

**SCRAPBOOK**



J.J. Johnson, the founding father of the modern jazz trombone.

JAZZ

## Trombone Renaissance?

By LEONARD FEATHER

Part in a two-part series

Whatever happened to the jazz trombone? This may seem like a loaded question, unfair to those who still practice their profession on this horn, yet it is undeniable that trombonists are no longer in the forefront of the scene. For every youngster who decided to take up this difficult instrument, there must be a hundred who pick up a guitar, learn a few chords and rush headlong into a career.

Among the Swing Era and post-swing giants, long gone are Tommy Dorsey and Jack Teagarden. Of the great Ellingtonians, for whom Duke fashioned frameworks, Tricky Sam Nanton, Juan Tizol, Wilbur de Paris and Tyree Glenn are no longer among us. Neither are Count Basie's Dickie Wells, Benny Morton, Vic Dickenson or Woody Herman's Bill Harris, Kai Winding and Benny Green, who led their own small groups in the 1950s, died years ago. Benny Goodman's Lou McGarity and Cutty Cutshall also are among the missing, as is J.C. Higginbotham.

Lawrence Brown, a vital voice in the Ellington band, hung up his horn forever in 1970. Frank Rosolino killed himself in 1978. Ed Hubbe, once with the World's Greatest

Jazz Band, when last heard of was a chicken farmer.

It's a depressing picture until you examine the other side of the coin. There is actually a minor renaissance at work, in which the most prominent figure is the founding father of modern trombone, J.J. Johnson.

Once hailed as a sort of sliding Dizzy Gillespie, Johnson all but gave up the horn after moving to California in 1970 to become a composer/arranger for TV and movies. After his last assignment, as regular writer for "Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer," conditions slowed down (as they have for most screen scorers in this age of synthesizers and rock tracks). Johnson decided to pick up his horn again, form a group and go on tour.

Johnson disagrees with the premise that the trombone's present Cinderella status has to do with its sound, its technical demands or the vagaries of fashion.

"Actually," he said the other day in a call from Boston, "there are a lot of guys around who are playing up a storm. They just aren't getting recognition."

"Slide Hampton, for example, is doing some amazing things—and on a big, monstrous horn, the bass

trombone. Curtis Fuller, who used to work with Art Blakey, has played beautifully every time I've heard him. Up here in the world of academia, where the air is rarefied and the level of musicianship high, I've listened to Phil Wilson, who left Woody Herman to head the trombone department at Berklee College of Music. He does impossible things on the horn!"

Johnson's return to jazz was one of a series of steps involving a new life style. He will compose for his new jazz quintet, and for larger groups now and then, but grandiose composing and conducting for film scores are the farthest thing from his mind.

He surprised his friends recently by announcing that he and his wife will leave Los Angeles to move back to Indianapolis, where they were born. They have already bought a home there and will take occupancy as soon as they have sold their home in Sherman Oaks.

"It's time for a change," he says. "Mr. Khayyam said it: The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on." That sounds corny, but it's true.

"My mother and father, 84 and 85, still live in Indianapolis. Vivian and I went to high school there, and we look forward to enjoying a good life with the old friends and relatives who are still there."

Johnson was eager to emphasize that he feels no sour-grapes attitude toward Hollywood. "I've had a wonderful time in L.A. Musicians were kind and generous to me, and I had a lot of help from trombonists and composers. I didn't put down New York when I left there, and I don't put Los Angeles down now."

With the help of Slide Hampton, he has found a manager in New York and some world-class musicians for his group. His pianist is Cedar Walton, who has worked with him often in the past. Victor Lewis, the drummer, and Rufus Reid on bass are also well-established.

"The new discovery in the group is my saxophonist, Tom Gullion. He's from Bloomington, Ind., only 22, and I hired him on the basis of a tape I heard. He's a young monster, believe me." (The Johnson Quintet will man the stand tonight at the Loa in Santa Monica.)

Along with his tours as leader of the group, Johnson will step up his

activities as a speaker. His enthusiastic, stentorian voice (so suitable to a trombonist) will be heard at colleges, where he will talk about the instrument's history and potential before offering live demonstrations.

The new Johnson Quintet is being submitted for a record deal; meanwhile, a CD of some 1960s sessions has been reissued on RCA Bluebird ("Say When," 6277-2-RB). Despite the economics of the traveling jazz group, he will be able occasionally to make appearances in more ambitious settings. On Jan. 14, he will be the principal guest soloist at the National Assn. of Jazz Educators' annual convention in Detroit, joining with a long-popular Air Force band, the Airmen of Note, in Slide Hampton's arrangements of three well-known Johnson compositions: "Lament," "Say When" and "El Camino Real."

Johnson's reputation as a performer has survived the 17 years during which he rarely appeared in public, in fact, literally, he has continued to win the Down Beat poll as No. 1 trombonist even when he was inactive.

Told that he has won again this year, he reacted in amazement. "Are you sure? I can't believe it! That compares interestingly with the recent Down Beat Critics' Poll, in which I finished fourth, with several people high on the list

whom I'd never even heard of. But that's as it should be, it's healthy to have new guys coming out of the woodwork and playing good trombone. [The critics' favorite was Ray Anderson, who has worked with Anthony Braxton and other avant-gardists.]

"But as for that Readers' Poll—you've made my day! Wonders will never cease—I'll have to go out and buy 10 copies."

Reminded that his tremendous reputation has carried him through the non-playing years, Johnson laughed and replied: "Let's just say I've been around the block a few times—and I'm happy to be back." □

Los Angeles Times 11/20/87

## Jazz Reviews

### Rowles-O'Hara Group at Donte's

Sometimes, strange as it may seem, little oaks from great acorns grow. The small band heard Wednesday evening at Donte's was clearly an offshoot of Maiden Voyage, the big band that is now regrettably inactive.

Co-leaders of this five-piece unit are Stacy Rowles on fluegelhorn and trumpet, and Betty O'Hara, who plays valve trombone, with occasional side ventures on the double belled euphonium and the fluegelhorn.

Though they brought some written music along, informality was the keynote. Usually Rowles would state a theme while O'Hara limned out a casual counterpoint. On "Nobody Else But Me" O'Hara sang an airily charming vocal, with Rowles backing her on muted trumpet.

The two horns interacted well, though most of the group's value stemmed from the consistently rewarding solos that took up most of the time. Neal Hefti's attractive tune "Fred," and such staples as "Secret Love" and "Speak Low," provided adequate outlets for the leaders as well as for Liz Kinnon, an economic but eloquent pianist, and for the remarkable Mary Ann McSweeney on bass.

We live in an age when the extraordinary becomes the norm. Either there are simply no inferior bass players left or they are all out of work—as they should be when talent like McSweeney's is available.

Jeanette Rate, the regular drummer, was replaced on this gig by Sherman Ferguson, a highly qualified sub, who ended the set with a quirky solo consisting of rhythmic hand claps.

The Rowles-O'Hara fivesome offers first rate, versatile illustrations of where the jazz mainstream flows at this enlightened point in time. Donte's has invited the group back on Dec. 2.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# REMEMBERING SWEET PEA

By  
Leonard Feather

It is hard for those of us who knew him to realize that Billy "Sweet Pea" Strayhorn has been gone for 20 years.

Ironically, although cancer took him from us on 31 May 1967, he is better known now than during his lifetime. More people today know that it was he, not Duke Ellington, who wrote *Take the A Train*, and it is performed nowadays more frequently than ever.

Tunes he wrote that were scarcely noticed in his lifetime, such as *I Gotta and Blood Count*, are belatedly becoming jazz standards. Recently during one week I received three albums of Strayhorn's music: one by Marian McPartland, one by Art Farmer, and a compact disc reissue of Duke Ellington's own *And His Mother Called Him Bill*, the magnificent collection of Strayhorn tunes recorded shortly after Billy's death.

Billy's entire professional career was developed within the Ellington orchestra. Before that he had worked for eight years doing odd jobs in a Pittsburgh drug store. Although he had studied harmony at high school and took private piano lessons, music had not really become a career for him until the fateful night in December 1938 when a friend introduced him to Duke backstage at the Stanley Theatre in Pittsburgh.

Billy was a small man, only 5ft. 3 in., stockily built, with big horn rimmed glasses that gave him a professorial air. His childhood was somewhat erratic: he was raised mainly by his father's mother, and shuttled between various cities: Dayton, Ohio, where he was born 29 November 1915; Montclair, New Jersey; Hillsboro, North Carolina and various Pittsburgh districts.

He played Greg's *A Minor Concerto* with the high school orchestra at the graduation ceremonies, and became familiar with the work of Ravel, Chopin, Debussy, and Stravinsky.

It was not until he was about 20 that he became interested in jazz, which he heard played by such local musicians as Erroll Garner. He also acquired a talent for writing lyrics, mostly sophisticated songs in the manner of Noel Coward, and it was as a lyricist and songwriter that he first auditioned for Duke.

One of these songs was *Lush Life*, a



Photograph reproduced courtesy of Angus James

Billy "Sweet Pea" Strayhorn at Convention Hall, L.A. in 1945 with Duke Ellington work of incredible melodic and lyrical sophistication with its talk about "a week in Paris" and other concepts that seemed out of character with someone who had never seen much of life outside the towns where he had been raised.

Duke was impressed and asked Strayhorn to leave the songs with him. "I can't," Billy said. "I haven't written them down yet." Then Duke suggested that Billy might come to see him in New York. In February of 1939 Billy took him up on that offer, bringing with him some pieces he had put on paper. One of them was a song called *Something To Live For*.

Duke wrote an arrangement on it and recorded the song with a vocal by Jean Eldridge. The result was so successful that Duke gave Strayhorn a free hand to do anything he wanted - lyrics, music, arrangements.

On 27 February a Johnny Hodges band date, with Duke at the piano and a Jean Eldridge vocal, featured Billy's arrangement of *Like a Ship in the Night*. A little later he arranged *Savoy Strat*, *You Can Count On Me* for Hodges, and sat in on piano for *The Rabbit's Jump*.

For two Barney Bigard dates he wrote *Barney Gait*, *Easy* (later recorded by the full Ellington band as *I'm Cheekin' Out Goodbye*, with Ivo Anderson, plus vocal asides by Strayhorn), and *Misrael in Blues*, a delightful Strayhorn original that lived up to its title.

During part of 1939 the Ellington band was in Europe; in the meanwhile, Billy became virtually a part of the family, moving in with Duke's sister Ruth, who was about his own age, and Mercer Ellington, who was four years younger. He enjoyed touring the night clubs with Mercer, who was about to begin a brief, unsuccessful career of his own as a bandleader (Billy did a little writing for him too).

When Ellington returned, Strayhorn got into the serious business of finding out how the orchestra worked, as Barry Ula-

nov observed in his book *Duke Ellington*,

"He pored over Duke's scores and took apart his writing and arranging technique, his ensemble chords, his melodic lines, his characterization of the various soloists ... He understood quickly how important all of these colors were in the Ellington manner ... Billy's secret is really no secret at all ... A lot of it lies in his affinity with Duke, the way he lives and talks and, consequently, the way he writes. When the band returned from Europe, Billy went along on its summer trip to Boston."

As Ulanov wrote, the band moved gradually into Strayhorn's groove. In the early years Billy was strongly influenced by Duke, but before long the influence became mutual. Billy was assigned to arrange many of the pop songs featuring Herb Jeffries and Ivo Anderson.

Billy soon began writing the originals that would become essential components of the Ellington repertoire. His *Day Dream* was written for a Johnny Hodges date, recorded in November 1940 and later adapted for the whole band. *Chelsea Bridge* was recorded by the full orchestra, with Strayhorn at the piano, in December 1941. *Take The A Train* had been recorded earlier that year (Billy actually completed the rough outline of the score while riding on the Eighth Avenue Express from midtown Manhattan to Harlem, best known as the A Train).

During that same magic period of the early 1940s Strayhorn wrote *Passion Flower*, *Midriff*, *Clementine*, *Raincheck*, *Johnny Come Lately* and collaborated with Duke on the four part *Perfume Suite*.

In late 1942 I went to work for Duke, who was preparing for his first Carnegie Hall concert. Like Billy I became a part of the Ellington inner circle, getting to know Ruth and her husband Dan James, who also worked for Duke, as well as Mercer, Billy and Dr Arthur Logan, who was

Continued Page 20

## Podewell Recalls Woody at Perino's

**P**olly Podewell: The name somehow suggests someone out of the big band era ("and now our lovely vocalists step up to the microphone—here is pretty Polly Podewell"). As it turned out, the singer in question, who appeared at Perino's over the weekend, does indeed claim those credentials after 16 years, having worked with Woody Herman and Benny Goodman (but toward the end of their careers).

Saturday evening her opening show was dedicated to Herman, even including a rewrite of "Thanks for the Memory" in which her original lyrics evoked names of adherents from the distant past. The result, though well intentioned, was a little too concrete to be meaningful to the average listener. Podewell then took a lead out of the early Herman band book in the form of Frances Wayne's hit, "Happiness Is Just a Thing Called Joe," bringing to it just the right touch of nostalgia (but her second and style were better showcased in "Party Autumn," a Ralph Burns melody popularized by Stan Getz with the Herman orchestra and later equipped with typically scintillating lyrics by Johnny Mercer).

Later in the show she moved away from the Herman repertoire to combine "I Fall in Love Too Easily" and "Take Someone in Love" in a neatly organized melody.

A pleasant, unspectacular performer who now and then hinted at the late Mildred Bailey with her light vibrato, Podewell was intelligently accompanied by pianist Nat Pierce, himself a longtime Herman associate, and by the bassist John Letham, recently praised here for his work with Ed Shaughnessy.

She performs at Perino's through Sunday.

—L.F.

## Jazz Reviews

### A Formidable and Good-Humored Branford Marsalis at the Roxy

By LEONARD FEATHER

**B**ranford Marsalis, who may be reaching a wider audience through his impressive comedic performance in the movie "Throw Momma From the Train" than he can attract as a saxophonist, is a musician of formidable power and conviction, as he revealed Thursday evening at the Roxy.

A good-humored personality who even cracked a joke by way of an introduction (something brother Wynton would never do), Marsalis alternated between tenor and soprano saxophones in an esoteric but consistently excellent program.

Most of the compositions steered away from orthodox chords, leaning in a modal direction. Written by Marsalis or by such former colleagues as the pianist Kenny Kirkland and drummer Tony Williams,

they afforded him an opportunity to show his capacity for building tension, sometimes upward (by taking a phrase, elaborating it and gradually moving higher) or outward, by displaying his mastery of dynamics.

The only relatively traditional song was J. J. Johnson's "Lament," a vehicle for his tenor in its most serenely appealing mood. But it was on soprano sax that he showed most fluently how far he has advanced beyond the jazz mainstream since his first appearance in the forefront six years ago.

Billy Childs, who has been his regular pianist for two months, is the perfect foil for him, a past master of the post-McCoy Tyner idiom, with technique and ideas to spare. Carl Allen on drums and Delbert Felix on bass rounded out the quartet, their frequent tempo changes moving in easy parallel lines with the leader's.

A surprising opener was the newly discovered pianist Harry Connick Jr. from New Orleans. How he played (a bit erratically, thumping too hard at times and occasionally dragging the beat) was less important than what he played, which was extraordinary in one so young: a weird mixture of Erroll Garner, Thelonious Monk, and Fats Waller, whose styles were current long before he was born.

His set could have been called "Songs My Father Taught Me." Starting with "Birth of the Blues," he moved on to "These Foolish Things" and "A Foggy Day" before winding up with a perfect vocal imitation of Fats Waller on the latter's 1934 hit, "I Believe in Miracles." Connick, who is 20 years old and a student of Ellis Marsalis (Branford's father), is a most intriguing anachronism, from whom great things may be expected.

## Jazz Reviews

### Gibbs and DeFranco Stop to Bop at Loa

**B**e-bop, once the music of revolution but now the lingua franca of jazzmen by the thousands, reared its indomitable head when vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco played Friday through Sunday at the Loa in Santa Monica.

DeFranco, today as always, limns incredible, pearl-like strands of clarity in every up-tempo solo. On such ballads as "If You Could See Me Now" and the blues-like "Please Send Me Someone to Love," he achieves an emotional quality that belies the now rarely heard complaints about his alleged

lack of warmth.

Gibbs is to the bop generation what Lionel Hampton is to swing music: one of the eternal verities. His natural groove still seems to be a race-horse pace, yet he too has a more relaxed side, as he made clear in "Getting Sentimental Over You."

Pianist Alan Broadbent, more of a romanticist than a natural bopper, adjusted well to the context. Gibbs' 23-year-old son Gerry and the redoubtable Andy Simpkins on bass kept the rhythm unit ablaze.

The quintet wound up with

"Cherokee," played in five different keys. The bridge of this tune, in any key, is so demanding that negotiating it is comparable to stepping across a very wide pond on very small pebbles; but to these men it was no problem.

It seems a shame that artists like Gibbs and DeFranco cannot keep a group together in order to work out

some fresh, challenging material. Instead, they have to face a future that offers 1,000 more workouts on "Autumn Leaves" and the like. Still, what they do with what they have is so admirable that to complain would be like telling the waiter that the caviar has been served in the wrong dish.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# Jazz Album Reviews

By LEONARD FEATHER

**"STRICTLY INSTRUMENTAL."** Dan Barrett Octet. Concord Jazz CJ 331. Barrett is a gifted trombonist whose eclecticism enables him to tackle successfully works by Charlie Parker, James P. Johnson and Hoagy Carmichael. This mainstream session also offers good showcases (despite somewhat dated arrangements) for cornetist Warren Vache and guitarist Howard Alden. Barrett, who played in Woody Herman's Herd and with the final Benny Goodman orchestra, may help to break the barrier that has kept so many trombonists a few notches short of due recognition. **3 1/2 stars.**

**"WOODY'S GOLD STAR."** Woody Herman Big Band. Concord CJ330. Recorded just weeks before the late bandleader was hospitalized last spring, this is a near-perfect swan song, bringing into focus all the elements that contributed to the maestro's 50 years of accomplishments.

One is first struck by the superb sound quality (this was a live recording at a theater in Concord, Calif.), then by the judicious selection of material, by the quality of the arrangements (all but two by the virtuosic trombone soloist John Fedchock) and by the spirit with which they were interpreted. Finally, as with all Herman bands, there is a wealth of improvisational talent, with Fedchock himself, tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi and pianist Joel Weiskopf as key contributors.

The title tune is a Fedchock original based on a familiar 16-bar pattern. Duke Ellington's "Battle Royal," the Miles Davis "Dig" (based on the harmonic contours of "Sweet Georgia Brown") and Monk's "Round Midnight" all benefit from the Fedchock touch.

On Tito Puente's "Mambo Rockland," Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" and Chick Corea's "Samba Song" the orchestra becomes an Afro-Cuban light show with the addition of a three-man Latin percussion section (congas, bongos and timbales).

Herman is in there, of course, playing a typically fervent clarinet chorus on "Dig" and a lower-register "Rose Room" that leads into Ellington's familiar variations on those time-proof chord changes, "In a Mellotone."

Whether the band can keep up its impetus in the future under the direction of Tiberi, who has been the de-facto leader in recent months, remains to be seen. Whatever Tiberi may accomplish, this album constitutes a vital reminder of the extent to which Herman was able to maintain his high standards to the very end of his career. **4 1/2 stars.**

**"TOGETHER. MAXINE SULLIVAN SINGS THE MUSIC OF**

**JULE STYNE."** Atlantic 7-81783-1. Like Woody Herman's, this was a grand finale for an artist who was in the forefront for more than a half century. Sullivan's delicacy and intimacy were almost untouched by the inroads of time.

Given these top-drawer pop songs (covering a great span from the 1926 "Sunday" to the 1963 "Killing Time"), she seemed as much at ease as ever. She dealt with the lyrics (by Sammy Cahn, Comden & Green, Leo Robin and others) as graciously as she handled the melodies, never straying too far from home base.

The backing, by pianist Keith Ingham and a handful of New York musicians, among whom Glenn Zottola on trumpet and Al Klink on tenor sax stand out, is generally effective, though the rhythm section plods a bit at times.

Sullivan and Styne seem to have

been made for each other—but then, that could be said of her partnership with just about every other writer whose works she interpreted over the decades. **4 1/2 stars.**

**"Sonny Rollins: Saxophone Colossus."** Sony, \$29.95. This is the 90-minute film seen on public TV early in 1987. Rollins' tenor sax is heard with a small group in a rock quarry, where he missteps, falls on his back and winds up playing in a prone position; and, more significantly in a Tokyo theater, where he gave the world premiere of a concerto for sax and orchestra, written by a Finnish composer and performed with the Yomiuri Symphony. Rollins' energy, eccentricity, power and inspiration are well-framed here, the result is a generally impressive portrait of a unique personality. Information: (212) 757-4990. **4 1/2 stars.**

—LEONARD FEATHER

8/21

Saturday, December 5, 1987 / Part VI

music by Zoot Sims, Johnny Mandel and others) have always been his longest, strongest suit.

Most of his songs have persons, real or imagined, in their titles. Possibly on the advice of his attorney Bernie, he has constructed odes to Brenda Starr, Marilyn Monroe, a turn-of-the-century ballplayer named Matty, and, of course, Bernie himself.

It is as easy as ever to chuckle one's way through such staples as "Blizzard of Lies," however, the inclusion of a couple of new songs was a welcome bonus. His introductory comment that "this next number was written while Ollie North was on the stand" was enough to set up the ensuing piece, "Long as You're Looking Good," for a blizzard of laughs.

Frishberg at the keyboard is a personality unto himself. His solo medley consisted of an arcane set

of songs Ivie Anderson sang with Duke Ellington's orchestra, most of them when he was not yet in grade school. As a pianist he is also a valuable archivist.

Though this has been said quite often before, it needs to be men-

tioned again: Frishberg is a sardonically entertaining bar whose words and aptly chosen music may be the best commentary on our times since the days of Johnny Mercer. He will be at Vine St. through Sunday.

## Dave Frishberg on Sunny Side of Vine St.

By LEONARD FEATHER

**D**ave Frishberg is back in town, and suddenly Los Angeles is a lot brighter. After a three-month hiatus

awaiting a new addition to his family, the hippest of all songwriters/pianists/singers reopened Thursday at the Vine St. Bar & Grill. As usual, he carries no rhythm section, or rather, he is his own rhythm team. His left hand is the bassist, his right hand is the drummer, his right foot is the drummer.

Though his stock in trade also encompasses poignancy and nostalgia, the first word that comes to mind in evaluating Frishberg is wit. Even his quizzical piano introductions, interludes and solos have an overlay of humor, but of course the lyrics (many of them matched by his own melodies, a few with

# Marsalis: Playing as Much as Possible

By LEONARD FEATHER

In a powerful indication of how far he has advanced since his first cautious steps as a leader only six years ago, Wynton Marsalis will lead his quintet for two full weeks, starting tonight, at the Westwood Playhouse. There will be no other artists on the bill.

"Sure, it's a long gig," he said, "but I need to sit down."

By now, the saga of the fast-moving, 26-year-old Marsalis—possibly the most publicized new jazzman of the past decade; the possessor of 15 Grammy Awards or nominations in the jazz and classical categories—has become the stuff of music legends.

During the course of a recent interview, Marsalis talked about his stunning career, answering uncomfortable questions with candor. For example, in retrospect, wasn't it the fact of his being a young black musician, playing uncompromising jazz rather than funk or R&B, that set off that vast initial surge of media hype? Wasn't he, in fact, praised excessively?

"Yes, it's true: I was overtouted," Marsalis replied. "I got all that credit at the beginning because of what I played as much as how I played, in relation to the era in which I came up. I was fortunate in that respect—but the critics have made up for it." (Lately the press has backed off a little from its ecstatic stance, finding that even this hip Achilles does have a heel.)

"I don't use reviewers as a barometer," he continued. "I can listen to myself very objectively, and I listen to the opinions of guys I went to school with in New Orleans, or musicians in my own band; they'll tell me what the score is."

Recently there have been rumors that Marsalis plans to give up classical music entirely in order to concentrate on jazz. He offers a qualified denial: "I have a few more classical projects I want to do—maybe some new concertos. However, I don't want to get by on some fake image of eclecticism."

"I knew as I grew older that it would be hard to deal with both disciplines. On my last classical concert tour I wasn't pleased with the way I sounded; then I came back to jazz and my performance was sad too. If I can't

play both on the right level, I have to concentrate on being serious about jazz."

"My foundation in classical music is stronger than my foundation in jazz, which is a much more difficult form to play, because you have to have a personal vision, you have to improvise, you have to learn the blues idiom and all the other aspects."

His recent CBS album of standard pop sounds ("Marsalis Standard Time") was partly due, he says, to a need to learn "how to solo on these forms . . . those songs came from an era when America was more romantic. In an age when all you have to do is use some four-letter words or make some oblique adolescent reference to a sexual act, you become a risk taker just by dealing with

PAUL MORSE



Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis at Orange County Performing Arts Center concert.

sexuality and sensuality in an adult way. Romance is at the heart of music. That's what 'J Mood,' my previous album, was all about, too."

Asked whether he had ever made any records he was not satisfied with, he said: "I'm not really satisfied with any of them. There's things I can hear in them now that could have been improved upon. The things I'm most proud of are the conceptions underlying the records, and I'm particularly proud of the musicians I've played with."

At the Westwood his group will include a new addition, 20-year-old Todd Williams from St. Louis on saxophone. The original saxophonist in the group was, of course, Branford Marsalis, now on tour with his own combo. A rift that began when Branford left Wynton's band to join Sting is a thing of the past; the brothers are friends and Branford recently sat in with Wynton's group.

As for the paterfamilias, Ellis Marsalis, a pianist and teacher who brought up his family in New Orleans, has switched to a new teaching assignment at Virginia Commonwealth University. "My father recently played a concert at Town Hall in New York," Wynton said, "with two of my brothers—Delfeayo on trombone and Jason, who's just 10, on drums. Ellis Jr. is now in his last year at New York University."

Wynton himself devotes part of his time to teaching, at college clinics. "The level of comprehension is improving, but you have to be dogmatic and get used to saying the same things over and over."

"Sometimes you get the feeling that these people don't really care—but that's not really true. They do care. My fans care, too, and I'm grateful. That's why, when we go out on concerts, I try to play as much music as possible and keep everything else at a minimum: no playing around, no clowning."

"I can remember when I used to pay money myself to go hear concerts, and I didn't want to listen to jokes or stories about the musicians' lives. I wanted to hear music, and I figure that's what people expect of me. I don't care whether it's in a club with a dozen people or the Musikverein in Vienna; I'm happy to have the gig, because you know, I could be at home not working. So I never let up."

12/10/87 Los Angeles Times

## JAZZ REVIEW

### Fahn Breathes Life Into Show at Donte's

By LEONARD FEATHER

Mike Fahn, the young valve trombonist who appeared Tuesday evening at Donte's before a minuscule audience, has two plus factors working for him: the instrument of his choice is in short supply in jazz circles, and he plays it with extraordinary dexterity.

The initial impression given by his group was disconcerting. How could these stoddily attired musicians constitute a unit? After a few minutes, though, it became clear that appearances can be at least partially deceptive.

Although by no means as well organized as other groups Fahn has led, the quintet held together reasonably well as he and the Col-

trane-influenced tenor saxophonist, Doug Webb, made their way through sketchy but adequate parts of such tunes as Billy Strayhorn's "Upper Manhattan Medical Group," Joe Henderson's "Recorda-Me" and Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now."

Fahn is a startling soloist, bringing to the crisp sound of the three-valved horn a fluency, and an occasional flurry of staccato sound, that could never be achieved on its brother, the slide trombone. He also took part in some engaging interplay with Webb during the out-choruses.

The drummer, Paul Kreibich, served as a linchpin in a less than consistent rhythm section. This was due not to Frank Strazzeri's capable piano but to the fact that

the bassist, John B. Williams, played a thin-sounding electric upright instrument, which can never replace the standard bass, particularly in an otherwise acous-

tic group of this kind.

Fahn will probably be better served when he heads a somewhat different unit tonight at Catalina's, and Tuesday at Le Cafe.

11/29/87

# Jazz Album Briefs: Jobim, Manhattan Transfer

By LEONARD FEATHER

"PASSARIM." Antonio Carlos Jobim and the New Band. Verve 833-234-1.

The godfather of the bossa nova has not lost his touch. Singing (at the piano) five songs in Portuguese and six in

English—two of the latter with his own English lyrics—he has retained the light and gentle essence of this music with a simple, elegant six-piece group and five backup singers, with strings and/or woodwinds added occasionally. This is a family affair: His son plays guitar and wrote two songs, his wife and daughter are among the singers, as are the wives of his flutist and cellist.

Jobim is still the best interpreter of his own compositions. Particularly charming is the wittily autobiographical "Chanson," describing his return to the United States. ("The immigration officer asked

me, 'Where have you been Mr. Bim? Where have you been, Joe?') Paulo Jobim's "Samba de Soho" is another melodic and lyrical delight. Here, in short, is the bossa nova in its pristine, unspoiled state. 5 stars.

"BRASIL." Manhattan Transfer. Atlantic 7-81803-1. Here, on the other hand, is what happened to the music of Brazil after those crazy North Americans got hold of it. Despite the presence of several Brazilians (among them, Djavan and Milton Nascimento), the synthesizer programming and elaborate prepared percussion thus built a monument to overproduction. Djavan is a gifted composer, but Doug Fieger's pseudo-hip English lyrics on "Soul Food to Go" and "Zoo Blues" are an embarrassment.

Some songs, with lyrics by Brock Walsh or Tracy Mann, are very literate and deserved a better fate than this rhythmic overkill. The best cut is the only one sung in Portuguese, "Capim," with Stan Getz as guest soloist. In short, the LP is technically flawless but creatively flawed. The Transfer might be well advised to return to the North American idiom that served them so delightfully in "Vocalese." 3 stars.

"SONGS OF CHELSEA." Blossom Dearie. Daffodil BMD 110 (East Durham, N.Y. 12423). So they aren't writing songs the way they used to? Think again. Dearie demolishes the theory with the

hilarious "My Attorney Bernice" (by David Frishberg), the touching "What Time Is It Now?" (by Dearie, with lyricist Jack Segal), and "Let the Flower Grow" (a vocal duet with the composer, Jay Leonhart). She switches to electric keyboard for "C'est Le Printemps," words by Jean Sahlon, which turns out to be the Francophiles' version of "It Might as Well Be Spring," Johnny Mercer's final work. "My New Celebrity Is You" (he bequeathed it to Dearie) is packed with ingenious rhymes. Every track, including the instrumental finale "Chelsea Aire" (written with her brother, Walter Birchett), is a winner. Chic, sleek and squeaky-clean, Dearie's is a voice in a million, soaring octaves above the rest. 5 stars.

"EVER SINCE THE WORLD ENDED." Mose Allison. Blue Note 48015. Producer Ben Sidran calls Allison the William Faulkner of jazz. At the very least, this unique philosopher/conservationist/survivalist is the ideal singer and pianist for his own cogent lyrics and apt melodies. Opening with the title song ("It's just as well the world ended—it wasn't working anyway . . ."), he moves on to "Top 40" ("When I make my top 40, big beat, rock 'n' roll record everything is gonna be just fine"). Eight cuts later (all but two of them self-written) he winds up with "I'm Alive" ("Some folks think I'm jive, but I'm alive.") Good support from Bob Malach, Arthur Blythe and Benny Wallace on saxes, Kenny Burrell on guitar.

After a lull in his long recording career, old man Mose is back with a vengeance. 4 stars.

"CENTRAL CITY SKETCHES." Benny Carter and the American Jazz Orchestra. Music Masters 20126/7. Heading an all-star New York repertory group, Carter is in magnificent form as composer (of everything except his classic arrangement of Adam Geibel's "Sleep"), as alto saxophonist and, briefly, on trumpet, which he plays in the first (blues) movement of the title piece. This six-part suite, written for a concert last spring, is Carter's first extended work in many years, taking up the second of these four sides. Lew Tabackin on flute and Marvin Stamm on trumpet stand out among the other soloists.

On the other sides, much of Carter's best early work is updated. "When Lights Are Low," "Blues in My Heart," "Lonesome Nights" and "Symphony in Riffs" have made the decades-long transition with the same timeless grace that marks Carter's playing. On all but the last John Lewis, the conductor, sits in on piano, replacing Dick Katz. If it had not been for conspic-

uously poor mixing (notably in the sax section) and a weak trombone solo that interrupts the mood on "Blues in My Heart," this would have been a 5-star set. As it is, for a definitive cross section of mainstream big band music, 4 stars.

"SHUT 'YO' MOUTH!" Siam Stewart/Major Holley. PM Records 024. Both leaders bow their basses and hum—Holley in unison, Stewart in octave unison with the solos. The title cut is a sendup of "Close Your Eyes." "Tomorrow" is a perfect vehicle for what is primarily a comedy team, though Dick Hyman's piano (he co-produced) and Oliver Jackson's drumming are self-contained treats. After 38 minutes the bass/vocal trade-offs become too much of a good thing, but a good thing it surely is. 3 stars.

"CRYSTAL." Ahmad Jamal. Atlantic 81793. These 10 original compositions by one of the most pianistic of all pianists (no wonder he renounced electronics and stayed with the Steinway) add up to Jamal's finest album in years. "Avo," a fast waltz, stands out, but there are many passages of translucently intriguing beauty here. Sympathetic and well-integrated support is provided by James Cammack on bass, David Bowler on drums and Willie White on percussion. 5 stars.

See two pages back  
for 12/5 & 12/8 Rec. Kes.

JAZZ

12/6/87

# Ahmad Jamal—a Master of American Classical Music

By LEONARD FEATHER

It is a common practice for musicians, once they have set their sights on commercial success, to engage in a process of dilution that may result in popularization while lowering their creative sights. Such cases abound. Chuck Mangione, Grover Washington, Ronnie Laws and Jean-Luc Ponty come to mind.

Ahmad Jamal, to his lasting credit, has reversed the process. Once described by critics as light and airy, his piano recordings achieved success with such pop-standard hits as "But Not for Me" and "Poinciana." In recent years, however, his albums have been devoted to original compositions, some of them quite complex, bold and sometimes turbulent, possibly less accessible to the average ear.

Whatever the results in terms of mass acceptance, Jamal has produced a body of music that reflects his serious commitment. A small, affable man, he brings to his work an intensity indicative of his personality and dedication rather than his possibly deceptive appearance.

At times, he seems as concerned about words, or semantics, as he is about music. Like many of his contemporaries, he is not too happy with the word jazz.

"Did Duke Ellington ever call himself a jazz musician? Does Oscar Peterson? That word has so many dictionary meanings, some of them derogatory.

