



ALL ABOUT JAZZ
monthly edition — preview



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JAZZED.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

I remember when I bought it.

Wading hip-deep through the loss-leaders and extended warranties of the local electronics megalopolis, looking for ways to unload my paycheck before it burned a hole in my pocket, I came across Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*.

To be honest, I don't know what it was about the disc that caught my eye.

The cover was nothing fancy: just a headshot of a man with a horn, really.

The album art was negligible. And there were only five songs! I was used to 20 or 25 on a punk comp.

Plus it was *jazz*. Eww... I mean, I'd sat through an Appreciation course in college, but that was just to make an easy credit!

Something drew me to the disc, though, so I bought the CD on a gamble. "Go ahead", I told myself. "How bad can the rest of the record be?"

Shit.

Kind of Blue is still the baddest thing I've ever heard.

I took the disc home that rainy Spring day, popped it into the stereo, and sat back as

Miles blew right through me. When he started to solo on “So What” I began to warm to what I realized I’d heard at school, and by the time he buzzed in over Bill Evans’ trembling left hand on “All Blues”, I was hooked.

Hyperbole aside, my life has never been the same.

Kind of Blue gripped me by the throat and left me speechless. It turned me on to the Prince and to jazz in general, and now—a scant 5 years later—I’m editing a downloadable magazine for what I’ve long considered the best jazz site on the Web. What a marvellous turn of events.

I consider myself a jazz journalist now (albeit a budding one, lest Leonard Feather roll over in his grave). And that’s a curious thing to get used to. It sounds funny when I tell people. It certainly looks strange now as I type it.

But get me drunk enough and I’ll tell you about the madness that holds me, about the desire that eats me up. It’s not enough for me just to listen to jazz. I have to know jazz.

Never before have I been possessed by something that has so commanded my

absolute attention.

Never before has it been so important to know the Lem Winchesters and the Earl Colemans and all of the there-but-not-there players who made a mark on the periphery and disappeared.

And never before would I have even entertained the thought that I’d look on the long-dead trumpeter son of a dentist as a hero.

And now,
Ashley Kahn brings me
a wonderful book
full of the minutiae I crave.

Again, what a marvellous turn of events.

And now, Ashley Kahn brings me *Kind of Blue: The Making of a Masterpiece*, a wonderful book full of the minutiae that I crave.

Transcripts of the sessions that produced *Kind of Blue*. Photographs. Descriptions of broken-down takes. Interviews, interviews, and more interviews. I’m in heaven.

More important for me, though, is the reassurance that Kahn’s book brings—it

confirms that somebody out there feels the way I do. Someone else is crazy enough, in the words of Davis himself, to “dance about architecture”.

Now, this is restating the obvious, of course. There are hundreds of people moved by jazz to write about it, and thousands, if not millions, of listeners have been touched by *Kind of Blue* over the past 4 decades.

Still, Kahn’s book resonates with me. Part of me wants to believe it was penned solely for my pleasure. Part of me grows sad to know that this is not the case. Great writing will do that to you.

So thank you, Mr. Davis, for getting together with a group of musicians on those two days in 1959 and crafting with them the definitive musical statement of the twentieth century.

But, for adding another log to the fire that burns in my swinging heart, thank you too, Mr. Kahn. May your book touch others as deeply.

—Aaron Wrixon



FROM THE INSIDE OUT

CHRIS M. SLAWECKI

If you knew that you were going to die tomorrow, would that change the way you live your life today?

That question, or something close, seems to be one of those weighty, eternal propositions that has been bounced around and pondered from smoky college dorm rooms to pristine Bible studies. And though different people arrive via different routes, most folks generally arrive at one conclusion: It's best to live for today right now — today.

The Last Waltz—The Final Recordings Live at Keystone Korner, September 1980 presents eight CDs, one from each performance by pianist Bill Evans with his final trio, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe LaBarbera, from Sunday August 31 through September 8, 1980. Evans died exactly one week later, on September 15, from chronic bad health including liver problems and malnutrition from a quiet but insistent drug habit.

Evans recorded mainly in the trio format from the late 1950s until his death. His first trio, with drummer Paul Motian and bassist Scott LaFaro, remains a legendary small ensemble for its uncannily telepathic interplay

between the musicians, and came to a tragic end when LaFaro was killed in an automobile accident. Evans was not involved in this accident, but seemed emotionally wounded by LaFaro's death; in time he returned to recording as a trio with drummers Philly Jo Jones and Jack DeJohnette, and bassists Eddie Gomez, Gary Peacock and Chuck Israels all among its members.

To be honest, I never really considered myself a Bill Evans fan.

It's unfortunate, but writers often assess the historical perspective of an artist only when it's forced upon them by that artist's passing. To be honest, I never really considered myself a Bill Evans fan. But in composing this feature, I realized that Evans not only maintained for decades an individual career distinguished by uncompromising creativity and dedication to his muse. He also graced with his playing — austere yet soft in approach, romantic yet unsentimental in

sound — some of the great albums in the modern jazz canon: The way he perfectly sets the soft scene to introduce “So What” on Miles Davis' seminal *Kind of Blue* is merely one example; others include two magical sessions with Tony Bennett, *The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album* and *Tony Bennett and Bill Evans: Together Again* (LaBarbera became Bennett's drummer upon Evans' passing); and Oliver Nelson's 1961 majestic, classic *Blues And The Abstract Truth*, with Paul Chambers, Eric Dolphy, Roy Haynes, and Freddie Hubbard. Evans also contributed to Mingus' *East Coastin'* and to *Portrait Of Cannonball* when he and Adderley were both in the Davis band that recorded *Kind of Blue*.

Evans' supple “Blue In Green” became a modern jazz standard, and his “Waltz For Debby” and “Turn Out The Stars” are fairly well-known too. Oddly, although the 65 versions of 32 titles on *The Last Waltz* include many alternative interpretations (including six readings of “Nardis” and three versions of eight other selections), “Debbie” only appears once and “Blue In Green” not at all.

Evans repertoire during this engagement

included an abundance of classic pop ballads and standards: The first disc begins with the pianist complying with a request for Cole Porter's “After You,” followed by Jimmy Van Heusen's “Polka Dots and Moonbeams” and then Johnny Mandel's “Emily.” Throughout these sets, Evans' versions of “Someday My Price Will Come” (a Davis favorite), “Autumn Leaves,” “Days Of Wine And Roses” and even Anthony Newley's cheesy “Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)?” present simply amazing retellings of these familiar tales. Evans is proved to be a great bop impressionist in the musical magic he works on these warhorses. His ability and propensity to leap within and between octaves is astounding. “My Foolish Heart” and “But Beautiful,” in particular, are consistently beautiful.

Evans' playing also conjures the spirits of other great instrumentalists past and present. “Knit For Mary F” (Disc 2) and “Peau Douce” (Disc 3) reverse engineer Evans' influence on vibes player Gary Burton, jewel-like and exquisite. “Up With The Lark” (Disc 6) almost lands in the cheery neighborhood of “Sesame Street,” sparkling with bright shades

of Brubeck. The Disc 7 version of “Who Can I Turn To?” spins a heady Keith Jarrett web, while Ahmad Jamal resonates through the sparse, cool yet insistently powerful left-hand chords in the first two tracks on Disc 8 (“Letter To Evan” and “My Man’s Gone Now”), even as Evans’ elevating and energetic right-hand runs reach for the stars.

Musical conversations between Evans and LaBarbera often resurrect the ghost of the incandescent interplay between pianist McCoy Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones in John Coltrane’s great late 1960s Quartet, matching its intensity if not its ferocity, especially in “Yet Ne’er Broken” (Disc 4), “Days of Wine and Roses” (Disc 6), and the versions of “Nardis” on Discs 2, 6, and 8.

Sure, *The Last Waltz* captures and presents moments of profound sadness. “My Man’s Gone Now” sounds particularly reflective and blue, and makes you wonder what went through Evans’ mind as he prepared and executed this material. “I Loves You, Porgy,” which closes the first night, sounds almost primal—terribly wounded, ferocious, explosive. You nearly hear him chocking up as he closes “Letter To Evan,”

written for his son (Disc 4 and opening Disc 8). But there is no self-pity discernible here.

People rarely get to deliver their own eulogy. On *The Last Waltz*, Evans plays as much for himself as for his audience—and plays (beg pardon for the expression, which is not chosen lightly) as if his very life depended on it.



This is your computer.



This is your computer on
Screen Themes.

Any questions?

ASHLEY KAHN:

BEAUTIFUL BLUE

BY LAZARO VEGA

Ashley Kahn, the author of “Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece” (Da Capo Press, 224 pgs.), is Music Editor at VH1, and was the primary editor of *Rolling Stone: The Seventies* as well as the primary contributor to *Rolling Stone Jazz and Blues Album Guide*. He has contributed articles to *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* and *Mojo*, and lives in Fort Lee, New Jersey. The forward to *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece* is by Jimmy Cobb. Kahn spoke from his home in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Portions of this interview were broadcast along with music from Miles Davis’ recordings *Kind of Blue* and *Milestones* over Blue Lake Public Radio’s “Jazz a la Carte” with Lazaro Vega on October 28, 2000.

All About Jazz: After reading *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, one of the things I came away with was that this is a great compendium of information gleaned from Jack Chamber’s books, *Milestones 1 & 2*, Ian Carr’s biography and Miles’s autobiography with Quincy Troupe. What you’ve done is telescoped much of the information from those sources into 180 pages plus footnotes and

index. For people who haven't gone to the lengths of research on Miles as you have, obviously, and other's have as well, you've provided a primer on his career that maybe they wouldn't have had so easily before.

Ashley Kahn: If I might comment on that, I agree with that to a certain degree. However, there's a lot of primary source material in my book, too. I not only wanted to rely on the excellent job, of course, that Jack Chambers, Ian Carr, etcetera, have done in the past, but also to try and do something that I think biographies, when they give you this deluge of information, sometimes miss. And that's a flavor and the personality of not just the person but of the time. So what I attempted to do—and in the end spoke with about 50 different people, musicians, producers, and witnesses of that time in the late fifties when *Kind of Blue* was recorded—was to try and use *Kind of Blue* as a window back on to 1959. What was happening with jazz? What was happening to music in general? Where was Miles? Where was his head? Where was his reputation at that time? To try and basically give you the zeitgeist of what 1959 was like.

AAJ: Yes. I didn't get a chance to add that the original interviews you did are fantastic. I really enjoyed reading Jimmy Cobb's comments, and the statements of the engineers you were able to dig up, and also the Pop musicians, Donald Fagan, and the jazz musician from Chicago, Warren Bernhardt.

Kind of Blue says
'No, I'm not just
a jazz album;
I'm a music album'.

AK: Yes! Well, *Kind of Blue* is one of those rare jazz albums that totally defy its category. It says, 'No, I'm not just a jazz album; I'm a music album'. And it shows both in the musicians and the music makers who have totally embraced this album and allowed it to influence their own sound, and also the music buying public out there. You do not have to be a jazz fan; you do not have to be a knowledgeable jazz expert to enter into this world that *Kind of Blue* presents. That's one of the whole reasons for doing the book.

AAJ: The book will appeal as well to a wide

variety of readers because of that, and because you did dip into the Popular Music world, the world of studio technology, the world of record-label politics. There are many different strains going on.

AK: In a lot of jazz books, unfortunately, you either get a really dry academic tone, or you get the usual hit after hit sort of approach to the biography time-line. So you don't get a feel for whether he's going up hill here, is he at the top of the hill? Or is this just another moment in his career?

What I really wanted to do was get a feel for the fact that *Kind of Blue* is a real pinnacle, an incredible creative statement, and a risk-taking by Miles. A turning [of] the corner where by 1959 he was a very established artist, he could have just rested on his laurels as many jazz artists whose music I know and love very much have done in the past, and have total respect of their peers and of the jazz world in general. Miles defied that. Miles wanted to attempt something new. And the first time he really did that, and went into the studio and said, 'No, I'm not going to do something like I've done before, I'm going to

try a new style of music, I'm going to create and compose it as much in the studio as I have done beforehand, and take that chance' that is *Kind of Blue* and that's what *Kind of Blue* was. It set the pattern for the way he would approach music making, especially in the studio, for the rest of his career.

How many times can you do Cole Porter or Gershwin numbers?

AAJ: Herbie Hancock makes that clear in the interview segments that you used, and I think anyone who's followed his discography would see that change as well, that it was a defining moment for him. As it was a defining moment in music as you talked about how different artists in jazz were restless with the recurring cycle of chords and wanted to break out of the pop song structure.

AK: Exactly. How many times can you do Cole Porter or Gershwin numbers, which are fantastic numbers to do anyway? But there is a point where jazz musicians wanted to

break out and do their own music. I should add, however, that we're talking about *Kind of Blue* as a career watershed: in addition it's an unbelievable musical statement. Again, you do not have to have jazz knowledge. You don't even have to know any of the jazz lore or the history of Miles Davis's career to totally embrace and totally dive-in to the music itself.

AAJ: It's very accessible because of its mood. I remember a couple of stories. At the opening of the book you were saying everybody has story about *Kind of Blue*.

AK: [Laughs.] It's unbelievable. Everybody really does.

AAJ: Years ago I laid a copy of this on a woman who was living in a small town here in Michigan that I really liked. She was an earth-mother type, a graduate of Michigan State's horticulture program who had her own garden service. She was a striking Swedish woman. She knew I was on the radio doing jazz, so I thought I'd give her an LP copy of *Kind of Blue* to impress her. She responded, "This is bachelor-pad music." That was her summation of the whole record. I couldn't get past it.

AK: (Laughing). That's so funny. One of my

favorite quotes in the book, and there are so many to choose from and there is only so much room in a book to put them in, but is from a very established jazz critic whose approach was always dry and academic but who always hit the mark. I really love his writing. But it defines a certain style. You really do have to be part of the jazz cognoscenti, or at least have one foot moving in that direction to appreciate his writing. He says exactly that. He says the trick to *Kind of Blue* and Miles at that period, in the late fifties and the music he was making, is that at low volume it's unbelievable audio wall paper. It's so sophisticated it's perfect party music, or bachelor-pad music as your friend said. But turn it up and you get great art. For those who are willing to do focused listening on the album, it serves both purposes.

AAJ: It does. There are many sides to it. And that moment you talked about on "So What" when Jimmy Cobb hits that cymbal... I always thought that was a sizzle cymbal he hit, the cymbal with the rivets in it so when it's struck it has that long beautiful delayed fade-out as the band comes in underneath.

That is one of the most dramatic moments on the record, but it is so subtle.

AK: I would venture to say it's one of the most dramatic moments in jazz, period. On "So What," just as Miles starts his solo. It's the equivalent of Steve McQueen in "Bullet" clicking his safety belt, his seat belt, and you know this incredible chase scene is just about to start. Or in a movie theater when the lights go out. That magic moment is worth the whole price of admission, just there. Just for that.

Thankfully Jimmy Cobb is around to speak about that. And of course he is so incredibly humble about it. He said, "Well, we just made a nice jazz record." It's like Herbie Hancock says in the book, it really makes the whole album when that cymbal shot happens.

AAJ: Jimmy Cobb hooked up with the Yamaha Corporation of America, Band and Orchestral Division, here in Grand Rapids when he came through in the 1990s with the Nat Adderley band.

