

# ALL ABOUT JAZZ

monthly edition — may 2001





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# JAZZED.

AARON WRIXON

Welcome to the May issue of *All About Jazz, Monthly Edition!*

This month, we're proud to announce a new columnist, Jeff Fitzgerald, and his new, er, column: The Genius Guide to Jazz.

Jeff, it seems, is blessed by genius and — as is the case with many graced by voluminous intellect — he's not afraid to share that fact with us.

(Incidentally... I am not a Genius, nor am I Smart, nor even Capable of Breathing With My Mouth Closed. I, you see, am an Editor, which means — and any writer will tell you this without your even asking — I am an Idiot.)

Whatever. Let me be the first (or at least the second or third) to welcome Jeff aboard. (We'll see how long you last in the dog-eat-dog world of downloadable jazz magazine humour, Smart Guy.)

And speaking of smarts, you'd have to be sharp as a bag of wet kittens NOT to know that when Pat Metheny shuffles off this mortal single-coil (hopefully not for a long, long time), he's going to leave behind one helluva legacy. If you HAVEN'T heard of the man, it's probably time to move back to Stanistan, or

Pogo Pogo, or Joe Bat's Arm, Newfoundland (my grandfather is rolling over in his grave at the indignity I have just committed against him) — or WHEREVER you've been hiding under a rock all this while — and check some of Metheny's records out of the library.

The man is a guitar god, and it's an honour and a privilege to have Allen Huotari's interview with him in this month's issue.

Also on the guitar god front, look for a lengthy interview with uber-pickers Larry Carlton and Steve Lukather.

Just try not to play air guitar this issue! We dare ya! 🎸

*PUBLISHER'S NOTE: The opinions expressed above are those of the editor of AAJme, and do not reflect the Publisher's personal feelings about the people of Stanistan or Pogo Pogo. Joe Bat's Arm, however... In any case, complaints about the Editor's mocking of fictional countries and the birthplace of his forefathers may be made to, and discrimination suits filed against, Jeff Fitzgerald, Genius, c/o All About Jazz Monthly Edition. Thank you.*

# NEW APPROACHES

PAT METHENY BY ALLEN HUOTARI

Webster's Dictionary defines the word "communication" as "the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs." However, it also offers a pair of alternative meanings: "an opportunity or means of passage between places"; or "an activity by one organism that has the potential to change the behavior of other organisms."

At its best, music encompasses and transcends every one of these definitions.

Music conveys thought, emotion, and spirit. Music possesses a profound ability to change behavior. In a more abstract (and especially satisfying) sense, music can also provide transport across space and time. Music can help one relive experiences, re-encounter feelings — and suggest new meanings for these experiences and feelings. Performers and listeners can forge these intellectual, emotional, and spiritual connections through music.

Guitarist Pat Metheny has been *communicating* with listeners for nearly thirty years. And if you asked ten of his fans to select their favorite Metheny recording, you'd

probably get ten different answers.

With his amazingly diverse body of work, Metheny has touched a proportionately diverse audience. Although he's created a lot of commercially successful music, he has not compromised his integrity in order to reach out to different age groups and backgrounds. Rather, he has relied upon his innate and honest ability to *communicate* within a variety of musical settings — transporting listeners across borders. He frequently offers listeners a new home within his own unique concept of space and time. Perhaps it is this ability to make new musical experiences inviting that has allowed Pat Metheny to reach out to such a broad audience.

Pat Metheny's latest recording is *TRIO* -> *LIVE* (Warner Bros.). To celebrate the release of this new recording, Metheny graciously offered to answer some questions in this interview, which was conducted via e-mail correspondence in March 2001.

**All About Jazz:** Over twenty years ago you came to prominence as the “rookie phenom” — full of raw, limitless potential. Today you're the “crafty, seasoned veteran” — with a career

that spans over two decades and includes unheard-of notoriety. How do you feel your self-perception as a musician has changed over time?

**Pat Metheny:** First of all, when I look back at this point on my life as a musician, I am mainly struck by how lucky I have been to be given so many opportunities to be in challenging and rewarding musical environments... right from the very beginning in Kansas City, when I was playing with great and much older musicians at a very young age.

My own perception of my playing and development as a musician has always been kind of odd — in many ways, I was much more confident and sure about what constituted “progress” when I was 19 or 20 than at later points in my life. Some of that is natural; I think you have a certain swagger in that general age range, especially if you are feeling like you may be accomplishing some of the specific musical goals that you are setting for yourself in fairly short-term ways. Of course, now that I am a little older (and hopefully wiser), I can see that there are things that I THOUGHT I was doing really well at that, in

fact, I kind of sucked at!

But on the other hand, I see that things I was doing many years ago were in fact more effective than I realized at the time (and in some cases, things I didn't even know I was doing at all!)... and ultimately they ended up being significant in developing whatever my thing has winded up being [now]. Perspective on one's own thing is one of the most elusive aspects of self-awareness. In the end, I find myself worrying less and less about perception in general towards music, and just enjoying it... the sound of it, and especially the process of making it and the wonderful community of it.

**AAJ:** How do you feel your responsibilities as a bandleader have changed?

**PM:** We live in a time where the broader culture itself is in a state of flux as it regards the kinds of creativity that I value — not just as a bandleader or a musician, but as a civilian. In that sense, I feel like my responsibility is greater than ever to try to pursue something beyond the obvious ways of thinking about sound and musical style... and the basic day-to-day function that music

provides. I feel that every effort that every musician makes to try to improve as a player benefits this cause.

**AAJ:** Charlie Haden has called your sound “contemporary impressionistic Americana.” Would you describe your music as being uniquely and unmistakably American?

**PM:** More and more I am finding myself bugged, or at least uninterested in, the whole notion of nationalistic pride attached to successful music — any music. To me, music is one of the major areas of human endeavor that so obviously transcends our differences. I certainly have had my share of personal pride over the years in that I came from the Midwest, from America, etc. But more and more I realize that all of that is just the envelope: it’s not the message, and it is even less about the MEANING behind the message. If it WERE the message, then it seems only fellow Midwesterners would be able to understand it. But in fact I am just as likely, or sometimes more likely, to have an impact on a Japanese girl from Osaka, or a young kid from Bosnia or South Africa, as someone from Lee’s Summit. Yes, we all come

from different places with our own dialects and experiences and heritages. But for me, those all pale in comparison to something much greater — our shared humanity. It’s that humanity that interests me and attracts me to certain players — not where they are from or what ethnic group they happen to belong to.

**AAJ:** You have a highly distinctive musical voice. Many players achieve this by continuing to refine their own “language” — gradually and determinedly adding to their own “vocabulary.” For others, it’s about developing a facility at “multi-lingual” playing. Which of these analogies best describes your approach?

**PM:** For everyone who is going to attempt to address the “jazz language,” there is a period of many years where just learning the basic grammar takes up the vast majority of your time. And then for the rest of your life, you continue to work with those fundamentals, trying to broaden and strengthen them to support your ideas. It is, in fact, a language that has evolved to include some somewhat quantifiable matters — the way that “jazz harmony” has evolved, certain kinds of specific rhythmic issues that give weight to the music

in most settings, etc. However, there is a danger in getting lost in the study of the language itself. There have been so many incredible thinkers and visionaries who have taken the language to such heights that, in the process of studying their achievements, you can lose sight of your original goal: the goal of learning how to manifest into sound your OWN story.

The “multi-lingual” idea may apply to many musicians who, like myself, don’t really buy into the idea that jazz is a “style of music” (or even an “idiom”), as much as it is a process. Through jazz you are able to learn things about your own musical sensibility. That comes from improvisation, as filtered by the prism of the work that thousands of musicians before us have offered through their accumulated wisdom. To me, it is only natural to try to honor the music that I love through my efforts as an improviser and as a composer — the issue of “style” really has very little to do with it.

**AAJ:** Developing an immediately identifiable style can be accompanied by the hazard of lapsing into cliché or predictability. How do

you maintain freshness in your music?

**PM:** If you have played for many years — it doesn't matter who you are — you certainly develop a kind of "accent" within the language. Your own harmonic and melodic preferences become evident by the fact that you seem to gravitate towards certain options over others. You have a place where you like to put the beat, or you have certain tempos that feel better to you than others. And in some ways, I think there is a certain naiveté about improvisation itself, even among somewhat knowledgeable critics or listeners.

For me, improvising — whether you are talking about the AEC or Oscar Peterson — is less about making up absolutely brand new ideas each time out (actually, I have never heard ANYONE who can do that) than it is about illuminating each moment in time with a particular musical gesture that somehow enhances the eternity of that moment. The goal is to play something that is so real to that moment that it has the capacity to remind people of something that they may have forgotten, or didn't realize they knew in the first place. The power of the moment is

what it is all about, and the materials that you use to fill those moments are ultimately less significant than the spirit in which they are offered. To me, the ultimate example of this would be Miles Davis, a musician who certainly had his zone in terms of vocabulary — but he made each note absolutely vital each time out.

But having said all that... yes, I do work hard to keep trying to come up with new approaches to things, to try to find new solutions melodically, harmonically. I just wish I had more hours in the day to practice — that zone of research is where I find I can make a lot of progress at expanding the actual materials I have to draw from.

**AAJ:** Many musicians limit their musical growth or contributions by avoiding risks. What advice would you give to musicians to help them get around this problem?

**PM:** Well, my playing has always been ruled by one thing: I always wanted to simply play the music I really loved. Somehow, if I felt close to and strong about a certain way of playing, or a certain kind of harmony or sound, any "risk" involved in addressing that slid so

far down the priority scale that it became insignificant. I have seen that kind of attitude in most, if not all, of the best musicians that I have been around.

**AAJ:** Based on your own experience, what advice would you give other musicians in learning to follow their instinct?

**PM:** I think that if you really examine what you love in music — MUSIC, not just "jazz music" — you can find a lot of clues about who you can become as a jazz musician. Every player has a story to tell that is theirs and theirs alone — and each one is really valuable. The challenge is to develop your skill enough that you are able to share your story in a coherent and compelling way... so that other people will be able to understand what you are trying to communicate. On a more specific level, I also always recommend that players try to seek out playing situations that include the best musicians they can possibly find. I always say, "Try to be the worst guy in every band you're in!"

**AAJ:** When it comes to learning, do you find you gain insights suddenly and unexpectedly, or slowly and gradually?

**PM:** Over the course of years of studying and playing, a certain rhythm appears in each player's growth. In my case, it has been more in the slow and gradual way that you describe. But there are often bursts of progress stimulated by a new instrument, a new playing partner, or maybe a new piece of information from transcribing a solo by a master musician. When those bursts come, I always try to really pay attention to them. They are sometimes short-lived — although while they are going on, it seems like they will go on forever. And I always try to document as much as I can during those periods by recording or writing.

**AAJ:** Does the term “modern jazz” work for you?

**PM:** I like the term. It has resonance with me because I feel that it's a way of addressing “jazz” through the day-to-day aspects of our modern lives that can give the form the nourishment that it needs to keep growing and evolving. The other approach, viewing “Jazz” as a style of music exclusively defined by the mythological details of its past... relegated to a certain set of stylistic boundaries and prerequisite conditions that MUST be there in

order for it to qualify as “Jazz”... that view of the music has always failed for me.

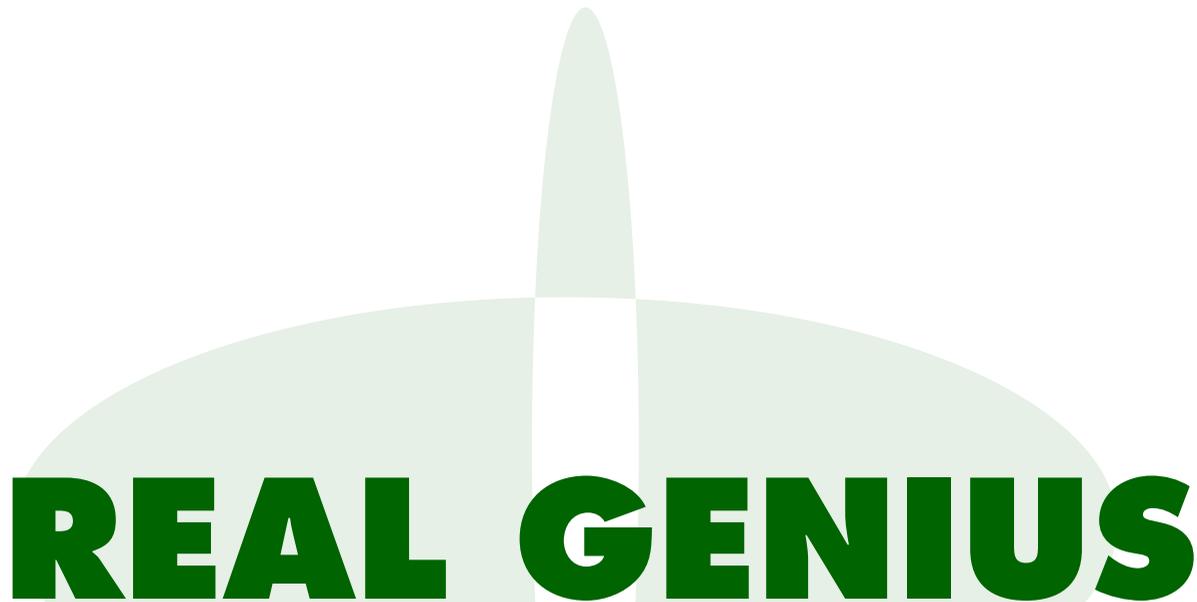
**AAJ:** Technology has been an integral part of your music. But considering non-music technology, what have been the best and worst aspects of the Internet for you?

**PM:** There really is no “worst” for me when it comes to increased potential for communication. The fabric of our lives is different now than it was before the internet... that much is for sure. And the fabric of our lives was certainly different — and in very short order as well — upon the invention of the telephone, or the fax machine, or the telegraph system, or whatever. But again, the mode of communication is less significant to me than what people are actually communicating. I do think that the general amount of information changing hands between people is significantly higher now than at any point in human history. And everyone is really just getting used to that increased potential, and what it can mean to all of us. The result so far is, mostly, a lot more junk than ever on pretty much all fronts. But I think that the long term impact of the

“internet” — or whatever it winds up being — will be huge for us as musicians. It is really going to change a lot of things for us.

**AAJ:** Many of your peers, and most of your devoted listeners, feel that you have much more to offer in your career. What do you feel you have yet to accomplish?

**PM:** I still want to play A LOT better! There is so much to do, so many things that I have just scratched the surface of... compositionally, as an improviser, in all areas of music. But on the other hand, if I never played another note of music again in my life, that would be OK, too. I have gradually gotten to the point that playing and just hanging out are kind of the same thing for me... and I really enjoy everything. I try to make each moment count for what it is, and I try to bring the things that I have learned from music into all aspects of my life, and vice versa. It has all become the same for me — and I really just dig being here. 🎧



# REAL GENIUS

THE GENIUS GUIDE TO JAZZ BY JEFF FITZGERALD, GENIUS

If you know anything about me at all, you know that I love jazz. And the company of willowy redheads of questionable repute, but that is neither here nor there and I'll thank you to mind your own damned business (unless, of course, you are a willowy redhead of questionable repute, in which case you may e-mail me c/o this magazine).

Anyway.

I love jazz. I love everything about jazz. I love listening to jazz. I love reading about jazz, hearing people talk about jazz, pictures of jazz musicians. I love pictures of people listening to people talk about jazz. I love reading about hearing people listening to jazz. I love talking about reading about listening to people take pictures of...wait, I've completely lost track of this article already. Or, better yet, maybe I was riffing. This being an article about jazz, I could very well claim that I was wasn't just prattling on, I was actually building on an established motive to create an atmospheric sense of space within the confines of the traditional boundaries of the written word. Or maybe I'm just full of crap. The very same debate has been raging around Cecil

Taylor for years, so I'm in good company.

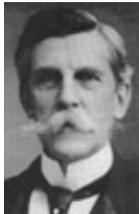
At any rate.

We've established two things already. First is the fact that I like jazz, and second is the fact that I'm either pretty damned clever or completely full of a substance known in the jazz vernacular as "Kenny G CD's." Either way, we're too far into it to turn back now so we might as well just hang on and enjoy the rest of the piece.

That said.

