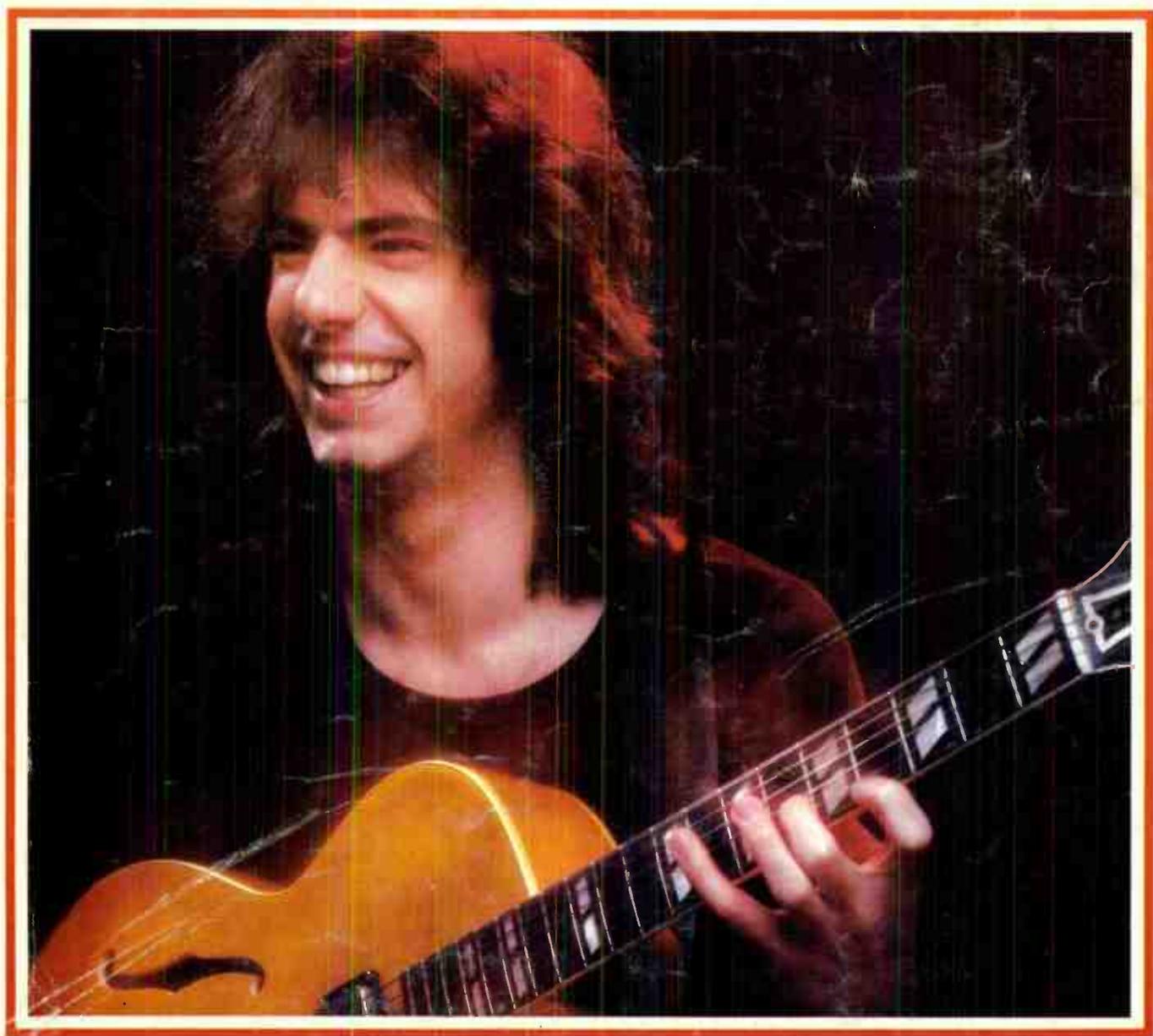


MUSICIAN

PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 18 JUNE, 1979 \$1.25

The Pat Metheny Method
Eno, Sample, Gaye, Straits, Roach
Black, Brown and Beige



Good-by Jazz Organ

World Radio History



Years ago this was a flanger.

Incredible, isn't it? But when flanging was first used, it was done like this. Rumor has it that the first time flanging was achieved, it happened by accident. An engineer mistakenly leaned on the flange of a moving reel altering its speed relative to another simultaneously moving machine. The sweeping sound that resulted was one of an enhanced tonality, similar to a phase shift but also having characteristics of its own. This phenomenon became the hottest new sound in the recording industry overnight, but there were problems. In order to duplicate the flanging sound one had to obtain three recording machines, one experienced engineer, and a lot of time.

It was soon realized that this mysterious sound was actually the result of a time delay causing the cancellation of certain harmonically related frequencies whose sweep could be controlled.

Later, it was also discovered that the same sound could be attained electronically by splitting the signal, passing one half through time delay circuitry, and re-combining the signals. The only setback was that this effect could be produced only with expensive electronic equipment, limiting its use to large recording studios.



The MXR flanger is the first reasonably priced flanger designed for live performance. With the MXR flanger it is possible to repeatedly achieve a wide variety of flanging-related sounds through the manipulation of the controls provided. From classic flanging to a pulsating vibrato, you have control over the parameters of sweep width and speed. As well, you have manual control over the time delay

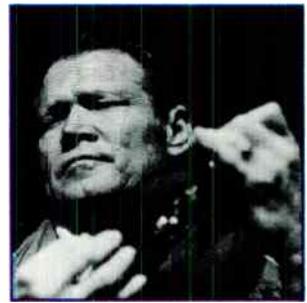
itself, and regeneration of the flanged signal for more intensity.

But it doesn't stop there. The MXR flanger's long time delay capabilities make it one of the most versatile effects on the market. By varying the delay range, colorations from subtle to bizarre are easily available, as well as really thick twelve-string simulation. We think it's incredible, and we believe you will too.

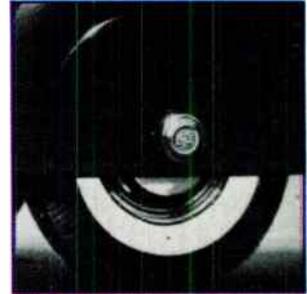
MXR Innovations, Inc., 247 N. Goodman Street,
Rochester, New York 14607, (716) 442-5320

MXR Professional
Products Group

Violinists have always been scarce outside of bluegrass and classical, for no good reason. Chip Stern covers the violin's past and talks with three present-day masters with vastly different styles.



Jazz Organ seems to have all but died out with the advent of portable synthesizers and electric pianos. Transported in huge hearses, it was the most powerful and physical sound in jazz, and Michael Rozek misses it.



Pat Metheny and band are a very hot new generation of musicians who tour incessantly, play an unforced hybrid of jazz, rock, and other influences, set a lot of records and generally play their asses off. Dan Forte reports.



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Cover Photo by Rob Van Patten

MUSICIAN

PLAYER & LISTENER

Letter from the Publishers

Rock, Pop, Soul, Hi-Fi, Edges?? What is this you might ask, has *Musician* finally sold itself down the river to live amongst the comic books and Kiss Rockmania journals? Actually, it's quite the contrary, as you'll soon find upon reading these new columns. *Musician* has always had eclectic tastes, and naturally feel our readers have the same, so it's only right that we would want to cover in our own way that which is most around us, the entire spectrum of so-called popular music, from soul and R&B to the edges of experimental rock. Our own way means finding imaginative columnists to lead us through the maze of musics within these genres and to point out the most interesting sounds that lie within. No matter what you may think of a particular style as a whole, there are always those that transcend style through the sheer excellence of their craft; Ellington's dance music, Ray Charles, The Beatles and Stevie Wonder are a few right off the top.

The writers taking on these tasks are all new to *Musician* and you'll see them more or less regularly in the future. Cris Cioe is a tenor sax player and writer from Detroit who will lead the way through the cultural minefield of Pop. Roy Trakin is a rock critic for *Melody Maker* and the *Village Voice*, among others. Terry Shea, who will be unravelling the complexities of the stereo/audio world is the Editor-in-Chief of *Audio Times*, a bi-weekly paper to the Hi-Fi industry. David Jackson is a writer for the *Village Voice* and the *Amsterdam News* and works at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Brian Cullman is a songwriter, bandleader, writer and artist who has contributed to a variety of publications including *Creamand Crawdaddy*. Please let us know what you think of these new columns and any directions you might like to see followed in the future.

Subscribers! This is our first issue done with our new computer service, a change we hope will clean up a lot of problems you've had to put up with in the past. Please, if there are any irregularities such as a wrong address, name, etc., tell us about it immediately by sending us your *incorrect label* along with the correction. On the same note, new subscribers within the past several months are due an apology as their #17 issues were held up and very late in arriving. Talk to your local teamster about this (firm, but *polite*) as the magazines were being held ransom in a warehouse in Buffalo enroute to the mailer while the truckers went on their spring strike. Thanks for your patience. Check back next month for Frank Zappa, Arthur Blythe, Robert Fripp and some surprises.

Letters

PRINTER'S DEVILS

The printer's devils were even more hellacious than usual last issue. For those who wondered, in the last paragraph of my article on the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Lester Bowie thought the band might start *making* it, not *misusing* it, in about five years. That must have raised a few eyebrows, Bowie's among them. Mine, too. Gadzooks.
Rafi Zabor
Brooklyn, N.Y.

FUNK-A-DUNK

What's gotten into Herbie Hancock? Where does he think he's going with that ridiculous Vocoder? That thing isn't just a waste of time, it's a complete waste of taste. I didn't pay \$10.50 to hear one forty minute set with twenty minutes of it devoted to Herbie playing Kid Scientist on the Vocoder. Especially when he went on twenty-five minutes late because he was chanting! I want a refund. I work hard for my money and I think Herbie Hancock should work a little harder for his than he has been lately. I wrote to you hoping that you

could talk some sense into him. Obviously no one else is.
Bob Mitchell
Concord, Mass.

ART AND JUNK

Some nerve trying to push Parliament/Funkadelic in the same breath as the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Who are you trying to kid? Art plus Junk might be more like it. I've been reading your magazine for over a year and I used to be your biggest fan. Mingus, Zawinul, Tyner, Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett and now this? Are you going to put Donna Summer on the next cover?
Jonathan Pope
Cleveland, Ohio

WE'RE READY

I love and appreciate the fact that *Musician* even exists and enjoy much of it. I look to the future and expect all of us to get better and better. The key to salvation of Western culture lies in the Mass Media. *Musician* has an exciting opportunity as well as a grave responsibility to stave off decadence and promote life in America. We should

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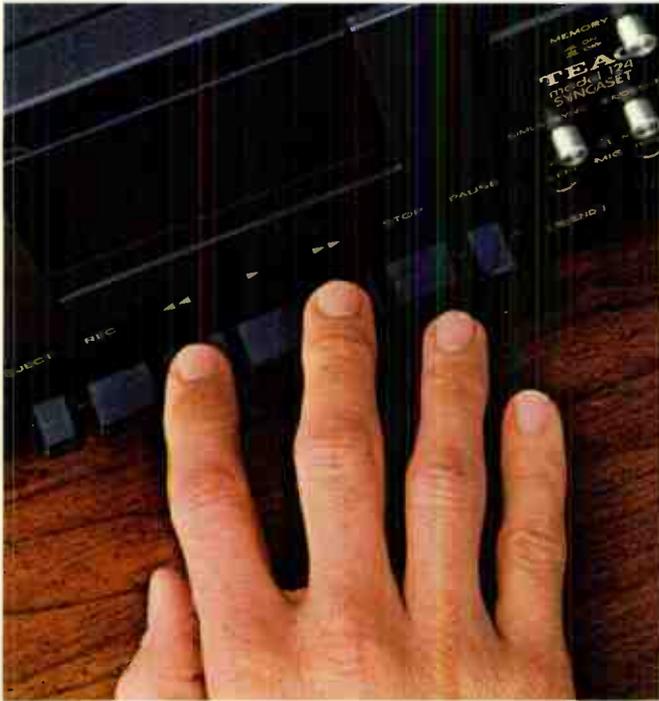
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all do what we can. For now, please concentrate on winning radio over for the people. Seems most pressing.

Bates
Chicago, Ill.

INNER CITY

It's about time somebody did a good piece on Inner City Records. I've been following them for two-and-a-half years while they've been steadily turning out solid music on their label. You can talk all you want about the Pablo's and the Fantasy's and the Concord's you want, but when it comes to putting out good records on the market, Irv Kratka has done more than his share. Face it, the record business is a tough place, but Kratka has gotten the product out there (in New York at least). Your writer got a good handle on Kratka. Sure the guy's trying to make a buck, but who the hell isn't.

Manny Zipkin
N.Y.C., N.Y.

ART ENSEMBLE

I am crazy about your magazine, have just finished the fine Art Ensemble of Chicago article and Rafi Zabor is more than one of the greatest writers on music — he is a great head and soul. How about more on the great international black music — Brazil, Africa (i.e. Mann Dibango), Caribbean, reggae, salsa, the Joujouka, etc. Keep it comin'!

Peter Coryell
San Francisco, Cal.

Matching the Art Ensemble and George Clinton on your Art + Funk cover was too much. Your magazine should be President instead of Jimmy Carter. Wilks Foster
New Cannan, CT.

END OF THE PIER AND KEEP GOING

In a recent Thursday night meeting, a copy of your fine publication was introduced to our Social Notions group for examination. Let me just say how impressed we were at the quality and depth of your presentation. Our group is planning a trip east this summer by tour bus and we were extremely interested in stopping by your offices in Massachusetts to see how a major music magazine functions behind the scenes. This little visit (it would be brief, we promise) would tie directly in with the theme for this summer's trip: Social Responsibility '79. There are fifty-nine curious travelers in our group and we would be most grateful. Your magazine would be the perfect stop to augment our already scheduled stops of (among other things) former Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo, a tribe of West Virginia Indians, an expressway designer and a nuclear power plant.

Betty White
LaCrosse, IN

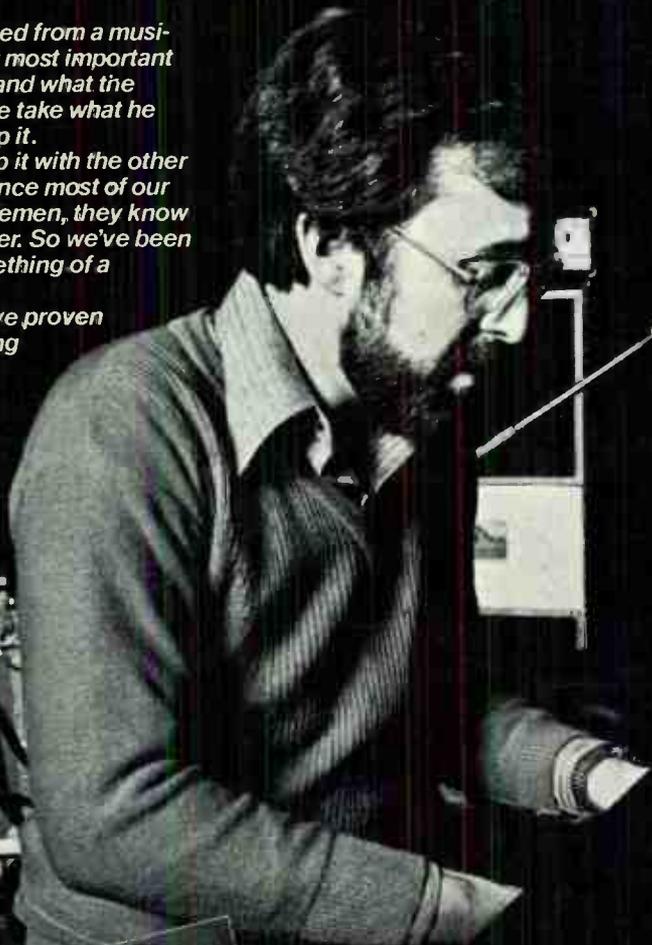
"We plan to make only as many records as we can do right."

— Bob James, President Tappan Zee Records

"Tappan Zee was created from a musician's standpoint. Our most important concern is to understand what the artist is about. Then we take what he does best and develop it.

"... And we develop it with the other artists on the label. Since most of our people have been sidemen, they know about working together. So we've been able to establish something of a repertory group.

"... And I think we've proven that a musician running a record company can work."



"Mongo has performed with just about every famous jazz musician. They know that he's a great catalyst for making hot things happen with those around him. And now he's making them happen with a great young new band. On this new album they go in a disco direction while still combining the jazz and Latin worlds."

Produced by Jay Chattaway.
Executive Producer: Bob James.

"Richard had hesitated to do a solo album because he was afraid he'd be forced to do what some record executive wanted. But I let him know from the start that this would be his album. And it is. It's a cross section of a lot of different aspects of his talent and reveals his totally unique combination of gospel, rhythm & blues and boogie-piano styles."

Produced by Bob James.



"Wilbert Longmire was recommended to us by George Benson. And we're very glad we took George's advice and signed him. Because when we went into the studio for the first time we discovered that not only is he a great guitarist, he also has a fantastic voice!"

Produced by Bob James and Jay Chattaway.

"I fell in love with Mark's sax solos when he was a sideman with Maynard Ferguson's band. He's a good example of Tappan Zee's approach to music because he draws from a lot of elements. Straight ahead jazz roots are combined with a strong sense of funk!"

Produced by Jay Chattaway.

"This album involves a departure for me. All the pieces are my own compositions. I felt that it was time for me to assert myself on my own, make my own statement. I shifted the music into an acoustic vein and worked with people like Ron Carter, Hubert Laws and Ralph MacDonald. And interspersed with that sound are elements of large orchestral writing."

Produced and arranged by Bob James. Associate Producers: Jay Chattaway and Joe Jorgensen.

Tappan Zee Records. The artist's label.

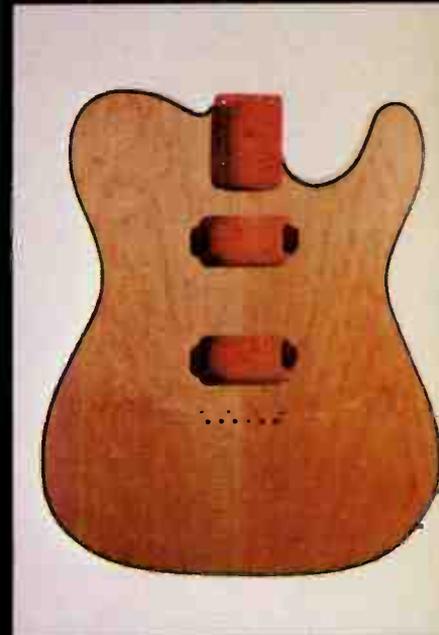
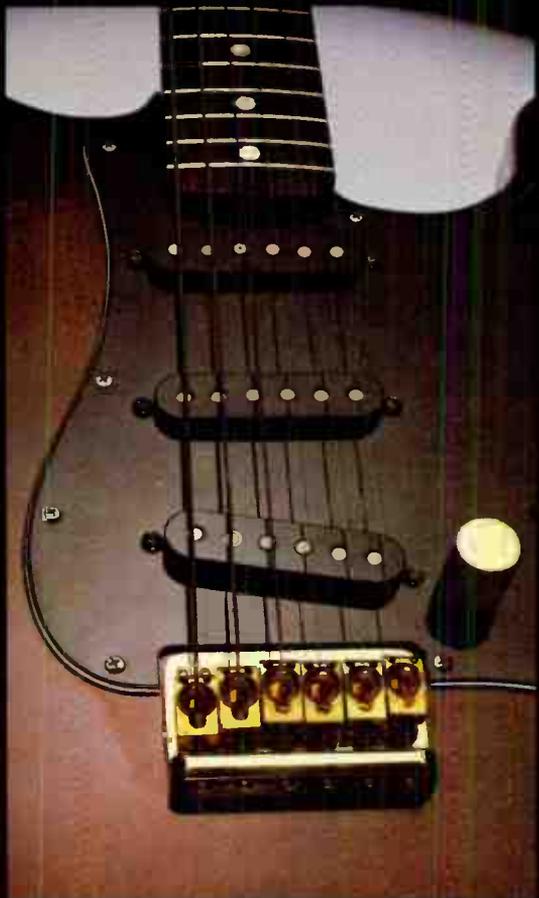
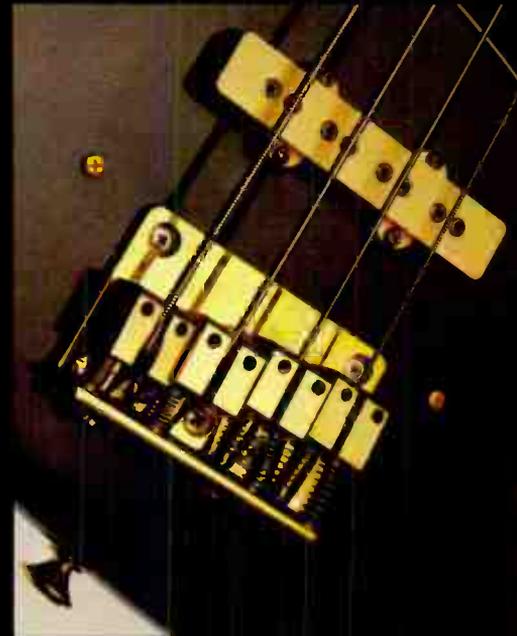
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RECORD NEWS



Godfather II

"When I recorded "Please, Please, Please" in 1955 I was a janitor," remembered **James Brown**, the godfather of soul. "Please, Please, Please" took the mop and broom out of my hand, put decent shoes on my feet and gave me a chance to do things I never thought I'd be able to do — to help the poor people in the ghettos. It gave me a chance to speak and be heard."

James Brown will, we hope, get another chance to be heard by the dancing progeny he fostered, which is what the press conference at the New York offices of Polydor Records was all about. "Due to all of the business arrangements I have, I sort of got pulled away from my records," said Brown as he introduced the press to his first outside producer ever, Brad Shapiro, and announced his return to active concert performances.

Brown seemed unconcerned that the new disco audience seems strangely unaware of his contributions to popular music. "I'm not going to die — I refuse to lose. I went away from the scene to get my head together and get away from the telephones for awhile. It gave me a chance to get some new moves together, and now I'm ready. Everybody been eatin' out of my bag of sugar for a long time. I just decided to go to the bag and release the sugar myself. They're doing things I did twenty years ago, so it's just the idea of me coming back



FEINGOLD

and wanting to deal again. And may the best band win. I'm going to do what I feel and let the people be the judge."

Polydor seems ready to give James Brown a real push, after years of acting as if he was washed up. Polydor Vice-President Dick Kline stated unconditionally that "this represents a major commitment of Polydor to put James Brown back where he never should have left in the first place — he is the original disco man."

James Brown is much more than disco. As much as the Beatles, his music put an entire planet on the good foot — dig his influence on the African fire-funk of Fela Ransome-Kuti. He expressed the joys, frustrations, and aspirations of black people — loud and proud. James Brown epitomizes funk, sensuality, and raw energy. Seeing him up close, glowing and confident like a 20 year old, a fresh process on top his head, one hoped Brown would not be swallowed up by trends. He is a national treasure. Take us to the bridge James Brown.

Big Gets Bigger

A&M, long considered the most successful and creative independent label, shocked the industry by signing a distribution deal with **RCA**. This move, coupled with **MCA's** purchase of **ABC Records** makes the record industry a very exclusive club with only the big boys playing for the high stakes. A cneck of the current trade charts shows only about 10% of the top 200 albums available on independent labels or 90% of the hot product controlled by six multi-national conglomerates, CBS, EMI, WEA, Polygram, MCA and RCA. And, if you believe the rumors that the largest independent left, Columbia Picture's Arista, is either about to sign a distribution deal with someone or set up their own international distribution system to compete with the big boys, the situation is getting worse. If there are no hot albums for local independent distributors to handle, these small businessmen will almost surely vanish and that will be bad news for music, particularly for jazz. Independent distributors are currently the only way that small jazz labels can get their products in the stores. It is hoped the Feds will step in soon and break up some of the conglomerates. MCA's decision to become a major force in the record business may have precipitated the recent rash of activity. MCA has tons of money and they are currently putting much of it in the record business to set up their own distribution network and buy labels and talent. It is known they out-bid big offers from Polygram and EMI to get ABC and they were also interested in A&M. MCA has also been reported to be bidding to get Gamble and Huff's **Philadelphia**

International away from **CBS**. If MCA continues to throw its money around, the record business could end up like the sports world with mediocre talent going for over-inflated prices.

Motown Records long a force in popular music, has just announced the formation of a new jazz division to be headed up by Lee Young Sr., vice-president of creative administration. Motown already distributes the beleaguered CTI label, and has had Grover Washington's Reed Seed on the charts for almost six months. Motown will be searching for new talents as well as established artists. Their first album will be by a five piece group called Dr. Strut, scheduled for release in May.

Inner City Records lost the services of the **Jeff Lorber Fusion**, the best selling group in the history of the label. Lorber has been successfully courted by Arista Records, and will now bring his infectious jazz-latin-funk hybrid to a wider audience through his new company's increased promotional muscle.

Well, it's time to snatch up those great **Barnaby/Candid** jazz recordings before they disappear from the racks again, because GRT Corporation has dissolved Janus Records and released the company's employees, including label president Ed DeJoy. The label's active groups, Kayak and Charlie, are seeking new record company affiliation, and Beserkley Records is scrambling around looking for a new distributor. The Barnaby/Candid catalog, which contains the classic Mingus Quartet (with Dolphy, Curson, and Richmond), and works by Cecil Taylor, Booker Ervin, Abbey Lincoln, and Coleman Hawkins, was originally produced as a series by journalist Nat Hentoff.

The **Miles**-watch continues. Followers of the great trumpeter-talent scout eagerly await his return. Trumpeter Lester Bowie saw Miles recently, said he looked great, and proposed to the Prince of Darkness that they do an album of duets. More likely it will be a collaboration between Miles and arranger Gil Evans (whose presence on the scene is also sorely missed). Evans told us that he saw Miles recently and that "we're going to do something, but we don't know what." Columbia told us that they are actively greasing the wheels for Miles' return and hope to have an album by June. Whatever and whenever, everyone at Musician sends Miles their best wishes. Thanks for all the good music, Miles. While we're giving out thanks, we'd like to express our gratitude to Mr. Thelonious Sphere Monk, who is not well, and may not be gracing us with his music again. As musicians seek to work their way out of the virtuosic maze erected by Bird and Trane, Monk's music becomes more and more important every year. Peace be with you, Monk.



Blues Are Back

Never underestimate the power of the media or the power of the **Blues**. The cultural deification of the Blues Brothers and George Thorogood has given the impression that these gentlemen initiated a blues revival. In fact, most aficionados feel that a general upsurge in real blues music has been evolving for several years. Giving credit to people like the Blues Brothers, they feel, is putting the cart before the horse.

What we can attribute to the media is a new wave of chic to the blues as everyone jumps on the bandwagon. **Alligator Records**, one of

the finest contemporary blues labels, told us that business is booming as far as album sales and bookings are concerned. Alligator said that their business expanded 100% from last year, and they anticipate another 100% increase this year. For instance, **Albert Collins** is flying to London to do a double bill with George Thorogood, then goes on to Geneva to play in the New Morning Festival with Taj Mahal, Johnny Winter, Richie Havens, and Elizabeth Cotton. **Son Seals** is making a big southern college tour that culminates Easter weekend in New Orleans, then moves on to Europe, and an East Coast tour this summer. Miss Koko Taylor is going to Europe, Japan, and possibly Africa. And Grammy nominee Fenton Robinson ("I Hear Some Blues Downstairs") is artist-in-residence in Springfield, Illinois.

At Delmark Records everyone is thrilled about the new surge of popular recognition for the great blues guitarist Otis Rush, while Tomato Records is ready for anything with a roster of blues luminaries that includes Albert King, Clifton Chenier, John Lee Hooker, and Lightnin' Hopkins.

B.B. King just returned from the Soviet Union, where he was the first blues artist ever to play that country, and **Muddy Waters** — spiritual godfather to modern bluesmen — is reaping the benefits of several fine Epic albums produced by Johnny Winters. Muddy is opening for Eric Clapton on the British superstar's extensive U.S. tour. Word is also about that Muddy will be honored at this year's Newport Festival.

In case there was doubt in your mind about the power of media hype, A & M Records just announced that **Ethel Merman**, the voice that sunk a thousand ships, is going to be making an all-disco album. No official word yet from A & M but well placed sources inform us that the album will be called *Sister Sludge*, and will feature guest appearances by Chuck Mangione and Namu the Killer Whale.

P.S. This is not a put-on, she really is doing a disco record.

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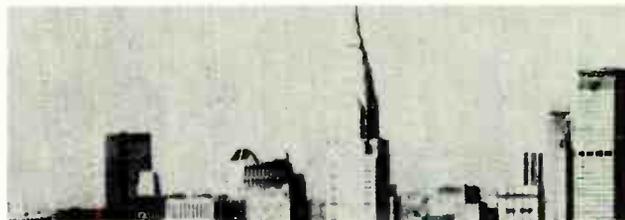


Ornette Discovers TV

One of the more remarkable musical events in recent memory was the nationally televised appearance of Ornette Coleman and Prime Time on NBC's "Saturday Night Live." At about 12:45 guest host Milton Berle (yes, Milton Berle) made his oblique introduction. Saying that it wasn't true he stole jokes, Berle introduced his writers, and cut walked five oriental gentlemen. After telling some jokes, ostensibly in another language, Berle snickered and quipped that "I

don't understand a word they say," followed by "ladies and gentlemen, Ornette Coleman." Was that meant to imply that this was Chinese music or what?

The camera shifted to a loft setting as drummers Ron Shannon and Denardo Coleman laid down a four on the floor backbeat, a sho' nuff disco pulse (some would call it disco, anyway). Ornette announced the repeating vamp figure to "Times Square" on alto, then *continued on next page*



Newport Schedule 1979

Beginning Friday, June 22 and running through Sunday, July 1, the **Newport Jazz Festival** will be back with an even bigger calendar of events than last year. Most of the concerts will be held at the usual venues around the city with the jazz picnic continuing at The Waterloo Village and the final two days of the festival again being held upstate at Saratoga Springs.

The usual Newport favorites will again be performing, Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Hinton, Maynard Ferguson, Sonny Rollins, Lionel Hampton, Gerry Mulligan, etc. Some surprises include Pat Metheny playing with Jaco Pastorius, a new music concert with the Anthony Braxton Quartet, Leroy Jenkins Trio and the Oliver Lake Trio. Muhal Richard Abrams will give a solo piano concert, Earl Klugh, Michael Franks and friends will perform and, guess what? George Wein is having a Disco party at the Roseland Ballroom. Labelled "unforgettable" Chic will be the entertainment of the evening, unless Leonard Feather and Whitney Balliet show up, in which case they will be.

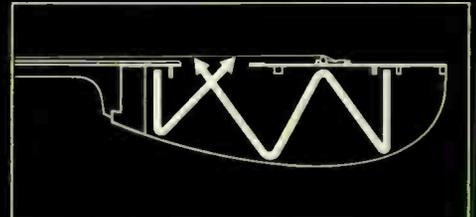
Latin music will be represented by Willie Bobo, Eddie Palmieri, Tito Puente and Cal Tjader. The Blues by Johnnyu Winter, James Cotton, B.B. King and Muddy Waters. Other new faces will be Ronnie Laws, Grover Washington Jr. and Hubert Laws. All this in addition to scores of other musicians and street programs, many of which are free. Write for the full schedule to: P.O. Box 1169, Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023.

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began to unwind descending intervallic variations and blues choruses. Gradually the guitars of Bern Nix and Charlie Ellerbee began to break away from the tonal center with a frenetic rain forest of percussive timbres and the remarkable electric bassist Jamaladeen Tacuma engaged Ornette in a free floating harmolodic dialogue as the drummers began to expand upon the quasi-disco pulse with syncopated variations. In the middle stood Ornette like some sort of great musical mediator, resolving all of the assembled tension and dissonance into a unity of dancing concord; an African pop music of sorts, a metaphor for how disparate individuals can sing separate songs yet be in tune — one leader but no followers. With a reprise of the theme, the music ended to enthusiastic applause.

