These guys do their own recordings and they're great. They make their own album covers and they are great covers, so they're involved in the art side of it. They record their own tunes and they play their own music, based on Cecil Taylor's music. They are just as weird as any musicians anywhere — totally into their own thing, with a minimum of public support and no government support to speak of at all. They're just doing their own thing and it's starting to build.

B.S.: *Is there a growing group of young players who are interested in a new identity?*

M.N.: Yes, I'd say there is, perhaps even a slightly larger percentage than elsewhere, but again it's a minority percentage. What I'm finding is that there are more and more young musicians coming up who have traditional strengths. It's quite amazing to me the number of musicians coming up who have the kind of qualities that have seemed to be missing in the music for so long. They are often sons of musicians, but they may not have gotten into it through the father's guidance. They may have just liked some of the music their father liked and then they get into playing jazz. They discover it themselves. I think that's really crucial. But being around the music a sense of tradition comes through in their playing.

I'm teaching at the Sydney Conservatory of Music and I'd say that probably my best students, not totally without exception but most of my best students come from New Zealand. It's quite amazing when you think about it.

B.S.: *You don't just teach piano though?*

M.N.: Oh no, I hardly teach piano at all. I'm teaching music. I'm just there as a jazz musician to impart my knowledge to the musicians, so I actually deal with ensembles. I have basically three ensembles, or groups of people, improvisation classes, and we improvise depending on the level of the players. It may be free music, it may be some tunes, whatever, we're just talking about playing, and what it's all about — they are like my peers. It's fantastic.

B.S.: *Do you like this idea of teaching other people?*

M.N.: I love it — I didn't think I would. I had a lot of reservations about it at one point because I used to think about the whole idea of teaching somebody, and the music business is so wretched, so I never taught much privately. But now I see it as a different thing. I see

it as enhancing a person's life, whether they become full time musicians is not the point. I really feel what we have to offer as serious musicians is something they won't find anywhere else. And a lot of people are looking for something like this, especially younger people. They don't have any guidance, all they know is you are supposed to get a good job and make a lot of money. Now is that what life is about? Not for me, I don't care what anyone says. It's important to know about that stuff but that's not what the seeds are about. So I can see now there's a role being played as a music teacher, because I'm not necessarily teaching the scales (although I do a bit of that) but I really try to impart philosophy, the whole idea of making music and what that is really all about.

B.S.: *Historically the axis of the planet came from the Middle East to Europe, from Europe to the North American continent. Do you feel the axis is changing, that America is becoming the deteriorating country and the axis is moving towards New Zealand and Australia?*

M.N.: I wouldn't say that, sometimes I do think that but it seems a little premature. I think that at this point in history the United States is still the axis. Sometimes in my dream I think it's changing, but not really.

B.S.: *But is it changing in Australia and New Zealand?*

M.N.: There are times when people like to think, especially down there, that Australia is the axis, that it's the center of the world. And funnily enough, Melbourne is one of the places in Australia where they really have an active free music scene, I guess you'd call it, you wouldn't really call it avant garde. But they do have a unique approach.

B.S.: *It's not really avant garde it's free music. That's funny because we always thought of Australia and New Zealand as dixieland countries, like the old British.*

M.N.: That's really a mistake. I did a television series, seven shows, and for the shows, with a couple of exceptions, I only used New Zealand musicians. There was also Eddie Thompson from England, and somebody else from the States who happened to be there. But basically it was a New Zealand band and I had two bands on a show and the criterion was that I had to like their music. In other words, it had to be music I personally felt good about. And there were more than enough bands; I had a lot of people get their hackles raised because they couldn't get on the show. And this is coming from a very small population of people, so that's saying something.

B.S.: *Here in Canada, to have a seven-part series on jazz on TV is not that common, that's quite adventurous.*

M.N.: And that was a continuing thing; now they have jazz on TV an hour a week in New Zealand year round.

B.S.: *That makes the country sound quite contemporary in thought. I mentioned to you the other night that here, from certain peoples' perspectives, New Zealand looks more radical. You said it wasn't quite this*

way, but we see it as such by reading about it. By telling Americans to get outside the three mile limit, we see it as a socialist country. There have even been a few artists here who think they should maybe immigrate to New Zealand because suddenly we see Australia and New Zealand in the news. Is it a socialist country?

M.N.: Not really, I always used to think it was but I'd say less so now than ever.

B.S.: Then what has brought about this sort of anti-American political action?

M.N.: People mistake it as being anti-American, it's not anti-American it's anti-nuclear. It's actually some of the Americans who have chosen to make it an anti-American stance. It's not at all, it's anti-nuclear. They don't want to have anything to do with nuclear stuff down there if they can help it. Keep the Pacific nuclear-free that's the stance. You can't really blame them.

B.S.: Oh no it's fantastic. I also belong to the anti nuclear organization in Canada. Yes I can see that it just happens that the nuclear ships down there are American. That's why it appears this way. When all this occurred I went to all the big Toronto newspaper stores trying to find a New Zealand newspaper and they all kept asking me why I wanted a New Zealand newspaper. They got them a month late though.

Do you feel, as a performer of some stature in New Zealand that you have influenced the young generation — do they know who you are?

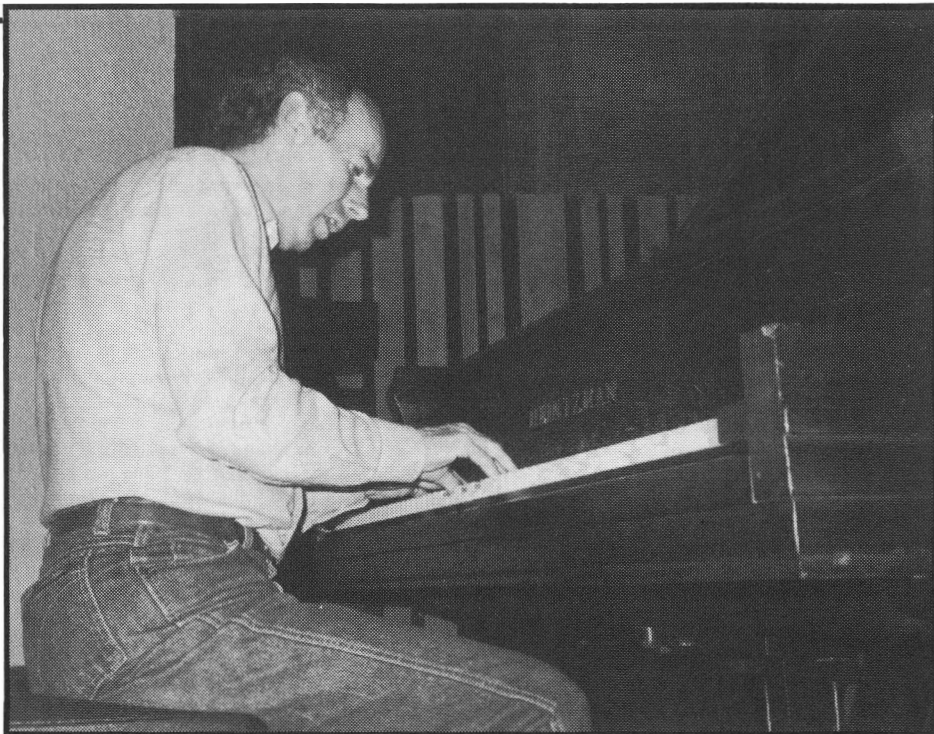
M.N.: People know who I am, even in Australia but particularly so in New Zealand. I suppose I have an effect — one likes to think one has. Even if it's just an effect of striving for something that may be out there. It's just the idea of what I stand for.

B.S.: So you can be, I don't want to make you sound really old, but some kind of father-image influence on those people, because I have that in Canada with young players, not in a big way, but locally people come to me for advice and all that kind of stuff.

M.N.: I suppose I get that particularly in Australia now that I'm teaching. It's kind of a weird thing because some of the students really are quite young, like 17, but the thing is they are also my friends, so there is definitely that looking-up-to thing, but I try to have no barriers, it's just a continuation.

B.S.: You refer to Australia and New Zealand often in the same breath. Are they very similar environments? Are the people very similar?

M.N.: Well they are similar — it's like Canada and the U.S. but even more because there is nothing else around down there. You can count out New Guinea and Northern Australia. When I talk of Australia I'm basically speaking of Sydney and Melbourne. They are very similar people, except with New Zealand there is a strong feeling of inferiority towards Australia; they have a real inferiority complex. Australians are much more open towards New Zealanders, but New Zealanders tend to be a bit biased against Australians. Most New Zealanders won't go to Australia, they'd rather come to the U.S. or England. But they are very close geographically, 1300 miles which down there is close. It's the next logical step. That's what I did. When I left New Zealand I



went to Australia for three years and really got a grounding before I came overseas. It was the best thing I ever did.

I left New Zealand in 1958, and went to Australia where I had a band called Three Out, an acoustic trio, and we were pop stars down there. For some reason it just caught on. At the time my major influences were Oscar Peterson, Bobby Timmons and Horace Silver. In Australia they had never heard music like this and the response was incredible. We made two albums, one of them was the best-selling album I've ever done. That was a milestone in Australian music.

Then I went to England with that trio. I played Ronny Scott's and worked around London and England and Europe. Then I got a scholarship to Berklee in the States.

I arrived in Boston at an extremely heady time for the music. Tony Williams used to live there and we all used to play together. Sam Rivers was there — he was like a father figure. There was a great piano teacher who used to have sessions at her house on Sundays and it used to be a kind of mixture of jazz and classical people improvising to all the latest ideas. Then I had a job playing as the house pianist at this gig called Lenny's On The Turnpike for about two years. I got to play with Coleman Hawkins, Pee Wee Russell, Benny Golson, it was just a fantastic experience.

I spent two years with Yusef Lateef and we toured the States and made five albums. Then I had my own bands in New York, and played a lot with Sam Rivers and people like that.

B.S.: The Fourth Way was in California. I remember it being a kind of outside group even at that time — with Mike White on violin. Of course when I listen to that record now it doesn't sound quite so radical. Yet I feel that the general audiences have always been kept back, as if they were twenty years behind.

M.N.: Maybe this is true, but I think it's more the economic forces, because I find that audiences have always reacted to honest music.

Years ago, before the Fourth Way, I used to do concerts with Yusef Lateef that were totally out. I mean, Yusef had some totally out concerts. Some of his stuff, we used to imagine we were from other planets and just try to talk to each other through anything we could. And people would cry when they heard it. I've always felt audiences are open, it's just how it's presented to them. Of course if they have got a thing in front saying "this is out" then they think it's out, but if they don't know and just happen to be listening to music I think the chances are good they are going to respond to it on that level.

B.S.: Doesn't it appear though that all the work that took place in the latter half of the sixties and through the seventies developing the avant garde, or the players who helped develop it seem to be disappearing at this time from public view.

M.N.: I have very strong feelings about this that you might disagree with. I feel a lot of the playing in the sixties, and I was involved in a lot of this playing, I always felt there was a lot of self-indulgence and not a lot of discipline. I always felt that this was one of the reasons ultimately. So much playing out of tune, playing sloppily, people pick up on this and they don't like it.

B.S.: So something like the sixties, for example, got under a black radical umbrella and it became something of a political, social statement.

M.N.: Exactly, one of the things when I was coming up in jazz music, one of the really wonderful things, that may even be happening a little bit now, I'm not sure — but there was a great feeling of love and support from the musicians for each other. That went out of the music a lot with the sixties — with a lot of the newer music. That became more and more exclusive. It was still like that in New York when I left. A lot of the younger black guys who I was playing with would say their friends kind of looked down on them because

they were playing with me and I'm a white guy. It's a real drag.

B.S.: *That political awareness seems to be a bit pseudo though, doesn't it, in retrospect.*

M.N.: Absolutely, I mean I thought so at the time.

B.S.: *Most of the so-called radical players seem to be unknown in this time. They're not even players, a lot of them. We could see the ones who could play, which were Marion Brown, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, because they're still here, they're still playing. But I think that was even apparent at the time listening to the records and going to Slug's in New York. You could actually tell they could play.*

M.N.: There were a lot of guys who could play. There was this guy called Giuseppe Logan; I had an incredible experience listening to him once. But I'm not so much talking about those guys — these things become general trends and a lot of people jump on the bandwagon. I think for music to have lasting qualities it's got to get beyond that — it has to grow to the next level which has probably happened with some of the music.

B.S.: *Well, let's assume the next level would be the movement that happened in the 70s: Braxton, Mitchell, Leo Smith, that period of the music, but that also was very organized and very recorded.*

M.N.: Yes, it's true, but I always felt, this is just my opinion, much as I really enjoy Anthony's playing, and Leo's music I'm not too familiar with, and I've listened to a lot of that music, I've always found it to be basically not satisfying. I will even go so far as to say that although I hold Cecil Taylor in the utmost respect, musically it isn't as satisfying. Whereas someone like Sam Rivers, especially in his early stage was totally satisfying. Because to me one of the things that makes music totally satisfying is an in-depth harmonic awareness, which of course Cecil has, but not in the way that I am hearing it. As I've said, Cecil is one of my heroes, but I don't listen to his music that much. Same with Anthony; I would hardly listen to their albums for pleasure. Instead I'd listen to some other improvisors maybe, because it may have more of the elements in it, that I want to hear.

I suppose we all have our personal ideas. My period of music, which I really loved or the direction of it anyways, was early Miles Davis, much more than the recordings, I used to hear that band live a lot. But to me that pointed in a direction that was kind of dismissed for several years and now is coming back. Free bop playing with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams. For me that band set a standard and that's what I guess you always hold in the back of your mind.

B.S.: *To get back to New Zealand — is there good jazz on the radio? You talk about this wonderful TV series — do the papers write about it? Is there an intelligent representation in the media?*

M.N.: Fairly intelligent. The thing is, you've got to realize that it's not the kind of awareness that you'd get from here, perhaps, or in the States with more hip people. A lot of people think that Oliver Jones is the epitome of jazz. Not to put him down, because he's a fine player, but I don't think he would consider himself the epitome of jazz either. But

this is the way they perceive jazz.

B.S.: *So it's like everywhere else. For example if I go to Europe to play, because I'm Canadian I get made a little bit of a fuss of, even though Canada is hardly the source of improvised music. Does that happen when foreign players come to New Zealand?*

M.N.: There's a certain amount of interest. As a matter of fact there have been a lot of groups from Europe that have done very well. The Alexander Schlippenbach trio did very well down there. What I really do notice, what the music really does need, is to be promoted right. There was talk of getting a government funded touring body together. To me I think jazz in a sense is thought of as old peoples' music, but to me music is music. So there are bands in Australia, like a group called the Benders who are playing in the rock clubs, and they are playing a new type of music — it's definitely jazz-based. Then there is the other extreme, like the violinist Jon Rose, which is further out again. What do you call this music? It's music — you either like it or you don't.

B.S.: *You have a similar geographical difficulty, inasmuch as the country is huge and there aren't very many cities — we have this in Canada as well. It's very economically unsound to tour. In Canada this has made very local things occur. Does this happen in Australia?*

M.N.: There are two different kinds of cities. The music that comes out of them is quite different. I think interestingly the music in Melbourne is more adventuresome than the music in Sydney and the music in Sydney might be more professional, and more traditional.

B.S.: *This new economy and this very expensive travel problem which didn't used to exist years ago on the same scale, has seemed to have brought about the leader bands, with young players and a star. I see this in two ways. One, either you don't get music quite so good or two, a new music will develop out of it, because you're giving the young players an opportunity perhaps to be put in front of audiences.*

M.N.: Both actually, let's face it. It's really wonderful to hear a group of peers playing but it's also special to see someone like Art Blakey and his group, where you have the experience of him and the vitality of youth which is really quite amazing.

B.S.: *You find that jazz is not such a forefront music in this period. I mean you've been doing it for twenty years or more.*

M.N.: No it's not. But my feeling is, one of my students at the school was saying the other day — he's into all the new wave things and he's a brilliant young player — he was saying that he was reading all these fusion magazines. Apparently there seems to be an upsurge in acoustic jazz music among young people in England. Vogue magazine had a ten page spread on jazz apparently. I didn't know about this, but it's becoming a trendy thing. The young rock musicians are playing a kind of jazz music. Maybe it's about time it came back. It's always been a cyclic thing as you know. It comes and it goes. There are more musicians than ever and there are more young musicians than ever and that's what makes me feel it's about time. When I see the young musicians coming along that's when I think something's going to happen — it's got to!