Any discussion of jazz must first begin with the fundamental question, "What is jazz?" One might define jazz as a form of musical self-expression that transcends the established limits of the European classical tradition and emphasizes both an exceptional level of technical ability and an intimate personal revelation of the individual musicians within a variety of ensemble settings, but that sort of talk isn't likely to get you invited to

too many parties. It is easier to define jazz in a similar fashion to the way pornography was defined by **Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes** (32-1-1, 26 KO's), you



know it when you see it. Or rather, when you hear it. Jazz, that is, not pornography (although, jazz is sometimes used as background music for porno flicks. I have no personal knowledge of this).

Having thus wriggled off the hook, we can now move past the question of what is jazz and get on to the larger issues of just how the hell I managed to get my own spot on this website. Or, we could explore the vast, rich legacy of jazz and maybe find a few ways to help make our music relevant to a new generation. Either way, I'm easy.

So then.

Let's begin with a brief, yet largely incorrect, history of the music we all love so much.

•••

## I. Prelude

The history of jazz begins in New Orleans, where an influx of disparate but oddly complementary cultures combine not only to create the framework on which jazz would be built, but also an atmosphere where one day,

## drunken college coeds

would bare their breasts in exchange for plastic beads. It is for these contributions to society that New Orleans can be forgiven for the NFL's Saints (but not, however, for that whole "Cajun-blackened everything" craze that still lingers in many full-service restaurants to this day). It is still a matter of debate as to whether jazz began as a natural progression from blues and field chants, or whether it was simply a way to discourage people from playing the banjo. Early pioneers of the form include the great coronetist Buddy Bolden, and impresario and composer "Jelly Roll" Morton who claimed not only to have single-handedly invented jazz, but also took credit for discovering elements 92-104 on the periodic table. Experts today doubt the veracity of these claims, but are at a loss to explain the element jellyrollium.

As jazz spread from New Orleans, gradually reaching the metropolitan centers of the industrial North as well as the most remote areas of the South and Midwest, it attracted



both musicians and listeners to its unique and exciting sound. It also produced its first legitimate giant, the great Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong. A natural musician with a virtuoso talent for improvisation and a sound as big as Ted Kennedy and Oprah Winfrey at an all-you-can-eat buffet (an early contender for cheapest gag of the piece), Armstrong quickly became a marquis name with his work with the King Oliver band in Chicago. It wasn’t long before Armstrong struck out on his own, beginning a solo career that would span almost six decades and leave an immense legacy as one of the greatest musicians of all time. And no, I’m not going to end this paragraph with a gag; Armstrong was that great.

The twenties was a time of mostly “hot jazz,” so named because it was so kinetic that it actually produced heat. Many of the



great players of the day had to play their instruments wearing oven mitts and some form of **protective clothing**. Early jazz patrons often brought uncooked meals with them to jazz concerts, using the heat from the stage to

prepare their food during the course of the show. In those days, when someone said that a particular performance was “cooking,” they weren’t just whistling Dixie.

By the end of the twenties, jazz was firmly ensconced (ensconced?) in the American consciousness. Jazz bands criss-crossed the country, bringing the music to ever-smaller and more remote places. Jazz record labels sprung up all over the place, bringing the music to places smaller and more remote still. Thus, it is estimated that by 1934, the only person in America who had not yet heard jazz

was **Mr. Zebulon Creasey**, of Dog Pike, Kentucky.

What is ironic is that Mr. Creasey’s home had once been personally visited by the Paul Whiteman Band, featuring the great Bix Biederbecke, but he was visiting his sister in West Virginia at the time and missed them. They played instead for his brother, Whistler (so named because he had once painted his mother), who was so inspired, he left immediately for New York and later played trombone for Fletcher Henderson.



To this day, he is considered the finest hillbilly jazz musician of his era.

The thirties brought an increasing sophistication to jazz. With the emergence of the great Duke Ellington, whose visionary compositions gave the first glimpses of how complete jazz could truly be as an American art form, jazz began to take its place in the collective culture. And for the first time, the music began to appeal to Americans of all heights (jazz had previously been considered “unseemly” for people under 5’4”).

The thirties also brought about the era of the great jazz venues, such as the Savoy Ballroom and the legendary Cotton Club (so named because the price of admission was actually cotton, or a textile product of some sort. This practice died out with the



advent of synthetic fabrics, which had little value to the **fashion-conscious mobsters** who ran the joint). These venues acted as the proving ground for virtuoso musicians, the incubators in which bold and exciting new directions in jazz were first

born, and among the first places in America you could call someone a “hep cat” with a straight face.

Moving into the forties on the strength of sheer momentum alone, we find ourselves firmly in the midst of the swing craze. Whether or not you consider swing an official school of jazz, or just “jazzified” popular music, you have to admit that without the emergence of big band, virtually every high school in America today would be without a jazz ensemble.

Of course, we shouldn’t dismiss big band music out of hand. There was some great music produced during the swing era, and some great musicians. It was also just about the only time in history that teenage girls got hysterical about jazz musicians. No one who has played jazz since has been able to escape that wistful fantasy of Beatle-esque clouds of screaming girls going out of their minds for a particularly swinging rendition of Well You Needn’t.

By the end of the forties, big band musicians tired of playing the same strict charts night after night were getting together after hours and experimenting with different

directions. Musicians like Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonious Monk were exploding the traditional definitions of jazz with breakneck chord changes, unique scales, and some of the **coolest hats** in music history. Calling the new form “Be-bop” (and you’d think I’d have a decent gag for that, but here we are), these giants ushered jazz into the fifties and arguably, into its golden age.



With the advent of Be-bop, jazz took on an intricacy and intellectual challenge heretofore only seen in pedantic articles that used the word “heretofore” for no good reason. As swing music gave way to homogenized popular music, and then to rock and roll, jazz became increasingly introspective and less concerned with popular tastes. Jazz musicians themselves began to embody an aloof and supremely self-confident attitude that would become known as “cool.” This is not to be confused with so-called “cool jazz,” which was an entity unto itself, or Kool-Aid, which has nothing at all to do with jazz so forget I even mentioned it.

At any rate.

Musicians in the fifties were the very epitome of everything cool. Just the presence of Miles Davis and John Coltrane lowered the earth’s average temperature by 2.4 degrees (in contrast, the 1991 eruption of **Mt. Pinatubo** in the Philippines only lowered the earth’s average temperature by 1.36 degrees, and didn’t swing anywhere near as hard). Increasingly free from the overbearing commercial concerns that forced jazz squarely to the middle of the road at times in previous decades, musicians were given more leeway to explore and experiment. The music became so rhythmically and melodically complex that it required a graduate degree from a good college just to listen to it. The unfortunate corollary effect was the creation of the Van Dyke-and-beret-wearing quasi-Bohemian poseur that has taken nearly a half-century to weed out of the collective consciousness.



So here we are, poised on the edge of the Golden Age of American Jazz, a time when some of the most gifted musicians in American

history were at the peak of their creative powers, a time when the music was as



exciting and new as it would ever be, a time when women boldly wore fishnet stockings and **bullet bras** and I wouldn't even be born in time to enjoy it, damn the luck. I think this

would be as good a place as any to wind up the piece till next time, when I can give proper due to my favorite era in jazz. And also, enough time for you to forget most of the gags from this piece so I can recycle them next month. Speaking of which...

**NEXT MONTH:** The enigmatic Thelonious Monk creates some of the most distinct compositions of the twentieth century, Miles Davis and John Coltrane combine to redefine the very concept of jazz, Dave Brubeck brings innovative meters and melodies to a new audience, and the editors of [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com) struggle to come to grips with their decision to make me the Resident Humorist. 🎧

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**tres josés**  
COMBING THE FANTASY CATALOG BY DEREK TAYLOR

Three Joes, an admittedly superficial, but nonetheless effective method of extracting this trio of Latin-tinged compilations from the Fantasy Jazz vaults. Afro-Cuban influences shape the music on many of the releases under the Fantasy umbrella of labels. Mongo Santamaria recorded a string of influential sessions for Riverside, Milestone, Prestige and Pablo. Cal Tjader has a voluminous discography on Fantasy dating from the late 1950s through the mid-1970s. Santamaria and Tjader are just two examples among several. But these three discs by three very different Joes present unusual twists on the form and stand as unique members of the Fantasy family. From the parlor room bebop of Joe Holiday to the pop-flavored pachanga of Joe Loco to the polyglot percussion workouts of Montego Joe and posse each collection spins an stimulating take on Latin musical traditions in jazz.

Gathered from various 10" platters and a sole single ("Blue Holiday") from the early 1950s, *Mambo Jazz's* 23 tracks are a potpourri of elegantly arranged blowing vehicles, but the Afro-Cuban elements are largely only for show. Simple bebop themes and lightly

swinging rhythms form the compositional crux on many of the early numbers. One of the most inexplicable and surprising elements in Holiday's ensemble sound is the presence of console organ played initially by the enigmatic Jordin Fordin and on a later session by pianist Billy Taylor several years prior to Jimmy Smith's flamboyant and revolutionary debut on the instrument. Fordin's lines are largely rhythmic filler with his tone coming off through the somewhat brittle fidelity as somewhere between spinet and roller rink in timbre. The bongo banter of De Luca is also mostly textural, but again the spotty fidelity affixes an odd (and intriguing) edge to his sporadic interjections.

Holiday takes his stature as leader seriously, annexing the bulk of solo space and spreading out rounded melodic lines that recall early Stan Getz in their beguiling pliability. Holiday also has a more boisterous side that allows egress on occasion as on the rollicking and extended "Mambo Holiday" where his booting phrases blend with De Luca's percolating skins. The latter's florid interaction with Hayes' off-kilter cowbell is a real treat. A later session

drops the Latin façade for a bebop septet populated by players with real credentials including baritonist Cecil Payne, trombonist Eddie Bert and drummer Max Roach. But curiously the three tunes the group launches through end up sounding flat and flaccid in comparison to the whiskered charm of the early stripped down cuts.

Taking up the disc's final third are a pair of sessions, the first featuring Holiday in the company of the Billy Taylor Trio and Machito's Salsero rhythm section, the second with only the Taylor unit in tow. Expanded to conga, timbales, bongo and maracas the former date wins out in terms of authenticity and rhythmic veracity, but it's also pleasing to hear Holiday backed by standard piano, bass and drums. Judged against the heavyweights Holiday might seem like something of a bantam player, but the lively arrangements and unusual instrumentation of these early sides still make for enjoyable and chin-scratching listening.

Combining a Loco-led date with another of his albums as a sideman, *Loco Motion* offers an offbeat pairing. *Pachanga with Joe Loco*, the no-frills title of the first, leaves little mystery

to the repertoire and the disc's first dozen tracks are indeed rooted in this rhythmically infectious Latin dance style. Mixing up the compositional pot with hard-driving purely instrumental numbers like the minor-keyed "Algo Caliente" Loco keeps the band on its collective toes. The violin triad of Silva, Legaretta and Martinez makes for a formidable harmonic foil and it's usually up to Lozano and Loco to handle the ensemble's melodic momentum. Santamaria and Bobo are percussion partnership made in heaven, and their near clairvoyant camaraderie makes for a slew of extraordinary rhythmic breaks. Crafting a fluid vocal repartee Velarde and Calzado weave between the instruments and croon the often sentiment-heavy lyrics in grand style. Loco shows himself to be a talented musician and arranger and he weaves in various surprises throughout the program, including a delightful pizzicato violin passage on "Tu Plato." The one weak link ends up being Martinez's incessant guiro, which scrapes out simple and monotonous support on the majority of numbers and is regrettably way up in the mix most of the time. The lack of

a definitive date on the session is another somewhat frustrating factor given the fact that virtually the same ensemble went into the studio and recorded an album called *¡Arriba!* under Santamaria's name (also dateless).

Session two is actually a date led by vibraphonist Pete Terrace and while a Latin percussion contingent is present in the form of congueros Flash and Aguilera the music the quintet tackles is a far less inspiring blend of tepid exotica. Loco does a turn as Latinesque *Liberace*, reeling out fleetly fingered rhapsodic runs that tickle the ivories with a firm, but largely lackluster caress. Garcia usually tugs out an unvarnished walking line and leader Terrace fills in the melodic cracks with luminous mallet clusters blanketed in heavy pedal sustain. The playful fire of the earlier pachanga meeting is left largely unkindled and even the more velocious pieces like the set's opening rendition of "September Song" are tempered with an air of disarming elegance and. Considered on its own terms however Terrace's date is a competently concocted slice of cocktail jazz and there is some interesting interplay interspersed within the

effusive arrangements.

Drawing on a cornucopic wealth of cultures and influences the pair of albums gathered on *¡Arriba! Con Montego Joe* makes for the most consistently interesting listening experience of the trilogy. Even more fascinating is the cadre of young sidemen Joe enlists in his pan-percussionary enterprise. Among them are bassist Eddie Gomez, just prior to his long tenure with Bill Evans and a twentysomething Chick Corea. Filling out the rhythmically charged percussion section around Joe are Robert Crowder who would join the ranks of the nascent Art Ensemble of Chicago in several years, Milford Graves, destined to become revered as a doyen of free jazz drumming and Sonny Morgan who would team with Graves just a few months later on the revolutionary drumcentric ESP record *Milford Graves Percussion Ensemble*.

From the funky hard bop of "Fat Man" to the closing unison grooves of "Lexington Avenue Line" Joe charts a course for maximum drum-driven adventure. On the opener Gibbons and Goines blow a frothy R&B-inflected commentary over bustling hand drum

backdrop. Echoing Nicholas Martinez's work on the earlier Joe Loco disc an uncredited guiro player carves out a relentless rhythmic line on the first few numbers that distracts rather than compliments. Detailing the development of dance its title is derived from "Maracatu" works off a vocalized history lesson from Joe fueled by an infectious carnival beat. Gomez and Graves are the focal points on the somber reading of "Dakar," with the drummer sculpting a brief solo that shows definitive signs of his freer leanings. "Calling For the Angels In the Water" closes the album out with a savory blend of modal drum and flute patterns over a loping native African rhythm.

Compositions of shorter duration and less exploratory feel dominate the disc's second half. Joe's arrangement Harold Ousley's classic "Haitian Lady" emphasizes the tune's moody atmospheric melody, but many of the pieces fall into the rut of lightly grooving lounge music with percussion tacked on more as coloristic device than determining ingredient. Exceptions that circumvent this unwritten rule include the rich horn and drum harmonizing inherent in "Ewe" and the punchy cerulean

swing of “Bata Blues.” Undeniably a product of their era Joe’s pair of Prestige projects still succeed in incorporating an exploratory element absent from many of the Afro-Cuban jazz albums of the 1960s.

So here they are. Three Joes, each connected at least peripherally to the Afro-Cuban jazz traditions that still color creative improvised music decades later. Easy to overlook in the mammoth reservoir that is the Fantasy Jazz catalog, each of these discs is worth investigating; flawed gems that still offer plenty of sparkling music to listeners willing to look them up and dust them off. 

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# GUITAR GIANTS

LARRY CARLTON AND STEVE LUKATHER BY TODD S. JENKINS

In mid-March, Steve Vai's label Favored Nations released the first collaboration between two giants of American guitar music. During 25 years of friendship, Steve Lukather and Larry Carlton had never played together live until the opportunity finally arose for a three-week tour of Japan in the summer of 2000. For full houses of wildly appreciative fans, the two guitarists performed extended sets in the company of keyboardist Rick Jackson, bassist Chris Kent and drummer Gregg Bissonette. The resulting shows were taped and recently compiled into the new album *No Substitutions: Live in Tokyo 2000*, featuring five powerful jams that showcase the guitarists' exemplary musicianship.

Steve Lukather spent many years in the front line of the acclaimed rock band Toto, creating chart hits like "Hold The Line", "Africa" and "Rosanna". He has logged countless hours of studio session work since the 70s. "Luke" has graced albums and live performances by Diana Ross, Chet Atkins, Michael Jackson (the blockbuster *Thriller*), Hall & Oates, Barbara Streisand, Santana, Boz Scaggs, Paul McCartney, Randy Newman,

America and many others. He has also released three albums under his name: *Lukather* (1989), *Candyman* (1994) and *Luke* (1997).