"Saturday Night Live" producer Howard Shore told *Musician* he had asked Ornette to do the show five months ago and Ornette had needed four months to prepare. The in-studio audience reaction was extremely positive though the coast-to-coast viewing audience was rather more polarized (they probably need about 40 more years to prepare). While jazz listeners may have considered Ornette to have been remarkably tight, rhythmic and accessible, in relation to Milton Berle's schlocky version of "September Song" which immediately followed, Ornette and Prime Time probably seemed like a dance band from Uranus to most TV viewers.

We did find out from Artists House, however, that there were a large number of inquiries and orders from record distributors for Ornette's new album, *Body Meta*, and that a tour is in the works. Now there is word that Ornette has gone into the studio with Prime Time to cut another album. One can only hope that Ornette will be able to get his music out to the people, who desperately need it — Ornette Coleman is primed to change the way we conceive of dance music.



Cobi Narita's Universal Jazz Coalition will hold their Second Annual **Salute to Women in Jazz** for five days from June 26-June 30. Opening day there will be an all-day free festival of new and established groups as well as several jazz dance events. Concerts will be held nights at 8 PM at Damrosch Park - Guggenheim Bandshell at Lincoln Center. Last years event attracted nearly 150 women musicians, more are expected this year. There will also be a schedule of conferences and workshops held in the afternoons. For more info write Universal Jazz Coalition, 156 Fifth Ave. New York, N.Y. 10010.

Bootsy Collins, the Sesame Street of Funk/rock, will be taking thirty children from the greater Detroit area on tour with him this summer. While in the final stages of mixing his new Warner Brothers album *This Boot is Made For Funkin'*, Bootsy got on a local Detroit radio station and sent out a distress signal to the youth of the city: "Calling all geepies, calling all geepies. All children please come to United Sound Studios immediately. I need your help." Over forty children showed up to do vocal tracks for some songs, and now plans are being made to make mini-rock stars of them. Watch out Osmond family — they're comin' to getcha.

Meanwhile, the World Funk Headquarters reports that Parliament/Funkadelic's head funkateer **George Clinton** is tired of the road and looks forward to setting up a Florida recording studio — where he can produce, go deep sea fishing, and generally lazy out. In retiring from touring, Clinton will probably do only occasional dates.

The rise of disco as the predominant force in pop music was recently celebrated by the publishers of *Billboard* in a **Disco Convention** at New York's Hilton Hotel. During the week con-

ventioners were treated to a number of seminars and panel discussions on business and production aspects of the industry, as well as live entertainment at Roseland Dance City by the likes of Sylvester, the Village People, Chic, and Linda Clifford. There was also a simply darling little roller disco party thrown by Casablanca Records at the Empire Roller-dome Disco in Brooklyn. No, John Travolta wasn't there, but Cher was.

Meanwhile, all the major record companies are beefing up their R & B/Disco departments, with many ma-

jo stars jumping on the platinum bandwagon, people like Rod Stewart, Blondie, the Beach Boys, Herbie Hancock, and the Kinks. Future disco mixes may also be expected from Paul McCartney, Steve Miller, Art Garfunkel, and possibly Bob Dylan.

With disco formats proliferating in radio stations all over the country, led by New York's #1 station, WKTU (a major power since switching from a mellow rock format), the disco tsunami shows no signs of cresting. Even WABC-AM is contemplating a format change!



We're Ashamed But We Couldn't Help It.

(this just came in the mail one day and we couldn't help printing it.)

Grace Jones (Island Records), darling of the disco set, gave a very unusual and fascinating show at the Whisky last Friday. The audience was dazzled and aroused by the naughty, newcomer queen of punk disco. Her act was a tasteful combination of fear, intimidation, and light-hearted B & D fun. Her dynamic opening included two chastity belt-wearing, semi-nude dancers jumping rope like fighters in training. Sexy Miss Jones, dressed like a prizefighter, punched her way through the title song of her new album, "Below the Belt".

This Muhammed Ali-type scenario was followed by "Am I Ever Going to Fall in Love in New York City". On this showy number, Miss Jones beat her audience into submission with haughty looks and a leather whip she used as a prop. The full capacity Whisky crowd marveled at her hypnotic sex appeal and her courage to dance in flesh colored body suit with a gold record attached to her head. Her bizarre outfits toyed with the imaginations of a large gay following who screamed with satisfaction, "We Love You Gracie... We Love You Gracie."

"I Need a Man", was the comic relief. Grace Jones, infamous for many costume changes, came out on stage with a white bridal outfit. Her voice was powerful and moving. She got her point across as two male dancers massaged and caressed her bold, black, beautiful body during the monologue.

Her theatrical approach to music is supercharged with New York Disco fever. She excited the crowd with sassy gestures to come up on stage "... if you can pump." Within seconds, she tore clothes off her ardent fans who danced on stage while she gently spanked their fannies. Grace Jones "fists-up" approach to music shows great persona, humor, and courage. She had to have been brave to sing before an awesome crowd with only pre-recorded rhythm tracks. She does indeed stand out of the crowd of typical disco acts. — Stan West

One night last week I gathered up my courage, took 35 hard-earned dollars and did something I'd never done before. Many people who know me will be shocked to learn what happened that night, and my only defense is that it was done in the name of journalism. When it was over I felt I'd gained little and lost much.

What I did was buy half a dozen top-selling, mass-market record albums.

That may not sound like a very serious transgression. Lots of people do it every day. Consider, however, that in my 18 years as a rhythm 'n blues fiend I've bought a minimum of current LPs, and hardly any that were pressed after, say, 1965. Ordinarily, if I had \$35 to spend on vinyl I'd put it toward rare old 45s by Fatso Theus and the Flairs or the Rockin' Townies or the Four Plaid Throats. So why did I do it?

As I said, it was the journalistic ideal. Good old investigative reporting. You see, as we approach the 1980s, some 30 years since the advent of R&B, the term rhythm 'n blues is still very much in use. It is the record industry's most common designation for popular black music, and a handy catch-all for the trade journals. Even the Grammy Awards have an R&B category. But is there any real rhythm in today's black music, or any blues? I decided my readers had a right to know. I would stop at nothing to find out. I would even buy six brand-new albums.

I admit my methods were less than scientific. Like any modern journalist, I tried very hard to make the story turn out the way I wanted. It's so much easier to write favorably about something, particularly music, so I made every effort to dig up some rhythm 'n blues on the industry charts. To this end, I chose albums by R&B journeymen, long-time veterans in the field. This was the line-up:

Gene Chandler, a.k.a. the Duke of Earl; Johnny "Guitar" Watson, 1950s R&B pioneer; Jerry Butler, distinguished lead of the Impressions; Peaches & Herb, the "Sweethearts of Soul"; and the former caped crusader of rhythm 'n blues, James Brown. For the sole reason that his latest album is named for an old Sam Cooke tune, "You Send Me," I added jazzman Roy Ayers. If there were any R&B to be found, surely it would



occur somewhere on these expensively priced discs.

Walking home with the albums under my arm, I began to feel increasingly uncertain. In the store I'd tried not to look too closely at the record covers. But the title of a Guitar Watson cut had caught my eye, and now I couldn't get it out of my mind. "Miss Frisco (Queen of the Disco)". An omen?

I got home and started playing records. Watson's album, *Giant*, (DJM Records), was first. The stylus slid into the opening grooves of "Miss Frisco." (Better to confront the inevitable, I thought.) The air was filled with a rapid, thumping disco beat. The music was thinner than a dollar bill. This was, however, what I'd expected and I felt not at all perturbed. This was merely an understandable commercial gesture. Johnny redeemed himself a bit two cuts later with an acceptable version of his well-known "Gangster of Love." The song had something of an R&B beat, as well as some good guitar licks and harmonica backing. But even gangsters are faddish these days, and the rest of the album was a disco disaster. Johnny "Guitar" Watson — can this be the man who recorded the likes of "Honey" and "Falling in Love" so many years ago? It was like hearing that Abbey Hoffman had joined the Republican Party.

At this point a voice within me said: "That's what you spent your money on?"

Let me tell you something about this

voice. It bore an uncanny resemblance to my father's mocking tone when, decades ago, I brought home my first R&B records.

Undaunted, I staved off this pang of conscience and quickly dropped another disk on my trusty Dual 1212. The Duke of Earl couldn't let me down. After I listened to the title track of *Get Down*, (20th Century-Fox/Chi-Sound), I realized that he most certainly could. Yes, "Please Sunrise" contained some decent falsetto riffs, but nothing near Gene Chandler's early work with the Dukays vocal group. And "I'm the Traveling Kind" had not only good lyrics, but an interesting sax break by Cliff Davis. Still, there was not much R&B on the album.

"You wasted all your money on disco."

"I did not," was my defensive reply. "And even if I did, the magazine will reimburse me." [*Oh yeah? Ed.*]

I picked up another album and peered into the darkness. "Besides, we've still got a ways to go." I began the title song of Roy Ayers' *You Send Me* (Polydor). A triumphant half-smile crept across my face. It wasn't disco. The smile faded. It wasn't Sam Cooke, either. *Schmaltz* reared its ugly head. Not even the vocal interplay between Ayers and talented Carla Vaughn could rescue the tune from an over-ripe string arrangement. Nor could a scat solo by Ayers or his work on the electric piano. The remaining cuts were second-rate funk or third-rate disco.

James Brown offered a little hope, especially on "Someone to Talk To." At certain points he even sounded like the James Brown of old, who along with the Famous Flames, revolutionized 50's R&B with the raunchy "Please, Please, Please." "Someone" contained all the elements of rhythm 'n blues, perhaps a little watered down, but there just the same: basic instrumentation, a taste of background harmony and carload of feeling. Replenished, I paid not one bit of attention to the other dubious tracks of *Take a Look at Those Cakes* (Polydor) and jumped headlong into Peaches & Herb's 2 *Hot* album (Polydor again)...

You might remember Peaches & Herb from their 1960s Date recordings, which included such R&B gems as "Close Your Eyes" and "Darling How

continued page 63

Lord Knows I Tried

A sad but revealing visit with some old friends on the Billboard R&B charts

By Joe Scherzer

R&B

**Art Ensemble
of Chicago
Nice Guys**



Nice Guys. Lester Bowie, Trumpet. Joseph Jarman, saxophones. Roscoe Mitchell, saxophones. Malachi Favors, bass. Don Moye, drums, percussion. "The Art Ensemble of Chicago plays an unbeatable combination: music, drama, tone pictures, avant garde adventurism, traditional jazz improvisation . . . above all, an overwhelming sense of vitality, expansiveness and sheer, joyful fun." (*San Francisco Chronicle*) ECM-1-1126

**Pat Metheny
New Chautauqua**



New Chautauqua. Pat Metheny. Metheny's first solo record (plays electric 6- and 12-string guitar, acoustic guitar, electric bass). "Metheny produces bright, ringing chords and solos that dazzle with melodic and harmonic ingenuity." (Robert Palmer, *New York Times*). Fourth album for ECM following *Bright Size Life*. *Watercolors*, Pat Metheny Group. Current Metheny band voted top new jazz group in *Billboard*, *Record World*, *Cash Box* and *High Fidelity* polls. ECM-1-1131

**Cherry/
Walcott/
Vasconcelos
Codona**



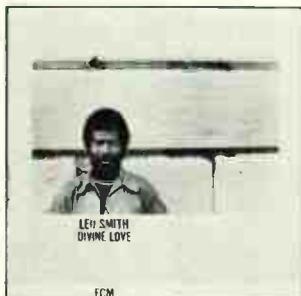
Codona. Collin Walcott, sitar, tabla, percussion and vocals. Member of Oregon. Prior ECM LPs: *Cloud Dance* and *Grazing Dreams*. Don Cherry, trumpet, flute and vocals. Played with Ornette Coleman and others. Current quartet with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden and Eddie Blackwell. Nana Vasconcelos, berimbau, percussion and vocals. Recorded with Egberto Gismonti on ECM (*Danca Das Cabecas* and *Sol Do Meio Dia*). ECM-1-1132

**John Abercrombie
Quartet
Arcade**



Arcade. John Abercrombie, guitar. Work with Dreams, Billy Cobham, Ralph Towner. Jack DeJohnette's Directions. Two solo LPs: *Timeless*, *Characters*. "Its awesomeness is one of sublime constancy, spoken by a master of his instrument." (*Jazz Magazine*). Richie Beirach, piano. ECM LPs: *Eon*, *Hubris*. George Mraz, bass. Peter Donald, drums. ECM-1-1133

**Leo Smith
Divine Love**



Divine Love. Leo Smith, trumpet, flugelhorn, steel-o-phon, gongs, percussion. Dwight Andrews, alto flute, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, triangles, mbira. Bobby Naughton, vibraharp, marimba, bells. Charlie Haden, bass. Lester Bowie, trumpet. Kenny Wheeler, trumpet. ECM-1-1143

Brian Eno is a good clear-headed producer, a limited instrumentalist, an adequate vocalist, and a less-than-memorable melodist. He has the credentials of a grand dilettante: since leaving Roxy Music in the early 70's he has recorded nearly as many albums as Elton John, composed soundtracks for a number of films, founded his own experimental record label, and has produced albums for David Bowie, Talking Heads, Devo, Ultravox, Portsmouth Sinfonia & Chorus (an orchestra made up of "avant-garde artists playing totally unfamiliar instruments"), and more than a few others. So how does he consistently make albums of his own that are this charming and this brilliant?

Eno seems blessed with a natural curiosity, a love for the found object, the unexpected sound. This is a man secure enough in his own world that he is perfectly willing to venture out into other worlds and explore the surroundings, knowing full well that supper (or the key of G) will be waiting for him when he gets home.

Music for Film is an instrumental album of incidental pieces, some from unspecified films that Eno has scored in recent years, and some that might simply be homeless without this context to fit into. There are eighteen pieces, mostly multi-tracked recordings of Eno alone at synthesized keyboards, bells, and chimes, though John Cale, Robert Fripp, Phil Collins, and others make occasional appearances on viola, guitar, percussion, and various et-ceteras. I use the word "pieces," because none of these are actually songs or melodies, nor are they tone-poems. If anything, they are still-lives of sound, occasionally still-lives about the *motion* of sound. The speed of hearing is slowed down, edges evaporate... notes are sounded but are seldom struck. It gets harder and harder to tell the foreground from the background, to tell the man looking out of the window from the window.

It is hard to imagine actual motion, motion on a screen, accompanying this music... how to imagine someone climbing a flight of stairs, a man getting out of a parked car, a woman tasting sand in an unseen desert accompanied by these strange old musics? These are songs of past action, of remembered action, of imagined action, though not

songs of nostalgia (unless it's nostalgia for a past that has not yet occurred).

Years ago, I saw an interview with an aging sitarist. He spoke at length about his home on the coast of his native India, and of how he would rise early in the morning, go down by the beach and tune his sitar to the sound of the wind and the waves. What do you do, the interviewer asked, when you are on tour and you wake up in a hotel room to the sound of traffic and streetnoise? "Very simple," he smiled. "I turn on the air conditioner, and I tune to it."

With that one sentence, he solved his problem of tuning, neatly transcended



Brian Eno. Playing in the electric world where everything is a doorway to somewhere else

the idea of "natural" and "artificial," and more importantly threw us back into an animistic world, where everything that has a shape has a soul, has a sound. A seashell pressed against the ear gives back the sound of the sea, but it is not the only doorway there. In the electric world, everything is a doorway.

Eno, of course, never content with the merely transcendent, insists on taking that idea one step further, making it a revolving door. With the supreme arrogance of the innocent and the very gifted, he tries to be the air conditioner and the sitar, to be both the sun and the man sitting on the roof getting a tan.

No one gets a warmer, more resonant sound from a synthesizer than Eno (with the possible exception of The Band's Garth Hudson, who could probably get a 200 lb block of concrete to sound not only human, but positively exuberant). We are in the presence of machines of loving grace, and Eno is taking us on a guided tour of their circuits, never pretending that steel is not steel, that electrons are not electrons, but showing just where these machines can and cannot go. The fact that Eno himself is not entirely sure of the boundaries is what makes the tour interesting. Where Iannis Xenakis might turn similar motifs into brilliant mathematical exercises, and where Michael Oldfield or Klaus Shulz might expand them into lush monuments of pomp and musical grandiloquence, Eno seems to follow his ideas as if they were fish, allowing (more than allowing... forcing) you to watch the various twists and turns that his imagination and his sounds take.

Eno is more interested in the act of invention than in what shape the invention actually takes, which turns out to be his tragic flaw as well as his saving grace. It's a flaw because nothing ever seems quite complete, songs border on magnificence and then end before they resolve. This is a world with no beginnings or endings, where the countries have no discernible borders or weathers, and where it is possible to walk into the water and not even know it. It is almost too easy to be hypnotized by the textures and the half-light of the sounds. It is Eno's saving grace that he never manipulates the situation, never capitalizes on the sheer beauty and expanse of the sounds for mere effect. As a result, he allows himself to be fully haunted by, and in the service of, a music which, in its raw form, seems not only older than film but sometimes older than music.

A Selected Eno Discography
Music For Airports - Jem/GVC
Music for Film - Antilles
Discreet Music - Antilles
Before and After Science - Island
Another Green World - Island
Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy - Island
No Pussyfooting - Antilles (with R. Fripp)
Evening Star - Antilles (with R. Fripp)
June First, 1974 - Island
Here Come the Warm Jets - Island

Brian Eno: Music for Film

A music older than film, or maybe even older than music itself, recalling a past that has not yet occurred.

By Brian Cullman

Edges

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Just a few of the biggies Americans will court to, marry to, name their children after, and listen to, at home, in the car, the office, the supermarket, again and again and again.

What is pop? Long the misunderstood stepchild of other genres, pop music has been labelled lyrically crass and musically shallow by its critics. And yet, most would agree that Nat "King" Cole, a pop music pioneer, produced some of the loveliest music ever to grace the airwaves. Actually, few people even stop to consider just what the much-maligned word means. Well, it's time to set the record straight. This column will cover pop music exclusively in future issues, and right from the top, perhaps a bit of history and perspective is in order.

Anything that gets on the radio and sells in record stores gets labelled 'pop,' but musically, the word can be much more specific. For example, Gloria

Gaynor's "I Will Survive" has been a huge hit lately, and production-wise, the song is disco to the bone. However, the strings (especially a recurring harp motif) and the record's mix are sweet enough to snare even non-disco ears, while the song's classical roots in European harmony further modulate its disco reality. So, to be more precise, "I Will Survive" is pop-disco, as is the Village People's "Y.M.C.A." Likewise, current pop-rock, as perpetrated by, say, Fleetwood Mac, slides the ear away from rock and roll's harsher guitar distortions and into Stevie Nicks' sweet voice, while retaining the backbeat. This strategy allows for an ever-expanding audience potential without taking the rock fan into totally unfamiliar and saccharine territory.

Of course, in pop-crossover genres like these, *production technique is everything*. After all, Fleetwood Mac was once a hard-edge blues-rock unit, and certainly Rod Stewart, prior to this year's rock-disco smash "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy," kept a much higher rock profile. In other words, a lot of what gets labelled pop is genre material produced to appeal to a wider audience. Nobody would confuse the rock group Boston with Led Zeppelin, right? Tom Scholz's "wall of sound" approach depends on things like multiple overlays of identical acoustic guitar parts along with screaming lead guitar solos; production tricks like this give Boston a much larger audience than just the hard-rock contingent. A vastly different but parallel example from the past would be the Norman Granz-produced Charlie Parker with string sides on these, the greatest alto-sax virtuoso ever glides over string-laden arrangements of standards like "Just Friends," thus increasing his juke-box potential beyond jazz joints exclusively. Chuck Mangione also stands in this pop-jazz tradition.

But there are also "pure pop" formats operating today that are such artfully-manipulated hybrids they actually transcend the genres they refer to, and create musical slots of their own. Songs of this ilk often possess beauty that's unique. At their best, pure pop practitioners see this format not as restricting, but as opening up new musical territory in the popular market that rock and disco ignore. For ease in

handling, here is a brief rundown of the three major categories that pure pop loosely falls into these days.

1) The pop standard: This pop tradition has the deepest roots, with its origins in Broadway show tunes and ultimately, the English dance-hall and European song forms. Past giants of the format include Sinatra and Dionne Warwick (in her classic Bacharach/David phase). Today, Barry Manilow, Johnny Mathis, Barbra Streisand and Melissa Manchester rule this roost. It's a tradition of big orchestral arrangements and, again at best, complex emotions, as with Ms. Manchester's rendition of "Don't Cry Out Loud." Occasionally a pop standard comes along that stretches the genre to new aesthetic heights, as Stevie Wonder has done with songs like "You Are the Sunshine of My Life." And while Billy Joel's albums now cover a lot of musical bases (including pop-rock, as in "Big Shot" from the *52nd St.* album), he has also written the definitive pop standard of the late 70's, "I Love You Just the Way You Are." This neo-classic uses interesting chord changes to shift moods, and the lovely, pastel harmonic colors (using flatted fifths at key points in the bridge) pave the way for a gorgeous Phil Woods alto sax break, one of the best solos on a pop record in recent years. George Benson singing "Unchained Melody" is another contemporary example of the quality pop standard.

2) The soul-based pop tune: This is a format which got its first big boost in the 60's, during the Beatles's Motown-influenced period. (circa *Rubber Soul*). Shuffles like "Got To Get You Into My Life" were stylized reworkings of rhythms and sounds then popular in soul music. So it's not surprising that Earth, Wind and Fire chose this particular Beatles tune to record last year for the *Sgt. Pepper* remake. The Bee Gees have always worked in this area (they were friendly with Otis Redding in the 60's). "Stayin' Alive" and the whole recent Bee Gees "sound" is a reworking of the early 70's "Miami Sound" of people like K.C. and the Sunshine Band and George McCrae. Many artists working today's pop field constantly draw on the melodic and emotional appeal of earlier rhythm 'n blues forms, while at the same time paring them

continued on page 63

Unmitigated Pop

Face it, you may not like them but you listen: over and over and over . . .

By Cris Cioe

Pop

Okay, you don't have a Martin. That's why there's Sigma.

DR-28

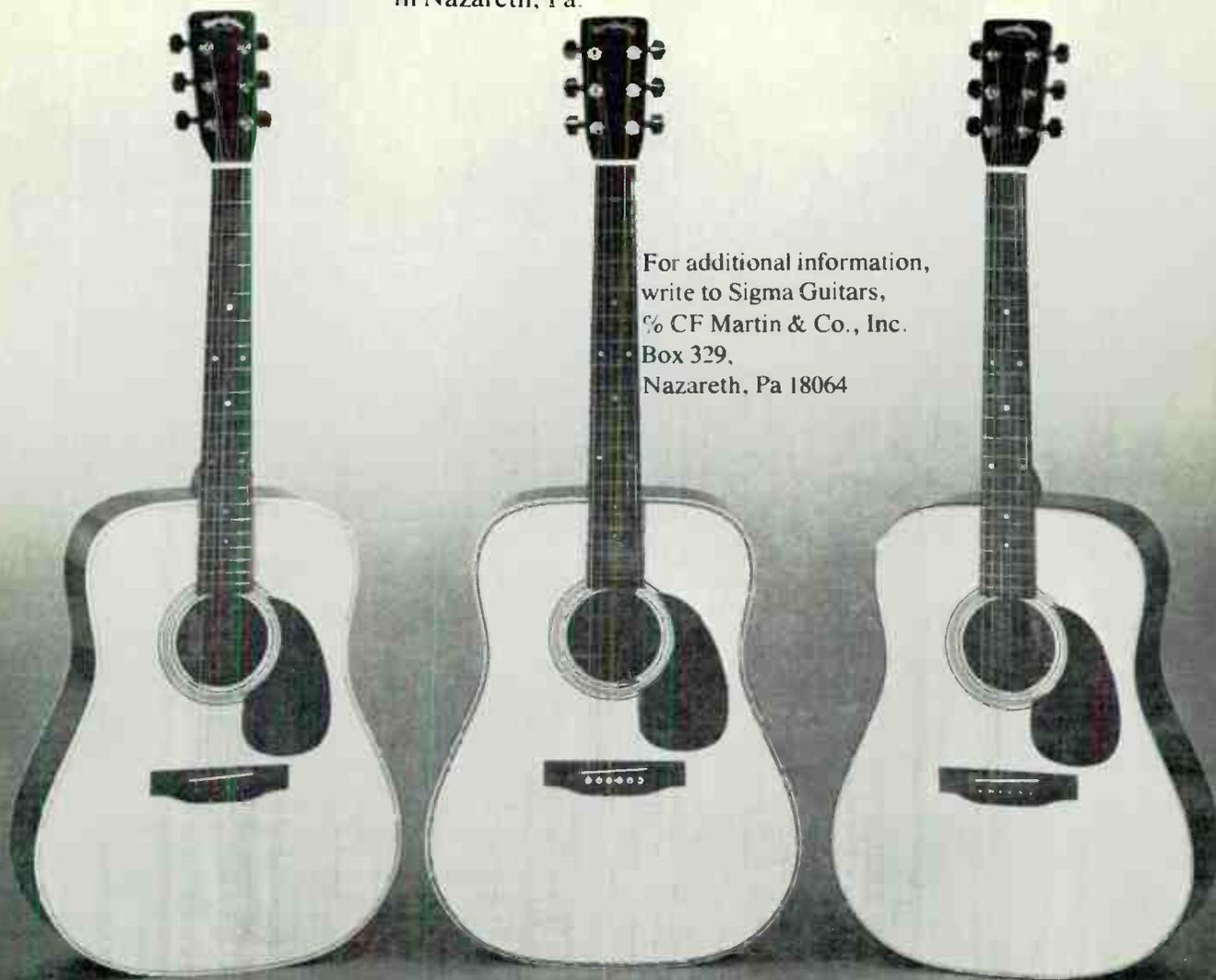
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The world of popular culture is characterized by the ebb and flow of constant change. Nowhere is this more apparent than in contemporary music. Today's stars could well be tomorrow's has-beens. The commercial necessities of popular music dictates its transitory nature. "We could be heroes, just for one day," as David Bowie sings. The urge to hear a particular tune over and over is implanted like some demon, pod-bearing seed. When that appeal is exhausted, the cycle continues with yet another melodic configuration as the beat goes on and on and on...

Rock 'n' roll began as teenage dance music. To this day, the adolescent experience remains at its heart, the touchstone around which all else revolves. But in the twenty-five years since Bill Haley rocked around the clock, rock music has had its share of growing pains. Just as many fans "grew out" of rock 'n' roll, so the music itself assimilated various styles on the path towards maturity. This included elements of not only jazz, soul, folk, and country, but classical and the avant-garde as well — a hybrid form with the visceral passion of more primitive musics like R & B.

Certainly true jazz and progressive music aficionados can sympathize with the lack of respect accorded rock 'n' roll by the *cognoscenti*. As rock 'n' roll guitar was to '60's hippies and '70's punks, jazz sax was to '50's hipsters and '60's beats. Beyond music itself, rock and jazz came to represent holistic life-styles to their respective audiences, encompassing fashionable dissent, emotional catharsis and self-supporting cultism.

And still the debate between rock and jazz fans goes on. Rock is too vulgar, jazz too cerebral. Rock 'n' roll is too white, jazz too black. The commercial

requirements of a three minute song clashed with the uncompromising integrity of a twenty minute horn solo. Of course, there were performers who managed to temporarily fuse these otherwise disparate audiences, in other words "cross-over." The Beatles, Hendrix, Cream, Sly, early Mahavishnu, Van Morrison, David Bowie. Unfortunately, for every *Sergeant Pepper* or *Wheels of Fire*, there was indulgent twaddle like *In A Gadda Da Vida*.

In the Seventies, AM pop-rock evolved into progressive rock. While this seemed to augur well for sophisticated music fans, the promise of FM radio soon yielded to the spectre of corporate co-option. Promising early-Seventies jazz-rock fusions by John McLaughlin, Frank Zappa, even Blood, Sweat & Tears and Chicago, sadly lapsed into either religious obscurantism, infantile vulgarity or formula pap. A chasm developed between rock 'n' roll fans on one hand and more mature, progressive music fans on the other. This is precisely the time when many of my own contemporaries stopped listening to rock 'n' roll. For me, it was a depressing period enlivened only by the still-born, glitter-rockin' New York Dolls; the revival of lush romantic balladry by the likes of Elton John; and the experimental art-rock of Bowie, post-Velvet Underground Lou Reed and Roxy Music. These bands became the forerunners of Punk or New Wave rock — which represents nothing less than the third great explosion of revolutionary rock 'n' roll, post-Elvis, post-Beatles.

While America is often regarded as the birthplace of rock 'n' roll, the English always seem to bring it back home as far as music appreciation goes: the tradition of the music-hall, a rigidly structured class society, a Continental

Dire Straits' distant terror subtly insinuates itself while the impact of the Clash is immediate. The country can be just as hazardous as the city

flare for fashion, a stratified and entrenched working class youth culture — all these factors help explain the enormous popularity of rock 'n' roll in Great Britain. So even though new wave rock began on the Lower East Side with the sleazoid, sub-garage band antics of the N.Y. Dolls, it took the obviously imitative outrage of the Sex Pistols and the mock rebellion of the Clash (both from England) to make the rock revival a bona-fide event.

Four working class yobs from London, the Clash released their only album in America, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, back in November and recently debuted by playing eight dates here to promote it. Although their state-side record company still refuses to release the first Clash LP here (it's available only as an import), the new album is a good introduction to what the new wave explosion is all about, and how it draws on rock's cumulative achievements. The crashing guitar chords are brutally uncompromising, a thrashing, metallic wall-of-sound. To the uninitiated ear, it may come across as undifferentiated white noise. But all great rock 'n' roll was initially perceived as unmusical — think of "Hound Dog," "Great Balls of Fire," "Shake, Rattle and Roll," and "Satisfaction," through "Purple Haze" and "My Generation." All were deemed noise by their detractors at one time or another. To say nothing of Albert Ayler's "Ghosts," John Coltrane's "Ascension," Charlie Parker's "Ko Ko," Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz," and Sun Ra's "Heliocentric Worlds." Were they noise?

continued on next page

Three-Minute Symphonies

The Spectorian ideal of songs replete with plot, character, setting and attempted moral resolution.

By Roy Trakin

Rock

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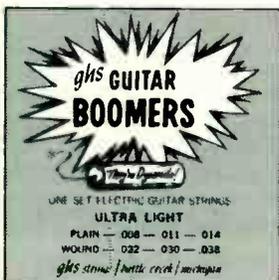


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The Clash call on the momentum of 25 years of rock in creating a monolithic yet cacophonous din which, on repeated listenings, becomes a symphony of thunder and lightning reminiscent of classic Who — but faster, far more intense. Joe Strummer writes the lyrics and Mick Jones composes the music. In guttersnipe lingo, they convey the turmoil of the modern world, the pain of compromise, the inevitability of dissolution. This is not just music for youthful rebels, it is for anyone who knows what it's like to feel trapped.

A wide variety of '60's and '70's pop music styles are covered on the Clash record. "Safe European Home" achieves a reggae/heavy metal fusion in its self-deprecating account of the band's trip to Jamaica. "Stay Free," despite its out-of-tune Mick Jones vocal, charmingly mimics the innocence of Mersey-beat. "Last Gang in Town" uses western outlaw imagery in its hard-rockin' lament while "Guns on the Roof" cops its propelling riff from the Who's "Can't Explain."

The greatest rock touches on the end of an era, the impossibility of going back, the loss of innocence. *Give 'Em Enough Rope* is full of the angst of lost adolescence and the bittersweet quality of growth. This album is for every music fan who is a lapsed rocker, who longs for a group with the primal punch of classic Stones, early Kinks or the young Who. Strummer bitches about the end of the punk movement as a force for change, but he may as well be tolling the bell for an entire genre. The Clash's best work is laced with visions of the apocalypse — they mourn rock's limitations — at the same time offering hope for its future by their very existence.