AK: Any type of support, corporate or otherwise, for these musicians who are out there still doing it [is good]. Jimmy Cobb, of course, is part of this landmark masterpiece,

but he still has to go out there and gig to put food on the table. So that's great to hear Yamaha sees the value in putting their name behind Jimmy.

AAJ: The other thing I wanted to let you know about was that when this Columbia box set came out with the complete Miles Davis and John Coltrane, including "Kind of Blue," the Wallace Roney band was in Grand Rapids for a public concert and a private party the next night at a person's house. Before the party they were relaxing in the basement listening to music on the stereo. Lenny White, Geri Allen, Charles Fambrough, Wallace Roney and a tenor player named Steve Hall. Those folks are in this basement library listening to "So What" and Lennie White is sitting on the arm of a stuffed leather chair acting like he's holding a tenor saxophone up to play, singing John Coltrane's solo. Everybody is giving skin and high fives after certain phrases. They were having a blast.

AK: Well, I'm telling you. The way that people quote Bible verse for verse, it's no kidding that for jazz musicians *Kind of Blue* is the Bible. And they can sing every solo. That

is the primer for every jazz musician, and still is 41 years later. I challenge anyone to find another album that has that effect 41 years later.

AAJ: One of the things I really enjoyed in your book was the George Russell thread. George Russell is recognized as a theorist and an intriguing recording artist who was there with Dizzy on "Cubano Be", "Cubano Bop," dealing with Lydian concepts and the formal aspect of modality, theorizing on that and putting it down on paper. He is very influential and maybe not a lot of people realize that.

It's the Valentine that came out of the period when Evans and Davis were working together.

AK: He was also the lynchpin between Bill Evans and Miles Davis. *Kind of Blue* really is, also, the Valentine that came out of the very short period, only 8 months, when Bill Evans and Miles Davis were working together.

AAJ: I appreciate his presence and comments. Also, I learned "Walking" is

“Weirdo” is Gene Ammons’ “Gravy.” That was really happy to learn Gene Ammons recording “Gravy” was “Walking.” I kind of knew “Weirdo” was, I have that on the Blue Note album. Of course “Sid’s Ahead” you mention later. I appreciated that, and the links you make with his recordings in the back end of the book, as well.

AK: The source notes part is really there for the jazzniks, you know? The front part of the book I really wanted to be inviting and open to any type of music enthusiast, but I don’t want it to get bogged down in detail. So for those who do appreciate the details like you’re describing, it’s all in the footnote section. [Laughs.] I’m glad you found it.

AAJ: You know, I don’t think Miles Davis’ autobiography was really autobiographical at times. You did use a quote from it, on page 38, it’s a quote about “Walking” where Miles is alleged to have said he wanted to use Kenny Clarke instead of Art Blakey because Kenny does the brushes thing. I noticed that when I read the autobiography, too, because Kenny Clarke does not play brushes on “Walkin’” or “Blue and Boogie.” He doesn’t play brushes at

all on that session and I don’t think Miles would say he did because Miles was so attuned to musical detail. I doubt he’d just forget.

Walkin’ was the formula that would later get distilled and turn into Kind of Blue.

AK: Yeah, yeah. Here’s the thing: unfortunately Miles is not with us anymore. I think the most important part of it is that he wanted Kenny Clarke, for a certain reason, whether it was brushes or not. The whole thing about “Walkin’” was it was the theme of hard bop. That’s the ultimate statement for hard bop of its time: one foot in the blues, one foot in bebop. That type of bringing Lucky Thompson and Kenny Clarke together with J.J. Johnson and Horace Silver was exactly what he was trying to do—get a balance of the bebop veterans with the younger, bluesier roots players. That was the formula that would later get distilled and turn into *Kind of Blue*.

AAJ: Also, it’s too bad the studio chatter from the Christmas Eve 1954 session isn’t

available on the CD reissues. Miles said he wanted that on the original LPs, I’ve heard that, but it’s not on the complete Prestige Recordings.

AK: For your listeners we should say that is an incredible moment in jazz lore, when Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis got together on Christmas Eve and recorded an incredible number of tunes such as when Miles really kicked it into gear, such as you’re suggesting.

AAJ: “Bags Groove,” “The Man I Love,” and “Bemsha Swing” (Ed: Unmentioned between us and recorded that day is one of Davis’ first scalar (modal) compositions, “Swing Spring”). Do you know if Miles 1955 Newport appearance is available on CD?

AK: I did my research and I was told about that being available audio-wise. Never was able to find it. (Ed: Further research exposed the 1994 CD release *Miscellaneous Davis 1955-1957* on Jazz Unlimited JUCD 2050). I was told that there’s some sort of very primitive video of the 1958 Miles sextet band with Bill Evans in it. That was shot in Philadelphia. Paul Bley told me about that, and no, I’ve never been able to find that,

either.

AAJ: One of the things I thought you did a really good job with is talking about how Ornette Coleman came to the same place in music where he wanted to get past the harmonic cycle of chords and not be so responsible to that as an improviser, but instead forge his own idea of blues phrase syntax. I thought you dealt with that well. I was waiting for you to deal with it and I was glad when I got into the back part of the book, not the foot notes but the narrative after “Kind of Blue,” you really went into that. And you really covered where jazz was.

But I thought one point you might have elaborated on was that like *Kind of Blue* Ornette’s way of going out was actually going back. He went back to the blues. The blues as a form before W.C. Handy was very open. A musician with a guitar would play whatever phrase length he wanted to: 4 bars, 8 bars, 6 bars.

AK: 13 and 1/2.

AAJ: You know what I’m saying?

AK: Yes.

AAJ: And W.C. Handy came along and said,

listen, if we’re going to play music together we can’t do that.

AK: Right.

AAJ: So it’s 12 or it’s 32, or it’s...

AK: I think what you’re referring to here is collective improvisation in general.

AAJ: No, what I was going to say, and it’s a point that you did make, Ornette decided his phrase lengths and syntax would be determined by what he had to say. And that to me is the blues. He went back to that earlier form of the blues before W.C. Handy standardized them, and he said that’s how I’m going to make my jazz improvisations, not necessarily by reporting on the chord changes. I thought you could have tied that in to what Miles’ was doing on *Kind of Blue*.

AK: You know what, that’s a very interesting comment, and there are interviews that I’ve read with Ornette where he refers to country blues. He doesn’t refer to any blues men by name, I wish, you know, if he was talking about Lightning Hopkins or even more, I hate to use the word ‘primitive,’ but more un-schooled blues musicians like Robert Pete Williams or someone like that. I would love

to know if Ornette was hip to the very loose approach to the blues that is all about individual expression.

AAJ: I think he is. That was the point I’m making.

Miles’ approach to change happened in such an underwhelming way.

AK: You know what? Knowing how just all encompassing he is in his taste I would not be surprised. I totally agree with what you’re saying. The point I think I was really trying to make was in 1959 the jazz world was ready to explode with change and that Miles was not alone. Miles’ approach to change happened in such an underwhelming way. Very influential, unbelievably influential especially when you consider the effect that the album that was certainly his watershed album of that period still has 40 years later. I’m talking about *Kind of Blue*.

But the sound of jazz revolution in 1959 it was, I mean, Ornette owned that. When he

came to New York and opened up at the Five Spot in November of 1959 it set the whole jazz world on fire. The coming of free jazz and the fact that you could make beautiful music as collectively improvised, and really stretch out the rhythm and melody structure, just break open the structure of jazz, was Ornette's contribution.

AAJ: And Miles, and Sun Ra and Cecil Taylor.

Miles never wanted to burn the bridge behind him.

AK: Exactly. It's funny, though, because Miles I don't think ever left behind total—I mean the way that Ornette and Sun Ra and Cecil did, the throwing out the baby with the bathwater type of idea. Like we're going to leave everything behind. Miles never wanted to burn the bridge behind him. There's a couple of comments that I quote where he seems to be saying from as late as 1969 or 1970 when the sound of Ornette has become very established and people like Albert Ayler

and Coltrane's explorations have followed in Ornette's wake, and Miles makes the comment, "We have to meet in a room, and that room has to have walls." You know? Blah blah blah. So he never totally embraced that sort of departure from melodic structure.

AAJ: No he didn't. At the same time he dissed Eric Dolphy, but then later on he had Benny Maupin playing a bass clarinet in his band playing much like Dolphy did. It was hard to understand him sometimes, or hard to read him with that later in his career. Many of the things he did seemed to be influenced by what Trane did later on. It was modal and deeply African.

AK: I love that moment that Paul Bley describes where Paul, of course, is in New York. He was part of the L.A. scene and Ornette and he were in the same band.

AAJ: At the Hillcrest Club.

AK: Exactly. There's Paul at the Five Spot [in New York] and Miles walks in. And Paul describes it as Miles acting as if he just happened to be in the neighborhood to grab a beer. 'Oh, here's the Five Spot, let me go in here.' And Miles is listening to Ornette, but

he's not even facing the stage. He's like talking with a bartender. But of course there's got to be some listening going on as he's checking out what Ornette is doing.

Although he might have dissed Ornette, dissed Eric Dolphy and the coming of free jazz publicly and in words, there definitely was an influence. That was part of Miles's genius, anyway. Is that he would listen to the full gamut of sound out there and pick and choose different players and styles, etcetera, and encompass it into his music.

AAJ: I really appreciate the work you did to show us what the Columbia 30th Street Studio was like. I had a friend of mine who made a record there in the 1970s with Roscoe Mitchell. It's called "The Maze." On Nessa Records. It's a double LP set and you open it up and there's big gatefold color picture of the inside of the Columbia 30th Street Studio taken by Chuck's wife AnnNessa. She went up on scaffolding above so you can see all of these percussion instruments.

AK: Wow, I'm going to have to try and find this.

AAJ: Oh yeah, he's in Whitehall, Michigan.

Chuck is really proud, a proud man to have worked in that studio because that parquet floor and those vaulted ceilings and those micro-phones and that equipment made for a very important place in a musical history of America.

AK: That's the type of stuff that really should be enshrined as well, along with all the biographical detail, say, of what Miles is going through.

What you're describing is exactly what the engineers. Unfortunately when you put something in print, unless you actually say it, you can't really suggest the emotional intensity that Quincy Jones still has for that studio. When he praises the wooden interior and the quality of the reverb that the room offered, it's almost like he's talking about his first girlfriend. (Laughs).

AAJ: It was really an important place, and no other records sound like those records sound. Joe Morello's drums on "Take Five" sound so good. And so did the band with Miles anytime he was in there. And so did Horowitz, or whoever else who might have been in there. They probably had, what, 10 or 15 Steinway

pianos to pick from?

I love the little clues and detective stories this book allowed me to follow.

AK: Well Columbia actually owned Steinway by the early sixties. They had a very intense and intimate relationship with the company. It was funny talking to the engineers and having one engineer saying, "Oh yeah we had two or three to choose from, but there was one that was always the jazz piano. And that was the one that Dave Brubeck beat the shit out of, you know?" That was what Bill Evans played and this piano is still around in New York somewhere. I love the little clues and little detective stories this book allowed me to follow.

I'll tell you one other story about one of the engineers I talked to. It turns out he lives five minutes away from me here in New Jersey. He was amazed that anyone wanted to talk to him, and invited me over. We sat and talked for a while and he said, 'Hang on,

hang on. I'll be right back.' He disappears and he goes downstairs, and he comes up from the basement. He had saved one of the knobs from the mixing board. And he had this in a shoebox with a velvet interior to it, and he brought it up as if it was a holy relic. I guess for him it was. He offered it to me and let me look at it for a while and hold it. He goes, "You have no idea how much great music passed through that knob."

That type of reverence people still have for the technology that made the preservation of the music possible is really stunning.

AAJ: I think if that studio had been in Europe it would still be there.

AK: Oh yeah.

AAJ: I don't think the economic forces would have made it go away. But they'll tear down Yankee Stadium someday, so nothing's sacred in America's commercial individualistic rugged world, but there's still thankfully people such as yourself who can document it, get it down, and talk to the surviving cats and let people know on a more general level what it really meant.

I really appreciated your research. I loved

the denouement of the book, putting *Kind of Blue* in historical perspective, the interview with Ray Manzarek and the whole thing about James Brown's tune "Cold Sweat" and its relationship to "So What," that was just great, and then all of the people who have gone on to record the music from *Kind of Blue*. I really appreciated all of that.

It's one thing to say this album sells a lot, but I want to give it a different type of scorecard.

AK: It's one thing just to say this album was influential and it sells a lot. You can talk about sales figures. I thought, you know, I want to give it a different type of scorecard. I want to show people how many different types of musicians and how many great musicians have come to embrace this album and make it part of their own repertoire, from Jerry Garcia to Ray Manzarek to The Police, back to the jazz world with people such as Wes Montgomery, Grant Green and Joe Henderson, etcetera.

AAJ: One of the people influenced by this,

too, who doesn't get discussed often for his work in that period immediately following *Kind of Blue* is Jackie Mac. Jackie McLean's records like "Omega" and things that really went modal, he went off into the modal thing and right up to the brink of freedom, yet he seems to be overlooked a little bit in that discussion. But he seemed to be one of the cats that really understood where Miles was going with this.

AK: I tried to mention this at the opening is that I was limited by the musicians and people who were willing to be interviewed and discuss this. There are many musicians out there who are just burnt out on interviews. Granted. There are also a lot of musicians who were burnt by Miles. Because of the way they may have been portrayed, say, in the autobiography they don't even want to discuss the subject.

I won't say that's my excuse, but I will say do you think I did not pursue Sonny Rollins, Jackie McLean, etcetera, etcetera? Of course I wanted them in the book and would have loved to have them open doors for me and see how I could have maneuvered their stories

in there, too. Sometimes you have to go with what you can find.

AAJ: Absolutely, and thank you for telling me that because people on the back end are armchair quarterbacks and there's a reality out there that anyone faces when they try to make anything happen.

AK: I tip my hat to you for knowing that and adding that to one more unwritten chapter to the book, and to the study for your listeners, because they should be aware of stuff like that.

AAJ: I enjoyed the way you used Lewis Porter to describe John Coltrane, which really nailed it; the historical perspective on page 183 that relates Miles music back to the blues was very good. I really didn't think the Miles Davis Quintet with the Gil Evans Orchestra at Carnegie Hall worked very well. The quintet sounds like it comes in early, but I may be wrong.

AK: I also don't think it was recorded that well, but then the technological aspect of what it was like, I remember reading in the files, because I was able to find Teo Macero's files at the Public Library here in New York. He

talks about the problems he was having one, getting permission to record the Carnegie Hall concert and other concerts, the 1964 concert, and two, the problems he was having with union rules. Because of the set up he was in some small little lighting room that was four floors up. So the sound that you're getting at the very top level of Carnegie Hall, and you're adjusting the knobs for the mix, is definitely not what you're going to be hearing, say, in the third row where the acoustics are best.

I think the Carnegie Hall thing was a symbolic bookend.

That's why in any concert nowadays if you're having a problem hearing or you think the mix is bad, the advice is always go to the mixing board, stand right next to the sound man because he's mixing for himself. Well, Teo had problems.

I think the Carnegie Hall thing was a symbolic bookend. I could not have continued my story, the Miles Davis bio timeline beyond a

certain point, otherwise I'm talking about the second great quintet. That's not my purview anymore.

AAJ: I thought the way you handled it going into Miles early history, then slowing it down the once you get into the *Kind of Blue* sessions, and then having a denouement with the effect of the music on the world was a beautiful shape to the book. I think my favorite part of the story is right after the album was recorded in that time they were together and touring. That is so exciting to know that band was out on the road and people could hear it. And describing the people that did hear it in various venues, with Warren Bernhardt, especially, painting a picture of The Southerland in Chicago.