"If you're applying for credit and write that you're an insurance salesman, or a member of the Chicago Symphony, you won't have trouble. But just write 'jazz musician' and you can't even buy a sofa on credit.

"Somebody may say, 'I don't like jazz,' when the word has permeated his dull brain, but he doesn't know what it signifies. On the other hand, people may say they like opera, when in fact they don't know a damn thing about the opera; it's just a social event that allows you to wear your fur coat."

To the argument that jazz is a term too firmly entrenched to be removed from our vocabulary, Jamal retorts: "So was the word *Negro*. Yet you hardly hear it anymore—it's now *Afro-American* or *Black*. All sorts of linguistic changes are going on. Instead of *chairman* we now say *chairperson*

in order to upgrade the position of women in our society. Jazz is an important-enough area of our culture to demand constant refinement.

"Years ago, when I was growing up and bands like Basie and Ellington came to the Stanley Theatre in Pittsburgh, where I was born, they were called *entertainers*. You can hardly use that word today, when men like Max Roach and Jackie McLean have tenure as professors at major American colleges."

Like Billy Taylor and others, Jamal for many years has been proposing that jazz simply be known as *American classical music*. Two questions immediately arise: How to distinguish between jazz players (or composers) and Copland, Damrosch, Ives, Sessions and others? How to separate the improvisational essence of jazz from the fact that so-called classical music is completely notated and played as written?

Jamal has a ready answer: "Bach was also an improviser. You can put Aaron Copland and our music under the heading of American classical music—the only difference is that Copland is a peach tree and Ellington is a plum tree; it's just a difference in styles.

"The personal touch of a Horowitz is not written on paper. Some of the readings classical players give are terrible compared to that given by others; in fact, certain artists can get more out of their own interpretation of Mozart or Beethoven than the composers did themselves. So as far as I'm concerned, that's another aspect of improvisation."

Whether or not one agrees with Jamal's postulate, his underlying concern with the inequities that exist in the arts is hardly disputable. Regardless of what it is called, jazz will never achieve in its creators' lifetime the material success enjoyed by others in the mass-appeal forms.

"It's always been that way," he points out. "It's absolutely obscene that a Van Gogh painting just sold for tens of millions of dollars, when in his lifetime he couldn't get five bucks for them. By the same token, although some of us may have attained at least a measure of



Pianist Ahmad Jamal: "You can put Aaron Copland and our music under the heading of American classical music."

financial security, we will never in our own lives make Elton John's kind of money, no matter how good we are."

Jamal does not let such matters concern him too deeply; he prefers to devote his time and energy to constant practice, and to the development of new compositions.

"Right now, I have the greatest feeling for being able to woodshed. Discipline is not easy; you have to really love what you're doing in order to sit down and work at the piano for six, seven hours on end—to go back to that state of mind you had when you were 7 or 8 years old and just getting interested. It's great, you know—and that's the way I feel right now."

Though he has made one conces-

sion to electronics through his use of a bassist who often plays a fretless electric bass, Jamal himself remains loyal to the grand piano. He did, however, dabble with the electric keyboard at a time when, tired of the vicissitudes of the traveling musician's life, he stayed in Chicago for a couple of years and doubled in several outside business ventures—a restaurant he ran for a while, a greeting-card business and the producing of records by others.

"It was an accident when I began playing electric piano and an accident when I stopped. Herbie Hancock asked for a Rhodes to use on a session I was making, so I ordered one for him. He said, 'Sit down and try it; you might like it.' I did, but the only reason I ever recorded on

it was that I had ordered a nine-foot Steinway and for some reason it wasn't delivered. I put the Rhodes in storage and never got around to getting it out again, so that was how I happened to stop. I feel that the acoustic instrument demands all my time and attention."

Jamal is not unduly concerned about the impact of fusion, electronic rock-jazz and other related forms, all of which he feels are to some degree offspring of the music to which he continues to devote his life. He sums up his philosophy in a statement that makes use, ironically, of the word he wishes were eliminated from the dictionaries:

"Take my word, Mother Jazz will raise no children." □

## JAZZ REVIEW

### Slavic Reunion Duo at Catalina's

By LEONARD FEATHER

The Russian/American Jazz Connection, which was scheduled to be heard Tuesday at Catalina's, has only one link with Slavic Reunion, the group that actually appeared. The common denominator was Alexei Zoubov, the Soviet tenor saxophonist who has been living here since 1984.

His regular sidemen (piano, bass and drums) having defected to other assignments, Zoubov stripped down to a duo with Michal Leviev, the pianist from Bulgaria, as his partner. This bare-bones instrumentation might prove daunting to a lesser pair, but because they have worked together before, off and on, and given Leviev's exceptional talent for filling in the rhythmic necessities with his agile left hand, less sometimes seemed like more.

One tune, the somberly engaging "Dark Night," was drawn from a repertoire of Zoubov's previous group. Everything else consisted of adventurous variations on "Stella by Starlight," "Body and Soul" and other pop antiques. Using tempo changes, quirky stop-and-go effects and occasional bursts of swinging 4/4, the couple was consistently intriguing, weakened only by Zoubov's freak note finales.

Leviev's classical training often surfaces in his impressionistic improvisational ventures, but like Zoubov, he has acquired a sensitivity that enables him to incorporate the jazz essence of his adopted country. Zoubov's big sound and robust style sometimes recall Lew Tabackin, with a hint of Sonny Rollins.



JAZZ REVIEW

# Joe Williams, 'Tonight Show' Band: Match Made in Pasadena

By LEONARD FEATHER

The teaming of Joe Williams and "The Tonight Show" Orchestra conducted by Doc Severinsen, presented Tuesday and Wednesday at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, was an inspiration in at least two ways. It afforded the preeminent male singer of the jazz world a rare chance to be heard locally in a big-band setting, and it allowed the audience to hear in person a band whose appearances are so often confined to five-second playoffs at the end of a routine by a comic or animal trainer.

Since Williams' commanding personality came to worldwide attention during his six years with the Count Basie Orchestra, the juxtaposition of his baritone with a battery of trumpets, trombones and saxophones still provides him with a logical setting that puts him immediately at ease—not that he could ever be less than comfortable with anything this side of an East Asian gamelan band.

Armed with a battery of arrangements by Thad Jones and others, he opened with a charming old song called "That Face" that put the band and the capacity crowd in a relaxed mood that was sustained through his sets in both halves of the concert.

To state that the blues is his forte would imply that he is less than powerfully effective in any other idiom, yet his "Young and Foolish," appropriately slotted after a rowdy band number featuring the drummer Ed Shaughnessy, exemplified his ability to bring out the lyrical and melodic excellence of a warm and tender ballad. Still, the supply of blues was plentiful, among them tributes to Jimmy Rushing and Duke Ellington and, for the finale, a scat chorus or two during the band's "One O'Clock Jump."

Doc Severinsen and Co. clearly relished this chance to appear in person and perform at length. Instrumentally, the leader bears a strong resemblance to Harry James, in that he can turn from a florid, almost fulsome sound and style to a jazz solo that swings as naturally as James did in his less bombastic moments.

A highlight of the evening was a

15-minute suite by Tommy Newsum, "Three Shades of Blue." The first movement provided the trombonist Gil Falco with a chance to improvise freely, reminding us of the hidden potential in many instrumentalists who lead anonymous lives as studio sidemen.

In the second, slow blues movement, Severinsen on flugelhorn and Ross Tompkins on piano were in elegant form; finally Snooky Young stepped to the mike, plunger mute in hand, to engage in a "talking trumpets" duet routine with Severinsen along the lines established by the late Rex Stewart in Duke Ellington's Orchestra.

The band for the most part was both loose and inspired, though the rhythmic foundation improved noticeably when, during Joe Williams' numbers, Joel DiBartolo switched from electric to upright bass, which he should have played throughout. Bruce Paulson on trombone and Pete Christlieb on tenor sax also had their moments in the Pasadena spotlight.

It was hard to leave the Ambassador without wondering whether, one of these days, Joe Williams might not have a chance to do more than two numbers with this band on Johnny Carson's time, and possibly an entire show might even be built around this compatible team.

Well, we can dream, can't we?

## Good-Time Baby Blues

The Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham Sweet Baby Blues Band, six men and two women strong, blew in Friday from its San Diego home base to play two nights at Catalina Bar and Grill.

Pervasive though the blues still is in most jazz territories, this good-time group is like nothing else now active. With Jeannie Cheatham singing and playing straight-from-the-roots piano, and her husband pulling his weight as bass trombonist and arranger, you are transported back to the Savoy Ballroom.

Jeannie shouts not, neither does she holler. Her blues vocals are delivered in an authentic but tempered manner, whether the song is one of her own ("Finance Company Blues," "Evil Ways") or a genuine antique ("Cherry Red," "Tain't Nobody's Business"). Now and then she slips in an Ethel Waters growl. Her piano, similarly, is unspectacular yet convincingly geared to the Kansas City mood.

Jimmy Cheatham, whose arrangements are serviceable, keeps

12/20

## A Sinatra CD 6-Pack

By LEONARD FEATHER

With the Christmas market doubtless in mind, Capitol Records has released six more Frank Sinatra compact discs, all but one of which include additional tracks.

"The Sinatra Christmas Album" consists basically all of the 1957 LP, but includes the previously unreleased "White Christmas" and two versions of the Jule Styne-Sammy Cahn "Christmas Waltz," one with arranger Nelson Riddle conducting, one with Gordon Jenkins.

"Point of No Return" is unique in that it includes, along with the contents of Sinatra's final album for Capitol (in 1962), four cuts from his first date for the label, among them the previously unissued "Day In, Day Out."

"Come Dance With Me," a jazz-oriented set with charts by Billy May, includes two unreleased duets with Keely Smith

("Nothing in Common" and "How Ya Fixed for Love?"—hardly the ideal songs for this or any other duo), as well as the newly issued "It All Depends on You" and "Same Old Song and Dance."

"Come Fly With Me," another Billy May set, features three extra cuts arranged by Riddle—"Chicago," "I Love Paris" and "South of the Border."

One CD, the 1954 "Swing Easy" and the 1956 "Songs for Young Lovers," contains no new material but comprises two of the singer's best collaborations with Riddle. Finally there is the Sinatra-Riddle "Only the Lonely," a classic now embellished by the addition of two numbers not previously available in the United States: "Sleep Warm" and "Where or When."

A rehearing of these performances serves to reconfirm the belief that these were the golden years for the man with the golden throat. □

12/14/87

"Au Privave."

There were moments of genuine nostalgia. Jeannie Cheatham introduced the 1930s Pete Johnson hit "Roll 'Em Pete" with the comment: "Pete Johnson used to baby at our son." Saxophonist Jimmy Noone Jr. switched to clarinet to achieve an uncanny duplication in "Sweet Lorraine" of the mellow lower register solo his legendary namesake father achieved on this song.

Traditional but never corny, old-fashioned but not antiquated, the Cheatham band offers a jubilant reminder of glories that are gone but not forgotten.

—LEONARD FEATHER

12/13/87

# A Message in Ministry and in Music

By LEONARD FEATHER

The words, spoken in a voice long familiar from records to nightclubs, rang out loud and clear through the microphone.

There is always room at the top for anything you may want to do. That's what Jacob's ladder is all about. You must stay consciously

connected, united with this power within us. Success in any area of our lives is built brick by brick. We have to climb that ladder a little at a time.

Uplifting, spiritual words—the kind you might expect to hear spoken at a Sunday morning service—as indeed they were. Less predictable, however, was their source. The speaker was the Rev. O. C. Smith, the same O. C. Smith who for seven years was a singing star on CBS Records, responsible for such hits as "That's Life" and "Little Green Apples."

Smith is now a Science of Mind minister whose sermons have been heard for the last two years in a ballroom near the Los Angeles International Airport, converted every Sunday to a church for his loyal congregation.

His rich, grainy timbre, the honest and personable manner and the handsome figure he presents are serving him as well in his new life as they continue to do, mostly on weekends, in his still-active career as a splendid jazz-oriented singer who joined Count Basie's band just after Joe Williams had left and went on to globe-trotting experiences as a single artist.

Born Ocie Lee Smith in 1936 in Mansfield, La., he has been singing almost all his life, at least since shortly after he and his mother, a music teacher, settled in Los Angeles. He was 3 years old; soon the sounds of Nat King Cole and other idols ("More musicians than singers," he says) came into his consciousness through radio and records.



O.C. Smith addresses his congregation at the Proud Bird.

He is a product of Jefferson High School, where a legendary music teacher, Samuel Brown, instructed such students as Ernie Andrews, Dexter Gordon, Frank Morgan and Vi Redd. His professional singing debut, however, had to wait, graduating in 1953, he joined the Air Force.

"I was classified in Air Police, but worked a lot for Special Services and did plenty of singing. I spent 15 months in Alaska, which is as cool as you can get. In 1957, I was discharged in New York and went to work doing whatever came along—the Catskills, small clubs. I did everything—ballads, swinging things, blues. It all added up to a beautiful experience."

Smith auditioned successfully for Count Basie early in 1961. "He was the ideal leader; I had a free hand to sing what I liked, and I got to see a

lot of the world during the next 2½ years. I sang some of Joe Williams' songs, since I didn't have a library of my own at first and people were asking for them." Smith recorded several numbers with the band for Roulette Records, now hard to find.

Following Basie came the club and concert circuit—New York to Chicago to Miami, and a tour of the Far East for several months in 1964-65—after which he settled back in Los Angeles. He had been on the West Coast less than a year when Columbia Records signed him.

Leafing through a huge pile of songs, he came across "That's Life." "This really told a true story for me, because I'd already had my share of ups and downs and been over and out. It became a hit single, and then everything really began to mushroom."

Though it was Frank Sinatra who had the major success with "That's Life," the song did well for Smith, and not long afterward "Little Green Apples," winner of the Grammy as song of the year in 1968, produced three hit records for Smith. Patti Page and Roger Miller. Smith was solidly on his way.

There were several other albums for CBS, though none achieved the stature of the first two. The association ended in 1974; he has continued to record off and on for various labels.

"By 1980, I was still on the road, leaving the city for weeks on end; then one day some friends invited me to attend a Science of Mind service at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. Dr. Joseph Murphy, whom I had heard speak that morning, became my teacher.

"I connected soon afterward with a presence that told me which direction I should take. I began studying for the ministry and graduated in January of 1985, but I was still going out of town for weeks at a time, and felt I was not ready to give up on full-time entertaining.

"I wanted the presence to reveal the right time to me. Well, that

summer I began to get the feeling that the moment had come to pull back a little on the reins of show business. The next step was to find a place where I could work regularly in the ministry."

A list of available facilities—churches, hotels, theaters—became part of his daily search. Then he remembered Murphy and the Wilshire Ebell, which suggested itself as the ideal locale.

"I talked to them about renting a room there on Sunday mornings. They said they'd let me know. But I must have gone back there 10 times and still couldn't get a firm answer. One day as I left there I got in my car, turned on KKGO, the all-jazz station, and heard a commercial. It announced that the Proud Bird, a building near LAX that had burned down a couple of years earlier, was reopening, and that the grand ballroom was a beautiful facility available for any functions. I just drove directly to the Proud Bird and knew immediately it was the place for our services."

The City of Angels Science of Mind Center, at 11022 Aviation Blvd., Los Angeles, convened for the first time in October, 1985. Because of Smith's personal popularity in show-business circles, he began to attract celebrity congregants: Brock Peters, Della Reese, Barbara McNair, Wally Amon, Terry-Cole Whittaker, comedian Timmie Rogers, musician Harry (Sweet) Edison, actresses Roxie Roker and, quite regularly, Maria Gibbs (of "227"), an active member of the center who has spoken in his place when he was on vacation.

Sundays at the center are a little unconventional, at least in the character of the music. Before, after and occasionally during the services, a small group playing gentle jazz performs in the background, its interracial personnel usually including Mark Cargill on violin, John Beasley on piano, Takashi Numajawa on drums and Dale Atkins on bass.

The presence of this group has an effect at once unifying and

calming. There is something poignant about hearing "The Lord's Prayer" sung and played with a subtle, steady four-four pulse.

Along with the regulars, many members of the jazz community have dropped by to sit with the group: guitarist John Collins, saxophonists Teddy Edwards and Vi Redd, trumpeter Clara Bryant.

With the help of his daughter Bonnie and other family members (the Smiths collectively have seven children by previous marriages), an outreach program is collecting funds mainly to feed

hungry families over the Christmas holidays. "We have enough for 55 already," said Smith's wife, Robbie, "and by Christmas we hope to be able to help 100 families."

The Rev. O. C. Smith has plans that extend beyond Sunday mornings. Next month, he will launch a 10-week evening course in Science of Mind; in August, he and a boatload of the faithful will take off from Miami on a seven-day seminar-cum-vacation cruise.

While he chooses not to renounce his ties to a musical life, Smith considers his church a main

priority. The extent to which he has become consecrated was expressed last Sunday by Jimmy Tolbert, a well-known show-business attorney (and nephew of the much-better-known Lester Young).

"When O. C. sings in New York on a Saturday," he said, "he won't ever stay over for a second night. He catches a 7:30 a.m. plane, which is 4' on Pacific time, and because he's around the corner from the church he can still make the 11 a.m. service. Now that's what I call dedication." □

## CHRISTMAS: Critics Share Their Holiday Thoughts

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Duke Ellington

### JAZZ

By LEONARD FEATHER

The love of jazz is such a personal matter that it is all but impossible to show, through one gift, its entire achievement and grandeur.

An album that comes closest is the recently revised "Smithsonian Selection of Classic Jazz." Here are 85 performances, on seven records, that illustrate the beauty of early traditions through the sounds of Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith and Frankie Trumbauer; the brilliant writing, glorious ensembles and solo work heard in the Big Bands, from Ellington and Basie to Lunford and Goodman; the timeless be-bop innovations of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, and the avant-garde experiments of John Coltrane and the World Saxophone Quartet.

I suspect that this listening experience could make out of the most hardened skeptic the same dedicated believer I have been all my adult life. (The album is P7-19477.)

### Ray Brown Quintet Makes the Creative Sparks Fly at the Loa

By LEONARD FEATHER

If there was any happier place than the Loa for a jazz lover New Year's Eve, no one at the Santa Monica hot spot wanted to know about it.

The ingredients were all in place as Ray Brown's quintet worked as if it had been waiting all year for this moment.

A celebratory occasion calls for a jubilant brand of jazz. With two veterans like Brown on bass and Teddy Edwards on tenor saxophone, this appropriate groove was all but assured, yet it was the phenomenal drive of two lesser-known men that put the proceed-

ings over the top.

The chief scene-stealer was Gene Harris, a pianist whose blues solos are as steeped in righteous funk as his ballads are couched in gentle understatement—until the last half chorus, when he would build to a climax with a series of massive, thousand volt tremolos.

Bruce Forman, a guitarist from San Francisco, matched Harris for speed and inspiration. If his version of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" had lasted another minute he might have worn out his plectrum. Completing the group on drums was a most effective last-minute sub, Clayton Cameron.

## JAZZ

## Christmas Gifts: A 'Bah, Humbug!' for Ellington Book

By LEONARD FEATHER

For the holiday gift season, a couple of book recommendations are in order. But first, a caveat is in order.

"DUKE ELLINGTON" by James Lincoln Collier (Oxford University Press, \$19.95; 340 pages). The Ellington family is up in arms about Collier's book—and with good reason. Written from a muckraking perspective, it is a shot of literary poison squirted in the face of responsible musicology, an insult to the memory of an incomparably gifted black American artist.

Most dangerous is that naive readers, dazzled by the author's seemingly scholarly and authoritative prose, may place credence in his false premises and irrational conclusions. His all-encompassing derogations extend far beyond the boundaries of *de gustibus*.

Collier's failure is in keeping with his track record of stirring up controversy. He began by writing a few years ago that Americans, not Europeans, were the first to treat jazz seriously as an art form (a concept so preposterous that John

Hammond, who could speak to the issue better than anyone else in this country, was the first to laugh at it). He later wrote a book about Louis Armstrong that did for its subject roughly what he has now tried to do with Ellington.

This time he has gone too far. Appraising Ellington's recorded oeuvre ("much of it memorable") and granting that "he wrote thousands upon thousands of bars of music," he tells us in the very next paragraph that "we are entitled to question . . . whether he was a

composer at all."

We are told that, aside from "Solitude," none of his best-known works were written without outside help, that he "did not really know what good writing was" and that almost anything he composed running over three minutes ("Black, Brown & Beige," "The Harlem Suite," "The Shakespearean Suite" and other masterpieces) was valueless because Ellington was too ill-educated to imitate the structure of European music.

He devotes a mere 50 pages to the entire last 28 years of Ellington's career, starting with a chapter called "Decline and Fall." On the one hand, he derogates the Paul Whiteman genre of "symphonic jazz," yet he denounces the very Ellington works through which Duke showed the way out of that blind alley.

Collier's superficiality becomes clear in this statement: "Who Duke Ellington was is critical to the work he produced. If he had been different in this way or that, his work would have been different or might not even have existed." Delete Ellington's name, substitute the name of any musician, painter, actor or sculptor who ever lived, and the sentence will make no more or less sense.

Collier beats to death the idea that Ellington was too middle-class, too lazy, too celebrity-and-woman-conscious, an indifferent pianist, a lyricist totally without talent and not sufficiently committed to the cause of his people. (This of a man who talked proudly of writing Negro music, whose first extended work was called "A Tone Parallel to the History of the American Negro.") He is gratuitously unkind to Ruth Ellington who, unlike her brother, is still around to read this contumely.

Having known the subject, warts and all—and nobody denies that there were warts—for much of his adult life, and having worked for him off and on for seven years, I was in a position to find in Collier's analyses flaws that may not be apparent to the average reader. What should be clear to anyone is that Ellington's genius will live in the minds of music lovers long after his detractors have been forgotten.

To sum up, Giving this to an Ellington fan for Christmas would be akin to presenting Juliet Prowse with a leopard.

"SINGERS & THE SONG" by Gene Lees (Oxford University Press, \$18.95; 257 pages). Though he has had many successes in other areas (as one-time Down Beat editor, as lyricist and singer), Lees is best known as author-editor of the monthly Jazzyletter.

Just as the subject matter of the publication extends far beyond the realm of jazz, "Singers & the Song"

is no less broad in its compass—understandably, since it comprises 10 essays from that source. Only five of the pieces are strictly about singers: Edith Piaf, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Dick Haymes, Jo Stafford. All are written with insight, compassion and the very special sensitivity with which Lees has become identified.

The other subjects are the lyricist/singer Johnny Mercer, the decline of the big bands, a delightful history of the English language as it applies to the writing of song lyrics, the late composer Hugo Friedhofer and, finally, taking up the last third of the book, "A Journey to Cologne," an altogether riveting account of how Lees was pressed into duty as translator (though there was much more to it than mere translation) of some poems written by a young man named Kazimierz Wozniak, who later became Pope John Paul II. Set to music, they were recorded in an album with Sarah Vaughan as the principal singer.

Though every one of these dissertations hits the mark on one level or another, "Pavilion in the Rain" is the most brilliantly crafted. Though its basic subject is the decline of the big band era, Lees travels through many byways—the malevolent influence of cigarette sponsors, U.S. copyright law, the railway unions in California—before tying together these seemingly irrelevant diversions.

"Singers & the Song" delivers much more than its title implies. Like Lees' previous efforts, among them an indispensable rhyming dictionary, it reflects the skill, the humor and the extensive interests of a man of protean talents.

"CELEBRATING BIRD: THE TRIUMPH OF CHARLIE PARKER" (Sony VHS 0509, \$29.95). Produced by Toby Byron, scripted and co-directed by Gary Giddins, this 58-minute video includes footage of Parker himself—some previously unseen—as well as numerous music clips of Basie, Tatum, Monk and others, with interviews that shed light on Parker's triumphs and tragedies. (Jay McShann, Frank Morgan and Parker's first wife, Rebecca, emerge as the most eloquent speakers.) This title has also been used for a book (Beech Tree, \$15.95; 128 pages) with scores of photographs and a text by Giddins.

"STORMY MONDAY: THE T-BONE WALKER STORY" by Helen Oakley Dance (Louisiana State University Press, \$24.95; 285 pages). The veteran blues singer and guitarist, who died at 64 in 1975, collaborated with the author on this work, which represents a decade of solid research.

Her sympathy for the subject shows how, just as Parker ultimately destroyed himself, Walker was the victim of his own social milieu and life style. A welcome change from the tiresomely unconvincing (and too often unrevealing) "as-told-to" biographies. □

CALENDAR/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Los Angeles Times

2/5

## Jazz Reviews

## Shy's Blues-Less Tribute to Dinah Washington

Jean Shy: A Tribute to Dinah Washington" was the billing of the show Wednesday at Nucleus Nuance. It was a promising premise indeed, and one that could have worked out well had the singer taken the trouble to live up to it.

Shy has little in common physically with the legendary blues singer, who died in 1963. True, like her predecessor, she is neither tall nor slim. Once in a while, too, you may hear traces of the vinegar-spiced timbre that was the essence of Washington.

Otherwise, there was not nearly enough in her show that justified the suggestion of an homage. A few songs recorded by Washington were included, among which "What a Difference a Day Made" and "Teach Me Tonight" came closest to recapturing a modicum of the original personality.

Much of Shy's set, inexplicably, was made up of nondescript contemporary songs, or of standards such as "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?," written five years after Washington died. There were at least two numbers inextricably associated with other singers: "Lover Man" (Billie Holiday) and "My Way" (Frank Sinatra), the latter delivered with a somewhat too melodramatic flourish, and accompanied by a trio that seemed not too comfortable with the music: Herman Jackson on piano, Dale Atkins on electric bass, and Ron Bruner, drums.

Shy would be well advised to study her alleged mentor and to bear in mind that Washington, first and foremost, was a dynamic blues singer; the set at Nucleus Nuance did not include a single blues song.

Even if one disregarded the concept and simply judged Shy's performance as a vocal grab-bag, it offered at best a strong sound and occasional moments of individuality.

It was an ironic postscript to the

evening for this reviewer to arrive home and be greeted by the real thing, Dinah Washington herself singing "What a Difference a Day Made" on KCET's "Brown Sugar" history of black singers. What a difference 25 years made; after all this time, it remains clear that this legendary lady truly was one of a kind. —LEONARD FEATHER

# The Transfer Detours From Manhattan to Brazil

By LEONARD FEATHER

**I**t was a long, circuitous road that took Manhattan Transfer from its U.S. roots to "Brasil," which is the subject and title of the group's new album, now rising fast on the charts.

"The whole thing began four years ago," said Tim Hauser, the member of the vocal quartet who produced "Brasil." "I looked in a store and saw this record in the window, 'Lilias' by Djavan. I didn't know who he was, or what kind of music he was into, but I bought it because the guy in the picture looked so cool."

"I heard it and thought it was fantastic, then I found out that Cheryl [Bentyne] had the album, and also that Alan [Paul] and Janis [Siegel] had been listening to this new Brazilian music."

"Later, I had to go to Quincy Jones' office to get clearance on a song for 'Vocalese.' I met Louise Velazquez, who runs the Brazilian arm of Quincy's publishing business. She asked me if I was into Brazilian music, and I told her I had this one album by Djavan but was also a fan of people like Gilberto Gil and Milton Nascimento. Well, to

cut a long story short, after several hours of talk I walked out of her office with 25 albums she loaned me."

(Djavan will be with the Transfer for its appearances Saturday through New Year's Eve at the Universal Amphitheatre.)

Velazquez turned out to be the Transfer's mentor throughout the "Brasil" project. She was with them when they went on a trip in September, 1986, that combined a few gigs with fact finding. Her contacts were invaluable.

"Within a single week in Rio," Hauser recalls, "we spent an evening sitting around the piano at Antonio Carlos Jobim's house, had dinner with Ivan Lins, dinner with Djavan, with Milton Nascimento, a luncheon where we met Wagner Tiso and Dore Caymmi. Getting to know all these people led to an even deeper sense of involvement."

A subsequent jaunt on his own led to more serendipity. Hauser was seeking out local instrumentalists when, in a Rio record shop, he picked up an LP by the group Uakti.

"Their music was so beautiful, so intelligent and different [that] they

reminded me of the 1960s when I used to listen to Harry Partch. In fact, one of their albums mentions in the liner notes that they are Brazilian counterparts of Partch."

(Uakti, heard on the "Brasil" album, will also perform at the Universal concerts.)

The next step was the search for English lyrics. A friend of Hauser's named Doug Figer, who had heard some of Djavan's songs, asked to take a crack at writing a couple of them. According to Hauser, he used a technique that had been recommended by Djavan, who had told the Transfer: "I don't really tell stories; I use words as rhythms and sounds. If you hear in my songs a Portuguese word that sounds like an English word, use it; if you have a string of these ideas happening through the song, piece them together through a stream of consciousness."

Whether or not Figer's English lyrics for "Soul Food to Go" and "Zoo Blues" succeeded is open to question. Some listeners may find a far more significant message in the album's two best lyrics, Tracy Mann's for "Hear the Voices" and Brock Walsh's for "Notes From the Underground," both heavy in po-

litical overtones.

"Gilberto Gil, who composed 'Hear the Voices,' was jailed, tortured and exiled during the military dictatorship in Brazil," said Hauser. "This song, which he composed, tells his story. We dedicated it to him and to Caetano Veloso, another musician who was jailed and tortured."

No less moving is "Notes From the Underground" with music by Ivan Lins and original words by Vitor Martins. It carries a powerful anti-apartheid motif: "Beneath the marbled halls of Pretoria/There's the faintest sound rising from the underground... Ten miles from Soweto under a thorn tree's branches/shanty will be no longer after the battle's over."

These socially significant lyrics are a product of the movement, known as Tropicalismo, that brought a hot gust of new winds, a

sort of *nova bossa nova*, to the Brazilian music of the past decade.

Men like Djavan and Ivan Lins have become symbols of Tropicalismo. Djavan contributed five songs to the album, one of which he sings in Portuguese. Milton Nascimento not only made a guest vocal appearance but also turned Hauser on to some of the best available instrumental talent in Rio.

Asked how long the Transfer

will keep its present Brazilian mat, Hauser was typically evasive. "We never know what we're to do next," he said. "We'd do some more stuff with that's for sure. But I've found the years that you just can't out your plans intellectually spiritual thing, a feeling that to you in its own good time, we listen to our own inner voice, we'll know which way to go."

# Picking the Year's Best

By LEONARD FEATHER

Jazz has been through some apocalyptic developments during the past two decades. It has found new courses to chart, given rise to new related idioms such as fusion and New Age and grown immensely in the number of men and women studying it at colleges and performing it at concert halls and festivals worldwide.

A glance at the first "Golden Feather Awards" column, which appeared in these pages Jan. 2, 1986, points up some of these changes. Four of the recipients have left us, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Earl Hines. Others such as Oscar Peterson and Paul Horn (honored for their 1965 compositions), Joe Williams and pianist-psychiatrist Dr. Denny Zeitlin, are still here and active; Stan Getz is sidelined by illness but will probably be in harness again soon.

For the 23rd annual awards, given the degree to which the field has expanded, it seemed appropriate to call on a few colleagues, all respected jazz experts and fellow writers for the Los Angeles Times, to add the names of those musicians they believe are deserving of kudos.

**Musician of the Year:** My choice is a jazzman who lived for 34 years and has been dead almost that long: Charlie Parker. Odd though it may seem to select a long-gone artist for this honor, the shadow of Bird looms larger than ever this year over much of the jazz world. His innovations are still reflected in the work of young musicians; a splendid hour-long documentary devoted to him was just released (and reviewed here last week); "Bird," a major motion picture produced and directed by Clint Eastwood, is nearing completion at Warner Bros. with Forest Whitaker in the title role.

Coincidentally, Don Heckman, who writes for the Times and Jazz Times, also selected a departed pioneer, Woody Herman ("Very simply, in tribute for everything he gave us").

A. James Liska, whose byline is seen in The Times and Down Beat, selected the recently revitalized saxophonist Frank Morgan. "His story of survival is as impressive and inspiring as the jazz he creates."

Zan Stewart, of The Times and L.A. Weekly, chose Johnny Griffin. "the expatriate tenor man's ability to deliver mercurial mainstream messages is waxing rather than waning."

Don Snowden, who contributes to The Times and Musician, picked Ornette Coleman. "For singularity of vision and for releasing a double album, with one record each by his reunited original quartet and his current Prime Time ensemble, playing seven common compositions to emphasize the continuum of his music—this paid rich dividends."

**Album of the Year:** Choosing a single album, it seemed to me, was an impossible choice, given the hundreds of new releases and almost as many reissues, most of them on CD. I passed, as did Liska. Snowden opted for the above-cited Ornette Coleman 2-LP set ("In All Languages," on the Caravan of Dreams label). Stewart chose "What If?" by pianist Kenny Barron on Enja. "Arguably the finest jazz pianist, presenting a beautiful blowing date, with underrated ace hornmen Wallace Roney on trum-



pet and John Stubblefield on tenor sax."

Don Heckman had a split vote: "The Complete Blue Note Recording of Herbie Nichols," a five-record set on Mosaic; and "The Private Collection," a set of five CDs of previously unissued Duke Ellington items on LMR Records.

**Band or Group of the Year:** The American Jazz Orchestra. Unfortunately, this repertory group is confined to New York. Its library of masterworks by many of jazz history's great composer/arrangers was presented on a limited but impressive basis in a retrospective held during the New York Jazz Festival last June. The group has made only one album, "Central City Sketches" (Music Masters), with Benny Carter playing his own compositions, not well recorded but first-rate in content.

Stewart admired the Phil Woods Quintet: "The alto man and his



Musicians of the year: Charlie Parker and Woody Herman.



chief foil, trumpeter Tom Harrell, play post-bebop just about to perfection, and with soul too." Liska offered two choices: "The groups led by Branford Marsalis, who I think will prove to be an enduring artist, and Michael Brecker, who continues to show himself to be one."

The George Adams-Don Pullen Quartet was Snowden's selection. "For nine years of inventively blending respect for the jazz tradition (particularly the blues-gospel side), innovations that are logical extensions of that tradition, and a commitment to swinging hard and fast," Heckman was impressed by Chick Corea's Elektric Band: "Collectively and individually, a group that never fails to surprise me."

**Singer of the Year:** Shirley Horn. In another egregious example of being in the wrong place for a long time, the Washington-based Horn was ignored by the record industry moguls until a visit to Los Angeles enabled her to tape a superb live album at the Vine St. Bar & Grill. She is not only a singer of charm and conviction but also an exceptional pianist.

Liska selected Joe Williams; Heckman commended Ernestine Anderson for keeping the flame of classic jazz singing alive. Stewart observed that "if Sarah Vaughan is not the greatest singer we have, she'll do until the real thing comes along." No choice by Snowden.