While the Clash holds down the heavy-metal end of the modernist rock 'n' roll spectrum, another English outfit has been drawing attention with its streamlined, relaxed country approach. Dire Straits and its mentor, lead guitarist/singer Mark Knopfler, have burst onto the musical scene with a deceptively virtuous debut LP and its evocative single, "Sultans of Swing." Although Dire Straits' evanescent brand of countryish swing sounds more like *John Wesley Harding* or *Workingman's Dead* than the three-chord barrage of most punk bands, this album would be inconceivable without a new wave-inspired dip into rock's roots, as well as into the roots of older forms of popular music.

"Sultans of Swing," like the best work of the Clash, sets up a situation where the song's protagonist is making a heroic last stand. Ironically, it is a trad jazz band which tries to preserve its music against the on-slaughter of time and changing fashion. Knopfler sets the scene and becomes the lens of a dolly camera. The Sultans become Everyband, the jazz they play becomes

Allmusic. Lifting yet biting, safe yet fraught with danger, Dire Straits' gentle south-western twang strikes a resonant and familiar chord. Like Robbie Robertson in *The Last Waltz*, Knopfler is a proud craftsman on guitar, reviving an ancient skill for what may well be the last time. The bitter urgency of Knopfler's plea is belied by the casual, mocking delivery of his singing; the hurt only bubbles to the surface in the biting but understated Knopfler guitar fills. Haunting ballads like "Down to the Waterline" and "Six Blade Knife" hide the rawest passions underneath a calm exterior.

If I prefer the Clash's raw urban fantasy to Dire Straits' slick frontier romance, it's only because it seems much closer to the dangerous vitality which marks all great rock 'n' roll. Nevertheless, while the sheer physical impact of the Clash sound is immediate, Dire Straits' distant terror subtly insinuates itself. The country can be just as hazardous as the city, though its cruelty is revealed gradually rather than suddenly.

The Clash and Dire Straits have revived the pop tradition of great individual songs — the Spectorian ideal of three-minute symphonies, replete with plot, character, setting and attempted moral resolution. While the urban Clash represent the violent chaos of revolutionary change in the '60's, the more rural Dire Straits are about the inevitability of creeping evolution — the whimper rather than the bang. Given strict commercial guidelines, both of these groups have produced expressionistic, personal works which accurately reflect the times they live in.

Lifting yet biting, safe yet fraught with danger, Dire Straits' southwestern twang is a slick but still dangerous frontier romance.

Rock 'n' roll is no longer the bastard stepchild of the arts. Jazz has its intellectual purists, and so does rock. Today's music fans are splintered into smaller and smaller factions, but great rock 'n' roll has always had the ability to unite disparate groups — mass appeal. The Clash and Dire Straits are not only throwbacks to the Golden Age of mid-sixties rock, they are harbingers of whatever future pop music has as a universal language. These two bands have created pop music which not only evokes, but in some cases, even surpasses its original inspiration. Likewise, the most successful music of the the future will transcend the limits of categorization.

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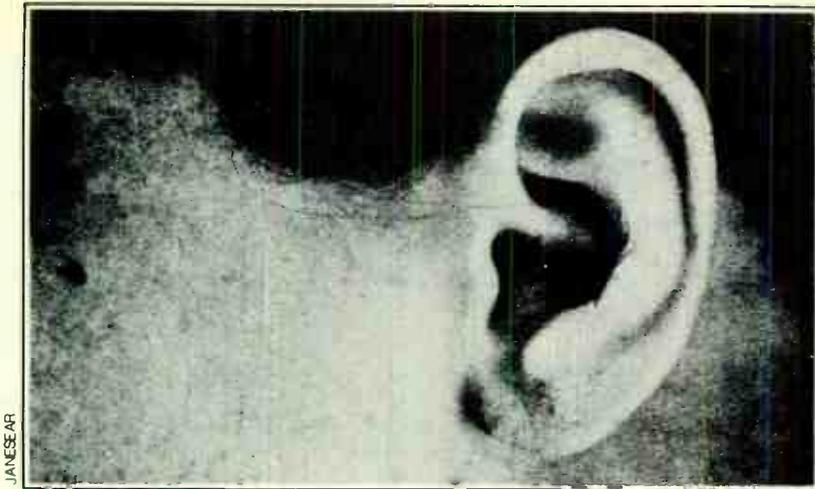
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JANESEAR

There's a bit of a revolution stirring in audio these days. People are listening to music and judging components on that basis.

That might not appear revolutionary, but it's quite significant. You see, while component high fidelity was born out of a desire to more faithfully reproduce music in the home, it has become a business for many and a hobby for others. These two factors combined to take the focus away from music, elevating specifications to star status. Manufacturers pursued ever lower levels of distortion to advertise, while the techno freaks jumped from component to component, record to record, never listening more than a few seconds to each passage, interested only in demonstrating their hardware.

That's changing. What most consumers probably discovered on their own has now been recognized by the trade — many components with identical specifications sound different. Moral: there's more to high fidelity than specs.

Enjoying music — that's what the focus of this column will be. We'll deal with the real world of what you can hear, and leave the rest to the engineers and the fanatics. Not that specifications will be ignored. In fact, the realization that we can't hear the difference between 0.1 per cent and 0.05 per cent total harmonic distortion (the most commonly advertised form of distortion) has been accompanied by the discovery of

new forms of distortion that go far toward explaining why many components with identical THD figures sound different. You've probably seen much of this in the latest hi fi advertising, and believe it or not, there's something to it. It's called *transient intermodulation distortion*, and it's just now appearing on manufacturer's spec sheets. In terms of how reproduced music sounds, it's much more important than the more commonly quoted specs.

So you see, specs will certainly have a place here. Indeed, my next few columns will be devoted to the basic specifications for each component — what they mean and how to read them. The basics are necessary, if only to understand which specifications count and which are useless, and several are by the way. For example, if you've shopped for an FM tuner recently, *usable sensitivity* usually heads the spec sheet. This so-called "usable" number is useless. What it tells you is the number of microvolts needed to produce a signal at the output of the tuner, which contains no more than three per cent noise-plus-distortion. Whether you understand what I just said isn't as important as realizing that given the sophisticated state of hi fi today, there are few of us who would want to listen to music that contained three per cent noise and distortion. So it matters very little what this spec is.

Besides unraveling the musical meaning of the spec sheet mumbo-

jumbo, we'll track the trends in technology. There's plenty happening. A small new company based in the state of Washington has designed a 200 watt-per-channel amplifier that weighs only 12 pounds and has a suggested retail price of about \$300! If you're a musician, you probably know enough about amplifiers and power to realize that's an incredible power-to-weight ratio. For the others, consider this — a rather advanced 70-watt-per-channel integrated amp from one of the leading Japanese hi fi manufacturers weighs 34 pounds. An average 60 watt receiver weighs about 39 pounds.

Meanwhile, something called *digital recording* threatens to make recording as we now know it obsolete, and consequently, alter the way we reproduce music in our homes. *Wow and flutter*, a measure of speed accuracy in tape decks and turntables, is rendered meaningless with this new technology — it doesn't exist. Noise is, for all practical purposes, absent. It's an entirely new process that transforms a musical signal into energy for electronic reproduction, which is so impressive even the most trained ear can be fooled into thinking it's live. There are already disks commercially available using digital master recorders to make the *master tape*, from which conventional LPs are cut. Even this limited application of digital technology offers quieter recordings with more dynamic range than previously possible. That telltale hiss we hear as the stylus hits the record just disappears.

Musicians intent on capturing their performances on tape with the utmost fidelity can already take advantage of digital recording in their homes or studios. Sony offers, for \$4,000, an audio adaptor which connects to the many video cassette recorders now on the market which enables you to digitally record live music on video cassettes. Technics has a similar unit set to hit the market shortly.

So you see, I'll occasionally bring you to the razzle dazzle products and the ultimate gear in music reproduction; but my prime purpose will be to take the pain out of buying hi fi, helping you to put together the best system given your budget and musical taste. It's really not hard, it just appears that way. Stick around and you'll see.

Spec Reality

There's mumbo-jumbo on those spec sheets unless you know what to look for

By Paul Terry Shea

Hi-Fi



African musicians, blues singers, and to a lesser degree gospel singers and jazz musicians, aim simply to express life in all of its aspects through the medium of sound. In black cultures music has psychological and educational value. Not only are ideas and repressed emotions rendered as natural as possible through music, but it is also common knowledge that songs make memorizing easier and can be used to instill in people important rules of conduct or hygiene. Music, not only for black people but everybody, opens doors through which the "world" and "self" can approach one other.

Marvin Gaye's controversial two-record discourse on love and marriage/pain and divorce — *Here, My Dear* — has been accurately described by Stanley Crouch as "black middle-class blues." The album, dedicated to Gaye's former wife Anna Gordy Gaye, expresses his feelings about a marriage which recently ended in divorce, with her receiving more than a million dollar settlement. Obviously there is very little on the album that reveals the 12-measure pattern characteristic of traditional blues, but like a blues singer Gaye's songs create accurate portrayals of his state of mind during the experience, uninhibited in their self-expression. There is little doubt that recording the album brought relief to Gaye's heart and order to his disturbed thought, but equally important, he has created a balm or antidote for the countless men who have been angered, humiliated, and frustrated by the divorce

Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear* is perhaps best described as black middle-class blues documenting the anger, humiliation and frustrations of a painful divorce.

laws in this country. He offers his audience more than a personal lament. Not only has he stated common problems clearly and concisely, but in some sense has taken steps toward their analysis and solution. Some music writers have criticized *Here, My Dear* for being pretentious, self-indulgent, and corny. They have also said that the classic *What's Going On* is still Gaye's best album to date. In my mind this just isn't so, and it seems to me these critics understand very little about the function of black music, black people, or Marvin Gaye. *Here, My Dear* is a work of art and beauty that is fundamentally moral. The techniques Marvin Gaye employs on the album have something for everyone in the mind and music game: vast fields of musical reference, an easy use of religious and philosophical analysis, ruthless self-criticism, a shifting focus of investigation. On certain levels the album surpasses *What's Going On* in its accomplishment.

In the early 1970s, Elaine Jesmer — a former publicist who worked with entertainers and recording artists — wrote a powerful, topical novel about the music world called *Number One With A Bullet* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). The novel focuses on an imaginary black-owned record company, Finest Records, that bears a striking resemblance to Motown Records, founded by Marvin Gaye's former brother-in-law, Berry Gordy, Jr. The main character of the novel, Daniel Stone, is a complex mixture of show business sophistication and religious belief, one of Finest's most valuable "commodities," and a superstar to the vast pop music audience. But his private life is a mockery. He is married to willful Vinetta Vale, sister of Finest's owner Bob Vale, whose flagrant infidelity and jealousy have begun to rip apart their marriage. The combined forces of the Vale family are overpowering Stone, threatening his self-respect, and he has long and increasingly frequent depressions during which he sees himself trapped in a velvet web. But Stone's lifelong and abiding hatred for authority has made

him a rebel. He expects defeat, yet he can't help making a fight for the right to self-determination. I won't say anymore about the book except that the film rights were sold to the producers of *The Godfather*; but, for whatever reason, the film was never made and the book is now unfortunately out-of-print. It should be required reading for everybody who buys a copy of *Here, My Dear*.

Marvin Gaye opens with the title song, beginning with a spoken statement directed towards Anna, as the background singers lay down sweet, sophisticated, precisely placed harmonies reminiscent of the best work of Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions. After expressing his resentment for the way she used their son to try to control him, Gaye slides effortlessly into "I Met A Little Girl," and the musical trip through personal experiences begins in earnest. In a restrained but reflective manner that envelopes the lonely listener, Gaye tells of meeting and falling in love with Anna, describing all the joy and delight of being in love. By the third track on side one, the arrangement takes on a soft soulful tone, with the rhythm section setting the mood, and Gaye raises the question that will continue to be asked throughout the other three sides of the album, "When Did You Stop Loving Me, When Did I Stop Loving You." He sings that he would rather remember all the good times he and his wife had together, but at one point during the song he asks her if she remembers all the *bullshit*. He literally spits out the word bullshit with unrestrained anguish. But he redeems himself on the closing track on side one, "Anger," telling the listener that anger and rage are too destructive and have no place in his life. The song reveals Gaye's deeply religious convictions, and is the funkiest one of the album, with congregational and percussive flourishes that make the thought of anger and feeling bad virtually impossible.

With "Is That Enough," Gaye complains bitterly about having to pay attorney fees, high alimony and the like. The most impressive thing about the song is how much it has been influenced by the music of Weather Report, particularly soprano saxophonist Wayne Shorter. One of the joys central to the album is Gaye's ability to include a

continued on page 70

Marvin Gaye

His latest is a much maligned 2 record set on love and marriage, pain and divorce

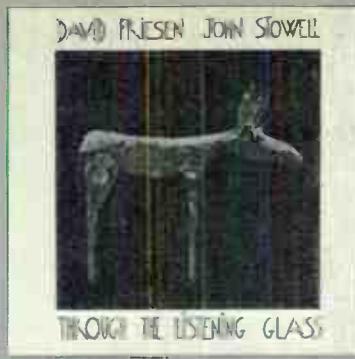
By David Jackson

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Two of the most unique artists in jazz, virtuoso musicians in the true sense of the word David Friesen, bass, John Stowell, guitar. Not just a duo album, but an important musical statement, made more enjoyable by the great rapport they feel for each other and express through their music. A superb recording.

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Tom Albright describes Dollar Brand's pianism as "the movement of a great river. Embracing and absorbing elements . . . rising to harrowing climaxes and then churning, resolving as it broadens and empties into silence." It was Duke Ellington who sponsored Dollar Brand's first record date—and now the favor is lovingly returned. **ODE TO DUKE ELLINGTON** is a tribute combining the master's music with the stunning originality and inspiration of South Africa's Dollar Brand.

IC 1065 Mike Richmond/
DREAM WAVES



This is Mike Richmond's first record as a leader and it offers a unique glimpse into the musical personality of a bassist who has worked with Hubert Laws, Jack DeJohnette, and Stan Getz. Mike's intonation, bowing technique and round, full tone are truly exceptional. He plays classical guitar, electric string ensemble and shows off his considerable compositional talents as well. Andy Laverne (piano) and Billy Hart (drums) assist on this evocative debut.

IC 1054 Fred Raulston/
OPEN STREAM



Talented newcomer Fred Raulston has performed with Jean-Luc Ponty, John Handy and Yusef Lateef. He is a keyboard player of immense imagination and on **OPEN STREAM** he showcases the vibes and marimba. The result is jazz with a classical flavor—and a sound as fresh as the Montana air where Raulston makes his home. Another great find for Inner City.

IC 6007 Joe Sample/Ray Brown/
Sheily Manne/THE THREE



Pianist Joe Sample has been taking the country by storm and his performance on **THE THREE** shows why. The former Crusaders keyboard player combines with two of the giants of jazz—bassist Ray Brown and drummer Sheily Manne—and the result is an album of total excitement. Sample come Sample today—and hear for yourself what the fuss is all about.

IC 6052 Lew Tabackin/
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Downbeat's Chuck Berg declared "Nobody plays better flute than Lew Tabackin." Leonard Feather called him "a flutist of rare distinction." Now, for the first time, Lew devoted an entire session to that magical woodwind instrument. With his tremendous technique, his glistening highs and richly resonant lows, Lew demonstrates that he is a flutist to be reckoned with.

IC 6040 Abbey Lincoln/
PEOPLE IN ME



The return to the recording ranks of one of the major jazz vocalists of all time . . . Abbey made her mark in films and Hollywood nightclubs, later recording a series of innovative and unforgettable albums with Max Roach. A superb vocalist, this LP will surely propel her back into the limelight. With her are Dave Liebman and Al Foster.



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FACES

John McLaughlin

John McLaughlin's recent New York date with the One Truth Band followed closely on the heels of his latest Columbia release, "Electric Dreams". It was one of those ghastly evenings when everything that can go wrong goes wrong. Roy Buchanan's opening set was unadulterated slop; the sound system was atrocious; and the audience was liberally sprinkled with visigoths. McLaughlin's performance, while hardly a disgrace, did not measure up to the levels of artistry we have come to expect from this great guitarist-bandleader. Never merely nostalgic, the performance was a retrospective at

best — suggesting that you can't go home again.

McLaughlin alternated between high levels of creativity and simply treading water. McLaughlin has been forced to unearth some of the lost facets of early 70's fusion music that were swamped in the wake of Mahavishnu. The new compositions don't seem to lend themselves to live expansion like the original Mahavishnu repertoire; instead of an ever increasing tension, the tunes fall too often into easy funk cliches; and whereas the solo features in the original Mahavishnu performances were perfectly integrated into the fabric of each composition, on this evening — as interesting as they were — they stuck out like a sore thumb. One gets the impression that this band was rushed out on to the road long before they had achieved a unity and direction.

Much of the problem was with the audience. McLaughlin's electric music has always attracted a high proportion of musical sports fans who listen with their eyes and destroy the continuity of the music by cheering every other sixteenth note like a goal at a hockey game. McLaughlin was obviously upset by this, but he should probably come to expect it if he's going to play electric music aimed at masses of oafish jocks right out of "Animal House." McLaughlin was despondent as noise destroyed the tender intimacy of his acoustic duet with painist Stu Goldberg on "Electric Dreams;" violinist L. Shankar pulled the band out of the doldrums with a galvanizing emotional solo that had me in tears, but the

energy level soon dropped to a dull roar.

The other problem was with the rhythm section of Tony Smith on drums and Fernando Saunders on fretless bass. Smith is a buoyant, powerful time-keeper in a funk/rock mold, and Saunders has marvelous drive and fluidity, but they seem unable to deal with some of the jazzier directions McLaughlin wants to pursue. "The Dark Prince," taken at a brisk gallop on record, was flat and plodding in concert; Smith and Saunders took it at half the swing tempo, leaving McLaughlin to flail away aimlessly, even getting into indignant feedback by rubbing the neck of his guitar against the microphone stand.

All the players in The One Truth Band are excellent musicians but as of this date, the parts are more interesting than the whole. McLaughlin seems a frustrated man — I don't think his heart is really in what he's doing. The guitarist was most animated and creative during the Shakti duet with Shankar, a true dialogue between kindred spirits. I hope McLaughlin gets to do what his muse demands before it's too late. — Chip Stern

Ran Blake

Those who've seen Ran Blake know there's one rule for his performances: expect the unexpected. The nervous and deferential director of New England Conservatory's Third Stream Department is the antithesis of a showman in most respects — eschewing smiles, patter, encores — but he keeps his audience intrigued and attentive with his oblique approach to a range of eclectic material. He's had a recent spate of records (on IAI, Golden Crest, Arista Novus) and has been playing live more.

Blake does not concern himself with "swing." He's as liable to break into a soft series of chromatic minor ninths as four bars of stride.



M. GRECO

He does not make tunes easy. He submerged the melody line of "Motherless Child" into an amber chord study, and drove "A Man and a Woman" from banal repetition into intense microtonal ostinati. Yet he does attune himself to his audience and adjust his program accordingly. "There's a little mood in a club and I try to get it into my music in the present tense. Is there tension? despair? happiness? There are so many directions you can go."

Wherever he goes, from Sousa to Satie to Sonny to Stevie, Blake will be riding herd in the vanguard. — Fred Bouchard

Baird Hersey

Baird Hersey, a 29 year old guitarist-composer, is making significant strides in the development of big-band rock. Perhaps that is an oversimplification. Or maybe it's just that pigeonholes and generalizations have less and less meaning on contemporary music. Barriers between musical forms are being obliterated. Creative expression is the thing.

Baird Hersey's creative medium is the 11 piece ensemble known as The Year of the Ear. There are two drummers (one who acts as a groovemaster, the other as a colorist), a percussionist, three saxophonists who double on flutes, one trombonist, two trumpeters (one of whom doubles on electric trumpet), a bassist who plays both upright and Fender, and Hersey on very electric guitar. Hersey's guitar work owes a very palpable debt to the work of people like



CAROL FRIEDMAN



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix, and the legacy of countless rock and roll gigs.

Hersey's music is excoriating and funky. It reflects the orchestral language as pioneered by Duke Ellington, and the electric grit of 1970s Miles Davis (as exemplified by albums like *In a Silent Way* and *Live Evil*). It also shows that urban American funk and third world sounds can be seen as a sort of universal bump music. Hersey and *Year of the Ear* are making exciting, variegated music for the 1980s. — Chip Stern.

World Saxophone Quartet

In days not quite forgotten they were known as the Gotham Minstrels. Walking the bars in dank, hazy rooms, watching the courting dance below, waiting for twenty minutes off so they could join in the fun. Twenty, thirty hours on a bus they would travel to entertain you. Lonely outposts

with dusty names: St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Fort Worth. Little time for sleep, but plenty for irony. The blues cry rose gloriously, though sometimes they would gag on the disharmony of life behind the song.

The Gotham Minstrels are back in the form of the World Saxophone Quartet. Their historical scope, oblique theatrical banter, and off-center humor attracted sell-out crowds at New York's Public Theatre and Village Gate. The idea of seeing four of modern music's most daring and resourceful horn players perform as an ensemble was irresistible. And an ensemble it was — four original voices speaking as one, making the most exalted music of their careers. David Murray, the swaggering enfant terrible of the tenor sax, displayed a growing sense of rhythmic control and compositional flair to go along with his already formidable tonal range. Hamiet Bluiett, a bemused country sage, offered up sanctified gospel blues stomps, and used his baritone sax to anchor the quartet with the deepest sound this side of a humpbacked whale. The reserved altoist Oliver Lake — a warm, gentle craftsman who often looks as if his dog had died — leapt tall intervals in a single bound, alternately bleating and reassuring as he constructed lyrical mobiles of thought.

Then there is the brilliant and erratic Julius Hemphill

— a shadow dancer whose writing often has a terrible beauty. More often than not Hemphill eludes the hellhounds on his trail with astounding creations like the supercharged nod to Bird, "Kansas City Line", or blues conceptualizations so stark they make your skin crawl.

The World Saxophone Quartet is charting communal links between the past, present and future of American saxophone music, a perfect balance of improvisation and composition. With the luxury that only continuous gigging and time can provide, they promise to be the most significant saxophone section since the halycon days of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. — Chip Stern

David Grissman

"Paul Bley, the composer, was over at my house a few months ago," mandolinist David Grissman related. "I played him some tapes of the music I've been writing, and he asked, 'are there others of your genre?' Well, I'm happy to say that there are — and they're all up here on stage with me."

The stage is the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, and, as is always the case when the David Grissman Quintet performs there, it is sold out. The genre is, for lack of a more accurate term, known as "Dawg music," and, although guitarist Tony Rice, violinist Darol Anger, Bassist Bill Amateek, and mandolinists Mike Marshall and David Grissman are its sole proponents, Dawg music has found a loyal and ever-growing audience in the three-and-a-half years since the quintet's formation.

"Dawg" is a nickname Grissman got stuck with during his stint with Old And In The Way, a bluegrass band he formed a few years ago with The Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia. Besides supplying several song titles in the Grissman repertoire (*Dawgology*, *Dawg-Ola*, *Dawg's Rag*,



M. GRECO

Dawg's Bull) it seems to be the only appropriate term to describe the thirty-four-year old mandolinist's original blend of jazz, bluegrass, rock, classical, gypsy, and mid-Eastern influences.

The all-acoustic string band's debut album, "The David Grissman Quintet" (on a small Bay Area label, Kaleidoscope), resulted in the leader being hired to score the Federico DeLaurentiis film "King of the Gypsies." For the project David contacted French violinist Stephane Grappelli, Django Reinhardt's former partner in *Le Quintet du Hot Club de France*. Grappelli not only appeared in the film but contributed violin parts to two tracks on Grissman's new Horizon album "Hot Dawg."

The Grissman Quintet's fiery music has been compared favorably with the recordings of Reinhardt and Grappelli, and last December Grappelli flew David to Great Britain for a series of concerts celebrating the violinist's 70th birthday.

Mandolin used to be about as fashionable as the accordion (maybe even less so), but Grissman is out to rectify that. "Hot Dawg" is currently No. 19 on the Billboard jazz charts, an unprecedented triumph for the instrument. On the Dawg charts it is, of course, No. 1. — Daniel Dean.



DEBORAH FEINGOLD



JOE SAMPLE

Pianist Joe Sample, 40, has been playing with drummer Stix Hooper and saxophonist/bassist Wilton Felder for nearly 26 years, since their first incarnation as the Swingsters in 1953 in their hometown of Houston, Texas. The trio has undergone a series of personnel, stylistic, and contractual changes over the years, but today seems more stable than ever. Sample's comment that "whatever feeling I want I can always get with Stix" seems to hold true for the entire group. Since dispensing with their "Jazz" prefix in 1968, the Crusaders have been no stranger to the jazz and pop charts. This year Joe's solo LP, *Carmel*, reached the number one slot on the *Billboard* jazz charts and Joe was voted Top New Male Artist in *Record World's* year-end Jazz awards for 1978. The Crusaders' first album since moving to MCA, *Street Life*, is due out shortly.

The Crusaders are producing B.B. King's upcoming album, *Take It Home*. Is this going to be a straight-ahead blues project, or are you trying to present him in some other format?

Well, the first album we recorded with B.B. was *Midnight Believer*, and we learned a lot on that. B.B. is a blues singer; you can't make him do anything else but sing the blues. But what you try to do is write and produce blues which will sound like, and be into, the mode of the present day. And he poured his heart out into these songs. I think it will be the biggest album he's ever had. I think it's a very strong and positive album. It is blues; he's singing in his old blues way, but there is a twist on certain compositions.

Is that the sort of music you grew up listening to in Houston?

Yeah. B.B. was, of course, an influence, also T-Bone Walker, Gatmouth Brown, Lowell Fulson. Texas is a unique state in that it has its own language down there; there's another psychology in Texas that I have not seen anywhere else. It's almost like a New Orleans sort of consciousness about the music, but much more on the unrefined side.

Who were some of your early influences on the piano?

My first influence ever, as far as getting into jazz, was Louis Armstrong. I actually wanted to be a trumpet player; I don't think I've ever said that in an interview before, but I always think about it. On piano — and I'm talking about when I was five or seven — the first influence I actually had was Oscar Peterson. I heard a Peterson album on the radio, and it just completely floored me. I didn't know what the hell was going on; it seemed like some of the most difficult stuff I ever heard. From that I got into Hampton Hawes, to Brubeck — basically all of the piano players of that period — Shearing, Tatum, Errol Garner. Everyone had a personality; they all made the piano

sound different. I went to the guys who had a distinctive, personal style. I got a kick out of just knowing that that was this man's thing?

Do you think that sort of personal stamp is something that's lacking in today's players?

Well, they have to work until that voice comes. Nowadays it's a little bit lopsided in terms of the music that they're hearing and playing. In my music you may hear a lot of different sources, a lot of background. The younger players should spend a lot of time listening to a lot of different kinds of music, and actually playing it.

What would you say is the most distinctive element of your style?

Every single note I play I want to mean something. It's all based on melodic figures. In other words, I don't play a solo off scale patterns; everything I play, there are melodic figures going by. Sometimes I sit at the piano and just solo and turn the tape on and write down what I played, and it's a new song. At all times I want the notes to sing out and come at me from a lyrical point of view.

When the "jazz" classification was taken off the Crusaders' name, was that because the music had already evolved to a point where the term was no longer applicable, or did the band make a conscious decision to take an abrupt turn?

We made an abrupt change. Being from Texas, we all have a definite way of playing and feeling music. And the jazz at that particular time, in the mid-60s, was not of my makeup. At that particular time, there was a lot of protest music in jazz. And me being a southerner, I've been fighting ever since I was a kid, in gangs and all that. So when I sat at the piano to play, that was the last thing I wanted to bring to my music. The piano was a refuge for me. At that time there was a lot of tension, musicians were tense, and I played with some of these guys and just said, 'Man, this is not for me.' We decided, 'Let's just do our Texas thing.' We had always held back that sort of rhythm and blues factor in our playing — which was the most natural thing we felt at that time — so we just let it come out.

How does your role change from playing as part of the Crusaders to heading your solo records?

The vehicle I'm playing for my solo album is acoustic piano. I only used Fender Rhodes on one song on *Carmel*. The solo voice is the acoustic piano; whereas with the Crusaders it's the saxophone and the guitar. Just based on that fact, it's different music. On an acoustic piano the classical side comes into the picture a lot stronger, and melodies on the acoustic piano really do sing out. With the Crusaders I take a role more like a rhythm player.

What equipment are you using with the band?

Fender Rhodes, Hohner Clarinet, acoustic piano, and a Yamaha synthesizer — a very simple model.

Have you tried the Yamaha electric grand?

Yes, I've tried using those on recording dates, but I found that as a solo voice they don't have the punch, the power that I require. They just don't sing like the acoustic for the use I can see out of them. I have found, though, that in subordinate roles I like it, as a matter of coloring.

Did the success of the *Carmel* album surprise you?

It really did. But you know what I found out — and I've always felt this — if you look throughout history at the music periods and the classics, anything that has a lot of feeling, and you put that into the mode of today's feelings and moods, it's going to work. I must say, though, that in the age of electronics I was worried that the acoustic piano wouldn't get the acceptance on the radio level. I knew that if people ever heard it, they would have to get off on it. But the radio level has been absolutely superb.



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When I die, I hope to come back as a jazz organist. Then, like my forebearers in cathedrals, I'll make supremely *physical* music; music to lift the senses through the spirit, and right out of the body. *Seriously*. On my Hammond organ's two keyboards, I'll play melody and improvisation with one hand, contrapuntal to a galloping bass line, worked with footpedals and my other hand. In this tense, seesaw structure, the bass'll lurk behind and snap at the upper-register lines, while the melody — screaming, droning — will top the rock-solid bass. Then, in sudden, exquisite release, I'll grunt, groan, bend my head, as I sweep the keyboards and pump the pedals. (Even say "Whew.") And, if things keep going the way they are now, no one will even be listening.

Because, the last time I saw a jazz organist play, I was the entire audience. For *both* sets. And, *that* was two years ago. Today, that nightclub's abandoned. The organist? Like many others, playing synthesizer. And the art of jazz organ? On the wane — as if you had to ask. Puzzling thing is, we're supposedly in a jazz renaissance. And, just like in its religious roots, jazz organ is music you can *feel*, seemingly the measure of today's market. It's even music based on an electric instrument — actually, a harbinger of the phases so much in use today. At least, it can generate the same kind of visceral excitement as a cranked-up synthesizer. So, what's happened in the last five years to make its bottom drop out?

For starters, three answers make sense. "Radio," says Joe Fields, "It's the tail that wags the dog." Fields heads New York's Muse Records, maybe the only label in the world still marketing jazz organ. "There's a small audience left," he says. "Older black people, who patronize the inner city nightclubs, where you can still dance to jazz. Plus, a few younger people. And, there's some interest developing in Europe. But, you used to get an organ record on jazz and r&b stations, back in the Sixties and early Seventies, and really sell it through airplay. No more, though. And how can somebody play to any kind of audience if their record isn't happening?" True enough. Today, jazz stations often have strict playlists — but only for fusion, and smooth pop-jazz. And today's r&b is *produced* music, full of strings and sweetening; the days of the sax honkers and the blues shouters are gone. "Add it all up," says Fields, "and it means a raw, cooking sound like organ just can't get exposed."

Conversely, Muse tenor saxophonist Houston Person, a user of organ in his own group, feels "the organists themselves put the organ down. So many of them are playing

synthesizer, piano, electric piano, because they say the money's there. And yet I'll bet they haven't done any better . . . you don't see Herbie Hancock playin' organ to cross over, why should organists play piano?" And, another Muse tenorist, Willis (Gator) Jackson, offers: "I still carry an organ in my band. But a lot of groups figure that can be cumbersome — and expensive — so they go with an electric piano, which is smaller and lighter."