Larry Carlton is an undisputed legend of jazz and pop guitar whose resume includes work with Joni Mitchell, Michael Jackson, Herb Alpert, Steely Dan (*The Royal Scam*), Donald Fagen (*The Nightfly*), The Crusaders and Linda Ronstadt, in addition to twenty well-crafted albums under his own name. In 1988 Carlton was shot outside Room 335, his studio in Burbank, but resumed his music career the following year after an intensive period of recovery. In 1998 Carlton replaced Lee Ritenour in the popular contemporary jazz quartet Fourplay. All About Jazz fusion editor Todd S. Jenkins spoke with Luke and Carlton about the tour, the new disc and their careers to date. (The two separate interviews have been combined here.)

**All About Jazz:** I've spent most of the last three days spinning *No Substitutions*. That is one beautiful album. You guys should be proud, Steve Vai should be proud...

**Steve Lukather:** You know it's so funny that we're getting such great reactions... I mean,

it's a jam record, we did it off the cuff, no rehearsals. We just went in and had a great time in Japan, and we had so much fun we decided to record. We just did it for ourselves. And then, you know, Steve Vai heard it and wanted to put it out. So Steve and I went in and mixed it and did a couple of edits, no fixes or nothing, what you hear is the way it really was. And I'm real proud of it because I got to play with Larry Carlton!

**AAJ:** You guys have known each other for about 25 years, and this is the first time you actually got together to play onstage?

**SL:** Yeah! Well, we did one little thing years ago, but that wasn't really playing together. We just played a song together in the 80s sometime. But this is playing together. Being with Larry was like going to school every night.

**AAJ:** How did this tour come together in the first place?

Larry Carlton: I've been doing the Blue Note club in (Fukuoka) Japan for about the last 8 years. I'm fortunate that there's a large audience there who have followed my career. So after doing 3 or 4 years straight, every year

going back and spending a month in Japan, I've become really good friends with the club owners. We had been trying to decide what kind of special project I could bring that would be a little bit different. And there's been talk over the few years about me and Joe Sample doing something, or me and Kirk Whalum doing something. So they called for that two years ago and said, "Let's do some kind of guitar thing," and Luke's name came up. I said, "Yeah! Let's do that." And it was as simple as that.

**SL:** They (Blue Note) like to have strange combinations of people; well, not necessarily strange, but they like to keep it fresh. Something people would generally fantasize about but would not necessarily happen. So Larry called me on the phone out of nowhere. "Hey, Larry, how's it goin', bro?" He's been one of my heroes for most of my adult life. I always wanted to be like Larry Carlton when I was a kid. He used to let me hang out. Jeff Porcaro introduced us; I went to school with Jeff. He worked with David Foster, Jay Graydon and all these other guys I used to look up to when I was 18 years old. That was right after

(Steely Dan's) The Royal Scam came out and changed my life. You know, I'd been a fan of The Crusaders and Larry's studio work, but that album in particular... I was like, "I wanna play like that guy!"

**AAJ:** (Laughs) So you used to sit around and try to jam on "Kid Charlemagne"?

**SL:** Yeah! And we'd been friends, but then he moved to Nashville. Obviously we were still friends, but we just didn't see a lot of each other. And then out of the blue he says, "This is Larry. Do you want to go to Japan?" And I was like, "When do we leave?!" I was honored to be asked, because Larry... what can I say? Genius is all I can say.

**AAJ:** Nice work if you can get it.

**SL:** We went off and we did this gig, and the crowd reaction was tremendous. We just had a ball. A great band, Gregg Bissonette, Rick Jackson, Chris Kent. We all just showed up, coming in from all over the place. I think Gregg came in from Australia, I came in from L.A., the other guys came in from Nashville. We met in Fukuoka and said, "So, what do you want to play?" I was real familiar with a lot of Larry's older stuff. We didn't want it to be a

happy-jazz thing, and we didn't want it to be a hard rock-and-roll thing. We just sort of went at it without any preconceived notions on a couple of tunes we all knew, and it just sort of developed into its own style. I don't really know what kind of music it is; kind of like the best of all the music I like. You know, you use the word "fusion" and people wince, I don't know why. I suppose it is a fusion of sorts.

**I think fusion is great. It's difficult to play, and some of it is actually humorous when you listen to it.**

**AAJ:** Right, a lot of people view fusion as just sort of a bastard child of smooth jazz or something, no idea of the history or what's involved.

**SL:** I don't think it's either of those. I mean, fusion is intense. I play in a fun band with Simon Phillips, and all we do is Mahavishnu, Billy Cobham stuff, the stuff nobody plays anymore, just for fun. I think fusion music is great. It's difficult to play, and some of it is actually humorous when you listen to it

because it's so over the top. Let's see how out we can get the notes, and the weirdest time signatures known to man.

You can view it as an exercise as well. As I am a musician, I'm still a humble student. I'm still practicing, I wake up in the morning and go, "I suck, I've got to practice." I keep going back to the music of the day, you know what I mean? Like now, there's no challenge to contemporary music now. It's crap for the most part. I don't mean to sound old and bitter, but I've got teenagers. I know what they listen to... For me, I go back to an era where everything was brand new. I think I lucked out being a child of the late 60s and 70s. Everything was still experimental and new. Nowadays if you have a computer, you don't have to learn how to play. It's pitiful.

**AAJ:** And you had the fortune to come up with electric Miles and John McLaughlin.

**SL:** You know what I'm saying? I got to play with Miles! In fact, believe it or not, Toto did a track with Miles back in 1986, with David Paich and myself. It's going to be on his Warner Bros. boxed set. At one point Miles asked me to join his band. I was just gob-

smacked, but I couldn't do it because I was on the road with Toto. That was about fifteen years ago. I didn't think I was good enough to be in Miles' band anyway, but I was honored to be asked.

It's one of those kinds of things, you get to play out your fantasies sometimes. One of my fantasies was to play with Larry Carlton, and here I am. Be careful what you wish for; it may come true! He's such a great guy, such a gentleman, such an effortless musician. Everything he hears he can play. Most guitar players think linearly, one note at a time. Larry thinks in five-part harmony. Some of his shit is so deep, he does things that would be physically impossible for any other musician to play. And he's groovy just to hang with, too. We'd sit before the show and have a special time, just me and him with a couple of guitars. We'd start playing, and I was basically getting a lesson from Larry. It was pretty groovy. It just doesn't get much better than Larry Carlton, let me tell you.

I'm really excited about this whole project. Steve Vai is also another one of those genius guys, and just a really great guy. It's just such

a joy to be a part of (his label). I mean, I was signed to Columbia Records for 24 years and I didn't know anybody there. There was no rapport. All the people I knew from the time we got signed had either quit the business or were dead. It's nice to be on a record label where you can call up the president of the record company and he's a friend. And a musician, sharing in the process, instead of "One for you, a hundred for me..." Favored Nations is the best label I've ever been on, and I've worked for 'em all.

**AAJ:** It's great that Vai has gotten to the point where he can take some creative risks and present to people the kind of music he really wants them to hear.

**LC:** It's nice doing business with a friend that you know is an honest friend with only the purest of motives, and that's the music. And that's the way we feel about Steve Vai.

**SL:** He really believes in the music. It's not about, "I don't hear a single," or "What format are we going to?" It's the antithesis of that, actually. And it's all about the guitar, really. I think he's going to have all the cool guitar players on his label. He's already made a

pretty big dent in it, releasing an Eric Johnson record. I mean, that guy's brilliant.

**AAJ:** And (bassist) Stuart Hamm, who might as well be a guitar player.

**SL:** Right, I love Stu. It's one big, happy family. Everybody knows each other. That's part of what makes it so comfortable.

**AAJ:** How did Steve get hold of the Tokyo sessions?

**SL:** I had a DAT tape of just the rough mixes off the board, when Larry and I said, "Let's just record it. It's so much fun, maybe we can put it out sometime." And it sort of sat around. Then, you know, Steve and I are really good friends, so I said, "Let me lay a couple of these DATs on you and let me know what you think." He called back real excited and said, "I gotta put this out! Let's you and me go in and do some edits." I mean, some of the tracks were 25 minutes long. Believe it or not, we trimmed some of what's already there!... So we didn't fix anything, we just did some edits. And what we have is a really cool representation of that event. We're going back again to do the same type of gig in about a month.

**AAJ:** Let's talk about the band. Gregg Bissonette is one of the great session drummers, of course, but I'm less familiar with Rick Jackson and Chris Kent.

**LC:** Rick Jackson has been performing in my band for about six years now. But he had worked prior to that, and still does, with Kirk Whalum. And I met Chris Kent when I moved to Nashville. He's one of the up-and-coming session guys here. He had been to Japan once prior to going with me, and that was with Take 6. So he's of that caliber. He floats around with a lot of great bands.

**SL:** I brought Gregg with me from L.A. since we've been friends for a hundred years, and Larry brought Chris and Rick from his band in Nashville.... Every set was different and fun. It was almost hard to pick which take to use because they were all so cool and all had something to offer. But like I said, we all just showed up and stared at each other, said "Nice to meet you," then went out and did a set and just ripped. It was kind of like we were going by the seat of our pants. Most of it is improvisation anyway, and it was a matter of learning the heads and figuring out who was

going to play what. There wasn't any rehearsal. We had a little soundcheck, then it was time to do the gig.

**AAJ:** The way it came together on the disc, it sounds like you ran it down for six months before you hit the road.

**LC:** By the time we started recording, we already had about 34 shows under our belt because we did two shows a night. So it was very, very tight.

**SL:** I think we had done a couple of weeks (on the tour) before we recorded it. I'm happiest playing live, I gotta tell you. I love the studio and I love writing and recording stuff, but I'm a live guy. When it's going down, that's the way music was intended to be played. It's become an art form with whole techniques on how to record things, how to layer and produce. But really, the essence of what you want to do is, can you play or not? Can you get out there and create a new thing, you know? And God knows where it comes from. It comes from God, I guess. I can't stand up there and think that fast. I can't write my name with my left hand; what the hell am I doing playing a guitar? You just stand

up there, and as cheesy as it sounds, it's a very spiritual experience. When it works, man, and the whole band goes, it's like you're all breathing at one time. It's like the highest of all highs.

**AAJ:** I remember Rick's electric piano intro on "It Was Only Yesterday", that gorgeous thing...

**LC:** Rick is truly a world-class player. I'm honored to work with him.

**Dig this man: every night it was different. I mean, he'd just go off into the ozone. I'd just sit there and laugh.**

**SL:** Not only is it gorgeous, but dig this, man: every night it was different. I mean, he'd just go off into the ozone. I'd just sit there and laugh. He and Larry have a musical rapport that just doesn't happen very often. Larry's got perfect pitch, and these guys would go off for, like, ten minutes on the most beautiful stuff you ever heard. Changing keys every half a bar. It's like, "How do you do this? How do you even know where you're going?" Even with a

schooled ear, you just shake your head and go, "That's just brilliant, I'm sorry..." I'm standing on the stage going, "Man, this is a great concert!" And all of a sudden I realize I have to play!

**AAJ:** That particular track, "It Was Only Yesterday," not only shows the tight interplay between you all, but it also shows off the difference between your styles. Larry has this crystalline jazz tone out of the hollow-body, and you've got more of a forceful...

**SL:** (Laughs) I've got the Satanic noise that comes from my speakers?

**AAJ:** (Laughs) Well, I didn't want to say that, but... you've got that edgier, forceful rock thing. The two separate solo sections on that song emphasize your differences, while the rest of the set shows just how well you two can blend in and listen to each other.

**SL:** That's all about having the big ears. A lot of times, when you have another guitar player, it becomes this kind of cutting session. But Larry says more with one note than I say with a flurry of 64th notes. We both have our moments, you know. But he had a tendency to let me go first all the time: "You go, blow

it out, shred and have your fun." Then all of a sudden he brings it down, he starts playing two or three notes. That's when you hear the audience kind of laughing, because of the look on my face. I'm like, "Okay, I suck." The guy just cuts me with one chord.

**LC:** It's pretty obvious on that tune that we're coming from different schools, but both so musical.

**AAJ:** Steve, I noticed Larry was gracious enough to let you start "Room 335" (Carlton's signature tune).

**SL:** That's the whole thing! I mean, I wish it was filmed so you could see the look on everybody's faces. At one point, and we actually left it on the record, I fouled it up. I went to the wrong place; I was supposed to go to the next section, but I went back to the intro again. You can hear a pause and the people laughing? That's because of the look on my face: "Oops, I fucked up!" And then we managed to salvage it. It was all in that spirit. I think when we go this time, we'll try to do a DVD. Hopefully that will work out, I'm not sure.

**AAJ:** Any chance that you'll do any

American dates?

**SL:** Absolutely! They're booking them now. The album comes out here March 20th. It comes out a little earlier in Japan because we're going there first. We'll be touring sporadically throughout the rest of this year and into next year. It's not like this record is a radio record, like, "Oh, you'd better catch the wave," or something. It's one of those records that you just go out and play, and I think it will sell for many years. To guitar collectors and stuff...

**AAJ:** I played it for a couple of my metal-guitar-head friends and their jaws hit their laps.

**SL:** Really? Wow, that's awesome! I've got to tell you something, the reaction is... obviously you hope for a really good reaction, but this has kind of gone beyond that. I'm not used to it. When I was in Toto we would get creamed by the press. They either loved us or hated us so vehemently it was unbelievable. But, out of the box, this is something that's so real and so natural, and to get the reaction we're getting is really a kick in my ass. I'm like, "Wow, people like this!" We got this great review

from some guy, I won't say who it was, who said, "I hate Toto, I hate Fourplay, but I love this record." And I just cracked up. I said, "Well, man, you got some new ears off of this."

**AAJ:** He's now grown as a person.

**SL:** (Laughs) Yeah! It's the old adage: if you hang around long enough, people will have to learn how to accept you.

**AAJ:** Now, about a decade ago, Toto ended up like a lot of acts, with a bigger audience in Japan than you had in America.

**SL:** Well, actually, around the world it's been like that. The last time we went out was a couple of years ago, we did Europe and Japan, playing to 17,000 people a night. In America you can't give the shit away. But that's sort of come to an end. It was fun; we were high school buddies, you know? It's not like we said we were breaking up and I'll never play with them again. But it's not something we're planning on doing any time soon.

I'm really interested in doing other things musically. I don't want to be playing "Rosanna" for the rest of my life, like some big fat guy in a lounge in Vegas. I mean, I have so much more to say musically. I'm still learning,

I'm still studying. I'm playing with Larry, I'm scoring a new NBC TV show, so there's a lot of new challenges for me, as opposed to being that guy that used to be in that band.

**AAJ:** So we can pretty much conclude it will be a while before we get a follow-up to Mindfields (Toto's 1999 album)?

**SL:** Yeah, I wouldn't look for that anytime soon. But hey, we had a great run. I'm not dissing the band at all. I'm really much more about learning and getting into some other areas.

**AAJ:** Are you going to do any more vocals anytime soon?

**SL:** Oh, yeah, man, I love to sing! I'm going to do a solo album probably toward the end of this year or beginning of the next year. So that's still in there. I still like a good song. I write songs for other people. That's the gift that keeps on giving. That's all that horizontal money, where you walk out to the mailbox and say, "Well, will you look what came in the mail?" It's wonderful.

**AAJ:** How much can you share about the TV project?

**SL:** It's called "The First Years", and it's an

NBC show on Monday nights at 9:00, starting in mid-March. I'm working with my friend John Pierce, the bass player. And that's a really neat thing. It's an hour-long comedy-drama. I'm really excited about that; we're actually starting tomorrow. So that's a whole new line, you know?

I feel like the second half of my life is just starting. I had a great time being a rock-n-roller. I experimented with all the excesses and lived through that and had a laugh. Now I'm grooving on where I am in life. I wouldn't want to be twenty years old again.

**AAJ:** Well, it has been a long time since "Hold The Line" and "Kid Charlemagne"...

**SL:** I know, it seems like another lifetime ago. Who was that guy?! I don't even look the same. Like I said, it was a great time. Also, I was doing all those sessions at the time, when the session scene was really happening. It doesn't really even exist anymore. A lot of the guys out there are really hurting. Everybody's making records at their house, and they don't want to pay the money. Rhythm sections don't play together. I think I was in the last wave, where I'd play with Steve Gadd one day and

then I'd be playing with Jeff Porcaro, and with all these great musicians. Other guitar players! Now you never see two guitar players on a session. It's unheard of.