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Them Dirty Blues

Landmark 1301 (Vol 1) (Feb/Mar 1960)

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Landmark 1302 (Vol 2) (Dec 1962)

Jazz Workshop Revisited

Landmark 1303 (Vol 3) (Sept 1962)

Cannonball and the Poll Winners

Landmark 1304 (Vol 4) (May/Jun 1960)

Quintet at the Lighthouse

Landmark 1305 (Oct 1960) (Vol 5)

Philip Larkin, one of England's foremost poets of the 20th century, was noted for clarity and freshness of image, for his often wryly humorous perspective of the human condition, and, amidst a century that fostered experimentation and novelty in the arts, for his strict adherence to the traditions of formal structure in his poetry. He was also, for a time, jazz critic for London's *Daily Telegraph*; many of his articles have since been compiled in book form ("All What Jazz"). In keeping with those principles he so cherished, his love for the older, more conventional sounds in jazz was unrestrained, while his distrust of the newer "free" jazz idiom seldom abated. Hence, his reactions to players such as John Coltrane ("earnest, humourless... a Youth Club bore...") (p 98), or to the music of Ornette Coleman ("...a patterned reiterated jumble...") (p 204) are understandable. He did make a point of listening to it all, however, and there were concessions; such were the Adderley Brothers, Julian and Nat, who, on occasion, could create the "...familiar illusion that somewhere on the far side of modernism is hot jazz again..." (p 42), and that jazz just might indeed be "...emerging from experimentation into simple happy improvisation" (p 98).

Despite obvious short-sightedness, Larkin undoubtedly detected what most now, in retrospect, agree was the strength of the Adderley approach to jazz. Though Parker-influenced and a bop era derivative, Julian offers ample aural evidence on these recordings that, like the Roman deity, Janus, he could look back as well as forward — in this case, to those blues and gospel modes that form the rudiments of the music. Larkin had given the San Francisco group a qualified positive grading (p 98), and there is no reason to assume that he wouldn't have received the next session (Vol 1) equally

well; side one, at least was the same working aggregation. Unfortunately, it was sandwiched between the October 1959 Jazz Workshop album, a very popular one, and a similarly successful Lighthouse recording of October 1960; as well, pianist Bobby Timmons was lured back to the Blakey band so that side two featured replacement Barry Harris, a more melodic stylist than Timmons, but also one who captured less of the funky soulfulness of the latter. Its neglect is unwarranted. Timmons' *Dat Dere* (an alternate take is given as a bonus) is an obvious attempt to capitalize on the enthusiastic reception afforded *Dis Here*



from the previous album, and, like his other blues-oriented hit, *Moanin'*, it works its magic. The Adderley Brothers shared a musical approach that could only have developed through a deep understanding of mutual goals. Having learned through working with Miles and Coltrane that there is a danger in getting hung up on technique, Julian preferred to go his own way; in an interview for *Coda* (October, 1982 - transcribed from tapes of a radio interview by Jack Winter in 1972), he stated: "...we don't look down on any music, and we don't play anything simply for effect... we have a ball—that's the only way music can be for real... those are the only things that are important". One senses that working philosophy here, even on such standards as *Easy Living* where Julian eases into a rich, relaxed alto interpretation, or Gershwin's *Soon* with Nat plying the melody with his softly muted cornet. Together, on numbers like *Jeannine* and *Them Dirty Blues*, they are a formidable duo, deliciously raw-edged and bluesy. Of all the cuts on the album, *Work Song* is the most interesting, chiefly because we have two versions, one with Timmons (unreleased) and the other with Harris (the released take). I think that Larkin would have preferred the former, for the released version is taken at a slightly brighter tempo, Julian and Nat are much freer in the liberties they take with solos, and the whole rendition exudes a looseness of form not found on the alternate; however, he would have wished for a Timmons on piano, I suspect.

The next recording, chronologically

(Vol 4), features significant changes, notably Victor Feldman on piano and vibes, the addition of a guitar (Wes Montgomery), Ray Brown for Sam Jones on bass, and the absence of brother Nat. As the title indicates, these were musicians that Cannonball wanted to play with "strictly because of their talent" (liner). Feldman, a British pianist, added a further dimension as vibist, as did guitarist Montgomery, as yet unheralded. The latter was to gain needed recognition through the session, while the former, contributed two of his own compositions to the date, *The Chant* (not Jelly Roll's!) and *Azule Serape*, was to become a regular with the quintet a few months later. The amalgam was fortuitous, and, as producer Orrin Keepnews notes, "I've always found this an uncommonly happy and swinging album" (liner). Indeed, J.C. is at his relaxed best on Feldman's *The Chant* and Lehar's *Yours Is My Heart Alone*, while on a direct tribute to Parker (*Au Private*), worked over carefully in two takes, he swings mightily, especially on previously unreleased take one as well as with a Loesser ballad, *Never Will I Marry*, where, least expected, he and the group serve up some highly charged instrumental runs. As Philip Larkin had observed in reviewing an earlier Adderley recording, he "has the rare virtue of sounding neither screwball nor neurotic, yet always pushing towards excitement; I favour him for this reason" (p 51).

With brother Nat restored and Feldman now firmly entrenched in the quintet, we have the group once more before an enthusiastic audience, this time at the Lighthouse Cafe in Hermosa Beach, California (Vol 5). A second, more extended rendition of Feldman's *Azule Serape* (no studio fade this time) makes for an interesting comparison, with Nat's sizzling solo and a more animated Feldman favouring, perhaps, this choice. Julian's *Sack o' Woe* and its gospel-like suggestiveness ("soul jazz", as Keepnews calls it) was just what the audience wanted. Nat is sterling throughout, and the rhythm section seems to have congealed into a hard-driving support team for such a date. This was a well-conceived album, and, listening to the assemblage's frantic flight on Dameron's *Our Delight*, the beautifully stylized configurations of Rosolino's *Blue Daniel*, or the tightly-controlled offering of Cole Porter's *What Is This Thing*, one can clearly appreciate the reasons for its success. Larkin would have described it in terms he was to use

for a later Adderley outing as "a good hearty evening" of jazz (p 211).

Volume 2 reflects a nod to the popular bossa beat of the early '60s. Many, such as Stan Getz (Verve), Dizzy Gillespie (Philips), Gil Evans/Miles Davis (Columbia), Dave Brubeck (Columbia) and George Shearing (Capitol), were, for a time, caught up in the fervour of what Philip Larkin would disparagingly refer to as a music "too coloured by... a deal of Latin-Americanism" (p 167). A chance meeting at Birdland between Adderley and Brazilian pianist-leader, Sergio Mendes, led to the making of this special session, following tricky negotiations negating the use of any of J.C.'s regular band members or the injection of any bossa variations on tunes that Adderley might call his own identification marks. It was, as Orrin Keepnews points out, an unusual meeting — a melding of the gutsy, explosive energy of the altoist with the rhythmic intricacies laid down by the South American musicians. Most of it works wonderfully well, and numbers like *Groovy Samba* (a Mendes original) and *Sambop* offer J.C. in an exciting exploration of the full range of his instrument in this context. On ballads such as *Once I Loved*, where his tone is scaled down, but loose and relaxed, he sounds remarkably Carter-like. The double pairings of *Clouds* and *Corcovado* make for interesting listening. Take 5 of the former, issued only as a single for an obvious commercial venture, apparently didn't work; yet the longer take 7 (issued on LP) ironically might have proven a more marketable product with its fluid, emotional approach. Similarly, the shorter unissued take 6 of *Corcovado*, though with less appeal to the jazz fan, seems a more viable commercial interpretation. But then, as Adderley would say, "I care a lot more about having a good band than I do about the money" (*Coda*: October, 1982, p 7). Personally, I find this album every bit as good as the highly successful Getz/Jobim/Gilberto release of the same period; but then, who had heard of Sergio Mendes in 1962?

A return to the Jazz Workshop in San Francisco (Vol 3) where they had tasted such success in 1959, and a new format, six where there had been five with the addition of multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef, opened still further vistas for the Adderley aggregation. The ever-shifting piano chair featured Joe Zawinul, "...undoubtedly the funkiest of all Austrians and later the driving force of Weather Report" (liner); he certainly seems to have adjusted comfortably to the Jones-Hayes tandem, and was to remain with them for quite some time. There are some satisfying moments on the album, notably *Unit 7*, a previously unissued sub-

stituted here for the ballad *Lillie* (both by bassist Jones), and *Jive Samba*, an eleven minute romp with some vibrant exchanges between horn players ("Everybody acts mean on this one" states J.C. in his introduction); there was a truncated version of the performance (i.e. the final three minute chorus) which apparently did become "something of a 45 rpm success". In addition, Nat steals the show on *Primitivo* and Donald Byrd's *Marney*. J.C.'s style here is noticeably changed, perhaps sounding more early-Coltrane, lighter and freer. Moreover, he seems more of a peripheral figure than a provider of the urgency of the group; perhaps the addition of the extra player had something to do with it. Indeed, Larkin could hardly accuse Lateef of playing a "genteel flute" (167), and his presence is a positive one. Yet, the album, with few exceptions, never truly recaptures the intensity and exhilaration of the first Workshop production.

The five volumes represent only two years in a career that spanned more than twenty. What they reveal is not an original voice in jazz (perhaps too predictably blues-based or Parker-oriented), but one that was totally committed to *his* style of music; "Everything we play we choose to play", Adderley affirmed (*Coda*, October, 1982, p. 6), and this is echoed in the wide cross-section of selections available on these discs. Interestingly, though I believe critic Larkin's (he was a better poet!) perspective of the music was hampered by his rejection of newer sounds, it is difficult to fault him for his more general view of what constituted good jazz; and "good jazz" is what Adderley projected for all his possible shortcomings. He gathered around him quality performers who enjoyed playing for its own sake; that is evident on what we hear. J.C. would understand this; he said as much: "... that's just me. I'm sure there are people who like some of the things I do and cannot understand why I do some other things. I don't want everybody to like me because it wouldn't give me any dimension. I like to be able to have my beginnings and my endings and I'd like my listeners to have the same privilege" (*Coda*, October, 1982, p. 7).

J.C. Adderley and Philip Larkin are, alas, no longer with us. "Almanacked, their names live; they have slipped their names and stand at ease..." (Larkin, *At Grass*). These recordings and that book are appropriate and necessary reminders of an important transitional period in the development of a music they both cherished.

— John Sutherland

Reference: Larkin, Philip. *All What Jazz — A Record Diary: 1961-68*. Faber and Faber, 1970.

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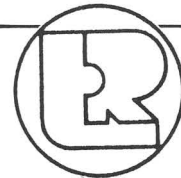
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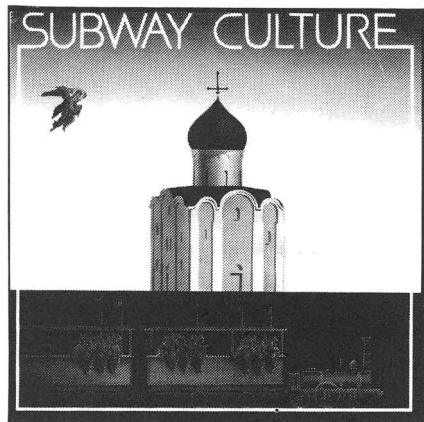
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JAZZ LITERATURE

DANNY BARKER * JAMES P. JOHNSON * LOUIS ARMSTRONG * BOOK REVIEWS BY AL VAN STARREX



A LIFE IN JAZZ

by Danny Barker

Oxford University Press, New York.

\$19.95

For some thirty years now New Orleans jazzman Danny Barker has been making notes and collecting memorabilia about his remarkably diverse musical career with this book in view. But it has taken a British musician — writer Alyn Shipton (a co-founder of the Excelsior Brass Band of London) to put Barker's manuscript into publishable shape, with enough material left over for another and forthcoming book they are working on to be titled "Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville".

Parts of Barker's written reminiscences have appeared in various magazines, so there is some repetition in Danny's present saga of a life in jazz, but his narrative as a whole represents a juicy chunk of jazz history through the eyes of one of its most accomplished performers. His writing ranges from rambling accounts of gigging with some of the greats of jazz, notably Jelly Roll Morton, Lucky Millinder, Benny Carter and Cab Calloway (in whose band he worked for several years) to a vivid portrayal of Jim Crow Mississippi (in which a redneck pays him for a

private performance with Confederate money called "Dixies") that reads like pure Faulkner — from the other side.

Danny Barker grew up with the music and musicians of New Orleans and his descriptions of the marching bands, funeral parades, dance halls (such as the notorious Animal — or Animule — Hall) parallel those of Jelly Roll Morton (Library of Congress recordings), Louis Armstrong, Barney Bigard and others of that epoch. He studied clarinet under Bigard and his uncle Paul Barbarin taught him drums, but he chose to play banjo, because of its popularity at the time, later switching to guitar. With other kids he formed a spasm band called the Boozan (Creole for party) Kings that became so popular it had its own fan club, the Boozan Queens. But it was hearing stories about Sidney Bechet, a neighborhood folk hero who had gained fame in the capitals of Europe, and the growing demand for New Orleans musicians that decided Barker to become a full-fledged musician.

Describing the music scene in New Orleans, Danny notes that there was a great deal of "feudin' and fussin'" among musicians at the time, brought about by rivalries and jealousies among the "stars". Not all New Orleans musicians were great,

by any means; there was a large contingent of second or third-rate musicians who were referred to as "ham fats" because of their indifference or incompetence and it was easy to spot them. "You saw and heard these musicians. They were relations; they were friends... You listened to this very poorly inspired jazz and inside to yourself grunted 'Ham fat jazz.'" They were the musicians Jelly Roll Morton had in mind when he composed *Big Fat Ham*.

One of his first gigs, while still a kid, Danny accompanied blues singer Little Brother Montgomery on the road through rural Mississippi — a daring adventure for a young black. ("It was the earnest and general feeling that any Negro who left New Orleans and journeyed across the state border and entered the hell hole called the state of Mississippi for any reason other than to attend the funeral of a very close relative... was well on the way to losing his mentality, or had already lost it".) It turned out to be a most rewarding experience, musically and financially.

For most musicians, however, Chicago was the Mecca, and the quickest and most direct route there was the Illinois Central Railroad, thus avoiding stopovers in such "terrible" states as Alabama and Mississippi, the bane of New Orleans blacks.

When Danny finally left the Crescent City it was to head for New York and he paints a vivid portrait of the New York jazz scene at the height of the "Harlem Renaissance" of the 1930s. He describes a typical Monday afternoon at the Rhythm Club, an informal union hall where musicians came to collect their weekend wages and stayed to gossip, play pool, and take part in jam sessions and cutting contests the likes of which you never heard in any recording studio. That afternoon the famed McKinney's Cotton Pickers were in town to record for Victor and the place was packed. On the stand a trumpet battle was raging between Bobby Stark, Rex Stewart and Cuba Bennett (a cousin of Benny Carter and a much respected trumpet player).

"I was watching the jam session when Paul (Barbarin) said, 'Come over here and meet Jelly Roll and King Oliver'. Paul led me through the crowd to where King and Jelly stood. I had noticed Fletcher Henderson was playing pool and seemed unconcerned about who was playing in the jam session, or who was there. Whenever I saw him at the club he was always playing pool seriously, never saying anything to anyone, just watching his opponent's shots and solemnly keeping score. All the other musicians watched the game and whispered comments, because he was the world's greatest bandleader.

"King Oliver said, 'How you doing, Gizzard Mouf?' I laughed and Jelly said, 'How you Home Town?'

"I said 'Fine.' And from then on he always called me 'Home Town.'"

"Jelly, who was a fine pool and billiard player, had been watching and commenting to Oliver on Fletcher's pool shots. 'That Fletcher plays pool just like he plays piano — ass backwards, just like a crawfish'. And Oliver laughed and laughed until he started coughing..."

Danny eventually got to play in Jelly Roll's band and he gives a graphic account of traveling with Morton and the band in two of Jelly's Lincoln's for a gig in New Jersey. En route, they came upon an accident — a speeding trailer truck had smashed into a farmer's jalopy, ramming it into a diner, toppling the diner and injuring several occupants:

"We pulled up and rushed out to help the victims, who were frantic. Jelly yelled loudly and calmed the folks down. He took complete charge of the situation. Jelly crawled into the overturned diner and called the state police and hospitals. Then he consoled the farmer, who was jammed in his jalopy and couldn't be pulled out... The farmer was so scared he couldn't talk... I noticed that he was barefooted... Jelly told me that happens in a wreck; the concussion and force cause a person's nerves to constrict and

their shoes jump off".