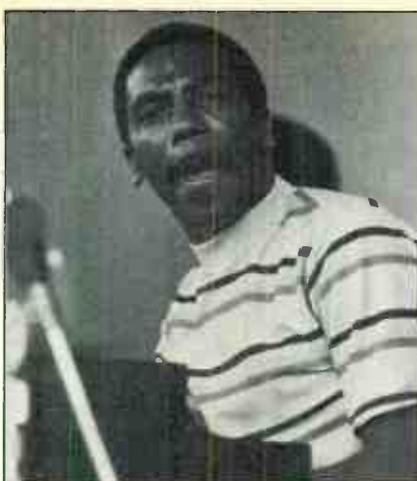
A few jazz organists *do* still persist — though all of them admit it hasn't been easy. The oldest — and first modern figure on the instrument — is Wild Bill Davis, who began playing in the mid-1940's. "When I first heard the organ, I heard all kinds of possibilities," he remembers. "All that was being done on it were show tunes. But, I was arranging for Louis Jordan at the time, and I could hear a whole big band in all those stops and colors." So, Davis bought one of the first Hammond B-3s — the standard for jazz organists ever since — and eventually used it to do the famous "April In Paris" arrangement for Count Basie. Since the early 50s, he's worked as a single and with his trio; now, though in demand on a circuit of U.S. private clubs and European concerts, he lacks a record contract. But that doesn't bother him; instead, he stresses that "I've rarely made a record where the organ, especially the base, sounded right. And in my style, since I play a lot of full chords on top, and tend to cover the bass, it's especially a problem." Confirms engineer Jon Child, who's worked on a number of albums by organist Jack McDuff: "You've usually got to record the organ incredibly loud to get a full sound, then take it down in the mix. And yet, some of the highs on the organ can absolutely pin your needles. Add the problem of corroded stops on a lot of studio organs, and you can see why the whole thing's tricky."

Then there's the modern jazz organ's prime innovator, Jimmy Smith. A teenager when Davis was first gaining notoriety, Smith abandoned Davis' style of playing in chords, instead developing a single-note approach that allowed the bass to come through more clearly. Combined with his astonishing improvisational and arranging skill, it soon made him as influential on his instrument as Charlie Parker or John





Johnny Hammond Smith



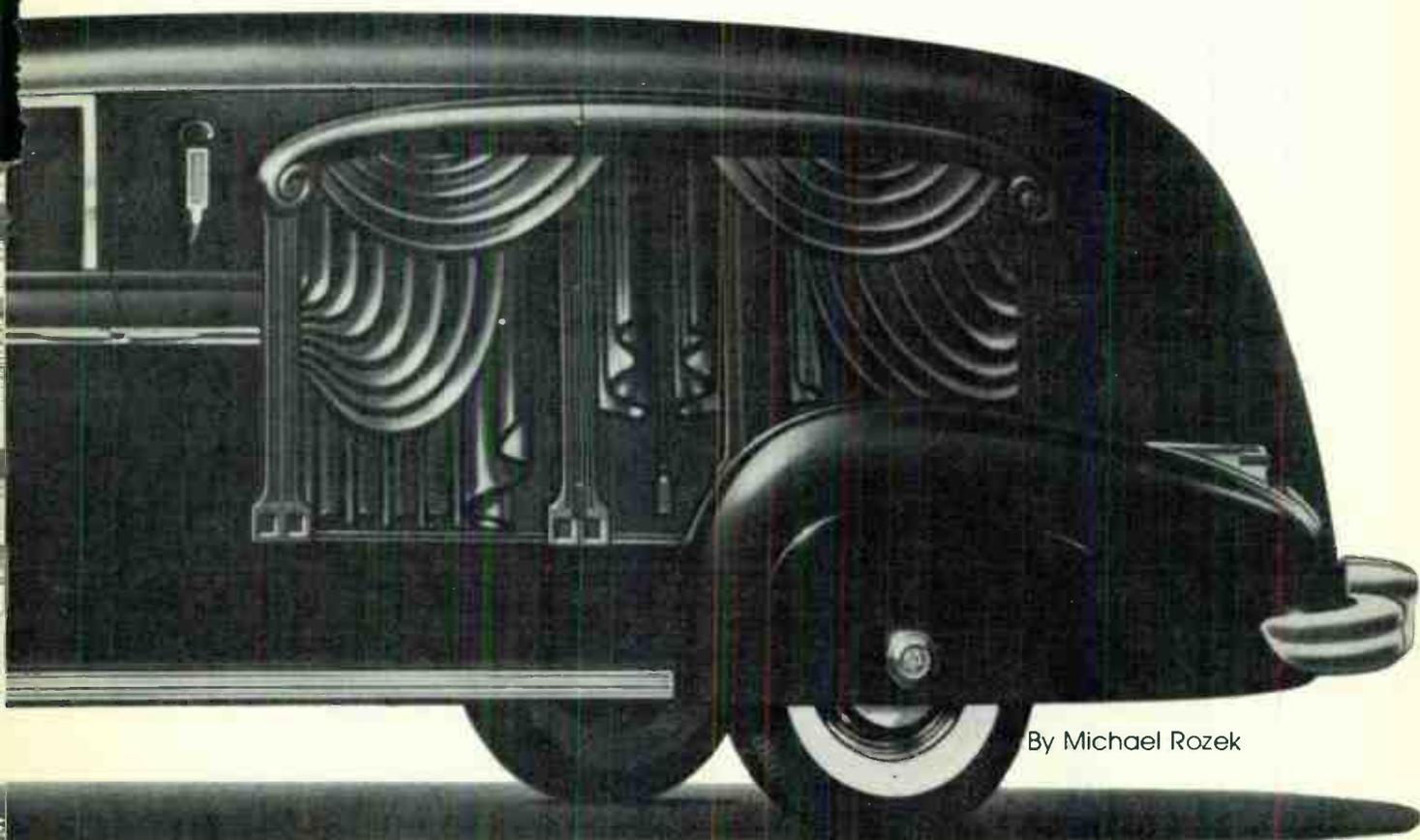
Jimmy Smith



Groove Holmes

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By Michael Rozek

Coltrane were on theirs. (For example, the "Jimmy Smith registration" — a way of setting the organ's stops — is used, even with variations, by almost every other jazz organist.) In 1956, Smith made his first album, for Blue Note. The engineer, at a small New Jersey studio, was a man named Rudy Van Gelder. And even then, there were problems. At the session everyone was aware of the kind of difficulty recording organ posed. Remembers Van Gelder, "Jimmy and Alfred Lion (the head of Blue Note) were very insistent that I get a certain organ sound. I tried all sorts of things and finally one worked." What was the trick? "Professional secret," says Van Gelder, "but it gave me the basis for the Jimmy Smith recorded sound for the next 20 years." And, as it turned out, the sound for almost every other organ record, too. Because the Van Gelder technique brought Smith huge success — and a slew of disciples — and since most of them recorded for Blue Note and Prestige (East Coast labels exclusively using Van Gelder's studio), Van Gelder and organ became virtually synonymous. In fact, in the mid-70s, when both companies had moved to the West Coast and other studios, and Van Gelder was instead into heavy — and eventually exclusive — work for Creed Taylor's CTI label, organ was also beginning its decline. Hmm... was the Van Gelder sound the *only* organ sound the public wanted to hear?

Today, living in California, Smith enthusiastically gives Van Gelder his share of credit. "I had to make my last four or five albums without Rudy, and they sounded terrible," he said. "You tell him, even if I have to marry him, he's going to do Jimmy Smith's next record." (Since Van Gelder wouldn't say, I asked Smith what the secret of the sound really was. "The mike system," said Smith. "High and low frequency mikes." The secret's still safe, I guess.) In fact, Smith claims the only time he's ever been happy with his organ sound has been inside Van Gelder's studio — which includes 25 years of clubs and concerts. "Live," says Smith, "the basic problem is people, rugs, ceilings. They all absorb sound." Now, in his own Los Angeles nightclub, he's installed "30-pound magnum drivers for my Lesleys (sound-driven rotating speakers, standard equipment for rock and jazz organists), plus huge boosters. I need it all just to cut *through* everything."

But these days, sound's not the only thing bugging Smith. After some unsuccessful commercial concessions (over-dubbing on synthesizer, playing acoustic piano) on recent albums for Mercury, he's now without a record deal (save his own label, Mojo). But, unlike Davis, he's not that happy about it: "They keep throwin' this teenyboppy mess down people's throats. But I know music's like anything else; what comes around, comes back. And Jimmy Smith'll be ready. 'Cause all I'm gonna play is Hammond organ, and if I have to wait it out, I will."

Finally, there's Charles Earland. The last impressive new voice on jazz organ (as heard on hard-swinging early 70s albums for Prestige), the late Seventies saw him switch to singing — and synthesizer. "Comes a point when you have to feed your family," he explained to me. "Plus, you want to explore new things." But critics (and probably record buyers, since Earland's now label-shopping, too) were not receptive. So, as the Eighties near, he's back to the organ. "When my new record comes out," he told me, "you're going to hear the Charles Earland organ sound on top, but since the radio won't play jazz organ, there'll be disco, jazz and funk on the bottom. And what I'm hoping will happen is that this'll open people's ears, and then maybe I can start doing some of the things I used to do."

Sadly, though, not much can be said about the other jazz organists once popular. Jack McDuff, still working black clubs around the country, has stuck with the B-3; on the other hand, he, too, lacks a label. (Plus, like Earland, his last four or five albums, made in the early Seventies, feature more synthesizer and other electric keyboards than organ.) Today, Richard (Groove) Holmes is in a similar situation; his two recent LPs on Versatile are synthesizer-heavy, except for a few meshes of his organ with a disco beat which fall flat. (However, Muse has

recently released a straight-up Holmes jazz date, *Shippin' Out*. Lonnie Smith and Jimmy McGriff, two other veterans, play even less organ on their recent records (distributed by TK). Johnny (Hammond) Smith now plays piano. Don Patterson records infrequently for Muse. Larry Young recently passed away. Shirley Scott, Bill Doggett, and Charles Kynard all work, but don't record. And others? In the words of Bob Porter, producer/writer/organ buff, they're "missing in action."

Equally sad to contemplate is that if jazz organ dies, so will its picaresque lore. Take hearses, for example, with their padded rear cargo space, perfect for cradling a tube-filled organ. "Oh yeah, I used to own a hearse," recalls Charles Earland. "I had a '46 LaSalle. I sold it in LaPorte, Indiana on a Sunday, when I was riding between gigs and the oil pump went bad. Took out my organ, shipped it home C.O.D., and took a bus home to Philadelphia. Then, I had a '56 Cadillac hearse... It was so warm, I used to sleep in it all the time." And Jimmy Smith remembers: "I had the first hearse. Put a high speed rear and a new engine in so I could cruise at 80. 125 was no strain. See, I would wear a dickey, coat, hat, and gloves — just like I was drivin' to the cemetery. I only got caught a couple of times."

There's also the fact that most organ players, as sworn users of the Hammond B-3, are playing an instrument that's no longer being made. "The company discontinued them a few years back," explains Wild Bill Davis. "And the new transistorized ones just don't have the same sound, to me. So, I'm involved with an organization called Keyboards International, which refurbishes used models. That way organists can get a new B-3, if they ever want one." (However, though most organists will rent an organ on tour rather than lug theirs, or play a studio's model on a record date, almost all, like Jimmy Smith, stick, in some context, with the first B-3s they ever bought — some over 25 years old. Charles Earland, one exception, has switched to a portable Italian model he considers comparable.)

Still, such is the jazz organ's magic, that in black nightspots like Newark's Key Club and Detroit's Dummy George, the sound lingers on. Willis Jackson uses an organist, Carl Wilson, on this circuit of clubs, and for definite reasons: "I get more out of the organ in an arrangement... it can sound like a bass player and a brass section all at once." And Houston Person, who travels the same circuit with organist Sonny Phillips, feels "the sustaining quality of the notes blends with my playing... plus, the driving bass line is great to solo over. And, most clubs just have bad pianos, so if you carry an organ, that's not a problem."

And, then, you know, there's always records to preserve the past. But realistically, I'm just looking forward to my afterlife. Even if nobody'll be listening.

Rozek's Favorite Organ Records

Charles Earland: *Living Black*, Prestige PR 10009. *Black Talk*, Prestige PR 10024. *Shippin' Out* Muse MR 5134. *Giants Of The Organ Come Together*, Groove Merchant GM 520 (with Jimmy McGriff).

Jack McDuff: *Rock Candy*, Prestige P-24072 (2-record reissue).

Jimmy McGriff: *Fly Dude*, Groove Merchant GM 509 (check cutout bins).

Don Patterson: *Why Not*, Muse 5032.

Jimmy Smith: *The Sermon!* Blue Note BLP 4011 *Organ Grinder Swing* Verve V6-8626 (ditto) *It's Necessary*.

Lonnie Smith: *Afro Desia*, Groove Merchant GM-3308 (check cutout bins) *The George Benson Cookbook*, Columbia Collectors' Series CS 9413 (ditto). (Featuring Benson's first working group, styled after McDuff's.)

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis: *The Cookbook*, Prestige P 24039 (with organist Shirley Scott).

Willis Jackson: *Bar Wars*, Muse MR 5162 (with Charles Earland).

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...an incredible blend of
Missouri, hip, chops and
all those teeth.

—Gary Burton

By Dan Forte

I first met Pat Metheny a few years ago in Wichita, Kansas while hanging around backstage waiting for a concert to begin. Pat introduced himself and said he was from Lee's Summit, Missouri. He also said he knew most of my group's tunes and wanted to sit in . . . (reaction: is he kidding? This kid who looked about fourteen, all smile, teeth everywhere . . . there in the middle of Kansas?) Then, he proceeded to say how one of my early records had first influenced him to take up guitar and try jazz music. A great compliment, of course, but I was still skeptical and feeling older by the minute. But after I heard him, I had to admit he played pretty damned well; an incredible blend of Missouri, hip, chops, and all those teeth.

— Gary Burton, 1975

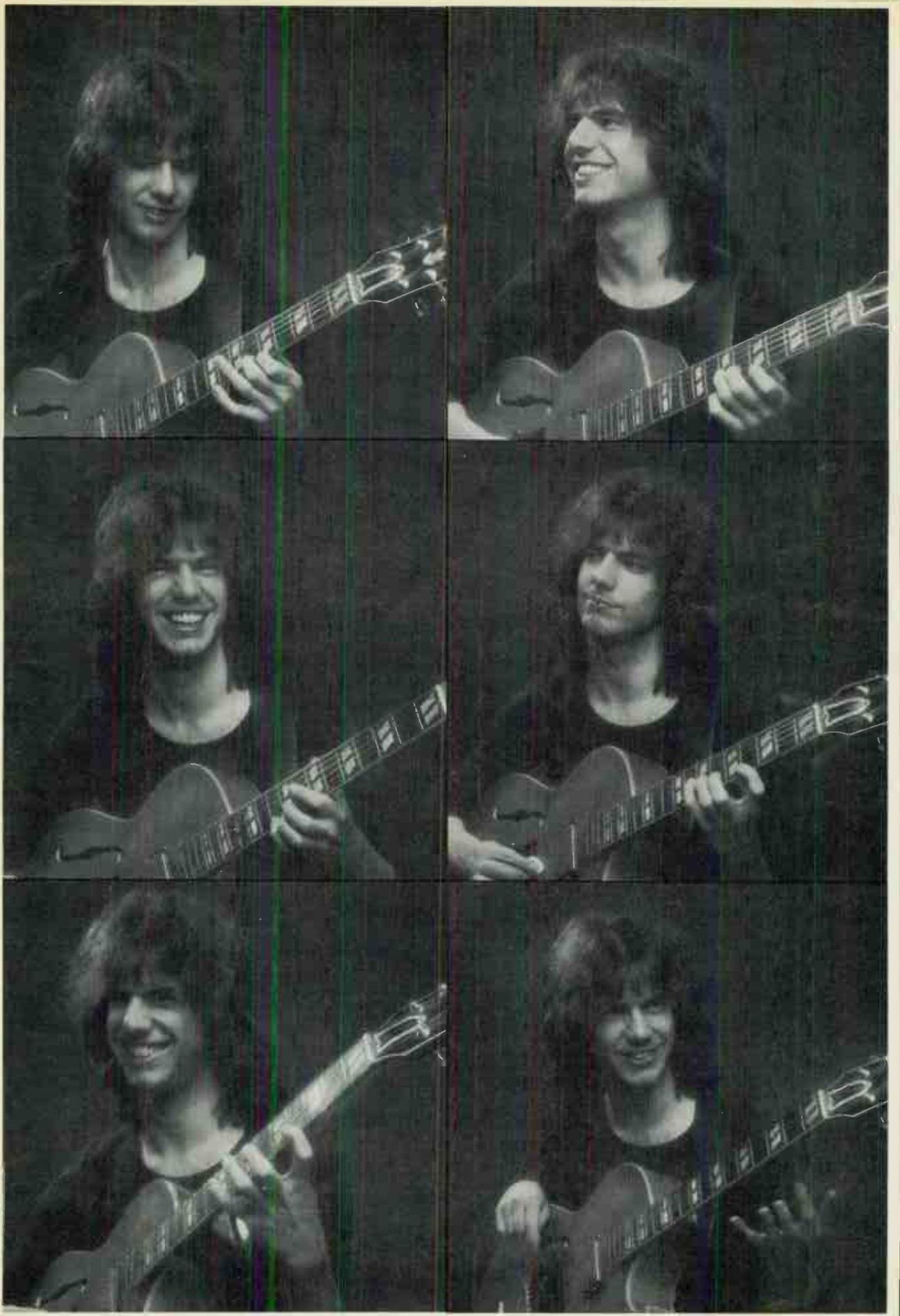
Upon first meeting Pat Metheny, the initial tendency is to react much in the manner described by his former leader, Gary Burton. The guitarist is now 24, but in his blue jeans and tennis shoes he could pass for 19 or 20 (he still gets carded occasionally when he works clubs). He talks about his art with an intense enthusiasm and an idealism lacking in all too many performers — as though he hasn't yet become completely jaded by the business end of making music. His personality seems best described by adjectives such as canoid, energetic, straightforward, unpretentious — qualities also inherent in his music.

It would be wrong, however, to mistake Metheny's youthful zeal for naivete. Five minutes of conversation with the guitarist/composer/bandleader is enough to reveal that

behind the boyish exterior is a level-headed, serious artist, who seems to be handling his sudden popularity with a great deal of maturity. Pat Metheny is 24 going on 45.

Today Metheny heads a quartet — with Lyle Mays on piano, Dan Gottlieb on drums, and Mark Egan on bass; each within a couple of years in age of Pat, who is the youngest — which commands a strong and growing following made up of both jazz and non-jazz fans. The *Pat Metheny Group* — Metheny's third album for ECM and the band's first joint effort — was recorded a year ago January and is, by jazz standards, a runaway hit.

If Metheny's current status is impressive, his musical background is downright amazing. He grew up in the Midwest, in a small town with a population around 6,000. He first noodled around with a guitar, playing rock and roll, at twelve but doesn't admit to seriously taking up the instrument until age fourteen, when he became increasingly interested in jazz. Within his first year of concentrated study he was awarded a *Down Beat* music scholarship, with which he attended the magazine's summer camps. Shortly after turning eighteen, Pat entered the University of Miami's music program. "When I got out of high school," he recalls, "I was kind of like the star quarterback — all these schools came around offering me scholarships." His days as a student ended after only one semester, when he was offered a position on the University's faculty. ("It was hilarious at the time; my parents were wanting me to get a liberal arts degree so I'd have something to fall back on. In fact, just last Christmas my dad wanted to know



when I was going to go back to school.") After a year in Miami, Metheny began teaching at the Berklee College of Music in Boston and was soon playing electric 6- and 12-string guitars behind one of his early inspirations, Gary Burton, with whom he recorded three albums. "After I met Gary at that festival in Kansas," Pat explains, "we got to be friends and he asked me to come up to Berklee kind of as his assistant. I moved up there hoping that once I got there he'd ask me to join his group — it was kind of my dream — and he did."

The question that is at this point undoubtedly on the lips of every guitarist (at least those who on having read this far haven't retired their axes at the advanced age of 21) is, "How? How can anyone advance that quickly on the guitar?"

According to Metheny, "All I can say is that it came extremely easy for me. I remember when I got this Gibson and decided I was going to learn to play the guitar, within a week I could play almost as fast as I can play now. It was just so easy for me to do. I have a very hard time explaining it; it's real difficult for me to talk about. The only thing I can figure is that I must have had a great chromosome count for being a musician or something — because there are musicians all over my ancestors. I've got an older brother, Mike who's an excellent trumpet player. He teaches at Berklee; he plays like Art Farmer or Chet Baker. My father played trumpet all through college, and my mom's father was a professional trumpet player all his life. There was always lots of music around."

A battery of the country's top PR men laboring around the clock couldn't write a better blueprint for the next Guitar Star. Metheny does not seem to be interested. Like the other three-fourths of his quartet, his playing is better called sensible with a minimum of flash. You are impressed more with the tunes in general, and Metheny's keen sense of melody in particular, than with displays of technique and speed. "I just see myself as a guy in the band," stresses the group's leader. "I really have no interest in being the next guitar hero, because to me it's something that changes every year. Also, the nature of the way I play doesn't ask for that; I'm not really showy like some guys. I'm more interested in establishing an atmosphere to the music, which people can identify with me and the band. And, to be quite honest, I don't have any fantastic love for the guitar as an instrument. I don't

"I'm not sure I'm ready to call what we do jazz knowing Coltrane's group existed...I see our group as reporters on the times...and a case can be made that that's what jazz is anyway."

feel that religious about it. I think it's nice, it's okay, and it's real flexible these days. But, to me, an acoustic piano is the instrument. If I had it to do all over again and I was about three years old, I'd start on piano. I was never attracted to the guitar, per se. I got braces on my teeth when I was about fourteen, so I couldn't play the trumpet anymore, and I had a guitar, and I heard Wes Montgomery. A lot of things happened at once. But I don't really consider myself a guitar player; I consider myself a musician who happens to play guitar. I feel like I'm in the process of defining my music, and I feel so much like a beginner it would be unwise to come on like a Guitar Star. I think I'd be digging my own grave."

Pat feels his indifferent attitude toward the instrument he plays is shared by most of his fans. "Most people who like us," he says, "don't know anything about the guitar; they like the spirit of the music. We don't draw that many musicians; they're more into players who are expanding the vocabulary on a technical level. I think there are a lot of guitar fanatics who can't understand what all the fuss is about. I know there are. People have come up and told me they can't believe I'm getting all this attention, because I don't play as fast as so-and-so. Our stuff is very human music; we're dealing with more of a 'life' approach, as opposed to just more notes, yet another chorus or whatever."

Metheny's perception of his audience seemed to be substantiated when he gave a seminar for an audience of all guitar students at the Guitar Institute of Technology (G.I.T.) in Hollywood last February 14. There were a few of usual hardware questions concerning amps and strings, the sort of stuff guitar freaks are supposed to be interested in ("I go from my guitar into an MXR digital delay set for a little bit of slap-back echo, then into an Acoustic 134, from that into another digital delay — a Lexicon with two delay outs; I put one amp on one side of the stage at 19 milliseconds, and another amp on the other side of the stage at 29 milliseconds with a little pitch bend on it, with a voltage controlled oscillator . . ."). But by far the most questions concerned Pat's philosophy of music, his sources of inspiration, his influences, what he sees as the purpose behind what he does.

This is important for two reasons: 1) it shows how a fair sampling of other guitar players (all at a fairly intermediate or advanced level) view Pat Metheny; and 2) it may point to a new trend among young guitarists to not forsake inspiration in favor of mere speed and dexterity. If such a trend materializes it will be due in large part to the impact of players like Metheny.

Pat Metheny is in many ways a fairly unorthodox guitarist just in terms of how he plays the instrument ("there's all kinds of stuff I do that's real weird and doesn't seem to work for other people"), not to mention his extraordinary background and phenomenal rate of development. During his four-hour question-answer session at G.I.T., some members of the student body — many of whom spent a minimum of eight hours a day with a guitar in their hand and their head buried in a book of exercises — were intrigued, if not shocked, by some of Metheny's "study methods." For example: "This seems to surprise people, but I never practice. I found that after a certain point it got in the way of improvising, rather than encouraging you to improvise — I found myself playing the same things I was practicing when I was supposed to be soloing." And when he is soloing, is he thinking of the melody, the tune's changes, rhythmic motifs? "I play my best when I don't think about what we're doing at all. Sometimes I intentionally distract myself; I'll notice that the bass drum is about to slide off the rug, or I'll think about having to do the laundry when I get home. It really works in such a way that your conscious mind is on one level, but the subconscious mind is where all the interesting stuff is — that's where everything you've ever learned or heard is stashed away. So if you let that stuff in back take over, then the real good stuff starts happening." As for music he enjoys listening to, Metheny included Linda Ronstadt, Nicolette Larson, the Dixie Dregs, and guitarist Neal Schon of Journey, alongside a lengthy list of jazz players encompassing all styles and eras.

It would be impossible for any musician of Pat Metheny's generation to grow up without absorbing the countless influences readily accessible thanks to mass media. Metheny (who was nine and a half years old when the Beatles first appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964) sees the validity in Jimi Hendrix as well as Stan Getz, and recalls with enthusiasm obscure AM hits from his adolescence such as "She's Not There" by the Zombies and "Dirty Water" by the Standells, in the same way that a musician a couple of generations older might remember buying 78s of Count Basie or Benny Goodman. But the outside ingredients seem to spice up, rather than define, Metheny's resultant sound, which is more jazz than rock — and, in fact, more jazz than jazz-rock or fusion.

"I've always liked lots of different kinds of music," he muses, "not necessarily just jazz. In fact, much of the jazz I hear really bores me. I love the highest level of playing — like Miles or Coltrane or Sonny Rollins or Keith Jarrett — but the sort of mediocre players you don't hear so much about, I can tell when I hear them why no one talks about them. But I've always kept right on top of what was happening with Top 40 and all that. I'm a big fan of that sort of stuff, and I like country music, too."

"Speaking just in terms of my enjoyment rather than

influences, there's a guy named Steve Morse with a band called Dixie Dregs. They're incredible; it's like a cross between the Allman Brothers and Stravinsky [laughs]. Steve's also one of the best classical guitar players. He can play the most delicate acoustic stuff on the one hand, or incredible sort of Roy Buchanan style Telecaster — but nothing in between. There's a guy in New York named Michael Gregory Jackson, who plays with the so-called avant-garde community, and I think he's amazing. Totally unusual intervals, strange stuff. And I like Alan Holdsworth. Of the current young guitar players, those are the three guys that I point to as my peers, who I listen to. I think Keith Jarrett is probably the greatest musician of our time.

"But I never let myself forget the historical perspective on things — that Lester Young did exist. And even though most people haven't heard of Lester Young, a lot of the music that's popular today can be traced back directly to that source — certainly elements of my playing can be. Of course, I like all the jazz guitarists, too. I'm still really knocked out whenever I hear Jim Hall or Wes Montgomery, also George Benson and Pat Martino. Mick Goodrick is a true great, probably the loosest improviser I've ever heard. Joe Diorio is someone I have a real high regard for. Attila Zoller is a good friend of mine. When I was sixteen, I went to New York and stayed with him for awhile, and we went to see Jim Hall every night. That's actually where I made the decision to do this whole thing."

Besides the players whose records Metheny was collecting, one significant source of inspiration came from a local unknown right in Kansas City. Pat reminisces: "At one point, when I was maybe sixteen years old, I was thinking, 'Boy, I'm getting really good!' Then I heard a guy who just killed me, a saxophone player. Herman Bell was his name. He's an older black guy who works at the post office in Kansas City, and he played with Charlie Parker and all that. He was one of those guys who could play through a tune like 'Donna Lee' for four hours and never repeat himself. Ever since that time I've never thought that I was that great. And I'm sure he wasn't that good if I were to judge him by my standards now, but I have this image in the back of my mind of what that guy sounded like, and the sort of looseness and freedom he had. That's going to stick with me probably till the day I die — that feeling of amazement."

Part of the reason for Metheny's success as an instrumentalist is that he has always had incredibly high standards set for him, both by himself and by those he's played with. "I've been playing with great players from the time I was fifteen," he states, "and until this group, I was always the worst guy in the band, which is the very best place to be to learn how to play. When I was eighteen I was standing next to Steve Swallow and Bob Moses [with Gary Burton], cats who'd been playing twenty years. You can't beat that. You can't beat getting blown off the bandstand; nothing will make you get better quicker. That aspect more than anything just put me in a place where I had to get better. Also, I had no one to compare myself to, as far as peers who were also playing guitar in the style I was playing. So in everything I did, I compared myself to the greatest players — you know, Wes Montgomery and Jim Hall. I'd play something that was probably real good for someone my age, but I didn't even consider that fact, because the standard was obviously Wes Montgomery, and in comparison to that I wasn't that great."

Besides no doubt increasing his facility on, and his knowledge of, the guitar, this awareness of the real jazz virtuosos and his relation to them helped form Metheny's personal voice on the instrument. He explains: "I saw the entire guitar spectrum — like Jimi Hendrix to Jim Hall or whoever — and saw these huge gaps in different places where I could really imagine myself fitting in. And I saw this big gap between Jim Hall and John McLaughlin . . . just waiting. Somebody that plays melodies and non-rock, kind of fuzz sound, but at the same time had knowledge of bebop and changes and could play that stuff too but never really did. I noticed that when I was about sixteen or seventeen years old,



"To me, making records is a means to get in front of people and play for them live...as opposed to the introverted jazz image.

and I just sort of aimed for that little hole ever since. And, to me, there are still some gigantic gaps in the guitar spectrum."

Probably the most identifying characteristic of Metheny's lyrical style is his knack for simplicity. "I'd say Jim Hall was a good source for the simplicity. That whole school — Jim Hall, Bill Evans, Art Farmer, Steve Swallow, Stan Getz, Chet Baker — the early 60s kind of cool school. I really love simple melodies and simple songs — like folk music and country music — and I try to capture that essence as much as possible."

The folk/country element Metheny refers to, the midwestern side of his playing and composing, is clearly evident in all of his work but is more apparent on *Bright Size Life* (recorded in late 1975) and *Watercolors* (from early '77) than on the *Pat Metheny Group*. The scenes and images Metheny was writing about are best reflected in titles such as "Omaha Celebration" and "Unity Village" (from *Bright Size Life*), "Oasis" and "Lakes" (from *Watercolors*), and "Midwestern Nights Dream" (on *Bright Size Life* as well as Gary Burton's *Passengers* LP). The style is best described by the title of another tune on *Bright Size Life*, "Missouri Uncompromised." Probably the best example of Pat's country approach is the title cut of his new solo album, *New Chautauqua*. "On all the tunes on this record," the composer explains, "I thought about nothing but when I was growing up, what it was like. This music is about that. Chautauqua was a term for a bunch of guys who traveled around in Missouri during the 1850s and played dances in Oklahoma and Texas. They were musicians who did one-nighters, and my great grandfather was in that. This record was a special project, and I don't expect it to sell more than about ten or fifteen thousand copies. But it doesn't matter to me, because it's a statement that I really wanted to make. To me, there's an almost political feel in that tune ["New Chautauqua"]. It's real country, but at the same time the playing is coming from a Lester Young thing."

On the group album, Metheny's beautifully melodic concepts are teamed with the crisp, uncluttered texturings of pianist Lyle Mays. Side one is comprised of two Metheny/Mays collaborations, "San Lorenzo" and "Phase Dance," which are undoubtedly the group's most popular pieces. Metheny describes the atmosphere in which the two partners write as "more like an encounter session. We sit down with a guitar and piano and play eight or ten hours, sometimes just on 16 bars, to really nail it. Then we work out voicings and the complicated stuff. But it's never the same way twice. Sometimes I'll walk down the street, and I'll hear a tune in its entire, completed version, and that's that. I'll just go home and write it down. And I never write on the guitar; I

always hear it in my head and then write it down."

Mays adds, "On the early tunes that we wrote together it was much more Pat's show. He would have most of the ideas and the concept for the tune, and I would add maybe some new melodic material. The newer stuff has really branched out a lot, where we'll get into actually both sitting down together and writing the stuff out right there. It's not like one person will come in with the idea and the other person goes home and works it out. We'll just sit down at the piano, and he'll get his guitar out — like you'd imagine two people would write songs together. Pat's really got that melodic stuff together. I've learned an awful lot from Pat about melodic theory. You can't really put it into words; it's just something he does. You can hear it, and you can learn from it."