**Book of the Year:** Despite a fair quantity of jazz-related releases, nobody came up with a vote except Zan Stewart, who pointed to "Jazz," a collection of photographs by William Claxton (Twelve Trees Press). "These superb black-and-white shots, taken in the '50s and '60s, offer crisp, candid glimpses of jazzmen and jazzwomen in their milieu."

**Trend of the Year:** A return to respectability, and acceptability,

by mainstream jazz, in a significant move, the trade magazine Billboard began listing albums in this category separately on its best-seller charts, to avoid the confusion with fusion.

Less noticeable but important was the trombone trend. J. J. Johnson quit the studios, formed a band and went on the road. Bill Watrous and Dan Barrett led their own groups on recent albums; Mike Fahn of Los Angeles carried the banner for the valve trombone, and Jimmy Heatham, playing bass trombone, recorded with his blues band. John Fedchock is a key soloist in the still-active Woody Herman Herd.

Other trends noted: "The growing expansion of the territory of jazz—geographically, aesthetically and spiritually" (Heckman). "Bands led by Chick Corea, John Scofield and Michael Brecker are repaving the way for fusion and making it a more viable form of expression" (Liska).

Stewart hailed the "reissuing of many significant mainstream jazz sessions on CD—by such firms as Blue Note, PolyGram and Fantasy—replete with bonus tracks, providing a first and welcome hearing of previously unavailable gems." Snowden noted "the first signs that young bandleaders are attempting to work with electronics and contemporary styles—from hip-hop to reggae and other Caribbean idioms—without sacrificing improvisational daring."

**Blue Notes of the Year:** As ever,

it was a time not only for rejoicing but for regretting. Gone are Irving Ashby, Eddie Durham, Victor Feldman, Freddie Green, John Hammond, Woody Herman, Alfred Lion, Phil Moore, Turk Murphy, Jaco Pastorius, Frank Rehak, Bob Sete, Slam Stewart, Maxine Sullivan, Booty Wood and too many more to list.

Still, a generation coming up is reminds us of the utter unfeasibility of writing off jazz as a moribund art form. The average age of a Terence Blanchard-Donald Harrison Quintet is 24; the groups in Wynnton and Branford Marsalis' only a year or two older. To feel the spirit, a happy and big New Year, may the jazz great in '88. □

# L.A. Jazz Clubs Crystal-Ball Their Futures

By LEONARD FEATHER

The most remarkable aspect of the jazz situation in the Los Angeles area is that nobody is complaining about an excess of clubs—58 by one count, more than twice as many as the New Yorker magazine lists in the Big Apple.

An informal survey of the region's clubs underlined a fundamental principle of doing business that appears likely to hold through the coming year: Offer a good product and target it for a specific audience. Southern California's current embarrassment of jazz riches—either for tonight's New Year's Eve blowout or a mellow midweek night out—regularly includes offerings of fusion and jazz/rock, of mainstream and hard bop, of soul jazz, vocal jazz, big bands, cocktail combos.

But there are also problems facing some of the area's more notable clubs, from seasonal concerns—like rainy weather—to more fundamental problems such as the state of the economy, Southern California's ever-deteriorating traffic situation and the ever-increasing costs of booking talent. Some area clubs manage on a shoestring, using local musicians. A few—mainly Catalina Bar & Grill, Vine St. Bar & Grill, Birdland West and Concerts by the Sea—offer high-priced, world-class names.



Owner Ron Berin stein welcomes patrons at Vine St. Bar & Grill.

And at least one of them is flirting with insolvency.

When Vine St. owner Ron Berin stein opened his popular Hollywood jazz room, he never dreamed that one day he'd end up operating it for the Internal Revenue Service.

"We owe a lot of money to the IRS," Berin stein said. "We've worked out a deal [the club recently filing for bankruptcy under Chapter 11] so we can

stay open and pay it off. We did have a couple of very bad months, and lately some of our midweek nights have been terrible, but the weekends are doing fine."

Berin stein's problems are symptomatic of the perils of operating a jazz-oriented nightclub in Los Angeles. He set his sights high, hiring acts that were expensive and charging propor-

*Please see JAZZ, Page 12*

## '88 ARTS Outlook

One in a series exploring the issues that will be making news in the arts in the new year.



LA Times May 1-10

STACY ROWLES, musician

Rowles, a lyrical exponent of the flugelhorn and trumpet, has been at the doorstep of fame several times. She's played with Woody Herman at the Hollywood Bowl and at the famous North Sea Jazz Festival in Holland, been heard on three albums, worked

5, 1988

with the all-female orchestra Maiden Voyage and plays local clubs with her father, eminent pianist Jimmy Rowles. This year she's planning a return to Europe and a tour of Canada—both of which may finally propel her to a level of recognition commensurate with her talent.

### JAZZ REVIEW

# Saxman Hamilton's Beautiful Echoes of Past

By LEONARD FEATHER

In the view of many tenor saxophonists it was Scott Hamilton who, arriving in New York in 1976, saved their instrument from imminent death-by-tonal-torture. Then 22, he reminded us of the horn's inherent beauty at a time when honking and squeaking, bawling and caterwauling were rapidly becoming the disorder of the day.

These reflections came to mind Monday when Hamilton visited Los Angeles, a city that sees far less of him than does Tokyo, Nice or New York. For his evening at Alfonse's (where he will appear again tonight), he was unable to bring his regular group, as it turned out, he could hardly have asked for more encouraging support than was offered by the locally recruited Gerald Wiggins at the piano, Jake Hanna on drums and Andy Simp-

kins on bass.

Hamilton is to the sound of the 1940s (Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Stan Getz) what Branford Marsalis later became to the '60s: not so much a revivalist as a re-validator of a style that did not so much die as simply go temporarily out of fashion.

He has honed his gifts—the total fluency of phrasing, the keen harmonic sense, the implacable swing—to a point where every

effort succeeds in seeming effortless. Perhaps it is no coincidence that in his more romantic moments ("In a Sentimental Mood," "Emily" as a waltz, "When I Fall in Love") there were reminders of another great tenor star raised, like Hamilton, in Rhode Island, Ellington's unforgotten Paul Gonsalves.

Complementing him ideally, Wiggins has always showed his mastery of mainstream piano in a style that transcends eras and idioms. Simpkins and Hanna, magnificent both in solo and supportive roles, were sensitive to Hamilton's every inspired moment, clearly relishing the special pleasure of belonging to this short-lived but totally talented foursome.

...the club now draws erratics and no longer brings in many of town's attractions. Straight-ahead jazz often dra

CLUB	TIME	ACT
ALFONSE'S	7:30-11:30	SCOTT HAMILTON
BIRDLAND WEST	7:30-11:30	...
CONCERTS BY THE SEA	...	...
CATALINA BAR & GRILL	...	...
...	...	...

## JAZZ: Trials, Triumphs of Local Club Owners

*Continued from Page 1*

tionately high prices for admission, food and drinks. Unfortunately, the returns weren't always as high as his expectations.

Around the corner from the Vine St., on Cahuenga Boulevard, Catalina Popescu, at her eponymous Bar

**'88 ARTS**  
**Outlook**

*One in a series exploring the issues that will be making news in the arts in the new year.*

& Grill, is bullish. "Things slowed down for a while—maybe because of the [stock] market—but business has picked up. We had Ahmad Jamal here recently; we put on a \$12 cover and had great music and great business for all six nights."

Al Williams opened his Birdland  
Please see JAZZ, Page 13



JEROME HENKEL

*Catalina Popescu is owner of the Catalina Bar and Grill.*



## JazzTimes Convention

By Beth Derise

# Taking Care of Business

**T**O AN INTERESTED observer attending the sixth annual JazzTimes Convention from October 14-17, at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, it looked and sounded like a high-powered business seminar. Such catchwords as "marketing," "hook," "promotion" rolled off the tongues of musicians and guest speakers with nary a missed beat. So it wasn't any surprise that the bottom line was that today's jazz musician not only has to play well, but has to be savvy enough to sell him/herself well in order to advance in a very tough area of the music business. Guest speakers addressing the theme "Jazz and the Media: Past, Present and Future," were enthusiastic and helpful in providing ideas and solutions in advancing jazz as an art form, but it was the musicians themselves who were left with the awesome task of choosing which ideas could be most viable to them.

Keynoting this year's convention was Dr. Billy Taylor, pianist and jazz host of CBS-TV's "Sunday Morning." Dr. Taylor gave an historical overview of radio, TV and print media's contributions to jazz. "In the early days," Dr. Taylor said, "radio needed to fill time and it brought jazz into the homes of people who didn't seek it out." Dr. Taylor enumerated various shows on radio and TV that utilized jazz more than it's being utilized today. He did emphasize, however, that "today, jazz is enjoying a resurgence and there is a growing number of jazz organizations throughout the country."

Following are brief highlights of this year's convention:

### Radio

**Rick Petrone, program/music director, WJAZ-FM, Stamford, CT:** "Billboards, busboards, key chains, take-home items, coupons are making an impression on a lot of people that may or may not have even heard of our station. We are fortunate to have a lot of area clubs where we can tie-in promotional-

ly. We've even worked with corporations and department stores where we've furnished live entertainment for various events and have handed out promotional items from the station."

**Steve Williams, program director, WJZZ, Detroit, MI:** "Jazz is not just one type of music or one type of expression, it reaches many types of people of all different ages. You have to make the image of your station as flexible as possible to reach as many people as possible. WJZZ is planning to coproduce a cable TV program called "Jazz, Fusion and Beyond," utilizing the mailing lists of the cable company, the producers, and various area organizations, thereby expanding the audience of the radio station. We're also planning to produce a newsletter with the producers of the TV show, which will reach people in five or six regional markets. Record companies are also more than happy to provide records, concert tickets, all manner of promotional materials in order to enhance the station's image and the overall image of the artists."

### Television

**Frank Radice, executive producer, Showbiz Today, Cable News Network:** "Jazz needs a machine to sell it to TV producers. CNN is not the best venue for jazz; we'll do one or two minutes, that's about it. I tend to blame the publicity machines that work at record companies for not bringing new artists or even trying to sell us the old artists. Whenever we do something special on jazz, it's been created by my staff or myself and not brought to us by the record companies. That's not enough; it's certainly not enough as far as TV is concerned. Rock and roll publicists and record companies hound me daily; that's the way it has to work for jazz. We have to be force-fed. Send us biographies, videotapes. You people have got to force that kind of machine to exist. Television loves "hooks." We love to have stories. No TV station is going to take more than a few minutes to listen to your pitch, so you really have to have it together. If you don't have the machine behind you, then you have to be the machine yourself. You can contact me at Cable News Network, 5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001."

**Fern Robinson, producer, Black Entertainment Television:** "I believe we're paving the way for a new arrangement in TV which will allow jazz to continue to emerge as a popular art form. While we do show a tremendous amount of music videos on the network, I've made a conscious effort to give my audience which watches "This Week in Black Entertainment" an exposure to the entire spectrum of

black entertainment. So you may see Whoopi Goldberg, but you'll also see Art Blakey; then again you may see Luther Vandross, but you'll also see Dexter Gordon. We also include white artists on the show and want to hear from you. Our address is: Black Entertainment Network, 4217 Wheeler Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304 (703) 461-0344."

### Print

**Richard Sudhalter, jazz writer/musician:** "When I started working for the *New York Post* in 1978, the editor said: 'Nobody's interested in this stuff you're writing about.' That attitude really colors the thinking of the big-city newspaper editors in general. Each editor feels that you have to have jazz as a component of the overall cultural coverage, but you're lucky to get even six inches of space. As to jazz criticism itself, it's no secret that I prefer older forms of jazz, but it doesn't take any quantum leap of either skill or imagination for me to listen to the World Saxophone Quartet or Ted Curzon to know whether they are playing well, what they're setting out to do, because there are overall musical considerations which transcend style, taste, theories, preferences, periods, etc."

**Stuart Troup, jazz editor, New York Newsday:** "My toughest audience is the jazz editor. Most editors have a 'who gives a damn' attitude when you want to do a piece on a big jazz artist who is playing in town. There is a de facto racism; there's a sleaze factor that jazz affects throughout the community. Most jazz performers are aware their careers depend on whether you and I get drunk tonight. Musicians can help jazz writers by organizing all their friends, listeners and followers to write to the editors, who aren't really aware of this great audience out there."

**Leonard Feather, critic, syndicated columnist, Los Angeles Times:** "In 1961, I went to the newly appointed arts editor, Charles Chandler, and he told me he was a jazz fan. At that time, I was the only jazz writer with a Sunday feature and several nightclub and concert reviews. Today, I'm still there, but there are at least three other writers covering jazz. This may sound chauvinistic, but we are perhaps giving the best coverage of jazz in the country. New York is not where it's all happening!"

**Peter Levinson, president, Peter Levinson Communications, Inc.:** "I had represented the Woody Herman Orchestra for 14 years, when in July 1986, Woody had his 50th anniversary. I didn't have to approach Leonard Feather; I knew what Leonard was going to do. I believe he did a cover and four pages in the *L.A. Times*. I called *People* magazine about the same story—here is a man whose music was kept young, following the trends, developing young musicians, changing his direction and all the time trying to be a vital force in jazz all these years. I talked to three different editors and they all said 'no.' I then came to them with the idea of Woody working for the federal government for 40 years because of a tax problem. That was the 'hook' *People* magazine gave to the story. I think it says something!" #

# Jazz Album Reviews

By LEONARD FEATHER

"FIRST BRASS," Allan Botschinsky, M-A Music NU 1580 (K-Tel International, 15535 Medina Road, Plymouth, Mass. 05447, (800) 328-6640)

Incredible! Hard though this may be to find, it's worth the effort. Recorded in Hamburg, it is the work of only four musicians who, through multiple overdubs, sound like a 16-piece orchestra. Botschinsky, a Dane, arranged and (except for Brahms' Lullaby) composed all 10 pieces, he and England's Derek Watkins play trumpets and flugelhorn while the Dutch brothers Bart and Erik Van Lier are heard mainly on trombone and tuba.

There is no rhythm section per se, though the ingenuity of the writing gives the illusion of one. In addition to the implacable (but never too heavy) tuba beat, there are rhythmic devices ranging from a bang sound (via muted trumpets) to celesta effects and a Basie-like ending.

So brilliant is the recording, and so precise the playing, that a live performance by a full brass ensemble probably could never duplicate it. Some of the music has a jaunty, swinging flavor. "Alster Promenade" is at once rhythmic, Germanic and hypnotic.

The solos justify the praise heaped on this group by Quincy Jones, Dizzy Gillespie and Doc Severinsen.

"First Brass" is not a technical gimmick, on the contrary, this is sheer techno-logic. 5 stars.

"RENAISSANCE," Branford Marsalis, Comstar FC 40711. The marvelous sense of time on the part of all four men (Marsalis on tenor, Kenny Kirkland on piano, bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Tony Williams) does wonders for the racehorse opener, "Just One of Those Things." Still, the cuts that will be most played and best remembered are the perceptive J.J. Johnson tune "Lament" and Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," with Marsalis on soprano sax and Herbie Hancock taking over the keyboard for an ethereal solo. The closing "St. Thomas" is an unaccompanied sax solo, a ploy that works only sporadically even when Sonny Rollins does it. 4 stars.

"GUESS WHO'S IN TOWN," Bobby Short, Atlantic 7-81778-1. Andy Razaf, the lyricist who co-wrote countless hits with Fats Waller, Elsie Blake and others, is the subject of this worthy dedication. Short, his perennial ebullient self, sings and plays his way through a charming program with a backing far more jazz-oriented

than is his wont. Marshall Royal, Harry (Sweets) Edison and Buster Cooper are generously allotted blowing space. This was the late Phil Moore's last go-round as a producer, and one wonders: Who else could have refurbished "Honeyuckle Rose" so gracefully, or have conceived "Ain't Misbehavin'" as a waltz? "Black and Blue," by the way, is an old Razaf-Waller song, far superior to the similarly titled tune sung by Phyllis Hyman. 4 1/2 stars.

"THEN AND NOW," Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, Atlantic 7-81801-1. The concept, one side of old Dorsey hits, one side of newer tunes in big-band settings. It doesn't work, because the singer around whom this is mainly built, Carolle Taran, is at best competent; the arrangements are serviceable and the trumpeter-leader Lee Castle has a few mildly pleasant solos. 1 1/2 stars.

"CARLA," Steve Swallow, Xtra-watt 2. True, Swallow wrote all the music for this low-key set, plays bass and synthesizers, but the formidable presence throughout is Carla Bley, who introduces the themes on organ, joined here and there by Larry Willis on piano and Hiram Bullock on guitar. A generally light fusion or quasi-Brazilian beat underlines the melodies, some of which are harmonically charming though melodically very simple. What solemn and soulful here becomes gloomy and churchy there, with mixed results. 3 stars.

"HARRY CONNICK JR.," Columbia CK 40702. Who does this young upstart think he is? Fyrol Garner? Theonious Clunk? Don't be disconcerted; once you get past his variously loping, limping, fancy, funny, clunky, clever treatments of a couple of standards, Connick emerges as a pianist/composer of genuine merit and obvious promise. Only 19 when he made this CD a year ago, he is the first (apparently) white product of the Marsalis/New Orleans school. He studied with Ellis Marsalis, appeared recently in Los Angeles

operally Branford Marsalis, and the record was produced by the 21-year-old Delfeayo Marsalis. CBS put this out with no liner notes, not even any composer credits, though presumably the unfamiliar tunes are his own. "E," despite its title, is a blues in B flat. 3 1/2 stars.

"NEW BEGINNING," Gordon Brisker Big Band, Discovery DSCD 938. Brisker's arrangements and tenor sax are the batteries that charge this talent-packed 14-man Los Angeles band. Dipping into a well-mixed bag from Shorter to Porter, with four originals, he puts his many soloists on display. Rick Culver's soul-searching trombone in "Lament," Jim Germann's cavernous bass clarinet in "Land of the Snake People," Bob Summers' trumpet passim. Underlining it is a highly culinary rhythm section with Victor Lewis on drums and John Beasley on piano. Were it only economically feasible, this would be a splendid band to keep together. 4 stars.

"WORKIN' WITH THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET," Prestige OJC 296. Davis is the only survivor of this 1956 quintet, which included John Coltrane, Rod Garland, Philly Joe Jones and Paul Chambers. Suffice it that this set includes "Four" (not the original version but a fine one), "It Never Entered My Mind" and the Jamal Ahmad's Blues. This is one of another flood of bargain-rate (\$6.98) Original Jazz Classics on Fantasy's m.l. labels. Prestige, Contemporary, Milestone, Jazzland, Riverside. There are other gems by Cannonball Adderley, Kenny Burrell, Dex-

ter Gordon, Shelly Manne, Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner. Many of them, like "Workin'," rate 5 stars.

"AFTER MIDNIGHT," Nat King Cole, Capitol CDP 7 48328 2. Diving into the jazz/pop CD reissue pool, Capitol has surfaced with four Nat Coles of which this, one of the rare jazz sessions from his later days, is the most indispensable. He swings vocally and at the piano, with four rotating guests, trumpeter Harry (Sweets) Edison, alto saxophonist Willie Smith, Juan Tizol on valve trombone and violinist Stuff Smith. The CD includes five additional tracks. Given the digital remastering and the overall evidence of Cole's pianistic gifts, this is a must. 5 stars. (The others are "Cole Espanol," in Spanish; "The Very Thought of You," a ballad vocal set with Gordon Jenkins charts, and "Nat King Cole Sings/George Shearing Plays.") □

"Compact Jazz Dizzy Gillespie." Mercury. Culled from various 1954-64 dates, this superb package has a strong Latin (Brazilian/Cuban/Caribbean) flavor. Six pieces are by Gillespie, four by Latin composers. This version of "Manteca" was taped live at Newport. The legendary trumpeter is in top form, with strong support from, among others, pianists Lalo Schifrin, Kenny Barron and Ray Bryant and saxophonists James Moody, Sonny Stitt and Benny Golson. Such gems as "Con Alma," "Night in Tunisia," and "One-Note Samba" never resonated more brilliantly. *~~~~~*

—LEONARD FEATHER

## JAZZ REVIEW

# Singer-Saxman Eddie Vinson Soars Between the Blues and Bop

By LEONARD FEATHER

Lean of frame and clean of pate, Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson is one of those hardy jazz perennials who seem impervious to the inroads of time.

Monday evening (from 5 to 9 p.m. to be exact), he was greeted by a large, receptive audience at the Grand Avenue Bar of the Biltmore Hotel. Nothing has changed. When he applies his croaking, pleading vocal tones to the blues, more often than not he uses the same lyrics that have served him throughout his career.

The lines about his baldness, about faithless women, alimony and infidelity transform the setting of this swank hotel; suddenly we are in a dim Texas nightclub where he introduced these songs 40 years ago.

Vinson's dual personality is part of his unique charm. As a blues singer he is a reminder of a tradi-

tion as old as the century, but when he plays his alto saxophone he blends his blues inclinations with strong overtones of bop, and is as likely as not to play a tune by Charlie Parker or Tadd Dameron. His sound is forcefully rugged, his intonation faultless, his phrasing impeccable. There are not too many septuagenarian be-boppers around (Vinson turned 70 last month), yet he is as comfortable in the idiom as if to the manner born. In fact, he claims to be the composer of the tunes "Four" and "Tune Up," both commonly attributed to Miles Davis.

His accompanying group consisted of three local jazz club regulars, all stalwarts in the blues and bop styles. Art Hillery's fleet piano was showcased in a pleasant fast blues; Larry Gales soloed, as is his wont, both as a pizzicato bassist and as a master of the bow. Frank Wilson on drums rounded out this serviceable unit.

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Nat Cole's Still King in Hendricks' 'Salute'

By LEONARD FEATHER

In town for a few concerts, including one tonight at the Ambassador in Pasadena, Jon Hendricks premiered his new show, "Salute to Nat King Cole," Thursday at Pepperdine University's Smothers Theater in Malibu.

The new premise enables Hendricks, alternating between solo and group vocals, to touch a nerve in the audience through songs that are—to quote an old Cole hit—unforgettable.

It is strange to reflect that Jon's

daughter, Aria Hendricks, the youngest member of the present vocal quartet, was not born when Lambert, Hendricks & Ross burst on the jazz vocal scene, launching the vocalese generation. At 24, though, she is three years older than Danilo Perez, the group's boppish pianist from Panama.

"Straighten Up and Fly Right" and "Hit That Jive Jack" were lightweight novelty songs, but Hendricks & Co. retained the same cheerful spirit Nat Cole brought to them. "Ballerina," equipped with a few extra lyrics, came off even

better, and the ballads, filtered through Hendricks' pleasantly grainy sound, were best of all. "Blame It on My Youth" was a charming duo vocal with Hendricks' wife Judith singing what was, on the record, a trombone obbligato by Juan Tizol.

Kevin Burke and Aria Hendricks were limited mostly to ensemble vocals, though the latter, in her brief solo outings, revealed a rich, mellow sound that should be used more.

Hendricks reminisced about musicians Cole supposedly admired,

this enabled him to include some of the group's familiar Basie, Ellington and even Monk material. However, the use of Benny Goodman's "Sing Sing Sing" stretched relevance a little too far.

When he was not jumping on hot Coles, Hendricks might be doing anything from a bass imitation to a flute solo (by holding up a drumstick and whistling). "Jumpin' at the Woodside," which he recorded 30 years ago with Annie Ross, Dave Lambert and Count Basie's band, still makes for a crowd-pleasing finale, and Judith Hendricks hits the high notes with impressive accuracy.

The backup group, with Andy McCloud on bass and Clifford Barbero on drums, acquitted itself well enough; Perez did not try any duplications of Nat Cole's inimitable jazz piano.

# THE CRITIC

by LEONARD FEATHER

*Author, composer and leading jazz critic, Leonard Feather is perhaps best known as the jazz critic and columnist for the Los Angeles Times.*

"People ask you for criticisms," Somerset Maugham once observed, "but they only want praise."

In browsing through Bartlett's book of quotations to prepare for this article, I found that Maugham's was the only reference, under critics or criticism, that sided with the critic. More typical was the comment of Disraeli, who wrote: "You know who critics are? The men who have failed in literature and art."

The public view of critics corresponds more often than not with Disraeli's. It never occurs to the man on the street that some critics may have made no attempt to become active in the art form about which they expound, and therefore could never have failed, or that other critics may indeed have tried and, to one degree or another, succeeded.

Musicians tend to view the critic negatively until they receive a good review, which they will quote endlessly, but when the same critic issues a negative report on the same artist, he or she will have a ready response: critics don't know what they are talking about.

I once wrote that empirical experience is essential to the role of the critic, implying that those who have no musical skills are automatically to be viewed with skepticism. That was an arrogant statement which I soon renounced. While it is true that experience as a musician is most valuable, it is possible to fulfill this function as a non-musician. Whitney Balliett has eloquently demonstrated this in "The New Yorker."

On the other hand, musicians like Gunther Schuller, who has written some of the most useful and scholarly of all jazz literature, could not have made these contributions without technical understanding of the art form.

My own experience has stood me in good stead. Having been writing music as long as I have been writing about it, and having had some 225 compositions recorded, I feel well equipped to delve into technical analysis when it is necessary. On the other hand, much of what I have written over the years has called more for an historical understanding of the events than for the ability to dissect them, in terms that may be incomprehensible to the layman.

Would the public be better off without critics? I doubt it, though I despise those who use the printed page (or the microphone) mainly to vent their spleen (John Simon, the theatrical critic, comes to mind). The longer I stay in the profession, the more convinced I become that the ability to stress the positive, to underplay negatives as far as possible, and to draw attention to new, deserving and underrated talents, are our most important functions.

This attitude led, in fact, to my various other activities. At one time or another over the decades I was able to play a role, not only as critic but as record and/or concert producer, in helping the careers of George Shearing, Dinah Washington, Dixie Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan and others. If we believe in an artist and have the power or the contacts to help them either through criticism or any other medium, it is our duty to use that power and that ability. Many who started out as writers have moved irrevocably into other fields: John Hammond, whom nobody thinks of primarily as a critic, or Dan Morgenstern, who now heads the Institute of Jazz Studies, or Gary Giddins, who in addition to writing brilliantly has become artistic director of the American Jazz Orchestra. The late Ralph Gleason is still remembered, not mainly for his writing but for the priceless TV series he produced in San Francisco, prints of which are still shown at jazz film societies around the world.

I find it very strange indeed that once in a while someone who has seen my name on a record label as composer of a piece that has impressed them will comment: "I didn't know you were a musician." It's almost as though they automatically expect critics not to be musicians. But that is a problem that goes with our territory.

If I were asked to name my proudest achievements, I would include perhaps one

that entailed writing, namely the Encyclopedias of Jazz; but I am at least as proud of having organized the Esquire polls and concerts, which did so much to break down racism in the critical community; and I am more than happy that compositions I wrote 20, 30, even 40 years ago are still heard on records and, in many cases, are still being played and sung by some of the artists I most admire. In fact, having the Count Basie orchestra record one of my arrangements was a far bigger thrill (and a more creative accomplishment, it seemed to me) than simply writing a review of the Basie band. This does not, however, mean that I feel critics are useless; they serve a helpful auxiliary purpose and, despite the slings and arrows of outraged jazzmen, will certainly always be around as long as there are typewriters or word processors to bring their message, right or wrong, to a sometimes eager, sometimes reluctant reader.



# Blanchard & Harrison—Names for the '90s

By LEONARD FEATHER

**T**hough the names Terence Blanchard and Donald Harrison may not yet ring a bell,

these two musicians are destined for major achievements in the 1990s. Moreover, the parallels between their lives and those of the celebrated siblings Wynton and Branford Marsalis are quite remarkable.

Blanchard and Harrison, like Branford and Wynton, are in their mid-20s. All four are from New Orleans. In both cases, they are separated in age by a year or so, and the older of the two plays saxophone. The younger plays trumpet (he also wears glasses). All four studied with Ellis Marsalis, father of Wynton and Branford.

It doesn't end there. In both cases, the saxophonist studied at the Berklee College of Music in

Boston; the trumpeter did not. The Marsalises came to the attention of the jazz world as members of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, when they left they were replaced by Blanchard and Harrison. Like the Marsalises before them, on leaving Blakey they formed their own group.

Like Wynton Marsalis (and to some extent Branford), Harrison and Blanchard are serious, thoughtful, intelligent musicians with considerable gifts as composers. Their unsmiling faces on the album covers are misleading, though; in person they are bright and articulate conversationalists.

They are loyal, as are Wynton and Branford, to the non-fusion, acoustic roots of jazz; their quintet has been compared to that of the pre-"Bitches Brew" Miles Davis.

In town recently to promote their most recent CBS album, "Crystal Stair" (produced by Delfeayo Marsalis, one of Ellis' younger sons), both expressed enthusiastic confidence in the idiom they represent.

"We feel we're part of a great tradition that has gone down the line from Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet to Roy Eldridge, Dizzy, Bird, Lester Young, Miles, Coltrane and Wayne Shorter," Harrison said.

"In New Orleans, where my father worked for the Post Office and my mother ran a string of day-care centers, we grew up with my parents' records—I heard Ravi Shankar, Charlie Parker, Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan, Gil Evans, all the ethnic music including R&B and New Orleans jazz. That opened my mind up to jazz and everything else, which has been a great advantage to this day.

"My mother, in fact, liked to sing and play the clarinet—she studied with Alvin Batiste, who was one of my teachers later on. When she heard about the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, she took



Donald Harrison, left, and Terence Blanchard: part of a tradition.

me there to study with Ellis Marsalis and Kid Jordan."

Terence Blanchard, born in March, 1962 (21 months after Harrison), took up trumpet in elementary school. At the Center for the Creative Arts, which he attended a little later than Harrison, he studied with a classical trumpeter as well as with the senior Marsalis before going on to Rutgers University, where he continued his classical studies.

"Before I had enrolled at Rutgers," he said, "I sat in with Lionel Hampton and wound up playing with him off and on for two years. During that time, Donald left Juilliard and played with me in the jazz program at Rutgers before we both got the job with Blakey."

Both youths, like the Marsalis brothers, benefited from classical credentials. Blanchard played in the New Orleans Civic Orchestra. Harrison was an audition winner with the New Orleans Pop Symphony.

Obviously all their formal training had to be buttressed by empirical experience. "Art Blakey offered us a priceless opportunity," Harrison says. "There's nothing that can compare to working with a master musician like him."

While on the road with Blakey's postgraduate School of Hard Bop, Harrison and Blanchard recorded not only with Blakey but also as co-leaders of their own quintet for a Concord Jazz album, "New York Second Line," which won the Grand Prix du Disque in France. Again following in the path paved by the Marsalis siblings, they joined CBS Records, taping their first LP there in January of 1986. They went public with their own post-Blakey combo in May of 1986,

opening in an Francisco to ecstatic reviews, one of which observed that "Blanchard and Harrison play with more of a sense of knowledge of jazz history than 95% of the fusion stars."

This awareness of their backgrounds has prompted Harrison to say, in introducing the song "All Blues" at concerts, "This was written by Miles Davis when he was a jazz musician." Harrison respects Davis, has visited his home and admired his work, but feels (and declares that Davis agrees) that he is no longer a part of the jazz world.

The two men are not opposed to any musical genre. Typically, Harrison comments: "I listen to pop music, to Prince, to African music, Eastern music, everything. But I need to play the music that expresses my own feelings."

"What's sad about too many kids in our generation in America today," said Blanchard, "is that they don't want to think for themselves, they're too easily led, and all they seem to want is to be able to make money and be around and relax. What is that saying?"

"Another problem," Harrison said, "is that they don't get exposed to the music."

"Right," Blanchard agreed. "I remember in school they'd take us all to hear the symphony and explain the different sounds and instruments, but they never did that for the kind of music we play. That's why we try to go out and do as many lectures and clinics as we can, show how our music evolved and talk about its history."

Harrison said: "It would be great if people would come up to us and say, 'You guys are trying to play jazz, and we respect that.' But more

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likely, "especially" in "America," they'll say, "When are you guys gonna make an R&B album?" It's time for people to respect jazz as a great art form. It's time for Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong to have the same kind of respect that Beethoven and Bach have."

The music of Blanchard and Harrison is by no means inaccessible. In their first CBS album, "Narcence," for example, Blanchard played a hauntingly poignant reinterpretation of John Coltrane's "Alabama." On Harrison's "Guardian of the Flame" (a self-descriptive slogan for the group), there is an attractive chant-like Eastern feeling. The Blanchard composition "Tacit Approval (of Desmond's Flight)" was ignited by events in South Africa and by what Blanchard feels is our administration's tacit approval of them. On this tune, Harrison plays the C-melody saxophone, a horn that has been in mothballs since the days of Frankie Trumbauer half a century ago.

"Crystal Stair," the title number of their current LP, is Harrison's personal choice among his own works. "It has so many influences—there's a touch of pop, of funk, but you have the drummer swinging, the bass player doing a funk bass line, but from a jazz perspective—and the harmony's different."

If jazz is to retain its basic identity during the decade to come, men of integrity like these two will play a major role. "Maybe we are keepers of the flame," Harrison says, "but so were Charlie Parker and Lester Young and Dizzy and all the others. We try to aspire to the same ideals, to use whatever has happened in our lives, and to present our music in a way that will enable people to understand what we're trying to achieve. Above all, we'd like people to know that we are serious."



FOR THE RECORD: In my Dec. 27 column, Buddy Rich's name was inadvertently omitted from a list of musicians who died in 1987. □

17/5/58

JAZZ REVIEW

# Patitucci Leads Acoustic Group

By LEONARD FEATHER

The quintet that appeared Wednesday at Le Cafe's Room Upstairs in Sherman Oaks was billed as John Patitucci's Acoustic Group—no doubt to distinguish it from the bassist's other image (he will be back Thursday leading an electric quartet).

Basically this is a unit Patitucci has been co-leading with his brother-in-law, the valve trombonist Mike Fahn, often on for a year or two, though this remarkable team has yet to be represented on records. Far removed from the slap-bands that jam on stale standard tunes in some of the Valley clubs, their combo uses arrangements, most of them written by Patitucci or by the pianist, Tad Weed.

The effort that has been put into acquiring an organized group sound pays off handsomely for the most part, without limiting the extended improvisation that displays the expertise of the soloist.

Patitucci has taken the upright bass to its outer limits and seemingly gone beyond them. The technical and creative possibilities on the instrument in his hands are almost unbelievable. With the speed of a world champion runner, he wove a solo on "Night and Day" that tended to leave the listener slack-jawed in disbelief.

Fahn is almost as powerful. Not since Bob Brookmeyer came to prominence in the 1950s has a musician put the valve trombone to such potent use. His clarity, logic and dramatic contrast of phrasing were particularly well revealed in "My Love," a Tad Weed original. Weed, at the piano, displayed a rare ability to cross over from dashing bop lines to rich impressionism.