Larry kind of created that era; that was what we all wanted to be. He was a solo artist by the time I started doing sessions. He used to invite me over to play poker with the guys and hang out. I was so green I had Spanish moss growing behind my ears. But they were so kind to me and they didn't have to be. I wasn't trying to get a job or anything. I just wanted to hang around greatness, hoping it might rub off.

**It only took 25 years to have Larry ask me to play with him. I had to do some shedding!**

**AAJ:** (Laughs) And some would say it worked!

**SL:** Yeah, it only took 25 years to have Larry ask me to play with him. I had to do some shedding!

**AAJ:** Better late than never.

**SL:** Like anything else, it's worth the wait.

**LC:** Yeah, it was fun. And it will be fun again this year, too.

**AAJ:** I was pleasantly surprised at the selection of material you came up with for these live sets.

**SL:** You know, that was mostly out of Larry's bag. I don't have any songs on that record. That was out of convenience. I was familiar with the Larry Carlton songs that are on the record; we didn't have to rehearse those.

**LC:** Luke had 3 or 4 tunes that he's played with Bissonette before which he really enjoyed playing, "The Pump" being one of them. I'd never heard it before. We also did "Red House" while we were there, and Luke sang it. And I brought a couple of Crusader tunes, "Put It Where You Want It". It was just things we knew each other would enjoy playing on.

**SL:** The Miles tune ("All Blues") was kind of a throwback to the old days at the Baked Potato and Donte's, in the 70s. That's the kind of song I always wanted to play with Larry. And it's also a great jam. You can go anywhere with it.

**AAJ:** I loved the way you started with a

funky intro and very casually slinked your way into the song before anyone knew what was happening.

**LC:** In the 70s we used to play that at the Baked Potato, myself and Jeff Porcaro and Greg Mathiesen. That was a feel that Jeff enjoyed playing to that tune, instead of just playing it in a jazz 3/4. Luke had heard that for many years, and when he started playing there he always did it that way, also.

**SL:** It's a very different arrangement than what Miles had. Even a different time signature. And I'm a big Jeff Beck fan, so I brought in that other thing.

**AAJ:** I'm not sure that "The Pump" is one of Jeff's best-known tunes, but it's a great one for trading lines.

**SL:** And once again, it was hard to pick a take because there were so many different readings of it. Sometimes Larry would be full and intense and I'd play soft, or vice versa. That's why we made a point of mentioning on the record that I'm on the right side and Larry's on the left. It's not because anybody would confuse our styles. It's because of the conversation. Anybody who doesn't play guitar

might go, “Okay, who’s playing what?” You can hear the interplay this way. And I really think you can hear the fun. Everyone was having such a good time. The audience is so much a part of the band. There were five or six hundred people per set, just jammed into the club. Japanese audiences are so appreciative of the musicians. Nobody stood up and said “Rock and roll!” like some drunk in an American audience.

**AAJ:** Larry, “Room 335” has always sounded to me like a Steely Dan song. Was that intentional, or was it just something floating around in your head?

**LC:** No, it was intentional. I had already recorded the tune “Peg” with Steely Dan. So those chord changes were familiar to me at the time, and I wrote a tune based off of those first three chords.

**AAJ:** I’m wondering if people are going to look at the disc, see a bunch of 14-minute tracks and think, “What in God’s name is this?”

**LC:** (Laughs) Yeah, I can’t think of anybody I’d want to listen to for 14 minutes!

**AAJ:** One of the things that almost killed instrumental guitar music a decade ago was

that it seemed to become all about volume and notes per second, with very little tastefulness.

**SL:** Well, yeah, it definitely got a little pyrotechnical. Technique has always been fun; look at Django Reinhardt. He was the full shredder guy of his time. But he was playing, and he played the real thing. That whole thing started out great. I mean, you can’t blame Eddie Van Halen for coming up with a new technique.

**Look at Allan Holdsworth. His musical facility on the instrument is just so far advanced it’s like it’s alien.**

But some people will get hold of a trick and just grind it into the ground. And look at somebody like Allan Holdsworth, who’s just absolutely brilliant. His musical facility on the instrument is just so far advanced it’s like it’s alien. There are guys out there who play fast but still play. Look at Satriani and Vai. It’s not their fault that people took what they were doing because of their amazing facility... but they both still play music. It’s very intense

music; they’re both very good stylists.

There’s a little shredder in every guitar player. But there’s a point where it’s like, “Does anybody ever play soft?” That’s the thing about Larry. What’s so great about Carlton is that he brings it down. And when you bring it down like that, especially after someone’s been playing loud, it’s so welcome. And he can build this wonderful musical solo. Like I said, every night was a lesson.

**AAJ:** Right. After the chops-fest is over with, it comes down to playing one note and putting so much into it.

**SL:** And if you could see the look on his face! The only thing missing on the disc is that you can’t see the looks on our faces. We were just having a blast. He’d look at me, just kind of wink at me and play one note, and the audience would crack up and go, “Yeah, Carlton rocks!”

**LC:** In my mind it’s always the song that comes first. Song, song, song.

**AAJ:** Larry, I especially like the way that you work with a relatively simple theme, like “High Steppin’”, which is such a basic thing but it works so beautifully. In the hands of

somebody who didn't quite feel the music like that, it might just turn into a noodling little thing. What's your philosophy when you sit down to try and write something?

**LC:** It's a little difficult to describe. Like most people who compose, I think, I write what I like. And I'm a melodic player, obviously. When I was a kid I responded mostly to melodic players, so as an adult, mature musician, the things that I play are melodic. So really, when I sit down to write a tune, it's got to have some kind of melody and chord to it that tickles my heart, or I won't finish that song. I'll move on to something else.

**AAJ:** It's been twelve years since the shooting in L.A., before you fled to the greener pastures of Nashville. Obviously you sound like you're in top form and have been for a long while.

**LC:** Oh, yeah. There's basically no residual effect for that. Especially anything that has to do with making music. So that's cool.

**AAJ:** Is there anything else you want people to know about the new album?

**SL:** We were completely naked when we played it.

**AAJ:** Uh, that's a little too much information, Steve...

**LC:** I think you know how we feel about it, so probably enough said by me... I think the main thing is you responded to the joy. You can tell that that's two guys who are really having a good time, but they happen to be playing their butts off, too. So there's an honesty to this record that I personally enjoy.

**SL:** We just hope that people enjoy the record as much as we enjoyed making it. And I have a feeling that Larry and I... there's a studio album down the line for us. New original material that we would write together. I don't know exactly when that would be because both of us are in, like, nine different projects at the same time.

**AAJ:** Well, try not to make it another 25 years, okay?

**SL:** No, no, no! Within just the next couple of years I'd love to sit down and do a studio album with Larry. That would kind of take this to the next level, you know? In the meantime, this album is coming out and we've been really knocked out by the reaction to it. And we're really proud to be part of Steve Vai's company.

**LC:** You know, my manager was talking to Vai a couple of days ago, and Steve said, "Now, are the guys thinking about material for Volume 2?" I think there's high expectations for this particular CD and tour. And as long as the joy stays there, there's no reason that we shouldn't do it again some time. 🎸



Since 1995, Blue Note has been pleasing hardcore fans with a special reissue series that sports a very simple premise: we'll print up some of the catalog's most obscure titles as long as you buy them up quickly, because they'll only be around for a limited time. As a result, we've seen a great degree of variety within the catalog, from the early recordings of German pianist Jutta Hipp to the post hard bop implications of Pete LaRoca's *Basra*. This latest series of Connoisseur titles is no exception as far as diversity goes, although in two cases we get material that has been highly sought after for years (more on that later), making this one of the more exhilarating reissue batches in recent memory.

### ***First Session***

Grant Green

Along with Horace Silver, guitarist Grant Green might have been one of the most recorded artists at Blue Note, staying with the label well into the early '70s. Never before heard, *First Session* was cut in November of 1960, some two months before the first Green Blue Note album to actually get

released, *Grant's First Stand*. What a surprise to find these five performances considering that Michel Ruppli's *The Blue Note Label: A Discography* lists them as rejected (equally inexplicable is the fact that the same book also lists takes of "Jordu" and "A Night in Tunisia" that are not to be found on this disc).

For his maiden voyage, Green couldn't have asked for a better rhythm team than Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones.

The foursome mesh beautifully and even with a few ragged moments here and there, nothing of any note would have embarrassed anyone had this record been released way back when. Green's "Seepin'" is especially tasty, a slow blues number that finds Kelly in his best Red Garland mood. On the premier of "Grant's First Stand," Kelly drops out at one point, allowing Green to "worry a phrase" in a way that builds intensity and marks him as an individualistic soloist. Thrown in for good measure, we also get the two existing takes from a October 1961 date with Sonny Clark, Butch Warren, and Billy Higgins, cut just a bit over a year before that foursome would enter the Van Gelder studios again for the sublime

*Feelin' the Spirit*.

### ***Lift Every Voice***

Andrew Hill

Another significant Blue Note artist, pianist Andrew Hill's early milestones for the label have been available for some time, with even some of his stray sessions finally collected a few years back on a Mosaic boxed set. It's taken time for the pianist's later albums to see reissue and that may be because there are contrasting opinions on the merits of these idiosyncratic sides. It has been the considered opinion of this reviewer that *Lift Every Voice* is a pure jewel and the seamless manner that Hill used in integrating a choir and jazz quintet set new standards that surpassed even the stimulating methods of Donald Byrd's *A New Perspective*. Aside from the outstanding writing, with some tracks including wordless vocals and others including text, trumpeter Woody Shaw contributes a number of his finest recorded solos of the period. With a glistening tone and a resourceful imagination, Shaw's work here is worth the price of admission. So too are the incendiary contributions of tenor

saxophonist Carlos Garnett.

Adding to an already precious reissue, an extra six cuts come from two 1970 sessions that also utilize the "plus vocals" approach. Lee Morgan and Bennie Maupin form the front line, with Ron Carter and Ben Riley as part of the rhythm section and Lawrence Marshall again conducting the choir. There's so much to be keen on here that it's simply baffling as to why this music was never released. Among many highlights, a sprightly "Mother Mercy" benefits from Riley's crackling drums and Maupin's chirping flute work. Morgan is positively effusive on "Such It Is" and Hill is dynamic and less brooding than usual throughout. Fantastic!

### ***Straight No Filter***

Hank Mobley

The several and varied sessions that made up the Hank Mobley albums *No Room For Squares*, *The Turnaround* and *Straight No Filter* were first sorted out upon their initial release on CD. Then, the first two titles appeared recently in original scattered form as RVG reissues, followed closely by this new

incarnation of *Straight No Filter*. The whole thing is clearly a mess now, however, if you don't own the old CD versions of any of these three, then it looks like this is as good as it's going to get. No less than four different groups are heard here with sessions spanning from 1963 to 1966. All of the music is classic, despite the disjointed nature of this compilation.

### ***The Complete Blue Note Sessions***

Don Wilkerson

For the first time in the United States, one of Blue Note's more obscure artists gets his dues via a two-disc set collecting all three of his albums as a leader. Saxophonist Don Wilkerson may have been born in Louisiana, but he was raised in Houston and always considered himself as part of the lineage of soulful Texas horn blowers. Aside from his sideman work with Ray Charles and the exceedingly rare Riverside set, *The Texas Twister* (currently available for a short time as a Japanese import), Wilkerson's trio of Blue Notes form the cornerstone of his pedigree as a jazz artist.

Both *Preach, Brother!* and *Elder Don* find Wilkerson's boisterous tenor in front of a quartet including guitarist Grant Green. Call it "soul jazz" or "down home" or whatever you like, this stuff just wails. Especially choice are "Dem Tambourines" (with, of course, tambourine in hand and some vocal wallops from Wilkerson to get us started), "The Eldorado Shuffle," "Camp Meetin'," and "Pigeon Peas." Oddly enough, *Shoutin'* doesn't prove to be as rowdy as its title might imply. Still, Grant Green is on hand again and organist Big John Patton gives things a new twist. Sadly ignored for too long, this set demands to be heard.

### ***The Complete Blue Note Sessions***

George Braith

As with the Wilkerson collection, the three albums included on this two-disc set bring to light some great music that just screams for our renewed interest. Grant Green fans take note; the guitarist is all over this set too! As for Braith, who is still active in New York, his major claim to fame is an ability to play more than one horn at a time. Despite the

unfair comparisons at the time to Roland Kirk, a closer listen would reveal that Braith was clearly his own man. What he does with "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on the *Two Souls In One* LP is unlike anything heard before and his great sense of humor is evident throughout.

With the exception of rotating drummers on each album, the core group of Green and organist Billy Gardner remains in place for the subsequent albums, *Soul Stream* and *Extension*. The latter set may be the standout of the three, due in no small way to Braith's choice to utilize mainly his tenor saxophone and get down to business on a set of originals. Finally, while there are no previously unreleased titles on either this or the Wilkerson sets, it should be noted that both of them feature full color reproductions of all the original album covers inside the booklets.

### ***Structurally Sound***

Booker Ervin

While it's not technically a Blue Note date, Booker Ervin's 1966 Pacific Jazz album, *Structurally Sound*, sure sounds like one. Of course, it would just be a few short years

anyway until Ervin would cut *The In-Between* for Blue Note. Aside from bassist Red Mitchell, all of the cast members here were of the cutting edge variety, including pianist John Hicks, trumpeter Charles Tolliver, and drummer Lennie McBrowne. Taking that into account, it's odd that the program consists mainly of standards and only one original apiece from Ervin and Tolliver. Nonetheless, everything's poppin' and Ervin is his usual incendiary self, featured to great effect on "Dancing In the Dark." Tolliver too speaks eloquently and without hesitation. Two additional performances and another pair of alternates complete this overlooked pleasure. 🎧

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# JAZZ CLASSICS

LABEL M'S JOEL DORN BY CHRIS M. SLAWECKI

Ah, the classics. In every art form — painting, literature, architecture, dance, music — there are works which possess timeless beauty, works with themes that resonate emotionally across decades, through centuries, and are masterfully presented.

Joel Dorn's name is indelibly written in the book of jazz classics, though he's never written, hummed, strummed, blown, or otherwise struck a single musical note. He produced albums, in the 1960s and '70s, for a stable of Atlantic Records artists of enormous breadth and depth, including Max Roach, Keith Jarrett, Gary Burton, Les McCann and Eddie Harris (individually and together on the transcendent soul-jazz clarion call *Swiss Movement*), Mongo Santamaria and many others, claiming the Grammy Award for Jazz Album of the Year with *Gary Burton and Keith Jarrett* (1971).

Several years ago, Dorn formed 32 Jazz, a label dedicated to resurrecting and reconstructing gems from the catalogs of the Muse and Landmark jazz labels. Dorn's current project, Label M, reissues classics from that storied Atlantic catalog that Dorn helped

create; among the label's most recent releases are sets from the Modern Jazz Quartet and multi-instrumentalists Yusef Lateef and Rahsaan Roland Kirk.

*Here Comes The Whistlerman* (1967) was the first of Dorn's many collaborations with the mercurial saxophonist Kirk. It features the multi-talented Kirk blowing his nose flute (honest!) on the title track, digging heartily into gutbucket tenor on the opening "Roots," flying through the traditional flute on Jerome Kern's "Yesterdays," and scorching the earth with his alto on the set-ending "Step Right Up."

*The Blue Yusef Lateef* (1968) offers Lateef's unique perspective on how to cloak the globe in blue from the opening "Juba Juba," based on an African slave song, through "Moon Cup," a Tagalog chant based on an indigenous Philippine dialect, and the honky-tonk stomps "Othella" and "Six Miles Next Door," the latter nestled in soft, cushiony blue chords from guitarist Kenny Burrell.

Recorded in Stockholm and released in 1960, *The Modern Jazz Quartet: European Concert* is considered the penultimate album by

this Percy Heath (bass), Connie Kay (drums), Milt "Bags" Jackson (vibes), and John Lewis (piano) collective. With definitive versions of "The Cylinder" and "Bags' Groove," it crystallizes their "third stream" synthesis of classical formalism and jazz improvisation and spirit; in a famous essay for *The New Yorker* magazine, Whitney Balliet described the effect of the MJQ as "...tintinnabulous. It shimmers, it sings, it hums. It is airy and clean. Like any great mechanism, its parts are as notable as their sum."

AAJ is pleased to present an interview with one of the true jazz legends, Joel Dorn.