With the success of the group album, not to mention the superior talents of all four members, it would seem inevitable that ECM would follow its pattern of turning sidemen into leaders, at least for recording purposes. There is already talk of Lyle Mays cutting a solo effort. Like Metheny, Mays comes from a small town in the Midwest, Wausauke, Wisconsin. "I first heard about Lyle," Metheny recalls, "when I was maybe sixteen or seventeen years old. A friend of mind named Dan Haerle, who's kind of a famous jazz educator, told me about this incredible young piano player, and he also told Lyle about this guitar player down in Missouri. We even talked on the phone around that time about possibly getting together. I finally got a chance to hear him play at a jazz festival in Wichita — ironically, the same festival I'd met Gary at two years earlier — and he just knocked me out. I was extremely impressed with his playing and his whole vibe as a performer. So we spoke, and I had him come up to Boston to do a few gigs, and we worked real well together. I was just getting set to do *Watercolors* about that time, so I had Lyle play on it. When it came time to leave Gary's band, he was the first guy I contacted — so that was the nucleus of the group."

The other two-fourths of the quartet, Dan Gottlieb and Mark Egan, were both musicians Pat had known from his tenure at University of Miami. The list of musicians who were students at Miami the year Metheny taught there, 1972, is truly amazing. "It's miraculous how many people were there who are now musicians," exclaims Metheny. "We're all still sort of dumbfounded that things have turned out the way they have, because when we were all there we were just a bunch of guys goofing around. I'm talking about Danny and Mark; Jaco Pastorius; Mark Colby, who's got a record out on Bob James' label; all of the Dixie Dregs; Eric Traub, who's a tenor soloist with Maynard Ferguson; Narada Michael Walden; Ross Traut, and excellent guitar player living in New York; Hiram Bullock, who's the number one studio guitarist in New York now; Cliff Carter, who's maybe the number two or three call pianist for studio stuff in New York; Stan Samole, who's done a lot of Don Cherry records — the list goes on and on. At the time it was looking like the University of Miami was going to be the hip jazz school. But when we all left the thing kind of petered out."

Pat's latest is a solo album on which he plays 6-string acoustic, 6 and 12-string electric, and bass.

During his stint there not all of the gigs were exactly hip jazz. "I did a lot of dumb gigs in Miami," he concedes, "playing for Tom Jones, Ann-Margaret, Pearl Bailey — you know, really awful stuff. Jaco and Danny and I played a week with this girl Lorna Luft, Judy Garland's daughter. We took it so far out that girl's never going to be the same[laughs]. If she only knew what was going on underneath, she would have died."

Drummer Dan Gottlieb recalls that period: "I met Pat in '72 and played with him all the time at the University. I'd say I've played with Pat more than any other musicians. We used to sneak into the practice rooms at two in the morning when no one was around and play space sessions until eight, and then cut out on our theory courses [laughs]. Later, I'd fly up to Boston just to play with him."

Pat picks up: "Danny and I were always very close. We did duo concerts down in Miami, and I loved the way he played because it was so completely different than anyone I'd played with before. He wasn't really a great jazz drummer, and he wasn't really a great rock drummer. He was in this sort of in between thing, very similar to my situation as a guitar player. We seemed to have a nice rapport. In fact, I got Dan the gig with Gary Burton when Bob Moses left the group. But Gary runs a band in such a way that everybody has to answer to him for every note they play from the start of the night till the end of the night. Which is cool, you know, and I appreciate that approach, and it works real well for Gary. But the problem is that Danny's playing is based on a sort of strange chaos where anything can happen at any time. As a result of that, any time Danny would go off on one of his tangents, Gary would, like, yell at him or something, and that would inhibit Danny. When he got inhibited the music would tend to lose the spirit that he was capable of generating. So it didn't really work out too well for Danny or for Gary. When I decided to leave Gary, I asked Dan if he'd come along. So that was three-fourths of the group."

As with all albums on Manfred Eicher's ECM label, *The Pat Metheny Group* was recorded very quickly; the actual sessions took only two and a half days, and the mixing took one day. *New Chautauqua* was done in two days, with Metheny overdubbing several guitars and bass. "Manfred believes very much in getting the moment on tape," says Metheny, "and that makes so much sense. He creates an atmosphere of incredible intensity and concentration that's hard to work under but works extremely well. He really makes you focus on the moment, and he bats a thousand at capturing the essence of a date. You can feel what it's like to be at that date whenever you listen to those records. That's really what counts; people seem to respond to that. I really like ECM. I like the sort of low-key format and the lack of hype or whatever. It's just guys playing their music, and that's the kind of setting I prefer to be in — especially at the age I'm at, where I feel like it's just barely starting to come together. After my first record came out I got besieged with offers from all of the so-called major labels, but I really like ECM. There's a kind of atmosphere where the number one priority is to play your music, while on most major American labels the priority is to sell some records."

Metheny and company take sort of a reverse route from most artists in preparation to recording an album. Explains Pat, "We go on the road for months and months at a time; I'm a big advocate of letting the tunes develop and then recording them. We write the music, play it for about six months, then record it. See, even though we're recording the stuff live, we have an advantage because we've played the tunes for months, so we rarely make goofs."

On the relative merits of the Eicher two-day method of making an album, Lyle Mays feels, "You're able to focus your energies and thoughts, and there's an awful lot to be said for that. We just did a film score for a series of short documentaries called *Search For Solutions*, and we had unlimited time in the studio. But it was kind of a mixed blessing."

Contrary to most bands who take to the road mainly for the



purpose of selling their records, Metheny records albums to enable him to tour. "To me, there's nothing like the feeling of playing before a live audience, with that energy and intensity there. That's why I do it. If I did nothing but make records I'd be bored to death. To me, making records is a means to get in front of people and play for them live. I've always been interested in playing for people, as opposed to the introverted jazz images. I've always been one to send it out. The nature of our music is pretty outgoing, so our performances are much closer to a rock kind of thing than jazz. The presentation of it is fun for people who aren't jazz fans as well as for those who are."

Even though his albums are done very spontaneously, live in the studio, Pat is still interested in the possibility of a live album, because, in his words, "It would definitely capture an element of the band that I don't think we can get in the studio — which is our sort of kick-ass side."

What comes across on record is mainly the material, the tunes and how well they are executed. Onstage, what is most impressive is the band's power and the sort of fun atmosphere they establish with an audience. When the band played San Francisco last February, they proved that even serious, accomplished virtuosos can still laugh at themselves and have fun with the music. The quartet played two two-and-a-half-hour sets which included several favorites from Metheny's three albums and a large body of material not yet on record. The evening's highlight, however, was Metheny's spontaneous tribute to the 60s. Starting with a feverish guitar-drum duo called "Mean Time," Pat worked his way into an uptempo 12-bar shuffle with the rest of the rhythm section joining in. From there he segued into "Louie Louie," into the Animals' "House Of The Rising Sun" (With Mays playing Alan Price's organ part on synthesizer), into possibly the hottest rendition of "Wipe Out" ever, then out with a slow blues. In each segment all four members played with as much dedication and enthusiasm as they had during the set of original compositions. This was by no means a bunch of jazz snobs making fun of rock and roll; this was a garage band — an unbelievably talented one — playing as though their lives depended on every note. When the commotion died down, Metheny sidled sheepishly to the microphone. "You people have to promise not to tell anybody about that," he told the sell-out crowd; "it could ruin our reputation."

Those purists who choose to categorize styles of music may be correct in calling Metheny's approach something other than jazz, but it seems obvious that Metheny's loyal and growing audience couldn't care less about such distinctions. Pat Metheny may not be able to blow through bebop changes with quite the facility of a seasoned veteran like Joe Pass, but the original voice he has found as a guitarist by far outweighs any shortcomings of technique (besides, how many "seasoned veterans" can really do justice to "Louie Louie"?).

And as Metheny points out, "The question is, what is jazz? The question I'm asked six or seven times a day in interviews is, am I a jazz musician? or, are we a jazz group? I'm not so sure I'm ready to call someone like Chuck Mangione jazz, and I'm not sure I'm ready to call what we do jazz, knowing that Coltrane's group existed. I don't see us playing that kind of music at that kind of level. But I do see our group as serving a function as reporters on the times, on what's going on right now. I think we reflect sort of a spirit of this branch of our generation. And a case could be made that that's what jazz is and always has been. There's an element of capturing the mood of a time."

Metheny's major concern at present is establishing his quartet as an identifiable group, with stable personnel. "Bands used to be real strong personalities," he stresses, "like Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers or Miles' band — instead of a star with a backup group. And other than Weather Report and Oregon, we're about the only guys where you know who you're going to see in the band from one time to the next. I think the other members of the ensemble need to be featured much clearer in a lot of groups; otherwise it almost turns into Musak.

Not that I have anything against him, but, like, Steve Gadd is on every record that comes out and after a while there's nothing special about it."

Part of what gives the Pat Metheny Group its distinctive sound is that, although the instrumentation is fairly standard — guitar, piano, bass, drums — each member plays a role not ordinarily associated with his instrument. Naturally, the guitar often plays the melody, the piano provides a bed of chords, the bass holds down the bottom, and the drums act as sort of a



The touring and recording band as it has been for the past two years. From l. to r. Metheny, pianist Lyle Mays, bassist Mark Egan and Dan Gottlieb.

kinetic catalyst; but the roles shift just enough so that, if you didn't already know, it would be difficult at times to tell just who is the band's leader. Much of the time it seems that the drums are what dictates the music's direction — and that is actually quite often the case.

"The way Danny plays with the group," Metheny feels, "is maybe the second most important factor in our sound. Most of the discussion when we write a new tune is, 'What are the drums going to do?' What they have to do is capture the essence of the groove, but at the same time be loose and a free spirit throughout the music. That's what really gives the piece its character, our sound. With most groups and records I hear today the drum part may as well be a machine — totally metronomic. They lay down the drum track, and then they put everything else on top of that. And I have no interest in that; to me, that's so boring. I'm much more interested in the kind of playing that stems from, say, Elvin Jones or Jack DeJohnette,

continued on page 70

Discography

- Jaco*; Improvising Artists, Inc.; 373846. Recorded June 1974. Jaco Pastorious, bass; Metheny, guitar; Paul Bley, electric piano; Bruce Ditmas, drums.
- Ring*; ECM; 1051. Recorded July 1974. Gary Burton, vibraharp; Ebernard Weber and Steve Swallow, basses; Mick Goodrick and Metheny, guitars; Bob Moses, drums.
- Dreams So Real* (Music of Carla Bley); ECM; 1-1072. Recorded December 1975. Burton, vibraharp; Metheny and Goodrick, guitars; Swallow, bass; Moses, drums.
- Bright Size Life*; ECM; 1-1073. Recorded December 1975. Metheny, guitars; Jaco Pastorious, bass; Bob Moses, drums.
- Passengers*; ECM; 1092. Recorded November 1976. Burton, vibraharp; Metheny, guitar; Weber and Swallow, basses; Dan Gottlieb, drums.
- Watercolors*; ECM; 1097. Recorded February 1977. Metheny, guitars; Lyle Mays, piano; Weber, bass; Gottlieb, drums.
- Pat Metheny Group*; ECM; 1-1114. Recorded January 1978. Metheny, guitars; Mays, keyboards; Gottlieb, drums; Mark Egan, bass.
- New Chautauqua*; ECM; 1131. Recorded August 1978. Metheny guitars and bass.

BLACK

Leroy Jenkins: In his lighter moments his music has the elusive romanticism of Bartok or Ligetti, in moments of despair it is dissonant, vivid, boring and surrealistic in the manner of Cecil Taylor or Edgar Varese.



BROWN

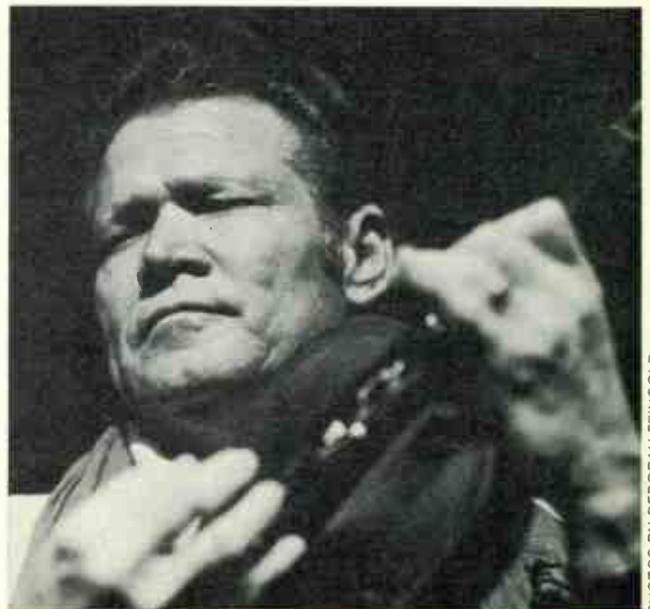
L. Shankar: Late of John McLaughlin's Shakti, he plays a rock hybrid that incorporates many of the subtleties of Indian music with a skill and technique that will completely alter your perception of what the violin can do.



& BEIGE

Vassar Clements: One of the premier improvising violinists in America playing a unique combination of bluegrass, jazz and rock in the Southern honkey-tonk fiddle tradition.

By Chip Stern



PHOTOS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

This is intended as a brief overview of contemporary violinists. In this writer's opinion, Leroy Jenkins, L. Shankar, and Vassar Clements represent the state of the art in improvising violin today. Each brings a very unique sound and musical viewpoint to their creations, and the following portraits are intended to give readers a perspective with which to approach each musician, and I hope to enjoy their work.

For an instrument with as much vocal quality and nuance as the violin, there have been relatively few exponents in the jazz idiom. Which is ironic, because violin was an integral part of jazz bands in the early years in the typical ensembles that furnished dance music in pre-World War I New Orleans. The violinists were used as a substitute for piano players in these bands, and they were expected to improvise.

During the 1920s violinists surfaced more and more in the cosmopolitan society dance bands. Often the leaders were themselves violinists, such as Paul Whiteman, who is perhaps best remembered for employing Bix Beiderbecke (and who also wanted to make jazz respectable). Perhaps all that Guy Lombardo music put a hex on violinist's minds. But it is more likely that the airs of the academy and America's basic racism deterred black musicians from even bothering to learn the instrument. So the first great innovations in jazz were made on horns. Black violinists couldn't get jobs with symphonies, and couldn't be heard over all those horns and drums anyway, so why bother.

There are four great violinists who emerged in the 1920s and early 30s: Joe Venuti, Eddie South, Stephane Grappelly, and Stuff Smith. The Italian born Venuti, and his boyhood friend, guitarist Eddie Lang, worked in a variety of musical settings, from society bands to hot ensembles. Between 1926 and 1933 Venuti and Lang recorded some memorable 78s for Columbia. These early duos, quartets and quintets have been re-issued as *Stringin' The Blues*, and they are possessed of an extraordinary chamber feel and vitality that compares favorably to Louis Armstrong's more dramatic recordings from the same period. Venuti's tone was pungent and vocal, and his melodic inventions were effortless and mischievous.

Eddie South, "The Dark Angel" of the violin, would probably have achieved acclaim as a great virtuoso had he been white, but like Art Tatum, he had the misfortune to be a black concert artist at a time when America was loathe to accept such an idea. He had an extensive formal training, but was drawn to jazz. He took a group to Paris in 1926 where he studied, later journeying to Budapest to study with the master gypsy violinists. There is little available of his playing, the recordings of his later life being extremely dismal. In 1937 he recorded with Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelly in Paris (on the hard to find import *Djangologie*, Pathe Marconi EMI). South was indeed an angel. His tone was soaring and light, his swing impeccable. Eddie South — lost master.

The Frenchman Stephane Grappelly was greatly influenced by Eddie South. A gifted melodic player, it is hard to differentiate Grappelly and South on the *Djangologie* date. Both are urbane and witty, but Grappelly employs a more pronounced vibrato. Still active today, Grappelly was every bit as much responsible for the legendary hot quintets as guitar cohort Django.

Stuff Smith was a foot-stomping, jive talking, blues shouting fiddler. In the late 1930s he solved the problem of volume by putting a pickup on his violin. Stuff's sound was grainy and metallic. Though a cruder technician than any of his peers, Stuff knew no equal at swing. And though he rarely took himself seriously enough to exhibit much emotional range, he was an awesome blues player.

There are two less renowned but important violinists from the early 40s that merit a word. Ray Nance is best known as a trumpet player, but he was a gifted violinist with a dark,

plaintive sound (almost cello-like) and a gift for insinuating pizzicato effects. The somber and mysterious "Bakiff" (from *The Duke Ellington Carnegie Hall Concerts — 1947* on Prestige) is a fine example of his art. Then there is Ray Perry, the missing link in violin history between the early greats and the later developments of Jean Luc Ponty. Perry was the only violinist who really had a chance to be a bopper. There are some examples of his playing on the RCA Lionel Hampton box, but an obscure record I found at The Institute of Jazz Studies in Newark was a revelation. Sandwiched in between solos by no less than Roy Elderidge and Coleman Hawkins, Perry's Smith influenced electric sound explodes with horn-like urgency, thriving on a Charlie Christian-like riff for three amazing choruses and making great use of interval leaps. Perry died in 1950, another forgotten master of violin.

In our era, Jean Luc Ponty offered the greatest hope for expanding the range and appreciation of violin. Ponty was the first player to have a really modern conception on the instrument, reflecting a strong grounding in Miles and Coltrane. Some of my fondest memories are of Ponty tearing my ears off with Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin. In recent years Ponty has chosen to mine a rich vein of cliches in post-Mahavishnu territory. Nothing personal Jean Luc, but if you've heard one of your records, you've heard them all. Where once Ponty asserted that he was less interested in being a violinist than in being a jazzman, now he states that his audience isn't a jazz audience. There probably isn't any jazz violinist with Ponty's starship control and dexterity, and when you get past all the pedals his tone is exquisite. But Ponty's recent works have been so stilted and predictable, it is hard to remember why I got excited in the first place. We couldn't hook up an interview with Jean Luc, who was finishing a new album in Europe, so in all fairness let's just say the jury is still out on Ponty. After all, he opened up ears for all the violinists that followed.

Space prohibits details, but we should mention some other violinists in contemporary music. Ornette Coleman is more expressionistic than technically adept, but I find his banshee choruses texturally interesting. Ramsey Amin is an Egyptian violinist of great promise, currently working with Cecil Taylor. Billy Bang has a gorgeous tone and a fine bowing attack, but I'm still waiting for his ideas to equal his energy. Jerry Goodman shook up some folks with the original Mahavishnu, but he's out in Chicago doing nothing; it's a pity, because he was a galvanizing gypsy acrobat. I've stopped waiting for Michael White and John Blair to get it together, but there's a new wave rocker named Walter Stedding who is, quite literally, making a lot of noise. One of the nastiest blues fiddlers ever is Sugar Cane Harris, who some of you might remember from John Mayall and Frank Zappa. Finally, I'd like to urge you to check out an Oregon album called *Violin* so that you can enjoy the creativity of Zbigniew Seifert, a fine Polish player who recently passed away.

I'm sure I missed somebody, in some cases intentionally, but, I'd appreciate if you'd give the music of Leroy Jenkins, L. Shankar, and Vassar Clements a listen. Of all the violinists on the scene today, they are offering the most meaningful new directions for the next generation of creators.

Black: Leroy Jenkins

My first verbal encounter session with violinist-composer Leroy Jenkins was so provocative that I'd ignored the clock, and now was late. The weather was a mild preview of spring, but there wasn't enough time to enjoy a walk, so I flagged a cab and soon found myself hopelessly interred in a crosstown bottleneck. The driver sighed as the light changed five times and we advanced three places. Five minutes later we still hadn't made the corner, so I decided to throw on a tape that



Joe Venuti, along with his boyhood friend, guitarist Eddie Lang, created some of the greatest violin jazz ever.

TOM COPPI

Leroy Jenkins had given me of his Mixed Quintet's performance at The Kitchen. The driver's head twitched as if his eardrum had been lanced, but he offered neither comment nor retaliation. The sounds spun around like a mobile, and gradually the cab eased into a moving flow of traffic. As we neared our destination the cabbie turned and gently offered that "what they're playing now is really beautiful." Then with a genuine tone of interest he asked me "what were they doing before? I didn't follow that. It sounded like they were tuning up."

I said something about how it was primarily a music of shapes and textures, that is was mostly improvised, and that they achieved a blend, not by coming together, but by moving in opposite directions.

He nodded his head as if to say fascinating. "Well, uhh, what would you call that kind of music?"

"I don't really know," I said, "but I thought it might make you drive a little faster." He got a good laugh anyway

There is an inherent challenge in Leroy Jenkins' music. It doesn't resolve into traditional patterns of tension and release, but consciously avoids guideposts and orgasms — which is both its charm and frustration. In his lighter moments, Jenkins' music has the elusive romanticism of a Bartok or Ligetti; when feeling celebratory it cooks with the oblique bluesiness of Ornette Coleman or the effusive Americana of Charles Ives; in moments of despair it is dissonant, vivid, boring, and surrealistic in the manner of Cecil Taylor or Edgar Varese — like life, *it ain't pretty*. Which is why Jenkins hasn't made a lot of money, so far. It is also why his work will last.

I was always attracted by the expressionistic audacity of Leroy Jenkins' violin, even if his intonation would waver or I was less than gassed by some of the *out* for the sake of out experiments the Revolutionary Ensemble sometimes indulged in. But I love a mystery, though, and the Revolutionary Ensemble were heroic, modern, and intense. Leroy Jenkins, acrobatic and lean; Jerome cooper, restrained and lyrical; Sirone, earthy and incessant. Even when they were just shouting — practically cacophonous — they were like John the Baptist. In a sense, they were telling about the coming of something. At their best, as on *The People's Republic* (Horizon) and *The Revolutionary Ensemble* (Inner City), they achieved a rare sort of chamber ambience. "We were trying to project a complete improvisational attitude as far as the accepted front instrument-bass-drums situation," Jenkins asserted. "It was based on the idea of an *equal* improvisational concept. We believed that our improvisations, when played together, would serve as an accompaniment and background at the same time. In pursuit of that we felt that we should jump from one to another, to be determined in a telepathic manner, except when we used written parts as a corner to make a turn."

Since leaving the Revolutionary Ensemble, Jenkins has been musically liberated. His recent work, as epitomized by the excellent trio date *the legend of ai glatson* (with pianist Anthony Davis and drummer Andrew Cyrille on Black Saint BSR 0022), is less cluttered and more playful than ever before. As the tour de force title tune demonstrates, Jenkins' tone has become bolder and more assured. His sound is beginning to approach the light, glassy radiance of an abstract Eddie South — it glows like neon — and compositionally there is more variety, though no lack of energy. "Brax Stone" is a group of portraits that reflect the numerous aspects of Anthony Braxton: formal and serious, swinging and lighthearted, pointillistic and detached, rhythmic and emotional; "Albert Ayler (his life was too short)" is churchy and elegaic; "Tuesday Child" is buoyant and innocent. *the legend of ai glatson* is the most compelling statement to date on Leroy Jenkins' stature as an American improvising violinist. "Most people really haven't had a chance to hear me. For the past ten years I've been involved in cooperative groups. First there was the AACM, then the Creative Construction Company with Braxton and Leo Smith, and then the Revolutionary Ensemble — I've been contributing to a mutual name. In the next year people will probably check out more of what I've done than ever before. The Black Saint record was one of the first projects where I got to write all the tunes."

Much of the time Leroy and I talked about how his music is perceived, popular acceptance, artistic intentions, and public misconceptions. Leroy, a feisty yet gentle man, positively bristled when I related some of my problems in understanding his music, and suggested that his work was not exactly laden with hooks. "You pre-conceive too much. If you're looking for the blues and a beat, you're looking for the wrong things in my music — that's not what I'm about. The music I play, if there's any dancing going on it's probably inside — you know, in the head. A little shaking maybe, but no dancing. Not that I wouldn't want to do it, but that's not my strength. I mean I'm in the business to be accepted and to make money. I have a wife and kid as they say. I'm not crying or asking anybody for nothing — just give me a fair hearing.

"I think maybe the writers and the public are a little afraid they're going to be left behind. If people are going to hold out until we play something that makes some sense to them, they're going to be waiting a long time. People are too hung up on understanding all the time. Sure I want to be accepted through our music. Like the cut "Albert Ayler" on the Black Saint album; people like that because they say they understand it, it's pretty — you see, I try. But I want to make people work hard to dig what I'm doing, and I'm not playing fads. There's a lot of people who'll go that extra step to get next to some good music, and that's who I'm playing for. I know that everybody can't like me, and that's cool, but I just don't want to be ignored. All I want is for people to be aware that I'm dealing.

"Black music has become such an octopus that my type of stuff is just a branch of it. People refer to my music as classically oriented, which really only means concert music — music that people listen to. I think that most people think of me as classical because I play violin well. But I'd like to clarify that I'm mostly influenced by jazzmen: Parker, Rollins, Coltrane, and Ornette — in that order. And compositionally the main influences are Braxton, Smith, Roscoe Mitchell, and Ornette. I would say mostly Ornette's harmolodic theory. I mean I don't understand it, but what I do understand I can derive something out of it. Before I met Ornette I was writing in a pat, accepted way. Now I don't do anything in the standard way. As far as some of the people you said I reminded you of, I've never listened to them. My first introduction to the modern composers came through Braxton and Smith. When we were in Europe they'd always be playing that stuff on a portable

record player. So I might have gotten it sub-consciously, but I don't listen to them. Most of my classical influences coming up were the old-timers like Bach, Beethoven, and Paganini. And the only cat that ever really gassed me, that totally blew me away, was Jascha Heifetz playing Tchaikovsky's Concerto in D with the Chicago Symphony. That's one of my favorite records. I consider it great black music."

Jenkins' most recent release is on Tomato Records. It is called *Space Minds, New Worlds, Survival of America*, and features Jenkins, Davis and Cyrille with trombonist George Lewis and Richard Teitellbaum on synthesizer. The title suite is music of the spheres, and makes excellent use of electric piano and synthesizer colors. The electronic textures seem to put the starker aspects of Jenkins work in a proper perspective. One friend even told me it reminded him of Robert Fripp's later experiments with King Crimson. Side two concludes with a piece for quartet called "Through The Ages Jehovah." George Lewis and Jenkins achieve a beautiful blend on the sing-song theme, which is redolent of Kur Weil or Carla Bley. It is a rare example of Jenkins employing repetition; short, bright and satiric. Maybe this is Leroy's AM hit.

The written and improvised parts phase in and out at the discretion of the players. On every song, no matter what the mood, there is such an understood sense of form that it feels like composition even though it's improvised. And of course, Jenkins avoids the familiar and expected. "That's exactly what I want. I want improvisation to become a form of composition so that people don't differentiate between them. It's a form of collective improvisation so that musicians can co-exist without it sounding like cacophony. And I know that people who listen to my music are going to have to work at it, but hopefully they'll get something out of it."

The last time I saw Leroy Jenkins he was in the studio making a record for Tomato with the Mixed Quintet — James Newton on flute, J.D. Parran on clarinet, John Clark on french horn, Marty Ehrlich on bass clarinet, and Leroy on viola. At the conclusion of one improvisation Newton and Parran arrived at a mutual note, a whole new sound, that left the people in the control booth gasping.

"What was that?" Leroy demanded to know.

"The harmony twins," quipped Ehrlich.

"I know what happened," Leroy concluded. "You'd never hit that note together so you decided to just let it happen and see what it sounded like. But that's not the way it was supposed to end. It's supposed to linger on out."

"He means decayed," the engineer observed. "Leroy, that sounded good."

"No man, it was traditional. I wouldn't allow it."

The engineer smiled broadly. "Leroy, are you saying I'm traditional because I liked that?"

"Yeah. Then everybody can say *ohhhhhh, that's so pretty*. And you went for it didn't you — hook, line and sinker."

Brown: L. Shankar

Americans tend to associate Indian music as a whole with Ravi Shankar, which is not true. Ravi Shankar represents the classical music of *North* India. Originally there was only one Indian music, then Persian invaders conquered the northern part of India, bringing with them their own court musicians and a variety of Arabic and Muslim influences. So it is the music of *South* India — largely unknown to western ears — that represents the pure ancient strains of a musical culture going back thousands and thousands of years.

Whereas Western European classical music raised harmony to its greatest esteem, Indian classical music emphasized rhythm and melody. Western classical music is based on a tempered scale, but Indian classical music — like its African-American cousin, the blues — is interested in the tones that lie between the tempered notes of the piano: quarter tones, microtones, and a vocabulary of slurs, shakes, and bends. While classical music seeks an aesthetic balance of

parts and form, Indian music aspires towards an expression of the inner voice and a continual dialog between improvisers — like jazz.

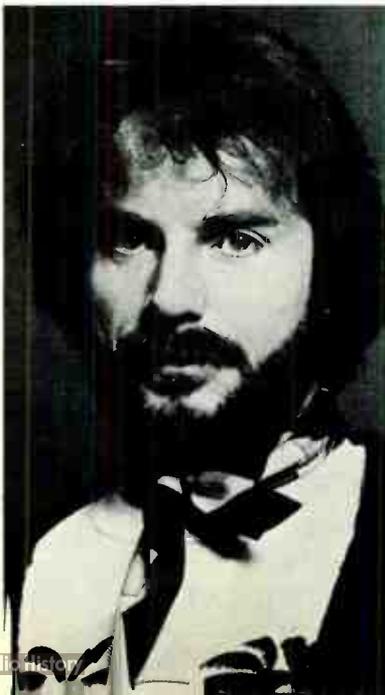
In Indian music everything is based on vocals. There is a vast literature on the theory of the raga system, yet there are no written scores. Ragas employ three octaves — low, medium and high — and within each octave there are seven main notes akin to the diatonic scale, but there is no such thing as a fixed key in Indian music. The Indian octaves are further divided into 22 intervals. The intervals are decided in relation to one another and with C as the tonic. The musician can start his tonic C on any note of the octave but thereafter must create in a rigorous pattern of intervals. Though there is no fixed key in Indian music, the emphasis is on the scale.

There are a lot of ragas and scales in common between the northern and southern systems, but the treatments are essentially different. Rhythmically the southern system is more complex and advanced. The northern drummers play a more regularly recurring cycle of beats (called the *tala*) but in the south, after the one, the drummer has more discretion in his patterns and subdivisions. To these ears the southern drummers have a freer more fluid approach, and they seem to turn the beat around a lot. The northern pulsation seems vertical and the southern linear — like the difference between the backbeat of rock and funk, and the swing beat of jazz.

The South Indian classical musician L. Shankar is without question the baddest violinist I've ever heard. No, I'm not overlooking Jascha Heifetz. He's peerless. But consider Heifetz's diamond-laser vibrato and supersonic dexterity as a mean point, the way violin is supposed to sound, like the Sibelius Violin Concerto. Substitute the poly-rhythmic counterpoint of melodic hand drums for an orchestra; have the drummers play complex cycles of beats with the violinist, like, say, 32 or 21¼, or maybe you'd like 62½; then imagine a 5-string violin or 5-string viola *improvising* in this setting, every note charged with an expanding vocal ornamentation... long cascading melodic lines quivering like a belly dancer... tall intervals leaped in a single bound... turbulent bowing and chainsaw chords... imagine the brilliant drummers Zakir Hussain on tablas and Palghat Mani Iyer on mridangam and you have Shankar's 14th album on EMI-International, *Violin Ecstasy*.

Shankar, a warm, playful, supremely disciplined man of 29, is the foremost violinist in India. He is best known in America for his collaboration with John McLaughlin in Shakti. "I loved that group," Shankar told me. "It was probably the first time

Two French virtuosos: Stephane Grapelli, known for his work with Django Reinhardt, and Jean Luc Ponty who introduced the violin to rock and fusion.





TOM COPI

Ray Nance, though primarily a trumpet player, was a gifted violinist with Ellington, playing with a dark, plaintively sweet tone.

western and Indian music had ever been brought together properly, instead of western music with an Indian flavor — Shakti was real synthesis. John and I used to give each other lessons. John taught me a lot about jazz and harmony, and he made a very thorough study of Indian music, so things blended. The true pity of it is that at the time Shakti disbanded we were really getting together. By the third album our concept and style was becoming so strong, but people in America were just not interested anymore, and the record company was always pressuring him to do something else."

"After Shakti a lot of people were interested in signing me, but no one was interested in South Indian classical music. Then I met Frank Zappa in Europe. He told me he'd heard my records and really liked Indian music. 'Don't sign with anybody else,' he said, 'sign with me.' So out of ten records, I'll get to do two of pure classical music."