Peter Donald at the percussion command post was rhythmically en rapport with the band throughout. The absence of the regular tenor sax player, Bob Shepherd, was regrettable, since his replacement, John Gross, didn't quite meet the group's demands.

LEONARD FEATHER ricorda Strayhorn, uomo singolarmente schivo, e musicista di impareggiabile raffinatezza.

# CARPÍ IL SEGRETO DEL DUCA PER VIVERE NELLA SUA OMBRA

di Leonard Feather

È difficile, per quanti di noi l'hanno conosciuto, rendersi conto che Billy «Swee' Pea» Strayhorn se ne è andato già da vent'anni. Per ironia della sorte, egli è più conosciuto ora di quanto fosse quand'era in vita. Oggi più persone sanno che fu lui, non Duke Ellington, a scrivere *Take The A Train*, e la sua musica viene attualmente eseguita più spesso di quanto mai si sia fatto. Brani di cui poco ci si accorse quando l'autore era vivo, come *Isfahan* o *Blood Count*, danno l'impressione di diventare dei veri *jazz standards*. Di recente, nel giro di una settimana, ho ricevuto tre album di musiche di Strayhorn: uno di Marian McPartland, uno di Art Farmer e una riedizione in CD dell'ellingtoniano «...*And His Mother Called Him Bill*», la magnifica raccolta di brani di Strayhorn incisa poco dopo la sua morte.

L'intera carriera professionale di Billy Strayhorn si è sviluppata all'interno dell'orchestra di Ellington. In precedenza, aveva lavorato per otto anni in una drogheria di Pittsburgh, e nonostante gli studi la musica non era diventata un lavoro, per lui, prima della fatidica notte del dicembre 1938, quando un amico lo presentò a Duke dietro le quinte dello Stanley Theatre di Pittsburgh.

Billy era un ometto, alto appena un metro e sessanta, massiccio, con grandi occhiali dalla montatura di corno che gli davano un aspetto professorale. La sua giovinezza era stata piuttosto errabonda. Era stato cresciuto soprattutto dalla nonna paterna, e sbalzato attraverso varie

città, da Dayton, nell'Ohio, dove era nato, a Montclair nel New Jersey e a Hillsboro, nella North Carolina (dove appunto viveva la nonna), e infine in vari quartieri di Pittsburgh.

Aveva suonato il *Concerto in La minore* di Grieg con l'orchestra del liceo alla cerimonia del diploma, e gli erano diventate familiari le opere di Ravel e Chopin, di Debussy e Stravinsky. Ma non fu prima dei vent'anni che si destò in lui l'interesse per il jazz, che sentiva suonare da alcuni musicisti locali, come Erroll Garner. Divenne bravissimo anche a scrivere versi per canzoni sofisticate, e fu appunto come paroliere che Duke lo ascoltò per la pri-

ma volta. Una di queste canzoni era *Lush Life*, opera di incredibile complessità lirica e melodica, con le sue parole che citano «una settimana a Parigi» e altri concetti insospettabili in uno che non aveva visto nulla della vita fuori delle città in cui era stato allevato. Ma il fiuto di Ellington gli valse l'invito a raggiungerlo a New York, e Billy lo accettò nel febbraio 1939. Gli portò *Something To Live For*, immediatamente registrata dalla vocalist Jean Eldridge, cui seguirono tanti altri brani e geniali arrangiamenti.

Nel corso di quello stesso anno l'orchestra andò in Europa, e frattempo Billy divenne in pratica un membro della famiglia Ellington, ▶



Leonard Feather nel 1946 con la moglie Jane e Duke Ellington, per il quale il noto critico, come narra nei ricordi «vissuti» del nostro articolo, lavorò all'epoca al fianco di Billy Strayhorn. La foto è tratta dalla recente autobiografia di Feather: «The Jazz Years».

# Sounds From Around the World

By LEONARD FEATHER

The international impact of jazz, long a *fait accompli*, is reflected more and more frequently in the recorded product available in the United States. Purely by chance, the first four albums chosen for review this week were by artists who came to

this country from Poland, New Zealand, England and Germany. But like their American counterparts, they have chosen many directions in their pursuit of a jazz-related image, as the following comments reveal.

□  
 "NAUGHTY BABY." Adam Makowicz. RCA Novus 3022-1-N. This all-Gershwin program, a potential problem for any performer who has heard the songs played endlessly, turns out to be a well-met challenge for the Polish pianist. He chooses to use two bass players on six of the 11 cuts; for the most part, it's Charlie Haden playing rhythm and Dave Holland soloing. The treatments often are unconventional: "They All Laughed" and "Maybe" are given a Latin tinge, "Embraceable You" is in half-meter, reduced to a 16-bar chorus, and "Rhapsody in Blue" is stripped of its usual pretentiousness. The title number is an unknown song never before recorded. Al Foster on drums completes the group in this admirable demonstration that Makowicz has much more going for him than his phenomenal technique: viz., imagination. 4 stars.

□  
 "ANOTHER TIME." Alan Broadbent Trio. Trend TRCD 546. The composing career of this Auckland-born pianist never quite gained altitude, despite some prestigious recordings of his work by Woody Herman. Today, he is better known as a free-lance Los Angeles pianist of taste and intelligence. Devoting himself here to the works of Rollins, Parker, Davis and Tristano, he leaves room for three pieces that offer evidence of his gifts as a melodic writer: the stately "East 32nd Requiem," the buoyant "Alison's Waltz" and the title tune. An admiring peer, Dave Frishberg, wrote the literate liner notes. 3½ stars.

□  
 "RIO NIGHTS." Victor Feldman. TEA 225. The main points of interest are the three cuts recorded the night before Feldman's sudden death last May. Backed by his son

Trevor on drums and the nonpareil bassist John Pattucci, he played a "Basin Street Blues" that moved from slow and sneaky to hot and heavy; a Parker-like blues line, "Don't Ask Oscar," and a charming swinger, "You Gave Me The Run-around." The six other cuts are reissues of a 1977 semi-fusion date, with such first-rate studio musicians as Hubert Laws on flute and Harvey Mason on drums. Feldman not only was an admirable pianist but also a composer incapable of writing an uninteresting tune. 3½ stars.

□  
 "THE NEXT DAY." Leni Stern. Passport Jazz 88035. Press hype can be counterproductive. It was dangerous to call Stern, the Munich-born wife of guitarist Mike Stern, "the first lady of jazz guitar" when she does not yet seem to have found a firm sense of direction. (Besides, where does this leave Emily Remler?) Her compositions have little of melodic interest to offer. The backup band is notable for fine work by bassist Harvie Swartz and pianist Larry Willis, but Bob Berg's tenor sax tends to prolixity and boredom. 2 stars.

□  
 "SARAH VAUGHAN LIVE!" Mercury 832 572 2. Given the vast number of Vaughan records available, one can afford to be selective. There are dazzling moments here ("Green Dolphin Street," "I'll Be Seeing You"), but 11 of the 14 songs, all old standards, are backed only by a rhythm trio of lesser impact that those that have supported her more recently. There are moments of unneeded vocal pyrotechnics and of the forced coyness Vaughan affected more often than (1957-63) than now. Oddly, she is introduced at one point by Carmen Cavallaro, a cocktail-type pianist of the 1940s; happily, he doesn't play. So, if you will accept a consummate stylist in not-quite-flawless form. *voilà*. 3 stars.

□  
 "LOVE IS A RUSH." Wilton Felder. MCA 42006. None of the influences attributed to Felder

(Coltrane, Rollins, Shorter) can even be dimly detected in this typical Crusaders production. Instead of spontaneity, every last detail is carefully planned: the drum programming, the synthesizer settings, the arrangements of tunes by Felder or Joe Sample, all almost martial in their precision. Reichl Guillory applies her little-girl voice to two tunes. Instead of a hand in the advancement of jazz, Felder and Sample have a finger on the pulse of pop. 2½ stars.

□  
 "SERIOUS SWINGERS." Bud Shank-Bill Perkins Quintet. Contemporary C 14031. Substitute looseness for rigidity, spontaneous creation for slogging preparation, and you have the difference between these two mature, limber sax soloists and Felder. Perkins' tenor is excellently framed in his own catchy "Nu Blues for B.B.," as is his partner's alto in a Shank original, "Blazing Paddles." The rhythm section (Alan Broadbent, Sherman Ferguson, John Heard) is top-of-the-crop. There is no pre- or post-recording, and the entire session was completed within a matter of hours. 4 stars.

□  
 "COMPACT JAZZ. CHARLIE PARKER." Verve CD 833-288-2. Most of these 1948-52 items were issued in the "Essential Charlie Parker" LP. Essential they remain, with 14 cuts, of which three were made at sessions with strings (among them the unforgettable "Just Friends") and one at a strange date with a Dave Lambert vocal group. But the rest are small combo items, with Miles Davis or Red Rodney on trumpet (one cut includes Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk). Though Bird may have been past his zenith by this time, such pieces as "Au Privave," "Star Eyes" and "K.C. Blues" are still classic reminders of the most influential horn player of his or almost any era. 5 stars.

□  
 "A SOUND INVESTMENT." Flip Phillips-Scott Hamilton Quintet. Concord Jazz CCD 433. This is not a "tenor battle," as such meetings of the saxophonic souls are often called, but rather a mutually agreeable teaming of like minds. Five of the tunes are by the veteran Phillips (among them two blues and his engaging old ballad "With Someone New"). The two tenors blend in close harmony on "Blues for the Midgets." An unlikely inclusion is "Maria Elena," which, we are reminded, was a pretty nice old song. Hamilton's regular rhythm section furnishes the easy-swinging accompaniment. 3½ stars. □



JAZZ REVIEW

## Saxophonist Cole Lets the Good Times Roll

By LEONARD FEATHER

Like a legendary namesake, Richie Cole assumes a merry-old-soul attitude toward life, one that is reflected in his music. Given to such slogans as "Alto Madness" and lately "Pop

Bop" (the title of his current album), he sounds at times less like a former protege of Phil Woods than a parody.

A sly quote here, a sputtering cadenza there, may interrupt the even flow of creative thought, yet Cole (whose engagement at the

Vine St. Bar & Grill has been extended through Sunday) basically is a well-schooled musician who, in his less comedy-conscious moments, displays a clean, legitimate sound and splendid control of the horn.

In tunes like "Confirmation," "Jeannine" and "Cloudburst" on Wednesday, there was no time for gimmicks; he was too busy delivering straight-ahead neo-bebop, backed by the Ross Tompkins Trio. His best ballad effort, "Pure Imagination," reflected more of a Benny Carter than a Charlie Parker influence, but regrettably tailed off with a fulsomely explosive ending.

Though Cole does not lead a regular group at the moment, he was fortunate to have Tompkins, with Allan Jackson on bass and Greg Field on drums. Once or twice Tompkins could be seen holding up the unfamiliar sheet music with his left hand and playing the piano with his right, but that should be

straightened out by now. Cole was wise to yield the spotlight to the ever-dependable pianist for a solo number, "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," that was one of the highlights of the set.

Jackson, though not an outstanding soloist, is a sturdy rhythm section functionary; Field, a former drummer with the Count Basie band, is no less at home in this intimate setting.

Cole's sometimes satirical outlook interferes only occasionally with the validity of his presentation. Clearly he is having a good time and wants the audience to share in it. Moreover, where too many of his contemporaries are practicing safe sax, Cole believes in taking chances; if he misses now and then, the swinging spontaneity of the result makes the effort well worthwhile.

# Scott Hamilton—In Swing With the Times

By LEONARD FEATHER

The time must come, in the career of any truly mature artist, when imitation of one's idols gives way to maturation and the development of an individual personality. Scott Hamilton can now be said to have reached that point.

Hailed as a sort of anachronism when he hit New York in 1977 and made his first record soon afterward, Hamilton brought to the tenor saxophone a sound and style that were hardly the *deus ex machina* of a time when the explosive and profits innovations of John Coltrane dominated the jazz world. But growing up in Providence, R.I., with a father who collected Swing Era records, Hamilton knew from the start where his destiny lay.

Of Coltrane, he says: "I listened

to Trane's records, but never heard anything I wanted there. I've always played the way I do now and never gave a thought to emulating any other style."

Today he is firmly entrenched as a 33-year-old veteran of dozens of albums for Concord Jazz, of eight visits to Japan ("The best working conditions in the world"), and so many to Europe that he has lost track ("I must have been to Sweden about 15 times").

That he is playing now better than ever may be related to an awakening in his personal life. The sudden fame that enveloped him led to the sort of offstage behavior that bedeviled too many great artists from Bix Beiderbecke to Lester Young. Talking about it the other day between dates at Alfonso's in Los Angeles, he said: "I just wasn't ready for what I stepped into in New York. It was scary."

"For years I could do a gig and drink all I wanted to. But after a while your health begins to suffer and you can't do it anymore. When I began losing jobs because of the drinking, I started to quit. Cold turkey? No. It took me about 50 tries and I finally stopped drinking and smoking. During your 20s you feel you can get away with anything, but when you get close to 30 you realize you can't."

Fans and fellow musicians who remember his pallid and bloated look of a few years ago are happy to see Hamilton today, completely adjusted and happily married. Mamami Imura, a Tokyo-born classical pianist, came to New York to study music and met Hamilton, a neighbor, soon after. They were married in March of 1986.

What sort of life in music is available to a jazzman who (a) can barely read music, (b) shies away from fusion, the avant-garde and other popular forms and (c) plays almost nothing but old standard songs?

Jackson on piano, Darrell Crooks on bass and Geno Jones on drums. She displayed a tendency toward such show-biz routines as conversations with the audience and sing-alongs.

Still, when she took off with "Stormy Monday" and followed it with a series of pleasantly unfamiliar blues lines, her right-of-way in the land of the blues was established beyond any doubt. For a bonus, she brought on a dazzling newcomer named Mendy Lee, who belied her youthful beauty by intoning "Since I Fell for You," an ancient Savoy Ballroom blues-ballad, with a commandingly soulful beat that took the house by surprise.

Next time around, Wilson would be well advised not to play down to the generally hip Grand Avenue Bar listeners by offering them trivial contemporary ditties. Having come here to listen to the blues-and-gospel truth, they need no palliatives to make her message easier to swallow.

—LEONARD FEATHER

gether off and on for a decade (with fellow-Providence musicians Chris Flory on guitar, Phil Flanagan on bass and Chuck Riggs on drums, along with pianist John Bunch), other jobs with pianist-entrepreneur George Wein's band, and frequent record sessions with Rosemary Clooney, Buddy Tate, Flip Phillips, and whatever other like-minded musicians empathize with him.

Probably because of his difficulties in reading and writing music, he has done very little composing. "I'm not much of a writer," he admits. "I may steal something from here and something from there and put it together once in a while, but that's about all." Oddly enough, "Freeze," one of his better pieces, sounds more like early bebop than a Swing Era product. "Stealing Port" is simply a riff on the traditional blues. But Hamilton's pieces serve their purpose as a launching pad for improvisation, which is what his ethos is essentially all about.

As Hamilton soon learned when his reputation achieved international proportions, the mainstream of jazz presently is alive and thriving in areas that provide regular work for musicians who do not have to rely on attracting the generally callow followers of the fusion bands. A whole circuit of jazz parties, for example, has grown up as a result of Dick Gibson's Colorado initiative. Hamilton has worked at most of them.

Despite his personal predilections as a performer, he does not close his mind to other areas of music. Speaking of Wynton and Branford Marsalis, he says: "They're great musicians and I like what they're doing. At one festival in Europe, George Wein had Branford Marsalis sit in with me, playing soprano sax. We just played some blues and got along fine."

Rather than regard him as a upstart, most of the senior with whom he has played see him as a valuable keeper flame. He has taken part in



Saxophonist Scott Hamilton: "I've always played the way I do now and never gave a thought to emulating any other style."

numerous sessions with men like Harold Ashby, the Ellington tenor saxophonist, Al Cohn, of Woody Herman renown, and his predecessor Flip Phillips, the 72-year-old tenor veteran with whom Hamilton was teamed on his most recent album, "A Sound Investment" (Concord CCD 4334).

"Flip is another guy I have always respected. I remember the wonderful records he made with Woody in the 1940s. I learned a lot from him, and I guess we both learned a great deal from the same people who were around before either of us, people like Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster."

The saxophonist with whom Hamilton has most often been compared is the late Paul Gonsalves, who, like him, was raised in Providence and who toured with

the Ellington orchestra from 1950 until his death in 1974.

"I listened to Paul every time he came to Providence with Duke's band," Hamilton says. "I was only 19 when he died, and I'll always regret that I was too shy ever to walk up to him and introduce myself."

Being compared to other tenor stars does not bother him. "I can't fault the critics, or anyone else, for hearing someone else in me, because it's there. If you listen to me long enough I suppose you'll hear influences of so many other people that it's hard to pin me down."

"No, I won't ever resent being compared to people I respect. When someone starts comparing me to someone whose playing I don't like, then I'll begin worrying." □

## Ruby Wilson Sings the Blues at Biltmore

"The blues is my territory," Ruby Wilson announced yesterday evening at the Biltmore's and Avenue Bar. In the latest of series of weekly celebrations of e-blues, Wilson staked out her aim in no uncertain tones.

In town briefly from Memphis, she was here as a protégée of Linda Hopkins (who will appear in the film herself March 1). Though there are traces of Hopkins in her words and phrasing, other echoes could be detected—even an occasional choked-tone hint of Esther Allpa.

Unfortunately, instead of playing in her strength, Wilson spent much of her set on nondescript pop songs, indifferently accompanied by a trio composed of Herman

## Jazz Reviews

### Gillespie in Greater Command Than Ever

By LEONARD FEATHER

Veteran Dizzy Gillespie watchers have long since learned what to expect, and what not to expect, in any of his concerts: plenty of patter from the paterfamilias of bop, but enough incomparable trumpet creativity to make it all worthwhile.

True, at El Camino College on Saturday, he still "introduced" the men in his quintet (to one another—a tired gag that no longer draws much of a laugh). Granted he indulged in a solo on the cowbell, scatted around, griped excessively about a microphone with which there really wasn't much wrong. Sure, he pokes silly fun at his own use of such words as *vicissitude* and *metaphysical*.

Yet these interruptions, part of a time-honored routine, do not negate the fact that this fire-breather-turned-wisecracker remains a national treasure. Today, 15 pounds lighter than when he brought this same group to Catalina's last April, he seems to have better breath control and even greater command of the horn.

Opening with the Toccata movement from Lalo Schifrin's "Gillespiana" suite (unannounced), he concentrated mainly on his sempiternal repertoire: his own "Manteca" and "Birks Works," Monk's "Round Midnight," as well as a newer piece called "The Tenor Sound."

Sam Rivers, long known as an avant-garde, has turned into a comedian himself under Gillespie's wing; dancing around during a solo by the Cuban drummer Ignacio Berroa, he showed that he has adjusted to this setting without compromising his music, which achieved its fiery fortitude on both soprano and tenor saxes.

The most intriguing sideman is Ed Cherry, a guitarist who aped the leader closely and brilliantly in a modal tune, sung and played to striking effect by Dizzy, who said he had picked up this Hebraic strain during one of visits to Israel.

John Lee is a schooled musician who, were he to apply his talent to the upright bass instead of the electric instrument he favors, would provide a more solid foundation.

Cherry and Lee seemed unprepared to accompany Clara Bryant, the surprise guest. After reading the music to an original song she had composed and dedicated to Gillespie, they backed her trumpet solo on "Day by Day," an old number with which they seemed unfamiliar. But when Bryant began playing a slow, funky blues, they helped bring her stint to a dazzling climax that all but stole the show.

Ignacio Berroa may be the strongest and most versatile drummer Gillespie has hired in years. From the opening 12/8 beat and on through a maze of other meters and rhythms, he was a tower of power.

### Menza and Friends Stir Up Donte's

Evidently a roaring, acoustic big band is what it takes to stir up the excitement at Donte's. Friday evening Don Menza, leading a 15-man, one-woman orchestra (Anne King was a member of the trumpet section) showed enough of that old-time spirit to keep the packed house jumping.

A saxophonist of boundless energy, coupled (as too seldom happens among tenor players) with generally good taste, Menza concentrated on his own compositions, with occasional examples of how effectively he can rearrange a jazz standard such as "Caravan."

Though the band rarely works together (Menza is a busy freelance musician), the teamwork was clean enough to do justice to the generally spirited charts. The five-man saxophone section, with Ray Reed playing lead alto, was particularly impressive in a soli passage on "Groove Blues." In other numbers, Menza and most of his section mates doubled on flutes, often to vivid effect.

Menza's brass team, nine strong, came through flaring and blaring on such pieces as "Tattoo" (with a lyrical fluegelhorn solo by Anne King) and "Bones Alone." The latter was mainly a showcase for the five trombones, with Bill Reichenbach standing out among the soloists.

During the first show there was trouble with the balance, aggravated by the lack of a piano. Drums and bass do not necessarily constitute a complete big band rhythm section, even when they happen to be Roy McCurdy and John Leftwich. Still, with the leader charging ahead in a multinoted display on his own colorful, Latin-flavor "Spanish Boots," the message came across bold and clear.

Menza returns to Donte's tonight leading a quartet. —L.F.

6 Part VI / Monday, February 15, 1988

### JAZZ REVIEW

## Superband Sum: Less Than Its Parts

By LEONARD FEATHER

It is easier to advertise a concert by an alleged "Jazz Explosion Superband" than to live up to this grandiose billing. Perhaps there was some skepticism: Friday at the Universal Amphitheater there were whole blocks of empty seats in the vast auditorium. Nevertheless, a fairly substantial crowd reacted noisily to the even noisier activities onstage.

Seldom has there been a more egregious instance of major talents put to minor use. Most of the six men on the stage are reputable musicians with strong jazz links, yet the applause-milking schlock they produced collectively was far less than the sum of its parts.

Trumpeter Randy Brecker seemed more concerned with energy and electronic trickery than creative ideas.

Stanley Clarke, who began the evening on upright bass, then switched to electric, is a consum-

mate musician, yet sound on both instruments was loud and ugly.

Allan Holdsworth, a much-acclaimed guitarist, also seemed eager to break a record for notes per second. The keyboard and synth expert Bernard Wright contributed a few solos that offered evidence of a thought process rather than a finger exercise.

Even Airto, the respected Brazilian percussionist, was disappointing.

Aside from the deaf-defying volume, a major problem was that of prolixity. By intermission the band had slogged its way through only three numbers.

It is a sad irony that there are those who view this music as representing progress, though in fact it marks a reactionary trend at a time when such men as Tom Harrell, Lester Bowie and Terence Blanchard have moved in a truly progressive direction.

"Yves Montand caps a

# The Superior Fusion of Creed Taylor

By LEONARD FEATHER

For some years now, the jazz world has been partitioned into at least three disparate, overlapping camps. One of these, New Age music—with its quasi-classical, often romantic overtones—is barely recognizable as a jazz-related form and now has its own separate category in the Grammy Awards voting.

Fusion is another matter. Often during the last decade, certain artists have been fitting back and forth between the areas of so-called traditional, or unhyphenated jazz (now granted its own best-seller listings in *Billboard*), and the more commercially oriented forms generally lumped together under the fusion banner. Herbie Hancock, Chuck Corea and Freddie Hubbard are among the many who have lived multiple lives, succeeding in each area.

But what exactly is fusion? There is a tendency among some purists to deal collectively with all such music and dismiss it as artistically valueless. This is at best a half-truth. Much fusion makes extensive use of electronic instruments, of pre-set rhythm patterns and of improvisation that is often fairly limited in creativity and, in the more traditional sense, swing. The compositions and arrangements too sometimes are contrived and unimaginative.

This, of course, is a generalization. Fusion jazz can be produced and executed with good taste, in such a way that the results neither compromise the performers unreasonably nor limit the sales potential. Possibly the outstanding examples of superior fusion were those produced under the guidance

of Creed Taylor.

A man of unique vision, with an ear for great talent as well as for good sound quality, Taylor was first prominent as a producer for Verve from 1962 to 1967. After a couple of years at A&M Records, he launched his own company, Creed Taylor Inc. (generally known as CTI).

The life of CTI corresponded almost exactly with the decade of the '70s. Regrettably, Taylor has spent much of his time since then embroiled in legal entanglements, one of which involves a suit against Warner Bros. Records concerning the services of George Benson, who left CTI to sign with Warners. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this case, what Taylor achieved during the CTI years is not now a matter for reminiscence but a living fact. Since last spring, many of his best works have become available again, the rights having been acquired by CBS.

A new batch received recently offers illuminating testimony that fusion in many instances could achieve a healthy measure of validity. True, it didn't always work; strings on a Milt Jackson album were a bit too saccharine, and the attempts to use classical compositions were at times debatable. Still, Taylor had more hits than misses, and a majority of his artists benefited from the treatment he accorded them.

It is particularly interesting to compare the contents of these 1970s products with the groups that currently dominate "Contemporary Jazz" (a euphemism for fusion) according to the trade papers. Reflecting on the work of Spyro Gyra, Hiroshima, Fatburger, Kenny G and the like, one wonders: Couldn't Taylor have come up with something just as viable commercially yet more durable musically?

In most instances, there are on these CD reissues of the CTI material additional tunes, or extra masters of the same numbers, that were discovered in the vaults. As the discs reveal too an important aspect of Taylor's creed was: When possible, cross-pollinate. Artists who appear as leaders on one album (Hubbard, Paul Desmond, Ron Carter) can be found as sidemen on others.

The following are valuable examples from the latest group.

"FIRE INTO MUSIC, Vol. II"

This compilation, the second in a series (another is due out shortly), includes one cut apiece from a dozen newly reissued sets. These include Stanley Turrentine's "Sugar," which still sounds engaging after 17 years, Hubbard's in "Red Clay," and Ron Carter's brilliant flamenco-flavored "Spanish Blue."

Taylor seemed to have particularly good luck (or good judgment) in the use of guitarists. In addition to Benson, the artists heard here include Jim Hall, Joe Beck and Kenny Burrell, whose "God Bless the Child" (reviewed separately below) was his only CTI album. The other fire-breathers are Hank Crawford, Jackson, Desmond and Chet Baker. 5 stars.

□

"GOD BLESS THE CHILD,"

Kenny Burrell. CBS ZK 40808. Burrell's gentle, often chord-rich guitar is superbly set off here with a background of five cellos, using impressionistic arrangements by Don Sebesky. Here and there are extra touches by Hubert Fuld and Hubbard's trumpet program begins with three E originals. "A Child Is Born" w cut excerpted for use in the "Into Music" sampler. The two previously unreleased tunes are Tommy Wolf's "Ballad of the Sad Young Men" and Kurt Weill's "Lost in the Stars," both performed as unaccompanied solos and doing ample justice to two superb melodies. It is debatable whether this was fusion or simply an uncompromising attempt to make Burrell's talent accessible to a broader audience. Either way, this was a 5-star production.

□

"SUGAR," Stanley Turrentine.

CBS ZK 40811. Along with the title cut, this includes three long pieces: John Coltrane's "Impressions," in a 14-minute workout that never lets up; "Sunshine Alley" by Butch Cornell, who played organ on the session, and "Gibraltar" by Hubbard, who shared the front line with Turrentine's boldly emotional tenor sax. The last number was never released in this version, though Turrentine recorded it later with a different group. Benson and Carter fortify this impassioned band, along with electric keyboard,



In 1971, producer Creed Taylor and Stanley Turrentine collaborated on "Sugar," which still sounds engaging after 17 years.

drums and congas. Performances like these put Turrentine in the forefront of high-quality pop-flavored jazz. 4 stars.

□

"BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON,"

George Benson. CBS ZK 40809. This was Benson's last session with a small jazz group before he broke into more pop-directed formats and began to gain a reputation as a singer. Backed by Carter on bass, Jack DeJohnette on drums, Clarence Palmer on organ and two extra percussionists, he glides elegantly through Luis Bonfá's "The Gentle Rain," Miles Davis' "So What" and four of his own compositions, one of which ("All Clear") is heard in an additional, hitherto unissued version. 4 stars. (Note: Benson's celebrated "White Rabbit" album, with a large brass, woodwinds and rhythm ensemble arranged by Sebesky, is available on ZK 40685.)

Other artists heard to advantage on the CBS-CTI compact discs are Gerry Mulligan, Joe Farrell, Esther Phillips, Jackie & Roy, Deodain and Airta. □

# Charles Delaunay, 77; Helped Popularize 'Le Jazz' in France

By BURT A. FOLKART, *Times Staff Writer*

Charles Delaunay, one of the fathers of "Le Jazz Hot," the French movement of the 1930s that instilled a love of the American music idiom in generations of Europeans, has died at his home outside Paris.

Benny Carter, the musician, composer and bandleader who was befriended by Delaunay in 1935 and in turn helped the French anthologist master English, said Delaunay was 77 when he died Tuesday of complications from Parkinson's disease.

Called by his American counterpart, *Times* jazz writer Leonard Feather, "the world's first important jazz critic," Delaunay and the late Hugues Panassie were advocates for jazz in Europe at a time when it was being dismissed by most foreigners as schmalz, or "Negro music."

First Panassie and later Delaunay not only amassed the greatest collections of jazz recordings then found in Europe, but they also founded the Hot Club of France, promoting concerts, record dates and radio programs.

Their *Jazz Hot*, believed the world's oldest pure jazz magazine, also was credited with sparking the careers of such French musicians as Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, who made recordings for Delaunay under his Swing label that were to lead to successes in the United States, particularly Reinhardt's guitar playing with the Benny Goodman band.

It was an era when black and white jazz musicians were unable to perform side by side in America,

but Delaunay, who later split with Panassie over the be-bop movement—a division he told Carter two months ago "was a big mistake"—formed interracial groups throughout France.

He even managed to keep the movement alive during World War II, even though the German forces occupying France insisted that he underplay its American origins.

Beyond the historic scope of Delaunay's career, his most lasting contribution undoubtedly will be his "Hot Discography," an anthology of recorded music and the musicians who made the records. It was published in 1936 and updated periodically.

## Son of Influential Artists

Delaunay, son of influential artists who included Gertrude Stein in their intellectual set, first heard jazz when confined to bed with an illness when he was 15. From that initial exposure to the records of Jelly Roll Morton, Frankie Trumbauer and Bix Beiderbecke came a lifelong love that culminated with his discography and collection, from which he would play for American jazzmen visiting Paris the hundreds of 78 r.p.m. jazz records he had accumulated and they would tell him who had played at the recording. At that time, most individual jazz musicians were unnamed on labels, particularly the blacks.

In 1977 he embarked on a revised discography that was believed to have numbered 20,000 pages and involved listings of more than 4,500 musicians.

## JAZZ

## Where Is the Black Audience Today?

By LEONARD FEATHER

Recently, Dizzy Gillespie visited Los Angeles to play a date with his group at El Camino College. This is the artist who, on Feb. 21, will be inducted into the Black Film Makers' Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Oakland. He is the same creative giant whose achievements have been similarly acknowledged by the NAACP and other black organizations. Yet, the number of black music lovers in the audience was well under 5%. Later the same week, Gillespie played at an Oakland club, Yoshi's, to a no less disproportionately white audience.

At the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, the Lionel Hampton and Count Basie orchestras performed not long ago for crowds that were even more overwhelmingly white.

One might conclude that these are not "black" neighborhoods, yet obviously there is nothing to prevent a fan of any race from attending jazz events, no matter what the area. But aside from this, I recall a most depressing experience some years ago when the Modern Jazz Quartet, whom I had never seen play to anything less than a substantial house, appeared at a black club in South-Central Los Angeles. The room was almost empty—a Friday evening.

Why is it that a musical art form developed by Afro-Americans arouses such minimal enthusiasm in black communities? How can it be logically explained that the phrase *black music*, applied very discriminately to Earth, Wind & Fire, Salt 'n' Pepa, the Ojays, Heavy D. and the Boyz, et al., is never used in the trade papers to refer to Wayne Shorter, Art Blakey, McCoy Tyner or Bobby McFerrin? (It's a weird irony, Kenny G, a quasi-jazz musician who is white, currently has a slot on the "black" chart in Billboard.)

Almost all genuine jazz is shunned by a majority of radio outlets aimed at the black audience. Do most of these stations avoid jazz because there is no call for it, or is there no call for it because the stations have failed to create a demand? A vicious circle seems to be in operation.

The situation, though more conspicuous recently, is by no means new. Mike Gould, the veteran music publisher and record promoter, recalls visiting a Los Angeles station to push some Billy Eckstine records but being told, "We can't play him." Quizzed further, the deejay informed Gould that he also could not play Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan or Duke Ellington—this on a station aimed at what was then called the "colored market."

Gould tartly informed him: "A lot of people have worked tirelessly to bring these great performers to the front of the bus, musically, but



ELIJAH BERENSON

Sonny Rollins: "If people aren't exposed to the music, how are they ever going to learn to appreciate it?"

attitudes like yours are pushing them back. As for your audiences, in effect you are saying, "Why feed them chateaubriand when they'll settle for hog maw and chillins?"

In the current issue of *Ebony*, essayist Marilyn Marshall raises the issue of black airplay. Though the headline on her story, "Are Blacks Giving Away Jazz?" is perhaps comparable to asking "Are Italians Giving Away Opera?" it is true, as Billy Taylor pointed out to her, that by and large the white community has indeed taken over support of the music.

A typical case history is that of Sonny Rollins, the saxophonist who will be visiting California this week. (He has dates in San Juan Capistrano on Tuesday and the Palace in Hollywood on Thursday.) It is safe to predict that the audiences who turn out to greet him will be predominantly white.

Born and raised in Harlem at a time when jazz was still the musical lingua franca of that community,

Rollins has impeccable credentials. First prominent in the 1950s with Miles Davis and Max Roach, he has won numerous awards as the No. 1 tenor saxophonist. His compositions, such as "Oleo," "Airegin," "Doxy" and "St. Thomas," have become jazz standards. Last year, he starred in the widely praised TV documentary "Saxophone Colossus" (now out on videocassette).

It seems unlikely that a record by the splendid group he is now leading (with his nephew Clifton Anderson on trombone, Mark Soskin on piano, Bob Cranshaw on bass and Al Foster on drums) would make anything but a positive impact on the air were it to be slipped in between items by Stevie Wonder and Dana Dane. Men like Rollins do not need to be pigeonholed as black musicians, but neither do they deserve to be exiled, through the self-limiting policies of radio outlets, from the very media that could play a significant part in expanding their appeal.

Asked if he could analyze the situation, Rollins paused for a long time before replying slowly: "I've thought about this a lot, and it's true. I've had the same experience. With certain exceptions, it's mainly the white audience I'm playing for."