Barker went on to play some celebrated gigs, including one with Dave Nelson's band in a Broadway show with Mae West, which folded after eight weeks. ("Broadway wasn't ready for it. Mae West had a black lover, supposedly, in the play — a little advanced for the time for the attitudes of the Whites on Broadway".) He worked in bands led by Benny Carter, Lucky Millinder and Henry Red Allen (with whom he recorded dozens of charming small band sides) before going on his longest and best-known stint with Cab Calloway. He gives some interesting insights into that band and its charismatic leader, as well as its emerging star Dizzy Gillespie and the bebop scene. He went into Minton's and even got to play and record with Charlie Parker. But, like many other New Orleans musicians, Danny was soon drawn into the traditional "Jazz Revival" scene, appearing with many of its veterans, becoming a regular in the Rudi Blesh "This Is Jazz" broadcasts and performing (and occasionally recording) with the likes of Bunk Johnson, Mutt Carey, Muggsy Spanier, Hot Lips Page, Sidney Bechet (the classic *Summertime* session), Wilbur de Paris and numerous others. Later he was to record with the king of them all, Louis Armstrong.

Meanwhile Danny had married his hometown sweetheart Louise Dupont, a singer who, as Blue Lu Barker, became a hit recording star for Decca's race series in the late 1930s, with Danny as one of her accompanists (in most cases). But Danny's experiences with the recording company, which gyped him of royalties, is particularly bitter. Danny went on to make several more records in the 1950s and 1960s, appeared in the historic television show "The Sound of Jazz" with Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins and others, and was a feature attraction, sometimes with Blue Lu, in several jazz festivals.

Fed up with the New York scene and its "various militant rabble-rousers" he returned to New Orleans in 1965 to work for awhile as an assistant to the curator of the New Orleans Jazz Museum, bringing Barker back home, this time for keeps — and to keep the records of its musical history straight, for this book. It is a fascinating document, fully worthwhile reading. An index and discography, along with photographs from his private collection (including a shot of Jelly Roll outside the Rhythm Club) are included.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY: The Life and Times of James P. Johnson by Scott E. Brown. Discography by Robert Hilbert Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey \$32.50

Although in our predilection for pigeon-holing an artist's talents James P. Johnson has been conveniently tagged the "Father of Stride Piano" (or, in some instances, "the grandfather of hot piano"), his piano style and his music in general defied cozy categorization, leading to confusion about Johnson's musical identity. This in turn contributed to his neglect by jazz critics, historians and the public, though not necessarily in that order.

Scott E. Brown's biography of Johnson, which started out as a Senior Honor's project at Yale University (and is published appropriately under the auspices of the Rutgers University Institute of Jazz Studies in Johnson's home state) is aptly titled **A Case of Mistaken Identity**, for if ever a jazz musician was so shoddily misrepresented it has to be James P. His year of birth for instance has been variously given as 1891 (Russell), 1894 (Blesh), and 1897 (Peck). Brown pins it down to 1894 based on birth records. And *Downbeat* prematurely buried him on May 5, 1954 (with a condescending obituary by George Hoefer) whereas Johnson died on November 17, 1955, with less than 75 persons attending his funeral services — a fact lamented by John Hammond in a further tribute in *Downbeat*. Even during his active career, he was known variously as James P. Johnson, James Johnson, Jimmie Johnson (which he preferred), Jimmy Johnson, James J. Johnson...

But it was Johnson's music that caused the most confusion, particularly in attempts to tie him down with the jazz tradition. He was a sort of odd man out, a unique individual who did not fit any of the accepted images, even eccentric ones. His powerfully-wrought piano style, that influenced a whole generation of piano players, from Fats Waller (his more famous pupil) to Thelonious Monk, who came after, was given a name that did not exist in its heyday. When James P. was hammering it out on the keys, to the awe of his listeners, it was called shout piano, rent-party piano, parlor social piano, and several similar terms. And then there were those who dared to question its validity as jazz...

Although as a composer Johnson created several "hits" that became jazz standards, notably the *Charleston*, *Old Fashioned Love*, *Porter's Love Song* and *If I Could Be With You*, he was not elected to the Songwriter's Hall of Fame until 1973. If Johnson had as little success in gaining public attention at the height of his career than impressing jazz historians later in life, it was because he was not a colorful figure like his friends Willie "The Lion" Smith, Fats Waller, even Duke Ellington. In an age of jazz nicknames he had none (though Willie The Lion called him Black James). And — a biographer's

bugbear — there were no tantalizing anecdotes or dramatic highlights that go to make a juicy storybook tale.

Not that James P's story is entirely dull. Johnson blossomed creatively in an era of jazz's greatest flowering, the 1920s, and in an area that made the biggest pianistic impact — Manhattan and across the Hudson in New Jersey. The fact that it was not New Orleans may have contributed to Johnson's later neglect, but he was a giant in his time and place. Scott Brown has researched his subject thoroughly focusing as much on the man as his music in an effort to define the full range and depth of his career. He examines the classically-trained Johnson's piano antecedents, from ragtime (his early piano rolls were mostly in this mode) and the blues (in Johnson's case the W.C. Handy type) to the two-fisted piano style that came to be called stride.

Johnson listened to the itinerant piano "ticklers" who wandered into Jersey City in his youth, en route to New York, but was influenced mainly by Luckey Roberts, Eubie Blake and Willie "The Lion" Smith. Johnson soon dominated the "rent party" scene, went on to cut piano rolls and solo records of his own compositions, including the first jazz piano solo on record "Carolina Shout" (1921), before forming groups for playing in cabarets, shows and for recording. He also recorded for groups led by Perry Bradford (with Louis Armstrong), King Oliver (1929), pianist Clarence Williams and others. But he is best known to collectors for his sensitive accompaniments to Bessie Smith and other blues singers. (Johnson also directed the music track for Bessie's film short "St. Louis Blues").

Johnson's compositional skills extended from show tunes and popular hits like the *Charleston* (which LeRoy Jones traces to a West African Ashanti ancestor dance), that fired the dance craze of the Roaring Twenties, to serious extended works like *Yamacraw: Negro Rhapsody* (written 20 years before Ellington's *Black, Brown and Beige*), which was premiered at Carnegie Hall. Johnson always wanted to be thought of as a serious composer, but in this area as in others, he tended to be overlooked so that even during the heyday of his "renaissance" or "rediscovery" period, the 1940s, he was known primarily as the teacher of Fats Waller, and a pianist with several dixieland-oriented groups than as a composer. But Johnson achieved most of his goals, lived comfortably, raised a family and didn't have to hustle to make a living like many of his contemporaries. Ill health and several strokes (the result he said of "all that free booze and rich food" at rent parties in his youth) finally did him in and he died not once, but

twice — according to *Downbeat*.

The discographical section of this book, meticulously compiled by Robert Hilbert, an audio-visual expert and record producer for Pumpkin Records, lists everything Johnson is known to have recorded, from the 1920s, when he waxed prolific, to the 1940s, the period of his rediscovery. It includes rejected sessions, radio broadcasts, film soundtracks, private recordings — including a final session with Sidney Bechet's Stompers at Vernon Hall, New York City on March 5, 1950 that cries to be released (by Pumpkin Records?).

Brown's biography of James P. Johnson, along with the simultaneous release of rare previously unissued Johnson material on Pumpkin Records, added to the recent reissue (by Mosaic Records) of Johnson's 1945 Blue Note solos — some of the best examples of his craft — should bring some belated recognition to this innovative pianist/composer who played so significant a role in the pianistic transition from ragtime to jazz.

SATCHMO: My Life in New Orleans

by Louis Armstrong.

**New introduction by Dan Morgenstern.
Da Capo Press, New York. \$9.95**

Louis Armstrong's first-hand account of growing up in New Orleans, originally published in 1954, was the first and only volume of a projected autobiography, and it covers the first twenty-two years of his life. Candid, heartfelt and unpretentious, this modest (240 page) volume is not only one of the finest pieces of jazz literature (in an area cluttered with spurious or flawed biographies) but is also one of the most compelling portraits of black life in New Orleans in the evolutionary years of jazz.

Doubts about the book's authenticity by the likes of Lincoln Collier who, in his snotty biography of Armstrong, calls it "in the main — unreliable", are demolished in graceful but telling fashion by Dan Morgenstern, Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University (where Collier did some of his alleged research), in a new introduction. Taking Collier to task for his attack on Armstrong's veracity, Morgenstern states that he has carefully compared a copy of the typescript of *Satchmo* (the author's working title was "The Armstrong Story"), in the Institute's archives, with the published text. Though substantial editing was done, it was mostly a matter of changing Armstrong's three-dot style to conventionally punctuated sentence structure. The words, contends Morgenstern, "are essentially Armstrong's own, and nothing of importance he did not write has been put in his mouth. Anyone at all familiar with

the editing process as applied to many famous works of fiction, not to mention non-professional autobiographies, should consider Collier's qualifying 'in the main' wholly irrelevant".

As for Collier questioning Armstrong's authorship, Morgenstern points out that only Armstrong could have typed that manuscript. "His approach to language, spelling, and syntax — even his touch on the typewriter — is inimitable, and as distinctive as his handwriting..." (Hughes Panassie states that the original French edition, published two years earlier, was translated by Madeleine Gautier directly from Louis' unedited manuscript and is more faithful to it than the American editions).

One may wonder how this "uneducated" and "deprived" man came to be a writer, and a real one, with a clear and distinctive style his own, says Morgenstern. But from evidence in the Institute's archives, Armstrong already owned a typewriter and knew how to use it when he first arrived in Chicago to join King Oliver's band (the climactic event in *Satchmo*). The earliest surviving typed letter by Armstrong seen by Morgenstern is dated Sept. 1, 1922 — almost a month before he left New Orleans — and complains that three previous letters (one to the recipient, two to other friends) have gone unanswered. Some 20 years later, he was capable of tossing off a 13-page single-spaced missive, though most of his known letters averaged a page or two — usually handwritten in green ink. The Institute's archives also contain a biographical sketch of some 10,000 words, penned in 1944 while Louis was "on the road", confirming some of the facts in *Satchmo*.

Clearly then, states Morgenstern, Louis loved to write and, given stylistic and linguistic idiosyncracies, he wrote exceptionally well. "Writing was a natural extension of his gift for the spoken word, his love of story-telling, and his ceaseless fascination with the foibles of human behavior... Armstrong's prose style reflects structural and emotional aspects of his musical expression. It is much more down to earth, but Armstrong wrote for relaxation. Music, as even a superficial reading of (his) book reveals, was work..."

Special attention is drawn to Morgenstern's introduction because it answers, at least in part, the questionable sociological and pseudo-psychological interpretations given Armstrong's life by Collier. As for Armstrong's book, it stands by itself, a work of art. There is poetry in his language, a richness in his prose that reflects the inherent genuineness of the man. One line of Louis is worth a whole volume of Collier, a million times over.

Life for young Louis was far from an

easy street, but he always made the best of it. It is this positive attitude, along with a system of values instilled in him by his maternal grandmother, who raised him to the age of five, and his mother Mayann, to whom he was devoted, that saw Louis through a series of incredible events in a world of "gamblers, hustlers, cheap pimps, thieves, prostitutes", among whom he was raised. As Louis explains it, "I didn't go any further than fifth grade in school myself. But with my good sense and mother-wit, and knowing how to treat and respect the feelings of other people, that's all I needed through life".

Armstrong's book is rich in jazz historical detail, from a man who was to become an integral part of that history. The famous pistol-firing incident that landed Louis in the Waifs' Home, for instance, occurred not on Independence Day, as had been written before (and not on New Year's Eve, as Collier later had it), but sometime during the week of revelry between Christmas and New Year. It was at the Waifs' Home that Louis got his first cornet and, as a member of the Home's brass band, began his career as a jazz master. But he was imbued with music from his earliest years: "Music has been in my blood from the day I was born," he writes — from the spirituals he sang in church and Sunday school, taken there by his great-grandmother or grandmother (and where, he says, "I did a whole lot of singing... my heart went into every hymn I sang. That, I guess, is how I acquired my singing tactics") to the ragtime, blues and brass band music he heard outside the honky tonks and on the streets of his ebullient neighborhood.

Louis heard Buddy Bolden, but thought that he played too loud and not correctly, doted on Bunk Johnson's "beautiful tone" (though Bunk had no influence on him whatsoever), and admired the talents of Freddie Keppard. In a moving statement that expresses Armstrong's deep feeling for New Orleans, Louis writes: "Those nights when I lay on my bunk (at the Waifs' Home) listening to Freddie Keppard play the cornet and smelling the honeysuckles were really heaven for a kid my age. I hated to think I was going to have to leave it".

But the musically more advanced Joe Oliver was his man: "... the finest trumpeter who ever played in New Orleans... he had such a range and such wonderful creations in his soul". Joe was both spiritual and musical godfather to Louis, though that was to come later, after Louis left the Waifs' Home at age fourteen and was on his own, working hard in a variety of jobs "to keep my head out of water and to help out Mayann and (sister) Mama Lucy". These man-sized labors ranged from working on milk and junk

wagons (when a cart ran over his bare foot) to hauling coal from door to door, besides eking out a living as a part-time musician at honky tonks, funerals and one-nighters. A prized job on the river boats added considerably to Armstrong's musical knowledge and experience, preparing him for the big step — going to Chicago to join King Oliver.

Armstrong's growing-up world was peopled with types from a real-life Porgy and Bess, not all bad, not all good, but all painted in vivid hues. He made no judgments, and his tolerance for a broad range of human behavior was vast. As Morgenstern points out, Armstrong's "sense of humor combined with the tolerance prevents him from striking a self-righteous pose, as writer and a man. Nothing human was alien to him, yet the standards he applied to his own behavior were quite strict, from an ethical standpoint. Collier, ever the puritan, finds Armstrong's fondness for eating "obsessive", yet Armstrong explains succinctly (in this book) why he is against self-deprivation".

Wrote an earlier reviewer, "Most of all, what comes through this book is that Louis was a yea-sayer to life, the rarest of all qualities in a human being. If Louis had ever put a trumpet to his lips, if he had lived and died an unknown turpentine plant worker like his father, this quality would have made him a great man. When he was arrested for a minor crime, he was given an indefinite sentence to the Waifs' Home where he was beaten and subjected to a harsh discipline that might have turned many boys mean. Louis seized it as an opportunity to learn to play the cornet and speaks with genuine gratitude of his stay there.... White New Orleans practiced many forms of conscious and unconscious cruelty on Negroes, but Louis never learned to hate. It was not docility on his part, it was once again taking everything that was positive out of life and not worrying about the rest..."

Indeed, this is a far cry from the Armstrong pictured by Collier as an acquiescent man plagued by a lifelong inferiority complex and self-doubts who compromised his art for commercial acclaim as an "entertainer". "Paradoxically," says Morgenstern, "what Armstrong created to entertain happens to surpass in artistry a great deal (if not most) of what self-styled artists have to offer... (He was) one of nature's noblemen... in the truest sense of the poet's term".

It is hoped that the many hours of taped reminiscences that Armstrong recorded at his home in Corona, New York, will someday be edited into book form, for the rest of the fascinating, and yes, entertaining Louis Armstrong Story — the genuine one.

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PETRAS VYSNIAUSKAS QUARTET
Vilnius, Lithuania, USSR
February 26, 1987

The Soviet republic of Lithuania is a relatively small country of three million inhabitants whose musical heroes are household names. Petras Vysniauskas, from the capital city of Vilnius, is fast becoming such a hero. At only 24, his immense talent is blossoming before very receptive local jazz audiences.

Vysniauskas, like his mentor and teacher Vladimir Cekasin, is a multi-instrumentalist of often dazzling ability. On the evening of February 26th, at the concert hall of the Ministry of the Interior in Vilnius, he performed with equal ease and fierce abandon on the soprano, alto and baritone saxophones. (Oddly enough, a local jazz fan told me that Vysniauskas was most impressive on tenor!)

Leading a quartet of impeccably dressed young musicians (perhaps in answer to the Marsalis look), the horn player, accompanied by drums, electric guitar and bass, presented a formally structured set lasting slightly over one hour. This concert was part of month-long celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the first jazz performance in Lithuania.

Vysniauskas offered his audience a pre-established and cohesive sequence of original compositions. In this respect his music "programme" was not unlike those of the Ganelin Trio, by far the best known exponent of Lithuanian jazz. Liudas Saltenis, the jazz authority at the Ministry of Culture, made a formal pre-concert announcement informing some four hundred listeners that this was the same programme which the quartet was to present a few weeks later to audiences in Austria.

The music performed that evening displayed a very broad spectrum of compositional approaches. These ranged from the intensity and violence of an opening number in which the guitarist concentrated on producing harsh strident sounds with no concern for chords or notes, all the way to a quirky minimalistic piece in which the musicians blew wooden flutes put through an echo box. In between, there were elements of straightforward bop which, within the context of the deliberately polystylistic approach of Soviet avant-garde jazz musicians, is but another quote from their rich musical vernacular. For Vysniauskas, this also includes the musical folklore of Lithuania.