Shankar's first album was produced by Zappa this past January in London. Entitled *Touch Me There*, it displays a heavy rock and blues influence, and Shankar overdubs all string parts — violin, viola, cello, and bass violin — like a Roscoe Mitchell of the fiddle, getting his unique vocal inflection on each instrument. "I am much closer to blues, rock and pop than to jazz. But since I've played with John people assume I'm a jazz or a jazz-rock player. But I was never trained in jazz. Jazz is a very, very hard discipline that requires a lifetime of study like Indian music. I can play through changes, but I think I tend to approach everything modally in different keys. I love people like Miles, Ornette and Coltrane, but I don't honestly think I can do justice to real jazz music.

"At this point I am much more into compositions and taking shorter, more meaningful solos. That's what's the matter with so much of jazz-rock thing today. The compositions are just excuses to take fast solos. If you really want to show your virtuosity you should differentiate between solo and composition. My father taught me that I should stop when they want more. I think that's a great philosophy, because many people overdo it. The greatest challenge is to take a short solo and say something substantial.

"Frank told me that some people are probably going to be disappointed in the album; but I feel you can't please everybody — I have to let people know what I really feel. I told Frank I'd rather do what I want now even if it takes people three or four albums to hear what I'm doing. In two or three years, if

I've built up a good following, then I can educate people to the beauty of South Indian classical music. But if no one is buying the albums, what is the use? I basically do different things for different results — it's not like what you call selling out. If I just wanted to play classical music I could have stayed in India."

So Shankar is basically meeting American audiences half-way with a rock music that contains many of the subtleties of Indian music. In short, he seeks to gain acceptance for the unfamiliar. Which is precisely what Shankar and his family did for the violin as a solo instrument in India. "In India 15 years ago, violin was not a leading instrument, but was used traditionally as an accompanying instrument for singers and flutes. It was really nothing. My father, V. Lakshminarayana, is a great violinist and he taught me and my two brothers. Eventually our group, The Violin Trio, became the number one recording artists in India. But it took people a long time to accept the violin."

The Violin Trio is startling. Shankar's two brothers are nearly as formidable as he is. Together they play unison, passages in quarter tones, and improvise complicated conversations over the ever changing mridangam pulse of Palghat Mani Iyer. What is most fascinating about Shankar's contributions to the Violin Trio and Indian violin in general — a whole system of ornamentations, different fingerings for different tempos, and articulation in the very upper octaves — is that he did it all on his own.

"My father had many students, so when I was 3 I used to hear all the things he was teaching. I was learning a lot of songs, even though I was too little to play violin. My father started teaching me at 5, but after three years he wouldn't teach me anymore because I was so bad in school. He used to lock my violin away, but then I'd cut school and find a violin to practice on. One brother became a medical doctor, so my family wanted me to be an engineer so that I would have something to fall back on if I couldn't earn a living as a musician. But I hated mathematics in terms of physics and things. So I used to wait for vacations, and all the time I was praying for rain, because when it rains in India it gets so muddy they close the schools; and the roofs leak. My happiest days were heavy rains, cyclones, floods, and tidal waves.

"I played my first concert at 7, but it took me a long time to perfect my technique to get where I wanted to go. I used to have visions, really amazing musical dreams where I would hear whole compositions. When I woke up I would try and get back that music. And even though my father would lock away my violin, I kept meeting great musicians. By the time I was 16 all the top players wanted to work with me because they needed violin accompaniment. Sometimes they wouldn't show and I'd improvise a solo concert and people would go crazy. After awhile promoters invited me to play solo because I attracted a lot of children and teenagers. I made a lot of money. The high point was when I got to play the national radio program on Saturday night as a soloist, instead of an accompanist, which was a great honor.

"Eventually I was under pressure to leave India. I was very happy when I failed my college entrance exams, but my father is a very influential man, and because I was the number one violinist in India, there were colleges that wanted to give me a scholarship to represent their school — like football players here. So I sent Wesleyan University an audition tape of me playing the most difficult classical pieces, like the Paganini caprices, and they gave me a scholarship and sponsored me until I got a permanent visa. I got a doctorate in ethnomusicology, but I had to wash dishes and things to cover the remainder of my school costs and expenses. My parents could not believe it, because in India I had made a fortune and here I was washing dishes."

But couldn't you take some of that money to America?
"No. Because they have a law which prohibits you from taking your money out of the country. So I just give that money away. If you ever come to India look for me and you'll be taken care of. I have a \$150,000 house, but I only get to use it when I

tour India in December and January. I can't even touch the royalties from my EMI albums. But I don't care. When I came to America it was a big change. It was all me and I didn't have to answer to anybody — like freedom, you know? Ask any Indian who comes here. Once they see what it is like they never go back. Which is probably why they keep the money."

So today Shankar is a native of New York and a featured soloist in John McLaughlin's One Truth Band. *Touch Me There* will be released on Zappa Records (distributed by Mercury) in June, and after his tour with McLaughlin, Shankar hopes to mount an American tour with The Violin Trio. The leading violinist in India is now, along with Leroy Jenkins, the most important improvising violinist in the United States. No matter what setting you hear him in — rock, jazz, or classical — Shankar will completely alter your perception of what the violin can do.

Beige: Vassar Clements

A large curtained touring bus pulled up to the curb on the corner of 13th St. and 5th Ave. The license plates spoke of a slower, more sylvan though somehow tragic part of America, triggering various thoughts of the frontier and the music it has produced. The high, lonesome cry of Hank Williams calling out for help one last time in the back of his limousine. A blue falsetto piercing the heavy dawn air of a Mississippi cottonfield, as B.B. King bends again and again, all the while dreaming of better days. Congregations raising joyous sounds and laments on both sides of town come Sunday.

The door opened and Vassar Clements ambled out into the early evening street noise. Puffing reflectively on a fancy pipe, his freckled countenance broke into a bemused smile when someone pointed out a giant lizard on the roof of The Lone Star Cafe, Manhattan's own honky tonk. It's an incongruous sight indeed to see that beast looming over the most fashionable street of New York's moneyed elite. "Well I'll be darned." Clements chuckled lightly.

The Lone Star prides itself on being a regular joint, though it is truly the higher priced spread. But no where else in New York can you see a selection of country, blues, and boogie people like Buddy Emmons, Otis Rush, James Cotton, and Albert King. So the place is usually jammed to the rafters with urban cowboys living out rural fantasies. People get nice and tipsy — sometimes blind drunk — dance, whoop and holler, and generally have a good old time. When Clements came through the revolving door he got a loud welcome as happy voices screamed out "Vassar" and offered requests. Vassar and his young new band (Marty Stewart, guitar; Buzzy Neekins, bass; Louis Stevens, piano; Jimmy Charles, drums) mounted the stage and began their set with Jimmy Forrest's "Night Train," done in western swing fashion. Vassar's tone is dark and sweet, almost cello-like in resonance. He doesn't venture into the upper octaves at all, but like Miles Davis, gets all the effects he needs from one range of his instrument. Vassar's lines swirled and soared upwards like a chorus of angels, undulating in perfect swing and making use of an array of percussive bowing effects and Djangoish chordal slurs.

The audience stomped, shouted, and generally danced up a storm to this spirited jump music. They were treated to a mixture of bluegrass, breakdowns, boogies, and even a latin flavored jazz-rock number called "Acropolis," that reminds one of Jean Luc Ponty's best work. Some of Vassar's prettiest moments came when he was playing rhythm and counter-melodies behind Marty Stewart's torrid guitar leads, suddenly engaging him for harmonies and round robin exchanges. This is a progressive improvising band in the best southern tradition of groups like the Dixie Dregs and the Allman Brothers. They are due for bigger things.

Vassar's music has been growing for some time. Born in Kinard, Florida on April 25, 1928, Vassar started playing the violin at seven. "The first music I ever heard was a couple of guys playing guitar on the steps of a church. To me the prettiest music in the world is the harmonies they get singing in

church. I guess I play violin the way I would if I could sing. I mean, I play the way I feel. I didn't get any training on violin, so I just taught myself. Couldn't read — still can't. I'm thankful and lucky to have done it by myself. If I had learned from another person I might never have had anything that was my own.

"I didn't even have my own violin. I used to borrow one up until the time I went to Nashville with Bill Monroe when I was thirteen. The thing of it is I idolized Bill Monroe back then, and I got his records and learned the violin parts. I only knew like two breakdowns, and I didn't know those real good, but I got the job with Bill Monroe because I knew those songs."

So Vassar stayed with Bill Monroe for around eight years. "We toured all over just about everywhere playing bluegrass — that's all he ever played. Then I started freelancing around playing square dances, country music and what have you. I would try anything in the world that made music, as long as it came from the inside. It all goes back to the music I was brought up on, that right; then I didn't think I would ever get a chance to do, because I didn't know that I loved music as much as I did — which was the big band years. That sound, that swing, and anything that moved and had a good rhythm, because bluegrass didn't have enough rhythm. I loved horns, and I loved to dance to big bands. Actually that's where disco dancing comes from, and people today think it's something really different. Same with boogie, which goes way back before the Allman Brothers were even born. People like the barrelhouse pianists were doing the walking blues thing and octave jumping — now *that* was boogie."

So Vassar spent years developing his unique hybrid of bluegrass, jazz, and rock, becoming one of the premier improvising violinists in America. "But the first real chance I got to do my own thing was with John Hartford. He told me to just play the way I wanted to play. After that I went with Earl Scruggs for awhile and while I was with him I did that record with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band — *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* — and that there record got me as far as I've gone."

But the albums that should be of the most interest to jazz listeners are sessions that Vassar did on Flying Fish Records: *Hillbilly Jazz* and an extraordinary supersession whose only title is the names of the participants, *Norman Blake/Jethro Burns/Sam Bush/Vassar Clements/David Holland/Butch Robbins/Tut Taylor*. The latter is the definitive recording of Vassar's work. "Hank Deane came down to Nashville and got us all together. With no preparation. It was the loosest album I've ever been on." There are many highlights, but the peak is a totally improvised duet between Holland and Clements, "Vassar & Dave." The rapport is up there with the works of Joe Venuti/Eddie Lang and Stephane Grappelly/Django Reinhardt, as Vassar and Dave prod each other into one freight train chorus after another.

Vassar brings that same energy and humor into every situation he plays in. With every chorus he sums up the best strains of the southern fiddle tradition. Check him out when he makes it to your local honky tonk.



RECORDS

Herbie Hancock/Chick Corea — *An Evening with Herbie Hancock & Chick Corea in Concert*, Columbia PC2 35663. *Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, acoustic pianos.*



Piano duets for three sides and Hancock *solus* for one. Hancock and Corea are both excellent pianists. Each man gets a lovely, ringing tone from his instrument, shows a fine mastery of dynamics and phrasing, and listens well to the other, but there are problems, and much of the album goes badly awry.

Of the six pieces here, only one is less than ten minutes long. At twenty two minutes, "La Fiesta" is the longest, and it is the second part of a medley begun by thirteen minutes of "Maiden Voyage." The proportions are ambitious, particularly for two pianists whose styles resemble each other too much for them to provide variety through contrast. So here's what happens: Only a few minutes have elapsed and each man has taken a solo. Now format and expectation together compel them to interact with each other, and that interaction, rather than the tune if there is one, becomes the subject of the piece. There's nothing wrong with that, but what follows is an interaction of personalities rather than essences, of pianists most of all, of very ingenious pianists. It is as if two men were talking to each other and the emphasis were not on the subject of the conversation but on the tone of their voices and their turns of phrase. It is all embellishment and little substance, all cadenza and no concerto. While something waits to happen there are too many storybook arpeggios, cute grace notes, "brilliant" inversions of rhythm and vamp-till-ready trills. Piano rhetoric: the mind trying to do the work of the heart. Moments of charm and invention do come, more than a few of them, but too often the music is in danger of falling upward, as it were, into vacuity (as Shakespeare remarked of the album in a British magazine).

Still, I would describe these as the problems of an interesting album rather

than the symptoms of a sick one. It's not easy to make duo-piano albums. One way of succeeding is through failure (the Mary Lou Williams-Cecil Taylor duets are a fine example). Another might be through modesty (Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan most recently), by playing tunes as if one loved them, not as if they were the excuses for one's automatically better inventions. This album is full of successes and failures, like most things. The more I listen to it, the more my ear becomes attuned to its details (as many listeners' ears will doubtless be from the beginning), and the more I find to enjoy in it. I mean, these guys are good. Hancock assumes the lead and Corea follows. You'd still have to go some distance to hear piano played better than this. — *Rafi Zabor*

Albert Collins — *Ice Pickin'*, Alligator AL 4713.

Collins, guitar & vocals; Larry Burton, guitar; Alan Batts, keyboards; A.C. Reed, Chuck Smith, saxophones; Aron Burton, bass; Casey Jones, drums.



I've been listening to *Ice Pickin'* for several months now and it's getting more refreshing with each playing, something I'm finding increasingly rare with contemporary electric blues albums. For all the limits of the form, Collins makes the blues sound boundless. His phrases sting with controlled sustain and hang in the air until the next chord change, and rather than following them up with a fast flurry of notes, he'll leave some space and surprise you with one searing high note. He is always an imaginative and unpredictable player.

His band, featuring some of the very top Chicago blues musicians, is remarkably tight. Their playing is almost understated and its excellence might be overlooked, but they provide immaculate support. Collins can play his spacious, biting solos without fear that his band will fall back on the changes and do no real work of its own, and when he does lay out they steam. The material is varied, contemporary, and personal. I like the fast shuffles that open each side best of all — the band is so good you

can't help but move around — and the slow blues, "Cold, Cold Feeling," will make anyone sit up and marvel at the emotional power that Collins is capable of putting out. He winds his guitar playing around his vocal lines with such fluidity and control that you have to wonder how long he can keep it up. Anybody at all into blues should own this album — *Patrick Irwin*

Arthur Blythe — *Lenox Avenue Breakdown*, Columbia JC 35638.

Arthur Blythe, alto saxophone; James Newton, flute; Bob Stewart, tuba; Cecil McBee, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Guillermo Franco, percussion.



Arthur Blythe continually amazes those who hear him. His provocative instrumental work is noted for its use of the entire jazz tradition, wide range of expression, and exploratory qualities. Yet, the saxophonist has remained relatively unknown, having previously recorded for only small independent labels. Hopefully, this recording for a major company will expose him to a larger audience. *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* is a superlative, upbeat session showcasing Blythe with James Newton, Bob Stewart, James "Blood" Ulmer, Cecil McBee, Jack DeJohnette, and Guillermo Franco. Newton is quite impressive, his flute forming an effective partnership with Blythe's saxophone. Although only in his twenties, he is already a major innovator on his instrument. His unusually large sound, forceful phrasing, and simultaneous use of voice and flute dynamically display his creative abilities. Stewart's impressive tuba work is responsible for much of the group's full, stimulating sound. Skillfully used in both harmonic and melodic contexts, the instrument's dual role belies its stereotype as a comical and clumsy horn.

The members of the rhythm section also contribute a great deal to the music's impact. DeJohnette constantly drives the band, producing multi-rhythmic textures that both support and prod the other musicians. Ulmer's mostly dissonant, single-line melodies and

chord/clusters complement his colleagues' efforts. His solo on "Odessa" documents his original conception, making one wish that he were featured more prominently.

Although the assisting musicians play an important role, *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* primarily features Blythe's formidable talents. The saxophonist's work is characterized by a story-telling quality, gorgeous lyricism, and a conception that draws from various aspects of improvisatory music. His solo on "Slidin' Through," for example, displays his feeling for the blues idiom and builds gradually to a spectacular series of climaxes. No matter how intense or abstract his music becomes, Blythe plays with a singing, passionate sound. On "Down San Diego Way," he combines riffs with long and short phrases into a cogent musical statement. He also employs ecstatic upper register cries, adding a vocal quality to his work.

Lenox Avenue Breakdown stunningly documents the creative talents of Arthur Blythe and his fellow musicians. Let these energizing sounds stimulate your spirit and emotions. — Clifford Jay Safane

John McLaughlin with The One Truth Band — *Electric Dreams*, Columbia JC 35785.

John McLaughlin, electric guitar, 6-12-13 string acoustic guitars; L. Shankar, electric and acoustic violin; Stu Goldberg, electric piano, Moog synthesizer with Steiner Parker modifications, Prophet synthesizer, Hammond Organ; Fernando Sanders, fretless bass, acoustic bass, vocals; Tony Smith, drums, vocals; Alyrio Lima, percussion.



Shakti was the most successful combination of Indian classical music and western improvisation, some would say the only true synthesis. It allowed

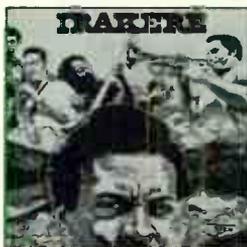
John McLaughlin to resuscitate his guitar playing, which had been reduced to rote imitations of Mahavishnu war-horse choruses. It also teamed him with the incomparable South Indian violinist L. Shankar; together they produced shimmering improvisational dialogues over the galloping melodic drumming of Zakir Hussain and T.H. Vinayakram — Shakti was four musicians at a communal zenith.

But alas no Shakti album sold over 50,000 copies — which is pretty damn good considering the minimum of production costs these super-professional players needed — while people like Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Al Dimeola, and Jean Luc-Ponty went to the bank on the foundations of Mahavishnu. McLaughlin had essentially lost his constituency.

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but McLaughlin couldn't just deal from a deck of shopworn concepts. *Johnny McLaughlin — Electric Guitarist* was a holding action until he could find and properly deploy a band. *Electric Dreams* is the culmination of that search, probably McLaughlin's most appealing electric album in years, and certainly among the best jazz-rock albums in memory.

Because McLaughlin has revived some of the seminal forms of crossover that were swamped by his own Mahavishnu Orchestra: early Weather Report, early Miles Davis electric music, the original Tony Williams Lifetime; and most importantly, the wealth of jazz guitar innovation that McLaughlin concocted as a session man and recording artist from 1969 through early 1971. The Weather Report influence is most clearly felt on the introductions of "Miles Davis" and "Desire and the Comforter" with the cymbal inflected double time of drummer Tony Smith, the crystalline percussion work of Alyrio Lima, and the freely flowing melodic counterpoint of bassist Fernando Saunders. On "Miles Davis" McLaughlin builds a surging arrangement around melodic fragments from the *In a Silent Way* epoch, complimented by the simpatico keyboard work of Stu Goldberg. The title track employs a churchy intro with strings, which leads to a loping odd meter theme with a soaring violin

solo by Shankar and McLaughlin's North African flavored banjo work. "Desire and the Comforter" closes side one with a tasty three part arrangement: floating bass intro, some round robin funk conversations, and a fast latin feature for McLaughlin's swift, acrobatically articulated guitar solo — one of the jazziest recorded examples of McLaughlin's art in years. Side two's "The Dark Prince" is even more jazzy, in a neo-bop manner. Neither Smith nor Saunders really play bop, but they lay down a powerful 4/4 in the manner of the Tony Williams Lifetime extrapolating late 50s Coltrane. Fast, then *faster* is the order of the day, McLaughlin and Goldberg handling the equestrian challenge with wit and intensity.

Shakti is represented by two lovely intros that open each side, but too little is heard of Shankar overall. "Love and Understanding" and "The Unknown Dissident" round out the album in less than top form. The latter is an appealing slow gospel with Dave Sanborn on alto that is marred by heavy handed theatrical messages, while the former is a pretty Santana influenced blues with vocals by Smith and Saunders. The singing is nice enough, but the preachy lyrics neither add nor detract — in fact they say nothing. McLaughlin says more about love and understanding with one note of his guitar then he can through the medium of language. That area of

communication seems best left to rockers, who have as *much* of a feel for words as they do for pitches.

With only a few lapses, this holds up as an excellent album. Some people, as I've said, may be able to appreciate the content while disdaining the form. This may have something to do with the pigmentation and outlook of the creator. But as I see it, if a Miles Davis represents the voodoo tradition, then McLaughlin surely represents the ideal of a William Blake. Both deal with aspiration and magic, and I think both are equally significant. — *Chip Stern*

The Art Ensemble of Chicago — *Nice Guys*, ECM-1-1126.

Lester Bowie, trumpet, celeste, bass drum; Joseph Jarman, reeds, percussion, vocal; Roscoe Mitchell, reeds, gongs; Malachi Favors Maghostus, bass, percussion, melodica; Famoudou Don Moye, sun percussion.



The album opens with an ethereal fanfare, complete with the AACM's patented "little instruments." A triangle is struck, then Moye hits a rimshot

to usher in a calypso with a Jarman vocal in perfect Jamaican style. (This could be a hit in the Caribbean.) After Bowie's solo, which slides into some brilliant horn lines, the piece resolves back to the fanfare, which actually emerges as a variation on the calypso itself. Roscoe Mitchell's memorable "Nice Guys" follows. A melodica precedes a twinkling Disneyland horn figure followed by the words, "They're so nice." The tune goes into a solid swinging four, reminiscent of Mingus at his most satirical and humorous. You can't help but smile.

This is not to say that *Nice Guys* is filled exclusively with witty asides and radio hits. Moye, Jarman, and Mitchell all include pieces more akin to the other AEC albums, and all are good. Moye's eleven minute "Folkus" is like a twenty four hour walk through downtown Manhattan, from a traffic snarl in Times Square to walking home alone at four A.M. the blend of Moye's percussion with the entire ensemble is startling. Mitchell's "CYP," a characteristic minimal composition, works particularly well in light of its placement before the immediately accessible "Dreaming of the Master" and after Jarman's strident "597-59." Lester Bowie has again demonstrated that he is a musician of ever-increasing importance. His muted solo on Jarman's "Dreaming of the Master," the signature piece that closes the album, is stunning. He dances above the "cool" horn statements and gives the listener a lesson in Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*. I understand that ECM has released an edited version of the piece as a single for radio airplay. If it isn't a hit,



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then I don't know if the state of today's radio is salvageable. Jarman also takes an ecstatic solo in the frenzied double-time section, which is followed by a brief drum break and a solo by Favours that leads back to a variation on the opening line. This is classic swinging jazz, the best I have heard in awhile.

Throughout, the well-known ECM sound is much in evidence, very clean and rather sterile, but the Art Ensemble is not swallowed by the production. The superlative moments recorded on the band members' recent solo and duet records have finally been captured on a total effort. The Art Ensemble has been around for a long time, and I hope that this album, which at times is a thrilling tribute to what they can do, will help take them out to a larger and broader audience. — Patrick Irwin

Anthony Davis — *Song For The Old World*, India Navigation IN 1036.

Davis, piano; Jay Hoggard, vibes; Mark Helias, bass; Eddie Blackwell, drums.



As the 1980s beckon, Anthony Davis looms as the most exciting young pianist-composer in American music. Davis had an extensive grounding

in classical piano, coming to improvised music in his mid-teens; as a pianist and a thinker he is a true child of Ellington, Monk, Powell, Taylor, and Bartok. Whereas a Jaki Byard brings his encyclopedic knowledge to a pan-stylistic American canvas, Davis seeks to expand outward towards a pan-cultural mix, where jazz and the third stream mingle with universal tribal rhythms. *Song For The Old World* is Davis' balancing act between freedom and form. The title tune demonstrates Davis' predilection for multiple themes, metric displacement, and sustained development during solos; "Andrew" shows his ability with more traditionally swinging materials; and "African Ballad" has a tranquil intelligence that can stand with some of Ellington's works. The finely tuned dialogue between Davis and vibes master Jay Hoggard is a joy throughout, as is the resounding poly-rhythmic pulse of bassist Mark Helias

and drummer Eddie Blackwell. Sometimes Davis plays so much piano he becomes enamored of piano for the sake of piano, leading to florid impressionistic designs like "Behind The Rock"; and compositionally he can overwhelm the listener with the sheer quantity of ideas. There is a sprawling quality to his ambitious works. But the fault of reach exceeding grasp is a small thing compared with the enormous scope of his vision. *Song For The Old World* is a mature statement that promises alternate musical realities in the years to come. — Chip Stern

Tony Williams — *The Joy of Flying*, Columbia JC 35705.

Tony Williams, drums; Jan Hammer, Herbie Hancock, Brian Auger, keyboards; George Benson, Ronnie Montrose, Mario Cipollina, guitar; Paul Jackson, Stanley Clarke, electric bass; Michael Brecker, tenor sax; Ralph MacDonald, percussion; Tom Scott, lyricist; Cecil Taylor, piano.



Tony Williams changed the way we think about drumming in the 1960's by mixing the sophisticated time playing of a

Max Roach with the free-accents proclivities of Higgins, Blackwell, Murray and Graves, helping the Miles Davis quintet of the period to perfect a liquid group sound, free modal lyricism, and telepathic suspensions of time. When Williams left Miles to form Lifetime, a punk jazz band with John McLaughlin and Larry Young, he helped initiate the crossover tsunami of the 1970's. But Williams was soon to be eclipsed by his imitators. It must have been a little galling for the still youthful drummer to observe Mahavishnu, Return to Forever, Billy Cobham, Alphonse Mouzon, and Lenny White go to the bank with acclaim for a music he helped invent.

Which is what makes *The Joy of Flying* such a decidedly mixed experience. In attempting to regain his place in the sun, Williams has been maneuvered by Columbia into producing a corporate mixed grill of airplay anthems and artistry that both obscures and

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elucidates his achievements. The basic problem with too much of the material on this all-star date is that *anybody* could have played drums — as pleasant as most of these crossover grooves are, they don't reveal Williams' distinct percussive signature. Part of the problem is the sidemen. *Open Fire*, with Montrose and Auger, is virtuoso heavy metal with none of the good visceral simplicity of a rock band like the Ramones (save for Williams' short drum solo). Then there is the work of Herbie Hancock and Stanley Clarke, artistically mauled by the influence of David Rubinson and L. Ron Hubbard respectively. With the timorously trivial Tom Scott on lyricon, they team up for "Hittin' On 6" and "Tony", examples of Hollywood funk that go in one ear and out the other. Jan Hammer and George Benson fare much better. Hammer's "Going Far" is an artifact of his quest to deny his jazz roots and boogie with the kids — plodding and forgettable. But Hammer's side two duet with Williams, "Eris", is powerful, airborne, and polyrhythmic. Even better is Hammer's gorgeous composition "Coming Back Home." Benson takes a loping, hummingbird solo that ranks with his finest work, as Williams creates clouds of cymbal and tom-tom textures all around him.

"Morgan's Motion" features Williams head to head with the indomitable (and incessant) Cecil Taylor. Williams seems to be the ideal drummer for Taylor, leaving lots of space for the pianist's *touch* to shine through, and amplifying Taylor's percussive ferocity with well-timed rolls, rim-shots, and melodic tom-tom phrasing that echoes the piano's melodic parameters. Taylor is more playful and lyric than on anything in recent memory, and there is even a comic moment when Williams deals Cecil a backbeat and the pianist declines to dance. This performance is worth the price of the album.

But Columbia doesn't seem to think so. There is another Taylor-Williams duet that was deleted from this album, and promotional material plays up the fusion connections while ignoring Cecil. Commercial realities I am sure. But one of the realities is that no one has a right to play more drums than Tony Williams, and no one is receiving less of a chance to do so. This was supposed to be a two-record set, and I suspect the music that was left out is more significant than what found its way on to *The Joy Of Flying*. Tony shines here when the material and peers are challenging. He needs a *band* of equals, and Williams won't find them in California. — *Stern*



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JAZZ BRIEFS

George Benson — *Livin' Inside Your Love*, Warner Bros. 2BSK 3277. Music to pretend you're rich by. This is the glossiest, most slickly produced and well-turned pop to come down the pike in a while, with Ogerman string charts and lots of vocals, very luxurious, not funky. Benson tries to mount his solos on the inadequate steed of the riffs, sings a good Cookian vocal on "A Change is Gonna Come," comes up a few miles short of Lou Rawls on "Love is a Hurtin' Thing" and looks like Clark Gable on the jacket, a new pop icon, Nat King Cole for the eighties. The slyest cover is of Jerry Butler's "Unchained Melody," the last slow song at every high school dance twenty years back. It's swoontime in suburbia as the eye of memory mists over. Platinum. — r.z.

Abbey Lincoln — *People in Me*, Inner City 6040. Abbey Lincoln is one of the handful of vocalists able to bend the stuff of modern jazz to her purposes. These 1973 performances are full of humor, mastery and power, and lack entirely the bitterness of her work in the sixties. She sings in a strong, proud voice, riding the rhythm like a horn player (post-Coltrane.) She has composed or co-composed all the material on the album and is admirably supported by Dave Liebman, Al Foster, Mtume, Kunimitsu Inaba and Hiromasa Suzuki. She is a stirring, original singer, and I hope Inner City or someone else has plans to record her anew. — r.z.

Horace Silver — *Sterling Silver*, Blue Note BN-LA945-H. Often overlooked is the fact that Horace Silver was one of the first fusion artists. Combining hard bop, funky gospel blues, and latin elements, Silver created a body of work that helped move jazz away from the cool era and paved the way for the seminal Blue Note sessions of the 1960s. *Sterling Silver* is a collection of the pianist's work from 1956 to 1964 never before issued on record, including a vocal version and alternate take of "Senior Blues." Silver's themes are engagingly angular as on "Sanctimonious Sam"; haunting and lyrical on the Afro-Latin "Que Pasa"; cool and blue on "Sighin' and Cryin'". The playing by Silver and cohorts such as Roy Brooks, Hank Mobley, Donald Byrd, and Junior

Cook is passionate yet relaxed. This is an exceptional introduction to Silver's work or a vivid reminder to old fans of how important these early groups were to current trends. — c.s.

Otis Rush — *So Many Roads*, Delmark DS 643. This set doesn't have the stygian impact of Rush's other Delmark release "Cold Day in Hell", and it is more relaxed and consistent by comparison — no doubt the result of the love and good taste of his Japanese hosts. But this is a fine introduction to one of the most influential blues guitarists. Rush's improvisations are soaring and urgent, making marvelous use of distortion and ornaments, and while his voice rarely equals the intensity of his guitar everything comes together on the deeply felt title tune. In a time when some people are making hay off the blues, *So Many Roads* has the ring of truth. — c.s.

Joe Sample — *Carmel*, ABC AA-1126. Sample doesn't explore new territory on this followup to his debut solo success, *Rainbow Seeker*, but the strength and freshness of his acoustic piano playing keep the material alive. The two albums complement each other; maybe they were intended as a pair. The same melodic material appears in both of them and the arrangements are much the same. What makes this record a good one is that Sample continues to use the material creatively. "Cannery Row" uncovers a humorous side of his playing rarely displayed. The Crusaders' Stix Hooper holds the rhythm section together and Sample gets the message through. — p.g.

Michael Gregory Jackson — *Gilts*, Arista Novus 3012. This album brings to mind the days when fusion was new and full of creative possibilities, not weary formulaic facts. Jackson, an innovative electric guitarist on the current New York scene, has put together an album full of fresh melodies, interesting rhythms and unexpected resolutions. It is at once exploratory and accessible, like a more homegrown version of Weather Report's first album. Jackson's group conception hasn't entirely jelled yet and not everything works, but his regular band, which is heard on this record along with a number of guests, is

made up of talented young musicians like Marty Ehrlich, Jerome Harris and Pheeroan ak Laff, and they'll be working on it. Jackson himself takes the most interesting solos on the date, loping and pantonal, and occasionally takes a wordless vocal reminiscent of Milton Nascimento. More promising than accomplished, but its freshness promises much. — r.z.

Matrix — *Wizard*, Warner Bros. BSK 3260. Literary inspiration seems to agree with John Harmon. The keyboard player uses literary and other sources to frame his compositions and arrangements, and the rest of Matrix digs in. The influence of Zawinul and Shorter can be detected, but the band has its own direction. An excellent recording, a crack rhythm section (listen to "King Weasel Stomp") and fine soloing from everyone (especially Harmon and John Kirchberger) are all here as Matrix turns out one of the better records in the genre. — p.g.