AK: I've got to tell you, I had chills when I would be doing these interviews and Warren would remember Chicago, and Gary Burton would remember French Lick, Indiana. Ron Carter would remember the Toronto Jazz Festival. He was living in Detroit at the time and drove up into Canada. Shirley Horn remembering Birdland and running into Stan Getz and them hearing modal jazz for the first

time and saying, "Where's he going with the chords, how come he's still on that D minor?" I'm thinking about "So What."

Without even requesting it or trying to find it, all these stories of summer 1959 were coming to me, and it was just, for a researcher and a writer like myself, I could not have planned it better.

Let me say one other comment. My hope with this book is that, you know there's an old Zen saying that when I point at the moon look at the moon, not my finger. Which means let the book be the entrance to the album. And if you already know the album, let the book add to your enjoyment and appreciation. And if you don't know the album yet, let the book be your pathway to the album directly.

AAJ: Is this just coming out right now?

AK: Yes, it's about two weeks old. It's a baby.

AAJ: Well good luck with it.

AK: Thank you. Thank you for your enthusiasm and understanding. I have to say that this is one of the most knowledgeable interviews I've had.

AAJ: Oh man.

AK: I probably won't call Chuck Nessa just yet, but I am starting to work on a project where an incredible photo of 30th Street Studio might be of interest to the people I'm working with. You can imagine I really did dive into the photo archives over at Sony and they do have a whole loose leaf binder of slides, contact sheets, etcetera of 30th Street because it was one of their assets and they had to have a photographic record of it. But I think it was done at the end of the seventies so you see mixing boards with the slide faders, etc. I'm like, wrong era. But I did find some photographs, which are in the book, of course, of the studio circa 1960 with the round pots.

AAJ: Small boards.

AK: Six channels. Three track tape with six channels.

AAJ: Your whole layout of how *Kind of Blue* was recorded, the channel assignments, the multi-tracking, were fascinating. I was really perplexed by all of that. But to see how the instruments were divided up within the six tracks is hip.

AK: Well, you know they weren't so multi-tracking. By multi-tracking I mean sound on

sound. They weren't doing that yet. They were doing stereo, but it was totally live to tape. It just happened that they had an extra track. And all they were doing with that extra-track was using it for isolation purposes, and the advantage of being able to throw on a little bit of sweetening through the echo room down in the basement.

AAJ: I think the best example of their using the echo room was on the recording they did with Duke Ellington, on "Ellington Uptown," of "The Mooche." Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope play a clarinet duet, and Russell plays in that reedy New Orleans style. The response from their call and response comes out of the echo room. It's just the most brilliant use of that: it's so effective.

AK: It's interesting you mention that because it's the same producer, Irving Townsend. Well, I've learned a lot in this [interview], too: I've got to tell ya. [Laughs].

AAJ: Well good. *Kind of Blue* is a key. I think the once John Coltrane was introduced to modes from Miles Davis, because he was such a tenacious musical intellect, that he ran them to their utmost conclusion and that is

any note is possible.

AK: Right.

It's a tough step to take for many listeners, because many listeners don't hear that.

AAJ: You combine that with the influence of Albert Ayler who insists on opening up the realm of sound in music and you end up in 1965. Many people don't understand how 'Trane got to that, but I think it's very clear if you know *Kind of Blue* then you can get to *A Love Supreme*. And if you know Albert Ayler and what modality meant to George Russell, then you can get to 1965 and out.

AK: It's a tough step to take, though, for many listeners. Because many listeners don't hear that.

AAJ: Well they don't view jazz as an art form. It's more like an entertainment. And 'Trane viewed it as an art form because he's a musician, he's like Stravinsky or Webern.

AK: The one part of the book I really wanted to expand upon and there just wasn't

enough room was jazz in the fifties. Because that whole elevation not just from a few but from a real school, a real center of the jazz world that wanted to elevate this form to an artistic level and demand that type of respect. There are very few critics writing about it: Nat Hentoff and Martin Williams. That's about it, you know —

AAJ: Leonard Feather.

AK: — that were noticing this change that jazz musicians, just one wave, a particular school that really were demanding the same type of attention, respect and reverence as classical music got.

AAJ: A. B. Spellman and Amiri Baraka, too.

AK: True.

AAJ: But you're right: there was a sea change in the music. There was just a huge difference to what had happened even in the immediate post-war period. By 1955 and Bird's death there was something there. Musicians were like, hey, wait a minute.

AK: I was fortunate to find that John Lewis quote where Nat interviewed him, and John Lewis said, and this is like five years afterwards in the early sixties, and he says

five, six years ago there was me, there was Miles, there was a handful of us, and we were demanding that our jazz be looked upon as an art form.

AAJ: His quote puts it in clear perspective. Isn't Duke Ellington's "Ko-Ko" modal?

AK: What is modal jazz? Is the ultimate question. I quote Dick Katz. He says if you take a simple cadenza, at the very end of a tune where the band drops out and the soloist stays on a chord for sixteen bars or whatever to show off his stuff and then, boom! They bring the song to a final close, that cadenza is an example of modal jazz.

One of my favorite images in the book is that close up of Bill Evans's note to Cannonball Adderley on "Flamenco Sketches" where he doesn't write 'play the scales, play the notes in the scale' he says, "Play in the sound of the scale." What he's saying is this is a suggestion. Play the blue notes, play off of these scales, and play on the scale: it's up to you. But the idea is, use this as sort of a foundation.

Modal jazz is not a direct script, it's a suggestion. It's up to the improviser. I think modal jazz, whereas you have modes, modal

jazz is more about freedom for the improviser.

AAJ: Right, it is not just that you're going to play Mixolydian, Dorian, Phrygian - you're going to use those as a template for what emotional climate you're trying to convey.

AK: Yes, you said it better than I could [laughs].

AAJ: I don't know about that. Well Ashley man you better get to your family dinner or else I'll keep you all night.

AK: OK, we'll stop. But let that be a comment on how I'm enjoying this.

AAJ: I appreciate it.



UNSUNG**HERO**

ROBERT SPENCER

He played with Dizzy and Bird. He replaced Miles Davis in Charlie Parker's group and Clifford Brown in Max Roach's group. When the music was making its terrific advances of the late Forties and early Fifties, he was there. A bebop revolutionary. A trumpet master for the ages. Mr. McKinley "Kenny" Dorham.

Kenny Dorham came from Fairfield, Texas. He started out on piano, but soon hit the harder stuff: he picked up the trumpet in high school. (What must that band have been like? Did the band director ever get a hint that this trumpeter would someday blow them away on 52nd Street, standing next to the biggest names in jazz? Unfortunately, his comments, if there ever were any, are lost to history - like Kenny Dorham, if we're not careful.)

The bare facts are these: Kenny Dorham. Born August 30, 1924. Joined the Army when the war came. Played with Russell Jacquet, Billy Eckstine, Lionel Hampton, Mercer Ellington. Plus (ahem) Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. Helped found the Jazz Messengers with a couple of guys named Art Blakey and Horace Silver. When the terrible car crash claimed the life of Clifford Brown,

Dorham stood in for him in Max Roach's group. He made discs with Cannonball Adderley and Sonny Rollins. In the Sixties, he led his own groups, working with Joe Henderson and Andrew Hill. Died prematurely in 1972.

The core fact is this: a rounded and full trumpet tone, never shrill, never thin. An easy virtuosity that could scale the heights that Dizzy was famous for reaching. A narrative-style improvisational skill that spun out endlessly lyrical and logical lines. A series of reasonably well-known masterpieces on Blue Note (*Whistle Stop*, *Una Mas*, etc.) plus a series of Debut, Riverside, and Prestige recordings that featured his playing at just as high a level. In the early Sixties he went to Copenhagen, where a few bravura concerts were captured and made available by the good folks at SteepleChase. Nice save, Nils.

The core fact is a trumpeter who was a contemporary and peer of the men who form the pantheon of modern jazz: Miles, Monk, Max, and who deserves to be counted among them. They knew it. They listened to him and played with him. You should know it. Listen, listen, and listen again to Kenny Dorham.

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MICHAEL CUSCUNA:

IN THE VAULT PLAYING GOD

BY LON ARMSTRONG

Michael Cuscuna is one of the most important figures in the jazz reissue field today. He has been responsible for hundreds of releases for many companies, and he was fortunate to meet and befriend Alfred Lion during the final years of his life. He is an authority on Lion's life and work and on the recordings and history of the Blue Note label. Michael graciously agreed to talk with Lon Armstrong about Alfred Lion and Blue Note.

AAJ: Was the Spirituals to Swing concert the catalyzing impulse that moved Alfred Lion to found Blue Note Records, or had he harbored the desire to become a record producer and record company owner for some time beforehand?

MC: That's an interesting thing. I never asked him that directly, but a guy who has been researching a lot of the first independent jazz labels believes that Alfred and Max Margolis that got the money going for Blue Note had already been planning to do something, and there were also Solo Art and Circle which were about to appear at that time, and the founders of these labels and Alfred and Max were all friends and

all talking about recording the boogie-woogie piano players. These may have been ideas in incubation before that concert.

AAJ: Lion appeared to be a strong presence and force in the studio as a producer. Was he this way from the very beginning in the early sessions of boogie-woogie piano, hot jazz and modern jazz?

MC: I suspect so. The second set of sessions was the Port of Harlem Jazzmen, and this was almost all slow blues, and no musicians left to their own instincts would do an entire session of slow blues. So I think he was very much involved and coaching them about what he wanted from the session. If he had just left the guys alone they would have done a fairly well paced set, and they definitely would not have done two slow blues for two sides of a 78. And I think that the idea of Meade Lux Lewis performing variations of The Blues in many parts sounds more like an intellectual, pre-thought out idea, instead of what a boogie-woogie pianist would do, walking into a studio. Although it may have been Edmond Hall, I think that the Celeste Quartet with Meade Lux Lewis and Charlie

Christian and the other group with Red Norvo and Teddy Wilson, these drummer-less bands were probably assembled from Alfred Lion's influence, because Alfred always liked things that were different and unusual.

AAJ: Did the practice of paid rehearsals begin early in the company's history, and did Alfred Lion always attend these rehearsals?

By the time Lion was into bebop he was having rehearsals for record dates.

MC: I am not sure when they began, but he always attended the rehearsals, because he used to take notes on them. And my guess would be yes, paid rehearsals from the start, from the way that the records went down. Certainly by the time he was into bebop he was having rehearsals for record dates. And I don't know how innovative that is; in the modern jazz era it was something that was an outstanding feature of his company, as opposed to Savoy or Prestige. But that is basically methodology. I was amazed when

I started to compare notes with Alfred how similar our working habits were, and it wasn't really anything I knew about when I started producing. It was just logical methodology to get the best out of a situation. And really, the key in jazz recording is to get as much done in front, before you get to the studio so that in the studio everybody can focus on the solos from a musician's standpoint. And from a producer's standpoint, you can make sure that the sound is going well and that psychologically everyone is happy and getting along. And if you do all your homework in advance on the sound, and the miking and that the material is all rehearsed and tight, then you can concentrate on what you should be doing, which is capturing the music as it happens and creating an atmosphere that will really work.

AAJ: I think it is unusual in a sense that, running a small independent record company, he actually financed these rehearsals. Other similar companies often did not for budgetary reasons. But as Alfred actually had a concept for each session and was not just recording blowing dates, or recording a working band

swinging through their repertoire, it was somewhat necessary for him to have rehearsals beforehand to get his concept across and get the material together.

MC: Right. The main working band that he had was Horace Silver's. Horace is also a very methodical, compulsive Virgo, and he also put that kind of work into any session no matter what. I wonder how Alfred handled sessions with Art Blakey, whether he would go over the material in advance with Blakey and the band, or not.

Lion may have done what a lot of us might do when producing someone: go to a lot of gigs.

I suspect that he may have done what a lot of us might do when producing someone ongoing: you spend an inordinate amount of time with him, and you go to a lot of his gigs. There are a lot of guys who play tunes, and by the time a record date rolls along they have forgotten about them. I'm glad that I was at certain gigs and said "What about this tune?

Now, this one's really great and you haven't done this in a while". So it gets recorded, but it might have been forgotten forever if weren't around to pay attention to those things.

AAJ: Blue Note was financially imperiled at one point. What turned the tide to a more prosperous position?

MC: I think it was always touch and go at the beginning but he hit a real low point at the end of the 78 and beginning of the 10" LP era, because it had been hard for all the independent labels to go from singles in paper sleeves to suddenly producing artwork, and liner notes, and the printing runs involved. In hindsight we don't think much about this, but this was a major, major added cost of doing business. And that is why Alfred did not start putting out 10" LPs until 1951 even though they were introduced in 1949, I think.

He told me when the 12" LP came, and he had sweated blood to develop a catalog of about 80 to 85 10" LPs it was "Oh my God, I have got to retool!" What really turned the tide were the two 10" Horace Silver Quintet records that really caught fire and developed what we call the "Blue Note Sound" and were

the birth of the Jazz Messengers. They turned the fortunes for him and Blakey and Silver. He actually got a very piddling offer from Atlantic Records to buy him out in 1954, and he was almost tempted to take it. When you own your own business, especially in the jazz record business, no matter how much money comes in, you have to turn it all back into the business, and you put yourself on an allowance that is a lot stingier than it would be if someone else were your boss. That is part of the reason that he finally sold out to Liberty Records years later — ill health and this financial stress. Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun and Jerry Wexler, when they had Atlantic Records sold their publishing company which in the long term was a stupid move, but they sold it in 1959 because they were having all these hits with Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, and the Coasters, but they didn't have a dime to show for it in their weekly income. They sold it so that they could simply get some cash for themselves. It's a lousy situation owning your own business. It is great to be your own boss, but then what a slavedriver your boss turns out to be!

AAJ: Alfred Lion's taste was known to be very refined and discriminating, and his standards were also well known to be very high and demanding. Were there any specific principles that he expressed that he followed in selecting artists to record, or selections to release, or styles to promote?

MC: No, only by elimination. A lot of the 120 or so sessions that I have dug up since the death of the original Blue Note, when you compare those against the sessions that did come out it is kind of revealing how high his standards were, because with the exception of some Grant Green and Lee Morgan sessions, where the stuff that I dug up is just as good as anything that came out — in those two cases there are commercial reasons why something else came out instead of those — other than these you can hear that his standards are high by listening to these sessions that just don't quite make it, that fall short. I don't know how in the day-to-day business he made decisions about who to record or not to record, but I do know that he trusted Ike Quebec and Art Blakey a lot and he relied on them to turn him on to people.

And anyone in the record business relies on musicians to turn them on to other musicians. Alfred seemed to be very astute in the choices he made. Freddie Redd pulled his coat towards the Three Sounds; Lou Donaldson brought in Grant Green... Well, you know all the "who led who to who" stories.

Lion felt he did not have a good ear for vocalists.

Alfred's choices were very good. Of course we also tend to think about the stuff that lasts and that was good, and there were a lot of thing and players that didn't make it. Although they are nice records, he was never successful with Don Wilkerson, and in that place in time Wilkerson was the type of guy someone might say "We've got to market this guy, he's got the tenor solo on 'I've Got a Woman' and all these songs and we could really cross this guy over!" And so Alfred was not successful in this instance. And he felt that he did not have a good ear with vocalists, that is why

he hardly ever recorded vocalists; he felt there were people who just knew that better, had better taste in that area. Blue Note Records has their share of records that were not very good, but I think on percentages their track record was a lot higher than anyone else's at the time.