**CMS:** How did Label M come about and what is the difference between Label M and what you were trying to accomplish with 32 Jazz?

**JD:** We were at 32, me and the guys. Now, everybody thought that was **my** label. I was a partner: There was an attorney, there was a Wall Street firm, and there was a bank. I was one member on a five man board. At the height of the internet craze, my partners decide that they want to go into the internet business. They borrowed a lot of money and, to finance their new venture, wanted 32 to pay it

back. In other words, it was purely a business decision. Now, I don't give a fuck about the internet. So the day that that went through, I just quit. I'm a record guy, I'm not a business guy per se. I go into business because I have to in order to do what I want in terms of records.

**CMS:** Will 32 Jazz continue?

**JD:** The label was foreclosed on two months ago. It's been in foreclosure.

**CMS:** You've got to be like a proud father getting back for Label M some of your own original Atlantic titles.

**JD:** I was fortunate when I worked at Atlantic in that I could pretty much sign anybody I wanted, and artistically or creatively nobody was telling me what to do. So I could sign the guys I wanted and we could make the albums we wanted to make. So that led to Yusef, Rahsaan, Fathead, Hank, Les, Eddie... Jimmy Scott, Ray Bryant, Mose Allison, all those guys that I wanted to record. There was no interference when I worked for Neshui (Ertegun). It was hard getting the gig, but once I got it, he said, "Look, you're a nice kid. I like you a lot. But you'll live or die

here based on the results of your work.” So basically, he gave me enough rope. And I’ve always used that same philosophy. What we do is, we hire people that we think can do the job, then we let them do it.

In order for the label to be successful, we have to have kind of like a “Boston Celtics” theme.

I’m really fortunate. I have an incredible team of people. In order for the label to be successful, we have to have kind of like a “Boston Celtics” kind of theme. You know, I’m a big Red Auerbach fan, and when he had those teams you always had like a Bill Russell or a Dave Cowens, somebody in the middle...you had the same team all the time, just with different people but the team played the same way all the time.

In the beginning, when we started 32, we tried a few things and some of them worked and some of them didn’t. But at a certain point about a year into it we put the team together. And you have no idea what kind of

freedom it gives me. It makes me not have to be “the boss,” which I’m not good at anyway. It lets me go and do what I want to do, and I never worry. Everybody does their job. There’s only six of us.

**CMS:** What’s the greatest professional basketball team you ever saw?

**JD:** Well, everybody says the ‘67 76ers, but...I can’t tell you what the best single team was. I think there was a *series* of best teams. I enjoyed, maybe because I was a kid, when the Warriors had a team with Neal Johnston and Paul Arazin, that was a good team. I would say the Celtics overall, as the best basketball franchise. And then you had the Sixers at a certain point, and you had the Lakers at a certain point, and then the Chicago teams with Michael were brilliant because of how the team was built around him. The ten years with Russell...

**CMS:** As much as I hate to admit it, that ‘86 Celtics team was the best team I ever saw. With Walton coming off of the bench...

**JD:** I can’t stand Bill Walton. He was a great player. He’s just a schmuck to me. As an announcer, more than half of what he says just

isn’t right. He just SAYS shit. At the beginning of the game, you know how they go, “Well, Bill, what should we look for?” and he’ll go, “Well, on defense...” Whatever he says ain’t it! He was a good player, but also...I just wasn’t caught up in his “earth-dirt-peace” bullshit. And that Deadhead view. Just play the fucking game, man. Play basketball, and when you’re done, go do something else.

Wanna know one of my favorite college teams of all time? The 1957 Temple team.

**CMS:** Harry Litwack (*Litwack coached this team*).

**JD:** ‘Cause I went to Temple, number one, so I was a Temple fan. But that team had...you know, that was back when college ball was pretty much the best guys from your area went to the colleges in your own town. That was Hal Lear and Guy Rodgers...

**CMS:** Guy Rodgers just passed.

**JD:** I know, man. When I was a disc jockey in Philly, every few months he’d come up and he’d do like an hour. He loved being a disc jockey — he was great. It was Hal Lear and Guy Rodgers; it was the best little backcourt I ever saw outside of the backcourt that the

Minneapolis Lakers had when George Mikan played, when they had Slater Martin and Whitey Skoog.

**CMS:** Well, I'm in over my head at this point...

**JD:** But Hal Lear and Guy Rodgers were unbelievable. Guy was obviously the most underrated fuckin' point guard ever.

**CMS:** Bill Lyon wrote a pretty insightful memorial column for "The Philadelphia Inquirer."

**JD:** Let me tell you something: He was the transitional point guard between Cousy — who was not a pretty player to watch; he did good stuff, but Guy Rodgers was the prototype for the modern point guard. It was after him that you had all those Earl Monroes and all those people. It was all based on Guy Rodgers. I think Guy Rodgers changed the point guard game.

But Cousy, you know, he did it in that unappealing and unattractive, but effective, white guy way. But Guy Rodgers, he was a forgotten fucking player. One of the greatest players of all time.

Hal Lear never made it to the pros — he

ended up playing in Harrisburg or someplace. But, boy, in college, they were something. It was Hal Lear, Guy Rodgers, Earl Rinefeldt, who went to a Philadelphia school. Tink Van Patten, was the center, he was 6'4" or 6'5" and it was like a big deal in those days! A guy who went to my high school, Yeadon High School, Freddie Cohen, was the forward. So I was really locked to that team. But Rodgers and Lear, man, forget about it. What was your question again?

**CMS:** What is Label M?

**JD:** For a reason that I still really can't figure out, Atlantic Records was the last of the major jazz catalogs to convert their vinyl jazz to CD. They did very little of it, and then not such a good job when they finally did do it in the early '80s. They put out a few Coltranes, a few Minguses — you know, nothing major. They've got maybe got five or six hundred albums in the catalog and they maybe put out twenty.

I went to Rhino in the late 80s and the early 90s and I reintroduced the Atlantic jazz catalog to the digital world; we made twelve or thirteen box sets and another dozen or

so compilations, and maybe reissued forty to fifty titles. But it left hundreds of titles that weren't going to be released. And I have a tremendous emotional attachment to those personally. I have a responsibility to the artist — through no fault of their own, some of their best work was not in the marketplace. And I wanted to play tribute to Neshui, who was one of the great jazz producers, whose work was languishing someplace. Also, I'm not an angel sent from heaven — I also wanted my records out there, personally.

So I put as many of them out as I could while I was at Rhino and the whole thing fell apart again. Then they languished again because Rhino is not basically a jazz oriented label. So we put them out and that was it. But I wasn't able to do any of the marketing and promoting, the kind of stuff we did at 32 and the kind of stuff we do at Label M.

When I started 32, we bought Muse and Landmark, which was the basis for our releases. At a certain point, what we did was request certain titles from Rhino, which administers the Atlantic catalog. They were kind enough to give us some. And we did

very well with them, much better than they thought. So the door opened. Then, when we got lucky with our compilations — that “Jazz For” series — they allowed us to compile, so we did “Jazz For” the different seasons, all that stuff. At one time, we had about 25 or 30 of the Rahsaan-Yusef-Fathead-Hank-Les-Eddie-Mose titles. We did boxes, we did three albums on two CDs, four albums, we did those packages. And Rhino found a new profit center.

So I split from 32 and then I took the guys a few months later and started Label M. One of the first relationships we got going was with Atlantic. There’s a lot of that stuff that just should be out. For instance, The MJQ was an important act and not just for Atlantic, but so many people came to jazz in the fifties because of the Modern Jazz Quartet. And the stuff was not available. They wouldn’t license it to me when I was at 32, and they weren’t putting it out themselves. It was nuts! One day I get a fax, there were fourteen MJQs available and I grabbed three of them, the three that I thought I could put into the release schedule and then actually market and sell. I also got *Collaboration with Almeida*

with Laurindo Almedia, and I got *Live at the Lighthouse*, so they’ll be coming out in the next six, eight months or so. And there were Minguses that, you know, got put out and disappeared, or hadn’t been put out, so I got *Oh Yeah*. And then finally one of the albums which was a real pleasure to be associated with the making of, the Jimmy Scott album *The Source*. There was a Hubert Laws album that was a favorite of his that I wanted to hit the street, the *Wildflower* album. There was Les and Eddie’s second album, *Second Movement*. There was a Fathead album with Blue Mitchell that I liked. What else was there? The best selling album we have right now is our flute compilation, *Heavy Flute*. And a bunch of others that just don’t belong in the unreleased bin.

**CMS:** What’s the “M” stand for in Label M?

**JD:** You know I like to have interesting names for my labels. 32 was based on my favorite sports number: Sandy Koufax, Jim Brown, all those great guys who wore 32 without discussing it amongst themselves. I was always fascinated by that number. Label M is an anagram based on the first and last

initials of my three favorite Jews: Lenny Bruce, Albert Einstein, Meyer Lansky.

**CMS:** While you’re in a sharing mood, where did “Produced by Joel Dorn for the Masked Announcer” come from?

**JD:** While I was in Philly, I was a disc jockey on an all jazz station, WHAT in Conshohocken. When I left the radio station and went to Atlantic, it was kind of the same time that the Philadelphia UHF television stations started, and they were hiring all the disc jockeys to do their commercials on the air. So every disc jockey was picking up a coupla hundred here, a coupla hundred there, you know: “Hi, this is Joe Niagra for Sheehy Ford...” You know, that kinda shit?

I had a buddy who had a clear plastic slipcover business and he sold carpets and all that low-end shit, right? So we were sittin’ around one night getting high and he said, “Look, all these disc jockeys are doing all of the commercials. You’re not on the air anymore — do my commercial.” I said, “Yeah, but I’m working at Atlantic and I don’t want to take away a job from a disc jockey, especially one who might play an Atlantic Record. I’ll do it,

but I'll create a character." He said, "What do you mean?" and I said, "Well, how about if I do it in a mask, and not use my name? Yeah! I'll become 'The Masked Announcer'!" I was selling clear plastic slipcovers and carpeting vacuum cleaners and vegetable choppers and all that shit, right? What we would do is, we would go to the TV station and I would have this beat-up old cheap suit and this cheap hat and an ugly shirt, and I put like a regular ten-cent mask on. And we would get high in the car on the way to the station. And I just babbled: We would make fifty commercials in two hours, and then we would pick the funniest ones, what we thought were the funniest ones. Kids loved them, man. The Masked Announcer — I'm talking about it like it ain't me — but he was a funny motherfucker. We used to have so much fun, and the commercials were great. It fucking sounds terrible when I say it, but we laughed our asses off.

So when I was Atlantic, at a certain point I became an independent producer; while I still worked at the label, I could do outside work. So I had to form a production company.

Now, the corniest thing in the world is, you know, "Produced by Joel Dorn for Joel Dorn Productions." Fuck you, you know? So I decided to call my production company The Masked Announcer for this alter ego. People ALWAYS ask that question!

Most people thought  
Rahsaan was some kind of  
clown or gimmick monster.  
But I knew he was brilliant.

**CMS:** We'd like you to express your own memories and thoughts about these three releases: What they mean to you, why it was so important to you to get them out, and whatever else you like. For the first one, let's do *Here Comes The Whistleman*.

**JD:** Rahsaan was wrapping it up at Limelight, which was Mercury's deluxe jazz label. He and I had become friends while I was on the air in Philly. I thought he had had unbelievable potential; most people thought he was some kind of clown or vaudevillian or gimmick monster or something. But I knew he was brilliant. I was only at the radio station

as a means to an end, to get to New York to produce records. I figured that being a disc jockey would give me a good shot, certainly, at least, starting to make jazz albums. So I started handicapping the different cats by audience response at the station, what I saw them do in the club compared to what their records were like, and one of the first people that I wanted to make records with was Rahsaan. So when I met him in '61 at the Academy of Music, I was overwhelmed by his uniqueness and his power and his talent. We started to become kind of buddies — all musicians have guys in each town that were watching their back, and I was Rahsaan's guy in Philly. But I also had this strong feeling about wanting to produce him and present him differently than he had been presented on his previous labels.

So when his contract with Limelight was up, I was just about done at the radio station; I knew I was heading up to New York, I was just waiting for the call from Atlantic. I absolutely begged him to let make an album with him after his contract was up, and to please come to Atlantic with me and be my first artist. So

he made an album with me — I had maybe five, six albums under my belt at the most — and he made an album with Creed Taylor on Verve. He was kind of testing the waters.

*Whistleman* was the first one. The theory behind it was, do some stuff that's a little more on the commercial side, and let's get the sound that we can get in the studio, but let's invite people in as a studio audience — not an original idea with me, Cannonball had been doing that for years. But let's see what we can get going. So it was like half a live record and half a studio record, even though the whole thing was done in the studio. So I'm on my way up, right? I get off the air at 4:00 pm, and we're doing the session at 7:00pm. I figure I'd start at 4:00pm, I'd drive up to New York, I'd be there at 6:30pm and we'd just go. I had two disc jockeys in New York, Alan Grant and Del Shields, announce that there was a session at Atlantic at 11 West 60th Street, just fall on by.

So hundreds of people showed up. They had to hire security guards. And here I am on the turnpike. I'm about ten minutes out on the wrong side of the Lincoln Tunnel and there was

an accident with a bus, a boat, a plane, a horse...I never saw an accident like that in my life. So here I am, an hour and a half late to the first record I'm gonna make with Rahsaan. I was beside myself. I was nuts. Meanwhile, at that time, Arif Mardin was the studio manager for Atlantic. He was just starting out there, too. He was an acquaintance, not a friend yet, but he covered for me and started the album off. I walked in about the middle of it. I flipped on the mike and said, "Roland, look, I'm sorry, there was an accident on the turnpike." And he said something like, "You should have let me drive" or "I would have driven you" or something, and everybody cracked up! Then we just recorded it.

It's interesting because that album was never available for licensing so I could never get it. It was the first album I made with him so I have a tremendous emotional, sentimental value in it. But it also kind of set the tone for what he and I were going to do together. It was a little unconventional at the time, but it was kind of like a table of contents to the madness that would follow.

**CMS:** It was recorded in 1965 but it wasn't

released until 1967. Do you remember why?

**JD:** Yeah, it was because...I think it had something to do with his contract ending at Limelight and we couldn't put it out until another record...there was one of those reasons but I honestly don't remember. We did hold it back for a while. Then we put it out and it did fairly well; it did well enough for the time, and the major consequence of making that record was that he ended up signing with me rather than Creed. And the reason he signed with me rather than Creed was that he could control me more than he could control Creed! I was a producer with training wheels, you know? Eventually, three or four albums into it I gained his trust, maybe five albums into the relationship. I gained his trust and also I had honed by skills a little bit. I was really running on instinct at the beginning, and am still running on instinct probably to this day. Just by the fact that you do something, you learn more about your craft.

**CMS:** It's convenient that we're discussing Creed Taylor because Taylor produced one of my favorite Yusef Lateef records,

*Autopsiopsychic* for CTI, and I want to ask you next about *The Blue Yusef Lateef*. Was this a concept that he came to you about, or...?

**JD:** No. I'll tell you exactly how it worked. I told you that I was handicapping guys when I was on the radio and hanging in the clubs. And I knew Yusef Lateef was capable of making records that were valid musically, much like Rahsaan, and also had great commercial potential. When I signed him to Atlantic, I had a clear plan in my mind as to how I wanted to work with him. Here's the way it went.

The first record we made on Atlantic was called *The Complete Yusef Lateef*. I requested that he do numbers that were analogous to numbers from a variety of other albums that he had done. For instance, we did "Stay With Me." That was based on the love themes he had done on *Eastern Sounds*, the love theme from "The Robe" and the love theme from "Spartacus." We did "Trouble In Mind" or "In The Evening," which related to the oboe blues he had done on one of the Impulse albums. I wanted an oboe blues, and he had done one with Cannonball so I wanted to have one like that. Then there was a honker that was related

to a Savoy record that he had done, called *Yusef's Mood*. And it was kind of a way of setting up a table of contents to who and what he was and what appealed to most of the people and were unique unto him. Also it was a way of introducing him so that we could then do a variety of records that would hone in on various things. So for instance, if we did a blues on the first one that was related to a successful blues he had done on an earlier record that I got a great response to at the radio station, then maybe we'd go do a blues album sometime. Each of the records we made was based on a concept of mine that, when he accepted it, he went and came back with the music. So the first album was *The Complete Yusef Lateef* based on the thought that I just gave you.