Anthony Braxton — (*Music for Four Orchestras*), Arista A3L 8900. This is music to think about... but the sounds aren't there. I don't mean to dismiss Braxton's creation. There are some interesting moments, but for the most part, the piece just doesn't succeed. I haven't decided whether the ideas are fantastic or unreal. What is most disheartening about this composition is that it sounds all too familiar. By combining four orchestras at once, you would think that new sounds and new textures would be created, but the scores for each orchestra are too similar to each other for any interesting polyphonic effects to emerge. Turning to the lavish booklet doesn't help. Braxton has a system which I find not only conceptually ambitious but conceptually extravagant, although I can't help but respect the effort. As directed, I even listened to the piece in quad with the hopes that I could appreciate the composition better. It didn't work. And if composing for four orchestras seems ambitious, think about Braxton's proposed piece for three planets by 1988 and another between galaxies by 2000. That's a serious space and NASA had better hustle. Clearly Braxton's music is outside of the context of jazz,

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and listeners with a taste for modern symphonic music might be interested. I keep hoping for something more — or maybe it's less. — *p.i.*

Stuff — *Stuff It*, Warner Bros. BSK 3262. This album falls far short of the band's previous accomplishments, and that's not saying a lot. Weak arrangements of Pop and R&B standards, bland soloing, poor original material and guest Gene Orloff's interpretation of Jack Benny playing the Burns & Allen theme highlight a thoroughly forgettable album. Stuff this one and wait for the next. — *p.g.*

Irakere Columbia 35655. Irakere is the Cuban band that Columbia signed recently. It is a great band and it's a shame that its current U.S. tour is taking place virtually without promotion (there has been some fear of violence, terrorism, threats and other fun manifestations). Fortunately the record is being promoted and can be bought over the counter, and even those who generally leave Latin music alone might profit by purchasing a copy. Irakere is a virtuoso band that plays with a wholehearted passion and commitment rare in any kind of music. Irakere effectively incorporates Cuban music, jazz, rock, funk and blues. Pianist Chucho Valdes has composed well for the band, and his charts are designed to get at all the emotional resources of the

material and the musicians. Reedman Paquito D'Rivera and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval are impassioned technicians and good soloists, and the whole band plays with great feeling and conviction — listen to the way they attack the big finishes. (There is also a funky version of Mozart's clarinet adagio, but people are doing funny things with Mozart these days.) — *r.z.*

Cecil Taylor — *The Cecil Taylor Unit*, New World 201. This album has been widely praised as Taylor's best group effort since *Unit Structures* and *Conquistador*, and while that is probably true, it is even more interesting for the changes in Taylor's music it reflects. If this album and his recent duet with Tony Williams are reliable guides, Taylor has become more abrupt and heraldic and less dependent upon obsessive rhythmic drive. He also seems willing to make more direct use of blues sonorities than ever. I've found the changes difficult to get used to on first hearing, but the more time I spend with this music the more impressive it becomes. There are three pieces on the album and very nearly an hour of music. Jimmy Lyons remains Taylor's alto accomplice, Raphe Malik is heard on trumpet, Ramsey Ameen on unamplified violin, Sirona on bass, and the thunderous Ronald Shannon Jackson (the drummer with Ornette Coleman's electric band)

keeps edging over into a backbeat. The recording, although far from perfect, sounds something like direct-disc; there's no fancy mixing to trick the ear. And Taylor continues to astound. — *r.z.*

Dollar Brand — *Ode to Duke Ellington*, Inner City IC 6049. While Dollar Brand has recorded many fine albums, *Ode to Duke Ellington* is one of his most outstanding efforts. The solo medium provides the pianist an opportunity to move freely through a variety of moods and musical styles, creating miniature tone poems in the process. Using Ellington's compositions as his initial source of inspiration, Brand ingeniously reshapes the piece until they are imbued with his own personal sound. "Impressions On a Caravan" features hypnotic bass ostinatos and swirling, melodic lines, while "Solitude" receives a gospel/blues oriented interpretation. — *c.j.s.*

Cedar Walton — *Animation*, Columbia JC 35572. This album proves once again that a commercial record can be made successfully if one is tasteful and imaginative. Walton scores on both counts. Meticulous arrangements and strong support from his sidemen set the stage as Walton works out his piano skills in jazz, R&B and gospel styles with ease. His exclusion of synthesizers is crucial to the album's success. He uses horn arrangements to supply and

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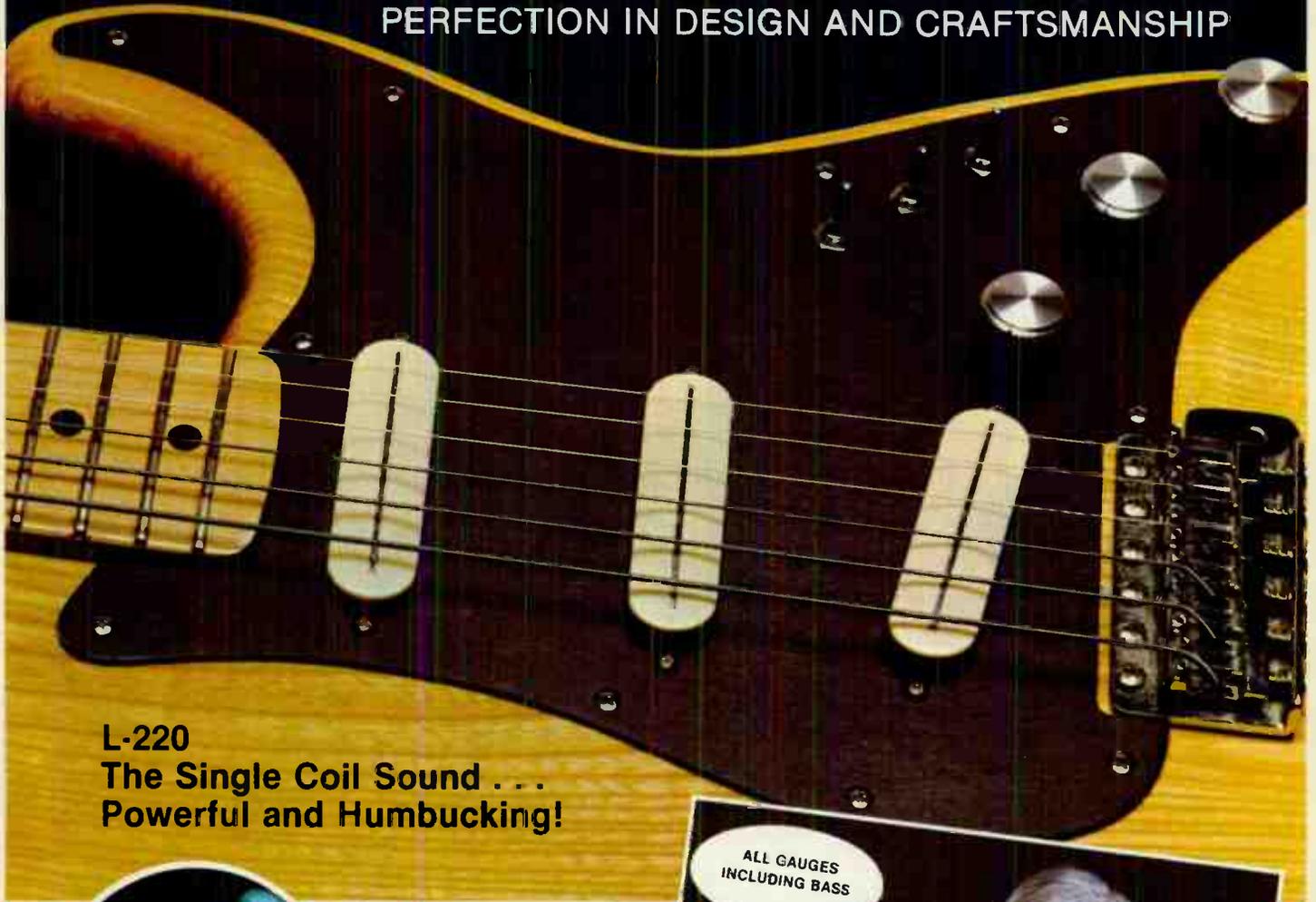
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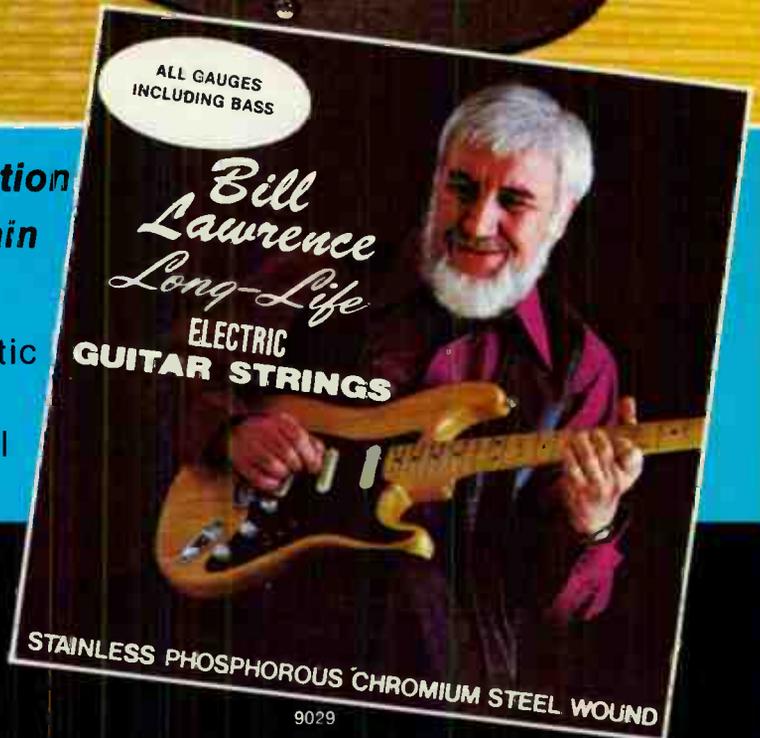
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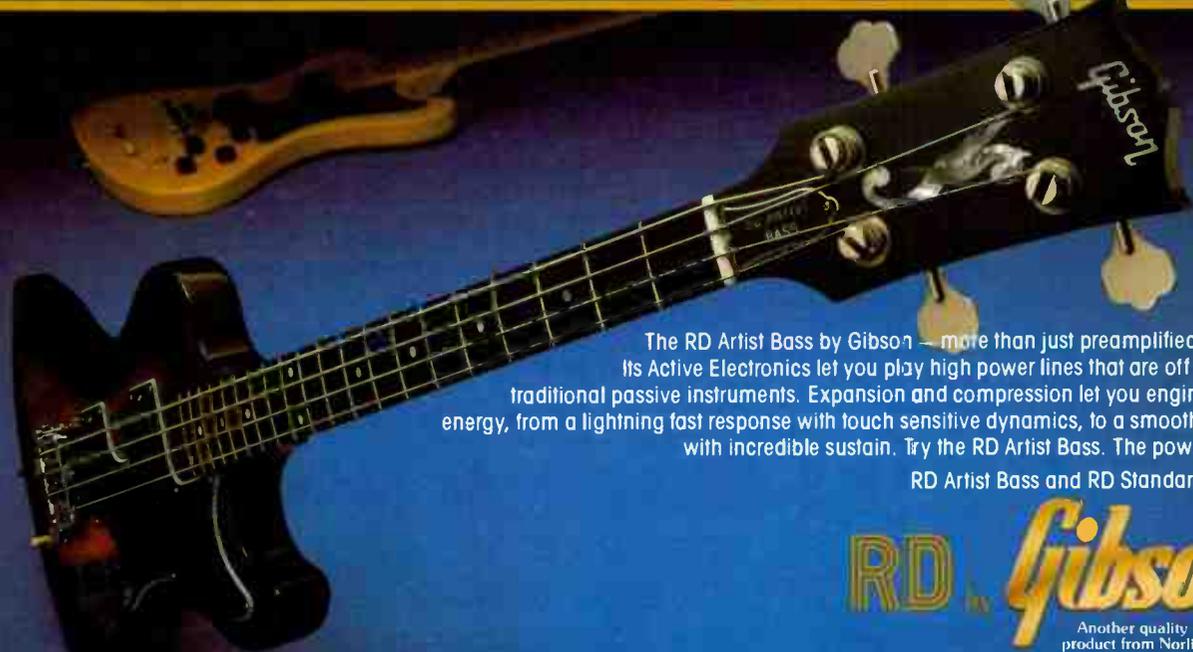
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augment harmonic movement, a job too often left to polyphonic gadgets. Co-producer George Butler is to be commended for giving Walton the freedom necessary to make this music work. — p.g.

Herbie Hancock — *Feets Don't Fail Me Now*, Columbia JC 35764. Columbia is promoting this as a disco album, and why not? There's nothing funky about the rhythm section as it pounds out the hypnotic patterns usually associated with disco. Add Hancock's synthesized vocals, which sound like R2-D2 going down for the third time, and this could be a commercial hit with a bullet. Maybe, but this album denies us the pleasure of hearing Hancock do what he does best. Never mind straight jazz, whatever happened to the cooking funk of the 1974 release, *Thrust*? That album can still be enjoyed because Hancock was playing his instrument and was able to control his use of electronics. It's the lack of that playing and control that makes it impossible for me to recommend this album to jazz listeners. — p.g.

Eric Dolphy — *Fire Waltz*, Prestige P-24085. Dolphy certainly gave us one of the most consistently inspired bodies of music of any 1960s improviser. *Fire Waltz* recaps some of Dolphy's early Prestige work as a sideman in groups led by reedman Ken McIntyre and

pianist Mal Waldron. The date with McIntyre is a relatively conservative affair (for Dolphy that is) which shows the reedmen paying homage to the influence of Charlie Parker over an immaculately boppish rhythm section of Walter Bishop, Sam Jones and Art Taylor; the exchange of eights on "Curtsy" and "Geo's Tune" is a good illustration of Dolphy's rhythmic daring and McIntyre's more traditional approach. The date with Waldron features Dolphy's exquisite clarinet work on the transcendent "Warm Canto" and teams him with the impassioned Booker Ervin to excellent advantage on the title tune. The mysterious Ron Carter's cello intonation is questionable at times. — c.s.

Jaki Byard — *Giant Steps*, Prestige P-24086. Byard's hegemony among modern pianists is probably one of the best kept secrets in America. In Byard's hands the history of the piano is not just a textbook demonstration of stylistic periods, but a statement of the continuing relevance and unity of all the great piano masters. Byard can traverse the distance between Errol Garner and Cecil Taylor in the space of a single phrase, and his playing is a continual triumph of taste over technical flourishes. These early 60s dates feature Ron Carter on bass and the exemplary drumming of Roy Haynes

and Pete LaRoca. There is an uncharacteristically relaxed version of "Giant Steps" (with a rollicking double-time ending), an alternately atmospheric and bouncy medley of Gershwin's "Bess, You Is My Woman Now/It Ain't Necessarily So", and a dramatic, masterful suite of moods by Byard called "Here To Hear." This is compelling, deeply swinging/reflective music of the highest order. — c.s.

Walt Dickerson — *Unity*, Chiaroscuro CR 2011. This album reintroduces two previously issued performances featuring Walt Dickerson and his quintet. An uncommonly imaginative musician, the vibraphonist displays both an original instrumental style and an overall conception that still proves stimulating some 15 years after these sides were originally recorded. Dickerson primarily creates moods and textures, and seems more concerned with the music's total effect than are many musicians who employ a more strictly linear approach. In addition, his use of two drummers (Andrew Cyrille and Edgar Bateman) provides a refreshing alternative sound to the then standard practice of employing only one percussionist. — c.j.s.

Henry Threadgill — *X-75 Volume 1*, Arista Novus 3013. Threadgill's lush, stunning compositions for four reeds, voice and four basses are strikingly

original statements, and this is one of the best albums so far in an already bountiful year. The rhythmic underpinnings are propulsive and various: on one piece the basses play asymmetrical vamps, on another they roll like a river or a choir. There is a wealth of detail in the horn writing, but no matter how involved the music gets it always remembers to swing, and despite the album's numerical moniker this is expressive, even Romantic music. Threadgill has really come up with something unique; you'll have to hear it yourself to know what it's like. It's an ensemble album, and no single instrumentalist rises to dominate it. Amina Myers' wordless vocals gleam through the thick textures like sunlight through trees. Fred Hopkins seems like the lead bassist throughout, but Rufus Reid, Leonard Jones and Brian Smith also make telling contributions. On the poppish "Fe Fi Fo Fum," all the reedmen (Threadgill, Jarman, Ewart and McMillan) get to solo, but no one comes up with anything to equal the marvelous, multilayered, polyphonic head. All in all, *X-75* is some new kind of a triumph. — r.z.

Muddy Waters — *Live*, Blue Sky JZ 35712. There are some very overdone guitar solos, full of squeals and fake effects, from producer Johnny Winter, inadequate harp work from Jerry Portnoy, and possibly the least discriminating audience I have ever

heard on a blues record (shrieks of joy greet any gutturals emitted by Waters, who obliges with more and then has a laugh). On the other hand, the rest of the band is good, and in general Waters comports himself less like a genial mask of legend and more like a man out to speak his piece than on his Winter-produced studio sides, good though they are. Waters is a master bluesman, and everything he himself does on this album makes the most satisfying kind of sense — r.z.

Sun Ra — *Lanquidity*, Philly Jazz P1666. Not only is this Sun Ra's most focused, enjoyable date in years, it is also his funkiest. Ra has distilled his Disco 3000 concept into a liquid mixture of African-Egyptian backbeats, succinct horn solos, and oceanic electronic keyboards. Most of the music is atmospheric, but "Where Pathways Meet" kicks out the jams with an infectious beat and excellent horn writing. If jazzmen want to confront the reality of dance music without sacrificing spontaneity, they are advised to give this album a listen. Eat your heart out, Herbie Hancock. — c.s.

Gino Soccì — *Outline*, Warner Brothers RFC 3309. No, disco is not my favorite form of music. Yes, I do believe it is some form of thought control — invasion of the booty snatchers if you will. But there's nothing wrong with people dancing, even if I myself can only twitch

in place. And the record companies smell so much platinum it would be quixotic to try and stop them — though we must continue to press for them to support and propagate the full range of creative musics. But in the meantime, if you can't lick disco, you should try and evolve it. Disco is not *listening* music, but some of it sounds so grim it's like drinking electric kool-aid dishwater. Gino Soccì's *Outline* does not vary much from your basic thumpasorus bass drum groove, but it is very listenable. Soccì has a fine feel for colors, from street polyrhythms to Euro-disco electronics — the tune "Dancer" being a commendable example. Dare I call Soccì the Duke Ellington of disco? Well, perhaps I daren't, but this is a tasty album anyway. One can only hope that RFC whiz kid Ray Caviano will encourage more innovation. Disco for the discriminating indeed. — c.s.

Mary Lou Williams — *My Mama Pinned A Rose On Me*, Pablo 2310 819. This is one of the most emotionally immediate records I've heard. Mary Lou Williams has always been one of my favorite pianists and I've always listened to her records with great care. Although on the surface this album is a simple collection of straight ahead blues, it is also something more than that. As Williams says in her liner notes, "I've had the idea for a long time, the wish, to

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record my version of the Blues." Her version is the most intense to hit my turntable in a long time. Mostly solo piano but vocalist Cynthia Tyson and bassist Buster Williams are also featured — *p.i.*

Marcello Melis — *Free To Dance*, Black Saint BSR 0023. Any album with the top two singers in modern jazz, Sheila Jordan and Jeanne Lee, and a supporting cast which includes Lester Bowie, Fred Hopkins, George Lewis, Don Pullen, and Don Moye should be listened to without question. Such a line-up might turn into a star-studded free-for-all with no substance, but *Free To Dance* isn't like that at all. It is a bright, colorful, up-tempo album with built-in dance steps... almost like a brassy Brazilian tango. Nobody really stands out and takes the album away — this is a collective effort that is sustained by Melis' solid compositions, not an array of super solos. The stereo separation is nicely arranged so you can tell who is playing what. I like this album — and it is getting increasingly evident that when you buy a Black Saint record you're going to get something worthwhile. *p.i.*

Count Basie/Dizzy Gillespie — *The Gifted Ones*, Pablo 2310 833. As golden as you'd expect. Gillespie is in form, Basie seems even more restrained than usual, and they are accompanied by Ray Brown and Mickey Roker. Everything works, Gillespie is spectacu-

lar on schedule, but one major opportunity seems to have been missed. Why record a version of "St. James Infirmary" and not let Gillespie sing it? *r.z.*
John Coates Jr. — *After The Before* Omnisound (N-1021). Some will unfairly put this solo piano record in the same class as some of Keith Jarrett's portentous meanderings. But my Pennsylvania friends tell me that Coates has been a fixture in Delaware Water Gap, Pa. for many years doing this music, and that he once was a teacher of Jarrett's. Hmm. In any event, Coates shows a more expansive harmonic scope than Jarrett, more righteous swing in the left hand, and a greater interest in *American* sound reflections than Jarrett has demonstrated in some time. My favorite performances here are the inward-looking title tune, and the vinegary swing of "Melancholy Baby." Distributed by New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, N.Y.C. — *c.s.*

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R&B continued from page 14

Long." If so, you'll find nothing of this type in their current repertoire. Instead, you'll confront the likes of "Shake Your Groove Thing" and "Four's a Traffic Jam." On one cut, "All Your Love," the duo performs a back-and-forth recitation faintly reminiscent of their vintage "Love Is Strange" dialogue. ("Oh, Peaches" ... "Yes, Herb" ... "How do you call your lover boy?")

The voice within me rose again but I drowned it with beer and hustled the last record onto the turntable. Not a word was uttered.

I must say in all fairness that Jerry Butler has so far resisted the temptation to go disco. That's about all I can say. Butler, "The Ice Man," still possesses a fine baritone, which has changed little since the "For Your Precious Love" days. It hardly needs the lush string backing with the LP *Nothing Says I Love You Like I Love You* (Philadelphia International) serves up to excess. Even a worthy sax solo on "Sad Eyes" couldn't reverse the damage. The Ice Man had melted around the edges. My final hopes were dashed on a sea of violins...

Following a moment of silence came these smug words: "So what do you think now?"

I slumped back in my chair, exhausted. I suppose I think the pop music charts are no place for an inveterate R&B junkie. Next time I'll take my money and my courage and try something with a little more kick.

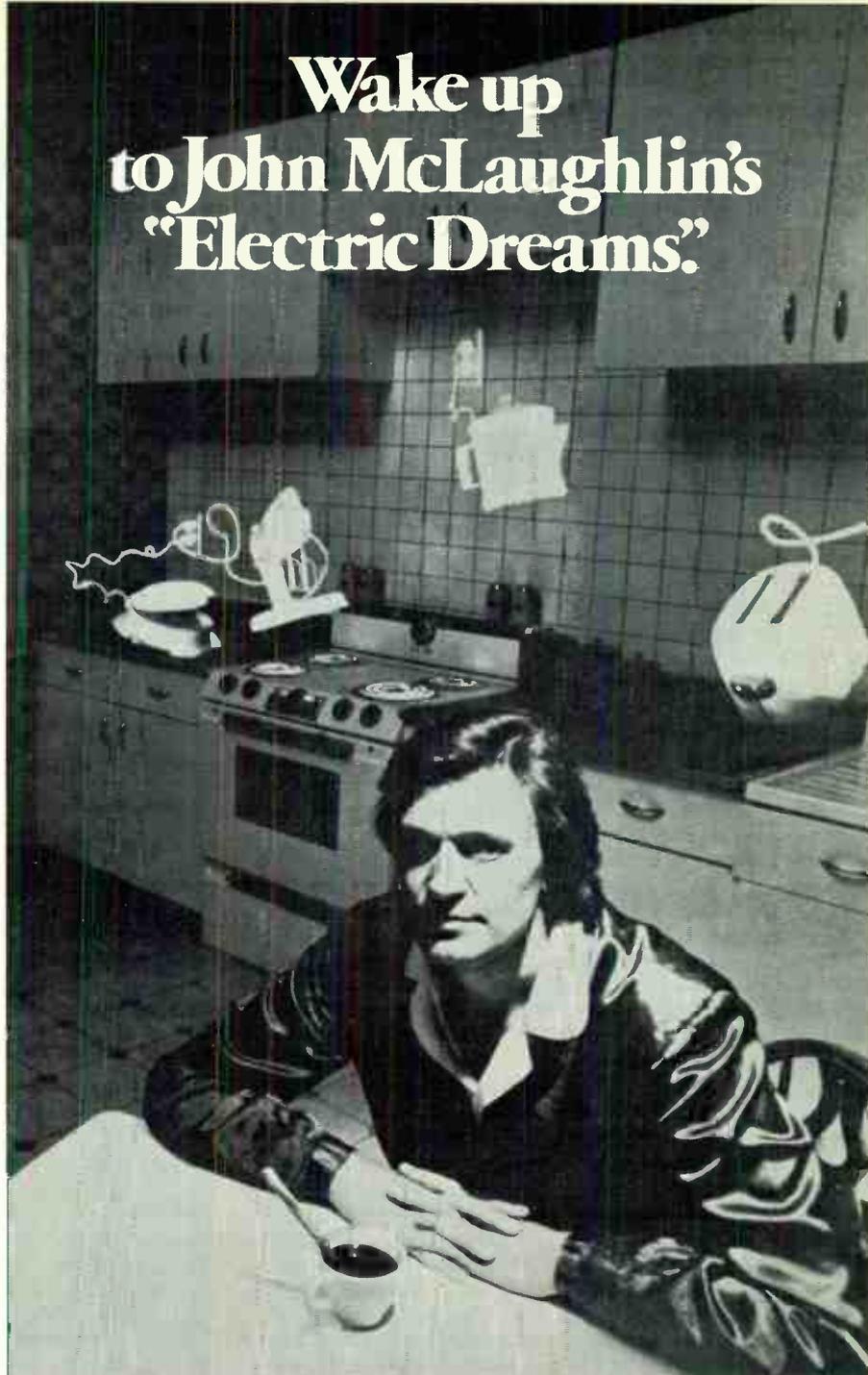
POP continued from page 18

down rhythmically. For example, James Taylor's "Your Smiling Face," a big pop hit last year, is a mellowed-out reworking of the Jackson 5's "I Want You Back" from 1970. Other artists from the Doobie Bros. ("What a Fool Believes") to Bob Welch ("Precious Love") to Captain and Tenille ("We Belong Together") constantly borrow elements from soul music and refashion them in a pop vein. Robert Palmer's "Every Kinda People" is an unabashedly pop tune, but in several harmonic/melodic ways its roots lie in Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On." George Benson singing the old drifter's song "On Broadway," is another contemporary example of the quality soul-based pop tune. Linda Ronstadt also flirts with this style.

3) The final category is a catch-all with its roots in the 60's sounds of David Gates and Bread ("I Wanna Make It With You"), Jimmy Webb and Glen Campbell ("Wichita Lineman"), and Seals & Crofts (anything). Adult contemporary, MOR (middle-of-the-road), soft rock, and easy listening are labels that get thrown around to cover this music. "Easy listening as opposed to what?" I ask myself, "difficult listening?" The style's

continued on page 70

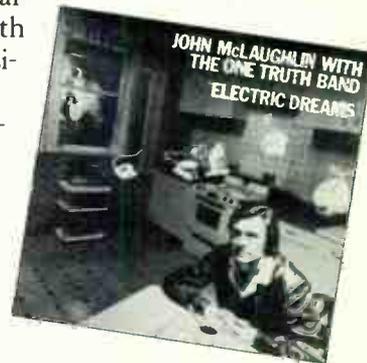
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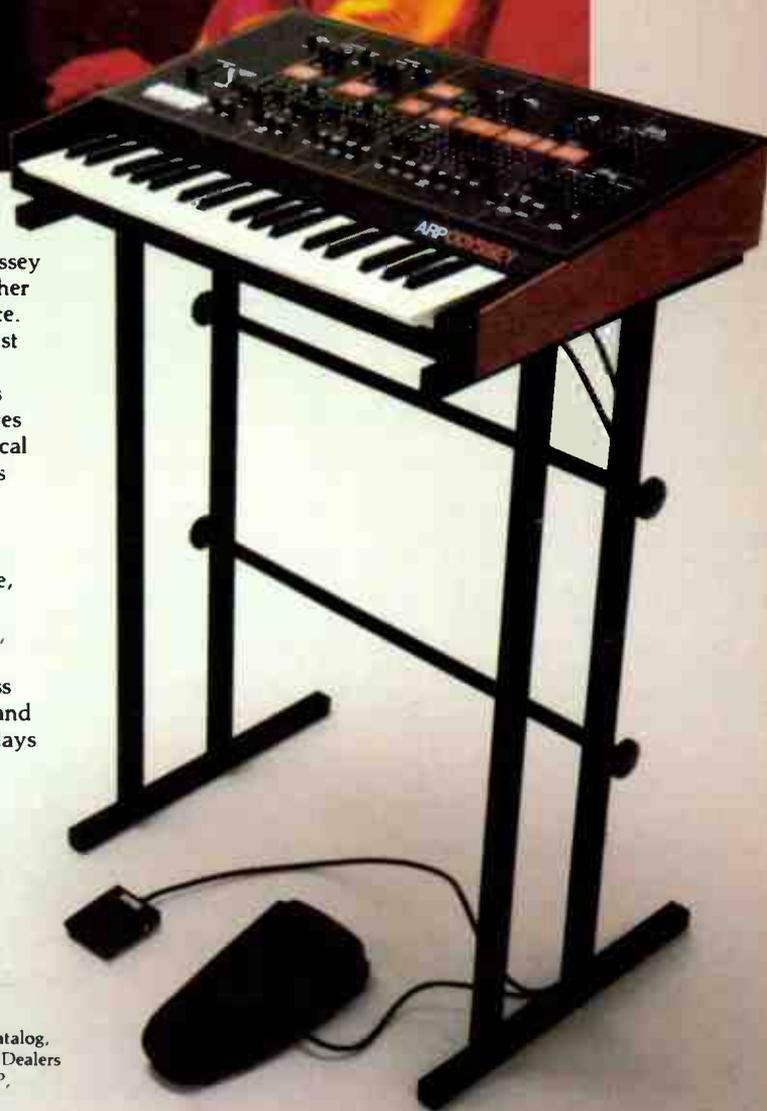
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A lot of musicians feel that rack-mounted components give an increase in overall equipment performance that is well worth the money. At the heart of the rack-mount set-up is the pre-amp and EQ, probably the pieces most responsible for the final sound. There are several pre-amp/EQ combinations available today and they attempt the same job with surprisingly different approaches.



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"When rock players get together they talk about equipment; when jazz players get together they talk about music." The previous statement by a well known jazz guitarist exemplifies one side of an argument that has raged since Marshall McLuhan declared, "the medium is the message." The funny thing is that proponents of both positions continue to win the respect of many, and musicians are more split than ever on the importance of equipment to achieve "their sound."

A few years ago I studied under a teacher who said his appreciation of Charlie Parker wouldn't be diminished if the Bird had played a plastic slide whistle rather than an alto sax. "It's the notes that count," he maintained. As a matter of fact, Charlie Parker did play a borrowed plastic saxophone on "The World's Greatest Jazz Concert," recorded at Massey Hall, Toronto, in the early '50's. His level of playing seemed unhampered by a strange, cheap instrument.

Another player whose equipment doesn't seem to matter is Jaco Pas-

torious. While Jaco makes use of effects and high-power amplification, he is every bit as hot with a Fender bass and an Ampeg B-15 bass amp. On the other side, there is Andre Segovia, who will not play live in front of a microphone because it would change the acoustic sound of the guitar.

In the opposite camp from Segovia are Kiss, who would no more think of playing without masses of equipment than Segovia would with it. For the vast number of musicians who fall somewhere between Segovia and Kiss, the importance of physical sound and musical content assume more balanced proportions.

This month's comparison examines the heart of a rack-mount equipment set-up: the preamp and EQ. Rack-mountable equipment has become very popular on stage with players in the Seventies. This has been the case particularly with bassists and keyboard players. A basic set-up consists of a preamp, some form of tone control (EQ), and a power amp and speakers. Additionally, a player might add a

crossover and another set of speakers, a compressor-limiter, and some special effects such as a digital or analog delay. There are many advantages to a rack-mount approach, one of which is modularity. A player may choose components from different manufacturers and still contain them in a neat package. Another advantage is roadability. Rack cases are available which are stronger than any conventional wooden-cased amplifier. The improved fidelity of separate power amps such as Crown, BGW, or Yamaha is especially appealing to bassists and keyboard players, who are hardest pressed to get a clean, loud sound from their equipment.