AAJ: I agree. And I think that a lot of the items he decided not to release another company would have said. "We've paid for these; let's put them out."

MC: Absolutely! As we get further away from the music that was made, I have gotten, as you know, a little more lenient about what I would put out. When I first got into the Blue Note vaults, I would ask Wayne Shorter or Horace Silver to come over and listen to the stuff, their stuff or other people's, and there was a lot of stuff I put aside myself too. When Bruce Lundval restarted Blue Note in 1985, I took another look at it, and there was some more things that I thought were good. Like, for example, Hank Mobley's *Far Away Lands*. I had already put out a bunch of Mobleys that I thought were wonderful, sometimes slightly flawed in terms of execution, but wonderful,

such as Third Season, A Slice Off the Top, and Another Workout, but Far Away Lands was the best of what was left of the unissued Hank, and I wanted to have a release of unissued material in the first year of the new Blue Note launch so suddenly I lowered my bar a little. And I knew Hank and I knew it was very unlikely at that time that he ever would play again. In light of that any Hank Mobley is better than a whole lot of other people. And so there become other reasons for reevaluating. The Blue Note bulletin board has also changed things. One guy asked about Grant Green's first session, with Wynton Kelly, Paul Chamber and Philly Joe Jones. He wrote "How bad could it be for God's sakes with these four guys?" And I went back and listened to it, and yes, Grant is a little nervous and there are rough edges to it, but there's amazing Wynton Kelly and everyone does play well enough, and all those guys are all gone, we'll never hear from them again. And so I am going to put that out next year, because I listened to it again at his prompting. It's not embarrassing and it is historically important, and there are some wonderful moments on it.

For me, every year that goes by there are more and more reasons to put some of this stuff out that I might have overlooked twenty-five years ago. An interesting point is that sales are almost like the movie Groundhog Day—they keep repeating themselves. A reissue will only do relatively speaking as well as the original release did. It can't change history. If Leo Parker didn't sell when it first came out, you can put it out five more times and it won't sell again. The only people I have been able to make a difference with are Tina Brooks and Herbie Nichols. Somehow those broke through and set a historic precedence. But for the most part it is really amazing that no matter what a record did then it will automatically do about the same as a reissue.

AAJ: Do the reissues of Hank Mobley and Grant Green follow this trend?

MC: Grant does well, and he did well then. Even Mobley's '60s stuff sold well. When I put out his '60s stuff, that gets a decent reception. When I would try to put out the '50s stuff, it wouldn't sell and it would show up on the deletion list in about a year and a half, which is finally why I said "The heck with

this" and put together the Mosaic set of the '50s Mobley. I thought "I am never going to get anywhere, I am never going to get all this stuff out at this rate", and that was the germ of the Mobley and Morgan '50s Mosaic sets. "Here is a way to get it out." Same thing with Lee Morgan. His '60s stuff sold the best, and that's what sells now; the '50s stuff didn't sell that well and doesn't sell that well now. His '70s stuff is sort of in between.

Because Mobley had a harder sound in the '60s, he was more accessible.

AAJ: It seems somewhat puzzling to me that so much of the sales and the fans are going for the '60s stuff, and not earlier sessions.

MC: Well you can sort of understand it with Mobley because he had a harder sound, he was more accessible. With Lee Morgan too, he had a lot of stuff with commercial backbeats, and the earlier stuff didn't, and the later stuff was very elongated. I suppose a lot of it is in the

music itself and the normal human reaction to it.

AAJ: How important were Ike Quebec, and later Duke Pearson, in their roles as A and R directors and assistant producers?

Duke Pearson was a heck of an arranger, and he could really put sessions together.

MC: I think Ike was a guy there to sort of co-produce with Alfred, and smooth over any musical mistakes, and he was close to a lot of the younger musicians. He was kind of an Artists and Relations guy, and the guy who could read music and help keep the session on course. And of course he suggested a lot of artists too. Duke Pearson took on a bigger role, because one of his many abilities was as an arranger, and he was a heck of an arranger, and he was someone who could really put sessions together in a highly produced way. His involvement—not on every project but on certain projects ran much deeper. In a lot of ways he moved Alfred into new areas.

For example, “Christo Redentor”: before “The Sidewinder” and before “Song for my Father,” that was the first real crossover success that Blue Note had. And the sextet/septet things that he did for himself and Stanley Turrentine, in many ways a hip jazz outgrowth of the ‘50s Ray Charles band—those were new sounds that he really put together.

AAJ: Which years were the most prosperous for Blue Note, and was this prosperity because of a few hit records, or a series of releases in a style that sold successfully?

MC: The biggest years for Blue Note were I think 1964, 1965 and 1966, when “The Sidewinder” exploded, and “Song for My Father” and all the albums that they put out attendant to those did well. Suddenly Blue Note was really a big deal. You saw more ads by them, you heard more spots on the radio by them, and Blue Note really meant something. And also that led to the time that Alfred then sold the label. I think that the pressure of it had a lot to do with the sale of the label too. Because once you have success and you are an independent label of any kind of music, you go through a series of independent distributors

that cover different geographic areas, and you ship them records, and you want them to sell them so you ship them more, and they won’t pay you for last release until you have a new release that they want. It is really a game of chasing your own tail. So the more successful he was, the more Alfred had to go out on a limb economically, and the more the pressure there was to match the success. That stress was part of his ill health at the time he sold out. Of course, I don’t know what he would have done. Once he did sell and Frank Wolff and Duke Pearson continued on, the whole jazz scene really came apart. The New York scene was great with Slugs and the Vanguard, and a lot of things were happening in the New York club scene, but from a recording standpoint and at radio stations, the whole jazz world started to shrink. A lot of it was due to losing a large audience to what they now call album rock: Country Joe and the Fish, Jefferson Airplane, groups that suddenly were a lot more interesting than three minute pop records. That drained off a lot of the audience I think for jazz. People keep saying it was the Beatles. It wasn’t the Beatles; thirteen-year-

old girls wanted to buy Beatles 45s. It was something that happened much later that drew people that were interested in jazz music, drew them away from the jazz scene. If you look at any jazz label discography, at that point everything went in all directions, desperately trying to do whatever they could. At that point Frank Wolff was recording Ornette Coleman and Andrew Hill on one side of the coin, and on the other side he was trying to find the funkier Lonnie Smith groove to put on record, and every effort to get new young guys like they used to do like the Contemporary Jazz Quintet, just fell flat. Suddenly there was no new blood. No way to get it going. Groups started to fall apart and have a hard time. And then we fell into the '70s and fusion and jazz sort of skipped a generation. In 1985 Alfred said, "I don't know if I had stayed in the music business what I would be recording today." It did get a lot rougher. He really actually got out at the right time in a way.

AAJ: I think he did too. If he had been having health problems because of the stress of the business in the '60s, the '70s would have deep-sixed him.

MC: Although if he had waited a few more years... [Bob] Weinstock, for example, sold his [Prestige] label for a fortune. Alfred got chump change really.

AAJ: In the mid to late '60s Alfred Lion produced recordings influenced by the "New Thing." Was he fully interested in this type of jazz, or did he participate more to support the musicians involved and offer them a place to present this music?

What really shocked me was when Lion came out with his first Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor records.

MC: That's a good question. He had been leading up to it, with Jackie McLean going in that direction, and he signed Andrew Hill in 1963, and Tony Williams and Sam Rivers, so it was a gradual thing. What really shocked me at the time was when he came out with his first Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor records, because usually talent at Blue Note was homegrown and this was one of the first times somebody that was already famous had

come to Blue Note. And I am not sure why. It may be at the time those guys were having a hard time getting recorded, and maybe he felt that they should be recorded and he made a deal with them. Someone who was on the scene then has said that he thought that what really drove Alfred out of the business was the stress of arguments with a lot of the avant-garde guys and that music, and yet when I told Alfred that I was going to put together the One Night With Blue Note concerts, one of the first things out of his mouth was "Oh you've got to get Cecil Taylor." So I don't that was totally accurate that particular perception, I think someone was putting their own views into it. He genuinely got into that music, and it is interesting because Cecil is the one guy that I would never expect Alfred to get into, simply because Cecil's sense of time is so unlike any sense of swing. You can understand Ornette and that gutbucket Texas blues sound, and people like Andrew who is an extension of hard bop, but Cecil really did surprise me.

AAJ: How do you think Alfred Lion would react now to the release of sessions and selections in the last decades that he had

not wished to put out at the time of their creation?

MC: We talked about that one morning. His reaction was, “Some of that stuff, I don’t know why I didn’t release that at the time.” In fact, that is how I got to know him.

I grew up with Lion’s records, and I was in his vault, playing God.

He was a recluse at the time. The only guy he would talk to was Horace Silver, and Horace said that he would get these records and start asking questions like “Who is this guy?” and “Why is he putting out these records? Do you know him?” Finally Horace gave him my number and he called one day and a relationship started up. But this was one guy I never thought I would meet. I grew up with his records, and I was in his vault playing God with his records, and I thought “It is a shame I will never meet him.” But fortunately things changed and I did. A lot of it he couldn’t remember. I asked him about specifics and he

said he didn’t know. He was surprised that there were instances where there were catalog numbers and album titles, and where the album covers even appeared on inner sleeves and were advertised, and the albums never came out. He said “No, I don’t know why that would have been.” Of course in the day to day of things a lot of stuff gets lost. He wasn’t looking at it ten paces back as history, he was just dealing with it every day as it came along. And then with guys who had economic problems for obvious reasons would go in there and ask for advances and do record dates just to get the money and he recorded a lot more Grant Green and Lee Morgan than he could ever have issued. The surprise is that Frank Wolff and Duke Pearson later on when the pickings were slimmer never went in and used much of that. They did go in and dig some stuff out like the Grant Green with the cowboy tunes, and a couple of Art Blakeys and a couple of Jimmy Smiths, but for the most part they really didn’t go back and use any of that at a time when I thought it would have been a good way to keep that pipeline going. Any of those Blue Note albums that I caused to come

out later on anyone could have sat down and said “Here are the musical reasons this didn’t come out, the rhythm section didn’t quite gel, the ensembles are loose,” or this was too hip and the guy was having a hit at the time. One of my favorite things that I found was [Lee Morgan’s] Tomcat. People don’t realize that the other album that Morgan recorded around the same time as Tomcat that fell into the cracks was Search for the New Land. That didn’t come out until about five years after it was recorded for the same reason that Tomcat got shelved: The Sidewinder took off and they had to scramble into the studio and cut The Rumproller. And so be damned with these other two records; they weren’t what the distributors are screaming for.

AAJ: He did support artist like Monk, Hill and Nichols by recording them and he had to have known that they would not sell.

MC: He hung on as long as he could. Fortunately Frank Wolff continued on with Andrew Hill, because Andrew was as close to Frank as he was to Alfred. Unfortunately a lot of Andrew’s later stuff... we talked about that. I don’t think I have ever put out any

of Andrew's stuff without talking to him about it first. I asked him about some of this other stuff, and he said it was just a hard time to find people that could play the music the way he wanted, and to play with him long enough to make the music work. I get a lot of requests for Mosaic to do the second half of the Andrew Hill legacy. But unfortunately, it would be a lot of stuff that almost made it but with no masterpieces, and it would be a very lopsided body of work, lopsided by the absence of the really great stuff. There are good moments, but there is no Point of Departure. Andrew is hard to sell, and I think part of the reason is there is a darkness to his music. In the same way I think Herbie Nichols is hard because there is a density in his music, that wasn't in Monk's music. Monk has a happier more danceable side.

AAJ: What do you feel is the most vivid legacy of Alfred Lion and the most visible influence on the jazz recordings of today?

MC: Probably the Art Blakey/Horace Silver axis. Thirty-five years ago I would have said Jimmy Smith, because at that time the organ was sort of an industry unto itself and it had

a powerful impact outside the jazz community. But I think the most lasting influence and you take it right up to the newest musicians today, or the guys who first came on the renaissance, the Wynton Marsalises and the Benny Greens, is the writing and style and swing and style of playing that is credited as the Jazz Messenger style.

AAJ: I also think Alfred Lion has been an influence also on the way that jazz records are produced, in attempting to have a "company sound."

MC: Well that only really happened two more times that I can think of, and they are as different from Blue Note as anything could possibly be, and CTI and ECM are the only other labels I can think of where if you like that sound, you can buy the next CTI or ECM the way we used to buy Blue Notes blind. When I bought Una Mas and One Step Beyond I don't know that I had ever heard Kenny Dorham and Jackie McLean. I bought them because they were the new Blue Notes. And that was at a time when every record was a major decision: it was lunch money.

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FUSION: A DIRTY WORD?

BY MIKE BRANNON

When I was just starting out, playing guitar in bands as a kid, it was the Blues of Muddy Waters, Fred McDowell, Howlin' Wolf and then the Stones, Hendrix, Cream, Johnny Winter, Kinks, Clapton, The Who, Led Zeppelin etc. A natural progression.

Then, when I was about 18 I heard a record with Joe Pass and Herb Ellis on it doing guitar duets and everything changed. From then on music was a 'serious' thing, not just a lot of fun. I found that music could do more than just satisfy good times with friends (and attract girls), it could make one think. It could address the intellect, the emotions, the physical and even the spiritual side. I can't say my tastes haven't changed since then but it was a turning point for me, aesthetically. From then on I searched for things displaying greater intellectual and technical prowess and the interplay of improvisation without forgoing feeling.

Discovering jazz caused a change in my entire direction in life. I ended up studying music not just playing it. It led me to Berklee in Boston and later to study with Charlie Banacos, an unsung master among musicians

of the highest caliber. To even be in his presence is to know there are levels far beyond where you are and always will be. And in that was a comfort anytime we thought we could run out of things to practice! Ha! Eventually, both sides once suitably developed, merged into a connected whole. Like the so-called 'fusion' of jazz and rock, what I felt was the height of musical ability and expression was that displayed by those who were truly moved by the music of Hendrix, Sly, James Brown, Bach, 'Trane, Otis Redding, Stevie Wonder, Miles, Monk, Cream, Frank Zappa and all in between.

Somehow 'fusion' became a dirty word. To be associated with fusion was to be less, not both, but neither jazz nor rock. At least not either done well or authentically. It took awhile for this new connected form to grow up and to be accepted as something valid in its own right. It took an entire generation, some would say. In either case, that generation is now grown, and this is both a legit art form and an exciting subset of jazz and rock. One that may have actually saved and resurrected Jazz, as it was going at the time.

There is something to this in the current zeitgeist. I've seen this expressed by many artists including Josh Redman who says growing up that he didn't classify or separate different styles in his record collection, but that the only types of music are that which moves you and that which doesn't. Some might say: good and bad. Bill Frisell has also voiced the same aesthetic in describing his musical evolution, as have many others. And as a result their music is richer for it. The farther we can open our minds the more we can accept that is good about all pursuits. A filter is still helpful, even necessary for focusing on what's of the most value, especially when studying.