Part of the problem, as he sees it, lies in the nature of jazz today. "Young black groups like Run-DMC have a high-energy level; popular music has a quality that's a little more elemental. Sometimes, in an art form like jazz, it's possible to get to a certain plateau where it runs by itself, with no fresh energy infused into it. Maybe that's what has happened."

Surely, though, in its own way, the music of men like Rollins has an innate excitement and energy that can communicate to anyone. Asked how often his records enjoy airplay on the so-called black stations, Rollins said: "Probably never, but I can't say for sure because I don't listen to them. I feel bad about it, and I feel bad knowing that other artists aren't played who should be. If people aren't exposed to the music, how are they ever going to learn to appreciate it?"

There are, as Rollins observed, some fortunate exceptions. Certain black colleges have opened their doors to jazz composers as music faculty members; as a consequence, some leading artists have appeared there in concerts. Rollins has played at Morgan State and Howard universities and a few other black campuses.

A unique situation is that of the annual jazz festival cruises, which have attracted from 25% to 35%

black passengers, most of them well-to-do and leaning toward mainstream jazz.

Critics, musicians and a substantial body of fans seem to agree that any music capable of giving the world some of the foremost creative artists of this century—Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Benny Carter, Oscar Peterson, Sonny Rollins and scores more—deserves to be presented more accessibly to listeners whose racial heritage they share. That is the very least the Afro-American segment of the public deserves, but we had better not hold our breath waiting for it to happen. □

## Diverse Roots Underlie Reeves' Jazz Career

By LEONARD FEATHER

In an odd twist, the top slots in Billboard's two jazz charts, usually filled by instrumental groups, are currently occupied by female singers who share a first name. Dianne Schuur's collaboration with the Count Basie Band has been No. 1 for 13 weeks in the straight-ahead jazz listings; now Dianne Reeves, in her self-titled album on Blue Note, is similarly placed on the Contemporary Jazz chart.

For Reeves, success has been a pleasant shock. "My two previous albums, on Palo Alto and TBA, didn't do anything commercially, but I never thought in commercial terms. Whatever I do, it's just what I believe in," she said. (Reeves will perform tonight at Concerts by the Sea in Redondo Beach.)

Born in Detroit in 1956 but raised in Denver, Reeves has enjoyed a richly diverse career. She was discovered by the trumpeter Clark Terry, who heard her at a National Assn. of Jazz Educators convention in Chicago.

"I went to Chicago with my own band, but Clark asked me to sit in with him, and I wound up working on several of his dates, one of which was with the Denver Symphony. I graduated from high school, went on to the University of Colorado for a while, studying music there with Dr. William Fowler, then came to Los Angeles in 1976."

The first real break in Los Angeles was her meeting with and subsequent tutelage under the late and legendary Phil Moore, who had been a vocal Svengali for countless singers from Marilyn Monroe to Dorothy Dandridge and Lena Horne. "I really had no style of my own, and after Phil and I got together everything began to go right," she said.

After a series of club dates and studio jobs, Reeves went into what she calls her Brazilian period, touring for 18 months with Sergio Mendes. "Sergio expanded my knowledge of Brazilian songs, he took me under his wing and allowed me to experiment, because I



Dianne Reeves will sing at Concerts by the Sea tonight.

seemed to have a natural feeling for that music. During that time I began to sing in Portuguese by learning the lyrics phonetically," she explained.

"Then in 1983 I joined Harry Belafonte, who was equally helpful, putting me in more of a folk-oriented place. In fact, just as my first record, 'Welcome to My

Heart,' was directly influenced by Sergio, the second one, 'For Every Heart,' stemmed from my work with Harry."

The latter album offered an impressive cross section of Reeves' abilities, from Joan Armatrading's "Willow" to the Nina Simone hit "Be My Husband" and a tune called "Sitting in Limbo," which involved a traditional Yoruba chant from Nigeria. With Belafonte's assistance, Reeves was discovering her multitude of roots, from West Africa to the West Indies and back to black America, finally reflecting her jazz heritage.

She credits her present position atop the charts to several factors, not the least of them being her producer, the keyboardist George Duke. "I was able to go to George and tell him about a variety of concepts I had in mind. For instance, on this song of Herbie

Hancock's, 'Harvest Time,' I was hearing a rhythm called a bawawa that comes from Chile, and I felt we ought to build the song on it." (Hancock co-wrote and played keyboards on this tune as well as on "Never Said," a.k.a. "Chan's Song," the latter with lyrics by Stevie Wonder.)

"It's hard to put a label on all the kinds of music I do. Truthfully, I see myself simply as a vocalist," she said.

"I look back at Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, and especially Betty Carter, whom I admire the most, and I say OK, they set a standard of excellence. I listen to them not for what they are doing, but to study where they are coming from because for me, jazz is life experience.

"Am I a purist? You may say I am. In any event, I'm proud to wear the badge of jazz vocalist if that's what people want to call me; but at the same time there are many other things I like to do. My credo is, just do what's in your heart—in other words, to thine own self be true."

## OBITUARIES

### Tenor Saxophonist, Composer Alvin (Al) Cohn

By BURT A. FOLKART, Times Staff Writer

Alvin (Al) Cohn, a tenor saxophonist who never studied that instrument yet came to be one of its best-known modern scholars, died late Monday night at his home in Canadensis in northeastern Pennsylvania.

He was 62 and died of cancer—the same illness that nearly three years ago claimed the life of fellow sax savant John Haley (Zoot) Sims with whom he had been closely identified in the later stages of his career.

Unlike Sims, who spent his entire adult life with his horn on bandstands or in recording studios, Cohn devoted many years to composing and arranging music for such varied television programs as "Your Hit Parade" and "The Steve Allen Show."

But his wife, Flora, said that most recently Cohn had returned to playing, "which he loved most of all."

His cancer was diagnosed last New Year's Eve after he collapsed while playing at Blackstone's in Chicago, she added.

Leonard Feather, The Times jazz critic, once described Sims and Cohn as "fraternal rather than identical twins . . . who evolved their own directions."

#### Early Influence

It was a direction pointed out by Lester Young, an early and lasting influence on the two sidemen who then added their own grace and timbre to Young's swinging sound.

Born in Brooklyn, Cohn studied clarinet and piano but not saxophone before joining Joe Marsala's big band in 1943. He played with Georgie Auld until 1946 and then joined, successively, Alvino Rey, Buddy Rich, Woody Herman and Artie Shaw.

In 1949 he "retired" for the first time but returned in 1952 as a

free-lance arranger performing occasionally with Elliot Lawrence. He scored for the old Jack Sterling radio show and then with the Andy Williams, Pat Boone and Allen shows.

In 1957 he and Sims, who died March 23, 1985, formed the quintet that made them both famous in jazz circles.

After appearances in 1960 at New York City's Half Note Cafe and the Randall's Island Jazz Festival, their recordings took off. With and without Sims, Cohn was heard on RCA Victor, Coral, United Artists, Dawn and Savoy Records.

In one 1979 review, Feather lauded the quintet's original tunes, most of them written by Cohn, as "remaining true to the swinging essence of the era that produced them."

In addition to his wife, Cohn is survived by a son, Joe, a guitarist, and a daughter, Lisa.

## Jazz Reviews

### Betty Bennett and Mundell Lowe at Alfonse's

There can be little doubt that Betty Bennett and Mundell Lowe are logical musical mates. Married for almost a decade, the singer and her guitarist/composer husband have worked together off and on, although for much of that time Bennett, once a name band singer, has been in semi-retirement.

Friday evening, their professional paths converged again when they played at Alfonse's in Topanga Lake. This turned out to be an instance of the right talent in the wrong setting, or perhaps simply on the wrong night of the week.

Bennett, after a trace of opening nervousness, displayed her customary combination of musicality, subtle phrasing and good taste, but this was apparent only to those sitting next to the bandstand.

Working to a crowd more intent on conversation than concentration must be an ordeal for any vocalist. Aggravating matters, Bennett leaned toward esoteric material.

Lowe, long a dependable and harmonically intelligent guitarist, played a few opening tunes with a group that did not live up to the standards of his usual sidemen (who were unavailable).

--LEONARD FEATHER



## JAZZ REVIEW

## Gibson's Denver Bash Migrates to a San Diego Ballroom

By LEONARD FEATHER

SAN DIEGO—The jazz party fever, a phenomenon that began 25 years ago when Dick Gibson staged the first event in Colorado, has reached Southern California.

Gibson himself was on hand to see his friend Bill Muchnic, a retired businessman and amateur trumpeter who had attended every Gibson party, throw a bash here in a ballroom at the Town & Country Hotel. With 500 fans paying \$130 for a badge giving them access to 15 hours of music Saturday and Sunday, the success of the affair was ordained. It was announced early in January that the party was sold out.

Though Muchnic followed the Gibson formula, shuffling his jazz chessmen around every 45 minutes, he operated on a smaller scale. Last year in Denver, Gibson had more than 60 players. Aside from a few local participants who were afforded brief token appearances, Muchnic kept his cast down to 24.

This worked to the musicians' advantage, since they were heard more often; however, for the audience it meant a somewhat too rapid rotation. Moreover, instead of finding new talent, Muchnic simply drew on the usual pool. Aside from the excellent cornetist Ed Polcer, every one of the 24 has been a regular at the Gibson parties.

Idiomatically there was a slight tilt toward the traditional rather than the mainstream, let alone anything even minimally progressive.

A few questions arise. How many times can you listen to "Royal Garden Blues," "That's A-Plenty" and "In a Mellotone" after hearing them blown to death by the same people year in and decade out? It would do no harm if these veterans expanded their vocabulary. (Only two who took part, Scott Hamilton and John Clayton, are under 40.) But it is possible to teach old cats new tricks, or at least to abandon the tried-and-true occasionally for the arcane and challenging.

When the cornetist Warren Vache played a seldom-heard Gershwin tune, "He Loves and She Loves," as a lyrical duet with Dick Hyman, the relief was almost palpable. Hyman, who has emerged as the logical successor to Art Tatum, was no less resourceful, applying



Bob Wilber on soprano sax.

his formidable technique and creative flow to a forgotten Fats Waller song, "Going to See My Ma."

The audience was not quite as enthusiastic as the typical Gibson crowd. Not until three hours into the Saturday session was there a standing ovation, when Bob Wilber on soprano sax and Kenny Davern on clarinet blended with Damon-

and Pythias perfection on a sneaky, loping blues. Wilber also offered one number as a tribute to Benny Goodman; trombonist Al Grey dedicated a solo to the memory of Al Cohn.

Two Angelenos, Snooky Young on trumpet and Marshal Royal on alto sax, seemed to lift up the mood whenever they were on the stand. Ralph Sutton's reading of Willie the Lion Smith's "Echoes of Spring" was a charming touch of lacy delicacy, though Gibson regulars may have been reminded of the memorable day when Smith himself performed it, backed by Duffy Jackson, a drummer young enough to be his grandson.

By the same token, when Peanuts Hucko revived "Memories of You," some of us thought back to the time when Eubie Blake himself played his own famous ballad in tandem with the trumpeter Jon Faddis, who was 70 years his junior. Because moments like this happen more by accident than planning, Muchnic could hardly be expected to distill such magic automatically.

Like Gibson, Muchnic made sparing use of guitars. Herb Ellis and Bucky Pizzarelli had their own solo and duo showcase Sunday, showing their self-sufficiency as

well as a mutual ability to cook gently but firmly.

A few more questions arise. Why is the superb trombonist Bill Watrous convinced that he has to sing and whistle? His vocal effort could have been retitled "Here's That Shaky Day." And why does a technically admirable pianist like Paul Smith find it impossible even to get through a few choruses of the blues without throwing in bits from "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town"?

Drum solos were kept within reasonable limits. For the most part Butch Miles, Jake Hanna and Gus Johnson served as first-rate rhythm section functionaries.

Among the bassists (Clayton, Hinton and Bob Haggart), Clayton stood out with his classically virtuosic bowed rendition of "Nature Boy." Flip Phillips, Buddy Tate and Scott Hamilton shared the tenor sax honors, but Tate's attempt to double on clarinet fell a little flat. In short, few surprises, some disappointments but many delights. By next year (and Muchnic confirmed that this will be an annual event), perhaps he will have found ways to emerge from the giant Gibson shadow.

## TV Reviews

### 'Wolf Trap Salutes Dizzy' Lives Up to 'All-Star' Label

**W**olf Trap Salutes Dizzy Gillespie," subtitled "An All-Star Tribute to the Jazz Master," is a 90-minute "Great Performances" special airing tonight on PBS. Taped last June at Wolf Trap Park in Vienna, Va., and ostensibly a celebration of Gillespie's birthday, it took place more than four months before he turned 70.

Produced for TV by John T. Potthast (the concert itself was assembled by Charles Fishman), the program lives up to its billing by presenting almost 40 artists in a kaleidoscope of dazzling small-group formats. Most of the participants are former associates of the trumpet veteran, or simply long-time admirers.

Some of the groups are unique in their spanning of generations: in one set Wynton Marsalis shares the front line with Benny Carter and J. J. Johnson. There are moments when the show has a "This Is Your Life" overtone. Carmen McRae, accompanying herself at the piano, sings "Beautiful Friendship." Gillespie joins with Sonny Rollins in "Wheatleigh Hall," and memorably with Oscar Peterson for a duo outing on "All the Things You Are."

David Amram reminisces about the cruise he and Dizzy took to Cuba in 1977, then plays a solo on two penny whistles. James Moody and Jon Hendricks join for some ebullient scatting, but the highlights of this number (and arguably of the entire show) are two spectacular solos, by Slide Hampton on trombone and by Dizzy's protege Jon Faddis on trumpet.

Gillespie weaves in and out of this uneven but often wildly successful cornucopia. Even his reclusive wife, Lorraine, is seen briefly in a clip from an old Ed Murrow "Person to Person" program.

The show's main fault is its failure to represent Gillespie adequately as a composer. Such tunes

## Few Surprises, Some Ironies in Jazz Honorees

**T**he jazz victories provided few surprises, though it was particularly gratifying that the superb Duke Ellington album, "Digital Duke," won out over very powerful competition.

There were two ironies: Dexter Gordon won for his "Round Midnight" LP strictly on the strength of the movie, since his playing was clearly inferior to his work on other albums that were deserving of awards many years ago; and "Call Sheet Blues," from the same album, which won the best instrumental composition Grammy, was in fact not a composition at all in the accepted sense. Rather, as the album notes made clear, it was something thrown together on the spur of the moment, completely ad lib.

The two jazz records—Artie Shaw's "Star Dust" and Charlie Parker's "Parker With Strings"—inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame (for recordings made prior to the start of the Grammy Awards in 1958) were especially deserving.

By the standards of any day, decade or era, Artie Shaw's "Star Dust" was and still is a masterpiece. Recorded Oct. 7, 1940, with the large orchestra (including a 9-piece string section) formed when he returned from a four-month hiatus, it manages in 3½ minutes to display the talents of four giants: Shaw himself, in a masterfully conceived clarinet solo; Billy Butterfield, whose trumpet makes the lyrical opening statement; trombonist Jack Jenney, who conveys a world of eloquence in only eight bars; and Lennie Hayton, whose skill as an arranger is brilliantly reflected here.

Purist critics of the day refused to believe that far from being forced to do it by his producer, Norman Granz, Charlie Parker was enthusiastic about the idea, then new in jazz circles, of recording with a string section. The results ("Parker With Strings") broadened his audience and produced one masterpiece, "Just Friends," on which Bird's solo was perhaps his greatest. Despite mundane arrangements, these products of a 1949 session have withstood the test of time.

True to form, NARAS downplayed jazz on the Grammy Awards show. Aside from a few spontaneous moments by Joe Williams and Bobby McFerrin, who were there mainly as announcers, there was no live jazz presented during the entire three hours.

—LEONARD FEATHER

2/21/88

## Ahmet Ertegun Mixes a Cabaret Cocktail Favorite

By LEONARD FEATHER

**N**ew York Cabaret Music" is a phrase that suggests (inaccuracy) an idiom unto itself, like West Coast Jazz or Third Stream Music. It also happens to be the title of a new six-LP set (LP 81817-1 or CD 81817-2), subtitled "The Ertegun's New York."

Ahmet Ertegun, who assembled this package of 1949-'83 rereleases (most of which he or his brother Nesuhi produced originally), was the son of a Turkish ambassador to the U.S. Growing up in Washington in the early 1940s, he and Nesuhi became avid jazz fans, frequently visiting New York to catch up on the Big Apple jazz scene. They also integrated a segregated Washington by staging jam sessions at the Turkish embassy.

In 1947, Ahmet became co-founder of Atlantic Records. Nesuhi, after working in California for Les Koenig's Contemporary Records, joined Atlantic a few years later.

Originally jazz-oriented, Atlantic moved heavily into R&B in the 1950s, then into rock, and eventually became part of a huge conglomerate, WEA (Warner-Elektra Atlantic). While they forsook active producing as they worked their way up the corporate ladder, the Ertegun's retained their interest not only in jazz, but also in the indefinable music heard on this album.

Today, Ahmet Ertegun is chairman of Atlantic Records, Nesuhi is vice president of Warner Communications. Last week, visiting Los Angeles, Ahmet made a stab at the elusive definition of cabaret music.

"It's not pop music," he said. "It's not exactly jazz. It's the kind of music that appeals to people who like hearing the great songs, Cole Porter and so forth, done not by Crosby or Sinatra, but by somebody a little more special."

"It's a mood, a state of mind,



*"It's a mood, a state of mind, rather than a specific sound," says Ahmet Ertegun of his six-LP set of N. Y. cabaret music.*

rather than a specific sound. It's a potpourri for people who like night life. The era it represents is behind us, but everyone who knows about it understands what it is. Of course, people who don't know will never learn what it is.

"I can remember leaving El Morocco at midnight, with a couple of hip friends, to go to a club in Harlem, or some place in the Village where Pee Wee Russell might be playing, or perhaps one of the places on West 52nd Street or the East Side. The people who didn't want to come along would wonder what we could possibly be doing, going someplace else at midnight.

"I really miss those places like the Ruban Bleu and the Blue Angel. We just don't have clubs like that any more."

In his introduction to the album, Ertegun observes: "New York to me was glamour, elegance and modernity . . . sophisticated, romantic experience, urbane city life." In other words, beyond the

Ellingtons and Armstrongs who were his original idols, he embraced the world of Porter, Noel Coward, Kurt Weill and the singers and pianists who plied their trade, mostly east of Fifth Avenue in the glitzy confines of the Embers and Tony's and the Ruban Bleu, but also uptown and downtown.

Cabaret music was anything performed by the soloists (and the occasional jazz group) heard in those rooms, mostly in the 1950s. Many of the keyboard artists were essentially cocktail pianists, albeit superior ones (Cy Walter, Ted Straeter, Jimmy Lyon, all now deceased). Some like Hugh Shannon and Jimmy Daniels were, to coin a phrase, cocktail singers, pleasant and competent. Mae Barnes was a special favorite of Ahmet Ertegun, yet her monopoly of the first side (10 ebullient and sometimes over-boisterous songs) may find the listener sinking in a bog of nostalgia without enough redeeming musical merit.

Overheard casually during a cocktails-for-two rendezvous, these were the right sounds for the occasion. The album runs to almost 100 songs, some of which have had trouble weathering the decades. Mabel Mercer, with her residual English accent, her already deteriorating vocal power, trilling her r's and assuming a near-parlante style, becomes a little overbearing after 11 times, as does the shorter set by a long forgotten Viennese singer named Greta Keller.

More by chance than by design, some of the participants were jazz-inflected pianists (Barbara Carroll, Billy Taylor) or singers with a convincing jazz style, most notably the organist Joe Mooney and the inimitable pianist and self-mocking vocal stylist Bobby Short, whose pseudo-Bessie Smithisms on "Gimme a Pigfoot" are among the album's high points.

Like Short, Sylvia Syms and Chris Connor are both still active. On Syms' six tunes, she is well supported by Al Cohn and others; her "Down in the Depths on the 90th Floor" exemplifies a Cole Porter sophistication that successfully blended West Side jazz with East Side politesse.

Best of all, the final record offers four superlative tracks by Carmen McRae and five by a 1962-'63 Mel Tormé, almost as spellbinding then as now. Genuine instrumental jazz, not a major part of the cabaret scene, is represented on two cuts by Eddie Condon and three by Joe Bushkin, on one of which he sings. Bushkin's attractive piano treatment of "Love is Here to Stay" has Al Grey on trombone playing "L/I Darlin'" as an uncredited counterpoint. (Check this out, Neal Hefti!)

It is tempting to observe of most of this album's contents that it was part of an era on which anyone who saw and heard it will look back with affection. To those who derive nothing from a first hearing, one is inclined to say, "Well, you had to be there" or "You had to see him/her" and "You had to know him/her." For the hard-to-convince, I suggest a careful reading of the notes by Jean Bach, who knew this ~~era~~, clearly enjoyed every moment of it, and may succeed in selling you on the strength of her enthusiasm.

It is intriguing to note that Ahmet Ertegun, whose record company eventually became identified with the Rolling Stones and numerous other megasellers of the rock ages, still leans to these often agreeable, sometimes bland sounds for his personal listening pleasure. For the most part they represent the antithesis of the music that made a fortune for Atlantic. But that, of course, is the music business. □

See 22 PAGES BACK FOR  
SLAVIC REUNION (on some  
page as AHMAD JAMAL, 12/6

## JAZZ

## Richard Stoltzman—Herd Instincts

By LEONARD FEATHER

It has never been a secret that a substantial number of jazz musicians have impressive credentials in classical music. Wynton Marsalis' two-world career has merely reaffirmed a point that became evident half a century ago, when Benny Goodman recorded Mozart's Quintet for Clarinet and Strings with the Budapest String Quartet.

What has escaped many observers, though, is the fact that these reverential breezes blow in both directions. Stravinsky wrote "Ragtime" in 1918. Darius Milhaud, in 1923, praised the "enormously beneficial influence" of jazz. Aaron Copland has long been similarly enthusiastic. Gunther Schuller has been a major force in the so-called "third stream music" uniting classical and jazz elements.

A cogent reminder has emerged lately with the increasing jazz activity of Richard Stoltzman, whose virtuosity as a clarinetist has been on display in many symphony and chamber settings around the world. Last week, Stoltzman went on a tour in tandem with Woody Herman's Thundering Herd; they will be concertizing jointly through the end of the month. (Monday they will be at the Orange County Performing Arts Center; Tuesday and Wednesday at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasa-

dena; Friday at the Haugh Performing Arts Center in Glendora, and Saturday at El Camino College in Torrance.)

The centerpiece of each evening will be Igor Stravinsky's "Ebony Concerto" composed by the maestro as a Christmas gift to Herman's orchestra in 1946 after having spent an evening listening to the band's records. (Originally Herman himself played the clarinet part; Stravinsky not only attended the rehearsals but conducted the recording.) Rounding out the concert program will be various short works out of the immense Herman repertoire.

"This tour is a little scary for me," says Stoltzman, whose affable personality, lacking in egotism, belies his chameleonic talent. "Of course, it's not a new experience; I first performed the concerto with Woody's band three or four years ago. We did it at Symphony Hall in Boston and then in 1986 at the Hollywood Bowl in a celebration of the band's 50th anniversary.

When Woody became ill last year, I filled in for him several times. Then we decided to record an album for RCA with the Herd, and Woody kept promising to get out of the hospital and drop in at the sessions, but he never could make it." Herman died Oct. 29, 1987.

Born in Omaha and reared in San Francisco and Cincinnati, Stoltzman was exposed to jazz from infancy, hearing the big-band sounds in a record collection owned by his father, a railwayman and amateur saxophonist.

"I was lucky. When I was a little kid, my first teacher happened to double on clarinet and saxophone.

For one of our first concerts at a music school, he wrote out a couple of choruses for me to play on 'Stardust.' So I think I always grew up with that sense that there were two overlapping cultures, American and Western European.

"My dad was a firm believer in American music, jazz, as the best music. We didn't have symphony or chamber music records in our house. While I was in high school in Cincinnati, he would take me to the Sunday park concerts, where I heard Stan Kenton and all the great bands—including Woody's. He pointed to the bandstand and said, 'That's what music is all about.'

"I played with dance bands all through high school and college—first Ohio State University, where I majored in music and mathematics, and then Yale, where I earned my master of music degree. Studying with chamber music performers, I learned that there was a great deal of classical literature for the clarinet—also that a different discipline was called for, without a vibrato."

After some very stern lectures ("You're not going to get the jobs you want unless you learn to fit in"), and after flunking several auditions, Stoltzman developed the requisite technique and sound. By 1967, he had begun a 10-year association with the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont. Through relationships established there, he became a founding member of the chamber group Tashi in 1973.

"I remember a concert we played that began with works by Beethoven and Nielsen, then after intermission consisted of jazz standards. We had Eddie Gomez on bass, and he seemed a little up-tight. I



CHRISTOPHER BROWN

Clarinetist Richard Stoltzman: Discipline without a vibrato.

thought to myself, 'How can this great musician who spent so many years with Bill Evans' trio be nervous?' But Eddie said, 'I have a sense that you're doing things I can't do.' And I told him, 'It's just the opposite—you're doing things I can't do!' So we both had a good laugh."

Over the years, Stoltzman came into frequent contact with Gomez, who he says was of great help in introducing him to the jazz literature, as well as with other jazz musicians.

"All my life, I've tried to keep in touch with the great artists of our time, and at last I had a chance to play with some of them. Two years ago, I went to Japan to take part in a concert called 'Tokyo Music Joy' and that was my first chance to play with Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, as well as with Eddie Gomez. I went back there in 1987 and played with Wayne Shorter, Yugi Takahashi and the New Japan Philharmonic."

Stoltzman's new album, "Ebony" (RCA 6486-2-RC), includes most of the material he is using at the concerts. In addition to the concerto, there is an original, "Waltz for Woody," featuring three clarinetists: Frank Tiberti (present leader of the Herman band), David Riekenberg and Stoltzman. It was composed by Stoltzman's former Yale classmate, Bill Douglas.

"Mel Powell was our composition teacher at Yale—a very inspiring and gifted teacher. Bill Douglas studied with him, and Mel suggested that we get into the unprovisational end of things; in fact, he

## JAZZ

**Donte's**—a major North Hollywood jazz shrine for more than 20 years—may be closing shortly after owner Carey Leverette sells the club and restaurant to a Japanese corporation headed by Ken Ake-moto, a Tokyo businessman. Leverette said escrow is due to close March 5. No financial details of the transfer were disclosed. Under the new ownership Donte's will continue to operate as a jazz club, probably with bassist Pat Senatore, formerly owner of Pasquale's in Malibu, choosing the talent and running the room. Before the as-yet-unscheduled reopening, Leverette said, there will be a period of at least several weeks for extensive refurbishing.

arranged for us to go and play for Benny Goodman.

"We tried out one of Bill's pieces for Benny, and he stopped us in the middle of it and said, 'What are you guys playing?' I said, 'Well, we're improvising.' Goodman said, 'It sounds like Brahms to me.' I don't know exactly how he meant this, but I decided to take it as a compliment."

Douglas and Stoltzman followed Powell to the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia when he became Dean of Music there. "Mel invited us to teach, and I spent four very rewarding years there playing with students."

Drawn directly from the Herman book are "Apple Honey," a wild head arrangement dreamed up by the band in 1945 ("I wanted to include this because the brass section played a quote from Stravinsky's 'Petrushka' at the end"); "Cousins," inspired by a Lester Young line on an early Count Basie record ("Woody sort of took me under his wing and led me through this blues as an encore at some of our concerts"), and an arrangement by John Fedchock, currently a trombonist in the band, of Ellington's "Come Sunday," because, as Stoltzman points out, "Woody idolized Duke and I couldn't see doing an album without one of his works."

Another vintage number from the Herman library is "Igor," composed by Shorty Rogers, who played trumpet in the band in 1947. "Igor," despite its title, is strictly a bebop line, but Stoltzman eagerly points out that "a transcription was made from the record, and on this tune I play exactly what Woody played on the original version of 'Igor.' There's also a little passage at the end where I just decided to toss in a brief quote from the 'Ebony Concerto' theme. I don't know whether people will notice this, but it just seemed right."

Stoltzman typifies the forward-looking stance of more and more classical musicians who defy arbitrary borderlines between musical genres. He refers to the Herman sidemen as "not just great jazz musicians, but fine artists by any yardstick. I'm thrilled to have been a part of this project." □

# Jazz Is Going to School for a Student Examination

By LEONARD FEATHER

"Our mission," says Dr. William J. Coffey, "is to preserve and perpetuate jazz—and what better way is there than to teach jazz appreciation to school children?"

Coffey's current Jazz Goes to School project is among more than 100 local events timed to coincide with Black History month. Aided by funding from the Musician's Union, the Berklee College of Music and other sources, Coffey, as the president of the Los Angeles-based International Assn. of Jazz Appreciation, has been dispatching a small group of jazzmen to demonstrate and discuss music for elementary schools, one junior high and one high school in South Los Angeles. The once-a-week classes began in mid-January and will end Friday.

"The reaction has been tremendous," he says. "One 6-year-old student wrote in his report, 'Until now I didn't know there was any music except pop and rap.'"

Washington Rucker, the drummer who leads the group and the discussions, doesn't try to make the kids play. They just listen to discussions and live illustrations. They learn about the origins of jazz, how to define it, the various idioms such as ragtime, New Orleans, blues, be-bop, as well as the problems of racism in jazz, and the heroes—Armstrong, Ellington, Parker—all people most of them had never heard of before.

Coffey, a dermatologist from Iowa, grew up in country & West-



Dr. William Coffey, jazz appreciation association president.

ern territory but was bitten by the jazz bug while working as a biochemist in Chicago. He founded the jazz association in 1982; two years later it received nonprofit tax-exempt status. Among the organization's other ventures are Sunday jam sessions at the Alleycat Bistro in Culver City; free concerts for senior citizens; a monthly newsletter, and reduced prices for certain jazz magazines and props. The association has nearly 500 members; chapters in other cities are being organized.

"As soon as we have more funding," Coffey says, "we'll ex-

pand our program to include whatever private and parochial schools are interested. Our eventual ambition is to apply this educational format to all the public schools in all 50 states by 1990. Just think—if even 2% of graduating seniors across the country became loyal fans, you'd be talking of hundreds of thousands of converts.

"The faculty members so far have been very receptive—some are jazz fans themselves; others learn along with the children."

Coffey's enthusiasm is contagious enough to suggest that his ambitious plans may well be realized. An old friend of pianist Ramsey Lewis, who was a neighbor

during his Chicago years, Coffey has Lewis on his board of directors, along with disc jockey Jim Gosa and several educators in the Southland jazz community.

"We're looking at a comprehensive learning experience," he says, "eventually to include young musicians' workshops and a summer institute bringing the youngsters together with world-class professionals. Black History Month is an appropriate time for us to be getting this program under way, but watch us—this is just the beginning of something long-lasting. Black musical history, jazz history, has to become a subject for serious study every month of the year."

ONE BAND.  
ONE DREAM.  
ONE SUMMER.

over

JUSTINE BATEMAN  
**SATISFACTION**

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Part VI / Monday, February 22, 1988

## Jazz Reviews

### Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra at Royce Hall

Beauty and the beat were the predominant elements in the concert presented Friday by the Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra. Beauty was in the grace and skill of her writing (every arrangement was her own, as was every composition but one). The beat, whether in swinging 4/4 or a jazz waltz or a 5/4 blues, was present in full force whenever the situation called for it.

This was the orchestra's first



Toshiko Akiyoshi

appearance at Royce Hall in six years; at that time Akiyoshi still had her West Coast ensemble. The present New York personnel have brought themselves up to the level attained by the earlier group, and that is high praise indeed.

Many of the works were familiar, drawn from the repertoire of the California band "Since Peary," with its shifting moods, tempos and

tone colors, was a virtual concerto for the implacable tenor saxophone of Lew Tabackin, still the principal soloist and still a dual personality. His flute, often pure and legitimate in sound, achieved an exotic, Asian flavor on one number in a duet with drummer Terry Clarke on "Autumn Sea."

Of the other solos, the leader underplayed her role as a Bud Powell-inspired pianist; Frank Wess on alto sax brought a luxuriant quality to his own composition "Your Beauty is a Song of Love." Trumpeter John Eckert, without a microphone, came across like a brilliant extension of the 1960s Miles Davis. Jerry Dodgion on alto and several other hornmen did justice to Akiyoshi's superbly crafted music.

She has indeed accomplished the impossible. Though still unable to keep her band together on a full-time basis, she brings out in these 15 men a unified character and a timbral mixture that is without peer in contemporary jazz. Her writing for the five reed players, using a dozen permutations of saxes, clarinets, flutes and bass clarinet, attests most vividly to her genius.

Like this magnificent orchestra, she is sui generis, deserving of the numerous awards that have come her way since the original band was launched in the Southland in 1973. —LEONARD FEATHER

## JAZZ

## Some New Sounds From Old Sources

By LEONARD FEATHER

History has shown us that jazz can be written for, and improvised on, virtually any instrument. (Even the bagpipes have been tried, though with questionable success.) As the first four records below illustrate, fresh and exhilarating sounds are being produced outside what is assumed to be the conventional instrumental jazz family.

"SOUND PROJECT." Joe Pass-Tommy Gumina Trio. Polytone (6865 Vineand, N. Hollywood 91605). Gumina retired from active playing 15 years ago to concentrate on the electronics business and the manufacturing of instruments. He now returns to the studios lugging along a polycorus, a sort of super-accordion that shows itself able to generate swelling organ-like sounds. With guitarist Joe Pass in an improbable setting (this is his first album in 15 years away from the Pablo family), and Jimmie Smith on drums, this is an intriguing experiment, using polytonal voicings. Pass at one point leaps out of his normal tonal skin to achieve an out-of-character electronic sound. The tunes are mainly standards, but one of the best cuts as an original blues, "About Time." There is no bass player; rather, Gumina's agile left hand is the bassist. 4 stars.

"THE NEW TANGO." Astor Piazzolla/Gary Burton. Atlantic 81823. Nobody ever calls an accordion an accordion any more. Gumina has his polycorus, Astor Piazzolla uses the bandoneon,



JOE GALVEZ / Los Angeles Times

Guitarist Joe Pass teams up with Tommy Gumina and Jimmie Smith for "Sound Project," an electronic experiment.

supposedly a cousin of the accordion, with a dark harmonium-like sonority. Teamed with Gary Burton, that most resourceful of multi-malleted vibraphonists, he taped this set live at the 1986 Montreux Jazz Festival. Long popular in his native Argentina, Piazzolla wrote the six-part "Suite for Vibraphone and New Tango Quintet" that shows here how far the tango has moved beyond the conventional tump-da-dump-dump of yesterday. Violin, piano, guitar and bass make up this unconventional group in a challenging program of sophisticated chamber music. There are

helpful historical notes by Piazzolla and Fernando Gonzalez. 4 stars.