The second one was, hey, let's do a whole bunch of different blues. Now Yusef obviously has a big front yard — it's the whole world. So it wasn't just to do six or eight twelve-bar blues. You go from "Mooncup," which is a blues he made up based on the Tagalog music of the Philippines, to "Juba Juba," which was based upon a slave song. So that was an

overview of the blues in a Lateef-ian kind of way, with that broad-stroke world view that he has.

That concept continued through *Yusef Lateef's Detroit*, in which I asked him to please do a reminiscence of Detroit but with his

**Jazz to him is a word for fornication, and he'll tell you that this music is not about fornication.**

rhythm section and a funk rhythm section. If we could combine the two rhythm sections, we could come up with something unique. I'm really pleased with *Yusef Lateef's Detroit*. I thought that was a watershed album in a lot of ways. And then we did *Sweet Sixteen*, which was based on layer after layer of overdubs which utilized the possibilities of the sixteen-track machine. And then we did *The Diverse Yusef Lateef* in which I said, "I want to do four numbers, only four numbers that have absolutely nothing to do with each other."

You gotta know how to talk to him. He's a beautiful guy, but he is the most **literal** guy

you'll ever meet. And he has very firm opinions about the way he feels. "Jazz" to him is a word for "fornication," and he'll tell you that this music is not about fornication. He was a Muslim way before it was popular for African-Americans to become Muslim, and he's a very devout, religious, for real Muslim. He's made the trip to Mecca many times, he's walked those last miles on that hot sand. He's an amazing person. Yusef is 81 and if he wanted to, he could still pick up that tenor and blow anybody living off the stage. And you can go to the bank with that one, jack.

I had forgotten about *The Blue Yusef Lateef*. When I did *The Man With The Big Front Yard*, either I missed it or I wasn't in a head for it that night. So John Kruth, who wrote the Rahsaan biography, was in the office one day and brought in a copy of *The Blue Yusef Lateef* and I just didn't remember anything on it except for the oboe blues. He said, "You're missing the boat, man, this is maybe the best record he did on Atlantic." I said, "I made a lot of records when I was there, I don't remember them all." Plus you remember shit that...when you're watching the movie from

behind the screen, it's not the same as sitting in the audience. What you relate to and what you remember and what sticks with you and what doesn't, a lotta shit like that affects your memory. They played me a thing like "Like It Is," which I love, and I didn't even remember making that! All of a sudden it was up for licensing and I grabbed it. It's one of those one that should be out there. I really think it's a good record.

**CMS:** A lot of people would say that Lateef and Kirk did a lot of their best work on the periphery of jazz, but both these sets place them squarely in a the honky-tonkin' sax tradition.

**JD:** Let me tell you something about the way people relate to them. One of the things that is idiotic to me about jazz albums is this thing that you have to make a "jazz album." Why do you have to confine yourself to a blues, a ballad, a bop tune, an "out" tune, and a bossa nova, in a trio, quartet, or quintet context, playing solely in the bop / post-bop, Coltrane tradition? A lot of these guys can do a lot more. Plus, what am I gonna do — make the same record with people ten times? These

guys got bigger heads, bigger ears than that! Yusef and Rahsaan, you could put them head to head with anybody, and nobody was going home with their head bowed. Those guys could play. They were out of the tradition.

I wanted to make more interesting records. Plus, if you wanted the regular stuff, and I'm not saying that in any condescending way, but if you wanted traditional jazz records of the fifties, sixties, and seventies, look at all the places you could go — Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside. You know what I mean? There were all these great places. And from time to time, we made regular jazz records. But I wasn't making "jazz records" — I was **making records**, with guys who happened to play saxophones and came out of what you would call jazz.

Even with more traditional players like Fathead and Hank, we always tried to do something different. We made records with Les and with Eddie that were fabulous — and when I speak about things that made the record, I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about the fact that there were these people with these ideas and concepts and the ability

to execute those things that goes way behind what you might call kind of jazz stuff. There's nothing wrong with the regular kind of jazz stuff. But not everybody has to be confined to what somebody else determines that they should be confined to.

**CMS:** On the other hand, "tradition" is a word that comes up a lot when you're talking about The Modern Jazz Quartet.

**JD:** The Modern Jazz Quartet is John Lewis' baby. He did something deceptively simple: He put jazz into a formal context, a shape, a form, not unlike classical music — because it IS a classical music and John formalized it, but they swung inside the formalization. And as a consequence, there were people who wouldn't buy a Milt Jackson record or a John Lewis record, but they bought MJQ records because the second they came on and you could hear them, and they drew on all kind of influences, but at the bottom here comes "Bags."

John Lewis and Neshui were really close friends, and Neshui is the one who really took the MJQ from their early days on Prestige and did the right thing by them and gave John all of that room to do everything that he wanted

to do. So I never produced an MJQ record, those were Neshui's guys.

**CMS:** What do they sound like to you?

**JD:** They sound like a quartet, but there's a formal aspect to it that no other combination of those same instruments ever had. It's the combination of the guys — it's John conceptually, with that magic sound that "Bags" had, with Connie and Percy combining kind of a rhythmic thing...it's hard to explain. The only word I can come up with is there's a formality to it. That's what separates them from the rest of the pack.

The thing about *European Concert*: If you're talking to real MJQ freaks, a lot of them will tell you, and I happen to agree with them because this is a record that I used to play on the air and get a great response to, that there is no such thing as a best MJQ record. There are a variety of records that highlight the different aspects of the Modern Jazz Quartet. But for me, this one comes as close as you can to capturing what it was that made them unique, but in a live context so you also have the performance sense as well as the sense of construction and formality of the studio. The

MJQ's records under John's direction were very, very carefully crafted.

I was talking to John a few months ago and I told him that I finally got some of his records and I was putting them out, and he was really happy. As big as the MJQ were, and as important as they were in their own way to the development of jazz on record and in bringing people to jazz who wouldn't ordinarily be jazz fans, they're not represented and their catalog is not out there the way that it should be. So when I called John and told him, he was happy. The Quartet doesn't exist any more, but he was happy, and he said, "I hope people understand how much love and hard work and care went into making these." I told him that if I had anything to do with it, they will! 🎧

# NO DETOUR AHEAD

DENA DEROSE BY MATHEW BAHL

A pianist by instinct, a jazz musician by choice and a singer by accident, Dena DeRose has emerged as one of the most captivating and distinctive new voices in mainstream jazz. Anyone who has not heard her music should not be misled by her status as a singer/pianist specializing in the Great American Songbook. DeRose is neither a Shirley Horn clone nor a Diana Krall wannabe. Although she admires a wide range of singers, including Horn (“definitely on the top of my list of favorite musicians”), she has created her own unique and fresh approach to singing and playing jazz.

DeRose’s work is smart, swinging, honest and unpretentious. Unlike so many other jazz vocalists, she holds the ideals of musical invention and lyrical expression in almost perfect balance. “I feel lucky to have words and stories to tell along with music,” she explains. “I try to shape the stories in a deeper way with colors of sound.” DeRose believes that her dual role as a singer and a pianist allows her a greater range of musical expression. “A lot of people through the years have said I should sing more and play less, but

I try to keep a good balance.”

Both DeRose’s singing and playing are the products of a disciplined musical mind. She has a light touch on the keyboard, and her solos are crisp, confident and imaginative. Her voice has a bright timbre with a slight, superbly controlled vibrato and a range of about two octaves. She makes canny use of time and tempo in shaping her performances and displays an absolute command of the beat.

DeRose has developed an unmannered approach to phrasing that treats lyrics like conversation set to music. Even at the fastest tempo, she never loses sight of the meaning of the words. Eschewing melodrama, she invests lyrics with the clear-eyed wisdom of somebody who has lived the emotions of the song and has survived to tell the tale. Her ballads tend to be more compassionate than confessional and more heartfelt than tragic. “I just try to bring my perspective, what I’ve learned in my life so far,” she explains. “When I sing, I am completely in the story and telling it to the audience almost as if for the first time.”

The frequency with which she achieves that illusion is astonishing given the familiarity of

her repertoire, which consists largely, though not exclusively, of standards. DeRose’s records serve as a wonderful riposte to those critics who say that the Great American Songbook has been played out. “If it’s a good tune and you can relate to the story, then [the song] can change and evolve into something else. It’s really about individual expression, and,” she points out, “that’s the freedom of jazz.”

DeRose approaches the standard repertoire from a contemporary perspective. Consequently, she will, on occasion, alter a lyric, either by changing a word or shifting a pronoun, in order to reconcile the song with a more modern sensibility. “A few years ago,” she explains, “Tony Bennett said in an interview that he can’t sing a tune if he can’t relate to the lyrics. I took that on as my motto. I don’t do tunes that I can’t completely relate to. There are a lot of tunes that have beautiful melodies and beautiful chord changes, but the English language changes over time. If a lyric uses words like ‘fancy’ that I would never say, then I can’t sing it. Many standards are timeless, but there are some that are definitely period pieces.”

The ability to balance musical innovation with lyric expression finds its greatest expression in DeRose’s arranging. An inventive small group arranger, she combines an instrumentalist’s expansive understanding of a tune’s rhythmic and harmonic possibilities with an interpretive singer’s precise focus on the meaning of a song. DeRose starts an arrangement by writing out the words to the song away from the music. “I read them over and over to see how I relate to the tune,” she explains. She then fashions a musical setting that matches her understanding of the lyric. As a result, her arrangements lack the kind of stylistic crutches that make every song on a record sound exactly alike. DeRose makes excellent use of the instrumentalists and gives them a great deal of room to stretch out.

The strong instrumental presence on DeRose’s recordings evidences her own background as a musician. In many ways, DeRose still thinks of herself primarily as a pianist, which is hardly surprising given that she has been playing piano for almost her entire life. Literally.

The Binghamton, New York native

discovered music at the ripe old age of 21/2 when her uncle gave her a toy chord organ. "I would come home from church and I just remember going right to [the organ] and playing. My mom could hear that it was the melodies from church that I was playing. Just sort of picking them out with one finger on the keyboard." She started piano lessons at age 31/2, she was reading music before she started kindergarten, and by the age of 6 she could play "easy Mozart." Dena's passion for music was entirely self-motivated. "There was always a piano in the house, and I can remember always wanting to play. My mom never really had to tell me to practice. I just instinctively came in the house and went right for the piano."

Between the ages of 7 and 8, Dena began playing classical organ in addition to piano. At age 10, she added percussion to her repertoire. She continued to play marimbas, timpani and snare drums until college. DeRose notes that, "all that percussion in my younger years has had a profound effect on my sense of rhythm. When I do arrangements, I hear drums."

She got her first taste of jazz in the

8th grade when she joined the junior high stage band, which played charts from Swing Era big bands. "I was floored. These kids were already playing jazz and taking solos." DeRose's bandmates included two future jazz musicians — trumpeter Tony Kadleck and trombonist Steve Davis. "They picked me to play piano because I could read the charts. I didn't know what the hell I was doing, but at least I could clunk down the chord."

As she began to explore jazz with a private teacher, DeRose ran up against the shortcomings of her classical training. "It was so hard for me to not think of reading notes. I could read anything, but when I had to go in my head and think dominant or major, I just could not get it. I would leave lessons in tears and my teacher just didn't know what to do. He just threw his hands up."

DeRose put her interest in jazz aside. She went to college to study classical piano, but after three years she left to tour with a pop band. That experience eventually led her back to jazz. "One night," DeRose recalls, "someone came up and said, 'You know, you guys don't play these tunes like the record.' I said, 'That's

it!' I gave my notice and two weeks later I was home [in Binghamton]." Determined to master the idiom, DeRose called her old jazz piano teacher. "I said, 'I'm going to get this, damn it, because I love the music.'"

DeRose immersed herself in jazz. She listened to Red Garland, Billie Holiday, Erroll Garner, Art Tatum and Ahmad Jamal. However, she cites the early Miles Davis recordings as her biggest influence. "I could sit and listen to that 24 hours a day, and I almost did. It was recorded so well that you could hear all the nuances." She began transcribing solos by pianists Wynton Kelly and Bobby Timmons to better study their technique

DeRose practiced constantly and worked every restaurant and cocktail hour she could book all the while trying to build her craft to the point where she could move to New York City. Around this time she noticed a pain in her right hand. DeRose ignored the warning signs and continued to push herself. The pain worsened until her hand became almost useless. The doctors diagnosed her condition as carpal tunnel syndrome. They operated, but the procedure did nothing to relieve the pain.

At age 22, DeRose found herself faced with the strong likelihood that she would never play the piano again. "I had always thought that [playing piano] was what I was going to do all my life." However, she could not even hold a pencil in her right hand much less play a chord. She watched nearly 19 years of studying and playing slip away. "I went through a lot of denial," she recalls. "I went way down in the depths. I didn't want to think about it. It was such a horrible time in my life."

Salvation finally came from an unlikely source. "My piano teacher had a trio playing in town. A bunch of us would go there to hang out. One night someone told me to get up and sing. So I did." DeRose's singing experience had been limited to some occasional back up vocals during her days in a pop band. She remembers her impromptu rendition of "Love is Here to Stay" fondly. "I was reading [the song] on stage with the microphone in one hand and the vocal Real Book in the other." The audience, to her surprise, demanded an encore. However, what shocked DeRose even more was how much she enjoyed singing. "It was an outlet, I think, and a way to express the

musical ideas I had bottled up inside me."

DeRose threw herself into singing with the same dedication and intensity that had marked her piano playing. "The minute I realized I liked to sing I started studying with a woman who only taught technique." Her long experience as an instrumentalist provided DeRose with a different perspective on singing. "I think playing piano gave me a good ear and helped me to focus on the melody more. Also, knowing that if we do 'Love Is Here to Stay' in the key of C, I knew what the starting note was. I knew it was a G. I think some singers don't think of things like that. They often just pick a note out of thin air and put it in their voice and they don't really think about the actual note. When I was singing I was actually at times seeing the keyboard."

If the music came easily, the words proved to be a different matter. "It was hard for me to remember lyrics. It took a little while for me to realize that I'm a singer telling stories and I need to focus more on that. And when I did, that is when the lyric sheets went away."

DeRose spent the next 18 months working

exclusively as a vocalist. However, she still felt the loss of not being able to play piano. She consulted a specialist in New York City who diagnosed the pain in her right hand as arthritis. He recommended a complicated operation involving the fusion of the joint in the index finger. Her desire to play again overwhelmed her fear of the difficult procedure. "After the operation, my fingers were just bones, absolutely no muscle there."

Her doctor said the best therapy would be to start playing again so DeRose found a solo gig at a little, poorly lit Italian restaurant. "I plunked my right hand down on chords, put my left hand down on some bass notes and just sang." She continued to play and sing for six months building up the strength in her right hand and paying off her substantial medical bills.

In 1991, DeRose moved to New York City and very quickly found work. "I was playing every night," she recalls. "I felt very lucky to come to New York and find regular gigs." DeRose spent the next several years working constantly, meeting musicians and honing her craft.

DeRose self-financed her first record in 1996, which was then picked up by a tiny label. “They said they were going to distribute it,” she recalls, “but they didn’t really have any distribution.” The CD languished in obscurity until DeRose’s encounter with Marc Edelman of Sharp Nine Records, an independent jazz record label.

Several musicians had mentioned DeRose to Edelman. Curious, he attended one of her gigs and was deeply impressed by what he heard. “He came up to the stand on a break,” DeRose remembers, “and said ‘I want to record you.’ I wasn’t sure how to take it at first, but he was really serious.”

Edelman decided to repackage and distribute DeRose’s first CD. Sharp Nine released *Introducing Dena DeRose* in 1998. The positive response convinced Edelman to take DeRose back into the recording studio. The label released the melancholy *Another World* in 1999 and the ebullient *I Can See Clearly Now* in 2000. Each album’s distinct musical identity was, according to DeRose, “a reflection of what was going on in my life at the time.”

*Introducing Dena DeRose* finds the singer

using her formidable command of time to rethink some of the true warhorses of the Great American Songbook. The sly “How Long Has This Been Going On?” and the swaggering “Blue Skies” are irresistible. She swings hard on “Time After Time” and “Every Time We Say Goodbye” and performs “How Deep is the Ocean?” with a subtle 6/8 Afro Cuban rhythm.