Throughout the performance, Vysniauskas constantly switched instruments to give each piece a distinctive texture. Displaying a frightening command of all reeds, he proceeded to explore the baritone's high register and retaliated on the soprano's lower octaves, at once negating and expanding the traditional roles of these instruments.

The other members of the quartet, although somewhat in their leader's shadow, proved to be extremely competent and creative musicians. Special notice goes to drummer Gediminas Laurinavicius who, on a crowd-pleasing piece based on a dirge-like motif, gradually built the intensity by going from gentle finger patting on the skins to an incredibly complex latin-flavored rhythmic pattern, increasing tempo and volume to a screaming climax.

It is quite clear, in light of recent events, that a growing number of Soviet jazz musicians



have had the opportunity to perform in the West. The North American visit of the Ganelin Trio in the summer of 1986 was certainly the most widely publicized of such forays. The most rewarding consequence of this development is that Western audiences can bear witness to the expression of a truly unique and contemporary musical synthesis.

THE GROUP
Hamilton College, Clinton, New York
April 3, 1987

Personnel: Ahmed Abdullah, trumpet; Billy Bang, violin; Marion Brown, alto saxophone; Andrew Cyrille, drums; Sirone, bass.

The carnage levied against creative musicians during the last decade seems to have reached an all time high. True, one could possibly say that this *opera seria* of "traditionalist programatics" is as much a strategy of the musicians themselves, as of the powers that be. But then again: Is recycled idiomaticism the only alternative revisionism can offer?

The Group (like the String Trio of New York, and David Murray's various aggregations) seem to be concerned with developing known areas of Jazz in relation to newer forms. But the new and the old — at least as far as The Group is concerned — only coexist to the point where they *seem to be the same* (whether they in fact *are the same*, is itself a highly debatable question...). Finally, these essentially pragmatic

concerns create a sedulous representational tawdriness that could very easily stifle creative initiative.

About the music: The Group is a cooperative band with all its members contributing music (ten pieces were played for this concert, with each member of the band contributing at least one composition). One might thusly think that with each member contributing music, the potential for diversity would be awesome. And yet — judging from this concert — the diversity claim remains merely a potentiality. (Though I have no doubts that if this band can stay together for at least another year an original direction — possibly beyond parody — will assert itself.)

The most satisfying moments of this particular concert happened on the opening *Assanta* (written by Cal Massey, and arranged by Ahmed Abdullah), and on Andrew Cyrille's *High Priest* (complete with lyrics, not found on the recorded version under Cyrille's leadership).

The former selection *Assanta* was a medium tempo "joy ride" that had exceptional solo statements by Marion Brown and Billy Bang. It was a warm, heterological display of sheer musicianship; making distinctions between "old" and "new" superfluous — what was and what is simply became what *was/is now*.

Cyrille's *High Priest* — a hipper-than-hip ode to the unpredictability of Jazz life — was distinctive in the sense that it was able to blend the somewhat shrill, brassy, trumpet sound of Ahmed Abdullah with the more evenly cautionable playing "style" of Marion Brown (unarguably the most process conscious minimalist the post-Coltrane era has produced). And this blending of the two horns (Abdullah and Brown) was immensely important, for by doing so The Group was able to extentionally amend certain historical directions in this music (Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, early Max Roach) — taking one more giant step toward a truly group sound. — *Roger Riggins*

JULIUS HEMPHILL / THE BALTIMORE JAZZ WORKSHOP Baltimore, Maryland March 21, 1987

Julius Hemphill is a chameleon. He's increasingly identified with lush charts for the World Saxophone Quartet, but his writing for that group is markedly different from the more spare arrangements played by his pianoless combos with cellist Abdul Wadud, or his funkting electric JAH Band. His WSQ sound even differs from that of his overdubbed solo projects. So the presentation of Hemphill's compositions for large ensemble, played by the Baltimore Jazz Workshop, afforded a glimpse at still more varied writing, of a kind not (yet) documented on record.

For the concert, the BJW's core quintet was augmented by eleven local professionals and amateurs, working for token pay. Since smart orchestrators tailor projects to the talents involved, it was fascinating to hear how Hemphill dealt with their disparate abilities.

The opening set, which Julius conducted but in which he did not play, hinted at ensemble limitations; intonation, on the opening riff blues *C*, sounded a little shaky. One obvious way to bypass limitations is to give the most able players the brunt of solo space; chief

among them were Newark-raised trombonist George Brandon, whose sound is full of healthy bluster, and BJW music director Carl Grubbs, altoist and sopranoist who in the first set acted as Hemphill's surrogate. Flutist Paula Hatcher got only one solo, on *C*, but her discreet use of R&B phrases and Kirkian shrieks, without lapsing into clichés, left one hungry for more. The funky, syncopated head, heavy on the backbeat, gave the section players good grooves to work from; Hemphill's characteristically creative use of dissonance spiced the backing chords.

For Billie (Holiday) is a fat-chorded slow ballad, in which a trace of WSQ harmonic density was echoed by five flutes, sometimes blended with muted brass; delicate voicings (as on parts of *Open Air*) suggested circa-1960 Gil Evans.

A pair of arrangements took greater risks, testing ensemble mettle, and forcing the amateurs onto tricky terrain. *Bordertown*, a sinuous sing-song melody disrupted midway by a conspicuous "clam", was a concerto for soloist — Grubbs, on striking soprano — and freely reined orchestra. Cacophonous saxes slowly rose to accompany Carl's solo, threatening to overwhelm it before tactfully subsiding: a deft display of sonic balance.

Open Air slowly built from a sober rubato flute-arco pass-piano-drums dirge to a surprisingly sure-footed, Ra-like free crescendo. Bassist Mitchell Pressman's rapid switches from arco to pizz showed his musical intelligence; the piece's development (balancing written passages and free blowing) showed Hemphill's ability to convey large-scale concerns to his charges. It concluded with a slow, stately movement revealing the apparent influence of Ornette's *Skies Of America* — a reminder that Hemphill's many recordings have yet to reflect the complete range of his work.

The composer began the second set with a long, improvised alto solo; sour, sweet, guttural, pretty, it confirmed his versatility and continued growth as a player. Featured on the majestic Ellingtonian/Mingusy ballad to follow, *What I Know Now*, his alto offered further evidence of an ever-widening expressive range, and willingness to draw (as the concert program did) on myriad sources. His blowing was rhapsodic but not sugary; he displayed the sort of gorgeous sound we expect of Fort Worth saxophonists. The ensemble, well focused by now, cleanly hit the dense harmonies and lithe slow backing lines.

For the close, Hemphill streamlined his classic *Hard Blues*' punchy figures, without sacrificing its lowdown and dirty air. (Drummer Joe Link's somewhat heavy hand with the beat, mildly detracting elsewhere, was an asset here.) *The Hard Blues*, first recorded for the classic "'Coon Bid'ness" in 1972, put us on notice that Hemphill hasn't forgotten the engaging, raunchy bluesiness of his early music — no matter how well the WSQ behaves on stage.

His varied charts were noticeably stimulating to Workshop regulars. At a concert three weeks earlier, both Grubbs and multi-reedist (and Workshop organizer) Bob Grey were deep in their Coltrane bags — not that it was a problem in the former's case; Grubbs' sheets of sound were electrically charged, and Trane-cloned lines don't seem quite so vexing when translated to popping alto. Responding to Hemphill's different voices, each found a more

individual voice.

Since arriving from Philadelphia several years back, Grubbs — who a decade ago recorded a pair of energetic post-Trane lps with his brother Earl, as The Visitors — has attracted little attention locally; he works far less at home than he does an hour down the parkway, in Washington (where, with the D.C. Jazz Workshop Orchestra, he presented a similar Hemphill concert two years ago).

The local media's indifference to home-grown jazz reinforces the slow progress of the music here. But indifference approached hostility, when the Baltimore *Sun*'s pop music critic wrote a rather snotty preview of the concert. On the basis of a typically chaotic first rehearsal he'd attended, the critic annointed Hemphill with trite gotta-suffer-to-play clichés, and implied that the Workshop's members weren't up to handling his material. Traditionally, newspaper previews are meant to make an upcoming event seem intriguing — not encourage the prospective audience to stay away. A responsible critic might have felt obliged to review — or at least attend — the concert, to see if the slighted musicians delivered the goods. They did. But he didn't. — *Kevin Whitehead*

MID-AMERICA JAZZ FESTIVAL St. Louis, Missouri March 20-22, 1987

This year's Mid-America Jazz Festival, the sixth annual, attracted about 700 fans to the ballroom of the St. Louis Sheraton Hotel. During the 43 hour weekend, over two dozen jazzmen filled more than 21 hours with an appealing flow of mid-stream music.

We were only a few hundred yards from the Mississippi River. The old Streckfus Line riverboats that carried jazz northward after World War I still dock at the St. Louis waterfront. It is fitting that this year's festival was lovingly dedicated to the memory of Louis Armstrong, who probably saw St. Louis for the first time from the deck of Streckfus' S.S. President.

Each of the four sessions was opened by the local favorite, Norman Menne and The Mason-Dixie Line. The personable young leader's robust trombone and spirited vocals evoked thunderous applause from his fans.

Don Goldie, remembered for his fine trumpet playing in the Jack Teagarden band, fronted an all-star group with Peanuts Hucko, Al Grey and Buddy Tate frontlining. Grey and Tate's trombone-tenor duet on *I Can't Get Started* injected a Basie flavor to the proceedings. They all drew rhythmic support from Eddie Higgins' piano, Butch Miles' flawless drumming and Arvell Shaw's flowing bass lines. Shaw, now silvery-haired, still retains the youthful face that smiled over Louis Armstrong's shoulder for twenty-three years. He soloed on *Summertime* and sang the Gershwin lyrics with a cantorish reverence.

Goldie, while occasionally given to an over-effusive cluster of notes, usually employs his tremendous talent to project waves of precise trills and a sustained upper register attack that would leave most hornmen lipless. His lower toned exploration of *When A Woman Leaves A Man* was executed with restrained beauty and remains vividly as a lasting memory of the festival.

Peanuts Hucko was most impressive leading

his own group. On his perennial favorites *Stealin' Apples* and *Memories Of You*, Peanuts disclosed his admiration for Benny Goodman. His composition, *Old Friends*, showcased a more subdued mood that contrasted nicely with the balance of his program. Mrs. Hucko, nee Louise Tobin, looking extremely youthful, provided several well-delivered vocals.

Chicago based Eric Schneider, while only 34 years old, carries impressive credentials that include several years with the Basie band. His tenor work, not unlike Buddy Tate, received a rousing ovation when his *Flyin' Home* soared to altitudes almost beyond the range of the instrument. After a safe landing, he settled into very pleasing versions of *Body And Soul* and *One Hour*.

Although Kansas City is about 250 miles west of St. Louis, pianist Jay McShann created the illusion that we were "standing on the corner of 12th Street and Vine". He reminded us, instrumentally and vocally, that *Confessin' The Blues* and *Cherry Red* are as much a part of this music's heritage as *Royal Garden Blues* and *Perdido*.

Ralph Sutton played impeccably, as he always does. His sessions, with Milt Hinton and Gus Johnson Jr. gently prodding from behind, are probably the highlight moments of the jazz-filled weekend. Ralph soloed, playing thoughtful duets with McShann and John Sheridan (pianist with the Jim Cullum Band), and handled the band chores with the Peanuts Hucko group. During Ralph's *Echoes Of Spring*, the noise level in the ballroom was reduced to a reverent hush. He deftly interspersed dreamy eight bar interludes among crisply punctuated phrases that fully grasped all of the brilliance and spontaneity of Willie "The Lion" Smith's fifty-year old masterpiece.

No assessment of Milt Hinton's bass playing can be complete without using the word *great*. His flawless timing and exquisite taste provides a plush backdrop that accentuates the talents of his fellow players. When Sutton played *Love Lies*, Milt provided the heartbeat that made the ballad sound rhapsodic. His solo on *These Foolish Things* should be required listening for all bass students!

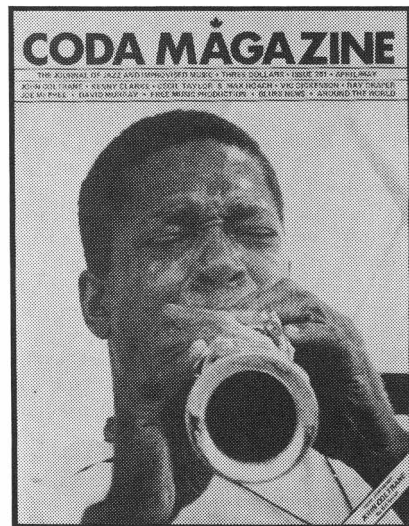
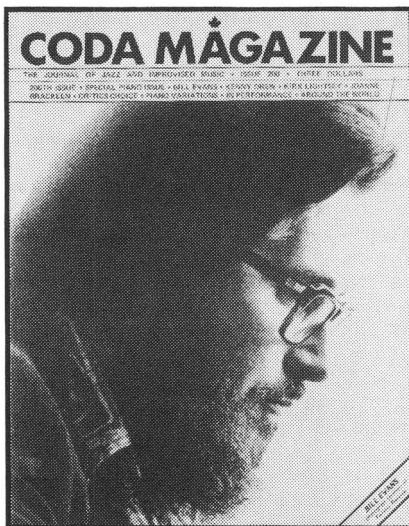
The brilliant Jim Cullum Jazz Band, from San Antonio, Texas, returned to the Mid-America Jazz Festival to repeat last year's triumphal appearance. Once again, their music added an important dimension to the ad hoc performances by the all-star groups. Cullum's eclectic programs ran the full gamut from Morton to Waller with trombonist Ed Hubble's *Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square* beautifully spicing the mixture. Clarinetist Alan Vache, featured on *Just Friends* filled the room with a welcomed traditional sound. Cullum's midnight session Saturday focused on Armstrong favorites. The leader's horn against Ed Torres' tom toms on Ellington's *The Mooche* was memorable the following evening.

Ever since John Philip Sousa legitimized ragtime during the St. Louis World's Fair in 1903, the city has played an active role in the continuing history of jazz. Producer Charles V. Wells sustains that important function with his well-presented Mid-America Jazz Festival. Next year's event is scheduled for March 18-20, 1988. For details contact Mid-America Jazz Festival, P.O. Box 28274, St. Louis, Missouri 63132.

— Floyd Levin

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BLUEBIRD BOXED SETS By Al Van Starrex

In what you might call the last hurrah of the LP era, RCA marks its re-entry into the jazz reissue field with its reactivated Bluebird label in spectacular fashion: a sixteen-LP boxed set of Benny Goodman's entire recording output for the company—some 250 titles; a four-record set of Duke Ellington—the Blanton-Webster years; plus 2 record sets of Coleman Hawkins.

The BG box, **Benny Goodman: The RCA Victor Years**, has got to be one of the biggest boxed sets in recent LP history—it sells for around \$100, surpassed only by the 21-LP set of the complete Keynote recordings, recently put out in Japan (it's producer promises an even bigger boxed set of the complete Dinah Washington). This should please fans who are not yet ready to give up their LPs (as once we held onto our treasured 78s) in favour of CDs and even more advanced audio systems (like DAT—digital audio tape) out there on the horizon. However, to accommodate the newer recording modes, the Bluebird reissues are also available on tape (16 cassettes for Goodman) and, in some instances, on Compact Disc. With CBS also set to re-enter the reissue field, with choice items from its vast library, and smaller companies (most notably Mosaic with its quality boxed sets) actively bringing out rare and unissued material by the masters, fans can expect nothing less than a feast when, with all the confusion over new recordings systems, there could have been a famine. As a reflection of audio advances, the Bluebirds are all digitally remastered, giving new dimensions to the original shellacs and later vinyls, stopping short only of the digital *stereo* remastering techniques of Robert Parker.

One other thing: the packaging of the boxed sets is particularly striking. The Goodman box has a portrait of BG in silver relief on a white background (and all 16 sleeves have BG in silhouette); the Ellington box has Duke in gold relief over black, with black and white piano keys on one side. The music speaks for itself.

The Goodman set takes in all the titles—the big band sides mixed with the small groups, chronologically, and some alternate takes—that were previously available on the earlier two-disc Bluebird sets that are now (officially) out of print. Collectors who have these discs already may want to try out the sound of the new digitally remastered sides—they are indeed an improvement, enabling us to hear the fabulous Goodman bands and small groups from April 1935 (*Hunkadola*) to May 1939 (*Who'll Buy My Bublitchki*)—of course the gems are scattered throughout—with a depth and clarity of sound unavailable in previous transfers, except

on some Robert Parker produced anthologies (on the BBC label). (The quality of the remastering is not consistent, however: there are flaws and surface noise still evident on a few titles, notably *Ida Sweet As Apple Cider*, from the original 78s used. But on the whole it's a commendable job).