"SVINGIN' WITH SVEND." David Grisman Quintet. Zebra CD ZEAD 42118. The mandolin is perhaps the unlikeliest of jazz vehicles, yet Grisman has overcome its inherent obstacles (mainly a light-weight, tinny tone) to achieve respectability. His teammate here, the veteran Danish violinist Svend Amussen, walks off with most of the honors in a swing-era program that involves standards by Django Reinhardt, Fats Waller and Duke Ellington. The pianoless backup (guitar, bass, drums) is by no means the hardest driving of groups. It all adds up to a pleasant but forgettable experience. 3 stars.

"TRIPLE TREAT II." Monty Alexander/Ray Brown/Herb Ellis. Concord CCD 4338. Jazz violinists being a fairly rare breed, it is astonishing that John Frigo, who appears on the last four of these nine cuts, has not been famous for decades. Even more remarkably, he is 71 years old, lives in Chicago (could that be the problem?) and is best known as a bassist. His solo on "Lester Leaps In" lead one to speculate why this is the last track rather than the first. The tunes without Frigo are superior piano-guitar-bass mainstream works, with Alexander in buoyant form on Neal Hefti's "Fred" and Ellis taking charge forcefully on "Seven Come Eleven." 4½ stars.

"PASSION SUITE." Doug Cameron. Spindletop SPD 124. That men like Frigo can languish in obscurity while a Doug Cameron can be touted as "top jazz violinist" says much about the bloated state of so-called contemporary jazz. These carefully programmed Cameron originals are dignified by the title of the third cut, "A

# Bill Watrous Gets His Second Wind

By LEONARD FEATHER

Second of two parts.

**B**ill Watrous says that the trombone, far from being dead or dormant, just needs to come out of the shadows.

"The problem is not the shortage of talent, but the profusion of synthesizers," he says. "Also, what with electric keyboards and electric basses and even electric drums,

the trombone, with those low overtones, can be totally buried. It can't squeal like a saxophone or pierce like a trumpet, with all that competition from highly miked rhythm sections, it comes off like a powerless entity."

Watrous, a second-generation trombonist whose father played with Paul Whiteman, was a prod-

uct of the post-J. J. Johnson generation, when there were still plenty of big-band outlets for the horn of his choice. During the 1960s, he worked with Quincy Jones, Woody Herman, Johnny Richards, briefly with Count Basie and with Bobby Rosengarden's band on "The Dick Cavett Show."

After leading his own New York



Bill Watrous, on moving to Los Angeles in 1976 after a decade of success in New York: "I was the best-kept secret in town."

band, the Manhattan Wildlife Refuge (recorded under the aegis of the late John Hammond), Watrous moved to Los Angeles in 1976 and found that despite a decade of major New York successes, demands for his services were about as numerous as calls for a left-handed exponent of the ancient Greek rither.

"I was the best-kept secret in town," he says. "If it hadn't been for one or two contractors who began hiring me, I might still be scuffling."

He has again tried his hand as a leader, appearing now and then with his own orchestra at Donte's. At present, he is waiting for his new album, "Reflections" (Soundwings SWD-2104), to break out for him.

□

Produced by an old friend, the composer/arranger Patrick Williams, the album reveals new facets of his talent. Here and there he sings (on David Frishberg's "Dear Bix") or whistles in unison with his horn (on "The Slap Maxwell Theme"). On one number, "Why Not," he overdubbed four trombone parts.

An artist of extraordinary virtuosity and versatility, Watrous has managed to blend the easy legato of Tommy Dorsey and the bebop concepts of J. J. Johnson to create a persona that spans two generations.

"J. J. was one of my first idols," he says. "When I met him, I said, 'J. J., do you remember this?' Then I picked up my horn and played, note for note, a solo he had recorded on 'Cry Me a River.'"

"It's hard to get really close to someone in style, but you can imitate up to a point, so he recognized himself, looked at me in amazement and said, 'I don't recall doing that!'"

"J. J. is one of my cultural heroes, along with people like Benny Carter, Ray Brown, Sweets Edison. Whenever I speak at a college clinic, if some kid says, 'Hey, man, I'm a trombone player,' I ask if he's listened to J. J., and if he hasn't I tell him to get as many of his

albums as he can. That's essential education."

Education has played a vital role in sparing the trombone from desuetude. This summer, Watrous attended the annual meeting of the National Trombone Workshop at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. "The workshop began many years back with, believe it or not, exactly 76 trombones. An offshoot of it is the International Trombone Assn., of which I'm a life member. We have our own magazine, with a worldwide circulation that by now is well over 3,000.

"The college bands are overflowing with talented youngsters who could have gone on to become heroes in another time. In the Tommy Dorsey days, there were vehicles that gave exposure to musicians coming up—the big bands, which were yesterday's counterpart to the rock acts of the 1980s. Today, when they graduate, no matter how good they may be, where are these humongous talents going to get a job?"

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Among those who do not suffer these privations are several Los Angeles musicians Watrous admires: "Chauncey Welch is a tremendous player, so are Charlie Loper and Bill Booth. Dick Nash doesn't get the credit he deserves. And there are younger men like Jim Pugh, who used to be with Woody Herman, and of course John Fedchock, who's still with the Herman band, writing a lot of the charts and playing great solos."

Watrous hopes that the current album will bring him to the point at which he can take to the road with a band something like his new Soundwings ensemble, a 24-piece group that includes a 14-member string section. "I realize how hard it is to travel with a band that large, but I'm going to find some way to figure it out. It's going to be an interesting challenge."

The difficult he has done right now, the impossible, if it takes a little while, could benefit audiences that may not realize what they are missing. □

CALENDAR/LOS ANGELES TIMES



Doesn't Get Any Better," which, alas, turns out to be true. Except for a few passages on the title cut, spontaneous creativity is at a minimum. This is all carefully calculated to get airplay while skaking no bones and toppling no thrones. 1 star.

□

"FUTURE EXCURSIONS." Henry Johnson. Impulse MCAD 42089. It is ironic, and symptomatic of the music world as business empire, that the best example of Johnson's guitar improvisation, "Ready and Able," is available only on the CD version. This simple "I Got Rhythm" line finds him loose and uncluttered; most of the other pieces, with the exception of a delightful blues-with-a-bridge called "75th and Levy," are tight and cluttered. "There Are Ways" is an agreeable quasi-samba, with good tenor sax and piano solos. The reprehensible treatment of "A Child is Born" could have been retitled "A Child is Aborted." Taking a leaf out of the George Benson book, Johnson sings, quite effectively, on four tunes. When his commercial potential has been adequately milked, perhaps Johnson will be allowed to give full rein to his exceptional talent as a jazz musician. 2½ stars.

□

"TRIBUTE TO COUNT BASIE."

Gene Harris All Star Big Band Concord CCD 4317. Harris' star seems to be in the ascendancy again. The one-time leader of the Three Sounds is in glistening, blues-inspired form at the piano, heading an extraordinarily powerful line-up of West and East Coast men; the trumpets, for example, are Jon Faddis, Snooky Young, Conte Candoli, Frank Stabo and Bobby Bryant. Though there are a few solos by Ray Brown, Plas Johnson, Bob Cooper and Bill Watrous, the spotlight is basically on Harris, strongly aided by the Frank Wes arrangements, which achieve the spirit of Basie without any literal translations. Most of the tunes are blues or blues-like—precisely the way Basie would have wanted it. The Count himself very seldom played this sort of two-listed piano in his waning years. Check this off as one of the best big band dates within recent memory. Harris is sensational. 5 stars.

□

"BASIE IN LONDON." Verve 833-805-2. The band was in fine form at this 1956 concert, however, several of the tunes are available in definitive versions on earlier albums. Moreover, this is an egregious example of sloppy reissuing. (1) Despite the album's title, the small print reveals that it was recorded in Gothenburg, Sweden.

(2) Not even the smallest print tells who any of the soloists are on these 16 tunes. (3) We are not informed who wrote the arrangements of such numbers as "How High the Moon" and "Yesterdays." (4) A. K. Salm's composition "The Blob Blues" is credited to Count Basie. (5) Of the four previously unreleased items, one is listed simply as "Untitled," with no composer credited. (Band members tell me it was probably by Ernie Wilkins.) So, 4 stars for the music but zero for the way this was slapped on the market.

□

"HIGH PRESSURE." Malta JVC JD 3303. This is one of the first releases under a new deal that is bringing to the United States, via GRP distribution, the products of the Japan Victor Co. Malta (Yoshika Maruta) is a Tokyo-based, Berkeley-trained saxophonist and composer who has mastered the functions of jazz fusion well enough to turn out a product that is slick without sacrificing soul. His alto and soprano, along with Don Grusin's piano and synthesizers, and occasional punctuations from string or horn sections, lift this above the run-of-the-mill contemporary jazz level. Except for "Stranger in Paradise" the 11 works are all Malta originals. 3½ stars. □

## Jazz reviews

### Old Pro, Student Big Bands at the Wadsworth

It was David and Goliath time Sunday evening when two big bands faced off in the latest "Jazz at the Wadsworth" concert.

Stage left was the New American Jazz Ensemble, an ad-hoc splinter group drawn from the ranks of the New American Orchestra, directed by Jack Elliot. Stage right, alternating with that group, was Dajobu, directed by George Stone, with 16 musicians consisting mainly of students from Cal State Northridge and Cal State Los Angeles, most of them in their 20s.

If the unknown ensemble had a certain edge, this was due in large part to its generally more adventurous charts, its remarkable precision and a couple of promising soloists, most notably Gene Burkert on flute in a charming arrangement of Clare Fischer's "Pensativa," and later on alto saxophone. These musicians exuded the spirit of youth, whereas the NAJE reflected mainly the security of maturity.

Evidently the student band had

had time to prepare its music; the older musicians across the stage, virtually a pickup band, had had only one rehearsal, and occasionally it showed, especially in a sluggish treatment of a fine old Quincy Jones tune, "Stockholm Sweetenin'."

Still, there were enriching moments on both sides. The elders displayed fine sax teamwork in Al Cohn's arrangement of "Cotton-tail." Stone's saxes did even better in his own arrangement of "It Could Happen to You."

You couldn't quite say that David slew Goliath, since the youth ensemble was here at Elliot's invitation and the two groups teamed up for a fortissimo-finale.

This battle of the bands was aired live on KKKO. Earlier, Bud Shank on alto and Bill Perkins on tenor, both members of the Elliot Reed team, played an agreeable quintet set with Tom Rainier on piano, Sherman Ferguson on drums and John Leitham on bass. (In the big band Sol Gubin took over on drums and Al McKibbon was the

bassist.)

The two-saxophone front lines blended well as Shank and Perkins offered a few selections from their recent album, with Shank in buoyant form and Perkins a little less composed, though his one number on soprano sax came across with more of the necessary brio. The set was dedicated to the memory of the late Richard Bock, who had produced many albums with both men and who died last month.

—LEONARD FEATHER

5/2/88 \

## Musicians, Fans in a "Tribute to Donte's"

By LEONARD FEATHER

Monday is normally a slow night at Donte's, sometimes the musicians outnumber the customers. This Monday, however, the North Hollywood club was packed as early as 9 p.m. and was still busy well after midnight.

The reason this was a "Tribute to Donte's," organized by some of the musicians who have worked there over the years. In particular it was a salute to Carey Leverette, who was one of the three partners when Donte's became a jazz haven in June 1960. The other founders were the late Bill McKay and his wife, Sunny, who was on hand for this occasion. The McKays sold their interest in 1975.

Donte's is not closing—not, that is, until at least April 15, when the new owner, Koichi Akemoto, takes over and temporarily suspends operations for about a month while the place is redecorated.

Trumpeter Chuck Findley, who helped organize this special evening, launched the proceedings with a set in the language that has always been common parlance at Donte's—basic bebop. With Frank De La Rosa on bass, Frank Strazzeri at the piano and drummer John Guerin, Findley cruised through a series of typical bop standards.

Old friends were greeted at the door by a large placard on which they inscribed their messages to Leverette and to Bob Powell, the bartender who has been part of the scenery ever since the club's second year.

After a second group sustained the groove with Stacy Rowles on flugelhorn, Ross Tompkins on piano and Sherman Ferguson on drums, Leverette seized the typi-

cally malfunctioning microphone to reminisce and tell a few jokes.

Joe Bushkin was next up, at 71 still looking like a schoolboy and shifting the mood back to the 1940s with his swirling swing era piano.

And so it went. In the audience now were Neal Hefti, Chuck Niles, and Ira Sabin (owner of Jazz Times, in town to set plans for the magazine's first Los Angeles-based annual convention in October). All expressed relief that the new owner will maintain and possibly expand the jazz policy, along with regret that Leverette, who has fought a difficult one-man battle to keep the room afloat, will soon have to yield the steering wheel.

10 Part VI / Saturday, March 5, 1988 ★

### JAZZ REVIEW

## Slow Start, Racy Ride With Pullen-Adams 4

By LEONARD FEATHER

The Don Pullen-George Adams Quartet opened at 8:45 p.m. Thursday at Catalina's, playing "All the Things You Are." After two minutes it stopped. Then started. Then stopped and started again. And again. Not until some 20 minutes of this did it become clear that the audience was being subjected to a sound check—hardly an auspicious beginning for the evening.

Finally, at 9:30, the group got under way seriously, taking about 80 minutes to play four selections. The men have been together seven years off and on, though saxophonist Adams has played even longer with Gil Evans. Except for the bassist, Cameron Brown, the men are alumni of the Charles Mingus band, but they have taken his innovations several steps further.

At the piano, Pullen alternated between stripped-down essentials and Cecil Taylor frenzies, with occasional blues overtones. During

an unaccompanied solo on the final number, a Monk medley that lasted at least half an hour, he ran the gamut from mild modality to wild outbursts, during which the instrument seemed to acquire 176 keys. If his astonishing agility were tempered by a touch of dynamic relief, his performances would be far more accessible.

Adams, playing his own "Mr. Smoothie" and Pullen's "We've Been Here All the Time," offered mood-swinging starbursts of tenor chaos, from squeaks to honks to

impressions of Sonny Rollins having a nightmare. In his own "Time for Sobriety" he switched from tenor to soprano sax, of which he is clearly a master, then briefly offered sustained tones on flute during Brown's limber bass solo.

Dashing, crashing, numbing, thumbing its nose at convention, drawing on a rich lode of experience from the blues-driven basics to the edge of beyond, the group is as calming as a roller-coaster ride, but you don't look to this genre to soothe the soul. In particular Dannie Richmond's drumming, instead of complementing the steady pulse of Cameron Brown, tended to force the beat and aggravated the volume problem.

The Pullen-Adams foursome may often be unnerving, but it's rarely uninteresting. However, given its longevity, the occasional disorganization and inability to make succinct statements is surprising. The group closes Sunday.



Bob Florence, left, Mort Sahl, Hugh Hefner, Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham at announcement of lineup of 10th Anniversary Playboy Jazz Festival, which will be held at Hollywood Bowl June 18-19.

## Playboy Jazz Festival: Tenth Time Around

The lineup for the 10th Anniversary Playboy Jazz Festival, set for June 18-19 at the Hollywood Bowl, will be a mixture of mainstream jazz, fusion, avant-garde and fringe elements.

The performers were announced by producer George Wein Thursday in a canopied garden area of the Playboy Mansion, facing an audience of media people and a few of the musicians who are due to

participate.

The June 18 program will make use for the third time of saxophonist Kenny G. Three locally based attractions will be heard: Bob Florence with his Limited Edition band, Carmen McRae (who will be backed by Florence) and the Ray Brown Trio.

Rounding out the first day will be the World Saxophone Quartet, Larry Carlton, the Fabulous Thun-

derbird, the Michael Brecker band and King Sunny Ade, whose 19-piece African beat "Ju-ju Band" will add an exotic Nigerian touch.

The June 19 show will open with the winner of the annual Hennessy Amateur Jazz Band contest. Two artists who took part in the original Playboy Festival in Chicago in 1959 will be on hand: Dizzy Gillespie (heading an all-star big band directed by Jon Fadlis) and Ahmad Jamal. Jimmy and Jennie Cheatham will co-lead their Good Time Blues band. Spyro Gyra will return.

Also set for that day are Bobby McFerrin, the Timeless All Stars (Bobby Hutcherson, Curtis Fuller, Harold Land, Cedar Walton, Buster Williams and Billy Higgins), a Latin set (with Flora Purim, Airto, Dave Valentin and Freddie Hubbard) and Ray Charles with his orchestra and show.

Because the regular emcee, Bill Cosby, will be overseas shooting a movie, comedian Mort Sahl, who took part in the 1959 festival, will serve as host.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Jackie Masonry

What is Leonard Feather, a jazz critic, doing writing about comedy ("When Mason Crossed the Racial Line," March 13)?

To paraphrase Jackie Mason himself, "Comedy is not Feather's field." Feather's article about Mason certainly proved that.

In trying to explain away Mason's success on Broadway with his one-man show, Feather attributes it to New York's "large Jewish population" and that population's willingness to "laugh at itself."

Well, that very same show which, according to Feather, could only appeal to New York Jews, was a smash hit here in L.A. for well over a year before it went to Broadway.

So Mason did four regrettable minutes on the Grammy show. He is still one of the funniest comedians America has ever produced. And as Dan Rather and Vice-President George Bush would agree, nobody's entire body of work should be judged



The 1963 Jackie Mason.

based on a few regrettable minutes.

As for Feather, those few regrettable paragraphs on comedy are enough. He should stick to jazz.

HAL WOLKOWITZ  
Los Angeles

Thank you, Leonard Feather! I too saw the embarrassment on the Grammy show. I was not surprised. I saw Mason in a local club a few years ago.

Please keep him off my TV.  
LEOPOLD T. GOLD  
Marina del Rey

It seems to me that Feather was on an unnecessarily high horse to publicly chastise Jackie Mason.

I find it hard to believe Mr. F. never said something he thought was funny, only to wish he'd bitten off his tongue instead?

Just because he's Jewish doesn't mean he's more sensitive to Mason's gaffe than non-Jews. The poor guy suffered enough. Let Feather stick to his jazz reviews. Sometimes musicians hit lousy notes they wish they hadn't too.

JOHN DEGATINA  
Los Angeles

I'm glad that someone finally spoke up about Mason's routine on Grammy night. For me, it ruined the entire show.

I must disagree with Feather on one point, however. I do believe that Jews of the New York area would find the joke amusing and be able to "laugh themselves." Mason's jokes were low-grade crude, and nothing to laugh about.

RITA KRAKOW  
Santa Monica

LOS ANGELES TIMES/CALENDAR

# When Mason Crossed the Racial Line

One Unamused View of a Comic's Ethnic Jokes on Grammy Night

By LEONARD FEATHER

Many days after the Grammy Awards telecast, certain positive memories linger on, most notably the fantastic performance of Michael Jackson. Certain others leave a slightly odorous aftertaste, such as the almost total absence of first-rate jazz in a program that ran more than three hours.

In some circles, though, the episode that remains a topic of conversation is the incredible comedy routine—or, more correctly, the attempt to sustain a comedy routine—by Jackie Mason.

Somewhere there may be someone who found Mason's act amusing, even enlightening. Perhaps they derived some satisfaction, or reassurance, out of being told that while blacks started fires out of anger, Jews start them for profit motives.

Actually, it seems unlikely that rednecks would react to Mason's racially oriented material. Not that it would be too hip for them. On the contrary, the bumpkins might well be too hip for Jackie Mason.

It was, in fact, surprising that the presumably liberal audience laughed as Mason found himself sinking deeper and deeper into his racial quagmire. He started in with the Jews, then zeroed in on the blacks, eventually bringing in a Pope joke. One was reminded of Mort Sahl's classic line at the end of his early nightclub act: "If there are any groups left whom I haven't offended, I apologize." But Sahl's tongue was always clearly in cheek.

PAGE 2/SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 1988

his humor was subtle and appealed to a sophisticated audience.

Mason's reactionary appraisal of American society may sit well within New York, where the large Jewish population may be willing to laugh at itself. But the same routine, or variations on it, played for an audience of millions, was downright embarrassing.

At one point, Mason seemed to be addressing himself to a group of blacks in the front row, among them Quincy Jones, with a series of condescending comments on how far blacks have come. As his patronizing quips became increasingly inept, a shot showing Jones' reaction left little doubt that he was doing his damndest to muster a faint smile to show that he was being a good sport.

"I was actually embarrassed for him," Jones told me the other day. "Jackie has built a very successful career, but away from his normal audience and not doing his normal act, he got off in the wrong direction and just couldn't get out—he lost control. I heard afterwards that he was sorry and upset about it."

Despite some applause, there was no doubt that Mason had bombed on a massive scale. He had failed to realize one vital point: that in 1988 it simply is uncool to base one's entire 4-minute appearance before a mass audience on racial humor, particularly when it involves the perpetuation of long-demolished



Jackie Mason: Was his racial humor beyond good taste on Grammy telecast?

stereotypes.

It was in a sense a throwback to the days when Richard Pryor saw fit to use the word *nigger* in every other sentence, something he no longer does, because he was sensitive enough to observe that it was neither necessary nor apropos. Mason is at the same point with the word *Jew* that Pryor passed years ago.

Whatever anti-Semitic and/or anti-black feelings exist in the United States today, they could hardly have been allayed by Mason's apparent lack of understanding of where that

subtle line has to be drawn between the all know these are only harmless attitude and the area, across the border where bad taste begins. Mason crossed a minute or so into his act and succeeded in backtracking.

Orrin Keepnews, the producer who won two Grammys that night for his The Monk album "The Complete Riverside Recordings," characterized Mason's performance as "ghastly." (Keepnews is Jewish; this writer is.)

Bill Cosby has built the most illustrious career in television without ever embarrassing his own race or any other. Suggesting that the issue of race never be brought up, it seems reasonable to propose that Mason at least could have done something by taking a leaf out of his

A spokesman for Mason realized as soon as he went on stage that he didn't have the right material for the industry audience, even though the routine used on his Grammy-winning album. He tensed up and couldn't get rolling. Backstage, Mason, who had come from a film location and had not been rehearsed beforehand, said he felt his performance had "stunk."

Mason, through the spokesman, offended anyone, I certainly didn't. If I have, then I'm unhappy that I

CALENDAR/LOS ANGELES

# Double Reunion for Pianist Oscar Peterson

By LEONARD FEATHER

Oscar Peterson has been known principally as a concert artist from the start of his American career (Norman Granz discovered him in Canada, and presented him at Carnegie Hall in 1948). Nevertheless, he has not given up entirely on nightclubs.

Though he will appear Saturday at El Camino College in a duo concert with his regular bassist David Young, the main thrust of his California visit will be a four-night stint, starting Thursday, at the Loa Club in Santa Monica. The booking is unusual, not only in the nature and size of the venue (the Loa seats 138), but also in that it will mark a double reunion: Bobby Durham, the drummer who worked regularly with Peterson in the '60s and '70s, will be joined by Ray Brown, part-owner of the Loa and Peterson's bassist from 1951 to 1966.

"I caught Ray when he was in Europe last year, and he was sounding better than he'd sounded in years. I guess he's matured in his old age. Of course, after all those years together, we think the same way in a lot of areas, so it's really no hassle to come back and play with him," Peterson said by phone at his home near Toronto.

"This won't be our first reunion; among others, he worked with me at the Blue Note in New York about three years ago. That's one of the clubs I like to play, along with the Fairmont in San Francisco. The intimacy of the sound is something you don't get in a concert hall; and you become much more aware of the audience because of the closeness. I try not to let that influence me, because you're supposed to turn out the same kind of performance in concerts."

Now 62, the Montreal-born pianist is almost certainly the most recorded artist in jazz history, primarily because of his long association with Norman Granz and the various Granz-owned labels: Clef, Norgran, Verve, Pablo. In addition to scores of albums under his own name, he has been heard on hundreds more with Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Fred Astaire, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Joe Pass, Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, Buddy De Franco, Count Basie (in two keyboard duet albums), and just about every other major jazz lumi-



Pianist Oscar Peterson

nary who ever entered a studio or concert hall under the Granz aegis. His most recent release is "Benny Carter Meets Oscar Peterson" on Pablo.

His visit to the Loa, Peterson admits, will be partly a favor to Ray Brown ("I hope it gives the club a shot in the arm"), but he grants that there are still some jazz fans who prefer clubs to concert halls.

One problem the pianist has had to contend with lately is that of

cigarette smoke. "You know," he said, "at one time I was a four-pack-a-day smoker, but after I gave it up almost four years ago, for some reason I developed a tremendous allergy to smoke."

"I remember one day I was at the student union at New York University with a couple of other teachers, and the students were all smoking. I wound up back home with my nose running and my eyes closed up; it was a horrible experience. I'm going to ask Ray to make an announcement at the Loa about smoking during the show—otherwise I'm out of commission."

Since Brown no doubt will respect the wishes of his ex-boss, and since Peterson's arthritis is no longer bothering him ("I'm not doing badly for an old man"), it is safe to assume that what the trio offers at the Loa will reflect all the elements that originally established him as the quintessence of swing.

Sixteen years have passed since he gave up the permanent trio format in favor of solo recitals, but for all the success of his unaccompanied concerts, the powerful presence of two men like Brown and Durham should give him all the desired impetus to generate optimum excitement.

As Peterson puts it, "It'll be a trip."

# Big Bands: Not an Endangered Species

By LEONARD FEATHER

At a recent concert by Woody Herman's orchestra, the present leader, saxophonist Frank Tibert, referred to big bands as an endangered species.

After some four decades of such observations, it is time to set this canard at rest once and for all. The impact of rock, of fusion, of mass concern for small groups, has been immense; but this does not mean that the big band is following the route of the dinosaur.

What has changed is the socio-economic situation that has made it impossible for many 15-piece ensembles to remain together on a year-round basis, but even the most superficial glance at today's scene confirms that there will be big bands as long as musicians can be found in the tens of thousands, streaming out of the schools and colleges, and as long as there are composer/arrangers who need an orchestral outlet for their music.

The Count Basie Orchestra is a relevant case in point. Like the present Ellington and Woody Herman orchestras, this is not a "ghost band," but a direct descendant of the group led by the original leader, with many of the same musicians. The real ghost bands, which survive only on nostalgia, consist mainly of men who were born after the original leaders died (Glenn Miller, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James).

A recent visit to Disneyland during a Basie engagement provided powerful evidence of the extent to which a musically valid orchestra can beat the odds in 1988 without depending exclusively on

its audience's memories.

Frank Foster, the composer and tenor saxophonist who now leads the band (he was a Basie sideman from 1953-64), says: "We're playing at more and more colleges; the band seems to draw its audiences from every age group."

Dennis Wilson, who last year left the Basie trombone section to function as the band's music production manager, added: "These men do more than just play. At some of the colleges, they offer instrumental, vocal, big band and arranging clinics in the daytime, with several sidemen and our singer, Carmen Bradford, as regular participants."

"The accent now in performance is not just on old favorites, but on broadening our library. We're planning a new, mainly instrumental album with some fresh, exciting music." (The band's last album, with singer Diane Schuur, has been No. 1 on the jazz charts for four months, and just won a Grammy.)

With bookings set solidly through October, two weeks in Paris in December and a Japanese tour due in 1989, the Basie band is emerging from a short-lived crisis triggered last year by the necessity to file for bankruptcy under Chapter 11.

The personnel is a fascinating mix of old and young, black and white (at last count there were four white members), old hands (Sonny Cohn the trumpeter, joined in 1960; Eric Dixon, who plays tenor and flute, in 1962) and new additions. Among the latter is guitarist Paul Weeden, whose story is unique.

Now sitting in the chair occupied for a half century by Freddie Green, Weeden came to the band from Kvitsoy, Norway, his home for many years, he had been living in Scandinavia since 1966. Now 38, with scores of credits all over Europe, Weeden was persuaded by trumpeter Harry (Sweets) Edison to call Frank Foster about filling the vacant guitar chair.

"It's odd," he says. "Years ago I told Freddie Green I'd love to have his job. He said kiddingly, 'You're welcome to it, I'm getting tired.' And now here I am sitting where he sat." Weeden, playing acoustic guitar in the Green tradition, even bears a slight resemblance to his predecessor.

New also are the drummer, Dave Gibson, bassist Bill Moring, and a promising lead trumpeter, Mike Williams, who joins Sonny Cohn, Bob Ojeda, and the returnee Byron Stripling, who left last year to play Louis Armstrong in the short-lived theatrical play "Satchmo." This powerful trumpet section is matched by five empathic saxophones, led by Danny Turner on alto and with Danny House, at 26 the second youngest member (two months older than Byron Stripling), displaying guts and imagination in his alto solos.

Except for vacation time, the Basie band still operates on a permanent basis. Other bands, though unable to keep up a comparable schedule, remain viable forces on the big band scene. Lionel Hampton is often unfairly neglected in assessments of the orchestral picture; he divides his time between tours with a large orchestra, visits to the Lionel Hampton School of Music in Moscow, Ida., and taking care of his extensive real estate interests. His library is a potpourri of early works and intriguing new pieces.

New York based are the bands of Toshiko Akiyoshi, whose compositions have established this as the most adventurous unit of all on today's scene; Mel Lewis, who still works locally and tours occasionally with a band descended from the group he co-led with the late Thad Jones from 1965; Gil Evans, whose music has taken a turn in the direction of big band rock, with synthesizer effects and a more heavy-handed beat than of yore but still a vital figure; and a few other part time bands, most notab



Frank Foster, who leads the Count Basie Orchestra: "The band seems to draw its audiences from every age group."

the American Jazz Orchestra, a repertory group that gives concerts at Cooper Union.

Dizzy Gillespie, who led a splendid big band last summer for an international tour, will reorganize this summer (in fact, Basie's manager Dennis Wilson will be joining his trombone section). Illinois Jacquet has taken to leading a big band lately, with considerable success. Others usually associated with small groups have expanded similarly from time to time.

Southern California has long been a haven for part time bands. A distinguished survivor is Gerald Wilson, who has led a large ensemble off and on since the early 1940s and continues to record for Discovery.

Also Los Angeles based are the

Doc Severinsen "Tonight Show" band with its strong swing orientation, and various groups that show up now and then in clubs and on records: the Frank Capp, Nat Pierce Juggernaut, the Bill Berry L.A. Big Band, the Bill Florence, Don Menza and Bill Holman orchestras.

In Canada, Rob McConnell has led an award winning big band for many years (he is due to move to Los Angeles soon to become a faculty member at the Dick Grove School of Music). Overseas there are frequent manifestations of the band phenomenon: Ernie Wilkins the former Basie arranger, who leads his "Almost Big Band" in Copenhagen, and the radio star orchestras for which there is a U.S. counterpart, Japan, of course has several big bands with a strong jazz direction, but then, when it comes to jazz, Japan has just about everything.

Adding up the evidence on the international scene, there can be only one answer to the perennial question about the alleged demise of jazz in its expansive orchestral form: Many big bands today simply cannot afford the bloated cost of travel, whether by planes, trains, or automobiles, so they are effectively grounded much of the time. In other words, the species is not endangered, it just isn't the source of income it used to be for airlines, or the railroads. □

In the East Coast, there are such outfits as Zim Zemardi, Bo Thorpe, Chris Powers, to name a few.

He ignored the outstanding Spiffie Band of Canada. And he gave short shrift to the "ghost" bands that are instrumental in maintaining interest among those who may not wish their big-band music to be totally avant-garde jazz.

That the big bands certainly are not an endangered species is quite true. However, Leonard could certainly have pointed out that a great number of young people of today are engaged in playing in big bands in schools and colleges nationwide.

In Frederick County, Md., for instance, all six high schools have big bands, and hold a festival each year—and this is happening more and more all across the nation.

Where Feather's prejudices shows is in his apparent belief that only "jazz" bands are viable—and only those that play the style of jazz that he personally approves. He has never been kind, at all, to the dance bands—and it was (and is) those outfits that bring big band music to a broad segment of the public, without which this style of music would be endangered.

JON A. HOLIDAY  
North Hollywood

## Big-Band Bias

Predictably, Leonard Feather shows his usual bias when writing about big bands ("Big Bands: Not an Endangered Species," March 6).

He had an opportunity to point out the sheer number of bands that are playing that are helping to keep the music alive and well in face of the onslaught of rock.

He could have pointed out that local units include Pat Longo, Bill Tole, Ray Anthony, Horace Heidt Jr., Bob Keane and several others.

3/13

Please keep letters brief and include full name, address and phone number. Mail to Calendar Letters, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles 90051.

3/18/88

## Guitarist DeArango Plus Three

By LEONARD FEATHER

There was a strange kind of comeback at the Comeback Inn Wednesday. Bill DeArango, a guitarist once prominent on 52nd Street during the bop years in New York City but long out of the jazz mainstream, surfaced here a few weeks ago and made his local debut at the Verice health food haven.

Once heard on records or in clubs with Dizzy Gillespie, Terry Gibbs and Ben Webster, DeArango earned a place among the vanguard of be-boppers on his instrument. The quartet he led on this occasion, however, seemed to be straining to avoid an association with that straight-ahead jazz idiom.

For a while it seemed as though an attempt was under way to step into the worlds of modality and new age music. David Witham on piano, Bob Bowman on bass and Paul Kreibich on drums wandered through this territory while DeArango spent much of his time fixing strings, adjusting parts with a screwdriver, and occasionally leading into fragments of "Lover Man" and other standards.

While Witham was paying his mitigated respects to "What Is This Thing Called Love," DeArango broke out a second guitar, but still seemed unsatisfied. He laid out during much of "Round Midnight" but seemed to be coming to terms with it during a closing chorus, though there was minimal rhythmic unity within the group.

"All or Nothing at All," written years before Witham was born, seemed unfamiliar to him. In fact, given DeArango's distinguished background, he might have been much better off opting for companions of his own generation instead of trying to cross thresholds into areas that seemed to provoke confusion rather than inspire innovation.

BY LEONARD FEATHER

It seemed more than merely accidental that his name was an anagram of Symon Gail. Gil Evans was so powerful an influence on the composers who knew and were inspired by his work that they all did his conscious or unconscious bidding.

"If you had a box full of uncut diamonds and threw them all in the ocean," said Miles Davis, "the one precious jewel you'd want to keep would be Gil. That was how I felt about him. He changed everything. Until he came along, all the movie composers were writing like Ravel."

Davis was speaking from a New York hospital bed. Around the world, sentiments akin to his were being uttered.

"He was the most important influence on my life," said Johnny Mandel. "He wasn't just a writer, he was a masterful tonal painter. He knew how to mix orchestral shadings — and in a dance band, Claude Thornhill's, which was one of a kind in its day. Without knowing it, he showed me how to develop that art of using the colors in all the instruments."