The preamp and equalization usually are the first pieces of the amplification chain, and probably those most responsible for the final sound. Power amps are developed to a state where there is little or no audible difference between the good ones in an instrument application. There are several rack mountable preamp-equalizer combinations available today, and they attempt the same

job with surprisingly different approaches.

The Alembic F2-B has to be the most traditional of preamplifiers. This preamp is stereo, having a volume, bass, middle, treble, and bright switch in each channel. The output of one channel may be fed into the input of the other channel for overdriven clipping effects. As one listens to this tube-powered preamp, one thing is obvious — it's a Fender. At least, it sounds just like a Fender Twin Reverb, but gives you the option of any power-amp and speaker combination. The tone controls are effective, but no matter where they are set this preamp retains its basic Fender sound. There are separate outputs for each channel and one combined output. This makes the preamp very useful in a biamp set up, where one channel drives an amp and speakers for high notes, and the other channel handles lows. A crossover would then be used before the preamp to divide the signal into high and low notes. The output of one channel may also be fed to the input of the second channel, enabling the musician to get an overdriven sound. Anyone who misses their old Fender amp would do well to try this preamp. Its suggested retail list is \$450.

Furman Sound put itself on the map with its PQ-3, a combination preamp and parametric equalizer. A parametric equalizer does three things. First, it enables you to decide on a precise frequency for cutting or boosting. A conventional bass control might be centered around 100 Hz, for example. A parametric EQ's center frequencies are variable, so that the user could set the center frequency anywhere from around 50 Hz to 1000 Hz, depending on where the cut or boost is desired. Secondly, it enables you to boost or cut a response at a certain frequency. Conventional tone controls will only cut. Thirdly, it offers bandwidth control, known as Q. This affords the player a cut or boost over a broad range of frequencies or a very narrow range. This is useful for suppressing feedback without drastically affecting the tone of an instrument. When the Q is set narrow, and centered on 60 Hz, AC line noise can be reduced without changing the overall tone of the bass notes. The Furman PQ-3 performs the above functions at three different frequencies, one each in the high, mid, and low ranges. High and low level inputs and outputs are provided. The PQ-3 retails for \$275, and a six band version, the PQ-6, is now available.

The Moog three band parametric equalizer is functionally similar to the Furman with one exception. It only offers a maximum of 10 dB gain, and thereby limits itself from delivering enough power to a power amp. This parametric should be used in conjunction with a preamplifier for musical instrument

amplification. An overload light is included on the front panel, and the equalizer is foot switchable to take it in or out of the circuit. The Moog parametric is priced at \$250.

Advanced Audio Design offers two preamps, one designed for bassists and one for guitarists. The Guitarist model offers two stages of preamplification and a master volume control. This enables you to get your "sound" with the first two volume controls and control your level with the master. High, mid, and low controls are provided with choice of two center frequencies for each. Two additional switches for boosting bass and treble are included. The Model 101 sells for \$250.

The Ashley SC-40 is a three band semi-parametric EQ. Each band has a control for center frequency and boost or cut, but no bandwidth control. The Ashley SC-40 is unique in that it also offers an adjustable pre-EQ output, for feeding a signal directly to a mixing console. This eliminates the need for an additional direct box. The Ashley SC-40 retails for \$350.

In overall flexibility, the IVP from Intersound is unmatched. From a performance standpoint, no other preamp is so well designed. Two inputs are offered with a rotary level control and two-way gain sensitivity for each. Next, there are shelving-type treble and bass controls. There is a LED indicator to show when the effects patched into IVP's effects loop #1 are being sufficiently driven but not overloaded. Four bands of tone control, each with level and center frequency, are the next component in the circuit. The signal then may be routed to an effect through effects loop #1. Next, the signal is sent to either a clean or tube style voicing, which may be controlled at the preamp or by a foot switch. A volume control is provided for each voice. The signal then may be routed through a second, post-voice effects loop, which provides good results with phase shifters and flangers. A master volume control is provided for correct level matching to any amplifier. Finally, three different outputs are provided for hookup to amplifiers, preamps, tape recorders, or a mixing console. The IVP takes up a little more rack space than other preamps, but provides a lot of capabilities for its price of \$360, retail.

Probably the biggest problem in rack mount equipment is its price. Many working musicians can't justify the expense of a component amplification system. As in hi-fi equipment, you may pay up to 100% more for components with the same volume capability as a self-contained unit. However, a lot of musicians feel that the increase in overall performance is well worth the money, so rack mount continues to grow in popularity. From a professional standpoint, it's becoming the way to go.

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POP continued from page 63
reigning royalty includes Poco, Al Stewart, England Dan and John Ford Coley, Olivia Newton-John, Anne Murray, newcomer Nicolette Larson; once in a while George Harrison; and inevitably, John Denver. The problems in this music are lack of originality and cloying sentiment. I'm sure we can all think up examples, dating all the way back, to Bobby Goldsboro's "Honey." On the other hand, some beautiful and genuinely poignant ballads have emerged from writer/artists like James Taylor, Paul Simon and Joni Mitchell. These are the kinds of songs you inevitably hear in the car when driving long distances, the windshield wipers squeaking lightly, snow on the edge of your mind. For me, the classic will always be Seals & Crofts' "Summer Breeze," with its beautifully clean production and striking use of guitar and mandolin sounds.

So now we've lightly covered the pop waterfront, and hopefully established some criteria for future looks at pop music. And remember: for every jazz fan who's disgusted that George Benson has "gone pop," there is a pop fan who is delighted, and ready to hail Benson as the heir to Nat "King" Cole's throne. Nat was also a beloved jazz player. But that's the way of the world.

SOUL continued from page 26
wide range of black musical references in one long work. Stanley Crouch recently pointed out that on *Here, My Dear* Marvin Gaye, with a flash of harmony, can recall the Impressions, and with a few grunts on "Anger" re-invent in one's mind the entire arrangement of Sam Cooke's "Chain Gang." In addition to Weather Report, and the examples cited by Crouch, I have been able to pick up on distinct tributes that Gaye seems to be paying to James Brown and the Nigerian iconoclast Fela Ransome-Kuti.

None of the reviews of *Here, My Dear* that I've read have made mention of Gaye's musical references, the extraordinary quality of flotation in his phrasing, or that there might be a connection with what he's doing and what Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman have done — that is, create an innovative black music out of the new combinations of rhythms in pop music and the intricate melodies of jazz. It's a neo-African musical form or as Crouch describes it, "populist modernism." I am appalled by the lack of critical responsibility brought to bear on *Here, My Dear*.

Marvin Gaye has been one of Motown's most consistently creative and popular artists, but with *Here, My Dear* I suspect that his association with the record company might have ended. And while it's foolish to speculate on what the future holds for Gaye, it seems

safe to say that his music will chart futuristic directions for rhythm and race music, as well as for black people.

METHENY continued from page 43
the drums are making a constant commentary on the music, and it's like a dialogue with the music itself."

Gottlieb reiterates, "The thing with Pat is that we'll sometimes come up with something that could fall into a certain category, and if I play it the way a typical drummer would play it, Pat will say, 'Try something different.' So it's hard for me, but it's something I really enjoy doing, trying to turn it around and come up with a sort of an all-purpose style. For some reason I never worked out that many drum licks, like a lot of drummers will do, and Pat really has no use for drum licks. That's why I play a lot of cymbals, because to me that's the most musical thing that fits. And I'll just open up sometimes and see where it goes. I'm still at the point where sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't."

In Mays' words, "We're all young, and for better or worse, that's the way we play. Some people would call it immature, some would call it fresh. We take chances a lot, because we're not into any ruts. We don't really know what works yet. And I think we all have found new ways of approaching everything. The concept of the group demands that."

The Pat Metheny Group will be back in the studio in July to cut their next group album, to supposedly be released by the end of September. And, although other recording projects will be forthcoming (Metheny is currently interested in recording another album with Jaco Pastorius), it seems as though Metheny, Mays, Gottlieb, and Egan plan on sticking together for a long time to come.

"I expect it to stay together for quite a while," the leader says hopefully, "as long as I can keep it. It's a very nice balance of personalities, and we've been watching each other grow a lot musically. We seem to stimulate each other's growth, which I think is real important. But I am very much into having a band, as opposed to being Pat Metheny with whoever he can get to go out on the road — which is the way most people do it now."

Lyle Mays agrees: "This is definitely a group, and there's a lot of mutual respect — there has to be to play together. It's taken two years to get the music to this point with these same people, and it'll be hard to get it back just starting from scratch. I'd be a fool to leave. I don't know how the others guys feel, but there's nothing else out there as far as I'm concerned; this group is it, it's happening. And even if I wasn't in this group Pat would be my favorite guitarist."

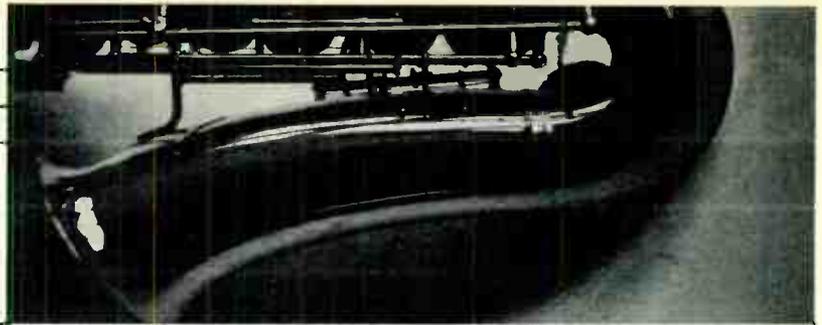


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Article #4 — Chromatic Lines — Pedal Point

Modal-harmonic lines was the material in the last article. It dealt primarily with harmonic sources for chromatic material. There is a subtle difference between this and pedal point. (The difference is arguable because the two are really overlapping, but for the sake of clarity, I've made a distinction.) In pedal point chromaticism we begin to deal with intervals more than chords. But to separate this from the next article, which is about "atonal" lines, I've chosen to describe pedal point as the use of superimposed scales and modes rather than only intervallic. We're now beginning to deal with chromaticism in a melodic rather than harmonic manner. There will be less arpeggiated figures which outline the chords, and more close-knit melodic lines. For the most part in this type of superimposition, I'm not necessarily inclined to have a pattern or sequence to my implied tonal centers. Rather, I'm letting the melody lead the way. Pedal point harmony creates quite a different attitude towards line making from the outset, because the pedal itself provides a much looser framework than an exact mode or chord. This immediately frees the improviser in a melodic way.

Methodology

Once again the tonality is established in the 1st and 4th bars, although it's only the key center I'm interested in. The scale may be different in the 4th bar, but not the tonality. My analysis gets increasingly difficult as we progress to the complex. I've done my best to assign tonal centers and scale names to these melodic permutations, although this is not the intended implication of the line itself. The real implication is melodic dissonance.

G TONALITY

G HALF, WHOLE DIMINISHED C BLUES G MAJOR MINOR
 F MAJOR MINOR B MAJOR G HALF, WHOLE DIMINISHED

A TONALITY

A MINOR A^b DIMINISHED
 D MAJOR D WHOLE TONE E^b WHOLE TONE A MINOR

D^b TONALITY

D^b MINOR F MINOR G MAJOR

D^b MINOR D^b AUG. D^b HALF, WHOLE DIMINISHED

E^b TONALITY

E^b MAJOR D MAJOR, MINOR
 B^b MINOR D MAJOR E^b MAJOR

F TONALITY

F MINOLYDIAN D MAJOR E^b HALF, WHOLE DIMINISHED
 F[#] MAJOR F

p) A^b TONALITY

A^b PENTATONIC G PENTATONIC
 F PENTATONIC D PENTATONIC A^b PENTATONIC

The Miles Davis Quintet of the mid-60's with Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock as well as some of the early rock stuff with Chick Corea provide great examples of this sort of playing (*Bitches Brew*, *Silent Way*). This type of chromaticism depends on a sparse harmonic background, with the accompanist required to have tremendous ears to catch these chromatic lines. Pedal point is the least harmony that can be given before we're out of the range of all diatonic harmony. After that it becomes planned polytonality or atonality.



You should remember from last time that *guide tones* are the 3rd and 7th of a chord. These are the notes which a) give the chord its color (major, minor, dominant) and b) cause the strongest motion within the progression. Remember that *motion* is of the utmost importance. Songs with only one or two chords usually rely heavily on rhythm and/or repetition for motion.

Musical logic demands that the 3rd of one chord move to the 7th of the next; the 7th of one chord moves to the 3rd of the next:

Fmaj7 Dm7 Gm7 C7 F7 Bb7 Ebm7 Ab7 Dbmaj7

When chords are a step apart, or when two chords are built upon the same root the 3rd goes to 3rd and 7th goes to 7th:

E7 Am7 Gm7 C7 F7 Bb7 Eb7 D7 Gmaj7

Guide tones will almost always move downward by step or remain as common tones between the chords. The exception is when the chord roots are a 3rd apart as in this case the GTs will often move in 3rds.

Guide tones are often used as lines against a melody and are particularly useful when only two horns are available: one horn plays the melody while the other plays a GT line. Obviously, there are two possible GT lines to any progression. In most cases, one line will be more active (fewer repeated notes) than the other. Usually the more active line provides more motion, but in some cases the less active line might sound better against a particular harmony. Your ear must judge. Here is a melody with each of the possible GT lines:

E7 Am7 Gm7 C7 Fm7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

GT lines are also used by background vocalists, singing the lyrics or just "doo", "la", or whatever:

Bbmaj7 Cm7 F7 Bbm7 Eb7 Abmaj7

GT lines may be sustained as in the above example, or used rhythmically if more motion is desired:

Bbmaj7 Cm7 F7 Bbm7 Eb7 Abmaj7

With three horns (or voices) one may play the melody while the other two play GTs (both lines):

E7 Am7 Gm7 C7 Fm7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

(NOTE: if you play these examples on piano add the bass notes (roots) to fill out the chord sound.)

The GT idea is also employed in larger groups where two horns play the GTs while others play roots, 5ths, 9ths or whatever. The horns playing the GTs, however, are the ones really holding the progression together. More on this later.

Remember that the ear wants to hear the GTs move logically (3rd to 7th, 7th to 3rd). They don't always have to, but that is the most logical motion. Breaking the flow of GTs shouldn't be attempted unless you are sure it will work.

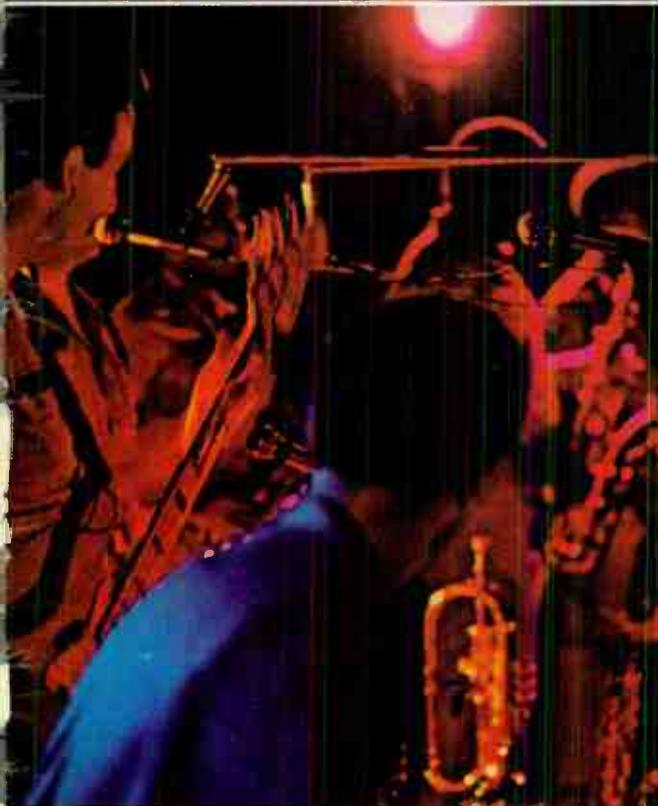
One primary instance of breaking the GT flow is when the line starts to move out of an instrument's range, or just gets so low that it sounds muddy. In this case you may leap up to another GT, but it is best to do it following a tonic chord. A tonic chord brings the progression to a temporary rest, so the motion (and ear) won't be disturbed if you break the normal flow of GTs once the tonic chord is sounded. For example:

Bbmaj7 G7 Cm7 F7 Bbm7 Eb7 (tonic) Abmaj7 G7 Cm7

Rather than have an exposed leap in the harmony, you would be better off 'filling-in' the leap with melodic material derived from the scale of the tonic chord. Like this:

Bbmaj7 G7 Cm7 F7 Bbm7 Eb7 Abmaj7 G7 Cm7

Listen for GT lines. When you know to expect them you'll be amazed at how common they are, particularly in string parts, trombone lines, etc. Next month I'll cover writing/playing GT fills in more detail, including actual improvisation using GTs.

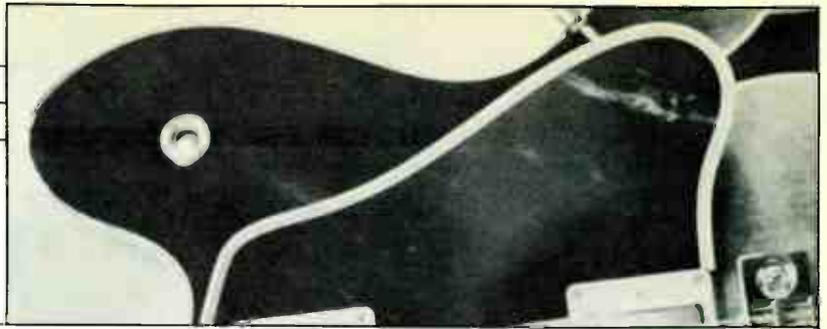


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Any study of improvisation in tonal music must eventually turn to chord-scale relationships. This means that for a given chord certain scales will sound good, and from a given scale particular chords can be extracted. In the last issue I discussed the use of an intervallic phrase which contained a whole tone and two perfect fourths. Much the same harmonic implications can be created by playing the fourths simultaneously in chords.

The guitar is tuned largely in fourths, but mention fourth chords and the listener's mind will probably turn to McCoy Tyner or Bill Evans or some other piano player. It is amazing that in the vast majority of jazz oriented guitar books in existence, very few have anything to say about fourth chords, otherwise known as quartal harmony.

eliminating any tritones. Play up Figure B, this time skipping the fourth and seventh chords. All five of the chords you played can often be substituted for one another. They all sound good as the tonic of the key.

Figure C shows a set of fourths usable against a minor seventh chord, where the root of the chord is again the note of the first string on which you start your fourth chord sequence.

Figure D shows the use of fourths against a dominant seventh chord. Notice that only the natural seventh tone of the scale must be avoided (at least on stress points).

In Figure E, a new string is added containing the scalar notes yet another fourth below the notes on the third string. New four-part chords are formed which, strangely enough,

Fig A

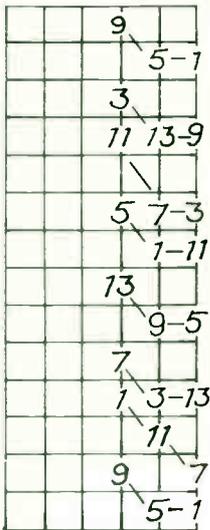


Fig B

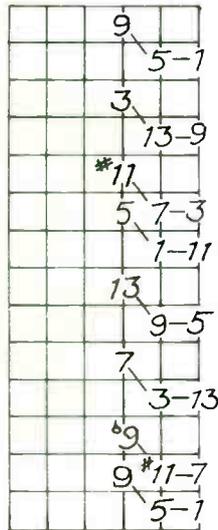


Fig C

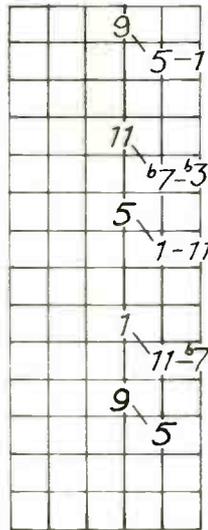


Fig D

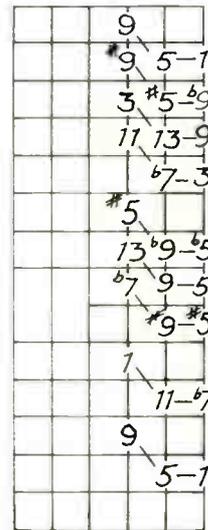


Fig E

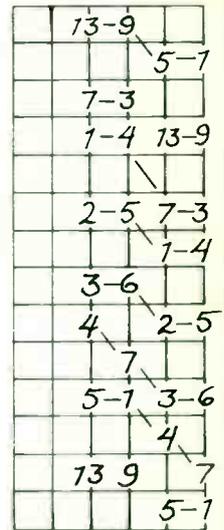


Figure A is a diagram of a major scale harmonized in fourths. The lines connecting the numbers indicate which notes are to be played as a chord. The numbers represent the relative positions of the major scale tones. On the first string, we'll select a note and call it our tonic (1) — on the second string we'll play a note located a fourth lower. This will be the fifth note of the scale (5). On the third string, we play another note a fourth lower again, this time falling on the second note of our tonic major scale (2).

If you continue up the neck, moving each note in the chord one scale-tone at a time, you will have seven different chords. Each of these chords may be used in much the same way as harmonized triads with two exceptions — the third and seventh chords. The problem is that these chords each contain a tritone interval and thereby lose the "neutrality" of fourths.

Figure B represents a solution whereby the lowest notes in the third and seventh chords have been sharpened, causing all chords to appear identical, and thereby

sound more consonant than the chords in Figure A.

The use of fourth chords will often leave a soloist more harmonic room. If the person comping can avoid the frequent stating of the third or seventh, the soloist is free to modify their position as he or she sees fit.

Probably the most often used is the simple perfect fourth interval. For years, R & B and country guitarists have been sliding fourths on the top two strings to add fills and "color tones" to chords. More recently, you can hear these in use by L.A. based session guitarists playing in the pop-jazz idiom. Several excellent examples of the device can be found in "Deacon Blues" by Tom Scott on the Steely Dan *Aja* album.

One final note — fourths can become tiring quickly if overused. They are great in modal compositions, but can create an openness, almost an uncertainty, in the listener's ear. To temper their effect, use them occasionally, or as a reinforcement to other chordal instruments that are voicing their chords in triads.

STUDIO

DRUMS/RALPH HUMPHREY

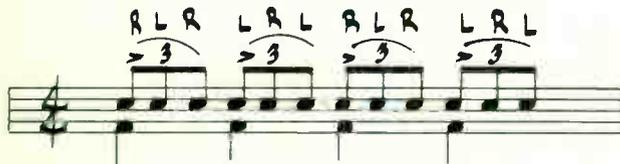
ODD COMBINATIONS IN 4/4, USING TRIPLETS



This article is a continuation of the ideas and concepts discussed in the December issue of *Musician*, #15. In that article I explained the use of odd rhythmic units of 3's and 2's in 4/4, using straight 8th-notes and 16ths, as they apply to Rock and Latin types of music.

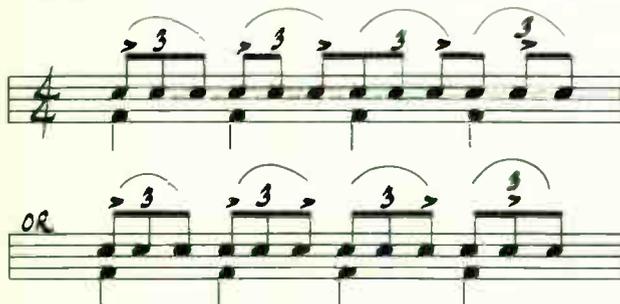
I now want to share some ideas for the use of the triplet in 4/4, particularly as they apply to jazz and triplet 8th-note music. First, let's examine how one would see a typical example of the use of triplets:

Exercise #1

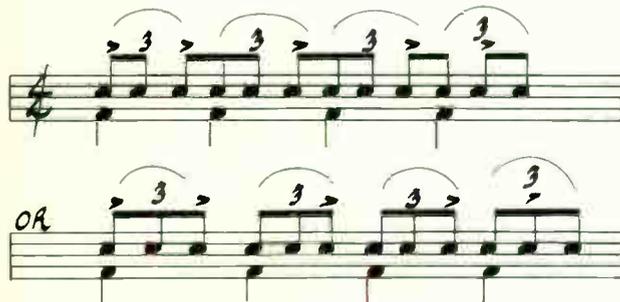


There are 12 triplet 8th-notes per bar in 4/4. Now, let's subdivide these 12 notes unevenly into groups of 3's and 2's. Following are some examples:

Exercise #2 3-2-3-2-2:



Exercise #3 2-3-3-2-2:



Exercise #4 2-2-2-3-3:



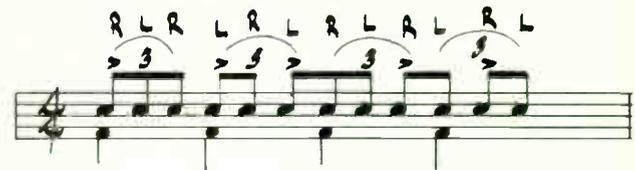
Note the alternation of a "feel" of 3/4 and 6/8 in example 4, the use of which is very typical in the Latin rhythm called the "Nanigo."

I've chosen to notate the examples two different ways. You should read the one easiest for you, although the first method, which groups the 3's and 2's separately, delineates the subdivision more clearly, and may be easier to remember.

Play the above examples and notice the cross-rhythmic effect of the triplet line and the pulse, especially when you strongly accent the beginning note of each group.

I suggest devising a number of additional examples on your own and practice them: until you really find the groove of each. There will be many possible subdivisions, especially if you decide to cross over the bar-line and devise a two-measure phrase. Use the bass-drum and hi-hat as your pulse. As for the sticking, use alternate strokes first, then let the lead hand (for most, the right) take the accents, while the other follows. This means that you must double-stroke the last two beats of a group of three:

Exercise #5 using 3-2-3-2-2:



If you place the right hand on the ride cymbal, you have a very poly-rhythmic pattern in 4/4.

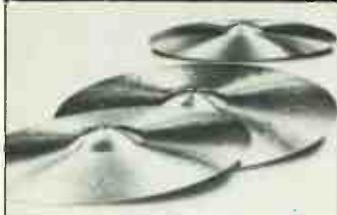
For advanced players, try the following sticking for the above example:

Exercise #6





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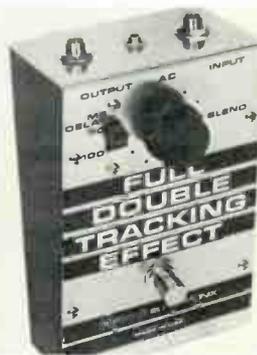
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Conversation: Max Roach



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I was sixteen, The Duke Ellington Orchestra was playing at the Paramount and Mr. Sonny Greer was sick. . .

When I was sixteen years old I had a job at an after-hours spot called Monroe's Uptown House. Monroe was Billie Holiday's brother-in-law at the time, and he owned a number of places. Young musicians like myself and Bud Powell worked there. We played Khachaturian for fire-eaters and sword swallowers, all kinds of things for dancers and different acts, and when other musicians had finished working downtown they would come uptown and play with us. Some of them, like Mr. Charlie Parker, liked what we were doing so much they hired us in later years. I used to finish playing early in the morning and go directly to high school without sleeping. We didn't need to sleep in those days. The music made us feel so good and strong.

I had acquired the reputation of being able to read anything on sight. It happened at that time that the Duke Ellington Orchestra had an engagement at the Paramount theatre on Broadway. Mr. Sonny Greer was sick, and the word went out that they needed a drummer who could read a show. I got the job, and as you can imagine I quickly became the local hero at my high school. Now Sonny Greer's set of drums had vibraphones, xylophones, gongs, cymbals of ever kind of timbre you could possibly imagine, plus tympani, and all I was used to was my little drum set. It worried me, but I was also young and sure of myself and felt that as long as I could read the music I'd be able to get through it all right. It was a four day engagement and I would have to play the shows and the Ellington repertoire.

You can imagine how I felt when I got there. Sixteen years old with the great Duke Ellington Orchestra at the New York Paramount! The orchestra came up on a riser out of the pit. I had never seen anything like it. And when I got there I found that *there wasn't a single sheet of music to be seen*. Sonny Greer played all those incredible arrangements by ear. I was terrified. Duke Ellington looked up at me, saw this harried look on my face and said, "You just keep one eye on me and one eye on the act and I think we'll have it made." I had had some experience with conductors before, but I found out that Mr. Ellington was the most profound conductor of all, because I didn't miss a thing.

When the engagement was over I

really was the local hero. I also had some extra money, so the next day at school I bought the entire school milk at lunch. Of course then it was five cents a pint.

I think that the rhythm sections, drummers in particular, are the unsung heroes of the music. It's the rhythm section that has changed the styles from one period to another. You listen to the singers and the horns and it is all basically blues-oriented music. These things have all been said and done before. It's the rhythmic things that have changed. For example, what we now call Reggae is a rhythmic innovation. The singers could be singing the same thing to a calypso beat. Bop might be the exception to the rule. That was a period of unprecedented virtuosity on all the instruments, which I don't think has been equalled since, but even there you would be absolutely correct in saying that Mr. Jonathan Samuel David Jones — Papa Jo — had already opened up the rhythm so that that music could emerge. And Baby Dodds, Sid Catlett, Kenny Clarke, and myself as well were all instrumental in opening that era up. I think it's time that people become aware of the importance of percussion in contemporary music. How did it feel to be playing bop for the first time? It felt great to me, but you have to be able to persevere in the face of criticism. The fact that you may be doing something different or new can subject you to the kind of criticism we met with in the forties. In those days the critics would say that Dizzy Gillespie sounds like he's playing with a mouthful of marbles, Charlie Parker doesn't do anything but play scales, Max Roach can't play time, Bud Powell has no left hand, Monk has no right hand and Oscar Pettiford doesn't play bass the way it ought to be played. Of course most of the criticism I get these days is favorable.

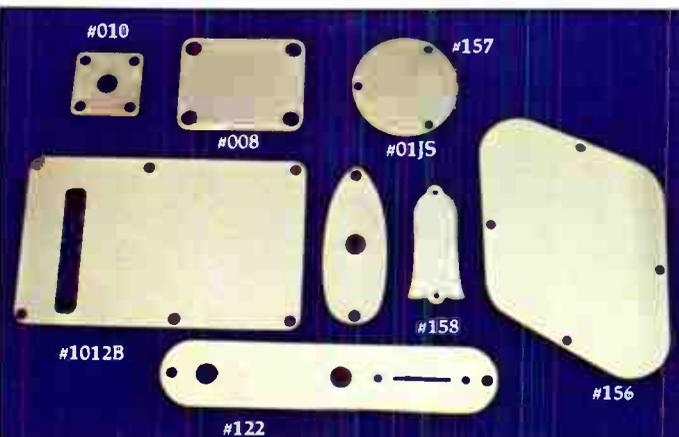
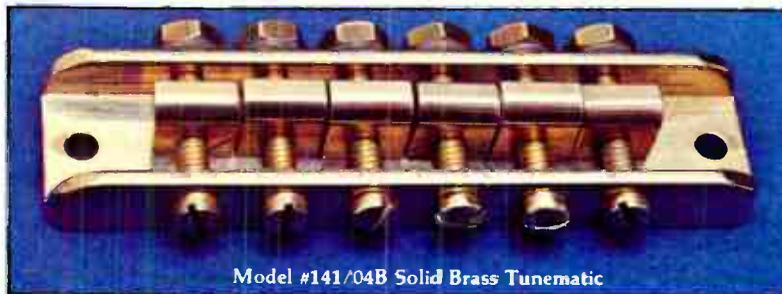
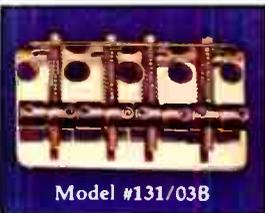


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