*Another World* is a beautifully paced, atmospheric album that intersperses two original tunes and two instrumentals amid six perfectly realized standards. The CD features several exceptional arrangements by DeRose and Steve Davis including a remarkable rethinking of “In the Wee Small Hours.”

However, the recently released *I Can See Clearly Now* is DeRose’s finest work yet. Her takes on “Detour Ahead” and the title tune are unlike any previous versions. She renders the standard “If I Should Lose You” and the gorgeous Edith Piaf tune “If You Love Me” in exquisite detail. She tears through “Day In, Day Out,” “I’ve Never Been In Love Before,” and “The Touch of Your Lips” playing with the beat even as she drives home the meaning of every line. The CD also features several

examples of DeRose improvising scat lines in unison with her piano.

All of her albums feature a basic jazz trio augmented by horns and percussion, and they all benefit greatly from the quality of the musicians. The horn players have included Steve Wilson, Ingrid Jensen, Joel Frahm, Jim Rotondi and her childhood friend Steve Davis. Her latest CD also features Joe Locke on vibes. “I think the people I’ve chosen to play with extend or add to the music,” DeRose observes.

Although her records are meticulously planned, DeRose tries to make sure that the actual recording process remains spontaneous and creative. All three of her albums were recorded live in the studio without overdubbing. “I hardly ever do more than two takes,” explains DeRose. “I don’t believe in it.”

DeRose gives a great deal of credit for the success of her albums to Marc Edelman and Sharp Nine Records. “They have been completely supportive from the beginning. Marc continues to tell me time and time again to keep [making music] the way I want to. He’s really into building careers, and, in this day and age, it’s really hard to find people

like that.”

Although she has been writing tunes for years, DeRose’s three albums contain only four of her original songs. In fact, until recently she had never played a performance where she featured only her own original music. “I got done with the gig and I felt like a musician, not a working musician, but like a real artist.” However, songwriting may be the one area where DeRose’s interest in singing works against her. “I’m not a real fan of my lyrics,” she observes wryly. However, she would love to record an instrumental album of her tunes. “I don’t know if it will be sooner or later, but I’m definitely going to do that.”

Already this year DeRose has played the Blue Note in New York and taped an appearance on Marian McPartland’s *Piano Jazz*. She plans to play more large jazz festivals in the United States and try to break into the jazz markets in Europe, Japan and Canada. “That’s what I think is missing these days. Touring. Rock and roll made it harder for jazz musicians to keep a steady band together and tour.” DeRose believes the Internet can play an important role in expanding the jazz audience.

“I get e-mails from people in India, Thailand and Malaysia saying they discovered my music through my website. I think the Internet has opened things up for artists who don’t have large record labels behind them.” Of course, she notes that ultimately, “You have to get people off their butts and out there listening to live music.”

DeRose is optimistic about her future. “Every record that goes by there are more people that we reach. That’s a great feeling.” DeRose seems focused on her long-term career rather than short-term success. She dismisses any suggestion that she could position herself to reach the wider non-jazz audience by reducing the amount of her playing. “I just want to be able to keep recording and keep evolving as a musician,” she explains. “I want [an audience] that keeps an open mind.” After a pause she adds, “not that I do anything really way out, but,” she laughs, “you never know what the future will bring.” 🎵



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# CD REVIEWS

## *The Free-Bop Movement*

**Jafar Barron**

**Q Records**

Philadelphia trumpeter Jafar Barron offers an impressively cohesive mix of bebop, hip-hop and spoken word on his debut album on Q Records. But jazz purists (at least those with open ears) need not fear - this *is* a jazz album, albeit one that draws on both rap and electronics.

Barron's approach most directly parallels that of Steve Coleman's M-Base Collective and, to a lesser extent Ornette Coleman's "free funk". Barron and his colleagues — including brother Farid, a member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, on the Fender Rhodes electric piano — are serious, well-schooled jazz-funk progressives whose music is infused with and informed by the spirit of hip hop.

Barron, who has played with everyone from Wynton Marsalis to Erykah Badu, leads his sextet through a series of groove-heavy compositions that reference some 50-plus years of jazz history. "Old Happy, Happy Buddha" and "The Buddha Monk Stomp" build on pure bebop structures while "Transit Dance:

Dancing Mass Transit” and “In the Realm of Permanence: Where the Souls Be At” come closer to free-form funk, propelled by bassist Michael Boone and drummer Rodney Green’s ferocious rhythms. The spoken word segments — poetic interludes and introductions on mostly spiritual and social themes performed by Oskar Castro — seldom distract from the music, which always remains in the forefront.

Credit Barron and company for creating an album of challenging yet accessible 21st century jazz. Well worth checking out.

— Joel Roberts

## ***Black Dahlia***

### **Bob Belden**

#### **Blue Note**

*Black Dahlia*, without a doubt, will be remembered as the most ambitious jazz recording of the year. Rather than a blowing session, influential though blowing sessions may be, Bob Belden’s *Black Dahlia* is an extended story-telling, romantic and fatalistic suite that was three years in the making. In addition, over 60 musicians were required to fill the symphony orchestra that accomplishes Belden’s vision.

When Belden’s last grand project, a 1993 interpretation of the opera *Turandot*, was blocked by Giacomo Puccini’s estate, Belden’s work in writing and recording his own music stalled. Not that he wasn’t busy. Belden has been scoring films, producing classic reissues (like Herbie Hancock’s Blue Note sessions), directing sessions by Joe Henderson and creating with Tim Hagans the Miles-inspired Animation/Imagination band.



But Belden’s reading of James Ellroy’s “Black Dahlia” novel provided the inspiration needed to reanimate Belden’s confidence and focus his writing on yet another project that combines musical drama with large-scale orchestration. In fact, the complexity of the project is so large that one wonders how Belden got the green light to proceed in these times of budget cuts. Nevertheless, Belden reports that he finished the recording on budget in two three-hour sessions.

While it is reported that the Black Dahlia Murder still resonates in Los Angeles, those of us east of the San Gabriel Mountains may draw a blank. Covered extensively in the press and involving the entire Los Angeles police force, Elizabeth Short’s murder in 1947 epitomized the meretriciousness and tawdriness behind the facades that L.A. had erected for public perception. A young girl who moved to Los Angeles from Massachusetts to pursue her dream of fame, Short moved through a series of seamy encounters that eventually ended with her shudderingly gruesome murder. Police called it “The Black Dahlia Murder” because of the blackness of her hair and the

attractiveness of her dresses.

It seems that the musical intellect of Belden merged with his interest in melodrama to spark a composition in 12 parts that captures Short's imagined state of mind. Starting with the "Genesis" section, *Black Dahlia* interjects an attention-grabbing exclamation before Belden develops a dreamy wonder described by Lawrence Feldman's alto. Alluding to Belden's fondness for Miles Davis' work, as does "Dreamworld", "In Flight" then takes her from home, breezily depicted by muted trumpet and Ira Coleman's thrilling accelerated pace "City Of Angels", as performed by Tim Hagans describes Los Angeles in serene, glowing harmonic ascents and descents with references to Jerry Goldsmith's stunning score for the movie *Chinatown*.

Joe Lovano brings in his unmistakable tone on "Prelude To Love" and "Danza d'Amore", Lovano being the ineffable and soft-speaking suitor fulfilling Short's quixotic attraction. *Black Dahlia* then takes a dark turn, reportedly reflecting on Belden's real-life rough experiences in New York in the 1980's.

While it is impressive to appreciate the

overall grandeur and scope of Belden's work, *Black Dahlia's* success relies on the professionalism of its execution: rehearsal, direction, engineering, and unity of sound. Most importantly, the soloists lend a personal voice to a very personal project. Lawrence Feldman's alto sax, so evocative in the film noir genre, captures the feeling of allure necessary to the project. Kevin Hays' work on "Dawn" limns the rays of light bringing the city delicately to life. Tim Hagans' trumpet work becomes a touchstone in itself as it energizes Belden's concepts of movement or terror. And Belden himself brings closure to the musical story as he plays the final "Elegy".

*Black Dahlia* is unlike any other jazz recording to be released this year, and it is a major achievement in its own right. *Black Dahlia* may be as important to future jazz composers as, say, Chico O'Farrill or Miles Davis' work was to Belden.

— Don Williamson

## ***Drift***

### **Michael Blake Intuition**

Following up his stunning and hauntingly beautiful 1997 solo release, *Kingdom of Champra* - saxophonist/composer Michael Blake enlists fellow "Jazz Composers Collective" performers along with modern jazz saxophonist Briggan Krauss and others for this equally impressive production simply titled, *Drift*. Here, the New York City-based artist once again demonstrates his melodic compositional gifts to coincide with his full-bodied tenor sax tone and witty arrangements.

Blake's superb thematic invention is supplemented by a large ensemble who sound as though they enjoy a near cosmic coexistence with the leader's expansive jazz vernacular and shrewd melding of disparate elements, amid traces of Ellington, funk/rock and more! The piece titled, "Toque", features Afro-Cuban rhythms embedded amongst Tony Scherr's funk-induced ostinato



phraseology, the horn section's tuneful harmonies and dashes of Asian modalities in conjunction with Blake and trumpeter Ron Horton's passionate soloing.

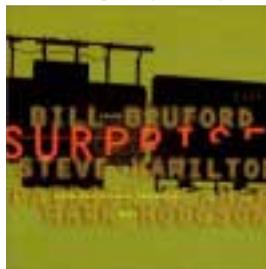
The band burns through a straight forward four to the floor pulse on the rollicking, boisterous and brassy, "Lady Red" whereas, they homogenize a groove oriented jazz/rock/funk, enhanced by bassist Ben Allison's profoundly stated bass lines atop memorably melodic hooks during "Afro Blake". Yet, Blake's strengths also reside within his ability to merge the tried and true into his deeply personal style and shrewdly envisioned concepts that seemingly transform his art and craft to lofty heights. However, the band's crackerjack musicianship only enhances the overall scope of this mighty fine production. Vehemently recommended!

— *Glenn Astarita*

### ***The Sound of Surprise*** **Bill Bruford's Earthworks** **Discipline Global Mobile**

Drummer Bill Bruford's storied musical career encompasses a fruitful thirty-year sojourn through the progressive rock, fusion, and jazz circuits. And while he gained prominence with the band, "Yes" during the late 60's and early 70's, Bruford established himself as a rare breed among his peers, namely for his uncanny approach to a simple back beat along with his often ingenuous implementations of cadence. Yet besides his work with prog superheroes King Crimson, various side projects and guest spots, Bruford launched his jazz/rock/fusion band "Earthworks" in 1987 featuring young keyboard whiz, Django Bates, saxophonist Iain Bellamy, and bassist Mick Hutton.

Essentially, what Bruford and Co. originally brought to the table was perhaps miles ahead of some of the drivel—the almost defunct fusion scene was producing at that time. And other than a few



personnel changes and six albums later, the ensemble surges into the new millennium with the same grace and vigor witnessed fourteen years earlier; however, these days the band opts for the all acoustic format.

"Earthworks" pursues multifarious themes that often intertwine with concisely organized shifts in tempo, and saxophonist Patrick Clahar's deterministic front line soloing and endearing lyricism. With the opener "Revel Without A Cause", Bruford lays down a hybrid Latin/swing pulse in support of the band's quiet intensity, airy statements, and altogether unimpeded sense of direction. However there's no denying that the ensemble incorporates precisely executed frameworks as the musicians' counterbalance lush melodies with hard-edged soloing and the leader's masterful support. On this piece, pianist Steve Franklin injects swirling cadenzas, well-placed block chords, and meticulously developed right-hand leads into a mix consisting of limber polyrhythmic developments and Clahar's commanding presence as a young stylist who possesses an impressive and quite expansive jazz vernacular. Here, Bruford alters the

momentum with crisp cymbal work, melodic fills and general time-keeping wizardry as he solos atop an ostinato motif prior to the coda.

The band swings hard in conjunction with oscillating crosscurrents while also tossing in some Bop-ish statements and penetrating choruses on “Half Life” as the drummer peppers and prods Franklin’s ebullient voicings. “Cloud Cuckoo Land”, “Never The Same Way Once” and “The Wooden Man Sings, And The Stone Woman Dances” are all movers and shakers, featuring groove driven motifs, and impacting opuses. Throughout, everything falls into place in such a seamless manner! Hence, *The Sound Of Surprise*, which is based upon a quote by famed music critic Whitney Balliett, transcends normalcy as this outfit cleverly or perhaps subliminally realigns convention via an overall sound and methodology that is clearly their own. Highly recommended!

— Glenn Astarita

### ***Ethnic Stew and Brew***

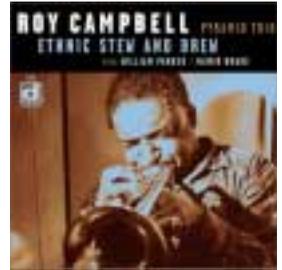
#### **Roy Campbell’s Pyramid Trio Delmark**

Saxophone trios rounded out by bass and drums are a regularity in creative improvised music. Strangely, trios led by trumpet are a comparatively rare occurrence. The reasons behind the disparity are debatable but may have something to do with the perceived difficulties in timbre and range sometimes attached to brass instruments. Where the adroit brass player can often effectively out lap his reed counterpart is in the area of tonal and textural variation. Roy Campbell is especially adept in this area, able to coax a rich plurality of voices and sounds from the bell of his horn. His two partners in this incarnation of the Pyramid Trio are similarly regarded for their skill at producing broad tonal ranges and dynamics from their respective instruments.

Campbell has been helming the Pyramid Trio as a flagship for his improvisatory craftsmanship for several decades. Parker’s handled the bass end from the beginning, but the drum slot has shifted between several men

including Zen Matsuura and Reggie Nicholson. Hamid Drake is the latest conscript and in many ways the most suited to date in terms of the fluctuating thematic centers Campbell creates for the group. Parker and Drake’s association may be less long standing, but considering the sorts of sagacious grooves the pair can scare up in tandem their relationship is far from superficial. The rhythmic push on “Malcom, Martin, and Mandela” is an early example of the pair’s uncanny agreement as they conjure up the kind of loping emancipatory groove that unlocks the hips, knees, and ankles and refuses to retreat until all are set in soulful motion. Parker sounds positively huge, his cord-like strings filling up the cracks, and Campbell seems secure from the opening sounding sassy smears that Drake’s muscular backbeats eddy around.

“Impressions of Yokohama” allows Parker to indulge in an area that he’s shown increasing interest in, Eastern wind instruments. In this case it’s Japanese shakuhachi flute and his



swirling vaporous lines form the focus of the piece's preface before he switches to thrumming bass and the momentum rises on Drake's perfectly pitched drums. Parker's near legendary arco technique is also afforded ample space, as on his bowed stretch for "Imhotep" where rich mahogany tones dance around a rigorous rhythmic core setting the stage for Drake's own polyrhythmic display. Switching gears in an unexpected direction Parker's dub-like stops weave with Drake's tick-tock drums creating a palpable Reggae atmosphere on the disc's title track.

Campbell's concluding "Amadou Diallo" leaves little to the imagination, painting a stark remembrance of a recent American judicial travesty. Drake's hand drums open paving a path for an extended rumination by the trumpeter that mixes somber lyricism with slashing stringency. The composition concludes with a sobering staccato fire of notes signifying the deadly barrage of bullets that struck Diallo down. All of the album's elements piece together into a complete and satisfying package that is both deeply gripping and infinitely listenable. Best of 2001 lists may

still be a long way off, but this release is certain to be a heavyweight contender in the honors.

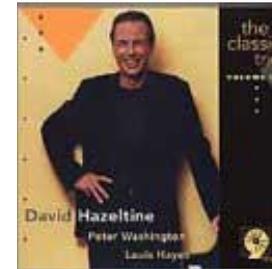
— *Derek Taylor*

## ***The Classic Trio — Volume 2***

**David Hazeltine**

**Sharp Nine**

It used to be that if you wanted to hear some very classy piano jazz you pretty much had only a few choices. Those in New York could chose to stroll down to the now defunct Bradley's, while the rest of us could be content in picking up a Tommy Flanagan or Kenny Barron album. About five years ago a new piano star began to change all that. While still a fledgling label, the Sharp Nine imprint released *The Classic Trio* headed up by David Hazeltine, and even those with a tin ear had to admit that something agreeable was afoot.