The Ellington Set—**Duke Ellington: The Blanton-Webster Band**—is particularly noteworthy, since Duke was not represented on the earlier Bluebird reissues (the big box former producer Frank Driggs planned never materialized) and it takes in one of the most glorious eras in the Ellington bands history—the first couple of years of the 1940s. This was the band that introduced bass soloing with the short-lived stint of Jimmy Blanton; that brought Ben Webster into the fold to complement Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney and other Ellington horn stars. This was the band that first recorded such three-minute masterpieces as *Cottontail*, *I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)*, *Take The A Train*, *C Jam Blues*, *Harlem Airshaft*, *Ko-Ko*, *Perdido*, *Dusk*, *Warm Valley*, *Sepia Panorma* (and a since neglected *The Flaming Sword*) among others, and etched Duke's first "portraits"—*Bojangles (A Portrait of Bill Robinson)* and *A Portrait of Bert Williams*, as well as *Concerto for Cootie* (for Cootie Williams, who left the band shortly thereafter to be replaced by the multi-talented Ray Nance). They are among the 66 titles represented—the entire Victor output of 1940-42 but, it should be noted, with no alternate takes or unissued sides (which you may still find on French RCA). Unfortunately, the unique Ellington-Blanton duets from this period are not included. But the digital re-mastering brings new clarity to the lush voicings and inimitable dynamics of Duke Ellington's personal instrument—his orchestra. The set as a whole is a gem worth treasuring—on LP, or any other recording mode.

The Coleman Hawkins two-record set, **Coleman Hawkins: Body And Soul**, brings together the entire session of October 11, 1939 that produced the masterpiece *Body And Soul* (available on many anthologies), the anthem of Hawk's triumphant return from Europe. Hawk maintained that *Body* was included as an afterthought, at the request of the recording director. But Hawk was already featuring this number as the climactic showpiece in his live performances, so it stands to reason that he would include this as the last number in this otherwise routine session. Other titles on this set come from sessions that included Benny Carter (1940), Charlie Shavers (1946) and others, plus later bop-oriented big band

sessions that produced another and less effective *Body And Soul* with strings (1956). In all, a good sampler of Hawk's mid-Victor years.

The weakest item on Bluebird's reissue agenda is Vol. II of **The Complete Bunny Berigan**. One of the best trumpeters in the Armstrong mold (and in turn a Favorite of Louis'), Bunny was saddled with a big band in the same Victor stable as Goodman, Shaw, Dorsey and Ellington. As clarinetist Joe Dixon explains, "We were the low men on the totem pole... The publishers gave all their best tunes to Benny and Tommy and the rest, and we got the lousy ones. Some real dogs..." But even dog lovers will balk at titles like *Rinkatinka Man* and *Heigh-Ho* (from Snow White) that the mighty Berigan tries so valiantly to save. But Bunny could never equal his *I Can't Get Started* classic on Vol. I and one can understand RCA's reluctance in releasing Vol. II until now.

The good news, according to executive producer Steve Backer, is that Bluebird will resume its **The Complete Fats Waller** series where it left off, this time with digitally remastered sides. These will be produced by Bob Porter, who produced the Ellington, Hawkins and Berigan sets. Sets of Dizzy Gillespie early Victor sessions, and later Ellington material, will follow.

This time out, however, Bluebird will be reissuing more contemporary material, well into the LP era, on LP, tape and CDs. First of these, **Charlie Mingus: New Tijuana Moods**, not only brings back a work that Mingus himself considered the best record he ever made, but provides a second disc of full-length alternate versions of each selection—a second unedited helping that shows how the master worked—all of it digitally remastered from the original 1957 2-track master tapes. (For the full benefit of audio advances, I suggest you listen to the CD version... a real treat).

A less auspicious release is **Sonny Rollins: The Quartets**, that features early 1960s material from the Rollins LPs *The Bridge*, *What's New* (1962) and *The Standard Sonny Rollins* (1964). In a bid to win popularity after a two-year hiatus—and reportedly to pay his dental bills, Rollins used a then fashionable format—a quartet (with Jim Hall's impeccable guitar, Bob Cranshaw, bass, Mickey Roker, drums) to play mostly pop and bossa nova numbers, with less bite and considerably more restraint and melodic feel than was his wont. Pleasant but not earth-shattering. Next on line is a 2-disc set of **Paul Desmond: Desmond Blue** that should be worth waiting for.

HAROLD MABERN • JOY SPRING

Harold Mabern is carrying forward the destiny of jazz music. His generation was the last to learn intuitively the inner workings of the music and it gives their playing an individuality, a vitality, an imagination which cannot be acquired through formal study.

"I'm from the university of the streets. That's where I got my knowledge from. I went to the university of Bill Lee, George Coleman, Phineas Newborn, Chris Anderson and Ahmad Jamal. When you get it that way it tends to stay with you.

"Most of the technique I have is from constant playing, practising every day and trying to play fast! I never had a piano lesson in my life. I watched somebody play and asked questions. I found out I could play piano when I heard a young lady one day and sat down and started playing the same song. I came to realise it's a god-given talent".

Harold Mabern discovered his gift for playing music in Memphis when he was a teenager. He developed this sense of discovery with Phineas Newborn, who became his mentor and guide, as well as with his contemporaries George Coleman, Frank Strozier, Booker Little, Garnett Brown, Charles Lloyd, Louis Smith and Calvin Newborn.

Memphis is a blues town and that's what all these musicians played in their apprenticeship years. "You don't have to be blue to play the blues. I can be happy and play the blues — that's part of my heritage. The more you know about the blues the more you can play jazz. It's a special gift. It deals with emotion. You can't just skate over them. You have to really get down deep in it. The blues will always be part of my repertoire. That's what I love so much about Bobby Timmons because he understood the blues so well. There are different kinds of blues — straight life blues (1-4-5), the hip blues (Charlie Parker), pretty blues like Bluesette and extended blues with modal changes. But the basic 1-4-5 Muddy Waters type blues is the key to the whole thing".

Chicago in the late 1950s was where Harold Mabern became a jazz pianist and first attracted attention with the MJT Plus 3 — a blues-tinged quintet which explored the "soulful" funkiness of the blues in the manner then so popular. He also worked hard on developing his piano skills to the level where he was ready to tackle any job. "Chicago gave me the stuff I needed — and the confidence. New York refined my stuff and it's still doing it. New York: it's like you're working on a sculpture for a lifetime. Each day you

yourself and have to say I'm not qualified".

The evidence for this was apparent early in Harold Mabern's career. The night he arrived in New York (Nov. 21, 1959) he was taken to Birdland by Cannonball Adderley. Cannon asked him if he wanted a gig. Naturally Harold said yes — thinking it was with Adderley's band. But it was the Harry Edison band who needed a pianist. Tommy Flanagan was getting ready to join J.J. Johnson. After being introduced to Sweets, Harold was asked to play a tune. "I sat in with Sweets. He got on the bandstand, turned around and growled 'Eight bars... Habit... A Flat'. I didn't know what he was talking about but I knew how to play an eight bar introduction in A Flat. Then he started into the song. He didn't ask me if I knew it. Little did I know that this was my audition. After half a chorus I checked out the chord structure and at the end of the tune Sweets said, 'You got the gig'".

Stints with Lionel Hampton, The Jazztet, J.J. Johnson, Joe Williams, and Wes Montgomery kept Harold Mabern busy for more than a decade. During that period he recorded prolifically as a side-

man — with most of his steady employers and on a casual basis with trumpeters Lee Morgan and Art Farmer. He has appeared on more than a hundred recordings but chisel a little more".

Harold Mabern's growth as a performer and greater recognition from his peers comes from his dedication, his talent and his attitude. "My thing is always being visible. I used to go to Count Basie's joint in Harlem — stay all night just to play one song. Most people wouldn't do that. They'd get tired and split. But the next week I'd go back early so maybe I could play half a set. It is never easy".

It's just as difficult for young musicians coming up today. The joints don't exist in the same kind of way but Harold believes his students have to find a way. "I tell them to create their own jam sessions whenever they can, keep practising and dedicating themselves. It's not going to go to waste. This is a funny business. You never know when someone is going to come and say 'Here is what I got for you. Are you ready?' So it is better to prepare yourself and be ready and not ever have to use it than *not* to prepare



only a handful (for Prestige) as leader. There's an elusive trio date on Trident from 1980 as well as a more recent session with George Coleman for Theresa.

Playing solo piano at Cafe des Copains in Toronto, Canada, was a new challenge for Harold Mabern, but one he enjoys. It's a test of abilities, as he views it. "You have to cultivate a good strong left hand so you can orchestrate and make it interesting harmonically. You might hear things that sound like big band shouts — that's Earl Hines' kind of influence. The piano — it's an orchestra. I hear brass, saxophones, flutes, strings — everything! The piano is the ego. Each night I go there and it's waiting for me. It knows what it can do and it's waiting to find out what I can do. There's no place to run. It's the ultimate challenge."

Brooklyn, part of greater New York, has been Mabern's home since 1960. By the 1970s he was traveling less and had established himself as a highly sought after freelance musician. James Moody and George Coleman are two saxophonists who have requested his presence on the bandstand during their New York engagements. Their reasons for choosing Harold are simple. He's an outstanding musician who always gives much more than 100% to every job situation. It's also his playing conception which appeals to them. "You take something to each job. That's the beautiful thing about being an accompanist. You have to give the singer or horn player what they want rather than trying to do your own thing. You have to be aware of each player's requirements because you can crowd a person the way you comp or the way you place your chords. Playing with a singer, above all, teaches you how to become an all-round sensitive accompanist. You learn from all aspects of it".

Since 1980 Harold has been part of the faculty of William Paterson College. Like other New York area schools it draws heavily upon the experience and understanding of seasoned professionals as the starting point in its music programs. All the faculty are working musicians who are artistically involved in the performance of jazz music. It makes a big difference for the select group of students who receive personalised guidance from Harold Mabern during his lengthy day of work at the college each week. In this way he is giving back to the music some of the skills he has acquired through the years.

There are three piano classes as well as two workshop ensembles. Emphasis is placed on developing the students aural skills and their ability to improvise. "I have them learning songs off records rather than notating them first. It is very hard for most of them to make note

transcriptions using their ears. But when you learn a song this way it stays with you. You have to cultivate your ears. Once you get on the bandstand 90% of the time is using your ears as opposed to the music".

Those students would certainly discover the lineage of Harold Mabern's music by listening to performances recorded originally for radio broadcast at Toronto's Cafe des Copains and now available on Sackville 2016 "Joy Spring". Art Tatum (especially), Bud Powell and Erroll Garner are all present in his playing but Harold's personal mentors are Phineas Newborn and Ahmad Jamal.

"Phineas has everything. He will always be close to me because 'he gave birth to me'. Ahmad has masterly chromatic runs and is a master at using space. He thinks of it as a discipline. He's the only pianist Art Tatum endorsed".

Harold's artistic presence is always felt in his music. He plays with the assurance and authority that only comes with maturity. He considers himself "a pretty decent jazz musician" which is something of an understatement from a pianist with his imagination and presence.

He also feels, now that he is older, that playing in a trio situation is the best showcase of his talents. "That's really the true me! Playing solo is the hardest situation of all so the more you do that the stronger you become for the trio. It's the core, the foundation of it all".

His needs from bassists and drummers are specific. "A drummer can make or break it for me. I need good time (but he doesn't have to play strict four-four or quarter notes — so long as it's not too uneven) and swing from the cymbal. Even if the bassist is not as knowledgeable as I would like it's cool if he plays in tune and uses the basic notes but it's the drummer who can really make a group with his concept".

What you hear when listening to a Harold Mabern performance is a one-time interpretation of the material — drawn from the jazz musician's repertoire of popular songs, jazz standards and the blues language. As Harold explains: "My stuff is not predictable. If I work out something, go to the piano, I can't remember it. So whatever I do is happening at that moment. I might have a couple of runs that I have played for years but 98% is happening at that moment. Strictly spontaneous!"

— John Norris

Harold Mabern's observations come from interviews conducted by Paul Hoeffler for his forthcoming book profiling jazz pianists. Additional comments were part of an interview with Ted O'Reilly broadcast on CJRT-FM's "The Jazz Scene" in Toronto in March 1987.

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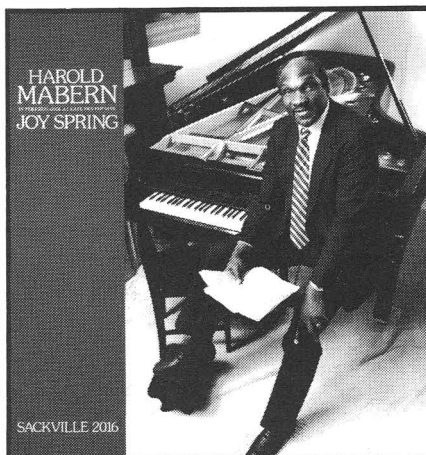
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IMPULSE • THE NEW WAVE IN JAZZ

Impulse! was created in 1961 by ABC-Paramount. Creed Taylor was given the responsibility of developing a distinctive jazz label which would have a significant impact on the marketplace.

Impulse! was the first label to have an overall design concept. All the records were packaged in gatefold jackets with distinctive orange and black spines. The jackets used full colour, eye-catching displays and the photography was excellent. More importantly, a high proportion of the initial releases became landmark recordings which have stood the test of time.

Only a handful of these were actually produced by Creed Taylor. He quickly moved on to oversee the growth of the Verve label after its purchase by Polygram. From there he went to A & M before setting up CTI Records. All of his associations were notable for the ways in which he found to expand the audience for the music he recorded. But with Impulse! there were no musical compromises. "The New Wave In Jazz" was a bold statement and the music justified it.

Taylor's replacement was Bob Thiele, a veteran producer who had first established his credentials in 1943 by recording an outstanding Coleman Hawkins quartet date for his own Signature label. At Impulse! he inherited what was to be the label's greatest asset (John Coltrane) and in the next eight or nine years recorded more than a hundred lps for the label.

Despite many changes in ownership and management the Impulse! recordings have never really disappeared from the scene. Many titles were leased to Jasmine Records in England and in Japan they were reissued with their original jackets. Copies of these recordings were available through many of the better retail outlets in North America but it was only in 1986 that MCA (who now owns Impulse!) embarked upon a major reissue program. Hopefully a new generation of listeners will discover the music created more than twenty years ago by some of the great stylists.

All the music has been digitally remastered from the original stereo tapes with significant aural improvements (especially in the CD configuration). The music is repackaged in single fold jackets but the original liner notes and photographs are used on the inner sleeves. The covers retain the photographs but the tasteful understatement of the original jackets now has a bellicose vulgarity to it. They certainly catch the eye when displayed on the wall of a record store!

Photographic reproduction lacks definition. It almost seems as though the jackets were re-shot rather than using the original prints. The colour tint given to John Coltrane in "A Love Supreme" is less dramatic than the original black and white photograph and other changes include the omission of Coltrane's signature from "A Love Supreme", the replacement of the William King sculpture in Oliver Nelson's "Blues and the Abstract Truth" and the band layout in Gil Evans' "Out of the Cool".

Impulse! Records did not have generous playing time. They average about 35 minutes but some are shorter: Hartman (31:24), A Love Supreme (33:09), Quincy Jones (31:18). Only Mingus' "Black Saint" and the Ahmad Jamal

get close to 40 minutes. Lp buyers will probably be satisfied with this situation but CD purchasers expect more playing time. This reissue program was begun at a time when these considerations were less critical but the ever-increasing selection is now making the consumer more aware of his options. It is more profitable, of course, to issue CDs of each lp rather than incorporating two lps onto a single CD. For example, Coltrane's "Ballads" would have been musically complimentary to the saxophonist's collaboration with Johnny Hartman. "Crescent" would have gone well with "A Love Supreme". The Hawkins/Ellington and Basie sessions have an extra selection which should have been incorporated into the CDs while Oliver Nelson's "More Blues and the Abstract Truth" has two additional performances. These were all issued in the various "Definitive Jazz Scene" samplers.

The CD inserts are reductions of the lp type. They have reduced the information to the point where they are readable in some instances only with a high-powered magnifying glass.