Those successful proponents of the merging of jazz and rock are now many and not surprisingly are littered with guitarists. Among others, they include Miles, Mike Stern, Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Bill Frisell, Pat Martino, John McLaughlin, Jaco Pastorius, Chick Corea, Mike Brecker, John Medeski, Dave Weckl and many others. Some of these guys may have considered themselves 'purists' at one time. This usually happens when we're

studying to become something and we feel we have to be serious and focused. Other times its merely a marketing thing. Some have never sought or needed to constrain themselves that way. Either way, we all have some great music to listen to as a result.

Being open to different forms is what allows 'jazz' to breathe and what keeps it vital.

Doing this kind of music doesn't keep anyone from swinging as hard as any straight ahead player. Or laying down funk like you were born to it. Or slammin' the blues or rock gigs like it was all that was in your blood. No, as a matter of fact the freedom we allow ourselves in being open to these different forms is what allows 'jazz' to breathe and what keeps it vital and from becoming merely a museum piece gathering dust. Jazz is surprise and excitement. Its the thing that makes us laugh when we recognize a quote within a brilliant solo as it goes by or a reference to another player, either by tone,

line or technique. Its what rivets an audience when two players square of to cut each other (not that music is competition but it does happen). Its what keeps our interest in a 12 minute drum or bass solo (some folks still don't understand, and that's cool). And sometimes you just wanna hear a rock groove with straight eighths (or sixteenths) but also with the cerebral aspect connected in overdrive. That's cool. So is tearing down walls and expectations.

All 'fusion' means is a melding of two or more musical styles. They can be ANY two, or more. People forget that, I think. So, whether you call it fusion or jazz/rock or just great, exciting music that keeps us surprised, interested and wanting more... or whether you won't let yourself listen to it at all, maybe because you feel its a 'mutt' or 'poorbred music', just remember: jazz in its purest form was once called 'the devil's music'. And this was by the very African-American culture it came from! Jazz is itself a fusion... it came from Blues and Spirituals combined with European Art music. And these are still areas we look to for current inspiration to propel

this music forward even now.

So, as music grows, so does our individual aesthetics, as they should. And so do we. Music and art has been said to reflect our times, and it does. On a more personal level it also can reflect who we are.

Maybe we could all give it a rest and put some music on... whatever works for you.



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RUSSELL SUMMERS:

THE PURSUIT OF BEAUTY

BY ALLEN HUOTARI

Beauty is unbearable, driving us to despair, offering us for a minute the glimpse of an eternity that we should like to stretch out over the whole of time. — Albert Camus

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed. — Albert Einstein

It has been reported that the average person strolling through an art gallery or science museum will spend no more than 30 seconds looking at each object or exhibit. No matter if it is a painting, photograph, tapestry, or sculpture, or whether it is an interactive demonstration of a principle in nature, the time taken for “appreciation” is approximately equal to that needed to bite, chew, and swallow a mouthful of food.

Personally, I’m not certain which lack of sustained focus is the most surprising, alarming, or saddening (i.e., being unwilling to savor the myriad visual aspects inherent in art,

being resistant to the innumerable thought provoking concepts in science, or being too hurried to relish the multiple flavors and scents in one's meal).

Is this a consequence of living in a world and society where "speed is life"? Where "beauty" has been reduced to the demand for instant and immediate gratification or confused with sheer entertainment? Where pausing to wonder simply takes too much time? (No relativity jokes please.)

Or is it that the average person must readily avert the mysterious? That fleeting glimpses of eternity are all that can be endured? That being overwhelmed by splendor has been mistaken for impatience or indifference? Well...probably not.

Although the definition of beauty is, of course, completely and utterly subjective ("in the eye of the beholder", ya dig?), the simple truth is that beauty is all around us. A casual survey of one's immediate surroundings will reveal beauty in a variety of forms. For this writer, on this October evening, it is to be found in the smile of a child, a gentle touch from my wife, the flash

of lightning illuminating the neighborhood landscape, the reverberant echoes of it's thunder moments later, and the sound of rain. All are experiences that deserve to be lingered over. At the continued risk of sermonizing, just as the body consumes food for nutrition and digests it for physical nourishment and growth, so should the senses take in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches as memories for the nurturing of heart, mind, and soul.

Who can pause to wonder, stand rapt in awe, and willingly risk despair as they bear the unbearable?

On the other hand, it could be argued that artists and scientists are simply those individuals who have been blessed with the gift of being able to gaze into the infinite and articulate upon what they have seen. Who can pause to wonder, stand rapt in awe, and willingly and repeatedly risk despair as they bear the unbearable?

Or perhaps, more simply and less dramatically, these are folk who are simply

sharing their own personal experiences with beauty as revealed within their immediate lives and surroundings.

Russell Summers, executive producer of nuscope recordings, may understand this concept better than most founders of independent labels. Summers "started nuscope recordings in 1998 to document the daring and life-affirming musics of musicians whose goals are to stimulate, mystify, and move."

Although only 8 recordings have been released to date, nuscope is already making an indelible impression. With an unswerving diligence to quality in both sonics and graphics, nuscope can take its place among larger and better established labels such as Winter and Winter, Songlines, Tzadik, Hat Hut, and ECM.

To help celebrate the release of a trio recording by Sten Sandell, Fred Lonberg-Holm and Michael Zerang, All About Jazz is pleased to present the following interview with nuscope recordings founder and executive producer, Russell Summers. This interview was conducted via e-mail in October 2000. (Special thanks to AAJ Modern Jazz Editor Glenn

Astarita for facilitating this interview.)

ALL ABOUT JAZZ: Would you please give us a brief history of nuscope? Please include an explanation as to why or what inspired you to found this label.

I experienced many dreams that continued to haunt me throughout the years.

RUSSELL SUMMERS: There is not much to tell about the history of nuscope, except that I finally collected the funding and began the label in 1998 after several years of contemplation. I also experienced many dreams that continued to haunt me throughout the years. My first release included two musicians of significant notoriety — pianists Fred van Hove and Georg Graewe — so that helped establish nuscope as a significant label in the marketplace from day one.

The artistic integrity of the artists involved is what inspired me to start the label. For me, the arts in general has been one way for me to enjoy life immensely — perhaps I am too fond

of Schopenhauer, but his thought certainly helped lead the way for me to further immerse myself in the arts to remove me somewhat from a simultaneously bland, violent, and quite frankly often tacky world. Having said that, however, there is a lot of beauty in life if you search for it. Starting the nuscope label is my way of contributing to that beauty.

More specifically, ECM's Manfred Eicher and Hat Hut's Werner Uehlinger have been inspirational. Both producers have made leading a record label an art as opposed to merely another profit-mongering exercise.

The graphics of each label have been very inspirational as well. A huge influence for the graphics on nuscope were the first CDs on the Hat Art 6000 series, for which their graphic artists — most notably Walter Bosshardt, used modern art works with tasteful font types. Obviously, Peter Pfister's sonic imprint on most Hat Hut releases and Jan Erik Kongshaug's engineering with ECM were large influences as well.

AAJ: Are there any underlying and/or unifying aesthetic policies or criteria that define what is or is not fitting for nuscope to

release? If so, could you please explain these?

RS: I waver between lyricism and complete abstraction in my tastes, so I like to embrace both. For example, I recently released a tuneful and through-composed Ben Goldberg project along with a disc with Georg Graewe, Peter van Bergen, and Barre Phillips, which is completely improvised and much more abstract.

As for criteria, I accept very few tapes for projects that I am not involved in directly. My preferences are to release recordings by visionary musicians who are also gifted technically.

I also prefer music that makes excellent use of space. One disc that I am about to release — a session with Swedish pianist Sten Sandell, Chicago-based cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm, and percussionist Michael Zerang — makes incredible use of space and silence — there are many passages with pauses, sustained notes, and pianissimo playing. That silence is counterbalanced by dense clouds of activity that make the silences more profound — it is almost like looking at a painting by Cy Twombly.

Also, it is essential to have an excellent recording. Improvisation would be elevated as an art if more recordings were of excellent quality. Yes, it is important and even essential to “get the music out there,” but it is difficult for me to listen to recordings with poor resolution, “buried” instruments, and even dropouts from the source tape. For instance, I remembered not wanting Music and Arts to release the Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway disc *View from Points West* because it came from days in which, as a producer, I was less experienced in understanding sonics. I still have some ways to go, but so far, I have been pleased with the majority of recordings on nuscope.

Lastly, I hope to continue to keep the graphics, artwork, and presentation consistent. I do not have the technical knowledge of many graphic artists, but I do believe that I have a fairly good eye for a unified graphic direction. I prefer labels that pay attention to consistency without becoming monotonous in its execution. ECM is a fine example of this sort of aesthetic.

AAJ: What demands or obligations does

nuscope place on you personally and professionally?

RS: Obviously, running any label places great demands upon one’s life. For me, it means sacrificing significant time and money to keep the label going. Until I am able to break even, or better yet, make money, there is a great degree of struggle involved in keeping things together at times. However, sales have almost tripled within the past year, so there is a lot of hope in this direction.

Balancing quality with a low budget is a significant challenge, and I have been able to do so.

Also, I have certainly learned to become a better business person. Dealing with manufacturing agents, musicians, publishing agents, and the like has been a great experience. Balancing quality with a low budget is a significant challenge, and I have been able to do so to a degree that I am quite happy with. I would eventually like to receive support from an individual or company that

is willing to allow me to continue to exercise artistic control and devote more quality time to running nuscope.

AAJ: What is your favorite story about life with nuscope? What is the most satisfying or rewarding part of your job? What makes all this effort worthwhile? (i.e., WHY do you do this?)

RS: Well, I would have to say that working with the musicians has been the most rewarding part of the job. Many of these musicians have been quite willing to trust me and work with me to collaborate towards the finished disc. Sitting in a studio and hearing the music evolve for the first time can be a monumental experience. I certainly felt this recently in Chicago as Sten Sandell recorded his new solo piano disc, which nuscope hopes to release in the Spring of 2002. Sten’s playing was fresh, concise, powerful, and quite frankly moving.

What makes this all worthwhile is contributing to an art form that deserves wider exposure and better presentation. This music is seen as a fringe art, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be packaged as such. Working towards

enhancing the image of the music is a real joy, and it has been worth every moment.

AAJ: If possible, could you briefly describe the process that a recording might go through from being a “release candidate” to a “finished product”?

RS: Again, I prefer to initiate my own projects for the label, although there are exceptions, such as Hornets Collage by the trio of Scott Fields, François Houle, and Jason Roebke. Scott has terrific taste and great ears, so that project landed into my lap complete.

The new disc that I am about to release with Swedish pianist Sten Sandell, cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm, and percussionist Michael Zerang is a similar but even more interesting case. Fred sent me a tape with another quartet, which wasn't to my taste, but I asked him if he had recorded with Sten and Michael during their tour in 1998, which he did. And, not so amazingly, the music was electrifying and fresh and the recording superb, so I sequenced the disc and we all collaborated on the final mix.

For most of my projects, however, I come up with ideas myself, which often evolve as I

am daydreaming. Sometimes, the idea literally comes to mind as I wake up in the morning, as it did when I realized that Ralph Towner would be the perfect foil for a trio project with Bill Bruford and Eddie Gomez. That project, which Bill Bruford agreed to do, came out Robert Fripp's Discipline label a couple of years back.

Anyway, for nuscope, I contact the musicians, many of whom are quite receptive to my ideas. There have been some notable exceptions, but I have been pleased about the percentage of interested parties. I get the best results when I combine musicians that have worked together with those who have rarely or never performed with the others. Therefore, you have the freshness brought about by the infusion of a new voice into the group along with the stability that only comes when musicians have worked together for some time.

After I contact the musicians, I usually arrange the recording sessions. To that end, I communicate with the engineer to discuss my concept of the sound and of microphone techniques, et al. I am no technophile, but fortunately, the engineers have understood enough to help me forge a consistent sonic

vision. I attend most of the sessions that I initiate, because I want to have personal contact with the musicians and make certain that the sound meets nuscope standards. I occasionally contribute artistically, but not during every session.

After the session, the musicians and/or I come up with the sequence. Next, I usually send the session tapes to my engineer, Alan Bise, for mastering, draft the graphics, arrange the use of artwork and photos, complete the packaging, and send it off to the manufacturer. After the disc is complete, I send copies to the press, etc.

Strangely, I do not have anything that I would like to change about the music industry.

AAJ: If you could change one aspect of the recording industry at large, what would it be?

RS: Strangely, I do not have anything that I would like to change about the industry. I mean, I think that some of the decisions that major labels make seem strange to me,

but they are in it primarily for the money. Why complain? Things will always remain as they were, which enables small labels such as nuscope to survive and hopefully thrive.

I believe the digital domain has made it easier for nuscope to thrive.

AAJ: Do you think that digital recording technology has made it easier for independent recording labels to be founded and to continue to operate? Why or why not?

RS: Yes, I believe that the digital domain has made it easier for labels such as nuscope to thrive. It is less expensive than analog, yet the resolution from digital recording has become every bit (no pun intended) as strong as analog, which took some time to happen.

Also, I have a tendency to find flaws in master tapes before I am to send them for manufacture, so this technology makes it easy for me to have the engineer solve the problem quickly. And, thank goodness, the artist can at least review a recording more clearly on a

digital audio tape (DAT) or CD-R instead of having to wade through the consistent drop-outs and hiss from an analog cassette tape. Digital has been a god-send.

AAJ: Do you feel that the continued growth of the Internet is making it easier for independent recording labels to be founded and to continue to operate? Why or why not?

RS: Yes, the Internet has helped independent recording labels quite a bit. First, it is relatively easy for me to provide running updates about the label on my website <http://www.nuscoperrec.com>. Also, because of websites such as Peter Stubley's fine European Free Improvisation site, news of artists and new releases become much more easily disseminated for music followers.

Also, there are many web sites that feature articles and reviews such as One Final Note and All About Jazz that are effectively reviewing discs and interviewing musicians and other people in the business. Most of these web sites have many visitors, and is yet another means by which the music press can reach people. All of these factors make it much easier for a label to continue to operate.

AAJ: What have been the best and worst aspects of the Internet for nuscope? Please elaborate.

RS: The best aspect of the Internet, as I mentioned, is the exposure that the music receives. The worst case scenario would be that people would take music from the Internet and create discs from those sound bytes. But, to be honest, I am really not very worried about this scenario stunting sales.

AAJ: How do you anticipate that the availability of economical high speed Internet access is going to change the music industry? Is it evolution or revolution? Or merely big business hype?

RS: At this time, I do not see this trend as affecting the music industry, even for high-profile popular artists. The Internet itself has been solid enough to boost interest in this and other musics.

AAJ: What do you think are the greatest artistic and business challenges (problems and/or opportunities) for nuscope as it heads into the year 2001 and beyond?

CD REVIEWS

Monk/Not Monk

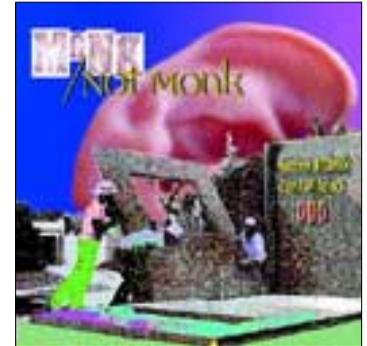
Matthew Brubeck/David Widelock

Beegum Records

One of the most satisfying ways jazz can enliven itself is with unusual instrumental combinations. Cellist Matthew Brubeck and guitarist David Widelock embark on their third duo record, *Monk/Not Monk*, with a pared-down string instrumentation distinguishing them from the vast sea of piano trios and horn quartets. It's a very effective combination. Brubeck can hold down the low end with arranged or walking basslines, yet step up for chordal accompaniment or high-end soloing.