"Gil was largely responsible," said Benny Carter, "for the success of some of the greatest albums Miles made — classics like 'Sketches of Spaul' and 'Miles Ahead' and 'Topsy and Beau.' He was truly one of a kind."

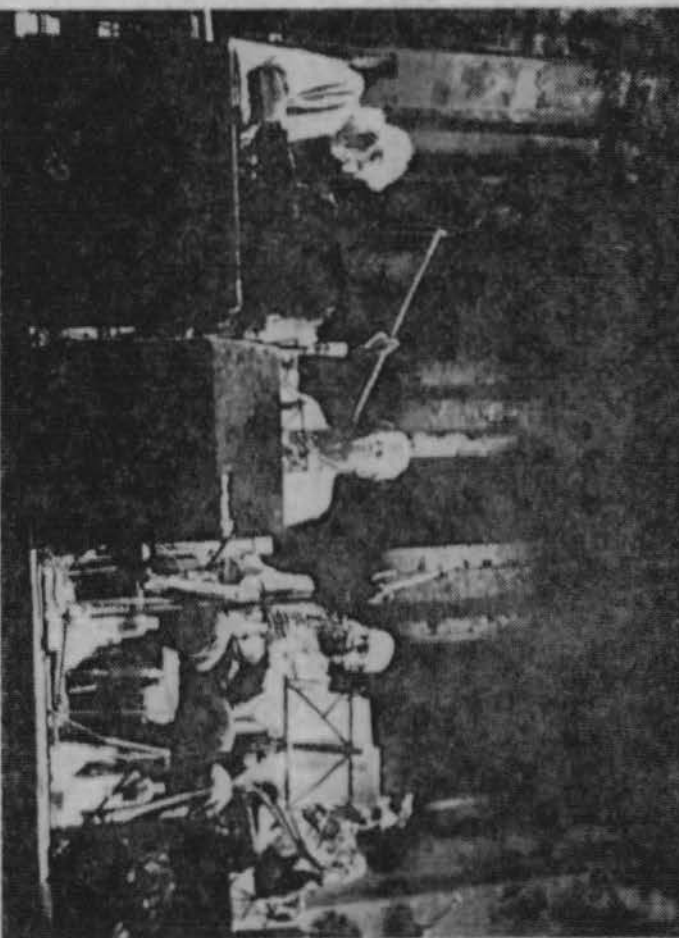
"I'd followed him ever since the Thornhill days," said Neal Hefti. "His death is a tremendous loss."

Evans was a maverick on several levels. Although he once shrugged and said, "I'm just an arranger," and true though it was that most of his masterpieces were arrangements of other musicians' works, his orchestral and developmental technique was so brilliant that every arrangement became a *de facto* Evans original.

He was a half-unknown grey eminence until his mid-30s; he never played an instrument professionally until he turned 40, when he began studying piano. Not until 1957, when he was 45, did he record an album under his own name.

Born in Toronto, he was living in Stockton, Ca. when he first led an orchestra at the age of 21. In 1928 the band was taken over by Skinny Egan-

# Remembering the Genius of GIL EVANS



Gil Evans with his Orchestra performing in a Ferrugin church.

Photo: Elena Caroniani

nis, a singer, with Evans remaining as arranger until he joined Thornhill in 1941.

During the next seven years he became part of a nucleus of forward-looking jazz artists; among them Lee Konitz and several other colleagues from the Thornhill band, as well as Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan.

"I was part of that bunch," Mandel recalls. "Blossom Dearie, the singer and pianist, took me to Gil's place one evening. I guess around 1949. He was living in a basement on 55th Street near Fifth Avenue, behind a Chinese laundry. John Lewis used to come in there, and Dave Lambert, John Carisi (who wrote 'Israel' for Miles) and Miles himself, who





The EIP International Conference of Jazz Critics in Warsaw, 1970, with (l. to r.): Ryszard Hutlita, Jan Byrceczek, Charles Delaunay, and Lubomir Doruzka

Photos: Janusz Nowinski

friends), it was clear that Charles Delaunay, the father of that European approach to jazz, must necessarily be on the preparatory board. Again, he came willingly, prepared to share all his experience and he was revered by all the other members, most of them of my generation or somewhat younger. However, it was not him (by that time approaching his 69th birthday), but a younger man, the Swiss International Radio executive Lance Tychmann, who was first called upon to steer the new organization on its way. He was suggested to me by Steve Race, a British radio man and former jazz pianist who had stepped in, without rehearsal, to accompany Cleo Laine at the Prague Jazz Festival, when this task had proved to be still a bit beyond the powers of the child prodigy Jan Hammer to whom we, the organizers, had attributed it at first. When I consulted with Steve about the people eligible for the board of a prepared International organization, he suggested Lance and said: "This is the only man who really fooled me. He arranged a radio interview with

me. I expected a typical Swiss radio executive, but he came early in the morning into my hotel room, unpacked his portable tape recorder, and before I could really come to my senses, he hollered in the most authentic transatlantic way: "Hi, cats, this is Lance going to interview the English jazz piano wizard..."

Well, as Europe's oldest and most esteemed neutral country, Switzerland was fully entitled to preside over a new European International organization and Lance was ideally equipped for this role. Charles was a Vice-president and his voice was always listened to — he'd had really the greatest experience in pushing jazz through on the European platform. But later on, when things were approaching a conflict between Lance and the General Secretary Jan Byrceczek, Charles was in a difficult position. As an active organizer of French Hot Clubs, the man who stood at the cradle of the first authentically European combo with Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, the man who helped to introduce Europe to Louis

Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and John Lewis, he was all for the more active and creative approach advocated by Jan Byrceczek. But as a man who grew up in Western Europe, he could see many of the dangers and risks which Jan, at that time a sort of innocent babe in the wood, could hardly recognize. Besides, as the time was all in favor of a diplomatically neutral approach, some of Jan's ideas were too far flung and unrealistic, and with some personal problems and the language barrier to overcome, he found it difficult to persuade the Board of the necessity and viability of a more active course. By then, Charles was feeling his time was no longer unlimited and he did not feel he should waste it on internal squabbles of which he'd had more than his fair share before. After a mismanaged Board meeting at Cascais he resigned from the Board. The time which was still allowed to him he spent on two books: one on Django Reinhardt, the other on his own memoirs. It was a wise decision and the fruits it bore will remain with everyone who longs to learn something about the story of jazz in Europe.

I saw Charles for the last time at the Paris Jazz Salon 1983 when he was signing one of his books. His health was not of the best but he was still in good humor. So it is only now as the news of his departure has reached me, that I realize I shall not see him again. A chapter in the history of jazz in Europe has been closed. Charles was a major figure in it and the title of his book — *Delaunay's Dilemma* — characterizes the everlasting problem of European jazz musicians and lovers. It was not only his personal dilemma between painting and music, but rather the everlasting dilemma every musician faces in his artistic problems, and also every jazz organizer, in the endless speculations, discussions and trial-and-error endeavors of how best to help the music he loves. Charles had to wrestle with such problems at a time when they were brand new and when he hardly had any predecessor to serve him as an example. So it's Good bye, Charles: everyone in Europe in whom jazz can offer something is in your debt, even if they may not realize it.

by Lubomir Doruzka

helped put some members of the group together into an ensemble and called the rehearsals."

Out of that literally underground beginning came the three Miles Davis recording sessions later issued in an album as "The Birth of the Cool." The use of a tuba and French horn on these dates was unprecedented in modern jazz writing. Seven years later, when Davis and Evans reunited to produce "Miles Ahead," the orchestra was enlarged to 19 pieces and the textural scope greatly expanded.

During the next decade the name of Gil Evans, all but ignored by the critical fraternity until the Davis association, was identified with a long series of adventures among which those with Davis were the most prominent, though some of his own albums were marvels of construction. Typically, in an arrangement of "The Barbara Song," a Kurt Weill melody from "The Threepenny Opera," he used two French horns, a trombone, tuba, flute, bass flute, English horn, bassoon, tenor saxophone (Wayne Shorter), harp, piano, bass and drums.

As his "Sketches of Spain" masterpiece with Davis revealed, he had a unique affinity for Spanish-tinted music. "I've always been inclined to Spanish themes, he once told Gene Lees, "but I didn't really absorb it from the Spanish. I got it from the French impressionists — and, of course, the Spanish impressionists like de Falla."

As I observed long ago in "The Encyclopedia of Jazz," "No matter what the instrumentation or size of the groups he has worked for, he extracted from each a fullness and orchestral variety compared to which the average swing band arrangement of the 1930s seemed like the work of a child playing with blocks. Despite the complexity of his work on every level — melodic, rhythmic, tonal and especially harmonic — Evans, like Duke Ellington, has remained firmly rooted to jazz and as a consequence has succeeded in taking the music a step further along the path to orchestral maturity."

True though all this was, Gil Evans never achieved the security his reputation merited. At times he seemed justifiably bitter and frustrated. Though in later years he led orchestras off and on with moderate success, his career failed to move onward and upward.

During the 1970s there were successful forays in Europe, where he toured with his orchestra and was heard more frequently on radio and TV than he had ever been in his own country. He wrote occasional film scores, received a Guggenheim fellowship in composition and won numerous awards such as the "down beat" readers' and critics' polls.

The friendship with Miles Davis endured, and was perhaps reflected in his own decision to "modernize" his ensemble, even though it meant trading in the rich old colors for synthesizers and other electronic effects. He even recorded some of the works of Jimi Hendrix.

After his death in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on March 29, his wife, Anita, announced that the orchestra would fulfill its commitments under the direction of their son, whose name, predictably, is Miles.

"I can't understand what he was doing in later years," said Johnny Mandel, "but what he accomplished before that established him forever as a magnificent innovator."

The force that he represented in the world of creative music, the jewels of sound that carved an indelible mark in the artistic history of jazz, are Gil Evans' monument. Thanks in large part to Miles Davis, with whom he formed one of the most fruitful partnerships in this musical century, he was indeed the diamond that was saved from the ocean.

photo: Jim Beegomak

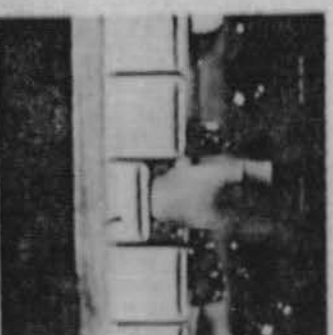


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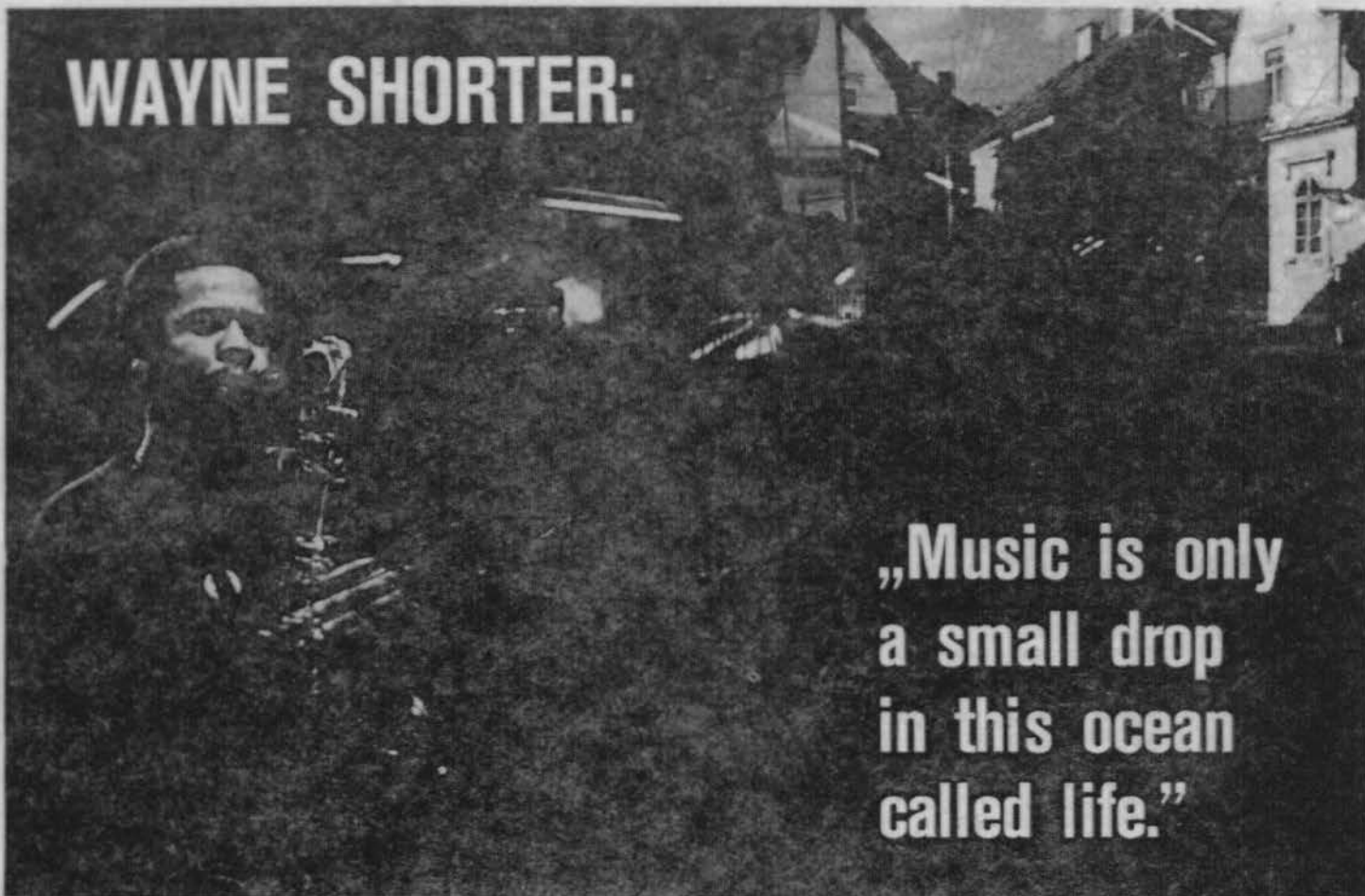
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## WAYNE SHORTER:



„Music is only  
a small drop  
in this ocean  
called life.”

photo: Milan Bucic

For all those who followed Wayne Shorter's development in the '60s, the prominent saxophonist is a master both as an improviser and a writer of demanding themes which have become jazz standards through his recordings for the Blue Note label and with the Miles Davis Quintet. Shorter shows an impeccable sense of melody in his improvisations enabling him to build singing lines over the most complex harmony changes. Even though he became a very prolific soprano stylist, he seemed to hide his talent while a member of Weather Report from 1971 till '85. He

mentioned later that during this period the music made up only a small part of his life and that he was more concerned with his Buddhist faith and family life, especially his ailing daughter who died in 1985.

The same year Shorter was back on the road with his own band. It was

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BY JURG SOLOTHURNMANN

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clear from the start that he wouldn't revert to his music style before Weather Report. He favors a strong rock jazz rhythm section, whereas his melodic and harmonic ideas clearly show a relationship to the Shorter classics of the '60s. Yet the music is driving hard and loudly without much room for melancholic balladry. It's as if Shorter is now free and soaring high without hesitation and regrets.

In the summer of 1987 Shorter visited Switzerland with a quintet consisting of Jim Beard, keyboards; Carl James, bass guitar; and two talented ladies Terri

# Moody's Mood Is High

By LEONARD FEATHER

James Moody was in high spirits during a recent visit to Catalina's in Los Angeles. He had good reason. As he put it: "For the first time in my life, I have complete security—all the work I can handle, an RCA record contract, musical satisfaction and peace of mind."

Anyone who has followed the career of the genial multi-talented jazzman (alto and tenor saxophone, flute, vocals, composer) must be aware that his present situation was not easily achieved. For a man whose education was gained partly in a school for the mentally retarded and then in a school for the deaf, he has done a phenomenal job of overcoming his supposed handicaps.

The details are not as grim as these facts suggest. "I was born," he says, "with a defect in my left ear. That's why I have a lisp; it's not an inborn speech impediment—I just don't hear how people pronounce the letter s."

"I grew up in Reading, Pa., and because we were seated alphabetically I was kinda far back in the class, so when I was asked a question I couldn't hear it. Well, they just assumed that something was wrong with me and sent me off to a school for retarded children."

"After we moved to Newark, N.J., my mother explained to the teacher about my hearing problem. The teacher put me up in front of the class, and I did fine—even skipped a couple of grades. Then in comes a nurse with a doctor, looking at our ears, and they say: 'This kid's gonna go deaf. He has to go to a special school.' So on three days' notice I was shifted over to this school for the deaf, and for the next two years I got my lessons reading lips."

"Finally, when I graduated from there, I went to a regular high school, an arts high school. Oddly enough, the only 'F' I ever got in my life was in music, because they asked me to sing something from printed music, and I didn't know the notes at that time."

Ironically, Moody's hearing problem did not prevent him from being snapped up by the Army, where he spent three years at a time when his career in music had barely begun. Shortly after his release, he was hired by Dizzy Gillespie for an all-star big band that included Milt Jackson, John Lewis, Kenny Clarke, Ray Brown and arrangements by Lewis, Tadd Dameron, and Gil Fuller. This

marked the beginning of a relationship that has lasted off and on for more than 40 years.

"I was with Dizzy the other day and he said, 'Moody, a day doesn't go by when I don't think about you,' and I told him a day never goes by without my thinking about him. I was 21 when I joined him; I'll be 63 very soon, and over the years we've just about toured the world. We may go on a trip to Russia and Africa this summer."

Though his first stint with Gillespie hardly established Moody as a household name either at home or abroad, it was in Europe that he enjoyed a taste of fame and made his first hit record, on an unfamiliar instrument and in circumstances that were purely accidental.

"I was working with a small group at the Club St. Germain in Paris when a musician from Sweden dropped by and asked if I'd like to make some records there. I'd already made dates in Lausanne and Paris, so I flew to Stockholm, played at a club and made some record dates."

"Up to this point, I had been playing strictly tenor saxophone. At one session, I noticed that Lars Gullin, the Swedish saxophonist, had an alto sax lying around. I said, 'Do you mind if I try it out?'"

"Then the producer decided we needed an extra tune, but didn't have any music prepared. I suggested making 'I'm in the Mood for Love,' and we went ahead and did it, in one take, with me playing this beat-up alto saxophone. Well, you know what happened."

What happened was an exact parallel to the experience of Coleman Hawkins, who in 1939 had recorded his memorable "Body and Soul" as a last-minute addition when one more tune was needed. Moody had a hit on his hands, one that soon became his worldwide mating call.

Eddie Jefferson wrote lyrics to every note of Moody's improvised solo, retitling it "Moody's Mood for Love." In 1952, King Pleasure recorded the vocal version, which Moody himself now sings in a weird combination of straight vocal, scat and falsetto. The song has been his



The multi-talented James Moody, "for the first time in my life," has achieved musical satisfaction and peace of mind.

permanent identification ever since, and was included, in an updated version, on his first album ("Something Special") last year for RCA Novus.

Having worked harmoniously for almost three years mainly with European musicians, Moody returned to the United States ready and eager to work with any jazzmen, regardless of nationality or race. In fact, he becomes upset when anyone raises the racial issue in connection with his hiring practices.

"Recently I played a week in Seattle. A lady with the local paper wrote that she thought the group was beautiful, but it was Black History Week and why was I playing with an all-white rhythm section? When I read that, I was quite perturbed. I called her and said, 'Here we are on the bandstand together and everything is going great, so with all the problems in the world, why did she have to bring up that?' She's white, by the way. Well, after I talked to her she said she was sorry she'd written that. My feeling is, you take the best you can get, regardless."

After his return from Europe, there were two major interruptions in Moody's career. The first was a serious drinking problem; he resolved it by spending time at a sanitarium, which he commemorated by writing and recording a piece called "Last Train From Overbrook," shortly after he beat

the bottle in 1954.

The second hiatus was also self-imposed. Opting for security, Moody settled in Las Vegas and became one of that city's exiguous minority of black musicians playing regularly in the Strip casinos. The work was steady and paid well, but was monotonous and anonymous. In 1980, after six years of only occasional jazz appearances, he returned to the blowing scene full time.

Though his roots are unquestionably in be-bop, he has kept in close touch with other developments and was indirectly the catalyst in a major aspect of the John Coltrane revolution.

"I was playing in Chicago, and Coltrane was there at another club. He wanted to go to Elkhart, Ind., where they have this big musical instrument factory, so I drove him there in my station wagon. So there he was, trying out all these horns, and at one point I said, 'Man, what is that you're doing?' He said, 'Aw, nothing'—but he was trying out a soprano sax. He bought it, began playing it regularly, recorded 'My Favorite Things' and reestablished the soprano as an important part of the musical family."

There are some adventurous works in Moody's last album, written by the composer-arranger Tom McIntosh, who has worked with him off and on since 1959. "I have another album coming out next month," Moody says, "with some new things by Tom that have a really different structure. It may be a little while before people who are used to hearing me playing one way become used to my doing this. But I think they'll get to like it."

Given his hearing difficulties (later this year he will celebrate his 40th anniversary as a recording bandleader), Moody should have no cause for concern. Even his hearing difficulties no longer bother him.

"Not long ago, I gave in and bought a hearing aid. Well, I put it on and heard all these funny clanks and tinkles, and I've never been so mentally nauseated in my life. Somebody said to me, 'Welcome to the real world,' and I told them, 'If this is it, you all got it!' I gave the hearing aid back, had my ears checked out again, and the doctor said if I've been getting along this well, I might as well just go ahead and do what I've been doing." □

## Jazz Reviews

### David Friesen Trio at Catalina's: State of the Art

The variety of material it performs, and the versatility of the participants, gives the David Friesen Trio (heard Tuesday at Catalina's) a singularly engaging character.

Playing for a small but select audience that included his sister, Dyan Cannon, Friesen performed during most of the set on a French acoustic bass, made in 1795. For three numbers, two of which he played unaccompanied, he switched to the Oregon bass. This almost bodiless instrument uses reverb and digital delays that enable him to play a bowed solo while sustaining chords and sounding like a one-man orchestra.

Friesen, however, is no gimmick artist. His "Amazing Grace" on the Oregon bass used this contemporary technology to emotionally stirring effect, capturing a pristine quality redolent of the early blues days.

On the regular bass he displayed a similar blend of facility and invention, mostly in his own tunes

such as "David's Dance" and the West Indian-flavored "Festival Dance."

Friesen has an extraordinary partner in Phil Dwyer. This 22-year-old musician from Vancouver, B.C., began on tenor sax in an energetic John Coltrane bag with touches of straight-ahead fire. For the third and fourth numbers he played piano (he was, in fact, an 8-year-old piano prodigy). His version of "Manha de Carnaval" was marked by a surging intensity in the right hand while the left supplied fierce punctuations mostly in and above the center of the keyboard. Later he switched back to tenor sax and wound up offering Bill Evans' "Blue in Green" on soprano sax.

Completing this state-of-the-jazz-art group was Alan Jones, a capable 25-year-old Vienna-based drummer. Jones was featured in his own composition, a somewhat arch, Mingus-like piece.

The trio sagged in interest only when it became a duo. One passage

when Friesen sat out, and another when Jones fell silent for a couple of minutes, proved how heavily this unit depends on the togetherness of its components and on the incredible solo virtuosity of its director. It's too bad the group was booked for only Tuesday and Wednesday nights (Cedar Walton opens this evening); Friesen deserves more extensive local exposure.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# Jazz Briefs: Live Recordings

By LEONARD FEATHER

The recording industry—not just the jazz world—owes an incalculable debt to Norman Grant. By recording (in the pre-tape era) one of his "Jazz at the Philharmonic" concerts for release in a series of 78s (staggered into 4- and 5-minute segments per 12-inch disc), he destroyed forever the assumption that all phonograph records had to be made in a studio.

That was in 1944. Today, given the vastly expanded playing time afforded by LPs and now CDs, "live recordings" are commonplace.

□

"SYMPHONIC DREAMS." Gerry Mulligan with Erich Kunzel & Houston Symphony. Recorded last year at the Music Hall in Houston, this is Mulligan's most ambitious venture. The most successful works are those he composed himself: the new, 12-minute "Entente for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra" and two pieces recorded previously with his jazz group, "Song for Strayhorn" and "K-4 Pacific."

Already an established success, enjoying acceptance in classical and jazz air play, the "Entente" integrates (seemingly without effort, though the composer/arranger clearly had a daunting task to deal with) the jazz soul of his horn and the form and instrumentation of the symphony orchestra within an accessible, tonal framework.

The balance of the disc is the seven-part "Sax Chronicles," composed by Harry Freedman but using fragments drawn from early Mulligan compositions adapted to the styles of Bach, Debussy, Stravinsky et al. As Mulligan points out in his notes, there are a few jazz elements, but the basic idea is a

hypothetical or revisionist history of the baritone sax as it might have been used in classical music. This intriguing premise may have been questioned in classical quarters, but it rarely smacks of Third Stream Music, which too often seemed to blend the worst of both worlds. 4½ stars.

□

"FINE AND MELLOW. LIVE AT BIRDLAND WEST." Carmen McRae. Concord CCD 4342. Taped recently at the Long Beach club, McRae found herself in unusual and informal surroundings, with splendid support by Red Holloway on tenor and alto saxes, Phil Upchurch (in a welcome mainstream mood) on guitar and Jack McDuff, whose organ solos will never be mistaken for synthesizers. McRae's arch manner and unpredictable phrasing are as entertaining as her use of extra lyrics on "These Foolish Things" and "Black and Blue" (the old Fats Waller-Andy Razaf song). The old Bing Crosby hit "Just One More Chance" is billed as "One More Chance" and credited to Carolyn Gillman (it was written by Arthur Johnston and Sam Costlow). A problem overall is the surfeit of long cuts at slow tempos. 3½ stars.

□

"EUROPEAN TOUR." Newport Jazz Festival All-Stars. Concord Jazz CCD 4343. Recorded last spring in Bern, Switzerland, this is dedicated to the memory of the group's bassist, Slam Stewart; it went to press just before the recent passing of Al Cohn, for whom this was also a final appearance. He was one of four saxophonists, trading off with Scott Hamilton on "Tackle

Tack," the others, Ellingtonians Harold Ashby and Norris Turney, are at center stage for "Mood Indigo." The oft-told tales of small-band swing music are spiritedly retold, with Warren Yache on cornet and George Wein at the piano. 3 stars.

□

"1968—PARIS OLYMPIA." Art Blakey. Fontana 832 658-2. Blakey's Messengers at the time of this concert had Bobby Timmons on piano (his "Moussin'" is the longest cut and one of the best), Benny Golson on tenor (writer of six of the eight tunes) and the late Lee Morgan, in dashing form here, on trumpet. Thelonious Monk's "Justice" and Golson's "I Remember Clifford" (a perfect vehicle for Morgan's lyricism) highlight a superior set of hard bop (was there ever a soft bop?). 3½ stars.

□

"PARIS JAM SESSION." Art Blakey. Fontana 832 682-2. A little later, a bit better, thanks to contributions on the two longest of these four cuts by the first and ultimate bop piano genius, Bud Powell, playing his own "Dance of the Infidels" (soloing on 19 choruses of the blues) and his ebulliently boppish "Bouncing With Bud." Barney Wilen, the French alto eminence, is another plus factor, along with a young, emergent Wayne Shorter on tenor and more of Lee Morgan, who's a little ragged on the frantic "Night in Tunisia." Recorded before a roaring crowd at the Theatre des Champs Elysees. 4 stars.

□

"LIVE AT THE HALF NOTE." Art Farmer Quartet with Jim Hall. Atlantic 7-90666-1. This New York club session reveals that Farmer's flugelhorn in 1963 lacked the assurance, warmth and tonal beauty he has since displayed. He is heard on four of the five tunes (the final cut belongs to Hall's guitar). With so many admirable albums now representing both men, this is expendable. 2 stars.

"THREE WAY MIRROR." Art Moreira/Floca Paris/Joe Farrell. Reference RR-24 (Box 77225 X, San Francisco 94107). This was taped at the Civic Auditorium in Oakland in May, 1965, eight months before the death of Joe Farrell, who is an invaluable contributor on flute, soprano and tenor saxes. Every cut has its own character. Examples: Farrell's flute and the 7/4 beat on Moreira's "Misturedo" (Mixing); the little tune, a waltz by bassist Mark Egan, Milton Nascimento's "Lilia," with bird-call ef-

fects; Jeff Gunn and Airo singing the misty, mystic quality of Powell's voice on "The Return," a credit to Kei Akagi as composer and pianist, finally Egan's evocative "Plane to France," with everyone doubling on percussion. A marvelously moody soundtrack indeed. 4½ stars. □

Los Angeles Times 3/21/88

## JAZZ REVIEW

# A No-Holds-Barred Return for Bill Berry

By LEONARD FEATHER

A large jazz orchestra is as viable as its library and as valid as the ability of the musicians to interpret it. As Bill Berry demonstrated Friday at Donte's, when these two requirements interact the results can make for some very healthy sounds.

The cornetist's group reassembles only occasionally, with a slightly shifting dramatis personae,

but the togetherness of these 16 men is positively inspiring. From the no-holds-barred opener, Billy Byers' "Doodle Oodle," through an hour-long set liberally sprinkled with Ellingtonia, the biting brass section, the five beautifully unified saxes and the potent rhythm backup merchants (Ross Tompkins, Paul Gormley and Frank Capp) cut a swaggering swath through the big band mainstream.

Along with the more familiar

Ellington pieces ("Sophisticated Lady" was a vehicle for Jack Nimitz's bold baritone sax), there were several arcane examples of the Duke's oeuvre. "It's Bad to Be Forgotten," a splendid Nat Pierce chart employing call-and-response effects with trumpets and reeds, "Festival Junction" with Jack Keiso on clarinet and Buster Cooper on trombone; "Rockabye River," with Marshal Royal, whose alto sax was even better displayed on Billy Strayhorn's heartbreakingly

poignant "Blood Count."

There were non-Ellington delights too. Lanny Morgan in a magnificent display of chops on "Cherokee," and Berry himself in a touching piece by the late Richie Kamuca, "When Love Has Gone."

A third requirement might be added. A big band is as powerful as its lead trumpeter. With Frank Szabo in this vital role, reaching for the unreachable when the arrangements call for it, there was excitement along with the moments of languorous beauty. The Berry band, despite its here-today-and-gone-for-weeks schedule, remains one of the most valuable examples of the genre it represents.



Los Angeles Times

Gil Evans was a band leader and composer as well as an arranger.

## Gil Evans, Acclaimed Arranger for Musical Greats, Dies at 75

By BURT A. FOLKART, Times Staff Writer

Gil Evans, the composer and latent pianist whose lengthy and acclaimed career segued from the brassy big band of Claude Thornhill to the cool jazz combos of Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan, has died in Cuernavaca, Mexico, his wife reported Monday.

Anita Evans said from her home in New York that her husband had gone to Mexico with their two sons a month ago to recuperate from prostate surgery and died there Sunday of peritonitis. He was 75.

A composer who had led his own bands off and on since 1933, Evans was working until the day of his death, his wife said, and had taken his synthesizer on his recuperative trip.

He was scheduled to resume his

weekly Monday night shows at New York's Sweet Basil club in July.

A planned tour of the Evans aggregation will proceed as scheduled with his son, Miles, leading the Gil Evans Orchestra, Mrs. Evans said.

"Gil left tons of music to be carried forth," she added.

Evans, who in recent years was considered a giant among jazz arrangers, had labored in relative obscurity before those plaudits surfaced. And they came primarily because of his brilliant collaborations with Davis on such landmark albums as "Miles Ahead."

Times jazz critic Leonard Feather said Evans left a legacy of

Please see EVANS, Page 16

## EVANS: Dies

Continued from Page 3

innovative arranging, beginning with his early Thornhill years when his work was known for fullness and orchestral variety compared to which the average swing band arrangement of the 1930s seemed like the work of a child playing with blocks."

Feather went on to cite "Miles Ahead," "Porgy and Bess" and the "Sketches of Spain" albums, which showcased Davis' style.

"They were really among the most brilliant orchestral jazz records made by anybody," Feather said. "He made brilliant use of colors."

Evans' career was marked by three distinct phases: his arrangements for Thornhill from 1940-1948; his collaborations with Davis, Mulligan and John Lewis in a series of recordings for Capitol in 1948-50; and then his re-teaming with Davis as head of a 20-piece band that produced the three landmark albums.

One of his early recordings with Davis, "Boplicity," qualified Evans "as one of jazz's greatest composer-arrangers," said famed French critic and historian Andre Hodeir.

Evans, who never played an instrument professionally until 1952, when he took up the piano, was born Ian Ernest Gilmore Evans in Toronto, Ontario, to Australian parents. He grew up in Stockton, Calif., learned to play piano by ear and started his first band while still in school.

He led his own bands (including one that was taken over by Skully Ennis) until joining Thornhill and introducing French horns to the brass section, producing tonal textures not heard elsewhere. He became well known among musicians but unheralded by both the public and critics.

After wartime service, he freelanced as an arranger in New York City and began experimenting with bebop.

### Started Own Band

In 1958, he started recording with his own band, producing the lush sounds he had fashioned for others and in recent years adding electronically amplified instruments.

He was a founding artist of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington and toured from Europe to Japan in addition to domestic appearances at college campuses, night clubs and concert halls and museums.

Evans recently had worked on a record album with Helen Merrill and Davis told Mrs. Evans last week that he had just written a new tune, titled "Gil Evans."

"He never wasted a melody. He never wasted a phrase," Davis said Monday after learning of his old friend's death.

"What he did to the texture of an orchestration, what he did with pop songs was like writing an original piece," Davis said in a telephone interview with United Press International.

"Students will discover him. They'll have to take his music apart layer by layer. That's how they know what kind of genius he was."

3/22/88

# Jazz Reviews

## Heritage Foundation Tribute to the Rumseys

Billed as a "Tribute to Joyce and Howard Rumsey," a concert was presented Sunday afternoon by the Jazz Heritage Foundation at the Musicians' Union on Vine Street, with proceeds going to the Paul Bullock Memorial Scholarship Fund for young music students. (Bullock was a key figure in the launching of the foundation.)

Given the premise, it might have been assumed that the show would feature some of the world-class artists to whom Howard Rumsey gave exposure during his many years running the Lighthouse in the 1950s and 1960s and Concerts by the Sea in the 1970s.

No such grand moments materialized. A show that could logically have included Horace Silver, Herbie Hancock, Art Blakey, Carmen McRae, George Benson and dozens more turned out to consist of conventional performances by lesser-known local musicians.

The matinee was long in duration but short on organization. Singer Ernie Andrews, by all odds the most popular of the scheduled artists, waited around and did not hit the stage until more than four hours into the show. There were no drums on stage for most of Pat Britt's very casual be-bop set.