Between 1961 and 1964 John Coltrane recorded a body of work which, in its concentrated outpouring of great music, parallels (in jazz) the Okeh recordings of Louis Armstrong and the Dial/Savoy sessions by Charlie Parker and (in art) the Provence paintings of Vincent Van Gogh.

The music on these Impulse! reissues is extraordinary. **A Love Supreme (MCA-Impulse! 5660)** summarised the elements Coltrane had been working towards over the preceding three years. This 1964 work — a suite in four parts — is a powerful, evocative musical statement. All the passion, tenderness and lyricism of Coltrane's music came together here. Coltrane was noted for the extraordinary length of his solo work but in "A Love Supreme" he harnesses his abilities to make a concise presentation of the most distinctive elements of his music. The richness of this concentration makes "A Love Supreme" one of the major recordings within the language of jazz music.

Crescent (MCA-Impulse! 5889) comes close to matching the majesty of "A Love Supreme". All the compositions by Coltrane show his mastery at utilising modal elements in structuring compositions which have distinctive thematic values. Once again, there are no superfluous moments — each solo is a finished statement by master musicians who are totally in control. And yet the passion, the richness of expression, the intensity of Coltrane's playing remains an overwhelming experience.

Ballads (MCA-Impulse! 5885) tells us more about Coltrane's sensitivity than any of the long convoluted solos which were so identifiably a part of his music. He transforms the songs through his harmonic and melodic choices. The clarity and brevity of these musical statements has helped them acquire an enduring quality which makes their message stronger today — more than twenty-five years after Coltrane conceived them. Their intrinsic beauty touches all who listen to them.

Coltrane (MCA-Impulse! 5883) was the first studio date by the quartet for Impulse! It balances various important elements of Coltrane's artistic development. **Out Of This World** is a long exploration of the Harold Arlen standard while **Soul Eyes** looks back at the structures and forms of the saxophonist's Prestige period. These are powerful performances by a quartet whose cohesion and single-minded pursuit of musical ideals had come to maturity by this time.

The seeming order and control of Coltrane's studio sessions is in marked contrast with his live performances from the period. He seemed to use the bandstand as an ongoing workshop for his music. The 1961 Village Vanguard performances were a startling revelation to listeners unable to hear the group in person. Time has softened the surprise but the broad emotional sweep of the music is still capable of electrifying the listener. **Impressions (MCA-Impulse! 5887)** contains the originally issued versions of **Impressions** and **India**. The former is one of Coltrane's impassioned outpourings with his solo building in intensity from chorus to chorus. **India**, in which he shares the limelight with Eric Dolphy, is an acknowledgement of Coltrane's interest in Asian and African music rather than an attempt to perform music structured in that way. Completing this reissue are outstanding studio performances of **After The Rain**, a marvelous ballad, and **Up 'Gainst The Wall**. A fuller documentation of the Village Vanguard sessions and their importance to the evolving nature of Coltrane and Dolphy's music can be found in "The Other Village Vanguard Tapes" (Impulse! 9235) and "Trane's Mode" (Impulse! 9361/2).

John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman (MCA-Impulse! 5661) is a sublime collaboration. Hartman's deep, rich voice has the sonority of a master instrumentalist and his haunting rendition of **Lush Life** is the finest interpretation extant of this Billy Strayhorn composition. Coltrane's serene instrumental voice becomes an extension of the singer in a series of collaborations which intertwine themselves within the frameworks of the six beautiful ballads recorded here.

McCoy Tyner (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums) became Coltrane's rhythm section during this period and their stylised playing methods were unique. They helped give Coltrane's music its identity and defined the role of their instruments for a whole generation of musicians who learned from their example. Bassists Reggie Workman and Art Davis and drummer Roy Haynes were also heard on some of the Impulse! recordings.

In these reissues no attempt has been made to correct or update the recording and personnel data from the original issues. This information can be found in David Wild's publication "The Recordings of John Coltrane" — an essential reference work for anyone interested in Coltrane's music.

John Coltrane's impact has been immense. His career spanned the past and the future of



the music. He was a ferocious user of chordal improvisation, modality became the foundation for the lyrical intensity of his most creative period and he had begun to explore the possibilities of improvisation without chordal references or song forms in his final years.

The song cycle repetition of **Thembi (MCA-Impulse! 5860)** by **Pharoah Sanders** is representative of this musical direction. The African retentions evident in rural American fife and drum music are heard throughout this recording but are performed with the control and discipline which comes from extensive musical training. "Thembi" is the most satisfying of the Impulse! sessions recorded by Pharoah Sanders. His music has since absorbed more traditional elements of the jazz language than is apparent here.

Blues and the Abstract Truth (MCA-Impulse! 5659) helped widen **Oliver Nelson's** reputation. The arranger-saxophonist had already recorded extensively for Prestige but it was this session which defined his music. It also helped bring into better focus the volatile solo work of Eric Dolphy who captures the imagination with the passion and audacity of his statements. Freddie Hubbard and Bill Evans also make important contributions to the music — which is superbly orchestrated by Nelson to fit the solo qualities of the musicians. Roy Haynes' drumwork is a key factor in the overall flow of the music and he and bassist Paul Chambers hold everything together. Nelson's charts are full enough to give control to the ensembles but light enough to prepare the listener for the statements by the gifted soloists. It's a perfect balance.

More Blues and the Abstract Truth (MCA-Impulse! 5888) was a 1964 follow-up by Oliver

Nelson to his highly successful 1961 recording. The magic is missing and the performances are merely workmanlike. There is extensive solo space for Thad Jones, Phil Woods and Pepper Adams but the baritonist is the only one of the three to jump out of the cracks with statements which catch the ear for more than a passing moment. Nelson's writing is busy and impedes movement in the music. It may account for the unsettled feel of the rhythm section — Roger Kellaway, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Grady Tate, drums — all of whom are excellent players. Ben Webster, one of the music's truly individual voices, is the guest soloist on **Midnight Blue** and **Blues For Mr. Broadway** but he struggles to find space for his ideas within Nelson's structures.

Charles Mingus approaches orchestration differently in **The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady (MCA-Impulse! 5649)**. "Black Saint" is an overwhelming musical statement which has lost none of its intensity in the twenty-four years since it was recorded. Dominating Mingus' soundscape is the cascading passion of black gospel music, the orchestral unpredictability of Duke Ellington and his own volatile personality. Mingus welds together the musicians into an ensemble whose sonic richness evokes continually shifting images. Mingus is the Picasso of jazz. The boldness of his strokes are matched by the continual shifting of his images. The solo work on "Black Saint", unlike "Blues and the Abstract Truth", comes from within the orchestra rather than being an extension of it. Mingus, like Ellington, can find ways to reach inside his musicians for performances which extend them beyond their own inspiration. He does this here with Charlie Mariano, Quentin

Jackson, Jerome Richardson, Rolf Ericson and Richard Williams. This performance sits alongside "Mingus Ah Um" and "Mingus Presents Mingus" as a superb example of Mingus' artistry.

Gil Evans' Out Of The Cool (MCA-Impulse! 5653) and **Quincy Jones' The Quintessence (MCA-Impulse! 5728)** are important works by composers who use the orchestra in different ways. Gil Evans, since his days with Claude Thornhill, has been fascinated with sound textures. His collaborations with Miles Davis in the 1950s culminated in "Sketches of Spain". "Out Of The Cool" is an extension of those same ideas but without the focus of a single major soloist. Johnny Coles (trumpet), Jimmy Knepper (trombone), Budd Johnson (tenor sax), Tony Studd (bass trombone) and Ray Crawford (guitar) are the principal soloists in the five orchestrations heard here. **La Nevada** has a Spanish tinge to it while **Sunken Treasure**, **Where Flamingos Fly** and **Bilboa Song** have melodic qualities which set off the unique orchestral voicings which makes Gil Evans so identifiable. This recording and his 1964 session for Verve ("Individualism") are the artistic summation of skills he had been perfecting over many years. When Evans returned to recording in the 1970s his focus shifted dramatically away from the music heard here.

Quincy Jones established his arranging reputation in the 1950s with Count Basie. His organising skills enabled him to take an impressive band to Europe in 1959 with the "Free and Easy" show. Since then he has become a major contributor to popular music in many different contexts. "Quintessence", apart from being a superior example of big band jazz, is the final attempt by the arranger to fashion music with some depth to it. It is even unclear just how many of these charts were actually done by the arranger himself. **Robot Portrait** and **The Twitch** are Billy Byers compositions while **Little Karen** is by Benny Golson. The music is faultlessly played by experienced jazz musicians in three separate sessions with some changes in personnel. The soloists include Phil Woods (outstanding on the title selection), Freddie Hubbard, Eric Dixon, Curtis Fuller, Thad Jones and Oliver Nelson. What isn't present is the kind of individuality which has made Gerald Wilson, Thad Jones and Toshiko Akiyoshi so distinctive.

Small groups dominated the Impulse! catalog and many of the sessions were with musicians whose associations with Bob Thiele reached back to the 1940s. **Benny Carter's Further Definitions (MCA-Impulse! 5651)** was not only the first of these sessions but the best. This 1961 recording was built upon the music Carter and Coleman Hawkins had recorded in Paris in 1937 with guitarist Django Reinhardt in a four saxophone, four rhythm instrumentation. **Honeysuckle Rose** and **Crazy Rhythm** were dusted off and Carter wrote new charts on six other tunes. Phil Woods, Charlie Rouse, Dick Katz, John Collins, Jimmy Garrison and Jo Jones completed the personnel. The music is wonderful. All four saxophonists are superb but, more importantly, they blend together in the performance of music which has continuity between the soloists as well as the individuality each voice brings to the performances. Special mention should be made of the haunting readings of **The Midnight Sun** and **Blue Haze**. But nothing is less than remarkable in any of

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these performances. The music is timeless.

Duke Ellington meets Coleman Hawkins (MCA-Impulse! 5650) was made a year later but is far less satisfying. Hawkins performs with the stalwarts of Ellington's orchestra — Ray Nance, Lawrence Brown, Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney — but the music and the interpretations are ordinary. The whole session has an unprepared feel to it. The new compositions are the kind of throwaways which Ellington often concocted in the studio while such pieces as *Mood Indigo* and *The Jeep Is Jumpin'* are well worn. Only in *Self Portrait (Of The Bean)* does Hawkins manage to shake off his restraint. Otherwise he seems to be treading warily within an uncomfortable environment.

Altogether different is **Count Basie and the Kansas City 7 (MCA-Impulse! 5656)**. This 1962 date by a scaled down version of Basieites works perfectly. Four of the performances were worked up in the studio (*Lady Be Good, I Want A Little Girl, Shoe Shine Boy, Count's Place*) while Frank Wess contributed *Secrets* and *Senator Whitehead* and Thad Jones wrote *What'Cha Talkin'*. Wess and Eric Dixon are the reeds on the first session with Frank Foster replacing Wess on the second date. Thad Jones' mercurial trumpet is heard throughout while the band's rhythm team of Freddie Green, Eddie Jones and Sonny Payne is light and crisp. What seemed slightly unpretentious and ordinary in the turbulent 1960s now shows its maturity like a fine wine.

Art Blakey: A Jazz Message (MCA-Impulse! 5648) and **Sonny Rollins: On Impulse (MCA-Impulse! 5655)** are the kind of recording dates so common in the past. Put four virtuoso jazz musicians together and a few hours later you have 40 minutes of music notable for its solo strengths, for the inventiveness of its interpretations, the unity and cohesiveness of its performance and, finally, the vitality and freshness which makes its qualities endure. This is true of both these recordings. Blakey is the drummer in what is, in essence, a Sonny Stitt date. The saxophonist plays both alto and tenor with equal authority and imagination in performances which are enhanced substantially by the presence of pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Art Davis. The bassist, in fact, makes many forceful articulated ensemble lines. Sonny Stitt is an emotionally supercharged saxophonist. The bite and energy of his playing is beautifully captured here and he responds superbly to the challenges of his fellow musicians. Blakey, of course, is a powerhouse, but equally persuasive is the way in which McCoy Tyner adjusts his playing to the feel of this music. His *Blues Back* is an especially impressive statement.

Sonny Rollins had returned from another hiatus when he made this quartet date in 1965. It was his second studio collaboration with Ray Bryant and just as successful as the earlier date for Prestige. The spontaneous, yet highly organised nature of Rollins' approach was in evidence throughout and all the material, except for the calypso *Hold 'Em Joe*, are well structured standards — the kind of tunes which bring out the best qualities in the saxophonist. Bryant, Walter Booker and Mickey Roker are a stimulant to Rollins' musical ideas as well as keeping control of the rhythmic cohesiveness of the performances. Even though this session took place in 1965 it still seems as though it was made yesterday.

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers (MCA-Impulse! 5886) sits between two of the many Blue Note recordings and marks some sort of a watershed. Both Lee Morgan and Bobby Timmons left shortly afterwards to be replaced by Freddie Hubbard and Cedar Walton while Curtis Fuller was making his first recording as a Messenger. His composition *Alamode* is the only original music performed at these sessions (June 13/14, 1961) but the standards are reshaped to suit the band's style and are performed with such authority it is probably that they were part of the working repertoire of the day. Lee Morgan's exemplary trumpet was at a peak during this period and his solo on *You Don't Know What Love Is* is magical. Bobby Timmons quietly steals the glory on several occasions. He was vastly underrated, both as a performer and as a composer. Wayne Shorter and Curtis Fuller, the newcomers to the scene, demonstrate their maturity with solos full of imaginative twists and turns. This session contrasts nicely with the heavyweight originals composed for most Blue Note dates and sounds just as appealing today as when it was created more than twenty years ago.

Ahmad Jamal: The Awakening (MCA-Impulse! 5644) was made in 1970 following the departure of Bob Thiele from the company. Producer credits go to Ed Michel. Jamal, like Rollins, has had a turbulent career. He was immensely popular in the late 1950s and then virtually disappeared. This recording was made at a time when his music was out of fashion and created few ripples. Its reissue coincides with listener rediscovery and a return to active performance and recording. All the subtleties of swing, improvisation and space which made Jamal such a unique performer are present in this collection. His impact on musicians was greater than listeners when he first came on the scene (like Art Tatum) but it is time for a reappraisal of his worth. His refinement of jazz elements was coupled with an impressionism which took his music beyond expected boundaries in the 1950s. Now they are part of many musicians' conceptions. This 1970 recording, a particularly good example of Jamal's work, is enhanced by the contributions of bassist Jamil Nasser and drummer Frank Gant.

Recording for Impulse! was a step forward for many musicians in the 1960s. The company was large enough to provide the artists with the kind of distribution and promotion which expanded their audience but retained the personal contact usually found only with the smaller independents (Blue Note, Prestige, Contemporary).

MCA, in addition to reissuing these classics, is recording new music for the label. The big difference is that they are recording unknown musicians (Henry Butler, Mike Metheny) rather than established performers who need the weight of a larger organisation to reach beyond their present audience. **Fivin' Around by Henry Butler (MCA-Impulse! 5707)** is enhanced by the presence of Freddie Hubbard, Azar Lawrence, Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins in tightly arranged performances which touch upon various stylistic elements of contemporary jazz. Butler himself is heavily influenced by the percussive configurations of McCoy Tyner. He's a powerful player but this is only hinted at in this recording. What this music lacks is any real sense of identity.

— John Norris

TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI • A PROFILE

Pianist-composer-arranger Toshiko Akiyoshi is doing her best to preserve the tradition of big band excellence that once blossomed under the leadership of jazz greats like Duke Ellington and Count Basie. Celebrating her fortieth year in jazz, she was a popular recording artist and performer in Japan before coming to the United States in 1956. As the first woman ever to have been voted Downbeat Big Band leader of the Year in 1978, Akiyoshi has received ten grammy nominations for her big band albums, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to complete an extended thematic work, *Minimata*, and countless other critics' poll awards. Released to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty and her receipt this summer of New York's Liberty Award, Akiyoshi's latest album, "Liberty Suite", showcased the best of her big band compositions. We spoke in November 1986 after her quartet performed at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. in honor of American Music Week.

TONI LESTER: I understand that you just got back from Japan.

TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI: Yes. I just finished doing a fifteen concert tour there. Since this is my fortieth year in jazz, we gave special concerts with guest artists like pianist John Lewis. I've been fortunate enough to go back there once a year with a small group and every two years with the band.

T.L.: You are often quoted as saying that the late pianist Bud Powell had a big influence on you. What was it about him that appealed to you?

T.A.: There was just something about him that agreed with me. Sometimes when you are very young... your learning process is very fast [and] whoever influences you I think stays with you all your life. In my case that was Bud Powell. I probably know just about every album that he ever made. His playing was just incredible.

T.L.: You finally got to meet Powell while you were studying composition at Boston's Berklee School of Music. Did your image of Powell clash with the man in flesh?