Widelock's playing is also quite versatile, allowing for space in the precious midrange while providing a harmonic framework and singing solo work.

The fine sound quality on *Monk/Not Monk* reveals the details of their interplay through



an exceptionally warm and well-resolved image.

Monk tunes make up a quarter of the twelve tracks on this record; the rest range from Miles Davis to the Beatles. However, the contrapuntal spirit of Monk shines through in all the pieces. Whether arranged or improvised, Brubeck and Widelock engage in a dynamic interplay which never settles down into formation for long. Versatility and sensitivity are the key words here. Whether communicating the melancholy sweetness of Davis's "Nardis" or the jaunty blues of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" (with slide guitar), the duo find unusual and intriguing approaches. *Monk/Not Monk* is a real winner of a disc which continues to reward the listener after many spins on the CD player. Beware, though — it might be a challenge to find this Beegum Records release in your local shop.

—Nils Jacobson

The Goldberg Variations

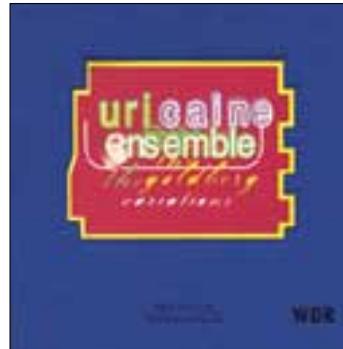
Uri Caine Ensemble

Winter & Winter

Pianist/composer Uri Caine has assembled a rather large aggregation of talent for this thoroughly audacious rendering of Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Goldberg Variations*. And while Caine has tackled Mahler, Wagner and Schumann with much success, on this release, the pianist melds classical music with genre hopping, doses of humor and sprightly interludes that makes for one heck of an extravaganza.

A 2-CD set that expands the original 30 variations into 70 pieces, we must also be cognizant of the fact that Caine's

arrangements and compositions are primarily adaptations. Along with such notables as trumpeter Ralph Alessi, clarinetist Don Byron, bassist James Genus, vocalist David Moss, the "Koln String Quartet"



and many others, Caine's musical visions draw upon a vast array of styles that includes, spoken word, DJ Logic's turntables, jazz, baroque, gospel and more. Disk 1, features pieces such as "The Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Variation", where the listener is treated to David Moss' farcical vocals atop classical overtones whereas, clarinetist Greg Osby and Caine engage in a bit of free-jazz type dialogue on "Variation For Saxophone & Piano". Yet the various ensembles also meld straight-ahead jazz with variations that feature Afro-Cuban rhythms and soulful blues.

Disc 2 commences with "Variation 16 Overture" which boasts a lovely theme thanks to Cordula Breuer's luscious notes and sweet-tempered musings performed on alto recorder; however, David Moss' playfully stout and largely indecipherable vocals might be characteristic of a grumpy old codger. Here, Moss could be poking a bit of fun at Bach or possibly your stereotypical frustrated-German classical composer. All in good fun I may add.

With Disc 2, you will also hear bassoon and trumpet duets, swing vamps, the great Ernst Reijseger performing a cello solo and

just about anything else imaginable. Basically, one of the great attributes of this ambitious project is based upon Caine's ability to inject humor and disparate elements into his writings and arrangements; although, there's much more than meets the eye here as ideas abound with ceaseless invention and soulful articulation despite the semi austere implications. Perhaps the bottom line or desired effect of this project is contingent upon the relationships established between varying art forms and how all music is rooted and intertwined. Either way you view it, Caine's *The Goldberg Variations* is a magnificent event for the aural senses! Highly recommended.

—*Glenn Astarita*

Written In The Stars Bill Charlap Trio Blue Note

After a decade of accompanying some of the world's best-known jazz vocalists and instrumentalists, pianist Bill Charlap is stepping forth, front and center, to claim his well-deserved recognition as a pianist with melodic expressiveness and straightforward appeal. While Charlap performed in Gerry Mulligan's, Phil Woods' and Clark Terry's groups, it's easier to imagine him accompanying singers like Carol Sloane, Tony Bennett or Sheila Jordan. Bill Charlap approaches a tune in the same way that a singer unfolds a song — little by little with tinges of joy and sadness and with discrete dramatic moments that connect with the listener.

Charlap's understated story-telling approach must derive from his upbringing by Broadway composer Moose Charlap ("Peter Pan") and singer Sandy Stewart ("My Coloring Book"). Fully appreciating the nuances of the American songbook, Charlap chooses to include the under-recorded choruses of the tunes, and his improvisations consist of embellishments of

the ever-present, even though unstated, lyrics.

Even though Charlap previously recorded with his present trio, *Written In The Stars* represents his first big-time release, complete with promotional events ranging from this month's week-long appearance at The Village Vanguard, interviews, tours of the major festivals and airplay galore.

The two unrelated Washingtons on the album, Peter and Kenny, establish an ease and interplay that animate the tunes not through flash but through understatement.

Listen to Harold Arlen's "It Was Written In The Stars," and it becomes evident that Peter Washington creates a slight tension with a pedal point as Charlap's chord changes shift, though rooted. Or "Blue Skies" begins with the seldom-heard chorus, perhaps puzzling the listener with its vague suggestion of the song to follow as well as its final tempo — which



happens to be an unostentatious, lively romp. “Where Or When” evolves into a swaying waltz enlivened by Kenny Washington’s steadfast foundation created from lightly tapped cymbals with a snare rim accent on the second beat.

More in the elegant tradition of Tommy Flanagan than the variegated unpredictable nature of a Kenny Barron, more in the lyrical style of Jimmy Rowles than in the smoldering fire of a McCoy Tyner, Charlap reveals the natural, sophisticated extroversion of standards—through the controlled, fast-paced swing of “Slow Boat To China” or through the unaccompanied reflectiveness of “I’ll Never Go There Anymore.” Appropriately enough, “I’ll Never Go There Anymore” was written by Eddie Lawrence... and Moose Charlap.

—Don Williamson

Colors

Avishai Cohen

Stretch

Releasing already his third CD on the Stretch label, Avishai Cohen is further elaborating on the vision he revealed on *Adama* and continued through his second CD, *Devotion*.

Make no mistake about it: “Vision” is the appropriate word for explaining the aesthetic he expresses on *Colors*. Not only does Cohen possess an broad artistic perspective that becomes more evident with each release, but also he quite literally compares the music he embraces with the literal sense of vision. Indeed, in the liner notes, Cohen goes so far as to compare an E minor chord to dark red and a G major chord to light green. Now, that’s a fairly detailed order within an overriding vision. Nonetheless, Cohen’s appreciation of the inter-relatedness of art forms helps him borrow from experiences and sights for musical expression.

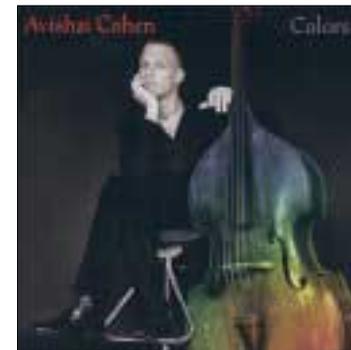
Thus, it’s entirely appropriate to describe Cohen’s music in terms of palettes and hues and prisms and concentrations of elements for a resulting mixture of basic colors and basic

notes that result in a shifting kaleidoscope of artistic endeavor.

“Shuffle”

involves a celebration of sorts in an loping introductory meter that dissolves into a 4/4 swing featuring the outstanding soloists of his band. “Balkan” refers to the folk origins of the music that Cohen investigates, Amos Hoffman making those origins explicit with his employment of the oud for Eastern European, and indeed Middle Eastern, shadings. Claudia Acuna joins Cohen’s group for wordless expression in unison with the instruments on “Emotions,” humanizing the songs through the use of the voice.

The point, it seems, of Cohen’s music leads to the conclusion of the universality of his music, which of course borrows from jazz. It also incorporates elements of Latin rhythms, Sephardic phrasing, gypsy populism



and classical harmonies performed by a string quartet.

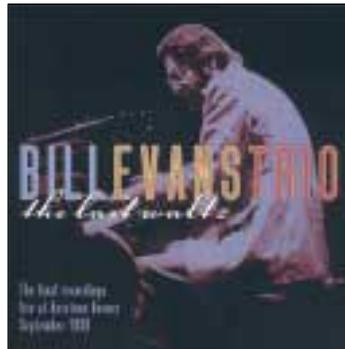
Joined again by his boyhood friend, Avi Lebovich on trombone, as well as his working band, Avishai Cohen further expands upon his distinctly individual approach to music. On "Colors," he delves even more into the underlying artistic basis for his music...not to mention the converging concepts of all of the realms of art.

—Don Williamson

The Last Waltz Bill Evans Trio Milestone

Bill Evans died, at the age of 51, on September 15, 1980. In what has been described by friends and family as "slow suicide," he finally succumbed to the effects of the years of substance abuse. Like Charlie Parker before him the world was alternatively too beautiful and too ugly to endure. For fans of Bill Evans, like those of Bird, the Grateful Dead and today's Phish, his live performances have been extensively bootlegged, traded and revered. *The Last Waltz* IS the last recording of Evans and his trio, made just a week before he passed away.

Evans was schooled early in the European classical piano. His studies and eventual college degree in music and music education were not the typical resume for a jazz star in the early



1950s. But then again Evans never fit into a typical jazz scenario. A fan of Nat King Cole, Evans always applied the structure of the European tradition to his music.

The criticism that he didn't swing or play the blues always followed him, yet Miles Davis called upon Evans as the foundation for perhaps the most important record of jazz history. Of course I am referring to *Kind Of Blue*, the 1959 modal jazz masterpiece. Evans, the inspiration and co-author of the recording date, influenced not only Miles' playing, but also the creation of jazz beyond the simple theme, solo, solo, theme. Evans endured in Davis' band despite the racist comments and harassing by audiences that believed Miles should front an all-black band. Notwithstanding Miles' continued defense of the pianist, Evans left the band. But he departed with the confidence to start his own bands. The legend of Bill Evans came in the form of the jazz trio and this format would persist for him over the next 20 year, until his death. His influence can be heard in every pianist recording today from Keith Jarrett, Fred Hersch, to Brad Mehldau.

Evans' jazz trios, from the first with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, to his final trio of Marc Johnson and Joe LaBarbera, included jazz innovators, not merely sidemen.

His bassists have included Eddie Gomez, Gary Peacock, Michael Moore, George Mraz, and Chuck Israels. The list of drummers is long and rich with the likes of Philly Joe Jones, Marty Morell, Eliot Zigmund, Larry Bunker, Marty Morell, and Jack DeJohnette. Each in his own way helped Evans redefine the jazz trio.

Beginning with his 1961 live recordings from New York's Village Vanguard, Evans (like Sonny Rollins) almost always sounded better in a live setting.

That may be a strange concept because Evans was a shy, withdrawn performer that rarely communicated with the audience to even name the tunes played. I couldn't help but compare this last date with the Riverside Vanguard recordings *Waltz for Debby* and *Sunday At The Village Vanguard*. But it's like comparing apples to oranges.

It can be argued that Evans circa 1961 was at the pinnacle of his career. Every fan cherishes the creativity and unbridled

joy of these sessions, what Nat Hentoff called "urgently imaginative." But they were recorded just weeks before Scott LaFaro was killed in a car accident, before Evans' brother and longtime girlfriend were to commit suicide, and before Evans' began to feel the debilitating effects of his drug abuse.

Exulted as some sort of a jazz god, Evans struggled with his burden to communicate for the next twenty-years. These final sessions, like the collected Village Vanguard session of the same year, *Turn Out The Stars* (Warner) remind me of Art Pepper's Village Vanguard recordings.

Pepper, like Evans was ravished by drug abuse and knew that his life was coming to an end. Both artists also knew they were no longer in top form on their instruments. But for both, pure expression was their goal. Evans was almost sprinting to heaven, making each gig, each set, and every song count. Sure I prefer the 1961 version of "Waltz For Debby" to this 1980 track, but I treasure his sacrifice more here. These sessions consist of 65 tracks recorded at San Francisco's Keystone Korner over nine days. The then unauthorized taping

is of good quality, and for fans of the great one these recordings remind us of the beauty that the tragedy of living is.

—Mark Corroto

Deep Summer Music

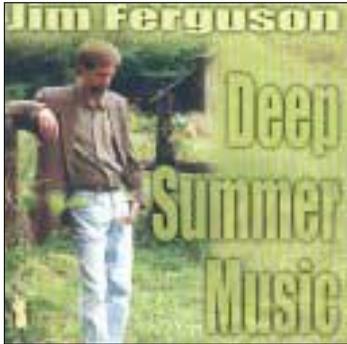
Jim Ferguson

A-Records

Which season of the year is the most romantic?

Jim Ferguson sings of the romance that exists for all seasons. For his latest album he's selected a program of songs that dig deep; they tug at your heartstrings. Samples may be found at his web site. The session includes standards from Matt Dennis, Rodgers & Hart, Sammy Cahn, Jimmy Van Heusen and Yip Harburg, as well as a handful of Ferguson's originals. These songs represent a romantic spirit for any time of the year.

Henry Mancini's "Slow Hot Wind" reminds the listener of the importance of Nature to romance. Stefan Karlsson and Chris Potter add to that romantic air with impressive lyrical thoughts. On bass, Ferguson contributes a natural rhythm



and melody. His approach to the bass, of course, is vocal-like. "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" is presented by Ferguson alone: just bass and vocal. The combination works quite well. As the protégé of songwriter-pianist Loonis McGlohon and bassist Red Mitchell, Jim Ferguson has developed a melodic style for both instruments. "Come Home to Red" swings cool to the heart of jazz. Pared down with tenor saxophone and bass alongside his vocal lines, this lively tribute brings out the goose bumps. Ferguson's "Walkin' the Dog" is a humorous look at living together and needing a little space from time to time: the key to a healthy relationship. His inventive "What's a Guy Supposed to Do?" includes a little scat singing, while "Deep Summer Music" settles down with romance and a slow ballad crawl. Whether it's the rainy season, the coldest week of winter, or a torrid heat wave, Jim Ferguson's romantic collection of songs goes right to the heart of good music.

—Jim Santella

Soulcall

Nnenna Freelon

Concord Jazz

Nnenna Freelon's high profile self-titled recording debut on Columbia Records in 1992 prematurely vaulted the young singer onto the national jazz stage. Unfortunately, Freelon was still in the process of developing her style and a major record label like Columbia proved to be a less than ideal environment for a singer with growing pains.

It wasn't until signing with Concord Jazz in 1996 that Freelon truly began to find her own voice. Her two previous Grammy-nominated CDs for the label, *Shaking Free*

(1996), and *Maiden Voyage* (1998), represented significant artistic leaps forward. Freelon's latest recording, *Soulcall*, finds this talented and engaging singer continuing to stretch herself in new and interesting directions.



Freelon has shed her early Sarah Vaughan mannerisms to create her own approach to the art of jazz singing. She combines a smooth alto voice with a brash, almost aggressive, style of phrasing. Favoring intensity of feeling over subtlety of expression, Freelon generates some of the visceral excitement of a soul singer but without any of the associated vocal quirks. Although very good, her wordless improvising, which strongly reflects the influence of Ella Fitzgerald, does not quite have the depth or imagination of Dee Dee Bridgewater's or Dominique Eade's. However, Freelon judiciously limits her use of scat singing to an occasional chorus, deploying it as an appealing ornamental device rather than as the centerpiece of a performance.