Proving that you can never have too much of a good thing, this second Sharp Nine session for Messieurs Hazeltine, Washington, and Hayes presents another hour's worth of some of the best piano jazz to be heard. While some of the grandeur of the first set, which came via the legendary sound engineering of Rudy Van

Gelder, is missing (this one is cut at Systems Two in Brooklyn), the overall results are no less inspiring. The highlight of the set is another in a fine line of Burt Bacharach originals given the Hazeltine treatment. A slow and stately “What the World Needs Now” joins past recastings of “I Say a Little Prayer” and “Alfie”.

Four originals by Hazeltine mix in nicely with such standards as “The Days of Wine and Roses” and “Prelude to a Kiss”. The former chestnut has never sounded prettier. Starting off solo in rubato fashion, Hazeltine then falls into a relaxed stride, before turning things up another notch as Hayes drops the brushes and picks up his sticks. Working in reverse, things settle down nicely following a very melodic solo from Washington. Hazeltine’s own lines are chock full of originality, from the up tempo swing of “From Here to There” to the melancholy pseudo bossa treatment of “Too Sweet to Bear”. Simply put, Hazeltine has added another solid entry to an already very impressive catalog.

— *Chris Hovan*

## ***Summer Sketches***

### **Bill Mays Trio**

#### **Palmetto Records**

After years of performing from within the Los Angeles studio scene, Bill Mays (now a denizen of New York City), serenades the dawning of summer 2001, with this exquisite and quietly powerful trio recording aptly titled, *Summer Sketches*.

On his “Palmetto Records” debut, the pianist along with bassist Martin Wind and drummer Matt Wilson commence the proceedings with the sounds of Mother



Nature going about her business as they set the stage for a series of group originals and theme-based standards. With the opener, “Summer Night”, the trio engages in an elegant swing motif, marked by Mays’ animated lines and lush actualization of the primary melody, although the band dabbles with free form notions on their polyrhythmic and sprightly rendition of “Summer Sketch”. Matt Wilson’s

composition, “(Gotta Go To) Summer School” is reminiscent of a Texas roadhouse blues, sparked by Mays’ limber yet straightforward blues motifs and the drummer’ often melodic fills and counterbalancing statements.

The band finalizes this most attractive set with, “Once Upon A Summertime”. Here, Mays’ poignant thematic inventions, enhanced by trills, well placed harmonics and articulate voicings are supplemented by Wind and Wilson’s fragile accompaniment. Hence, *Summer Sketches* is teeming with lucid imagery and stylish interplay, augmented by a top-notch audio production! Recommended.

— *Glenn Astarita*

***Mokoondi***  
**Mice Parade**  
**Bubble Core**

For all practical purposes, multi-instrumentalist Adam Pierce *is* Mice Parade. Pierce plays drums, guitars, organs, vibes, and cheng. Using studio tools, he blends all these sounds together to craft groovy, percolating textures. His third disc under the Mice Parade moniker, *Mokoondi*, gains extra personality through the efforts of additional musicians on saxophone, vibes, violin, and voice. However, it's Pierce's personal vision which organizes the music and sets the tone. Multiply overdubbed performances form a thick, pulsing collage of sound—always moving forward, but never in a hurry to get there. The combination of fluid improvisation with studio textures helps define *Mokoondi* as post-rock, though one has the sense that Pierce is not interested in definitions. His work on the cheng (a Chinese harp akin to a zither), for example, eludes categorization. At times percussive, at others melodic, he artfully stretches the possibilities (and the strings) of this unusual instrument.

Notably, Mice Parade defies the most

common pitfall associated with studio-enhanced improvisation: perfectionism. Pierce prefers to take the notes as they come, building them into an organic whole—rather than getting everything “just right”. As a result, *Mokoondi* has an authentic, homemade flavor. One can hear the personal character of each cymbal hit or pluck of the cheng—microtonal variation, attack, and all. The vocals are not always in perfect tune, but it doesn't really matter. The groove maintains over-riding authority on *Mokoondi*, though all the parts that fit together to form it retain their own personal character. Occasional improvised drum duets offer a hint at the possibilities available to the expanded Mice Parade in live performance, where post-rock drumming master Doug Scharin joins forces with Pierce to deliver polyrhythmic energy.

— Nils Jacobson

***The Complete Vee Jay Lee Morgan-Wayne Shorter Sessions***

**Lee Morgan/Wayne Shorter Mosaic**

It's unlikely that we'll ever again see the kind of concentrated intensity and sheer amount of music amassed as that which entered the jazz lexicon during the '50s and '60s. Not only does there seem to be less of an interest in the music by fans and musicians alike, but also the precipitous nature of the current financial economy would simply preclude small independent labels from producing such an immense output. So, let us go back to those times and consider the number of active jazz labels on the scene. A partial listing would have to include Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside, Impulse, Savoy, Atlantic, and Columbia. Then on the fringes, you have West Coast concerns like Contemporary and Pacific Jazz and Chicago mainstays like Argo/Cadet and Vee Jay. It is the efforts of the last



named label that come to fore with the boxed set at hand. With its jazz series produced by radio personality Sid McCoy, Vee Jay built a small, but substantial catalog that included recordings by Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, Eddie Harris, Louis Hayes, Eddie Higgins, and a few more artists.

The Vee Jay material of Wayne Shorter and Lee Morgan has been configured in various packages over the years, most recently in the form of two previous compact disc reissues and Japanese issues to boot. So why bother picking up this set, which basically includes items that have been available before? The answer to that question simply lies in the fact that never has this material been presented in such a definitive manner, including documentation and remastered sound quality that is undoubtedly superior to any previous issue of this material.

#### *Here's Lee Morgan and Expoobident*

Now that the obvious has been discussed, let's put this important music into context. Lee Morgan, who already had a solid series of Blue Note releases under his belt, joined

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1958. This gig would keep him busy and it would be about two years before the trumpeter would record another Blue Note session as a leader, a March 1960 date that would produce *Leeway*. One month prior to that, he would cut his first set for Vee Jay, *Here's Lee Morgan*. With boss Blakey at the drums, Morgan's quintet includes the stout tenor stylings of Clifford Jordan and the in sync rhythm team of Wynton Kelly and Paul Chambers. Highlights include Milt Jackson's quirky "Off Spring", which Kelly introduces ever so tastily, "Bess", a medium shuffle with Morgan muted, and "Running Brook", which incorporates some of Morgan's delicious half-valve effects.

Eight months after his first Vee Jay sessions and a bit over a year before Morgan's lone Jazzland date, *Take Twelve*, we get the second Morgan Vee Jay album, *Expoobident*. Clifford Jordan and Blakey are again on hand, but this time the studio is in Chicago and so local legend Eddie Higgins and Art Davis round out the rhythm team. We get a few standards and some well-penned originals by Clifford Jordan ("Lost and Found" and "The Hearing"), Wayne

Shorter ("Fire"), Eddie Higgins' title track, and Morgan's own "Triple Track". The mood continues to be animated and Morgan's horn crackles with enthusiasm.

#### *Introducing Wayne Shorter, Second Genesis, and Wayning Moments*

Whereas Lee Morgan had already documented his work on that previously mentioned series of Blue Note sides; tenor man Wayne Shorter's recording career would begin with work at Vee Jay. He participated in *Kelly Great*, a 1959 Vee Jay date for pianist Wynton Kelly. Then, in the span of two days in November of 1959, Shorter would cut his own record for Vee Jay and make his first recorded appearance with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (the Blue Note set *Africaine*). Including a nod to Shorter's present employer and a taste of Miles Davis' current backing group, the saxophonist shares the front line with Morgan, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb in support. All the tunes are by Shorter and even at this early stage his writing genius is apparent. The longest track, "Down in the Depths", also makes clear what a distinctive and individualistic improviser Shorter evidently

was.

Following more Blakey sessions for Blue Note, including *The Big Beat*, *Night in Tunisia*, and *Meet You At the Jazz Corner of the World*, Wayne would cut his next Vee Jay date in October of 1960, although it would not be released for over a decade. Done in Chicago, *Second Genesis* finds Shorter fronting a quartet with Blakey, Cedar Walton, and Bob Cranshaw. Aside from three standards, the program again consists of originals and Shorter's tenor voice continues to speak volumes in a way that marks him as one of the true innovators.

With a constant schedule of recording and touring activity with Art Blakey and the beginning of a soon to be budding relationship with Blue Note, it's surprising that Shorter would have time to return to Chicago to cut one last album for Vee Jay. Returning the favor of guesting on Freddie Hubbard's *Ready For Freddie*, Wayne would feature Hubbard on the front line for *Wayning Moments*, which also includes the rather odd rhythm team of Eddie Higgins, Jymie Merritt, and Marshall Thompson. This seems to be Shorter's least interesting of the three Vee Jay sides, possibly

because of the smaller number of Wayne originals and the aforementioned backing ensemble. Still, many fine moments can be found.

#### *The Young Lions*

Closing out this package, we get an all-star date that happens to feature Morgan and Shorter along with the tart and underrated alto saxophone of Frank Strozier. It's interesting to note that our two main stars, along with pianist Bobby Timmons, were with Blakey at the time. Strozier and bassist Bob Cranshaw were members of the Chicago cooperative MJT+3, Louis Hayes was from Cannonball Adderley's band, and Albert "Tootie" Heath was stoking the fires for J.J. Johnson. This is a superb meeting that highlights some groovy writing by Shorter and Timmons. "Scourin'" is especially choice, with its ascending line and a Shorter solo that includes low register honks and a rare quote from "Do You Know the Muffin Man?".

Like all Mosaic compilations, this one is a limited edition and after the initial 5,000 sets are gone they will never again be made available. The 12 x 12 box includes six

compact discs and a 16-page booklet. Inside, you'll find session photos by Chuck Stewart, additional shots from the lens of Frank Wolff, and session-by-session commentary from Bob Blumenthal.

— Chris Hovan

## ***The Complete Mercury Max Roach Plus***

### ***Four Sessions***

#### **Max Roach**

#### **Mosaic**

In Mosaic Records' quest for some of the significant but overlooked early recordings of jazz legends, the label has assiduously studied, gathered, and documented an important and prolific recording phase of Max Roach's career.

More than a decade after his first recorded appearance with Coleman Hawkins and his subsequent astounding premiere with Charlie Parker that set the jazz world on its ear, Roach was recovering from a monumental setback to his plans to record his own quintet. The deaths of Clifford Brown and Richie Powell in June, 1956 in the one of the most famous car crashes in jazz history affected Roach's plans deeply but it was not something that was insurmountable. Slowly, Roach pieced together his quintet again with Sonny Rollins, George Morrow, and newcomer Donald Byrd joined him. Byrd's work with the group appears only on a 1956 Sonny Rollins recording, instead of on one of Roach's. The first trumpeter to appear on a Max Roach + Four EmArcy

recording was Kenny Dorham.

The detailed booklet accompanying the set of seven CD's is sprinkled with nuggets of previously unrealized facts about Roach's groups. For one, Roach quickly replaced Powell with the relatively unknown pianist Wade Legge, who had worked with Roach in Dizzy Gillespie's and Charles Mingus' groups. Legge's work appears solely on a 1956 Sonny Rollins Prestige date (Rollins' work mirroring what Roach's quintet produced). Legge's appearance was mistaken for Ray Bryant's until Bryant cleared up the confusion during an interview for the production of the reissue. The booklet contains a fascinating account of how Roach and Harold Land recruited a young Sonny Rollins at the Chicago YMCA, which also housed a 17-year-old Booker Little. Little came upstairs to meet his idol Clifford Brown at the time, none of them knowing that Little would in a two years follow in Brownie's footsteps in the group. And well-positioned, contrasting interviews at the end of the booklet present Bob Boswell's and Julian Priester's assertions that a Detroit performance of Roach's quintet inspired the Dave Brubeck Quartet to venture

into unconventional time signatures. Brubeck counters, "Max was developing the concept of polyrhythms early in his career, as was I. My experiments in odd time signatures go back to the Dave Brubeck Octet in the late '40's". Touché.

Always restless and always shaping his music according to his personality, Roach wanted to continue realizing his vision through the recorded work of his quintet. Thus, the deaths of Brown and Powell stalled his work, but couldn't prevent it, so strong was Roach's will. The resulting restart of his recording activity with *Max Roach + 4* declared that his group would continue to extend the bop vocabulary with new ideas and reinvigoration. Rollins in particular seemed to have arrived as a complete package, his legendary extended solos and off-kilter improvisations of standards already in place.

Eventually, Rollins moved on, and a succession of first-rate tenors joined forces with Roach, including George Coleman, Stanley Turrentine and Hank Mobley. The swan song for the EmArcy label, managed by Bob Shad from its inception, was *Max Roach 4 Plays*

*Charlie Parker*. As a commercial reference to Roach's early rise in public consciousness, the album also was notable for its reliance on the strength of the hornmen, who played the outlines of Bird's best-known tunes without the support of a piano player. This wasn't the first or last time that Roach abandoned piano, hiring several other pianists besides Bryant over the years but never really sticking with one. But the 23-year-old Coleman, who joined Roach from the MJT+3 in Chicago, evinces the youthful maturity that all of Roach's associates possessed and possess to this day, including his work with M'Boom percussionists like Stefon Harris. On "Ko-Ko", Coleman adds bite to his pure improvisation over the theme of "Cherokee", not intimidated by Bird's groundbreaking work with Roach. Constrained by the 45-RPM format of the 1940's, Roach was able to take spurts of solos with Bird. However, he makes up for that lack by pursuing a long, energetic solo on "Ko-Ko". On "Parker's Mood", the group goes for the blues basis for the tune as bassist Nelson Boyd creates the mood for the piece before Kenny Dorham breaks out into a trumpeted cry.

Chicago continued to be an important city in the evolution of Roach's quintet, as he picked up pianist Eddie Baker and bassist Bob Cranshaw there in 1958 and in fact recorded *Max Roach + 4 On The Chicago Scene* at Universal Recording there. Neither of the Chicago-based musicians joined Roach's group, though. Instead, the next recording, *Max Roach + 4 At Newport*, features some of his most unusual instrumentation for his quintet because it included Ray Draper on tuba. In addition, bassist Art Davis made his recording debut live at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival where the famous film *Jazz On A Summer's Day* was produced. (Don't look, Roach's group doesn't appear in the film.) From that point on, Roach stayed with three horns minus the piano, even though he dropped the tuba phenom Draper. Instead, trombonist Julian Priester joined Little and Coleman on *The Many Sides Of Max*.

Another unusual, yet legendary, recording



occurred when Roach's group met Buddy Rich's quintet in Pittsburgh for a joint appearance. That was the germination of the idea to record both groups when they returned to New York, and Rich acceded to Roach's insistence that the incomparable Gigi Gryce prepare the arrangements for *Rich Versus Roach*. Rather than an adversarial relationship, we find a complementary and not-to-be-missed pairing of jazz' leading drummers of quite different styles. More than that, we hear the meshing of two groups' energies to advance Gryce's arrangements in incomparable style. Not only do we get to compare Roach and Rich, but also we can contrast Julian Priester "versus" Willie Dennis or Stanley Turrentine's tenor sax "versus" Phil Woods' alto.

On *Moon-Faced And Starry-Eyed*, future wife Abbey Lincoln breaks out of her nightclub singer mold to sing two versions each of "I Concentrate On You" and "Never Leave Me". Thus, the career of a jazz singer is launched as Roach's group once again records in Chicago, this time excluding drum solos and concentrating on ballads. *Parisian Sketches* continues Roach's tradition of investigating

new forms as he recorded with the Turrentine brothers, Julian Priester, and Bob Boswell at Barclay Studios in Paris. Already immersed in 5/4 and 7/4 meters, this version of Max Roach + 4 performs the time signatures effortlessly, incorporating them into the fabric of the tunes. Just as important, Roach by this time was starting his thematic compositions—that is, the five-part “Parisian Sketches”—that would lead to his famous *Freedom Now Suite* on Columbia of the same year (1960). Perhaps Roach’s restlessness and his venturing into political statements led to the end of his relationship with Mercury, which chose to play it safe but which missed the cultural revolution that was to come.

Nevertheless, we are fortunate that Mercury recorded Roach’s quintets throughout his important transitional period in the 1950s as he recovered from the tragic breakup of one of the most promising groups in jazz to resume his important musical and cultural growth that followed.

— *Don Williamson*

# CLASSIFIEDS



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