T.A.: The first day I arrived in the U.S. was the last day of Powell's trio engagement at Storyville [in Boston] — I think that was an important coincidence! [At the request of the band's drummer], I sat in and played a couple of tunes. Powell just stood there laughing his head off behind me. When I finished he just stared at me and took a deep bow.

T.L.: Who were some of your other idols before coming to the U.S.?

T.A.: Well... I listened to just about everybody, from Gene Krupa to Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson. I was influenced by a lot of drummers. I used to take down the rhythm solo patterns from Max Roach albums.

T.L.: When you were in Japan [in the 1950s] you were a very popular performer. Given the racial climate in the States at the same time and the fact that a jazz career wasn't financially appealing for minority and women jazz artists at that time, why did you want to come here?



T.A.: Japan just couldn't provide me with the information and experience that I needed. I planned to go back a few years later, but there were so many things that I needed to learn, I stayed on.

T.L.: What did you learn at Berklee that most benefited you?

T.A.: Before I went to Berklee, I already knew most of the things that they emphasized. I did, however, learn a lot from Richard Babitt, who was a legitimate theory and composition teacher. Being in Boston enabled me to play with my trio at the Storyville Club four nights a week, and I got to hear and sometimes play with the well-known groups that played there, like Duke Ellington, the Miles Davis Quintet, Count Basie and Max Roach.

T.L.: You and your husband, Lew Tabackin, have a unique and enduring partnership. He is co-founder of the

band and is the band's main soloist on sax and flute. What do you think is his strongest feature as a musician?

T.A.: There are two kinds of jazz players. One is the kind that derives the solo from the original melody and extends it through improvisation while staying within the spirit of the tune. The other is just detached from the melody and goes off. Lew is very sensitive to what the original melody is about. The tune *Autumn Sea* [during the performance tonight] has a Japanese flavour and he played his solo a lot like a Japanese shakuhachi player. It's nice for me when someone adds another dimension to their playing like that.

T.L.: Your song *Roadtime Shuffle* reminds me of the old swing bands from the '30s and '40s. Which are your favourite swing bands?

T.A.: I like all of Duke Ellington, and the 1940s' Dizzy Gillespie Big Band.

T.L.: A lot has changed since the '40s. Jazz has become all things to all people. It's fusion. It's techno-pop. Do you think you'll ever use electronic music in your compositions?

T.A.: I think I have my hands full just using the conventional sound — it's like a human being's voice. Every one sounds different. Perhaps if I were writing for movie soundtracks, I might be interested. I think it is interesting, but I prefer the more natural sound.

T.L.: I know about the "Liberty Suite" album. Any other new projects planned? Any new solo albums?

T.A.: The new album will be it as far as the band is concerned for quite a while. I have been asked to do another trio album. It might be good for me to do one. I think I pushed myself too much this year. I think now I'm going to try and see if I can play better piano!

"Liberty Suite" is available directly from the artists at Ascent Records, P.O. Box 20135, New York, N.Y. 10025 U.S.A., and from the Jazz and Blues Centre, 66 Dundas Street East, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1C7 Canada.

AROUND THE WORLD



CANADA — Information on the **summer festivals** is still largely a matter of rumours as this is being written in late April. By the time of the next issue they will all be history! Montreal's festival, sponsored by Alcan, will have a cross-Canada competition with the finalists performing at the festival. This is being coordinated through regional CBC offices. A good bet for Toronto listeners will be the nightly series at Harbourfront of contemporary sounds as well as the weekend showcase of local and international stars. These are being held in conjunction with concerts at Roy Thomson Hall, The Metro Convention Centre and clubs such as The Bamboo and Cafe des Copains.

Vancouver has the jump on everyone by announcing a lineup of artists for their festival — being held June 26 to July 5. Abdullah Ibrahim and Ekaya, John Scofield, Etta James, Michael Brecker, Ray Anderson, Houston Person/Etta Jones, Ran Blake, Dave Holland/Muhal Richard Abrams, Bill Bruford and more to be announced!

KT Enterprises presented Joe Henderson and Woody Shaw at the Bamboo for two nights April 29/30 and Art Farmer/

Benny Golson followed them for two nights in mid May.

The sixteenth annual Canadian Collectors Conference was held at Toronto's Ramada Inn on April 25... Back in January The Music Gallery presented a fascinating Piano Festival under the sponsorship of Yamaha. **Marilyn Crispell's** stunning piano concert revealed the breadth of her talent. Also of interest was Bill Dobbins' presentation of "The Solo Piano Tradition in Jazz". His ability to authentically perform transcribed solo performances by great jazz piano innovators from Jelly Roll Morton to Keith Jarrett was commendable. Missing only was a glimpse at Bill Dobbins' own creative abilities.

George's Spaghetti House has featured Bernie Senensky (with Kieran Overs and Barry Elmes), the Alex Dean Quartet, New York based singer Daniella, Joe Sealy and Lorne Lofsky in recent weeks... ARC featured flutist Don Druick and soprano saxophonist Bill Smith on April 14. They were followed, on April 23, by the Paul Cram Trio. Eugene Stickland's play, darkness on the edge of town, at the Poor Alex Theatre May 8-24, featured music by **David Lee**.... The University of

Toronto Jazz Band, under the dynamic direction of **Phil Nimmons** performed at the MacMillan Theatre March 28. Soloists who made an impression were trumpeter Kevin Turcotte and saxophonist Bernardo Padron. All arrangements that night were by **Thad Jones**. It was an impressive performance... Woody Herman was sidelined by an adverse reaction to medication and never filled his April gig at the Bamboo... Moe Koffman's Quintet returned from a three week cross-Canada tour in time for the release of their latest Duke Street recording, "Moe-Mentum"... Peter Appleyard's "Tribute to Benny Goodman" package will be back on the road this year. They will be in Calgary June 29, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival Aug. 10 and at the Oakville Centre Oct. 13.

Gatineau's La Spectra featured **Billy Robinson** with John Hicks, Buster Williams, and Joe Chambers April 13 and 14... Oliver Jones was in New York April 20-24 at Club Positano and returned to Toronto for a two week engagement at Cafe des Copains in May.

Frank Foster's Non Electric Company (Danny Mixon, Earl May and Charlie Persip) performed in concert April 12 at

the Winnipeg Art Gallery. They shared the stage with the Manitoba High School All Star Jazz Band... Calgary's Jazz Festival runs from June 22-28 in various locations... Peter Leitch played Edmon-ton's Yardbird Suite with Bennie Wallace in late March and they were followed, shortly afterwards, by the Dave Holland Quintet... The University of Alberta's "African Music Encounter" was held May 5/6... Johnny Griffin's quartet was at Vancouver East Cultural Centre May 10. Michael Weiss, Phil Flanagan, and Kenny Washington completed the personnel... Trombonist Joe Bjornson's quintet was in residence at Channel One Klub through January and February... **Justin Time Records** has been busy recording. April sessions involved Fraser MacPherson with Oliver Gannon, Steve Wallace and John Sumner and Pat LaBarbera with George McFetridge, Neil Swainson and Greg Pilo... The CBC has released new lps by Brian Browne and Guy Nadon... If you're looking for **Paul Plimley's** cassette (re-viewed in Coda 213) his current address is 670 Union Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 2B9... **Canada House** in London, England has instituted a series of jazz concerts to better reflect the extent of Canadian culture. Peter Leitch, Tim Brady and Kenny Wheeler are three of the artists to be showcased recently. Clarinetist **Cliff McKay** died in Yugoslavia in mid March in a car accident. He was 79. His multi-faceted career included work with Trump Davidson in a dixieland setting and a quartet in the 1950s which featured a young Hagood Hardy. — *John Norris*

NEW YORK — A large pool of resident musicians, a continuing influx of visitors and two great jazz radio stations (WKCR and WBGO) help keep New York pulsating with the sounds of jazz music.

The major clubs stick to a rotating roster of musicians who have proven their worth in the past but there are always fresh voices being heard in the many small clubs. Of special importance to the jazz community is The Jazz Center of New York. This concert space has the intimacy of a club but without the distractions. It was particularly suitable for the presentation of **George Coleman's** music in early March. Ronnie Mathews (just back from a Japanese tour), bassist Jamil Nasser and Coleman's son on drums gave a satisfying performance which encompassed many of the ingredients which make jazz music such a satisfying experience.

Illinois Jacquet's Big Band was back at the Village Vanguard March 10-15... James Williams celebrated the music of Wynton Kelly March 27/28 at the Jazz Center. Just prior to that date Ran Blake came into New York for a solo remem-

brance of Billie Holiday at the Jazz Center... Walter Thompson's Big Band was at Tramps May 3... Bross Townsend and his quartet were at the State University of New York in Stony Brook March 21. This was one of many concerts in the New York area organised by the International Art of Jazz. They also bring the music to the school system. One such ensemble features Hilton Ruiz, Valery Ponomarev, Michael Carvin, Ken Pepowski, Michael Fleming and vocalist Gwen Cleveland.

The 1987 version of the **JVC Festival New York** (aka Newport Jazz Festival in New York) will be held between June 19 and 28 with a lengthy list of concerts to be held at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Saratoga, Waterloo Village, Weill Recital Hall (Carnegie Recital Hall), Town Hall and other venues. The presentations cover all eras of the music and full details, including ticket availability, can be obtained by writing the festival at P.O. Box 1169, Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023 (or phone 212-787-2020).

Jazz radio is a powerful voice in the New York area and the community is well served by WBGO from Newark and WKCR in New York City. KCR's monthly program guide often contains fascinating articles built upon interviews conducted by the station. It is also noted for its marathon salutes to musicians. Published in the March edition of their program guide was **Coleman Hawkins'** birth certificate — discovered after all this time. It shows that the pioneer tenor saxophone innovator was born March 8, 1901 in St. Louis, Mo. The April edition included an extensive article on Howlin' Wolf. — *John Norris*

ODDS & SODS

Boston's Studio Red Top celebrated International Woman's Day March 8 with a special radio program broadcast by WMBR. It included performances from the studio's fall series of concerts in 1986... Jazz Vermont presents two one week programs for budding big band musicians this summer in July/August. Full details and brochure from them at Box 612, So. Royalton, Vt. 05068... **Buddy DeFranco and Buddy Tate**, the Count Basie Alumnae and the Grover Mitchell Orchestra are all heading to Burlington, Vt. June 12 for a performance at that town's jazz festival... Delaware Water Gap's Celebration of the Arts takes place September 11-13. The event will be highlighted by the performance of an original suite composed and arranged by **Manny Albam** and to be performed by the C.O.T.A. Cats and guest soloists Phil Woods and Nelson Hill... March 22 was the date of a "Tribute to Women in Jazz"

at Philadelphia's Clef Club where Trudy Pitts and Shirley Scott were honoured... That city's Painted Bride Center for the Emerging Arts has an impressive multimedia lineup. This diversity is emphasised through upcoming performances by the **Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band** (June 10) and **David Murray** (June 21). Coda writer **Gerard Futrick** is one of five photographers to have their jazz portraits on display June 5 to July 3... Art Park, on the Niagara peninsula at Lewiston, will showcase this summer the Great Swing Guitars of Joe Pass, Barney Kessel and Jim Hall, Ella Fitzgerald, A Tribute to Stan Kenton with the Four Freshmen, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and Pat Metheny... The John Abercrombie concert scheduled for April 4 in Ann Arbor was cancelled.. This year's Conneaut Jazz Festival takes place August 28-30 and focuses on the traditional and swing elements of the music. Full details from Joe Boughton, 283 Jefferson St., Meandville, PA... Paquito D'Rivera collaborated with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra April 3... Chicago's **Links Hall** (3435 N. Sheffield) includes jazz in its presentations. Percussionist Thurman Barker gave a solo presentation May 2 and Hal Russell and the NRG Ensemble are there June 13... The fourth **Chicago Blues Festival** took place June 5-7 with an impressive lineup of currently active performers including Little Milton, Joe Liggins and the Honeydrippers, Roscoe Gordon, Jessie Mae Hemphill, Sunnyland Slim, Jimmy Walker and Homesick James. Washington's Hot Mustard Jazz Band is active in the area and their music is available in person or on lps and cassettes. Write Dave Burns, 1712 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009... B.B. King and the Count Basie Orchestra appeared May 30 in Charleston, S.C. for the Spoleto Festival... PBS aired highlights of the 1986 Jacksonville Festival on May 8... The King Biscuit Blues Festival will be held October 10 in Helena, Arkansas... The River City Blues Festival was held April 4/5 in Baton Rouge... "Texas Musicians in Art: an Art Sale and Exhibition" was on display March 2 to April 3 in the lobby of the First City Centre in Austin, Texas... The University of Idaho has named its school of music in honour of **Lionel Hampton**. Hampton was there February 28 for the inauguration... The **Gibson Jazz Concert** in Denver March 20 and 21 was highlighted with a series of duets between Benny Carter and Phil Woods. Other outstanding moments came from trombonist Jimmy Knepper and Buddy DeFranco. Those were the peaks above the overall quality of play from Dan Barrett, Bill Berry, Richard Davis, Alan Lawson, Hank Jones and Jack Sheldon... Ernst Reyseger and Alan "Gunga" Purves performed April 12 at

the Music Academy of the West. The music was recorded by Nimbus Records for future release... The solo piano of Cecil Taylor and the Sun Ra Arkestra were at Oakland's Calvin Simmons Theater on May 15... The second "We're Jaazzed" youth adult jazz festival took place May 23/24 at the Santa Clara Fairgrounds' Family Fair Park... Herb Wong is no longer at BlackHawk Records... Cinemax aired "Sassy-n-Brass" March 22. Trumpeters Maynard Ferguson, Dizzy Gillespie, Chuck Mangione, Al Hirt and Don Cherry and a rhythm section of Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Billy Higgins were featured with the singer... The Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band began a month long tour of the U.S. May 22 at the Sacramento Dixieland Jubilee... Fall cruises to the Caribbean have a jazz flavour through the sponsorship, once again, of Norwegian Caribbean Lines. There are sailings September 20, October 24 and November 8.

The **George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band** was on tour in Europe during April. The band was a mixture of U.S. and European players which included Marvin Stamm, Manfred Schoof, Palle Mikkelborg, Ray Anderson, Lee Konitz, Joe Henderson, Larry Schneider and vocalist Sheila Jordan. There will be a recording issued by ECM from this tour and the band is scheduled to tour the U.S. between October 8-21. U.S. representatives are Hope Carr/Larry Stanley, Sightwaves, 26 West 76th Street, New York, N.Y. 10023. The International Jazz Federation announces that the sixth European Jazz Competition will be held Oct. 29-31 in Leverkusen, West Germany. It is open to young jazz groups resident in Europe... Steve Lacy, oboist Mario Arcari, flugelhornist Franc Koglmann and Klaus Koch (bass) were heard in concert April 24 in Vienna... The **Ben Webster Foundation** held a birthday celebration for their mentor April 19 with a big band battle between Mercer Ellington's orchestra and the Danish Radio Band... Helsinki heard a duo concert with John McLaughlin and Jonas Hellborg followed a week later by a visit from Pharoah Sanders' quartet. The highlight of the season was the appearance of Gil Evans who conducted the UMO band. More recently, Jerome Richardson has been a featured soloist with the UMO band and the Tim Berne quartet was at the Tavastia Club. The **Dizzy Gillespie 70th Anniversary Big Band** will be at the Pori Festival... The Horn Web Sax Quartet features Martin Archer, Derek Saw, Nigel Manning and Vic Middleton... Chick Corea, the Misha Mengelberg - George Lewis band, Gerry Mulligan, Jim Hall and John Surman were the headliners of the spring concert season in Regio Emilia, Italy... Champion Jack Dupree, Sir Charles Thompson,

Jackie McLean/McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Carla Bley were among the headliners of the spring festival in Terrassa, Spain... Jerome Richardson, Oliver Jones, Charlie Rouse and Johnny Griffin were at Zurich's Widder Bar in March... New Orleans in Lugano 1987 featured the **New York City Swing All Stars** (Joe Newman, Billy Mitchell, Benny Powell, Jack McDuff, Major Holley, Marc Elf and Terrie Lynn Carrington), and the bands of Humphrey Lyttelton and Papa Bue. Special guests included Tank Lawson, Memphis Slim and Marcia Ball. The event was scheduled for June 12-14... July 13 is the beginning of the jazz week at Montreux this summer... This year's Moers New Jazz Festival was held June 5-8.