On *Soulcall*, Freelon has assembled a diverse collection of songs and an impressive array of musicians to explore the theme of positive spirituality. What makes the recording ultimately so successful is the formidable level of concentration Freelon brings to every performance. Using 10 different combinations of musicians, she has thoughtfully and carefully reconceived each tune. "Straighten

Up and Fly Right" becomes an infectious, finger snapping, a capella showcase for Freelon and the vocal group Take 6, while the 1928 song "Button Up Your Overcoat" receives a funky, thoroughly modern transformation. Freelon takes the first chorus of "Just in Time" with only James Williams on piano and redefines the song as a gospel piece before being joined by the rest of the trio for an exuberant, swinging finish. Freelon sings two versions of "Amazing Grace" — one, accompanied only by Takana Miyamoto on piano, treats the song with a child's sense of wonderment while the second, more fully realized version, becomes an adult's celebration of redemption.

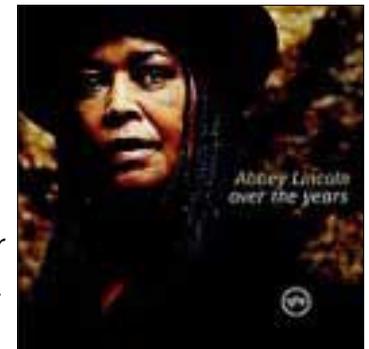
However, not every performance achieves the same level of synergy. A couple of tracks are given bland, smooth jazz arrangements and some of the material is not as strong as it should be. Overall, however, this is an enjoyable recording from an artist who has not only found her own voice, but who, it turns out, also has something very interesting to say.

—*Mathew Bahl*

Over the Years Abbey Lincoln Verve

During the 1960s Abbey Lincoln successfully combined political activism with a busy, successful career. After divorcing husband drummer Max Roach, the 1970s and 1980s found her relegated to the back burner of the entertainment world although she was still recording, mostly for independent labels. Then came Stan Getz who recommended her to Verve Records and who played on Lincoln's so-called "comeback album", the successful *You Gotta Pay the Band*. Since then, she has been restored to her rightful place as a major jazz diva, with several albums for Verve, personal appearances and other events accorded to a jazz star.

Now at 70, with more than 40 years traversing the boards, comes her latest offering, *Over the Years*, designed, I guess, to be a



summing up of a long career. The play list is rather unusual even for an iconoclast like Lincoln. There are tunes from the 1940s, traditional material, some romantic standards and a few of her own compositions. "When the Lights Go on Again All Over the World" was one of the more popular World War II songs, reaching number 1 for Vaughan Monroe in 1943. "Lucky to Be Me" is from the Bernstein, Comden, Green musical, *On the Town*, and features some ear catching playing by the rhythm section of Brandon McCune, John Ormond and Jaz Sawyer, all relatively unknown musicians. (However, if their work on this album is an indication, that state of affairs won't last long.)

Another fine track is the traditional "Blackberry Blossoms", to which Lincoln has added her own lyrics. She is ably supported on this cut by guest tenor player, Joe Lovano, and guest guitarist Kendra Shank, who is also a singer of note. These two open up the tune with a melodic duet before Lincoln comes on. Lovano assumes the role of Stan Getz as he becomes tender behind Lincoln on "What Will Tomorrow Bring". The album's coda is

appropriate as Lincoln sings "Tender as a Rose" a capella letting her vocal chords stand on their own without benefit of instrumental accompaniment as she ends it with "as that's the way the story goes".

Despite her years, her voice has lost nothing. In it is maturity, there's even more that, husky, dark and musical appeal that makes Lincoln's singing so alluring. One interesting thing about this album is that Lincoln relies less on dramatic effects she employed on earlier albums. Perhaps she feels that this refinement better allows her to express her approach to singing which she has said to be: "I don't sing jazz. You can't sing jazz. You have to sing your spirit and your heart and your soul. It's not about being clever and scatting and competing with the horns. It's about storytelling... taking somebody somewhere." Highly recommended.

—Dave Nathan

A Tree Frog Tonality John Lindberg Ensemble Between The Lines

With *A Tree Frog Tonality*, it becomes easily discernible that we are listening to a union of seasoned modern jazz experts who demonstrate their respective crafts with cunning artistry and inspiring resolve.

Bassist John Lindberg is arguably one of the finest acoustic bassists on this modern jazz globe as his credits and resume reads like an unending shopping list. On this new release, Lindberg performs with his peers under the moniker of the John Lindberg Ensemble for a radiant set emanating from studio sessions recorded in March 2000 during a European tour.

The proceedings commence with the three-part "Thanksgiving Suite", where Lindberg and Larry Ochs, here performing on soprano sax, pursue dainty choruses atop staid



undercurrents, whereas the duo also initiates a bit of melodrama in concert with invigorating spurts of emotion. Essentially the “Thanksgiving Suite” is a strong vehicle for the proverbial, let’s-introduce-the-band sequence yet it is quite evident that this strategy is not implemented or perhaps implied as a means for parody or traditionalism. Drummer Andrew Cyrille and Lindberg set poetry in motion on “Part II—Mellow T”, while “Part III—Dreaming At...”, establishes the presence of trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith as the quartet launches into a lightly swinging yet circuitous path on the piece titled “Four Fathers”. Here, Lindberg steers the flow with pronounced ostinatos and springy walking bass lines as Cyrille demonstrates his mastery of understatement by providing the rhythmic nuance with such control and precision, you’d think he was tapping his sticks on eggshells.

The band intimates a cool, sleek vibe with a hybrid bop/swing motif on “Good To Go”, as the musicians emit an air of suspense or bewilderment due to their shrewd implementation of multihued tonalities to coincide with a fruitful harmonic relationship.

Ultimately, The “John Lindberg Ensemble” provides the necessary ingredients for a mantra that befits many years of combined professionalism, savvy and superb musicianship yet it’s all about distinctive stylists converging for an ingenious meeting of the musical minds. Highly recommended!

—Glenn Astarita

Beauty Burning

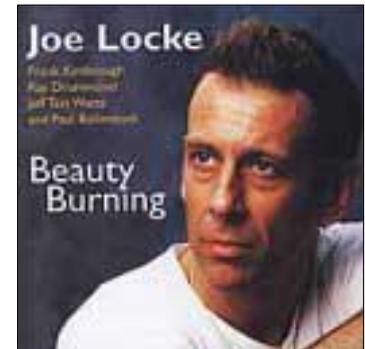
Joe Locke

Sirocco Jazz Limited

Vibraphonist Joe Locke and pianist Frank Kimbrough have developed a camaraderie that was well documented on 1999’s *Saturn’s Child*. *Beauty Burning* is the next chapter in that fruitful relationship, but this time bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Jeff “Tain” Watts join the party. Guitarist Paul Bollenback also appears on three tracks.

Kicking off the session with Chick Corea’s up-tempo “Litha,” Locke launches right into his furious lines and weaves them through the tune’s complicated form. His intensity

remains at a high level on Darrell Grant’s R&B-flavored “Twilight,” Ray Drummond’s medium-slow hard bop chart “I-95,” and Locke’s closing Latin/swing romp “Rasputainian Dance,” the last of which features a particularly hot solo



by Bollenback.

Bollenback's acoustic guitar is a nice touch on Kimbrough's "Quiet As It's Kept," a composition that appeared—quite differently—on the pianist's album *Noumena*. Similarly, Watts's "Pools of Amber," originally recorded in trio with the late Kenny Kirkland on *Citizen Tain*, appears here as a beautiful quartet piece. Locke and Kimbrough bring back the sparkling textures of *Saturn's Child* with a duo reading of "Where Is Love," a ballad from the film *Oliver*. The most serious magic, however, happens on Locke's "Somewhere Waiting." Kimbrough reaches great heights during his solo and is cleverly featured playing the catchy riff alone toward the end of the song.

Locke is a fiery and speedy player, tremendously exciting to listen to. But he also knows how to coax lyrical possibilities from every tune, and how to feature his band to full effect.

—David R. Adler

Tribute to the Trumpet Masters

Brian Lynch

Sharp Nine

From stints with Horace Silver and Art Blakey to those with such Latin luminaries as Hector LaVoe and Eddie Palmieri, trumpeter Brian Lynch has learned his lessons well. First turning a few heads with his solid series of dates as a leader for Criss Cross, Lynch made the move to the fledgling Sharp Nine label in 1995. There he would record his first volume of quartet recordings, *Keep Your Circle Small*, to be followed two years later with the multifaceted *Spheres of Influence*.

Spheres would prove to be a hard act to follow, owing to its elaborate and far-ranging implications, yet Lynch's second set of quartet recordings as

documented on the newly issued *Tribute to the Trumpet Masters* is far from being any kind of letdown. In fact, it not only acts as a solid



homage but also testifies to Lynch's talent as a lead voice. There have been relatively few records in the jazz annals sporting just a trumpeter with rhythmic backing (standouts for this reviewer would have to include Kenny Dorham's *Quiet Kenny* and Ted Curson's *Fire Down Below*). The instrument is a demanding one and it's often easier to include a saxophone in the front line to balance out the leadership chores. But as he did on *Keep Your Circle Small*, Lynch once again proves that the quartet setting can be a viable one for trumpet.

Lynch has also shrewdly avoided just picking out tunes by the trumpeters he's chosen to spotlight. Out of the nine cuts on the disc, over half of them are Lynch originals and each one sports a title that lays claim to the artist being feted. The most impressive of these are the sprightly "Woody Shaw" and the propulsive bossa of "Tom Harrell," which recalls such Harrell compositions as "Moon Alley" and "Sail Away." Freddie Hubbard's "Eclipse" provides a magnificent ballad forum for Lynch and both Booker Little's "Opening Statement" and Lee Morgan's "Search for the New Land" are

valuable pieces seldom if ever done by modern day players.

Lynch is extraordinary throughout in both lead and solo statements, with motivated backing coming from pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Essiet Essiet, and drummer Carl Allen. In fact, this may be Miller's finest work of recent vintage; he absolutely tears it up on the aforementioned "Woody Shaw." So while there may be a few years of delay between releases from Lynch, they're always worth the wait and his recent Sharp Nine dates have yet to disappoint.

—Chris Hovan

Soul Of The Conga Poncho Sanchez Concord Picante

¡Viva La Familia!

Poncho Sanchez' Latin jazz band is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. And what a way to celebrate.

With organist Joey DeFrancesco adding soulful sounds to the band's vibrant program, this session smokes with deeply rooted traditions. There are the Hammond

B-3 organ grooves with powerful horn solos alongside. Then, there's the lovely two-part vocal harmony Sanchez and Tony Banda express from a simpler, rustic, cultural standpoint. And then there's Terence Blanchard's contribution on a timeless ballad. But the biggest surprise comes from the Ortiz Brothers, who sing in the traditional changui style from Oriente, Cuba. Sanchez joins the brothers on congas, as they



chant and sing in Spanish with a different kind of soul.

Sanchez has been inviting special guests to work with his band for a long time. Past visitors to the family's affairs include Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Harris, Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaria, Dianne Reeves and the Jazz Crusaders. For this session, DeFrancesco works for half the album, Blanchard for one ballad, and the Ortiz Brothers for four.

"Haitian Lady" offers one of the most dramatic moments of the program, as DeFrancesco and the band stir up repressed emotions. As always, the three horns in this band's lineup work together as a tight unit and step forward individually with outstanding solo presentations. Saxophonist Martin soars on alto through three bright numbers, on tenor for three more, and on baritone for a handful more. The combination of baritone saxophone with organ on "Bodacious Q" invites a fun-loving, party atmosphere. Several of the selections sweep gently to a danceable beat. It's an opportunity for dancing couples to get involved physically with this band's magic. But when the hot solos erupt, much of the dancing

motion stops and the audience crowds around to see it firsthand.

Sanchez sings several of the songs with a natural charm and sincere expression. His powerful conga technique continues to impress. On the closing “Rumba de Po-Tiz,” particularly, the leader tears up the place with the kind of percussive tales that he’s been relating for twenty years. Sounds like he’s got the strength to go at least another twenty.

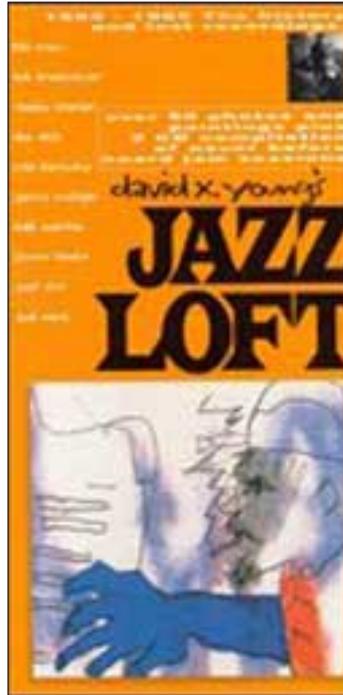
—*Jim Santella*

David X. Young’s Jazz Loft Various Artists

Jazz Magnet

From 1954 to 1965, David X. Young, a painter and jazz aficionado who is still very much alive, turned his studio in New York’s flower district into an oasis for some of the greatest jazz players of the era. The space became known to history as the “Jazz Loft,” where countless jam sessions transpired and a very special scene took root. This two-disc package from Jazz Magnet Records unearths some of the music that went down at Young’s place.

The principal figures include valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, tenor man



Zoot Sims, baritone man Pepper Adams, pianists Hall Overton and Mose Allison, and guitarists Jim Hall and Jimmy Raney. These, however, are only a few of the players who made Young’s loft their second home during those years.

The recording quality of the jam sessions is surprisingly good, but “This Can’t Be Love” and “Stompin’ at the Savoy,” from a 1959 Christmas eve session, are a bit sluggish and go on too long. (Both tracks also feature a trumpet player who isn’t even given an anonymous credit on the program list. It could be either Jerry Lloyd or Don Ellis, both of whom are listed elsewhere.) But there are better fruits from this same session: a spirited “Groovin’ High”; outstanding performances by Zoot and pianist Dave McKenna on the ballad “When the Sun Comes Out”; Brookmeyer on piano for “821 Blues”; and a brief, self-explanatory interlude titled “Zoot & Drums.”

These aren’t the best, however. The really priceless selections feature Brookmeyer, Hall and Raney together, Overton, bassist Bill Crow, and drummer Dick Scott. This stellar grouping blows with passion and refinement

on “There Will Never Be Another You” and Gigi Gryce’s “Wildwood” (both taken from a 1957 session). In 1965, with McKenna at the piano, they demonstrate consummate subtlety on the bright bop tune “Spuds.” Another top highlight, also from 1965, features Zoot, McKenna, an upright-playing Steve Swallow, and an unnamed drummer on a tune called “Dark Cloud,” co-written by Sims and Jon Hendricks.

In addition to the music, the package includes a booklet with reproductions of Young’s paintings, assorted photos, an introductory essay by Howard Mandel, and brief reflections by some of the players. But the main attraction, of course, is the music, which provides an enticing behind-the-scenes look at some of jazz’s most important and intriguing figures.

—David R. Adler

The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings of Gerald Wilson and His Orchestra

Gerald Wilson

Mosaic

Even with the reissue boon that has resulted in so much obscure music seeing the light of day, certain artists have not fared well when it comes to the availability of their work.