Greenwood Press announces the publication of Michel Ruppli's 876 page discography of the Clef/Verve labels.... Owen Bryce (68 Pond Bank, Blisworth, Northants NN7 3EL) has published three volumes of instructional books called "Let's Play Jazz"... "Big Noise from Notre Dame" is Joseph Carey's history of the Collegiate Jazz Festival... The CD Review Digest has begun publication with extensive listings of recent CDs and extracts of reviews from magazines and newspapers. There are a reasonable number of jazz entries but they are buried within an overall section called "popular music".

Koko Taylor has a new recording on Alligator Records. Albert Collins won a Grammy for his Alligator recording of "Master of the Telecaster"... New recordings by James Newton, Eric Dolphy (private tapes giving a different look at the talented reedman), Stanley Turrentine, Tony Williams and Kenny Burrell are all on the **Blue Note** label. That company has begun releasing a lot of CDs - mostly music from their classic period. Among these are two single CD collections of the Art Blakey Birdland and Bohemia sessions, the Sonny Rollins Vanguard sessions and the Kenny Dorham Bohemia dates. All of these were originally on three lps. Both the original Horace Silver Quintet session and "Blowin' The Blues Away" are among the ones due to arrive soon... **Cadence Jazz Records** has released "Man With A Sax" - a jazz fantasy by American writer Robert Shure in collaboration with noted Finnish composer Heikki Sarmanto... The Fantasy Group, which now owns Pablo has released an Oscar Peterson Quartet date, a Milt Jackson session and a collection of Duke Ellington concert recordings. All these were never issued before in the U.S. "Can't Take You Nowhere" is the title of Dave Frishberg's new Fantasy lp. Lps by vocalists Arthur Prysock and Carla White have also been issued as well as a Landmark lp of Buddy Montgomery... Seven

new titles from the **Impulse!** catalog are available now. "Ballads", "Impressions", "Crescent" and "Coltrane" are four of the saxophonist's strongest dates for the label. Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers' session, Oliver Nelson's "More Blues and the Abstract Truth" and Pharoah Sanders' "Thembi" complete the release. They are available in CD, LP and cassette... Mobile Fidelity's new CDs include "The Great Songs of the Cotton Club" with Maxine Sullivan (ex Stash), Charlie Barnet's 1966 Vault/Creative World session and the Mainstream Clifford Brown/Max Roach lp which is mostly Mercury material and is already out on CD on another label. The company, in a recent press release, announced the production of "audiophile" compact discs using a gold based metal. The first release on "**Ultradisc**" is a jazz sampler which includes cuts by Zoot Sims (ex Famous Door), Charlie Barnet, Erroll Garner, Shelly Manne, Buddy Rich and Max Roach / Clifford Brown.... **Polygram Classics** has released a 20 cassette series of jazz classics to be known as "Walkman Jazz". The digitally mixed tapes will have 50-60 minutes of music. The material is drawn from the extensive Verve/Mercury/MPS catalogs by the major names of the 1950s. Polygram distributes Black Saint and Soul Note in the U.S. New releases from that label feature four of today's dominant performers - Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Max Roach and David Murray... Red Records has new lps by Cedar Walton (Blues for Myself), Chet Baker (At Capolinea), Sphere (Live at Umbria Jazz) and Bobby Watson (Round Trip). Forthcoming releases include additional material from Bobby Watson and Cedar Walton as well as a Kenny Barron / Buster Williams collaboration from Umbria Jazz... There are ten new **Stomp Off** lps by Humphrey Lyttelton, Dave Dallwitz, New Orleans Rascals, The Dry Throat Five, Original Salty Dogs, Butch Thompson / Hal Smith / Charlie DeVore, Minerva Jazzband, Jack Rummel, Acker Bilk with Ken Colyer and Terry Waldo and the Gotham City Band... Stash Records has reissued lps by John Pizzarelli and the Blue Birds Society Orchestra... The two Reeves Soundcraft tapes with Red Allen and Coleman Hawkins have been issued again - this time as two separate lps (short playing time but better sound) on Jass Records... New from Theresa is a John Hicks concert date with Walter Booker and Idris Muhammad plus flutist Elise Wood and Bobby Hutcherson.

Noted British jazz writer and Ellington expert **Eddie Lambert** died March 12 of cancer. He was 56... Drummer **Buddy Rich** died April 2 in Los Angeles of complications following a brain tumour operation... **Maxine Sullivan** died April 7. She was 75. - compiled by John Norris

RECORD REVIEWS



THE SONNY CLARK MEMORIAL QUARTET / VODOO / BLACK SAINT BSR 0109

JOE HENDERSON / THE STATE OF THE TENOR / BLUE NOTE BT 85123 (VOL. 1) BT 85126 (VOL. 2)

JAMES NEWTON / ROMANCE AND REVOLUTION / BLUE NOTE BT 85134

DENNY CHRISTIANSON BIG BAND FEATURING PEPPER ADAMS / SUITE MINGUS / JUSTIN TIME JUST 15

STAN GETZ / VOYAGE / BLACKHAWK BKH-51101-D

LEE KONITZ QUARTET / IDEAL SCENE / SOUL NOTE SN 119

FRANK MORGAN / LAMENT / CONTEMPORARY C-14021

GIJS HENDRIKS — BEAVER HARRIS QUARTET / SOUND COMPOUND / YVP MUSIC 3009

TRIO PODIUM / LIVE IN MONTREAL / TRACTION AVANT 400

Over the last forty years, jazz has evolved in more ways than one could have ever known then: not only has it become an international art form, but its own development has lead to an increasingly diffuse boundary. In essence, jazz is a *syncretic* music, borrowing freely from other sources and ordering them in new configurations.

Concurrent to periods of active experimentation is a similar movement towards consolidation. In the past, this became a trend in itself, as one talked about "revivals", and, more recently, some have suggested the concurrent onslaught of the jazz mainstream as being "revisionist" in character. Beyond such terms, jazz remains firmly rooted to a core of musical values that cement the past to the present.

More than ever, this tradition has become a central feature in today's scene. As many younger musicians were defected to the ranks of rock and fusion in the seventies, most of them have now come back into the fold of the jazz mainstream. Moreover, many younger musicians of a more experimental persuasion have also edged their way back to the middle ground of jazz.

From this latter category, saxophonist **John**

Zorn and pianist **Wayne Horvitz** have (lo and behold!— devoted their latest collaboration to the music of the late Sonny Clark. As surprising as this fact may seem, the results are even more. These guys can blow! Now, the skeptics are invited to check it out, and Horvitz's statement that all Zorn ever practices is bebop, is no put on either. From start to finish, the music cooks and all seven tunes are dusted off and brought to life as though they were never forgotten.

Through it all, Zorn gives us driving solos tinged with blue and some of his schtick thrown in for good measure, minus the duck calls and bowls of water. On alto, he sounds close to Ernie Henry, though he has a flare for more extravagant ideas than the standard bop phraseology. Horvitz, for his part, has all of Sonny's blues licks down to a science. Ray Drummond on bass is today's man on the big fiddle, while drummer Bobby Previte proves

that you don't have to be flashy or loud to be on top of things. It would surely be foolhardy to assume that Zorn and co. will turn into mainstreamers, but it is still a treat to have them "come out of the closet", so to speak, and show another set of chops. Since variety is the spice of life, I hope that this will not be their last venture in this direction.

Yet another symptom of this consolidation is the proliferation of record labels that have opted for a mainstream sound. Chief amongst these is the newly reborn Blue Note records. Once the standard bearer of post-bop jazz, its revival is surely a telling sign of the "state of the art".

As one of its finest representatives, **Joe Henderson** has come around full circle in the jazz world by returning to his "roots", in that he has two new recordings for this label, which first gave him his big break some 25 years ago.

With Ron Carter and Al Foster as sole accompanists, both of these live albums, taped at the Village Vanguard, offer us some really heavy duty grooves. Volume One has Joe warming up, taking off on the last track, *Isotope*. But for those converts to compact discs, you get a bonus with a stellar version of *Stella By Starlight*. Volume Two is pure Henderson at his best: wherever his flights of imagination bring him to, the journey is always unexpected but in full control all the way. Without a piano, he is free to set the pace, never failing once to tell a convincing story. Not only is this **State of the tenor**, but moreso, this is the "state of the tradition".

Bearing in mind Blue Note's earlier commitment to fostering new talent, they have maintained this policy in their second coming. **James Newton** represents this younger generation of black musicians carving their own voices in an already crowded marketplace. By choosing the flute as his sole voice of expression, he is taking up a particular challenge in searching for his own artistic identity. In this, his second album for the label, he has chosen to pay tribute to Charles Mingus the composer. Though his flute work is not devoid of interest, his compositional abilities are the highlight.

Newton's reorchestration of *Meditations on Integration* is deserving, while his own suite, *The Evening Leans Towards You*, shows his classical influence. With *Forever Charles* and Ornette's *Peace* to round off the proceedings, each cut is set in a different instrumental combination (including one or two trombones, cello, vibes plus rhythm section). Through it all, Newton gives credence to the broad spectrum of compositional and orchestral possibilities.

As large ensembles were once an intrinsic part of the music, they now occupy a more marginal role, often reduced to that of a feature vehicle for a particular soloist or for the odd musician trying to prove his writing skills. The **Denny Christianson Big Band** of Montreal is led by an expatriate Californian and trumpeter, and for this, their second album, the band has chosen to feature the late **Pepper Adams** as guest soloist. Given the fact that this is Pepper's last studio session, one may pick this up as an eventual collector's item, but let us not confine our motives to sheer memorabilia.

Wisely enough, the producers stayed away from the "last recording syndrome", because this is Pepper's vital voice being heard loud and clear, albeit slightly jaded by his diminishing strength. To assist him, the 18-piece orchestra provides a good backdrop, supportive but not particularly distinctive in its charts. Mind you, this orchestra could do a lot more, but a band is only as good as its writers and arrangers. Though the major work is a suite of three interconnected Mingus tunes (*Slop, Fables of Faubus, I X Love*), one gets more the feeling of a collage than that of an organic work, which was the hallmark of Charles Mingus's genius.

As much as large ensembles offer added textures and dynamics, the crux of the music is located in small group performance. In the bop era, the quintet was the yardstick, until such time that the quartet (with saxophone) became the standard bearer of the jazz tradition. As a matter of fact, some musicians have built their

entire reputations on this very format. One name that surely comes to mind is that of **Stan Getz**: for years now, he has produced a steady stream of albums without other horn players, save for his recent collaboration with Chet Baker on *Sonet*.

Basically, reviewing a Stan Getz album is a hard chore: each new record (this one being his first in the last four years) upholds the same values of swing, melody, mood and personality. In one way, one does not expect to be surprised. Yet, his steady refusal to confine his repertoire to familiar tunes prevents him from becoming stale. Of the six tunes, only two are standards (*I Thought About You, Yesterdays*), while pianist Kenny Barron contributes two and drummer Victor Lewis another one, the last tune being an original by pianist Victor Feldman. In sort, this album is, to quote Stan Getz himself, "a classical-jazz approach to music", an apt summary of Getz's art for that matter.

The values that the tenor saxophonist espouses are readily shared by **Lee Konitz**, and moreso in this new release of his. For starters, the title is a sure tip off: to have one's own small working band allows for an effective intermeshing of personalities and individual sounds which can be worked out more spontaneously than with a larger ensemble.

This quartet brings these elements into fruition, and in so doing, it offers us some unexpected twists along the way. Side one is a suite of three originals, one by Konitz and two by pianist Harold Danko, linked together by Al Harewood's brief but pointed drum solos. Side two contains an intriguing rendition of *Stella By Starlight*, beginning with Konitz extemporizing a cappella and ending with a double time solo by Danko before the recap. For Konitz fans, this is a pretty good outing; as for those who have misgivings about his dry sound, there are some good moments by the pianist and the bassist, Rufus Reid, and also the drummer, who really cements the group into a cohesive unit.

Herein lies the popularity of the quartet: because each family of instruments is represented, it is possible to achieve a balanced ratio of sounds, and it is no wonder that many established performers settle into its comfortable confines. Moreover, it is also an ideal context for lesser known musicians to gain public notice. For **Frank Morgan**, it is more of a second coming, a return to the scene after years of absence due to those problems which befell almost every jazz artist of the fifties.

On this new release, the second since his comeback, he delivers a varied set, ranging from the overwrought (*Perdido, Half Nelson*) to the not so familiar (like Lee Morgan's — no relation between the two — *Ceora* and a very warmly rendered version of a Buffy St. Marie song, *Until It's Time For You To Go*). The trio of Cedar Walton, Buster Williams and Billy Higgins suits the leader to a tee, and the altoist's broad sound is inspired by Bird for sure, but refurbished to today's standards. This album may not be particularly distinctive, but by the results, one would not know that Mr. Morgan has been away from the scene for close to thirty years. In any event, this album if a sure bet for all those mainstream enthusiasts out there.

As much as North American has assumed its role as a purveyor of the tradition, Europe has

had its own share in that respect. Whether a distinct European jazz tradition exists or not may be a moot point, but the collaborations of Europeans and Americans have helped to widen the music's base. Some Americans have indeed made Europe their home, while many more tour the continent regularly, getting more opportunities (and recognition) over there than in their own backyard. In Holland, for instance, jazz has had a particularly devoted following, not only in terms of audiences, but also in the amount of home grown talent, of which only a handful are known on this side of the Atlantic. One musician new to me is **Gijs Hendriks**, a 49 year old reedman, who has teamed up with American drummer **Beaver Harris** for a new quartet album, entitled "Sound Compound".

On it, we get to hear the saxophonist's musings on soprano all the way down to baritone, although the tenor seems to be his main axe. For a multi-instrumentalist it is always a challenge to focus a sound on each horn, and even if his tenor has a pervasive Wayne Shorter tone, his soprano and baritone playing seem better defined. As for the music, it too has a few problems in terms of conception, particularly on side one, where the solos ramble somewhat and the themes don't jell fully. However, side two offers a much better fare on all counts, which gives hope for an even stronger outing on a subsequent recording.

Not only does Holland have a large body of established performers, it is also encouraging an infusion of new blood. For years now, the BIM foundation has been a major catalyst for the Dutch jazz scene. In the last three years, they have awarded a prize for best new talent. In fact, this album produced by the **Trio Podium** is a live recording featuring the three first winners of the BIM prize: trombonist Wolter Wierbos, alto saxophonist Paul van Dernen and guitarist Jan Kuiper. These three young musicians played at last year's Montreal Jazz Festival and, as reviewed by yours truly, this concert was a personal highlight. Consequently, this album merits high praise (and hopefully a good distributor), because this group's creative chemistry is truly cohesive. And most importantly, one does not miss a rhythm section because of the tight and inventive interplay between them.

In essence then, one can state that the jazz tradition is founded on two cornerstones, the first being small group performance, the second being harmonically oriented improvisation on thematic material. Once reviled by more radical thinkers, at times criticized because the forms were too confining, the tradition has weathered these storms and is now back at the center of the stage. But as jazz is in constant flux, the tradition has always broadened itself by carefully distilling the new with the old, just like separating the wheat from the chaff. For some, this process has been too slow moving, for others (a small minority) it has gone too quickly. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to say that there is only one tradition definable by a narrow set of characteristics. And that may just explain why the music is so exciting, both as an artistic expression and as a sociological reflection of our pluralistic world culture.

— Marc Chénard

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- 2005 TEDDY WILSON * "IN TOKYO" * Teddy Wilson (piano)
- 2007 JIM GALLOWAY * "THREE IS COMPANY" * Jim Galloway (reeds), Dick Wellstood (piano), Pete Magadini (drums)
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- 4009 FRASER MACPHERSON / OLIVER GANNON * "I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU" * Fraser MacPherson (tenor sax), Oliver Gannon (guitar)
- 4010 ED BICKERT/DON THOMPSON * "DANCE TO THE LADY" * Ed Bickert (guitar), Don Thompson (piano)
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- 001 LLOYD GARBER * "ENERGY PATTERNS" * Lloyd Garber (guitar)
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- 003 MAURY COLES' SOLO SAXOPHONE RECORD
- 004 BILL SMITH * "PICK A NUMBER" * with David Prentice (violin), David Lee (bass, cello)
- 005 RANDY HUTTON/PETER MOLLER * "RINGSIDE MAISIE" * Randy Hutton (guitar), Peter Moller (percussion)
- 006 PAUL CRAM * "BLUE TALES IN TIME" * Paul Cram (saxophones), Paul Plimley (piano & vibes), Gregg Simpson (drums) & others..
- 007 BILL SMITH ENSEMBLE * LIVE IN TORONTO * (Cassette / 82 Minutes Stereo Dolby) * Bill Smith (sopranino saxophone), David Prentice (violin), Arthur Bull (guitar), David Lee (bass), Stich Winston (drums).



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