Dick Bock’s Pacific Jazz imprimatur falls under the Blue Note/Capitol umbrella, but past reissues have seemed to focus on “cool school” items with sets from Chet Baker, Bud Shank, and Bill Perkins being the norm. Hard bop artists such as Curtis Amy, Paul Bryant, Frank Butler, The Jazz Crusaders, Charles Kynard and Gerald Wilson have been much less represented in the entire scheme of things. In Wilson’s case, out of the ten albums he made during his stay with Pacific Jazz, only two have ever been reissued on



CD in the United States. This sad state of affairs is certainly put right with Mosaic’s new packaging of the entire output of Wilson’s Pacific Jazz sides as a leader, although the terrific sessions he arranged for Les McCann and Carmel Jones are not included here and will hopefully see their own reissue at some later date.

With experience as an arranger for Jimmy Lunceford behind him, gifted writer and bandleader Gerald Wilson set up his own big band in 1944 and has actively maintained an ensemble of some kind or another ever since. By the time he hooked up with Dick Bock and Pacific Jazz in 1961, Wilson had already become one of the most distinguished composers and arrangers of his era. Unfortunately, the mere fact that he resided on the West Coast meant that he was not as well known to record buyers of the time as Count Basie or Duke Ellington. *You Better Believe It* is notable for the appearance of organist Groove Holmes, soon to become a major seller for Pacific Jazz in his own right. “The Wailer” and “Blues For Yna Yna” are particularly choice on this memorable maiden

voyage.

The first of many tributes to matadors (bull fighting being one of Wilson's favorite pastimes), "Viva Tirado" makes its appearance on *Moment of Truth*. The homage scheme reaches its ultimate fruition on *Portraits*, with pieces dedicated to matador Paco Camino, master musician Ravi Shankar, composer Aram Khachaturian, and jazz great Eric Dolphy. Soloists Joe Pass, Teddy Edwards, and Jack Wilson play prominent roles in all three of these aforementioned quintessential albums.

Giving a jazzy update to pop material of the day was not uncommon during the '60s. Duke Ellington, of course, made an entire album of his own version of the score from *Mary Poppins*. Wilson was also ingenious enough to handle such challenging assignments, although the closest he ever got to an entire album of pop-inflected material was on *Feelin' Kinda Blues*. Even here though, Wilson's integrity as an arranger comes shining through on such unlikely numbers as the Beatles' "Yesterday" and James Browns' "I Feel Good."

The Golden Sword, from 1966, is one of the best Wilson albums of the entire Pacific

Jazz lot and it features the "Latin tinge" that Jelly Roll Morton often spoke of, with bullfighting and Mexican motifs also exploited to their fullest. "Carlos" is another tribute to a bullfighter, in this case being Carlos Arruza. Other highly attractive pieces include "Blues Latinese" and "The Feather."

The next set documented a few evenings from the band's stay at Marty's on the Hill in Los Angeles.

Never content to stay too long in one area however, it was back to more traditional forms for the next set which documented a few evenings from the band's stay at Marty's On The Hill in Los Angeles. Trumpeter Charles Tolliver, a truly inventive talent who has yet to receive his dues, makes his debut with the band on this occasion and his own early masterpiece, "The Paper Man," is part of the program.

The final threesome of Wilson albums for Pacific Jazz (*Everywhere*, *California Soul*, and *Eternal Equinox*) carries us through to the

end of the '60s. Occasional pop material figured into the mix, such as "Light My Fire," "Aquarius," and "Sunshine of Your Love," yet Wilson's ability to transcend material (Oliver Nelson was another genius in this department) ensures that each of these albums has more than enough valuable music to make for an easy recommendation. In short, the entire body of work as presented in this collection is worthy of rediscovery, not just those known entities. In addition, prominent artists to play a part in these closing sets include Bobby Hutcherson, Roy Ayers, Bud Shank, and Anthony Ortega

For devoted Mosaic followers the usual packaging remains constant; a 12 x 12 box houses the five compact discs and a 20 page booklet. In addition to a complete discography and session-by-session annotation by writer Doug Ramsey, there are a wealth of photos from such photographers as Ray Avery, Woody Woodward, and Francis Wolff. Limited to 5000 copies worldwide.

—Chris Hovan

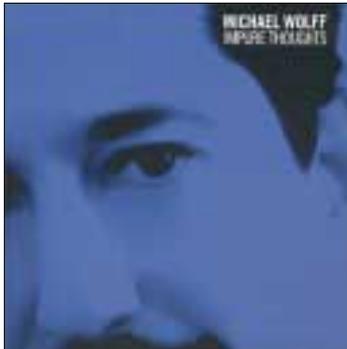
Impure Thoughts

Michael Wolff

Indianola Music Group

What say you? You have come before us with impure thoughts of what a jam band should be! You know better than that. Close your eyes and open your mind for many bands that truly jam were doing so decades before the term was coined. Michael Wolff has closed his and the result is heard in the pure deep groove of *Impure Thoughts*.

Many know pianist/ composer Michael Wolff from his long, respected tenure as pianist for jazz legends such as Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Rollins and Cal Tjader. Others were introduced to him in his five years as bandleader on the Arsenio Hall show. And then there were the four critically acclaimed straight ahead jazz solo recordings that brought him notoriety and, all of which, held top five



positions in the U.S. jazz charts. And further still, many were introduced to Wolff this summer as he composed the soundtrack for the award-winning feature motion picture *The Tic Code*, based on his real life story and written by and starring his wife, actress Polly Draper (from the TV series *thirtysomething*). *The Tic Code*, which also stars Gregory Hines, tells the story of a young piano prodigy with Tourette syndrome. So, with all these credits and musical ambitions, there was only one road to travel, the one less traveled.

Impure Thoughts features Wolff on acoustic piano but also brims with a dense cascading backdrop of African and Indian Beats and a percussive wall of syncopation produced by bass, reeds, shakers, drums and tablas. In assembling the band for this new musical jam, Wolff corralled some “heavies” including tabla player, Badal Roy, who made the original marriage between jazz and Indian music complete when he recorded on Miles Davis’ *On the Corner*. And with Roy in the mix, Michael pays homage to Miles, the fusion patriarch, with a propulsive version of *In A Silent Way*.

In the simplest terms, *Impure Thoughts*

comes across as a collective of musicians stretching out and having a blast. From the exotic Indian tones on “Eritrea” and “Euphoria” to the African infused swagger of “Bengal”, you’ll feel like you’re on a mysterious jungle safari. And if spice is what you crave, “Mama Tell Me” incorporates a festive Latin/ Cuban groove over which Wolff gets busy, but not too much so, as he slips back into the pocket and lets the band discover a new plane to graze upon. From there, the blood in your appendages keeps on flowing, as the band pulses and throbs through renditions of funk classics “Papa Was a Rolling Stone” and “Thank You Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin”. So, stop crowding your thoughts with impure notions and take a refreshing ride that reaches beyond and brings distinct worlds of music one step closer to fusionary perfection.

—Rob Evanoff



CONCERT REVIEWS

A Love Affair: Tribute to Ivan Lins
Carnegie Hall
New York, NY
October 2000

Telarc Records recently put out a compilation disc honoring the Brazilian songwriter Ivan Lins. Titled *A Love Affair*, it features some of America's biggest pop and jazz names, including Sting, Dianne Reeves, Vanessa Williams, and Chaka Khan. Producing and directing the affair is keyboardist Jason Miles, the brains behind Telarc's recent Weather Report tribute. While the record, and Lins' music generally, tends toward "smooth jazz" at times, many of the tracks grab you with their irresistible melodic lilt and harmonic movement. Vanessa Williams's version of "Love Dance" is a knockout, and Dianne Reeves's delectable "Sweet Presence" is also a keeper. Lins has a gift; that much is undeniable.

When *A Love Affair* came to the Carnegie Hall stage, Ivan Lins himself was more the focal point. (He sings only one song on the record.) Performing the first half of the show with his touring Brazilian band, Lins played keyboards and sang, his endearingly

unpolished voice effortlessly winning over the crowd. After a couple of numbers, Lins brought out his first guest, the rotund and charming singer Ed Motta, who displayed an accessible, R&B-style voice and even did some human beatbox, referencing classic rock bass lines like “In a Gadda Da Vida” and Led Zeppelin’s “Heartbreaker.”

Singing beautifully in Portuguese, Pinheiro and Lins did one duet before yielding the floor.

Leila Pinheiro, the next guest, sang the only non-Lins songs of the evening, beginning with Jobim’s classic “Aguas de Marco.” Singing beautifully in Portuguese, Pinheiro and Lins did one duet before yielding the floor to the percussionists, Pirulito and Jaguará, who tried to outdo each other on an assortment of instruments.

Following intermission, Jason Miles and an American band took the stage. Bassist Will Lee led off with a passable vocal on the groovy “She Walks This Earth,” which is sung on the

album by Sting. Next, Lins played and sang a solo medley, after which the parade of guests started to flow more quickly. Freddy Cole, with his low, throaty voice, was something of a departure for the evening. He was wonderful, but too low in the mix. The curly soprano-wielding Dave Koz, whose hyperactive noodlings whipped the crowd into a frenzy, was the concert’s most wholehearted leap into “smooth jazz” terrain. Vanessa Williams, in a very fluffy pink dress, brought genuine star power to the stage, but her rendering of “Love Dance” was not as inspired as on the record. Following Williams was Brenda Russell, with her fine, unpretentious vocal style. Here was one of the evening’s classiest acts. But soon enough, class went out the window with Peter White, the “smooth jazz” acoustic guitarist. While not as in-your-face as Koz, White’s playing was similarly insubstantial, and he seemed to compensate for the fact by shuffling back and forth across the stage. Then, finally, the moment the crowd had been waiting for: Chaka Khan was introduced. In a brown leather dress and with two backup singers in tow, the diva kicked ass on Lins’s “So Crazy for This

Love.” All the guests then returned to the stage for a spirited encore, Lins’s “Somos Todos Iquais Nesta Noite.”

Lins’s guests drove home an important fact about Lins himself: He’s written some indescribably beautiful songs, but he’s also capable of churning out cheese. An evening like this was bound to contain helpings of both. The unsung hero of the night: nylon-string master Romero Lubambo, whose solos on Freddy Cole’s and Brenda Russell’s numbers were models of tonal subtlety, theoretical depth, and melodic beauty.

—David R. Adler

Vandermark 5
October 6, 2000
Columbus, Ohio

With much anticipation and very little fanfare, Ken Vandermark's "5" walked on to the un-miked floor of Lil' Brothers, a local tavern. That he worked from the floor, as opposed to the platform where the three-chords-and-stagediving-bruise-fest was to take place later that night, was as significant as the music they would play. Vandermark, the recent recipient of a MacArthur genius grant, chose to base himself and his bands out of Chicago (not New York) and to record on the small but excellent labels Atavistic, Okka, and Delmark. His conscious choices are about the responsibility and apparent obligation he feels to this music and the musicians who play it and have played it. For instance, each song on his recordings is dedicated to a significant jazz musician, some you've heard of and others you better check out.

The band of trombonist Jeb Bishop, bassist Kent Kessler, drummer Tim Mulvenna, alto and tenor saxophonist Dave Rempis and Ken Vandermark playing tenor saxophone,

clarinet and bass clarinet opened with Ornette Coleman's "Happy House." Like all the music the quintet would play in the show, the opener was played in a brief (under six-minute) manner. Vandermark's arrangements suggest discipline. Snap. The front line plays the chorus and as Vandermark maintains the frame of reference of the song, alto saxophonist Rempis blurts a brief fiery line (that ends way too quickly for my tastes.)

Subsequent songs unfolded V5's presentation of jazz as jukebox fodder. "Ground" was played as a post-funk/post-modern groove with Rempis blowing a Marshall Allen-like solo before Vandermark took his turn at a Brotzmann power blast. Even as they ran the new composition "Coast To Coast" with it's Splatter Trio opening, I was on to their tight ensemble approach with compact (yet intense) soloing and tight arrangements.

Their latest recording, *Burn The Incline* (Atavistic), is an excellent representation of how tight this band plays live. They covered several tracks from this release including "Roulette", a four-and-a-half-minute theme song for the coolest cop show you've never

seen. The music they play is almost pop music for jazz ears. No, that doesn't mean it's 'lite' or fusion, it means that Vandermark dishes his compositions in edible chunks. Remember when the 'out-there' musicians like Thelonious Monk did exactly that? They wrote small bite music. It was digestible and, for Monk, danceable. Vandermark does the same like on the orchestrated hard-bop "Heads Up" and the film noir-ish "In Focus." What a concept: edible avant-music. It's appetizing and sustained, and you know what? It's good for you.

—Mark Corroto

RS: I see no artistic problems with the years ahead. If anything, the sky is the limit artistically. As long as people are buying the CDs, I can afford to continue to run a label with high artistic standards.

As for business challenges, I am cautiously optimistic. There seems to be an audience for this music, and it is not about to end anytime soon. There are some exciting changes

I am noticing some former die-hard acoustic music fans are warming to electronics. That's a healthy sign.

happening with improvised music, and the so-called "old masters" (and I use that term with much tongue in cheek) such as Evan Parker continue to find new ways with which to construct and present their music.

So, I see the old (but by no means retroactive) ideas keeping pace with new developments, and the audience becoming

open to both, which bodes well for the future. For example, I am noticing some former die-hard acoustic music fans are warming to electronics, something that I thought I would never observe. That is a healthy sign that the business end—that is—selling CDs is not about to wain.

Whether the support comes from individuals or corporations, there is enough of a market to sustain the music. For nuscope, I firmly believe that it will weather any small recession or dip in the market that we may experience.

AAJ: Aside from nuscope recordings, what would be on your Top 10 Desert Island Discs?

RS: Below are the discs, although not necessarily in any particular order:

Giuffre/Bley/Swallow —
1961 (ECM)

Giuffre/Bley/Swallow —
Free Fall (Columbia Legacy)

Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway —
Sonic Fiction (Hat Art)

Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway —
Saturn Cycle (Music and Arts)

Dave Douglas —

Parallel Worlds (Soul Note)

Anthony Braxton —

Willisau (Quartet) 1991 (Hat Art)

Guillermo Gregario —

Approximately (Hat Art)

Bley/Parker/Phillips —

Time Will Tell (ECM)

Schippenbach Trio —

Elf Bagatellen (FMP)

Leimgruber/Crispell/Leandre/Hauser —

Quartet Noir (Victor)

And those are only the "improvised" new music choices! There are actually many more—I would require a lot of luggage if I were stranded...

AAJ: What upcoming projects from nuscope should AAJ readers be aware of?

RS: Well, nuscope is about to release the trio with Sten Sandell, Fred Lonberg-Holm and Michael Zerang. Next Spring will see the release of the new Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway disc from their 10th anniversary tour. We recorded that trio live in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the fall of 1999. In September of 2001, nuscope will release a CD featuring

John Butcher, Phil Durrant, and cellist Peggy Lee that was recorded in Vancouver this past summer.

We are also about to record a new trio with Fred van Hove, Frank Gratkowski, and Tony Oxley in Germany, which we also plan to release in the fall of 2001. Of course, the Sten Sandell solo piano disc that was mentioned earlier in this interview will be released in the Spring of 2002 along, I hope, with a second Scandinavian project.

AAJ: Thanks for your time and effort during this interview.

RS: Thanks for the questions, and for your interest in nuscope recordings!

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