One pleasant surprise was the appearance of a new big band, led by saxophonist Steve Elliott and trumpeter Roger Ingram. Biting vigorously into mainstream charts by John Fedchock and Oliver Nelson, they displayed good solo work by Elliott, trumpeter Mark Lewis and others.

Trophies were presented by foundation president Larue Brown Watson to Paul Bullock's widow, and by president emeritus Kenny Burrell (the first artist to play at Concerts by the Sea, in 1972) to Howard and Joyce Rumsey.

The Jazz Heritage Foundation is one of several locally based jazz good-will groups, all well intentioned but underfunded. The difficulties encountered Sunday, all too typical of such events, may indicate that instead of competing for members and money, they might well be advised to consolidate into one unified organization with fuller financing and a single sense of direction.

—LEONARD FEATHER



# Kenny Burrell Adds Choral Work to a String of Pearls

By LEONARD FEATHER

To refer to Kenny Burrell as a guitarist is a half-truth that is reducing itself, year by year, to an even more fractional understatement, given the scope of his other activities.

True, Burrell remains fixed in the public mind as a fleet and creative instrumentalist, but his restless imagination has taken him into many other areas. He was the founder and is the president emeritus of the Jazz Heritage Society, a Los Angeles-based activist organization. He is the author of a book on the art of the guitar. At one time he owned a nightclub in New York.

In 1971, he began a series of college seminars. In recent years he has divided his time between the East and West coasts; while out here he has been a regular lecturer at UCLA, offering a course on the music of Duke Ellington.

Most significantly, he has had a long and enviable career as a composer, writing works mainly for his own albums; but his latest project is without precedent. Tonight, at Royce Hall, UCLA, he will be a guest soloist with the Boys' Choir of Harlem, offering the world premiere of "The Love Suite," a 45-minute work he describes as a "Double Suite for Guitar and Choral Group."

"I first got together with the choir three years ago, just to play on a record session for which they used a professional rhythm section," Burrell explained.

"It just happened that at that time I had been commissioned by a New York group called Art Awareness to write a choral piece, and they wanted to hear a group try it out. During a break in the record session I asked the choir director, Dr. Walter Turnbull, whether he would consider having the boys



LORI SHEPLER / Los Angeles Times

*Kenny Burrell and friend: enjoying a long, enviable career.*

sing this piece I'd been asked to write. He smiled and said, 'Funny you should ask. We were thinking about requesting you to compose something for us.' So we were able to satisfy one another's wishes."

Burrell soon learned that the Boys' Choir, founded 20 years ago, has had a unique career, touring worldwide in performances of its eclectic repertoire drawn from gospel music, popular songs, jazz and spirituals, highlighted by choreography. In 1980 the choir was the subject of an Emmy-winning documentary, "From Harlem to Harlem: The Story of a Choir Boy."

"Writing for this group is a big challenge," Burrell said, "because there are 35 voices—sopranos, altos, tenors, baritones and basses. I wrote the whole thing, words and music. I'll be playing both acoustic and electric guitar in the course of the piece. It has a lot of different American musical characteristics: rock and blues feelings, classical, jazz, anything that is a part of me and a part of what we hear around us all the time."

The choir left Monday on its first West Coast tour and will appear Sunday in San Francisco and Wednesday in San Diego. That will be followed by another week of one-night stands until it returns to New York, where the organization now has its own self-contained school.

While the choir is winding up its obligations, Burrell will return to the regular schedule as a guitar soloist that has been the main focus of his career since the 1950s. After arriving in New York from his native Detroit he led overlapping lives as a sideman (with Dixie Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, Benny Goodman, Gil Evans among others) and as leader of various small groups.

When the tenor sax giants roamed the land, Burrell was with

them, recording with Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins (on the famous "Alfie" sound track date) and John Coltrane. When organ-guitar-drums trios were the fashion in the 1960s, he was there, at sessions with the best of them: Jimmy Smith, Wild Bill Davis, Brother Jack McDuff.

His most recent recording initiative involved a quintet he put together with two other guitarists, Rodney Jones and Bobby Broom, for the album "Generation" (Blue Note BT85137). All three guitarists doubled on acoustic and electric instruments. A follow-up album, due out soon, will introduce a hybrid known as the guitarjo, a six-stringed banjo tuned like a guitar.

The only aspect of Burrell's multifarious life that has not surfaced in recent years is his singing. Long ago, when the late John Hammond was producing his LP for Columbia, he recorded a vocal album, "Weaver of Dreams."

Asked whether his teaming with the choir might not provide a logical time to resume his vocal career, Burrell laughed and said, "No, that album is gone and forgotten. We've got all these tapes of all the boys singing; I'll just try to play guitar part well and leave the vocals to people who do it better."

## JAZZ

## Gil Evans—A Magnificent Innovator

By LEONARD FEATHER

It seemed more than merely accidental that his name was an anagram of Stravinsky. Gil Evans was so powerful an influence on the composers who knew and were inspired by his work that they all did his conscious or unconscious bidding.

"If you had a box full of uncut diamonds and threw them all in the ocean," said Miles Davis, "the one precious jewel you'd want to keep would be Gil. Until he came along, all the movie composers were writing like Ravel."

"He was the most important influence on my life," said Johnny Mandel. "He wasn't just a writer, he was a masterful tonal painter. He knew how to mix orchestral shadings—and in a dance band, Claude Thornhill's, which was one of a kind in its day. Without knowing it, he showed me how to develop that art of using the colors in all the instruments."

"Gil was largely responsible," said Benny Carter, "for the success of some of the greatest albums Miles made—classics like 'Sketches of Spain' and 'Miles Ahead' and 'Porgy and Bess.' He was truly one of a kind."

"I'd followed him ever since the Thornhill days," said Neal Hefti. "His death is a tremendous loss."

Evans, who died last Sunday at 75, was a maverick on several levels. Although he once shrugged and said "I'm just an arranger," and true though it was that most of his masterpieces were arrangements of other musicians' works, his orchestral and developmental technique were so brilliant that every arrangement became a de facto Evans original.

He was a largely unknown gray eminence until his mid-30s; he never played an instrument professionally until he turned 40, when he began studying piano. Not until 1957, when he was 45, did he record an album under his own name.

Born in Toronto, he was living in Stockton, Calif., when he first led an orchestra at the age of 21. In 1938, the band was taken over by Skinny Ennis, a singer, with Evans remaining as arranger until he joined Thornhill in 1941.

During the next seven years, he became part of a nucleus of forward-looking jazz artists, among them Lee Konitz and several other



Gil Evans in 1986; the man who called himself "just an arranger" brought out the best in jazz greats he worked with.

colleagues from the Thornhill band, as well as Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan.

"I was part of that bunch," Mandel recalls. "Blossom Dearie, the singer and pianist, took me to Gil's place one evening. I guess around 1949. He was living in a basement on 55th Street near 5th Avenue, behind a Chinese laundry. John Lewis used to come in there, and Dave Lambert, John Carisi (who wrote 'Israel' for Miles) and Miles himself, who helped put some members of the group together into an ensemble and called the rehearsals."

Out of that literally underground beginning came the three Miles Davis recording sessions later issued in an album as "The Birth of the Cool." The use of a tuba and French horn on these dates was unprecedented in modern jazz writing. Seven years later, when Davis and Evans reunited to produce "Miles Ahead," the orchestra was enlarged to 19 pieces and the textural scope greatly expanded.

During the next decade the name of Gil Evans, all but ignored by the critical fraternity until the Davis association, was identified with a long series of adventures. Typically, in an arrangement of "The Barbara Song," a Kurt Weill melody from "The Threepenny Opera," he used two French horns, a trombone, tuba, flute, bass flute, English horn, bassoon, tenor saxophone (Wayne Shorter), harp, piano, bass and drums.

As his "Sketches of Spain" masterpiece with Davis revealed, he had a unique affinity for Spanish-tinged music. "I've always been inclined to Spanish themes," he once told author Gene Lees, "but I didn't really absorb it from the Spanish. I got it from the French Impressionists—and, of course, the Spanish Impressionists like De Falla."

Gil Evans never achieved the security his reputation merited. At times, he seemed justifiably bitter and frustrated. Though in later years he led orchestras off and on with moderate success, his career failed to move onward and upward.

During the 1970s, there were successful forays in Europe, where he toured with his orchestra and was heard more frequently on radio and TV than he had ever been in his own country. He wrote occasional film scores, received a Guggenheim fellowship in composition and won numerous awards, such as the Down Beat readers' and critics' polls.

The friendship with Miles Davis endured, and was perhaps reflected in his own decision to "modernize" his ensemble, even though it meant trading in the rich old colors for synthesizers and other electronic effects. He even recorded some of the works of Jimi Hendrix and Evans and his orchestra perform Hendrix's "Little Wing" on Sting's current LP, "... Nothing Like the Sun."

After his death in Cuernavaca, Mexico, his wife, Anita, announced that the orchestra would fulfill its commitments under the direction of their son, whose name, predictably, is Miles.

"I can't understand what he was doing in later years," said Johnny Mandel, "but what he accomplished before that established him forever as a magnificent innovator."

The force that he represented in the world of creative music, the jewels of sound that carved an indelible mark in the artistic history of jazz, are Gil Evans' monument. Thanks in large part to Miles Davis, with whom he formed one of the most fruitful partnerships in this musical century, he was indeed the diamond that was saved from the ocean. □

10 Part VI/Saturday, March 26, 1988

## Jazz Reviews

## Blues Shouter Jimmy Witherspoon in Good Voice

Jimmy Witherspoon's rig was working just fine at the Vine Street Bar & Grill, where he opened Thursday and closes tonight. The Arkansas-born blues shouter, now 64, settled long ago into a pattern with which he feels comfortable, and it suits him as well now as it did back in his Jay McShann days.

Dressed formally in his urban suit for his urban homilies (but with plenty of back-country roots), he dips into his everlasting blues bag: the opening ballad ("Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You"); a Kansas City double-time blues, a greasy old Jimmy Reed song; a shuffle rhythm blues, as well as "Goin' to Chicago" and other verses that have been heard around the century.

Sometimes it does not seem to matter what the words may be. His sly, suggestive sound and occasional soundless, mouth-moving hesitations have their own inimitable eloquence. Even the non-sequitur medley of songs that had nothing in common but their 16-bar form—from "The Saints" to "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" to "Loveless Love"—made senseless sense.

Spoon, as his faith call him, never seems to look for new material. He had his first record hit with "Tain't Nobody's Business" in 1952 and it continues to serve him well, as does his famous "Don't Gotta" verse ("Don't gotta take you to the dentist tomorrow morning 'cause I'm knocking out your teeth tonight"). Still, a few additions to the repertoire surely wouldn't hurt.

Outstanding in a generally excellent rhythm section was the remarkable guitarist Terry Evans, who was allotted ample solo space for his sometimes single-string, sometimes chorded, always swinging solos. Larry Gales, playing some of his bass choruses with a bow, was in typically able form. Roy Alexander on piano and Maurice Simon Jr. completed the back-up foursome.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## CALENDAR LETTERS

referring to other segments of our population as "rednecks" and "bumpkins."

What Feather has accomplished is to announce to Calendar readers that he himself is a very shallow and lightweight writer.

RANDOLPH CLARK  
Los Angeles

Feather stated that Mason's routine was so offensive that even rednecks would not have been amused.

It is amazing to me that in order to defend two ethnic groups (blacks and Jews) Feather feels perfectly free to impugn another—underprivileged, uneducated Southern whites.

"Redneck" is indisputably a racist term. Feather actually called them "bumpkins."

Recently in your Outtakes pages (Feb. 28), Aaron Spelling said that there would be no girls with dumb Southern accents on "Angels '88," his new edition of "Charlie's Angels."

The original Angels were, of course, all Southern—Kate Jackson from Birmingham, Ala. (just try being any more Southern than that!), and Terins Farah Fawcett and Jaclyn Smith. This trio of beautiful Dixie Belles earned Spelling untold millions.

Actually, it is not surprising that Spelling would make such a remark but one does expect better from Feather. I suggest that you call a moratorium on denigration of your Southeastern compatriots.

ANN LATHAM AGREDA  
Los Angeles

Feather and Quincy Jones were far too charitable to Jackie Mason.

Why on earth should his anti-Semitism and racism appeal more

### More Mason Jars

Leonard Feather's nasty little commentary about Jackie Mason's performance on the recent Grammy Awards telecast seemed, despite a half page, to have absolutely no point ("When Mason Crossed the Racial Line," March 13).

The article itself concludes with Mason's own apologies and regrets, no one knows better than he how poorly his routine went over. To put Quincy Jones on the spot for a quote about the situation seems equally mean-spirited.

Although I personally did not care for the routine either, the members of the Academy must have thought it was worthwhile since they nominated the album from which the routine was taken for a Grammy award.

Also, while Feather is so busy castigating an already rueful Mason for the "perpetuation of long-demolished stereotypes," he seems to have no compunction about

4/1/89

### POP MUSIC REVIEW

## Embarrassment of Riches in 'Singers' Salute to Songwriter

By LEONARD FEATHER

All it takes to stage a first-class benefit concert is talent, rehearsal time and legal tender. Nothing was spared when Rosemary Clooney's third annual "Singers' Salute to the Songwriter" was staged Wednesday at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

Between 7:45 and 11:30 more than 40 singers paraded on the stage, in an event organized to raise funds for the Betty Clooney Foundation for Persons With Brain Injury. Though Merv Griffin was the principal emcee, Clooney herself spoke and sang a few times. The family honors, however, were taken by her sister Betty's daughter, Cathi Demman, who applied her pure, gentle sound to Melissa Manchester's "Happy Endings."

Flawlessly produced by Allen Sviridoff (the only glitch was one song in which Clooney blew her lyrics), the show benefited from a superb house orchestra led by Peter Matz, playing perfectly tailored arrangements by Matz, John Oddo and others.

The six segments honored the team of Adolph Green & Betty Comden, followed by Burton Lane, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Ralph Burns (an arranger's award), Melissa Manchester and Michel Legrand,

all of whom were on hand.

Because almost nobody is singing more than one or two songs, the pacing was swift. Rather than attempt to review all the concert participants, it may be fitting to review our own awards system.

**Most Surprising Triumph:** Tennille, whose "What Did I Do That I Don't Have Now" really had all the soul, beauty and warmth which she is capable when the setting are right.

**Hottest Groove:** Patti LaBelle, backed by the female funk band known as Perri, in a knock-out, marvelously spirited version of "Can Cook Too."

**Best Instiller of Goosebumps:** Sue Raney, a blond beauty whose treatment of "You Must Believe in Spring" was as emotional as any I've seen McGovern was lady-like.

**Most Stirring Moment:** The stant standing ovation accorded Ella Fitzgerald, who was there to sing but to present Jobim's award.

**Best Instrumental Moment:** Stan Getz, his tenor sax aglow with Jobim's "How Insensitive" and his grand's "Summer of '42" preceding him, Oscar Castro Neve whose vocal on "Waters of March" and guitar solo on "Wave" believably brought the right Brazilian

Please see SALUTE, Page 4

## SALUTE

Continued from Page 4

var to a segment that had suffered from a contrived performance by the L. A. Jazz Choir.

**Best Ballad:** Joe Williams singing "Old Devil Moon."

**Most Nostalgic Trips:** Patti LaBelle on stage, and the four LaBelle Sisters, telling us, a cappella, of conditions in Glocca Morra.

**Least Honored Honoree:** Burns, represented only by his older and atypical arrangements.

No-shows were Bob Hope's order, but his wife Dorothy was on hand as vocalist for "Clear Day"; Diahann Carroll; Vic Damone; Jack Jones, who the flu, told a Jimmy Swaggart but didn't sing; Anita Baker's tribute to Manchester from Manilow; Dorothy Lamour's tribute to Rosalind Wiseman; concert chairwoman.

In the future, trimming down the number of performers a little would not hurt; this embarrassment of riches shortchanged a few who deserved more than a few minutes on the stage. But it is to bet that nobody left the Pav feeling cheated.

4/3/88

## Singing the TOBA Blues in the 1920s

### BLACK PEARLS

Blues Queens of the 1920s  
by Daphne Duval Harrison  
(Rutgers University Press;  
\$19.95; 285 pp.)

Reviewed by Leonard Feather

They all had nicknames: the Empress of the Blues, the Uncrowned Queen, the Creole Songbird, the World's Greatest Moaner, the Colored Sophie Tucker.

They sang about freight trains and floods, prostitution and pumps, sweet men and jealous women, jail houses and courthouses, disasters, dreams, the Depression, drink, dope, and death. Their decade was the '20s; their outlets were the ghetto stages, their principal windows on the world were the recording studios.

They were the great blues women who, through their stories, became a metaphor of black life and durable legends many of whose records are being reissued to this day.

Despite the plethora of books on blues-related subjects, the author, an Afro-American studies professor at the University of Maryland, has managed to find new insights. We learn, for example, that the phonograph record, long assumed to be the main launching pad for the blues artists, in fact followed by at least a decade the vaudeville stage. Central to their entertainment world was the Theatre Owners Booking Assn., organized in 1909 and known as a main outlet for blacks.

Working conditions were such that many artists, instead of calling it TOBA, referred to it as "Tough

on Black Artists" (but "Artists" was not the word they used). It was not until 1920 that Mamie Smith, with her best-selling "Crazy Blues," established the blues in the white-dominated record industry.

The taboos of American life took odd forms. The frequent use of female pianists in red light districts was due, Daphne Duval Harrison claims, to the disapproval, by wealthy whites who patronized brothels, of relationships between white prostitutes and black male pianists. Black artists working for TOBA were treated much like blacks more recently in South Africa, because they had to be off the streets after a certain hour, passes had to be given them by the white theatre bosses. At that, the Klan might have its fun by taking a performer to some remote spot for a clubbing-and-stoning party.

Though she deals with singers in every area—Ma Rainey and other country blues women, urban artists such as Bessie Smith, vaudevillians like Ida Cox, and cabaret stars from Alberta Hunter to Edith Wilson—the author focuses mainly on Hunter, Wilson, Sippie Wallace and Victoria Spivey.

The claim that the blues draws on the singers' personal experience does not always hold true. Alberta Hunter's songs about her men did not mirror her own life. Although Harrison deals with Ma Rainey's and Bessie Smith's affairs with women, Hunter's lesbianism (dealt with in her own posthumous biography) is never mentioned. Nevertheless, the long chapter analyzing blues lyrics is perceptive and laced with the mordant wit that characterized many of the songs.

That the blues era ended with

the Depression was due to several factors: the economy's effects on record sales (in 1932 the entire industry sold a mere 6 million 78s), changing social and musical values, and the chaotic lives of the artists. Though some died of their own excesses, others ended by returning to their home towns and the church, rejecting their blues-ridden pasts in favor of gospel music. (Harrison should have dealt with the reality that the blues never really died, that the tradition was carried forward by Lil Green, Dinah Washington, Linda Hopkins and Koko Taylor, and by countless male singers.)

The grotesque caricatures on some of the record companies' leaflets illustrate the humiliation these artists had to endure. Somehow, though, they succeeded for a while in rising above it all. As one famous and still current blues line put it: "Trouble in mind, I'm blue, but I won't be blue always; the sun's gonna shine in my back door some day."

Feather is *The Times*' jazz critic.

# After 22 Years, Donte's Owner Bids Adieu to Noted Jazz Club

by LEONARD FEATHER

Carey Leverette sits in the booth-sized, litter-cluttered office in back of Donte's. At 63 and in uncertain health, he looks tired. He says he has been tired for years.

Soon, though, there will be time, not for booking musicians and taking out trash and washing dishes and filling salt and pepper shakers and buying food and liquor and paying bills, but time to sit back and reminisce. After tonight, Donte's, the room he founded 22 years ago and that became one of the world's most famous jazz clubs, will no longer be his property or his burden.

As he talks about the future—about Koichi Akemoto, the Japanese businessman who will take over the club next week, redecorate it and make all the improvements for which Leverette has had no money—he flashes back to the past.

"It all began," he says, "when I was a singer and choreographer. I met a lot of musicians at MGM and all the studios there I worked; I loved their music.

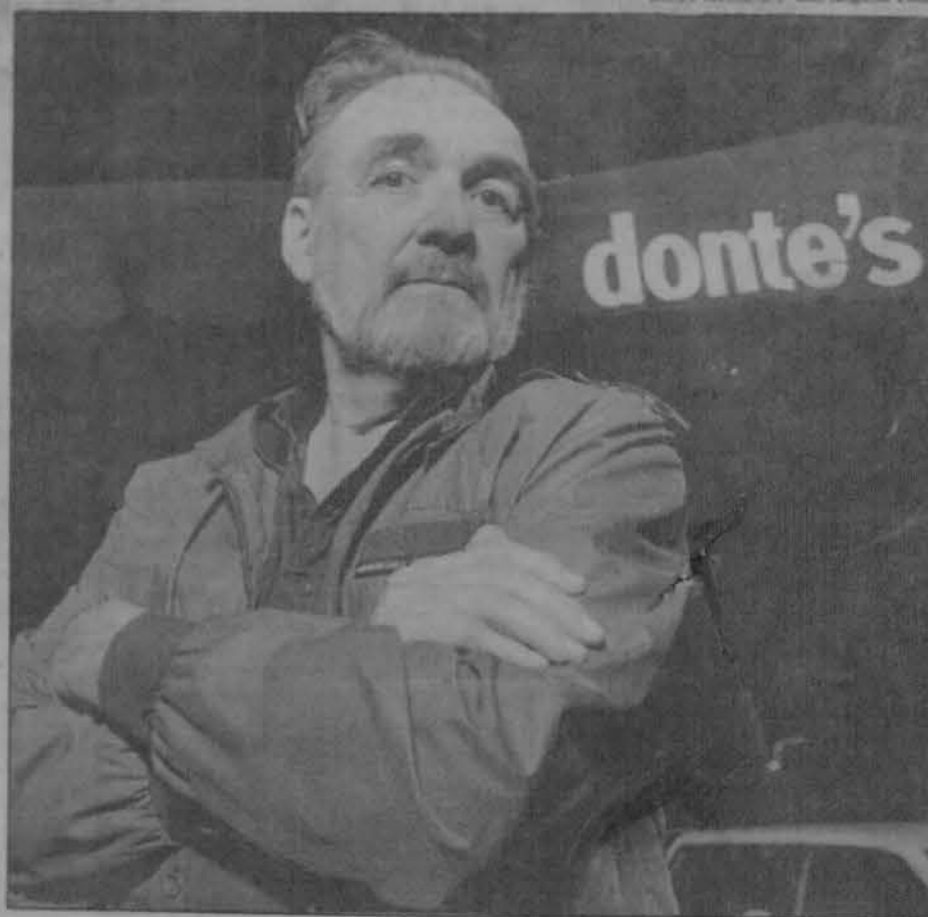
With a partner, John Riccella, I found this empty building on Lankershim [in North Hollywood]. We fixed it up and opened with just a piano bar.

"That was June 22, 1966. We started with Hampton Hawes on piano and Red Mitchell on bass. John didn't think we could afford a drummer, so I took some money out of my own pocket and hired Donald Bailey.

"In October, Sunny McKay, who was a waitress here when we opened, and her husband, Bill McKay, bought out Riccella. Bill took care of the kitchen and Sunny handled the staff, the hosting and all that stuff; they were here in the daytime and I'd come in for the evening and look after the bar, the bookings, the publicity. So there were three of us to share the responsibilities."

Soon it was decided that a piano bar wasn't enough; it was replaced by a bandstand, and Donte's began to book small groups, even big bands—first, Mike Barone, who was there every Wednesday for five years; then national

Please see DONTES, Page 8



Donte's founder Carey Leverette: "No, it's not been an easy job."

Part VI / Saturday, April 2, 1988

## DONTE'S: Longtime Owner Leaving After 22 Years

Continued from Page 1

same bands, starting with Stan Kenton, who one night observed, "You're probably wondering how Donte's can afford a big band. Well, our guys can outdrink the customers."

The glory years saw Woody Herman, Mercer Ellington (soon after he inherited the band from his father) and Count Basie, who, says Leverette, "was so eager to play he'd sit down at the piano and start a set before we'd had time to turn the room over and cover his fee."

Buddy Rich, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Gerald Wilson, Don Peasrup, Don Ferrara and Bill Holman brought in their big bands. So did Louie Bellson, who was a Thursday regular for almost three years.

Comedians liked Donte's. Mort Sahl became a popular attraction.

"We'd book him only on weekends, because he brought in the doctors and lawyers who had to get up early and couldn't be here on weekdays," Leverette says.

In the early days certain rituals were followed. Once a year Sunny McKay, who was of Iranian origin, celebrated Persian New Year with appropriate cuisine. Every Monday for years, the late Jack Marshall, a jazz guitarist, organized "Guitar Light," at which Joe Pass was a regular for most of a decade. Larry Carlton, in an augury of things to come, broke records with his early swing group.

Off or on the bandstand, celebrities used to flock to Donte's. Clint Eastwood, a big band fan, came in often. Frank Sinatra was there, and Herb Alpert. Carmen McRae, who

worked the room often, attracted fellow singers.

"One night," Leverette recalls, "Sarah Vaughan and Morgana King came in to hear Carlen, and the three of them were on stage singing together."

"Dizzy Gillespie came in one night and sat reading the fourth trumpet parts in Bill Berry's band. Doc Severinsen did the same thing once with Bellson's orchestra. Actually, Tommy Newsom brought in the entire 'Tonight Show' band several times, without Doc. He loved giving the men a chance to really loosen up and play at length."

About 10 years ago Sunny and the ailing Bill McKay (now deceased) sold out their interest in the room. Operating it more or less single-handedly—despite the help of such aides as veteran bartender Bob Powell—proved difficult for Leverette and the room began to fall on hard times; the national names gave way to local, scale musicians; checks, as Leverette

readily admits, began to bounce. He remembers what he calls the "faithfulness and unfaithfulness" of certain musicians.

"Art Pepper would never play anywhere else; he said I helped him out in lean times, and he became our regular New Year's Eve attraction. But I felt very hurt when I would call certain other musicians, some of whom got their big break here, and ask them to play for one of our anniversary parties, and they'd be too busy or refer me to a manager."

Leverette is grateful to men like Ross Tompkins and Conte Candoli, who for many months have led the Thursday night band and who never bother him about prompt

payment. But problems with other payrolls, an automobile accident that left his right hand partly immobilized and an accumulation of other woes began to take their toll.

"One time the urinal in the men's room overflowed; I had to get a mop, call the roofer company, and the guy looked in it and found 20 feet of twine. Well, it didn't fall down there; someone had to stuff it in. Then there were the people who tore up the gardening out front, and the woman who dismantled the water closet mechanism and had water shooting up to the ceiling.

"When Bill McKay remodeled and put in those huge candelabras, people would somehow steal them and stuff them under their coats. No, it's not been an easy job," Leverette says.

The worst calamity was the

sudden death of saxophonist Warne Marsh, who collapsed and died of a heart attack at Donte's last December while in the middle of a set.

"It was a terrible moment; everybody on stage and off just froze," Leverette says.

The future for Donte's is set. Escrow is scheduled to close Tuesday.

"Pat Senatore, who will run the room for the new owner, is bringing in an architect. They won't reopen until late June or early July," Leverette says.

As for Leverette, he says he will "check into a hospital, relax, and get it over with." He says he is ill but isn't certain what is wrong. "I don't like hospital food, but what the heck, at least they serve it to me."



Los Angeles Times

Carey Leverette, founder of Donte's jazz club in the Valley.

### Final Note in Dirge

## Carey Leverette, Founder of Donte's Jazz Club, Dies

By ERIC MALNIC, Times Staff Writer

Carey Leverette, the founder, owner, manager, booking agent, dishwasher and trash man at Donte's—probably the oldest continuing jazz joint in Los Angeles—was found dead in his cluttered office Wednesday.

His death at age 63 was the final note in a dirge that began months ago when Leverette, struggling against mounting bills and diminishing business, realized that he could no longer keep the venerable North Hollywood club alive.

His body was found by his son-in-law, saxophonist Dick Spencer, just a day after escrow was scheduled to close on the sale of the shopworn nightspot to Japanese businessman Koichi Akemoto.

"I thought he wouldn't last a month after he sold it," said pianist Ross Tompkins, a friend and frequent performer at the club on Lankershim Boulevard. "That place was his whole life."

#### Had Been Ill

While no official cause of death was listed, friends said Leverette—who had a long history of problems with alcohol—had been ill in recent months and had planned to check into a hospital within the next few days.

Reared in Manhattan, educated at Fordham University and seasoned as a Marine combat veteran on Guadalcanal, Leverette was coming off a career as a dancer and choreographer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios when a distant love affair with music led him to open the club in June, 1966.

"I didn't know what I was doing," he recalled later. "I was in charge of talent, but I didn't even know enough to spell their names on the marquee."

But the public liked the place, and the names Leverette was booking were soon big enough to be familiar to everyone—even Leverette.

There were the big bands of Duke Ellington, Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Count Basie, Woody Herman and Stan Kenton; the saxophones of Al Cohn and Zoot Sims; the horns of Dizzy Gillespie and Chuck Mangione; the pianos of Adam Makowicz and Teddy Wil-

son.

"But the place began to run out of luck and money," jazz critic Leonard Feather said. "Other clubs started coming up. I think he was the victim of bad luck and even bad management."

The Internal Revenue Service shuttered the place at least once, and Leverette's financial woes became legend.

Some of the musicians complained that they were paid late, if at all (Leverette denied this) and one musician, reminded of the club's "homey atmosphere," responded off the record: "It's like the home where your parents abused you but you still keep coming back for the holiday."

#### Tough Times

But other musicians, like Tompkins, praised the gruff, bearded proprietor as a "generous" man who was simply the victim of "tough times in recent years."

The names on the marquee got smaller and smaller, and so did the crowds.

"Toward the end, he had to do everything himself—buy the food, wash the dishes, fill the salt and pepper shakers and take out the trash," Feather said. "The place had really gone downhill."

Last month, a group of musicians and faithful patrons packed the place for one last time—in a "Tribute to Donte's." Chuck Findley was there on trumpet, Tompkins played piano, Sherman Ferguson was on drums, Neal Hefti was in the audience.

Last Saturday, the club closed after its final night under Leverette's management. After tidying things up a bit, Leverette retired as usual to his bed in the tiny, littered office.

He got in touch with friends on Monday. But after no one had heard from him Tuesday, Spencer called police. Officers broke in Wednesday to find Leverette dead in bed, alone except for a small kitten he had recently befriended.

"He was always collecting a stray dog or cat," Tompkins' wife, Annie, said Wednesday. "Now that latest cat, E-Flat, needs a home."

# Phil Woods, Documentarian

By LEONARD FEATHER

Phil Woods, whose alto saxophone has graced the jazz world for more than 30 years, and who during that time enjoyed an astonishing series of associations with dozens of jazz giants, wants to put it all in writing.

"I've had so many incredible experiences in my time," he said during a recent pause between sets at Catalina's in Hollywood, "that I just have to write a book about it. It's gonna be a long project.

"I originally just had an idea in mind about writing a saxophone book; then I decided to put in a few stories, and little by little it took on a whole new dimension. I will include improvisation lessons, but also poems, recipes, memoirs—it's liable to turn out to be a 'Whole Earth Bebop' book."

Few if any jazzmen now active are more literate or better qualified than Woods to tell their stories. Heir to a saxophone left him by an uncle, he moved to New York in 1948 and studied, first with the legendary Lennie Tristano, then at the Manhattan School of Music, and for four years at Juilliard, where he majored in clarinet.

"Think how fortunate I've been, working with so many of the giants," Woods says. "I was with Dizzy Gillespie on that first-ever State Department-sponsored tour of the Middle East. I worked with Thelonious Monk, I played at Birdland with Friedrich Gulda's jazz group. Then there were the tours with Buddy Rich, Quincy Jones and the Benny Goodman tour of the Soviet Union. I recorded with great composers like Oliver Nelson and Gary McFarland. I was in the middle of a great and glorious heyday.

"I guess I was thinking about my own mortality when this idea occurred to me that I had to document it all. It's not so much my own life that's important, but rather the relationships with all these cats who crossed my path. We've lost two great saxophonists who had memorable experiences but never got to write about them—Budd

Johnson and, just recently, Al Cohn; I've already got a whole chapter on Al.

"I'm working with a word processor, and I've got a modem, so I can call Jill, my wife, and put everything into a big hard-disc storage unit she has. We plan to print it ourselves too. It may not be as exciting as the Art Pepper story, but there are other sides to the jazz world, as you well know." (The Art Pepper biography dealt extensively with the author's drug addiction.)

Woods rightly believes that there has been an excessive accent on the negative in the representation, in books or films, or such musicians as Pepper, Billie Holiday, and the lead character in "Round Midnight," among others. "Why do they have to stress the tawdry, seamy stuff? I hope the Charlie Parker movie [Clint Eastwood's upcoming "Bird"] treats him fairly, because the Bird I knew was a really nice man—so polite to younger musicians, and always encouraging them to stay straight. The trouble is, who wants to see a movie about a nice guy?"

"Sure, we've always had problems; some people will go to hear a performer just to see what kind of shape he's in, or whether he'll show up for the job. But what does that have to do with the music? How about the legendary guys like Benny Carter, who has worked all his life, done a beautiful job and hasn't made the headlines?"

"That should be touched on. The degree of seriousness in our business has never been dealt with, or the brightness of the jazz musician, most of whom do read books."

The Woods literary venture is being sandwiched in between dates in a schedule that may well be unique for an acoustic jazz group. Organized in 1974, the Woods quintet includes three original members: Woods, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin, whose sister is Woods' wife. Hal Galper, the invaluable pianist and composer, joined the combo in 1981, and trumpeter Tom Harrell was added



ELLEN JASKOL / Los Angeles Times

Author-to-be Phil Woods: "It's not my own life that's important but the relationships with all the cats who crossed my path."

in 1983.

Woods is unstinting in his praise for Harrell. "If he's not a bona-fide genius, I don't know what is. I think he's one of the greatest improvisers I ever heard, carrying the flame of Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro. He never wastes a note; he has instinctive technical command, plus the passion, along with total harmonic control."

Asked whether this is a good time to be leading a group on a regular basis, Woods said: "I have no choice; it's what I want to do. Of course, without the dedication of the band it would be impossible, and admittedly it has been a little tough at times. But last year we worked six months straight from July to December, which is amazing. Then we took two months off—we try to plan the year so the guys can do their individual projects."

Woods had his share of working as a single with pick-up bands but, as he points out, that is not why he took up music in the first place. "I have nothing against those common-denominator songs like 'Green Dolphin Street,' 'I Remember April,' 'Stella by Starlight'—but rather than keep on playing the same old standards, I'd just as soon stay home and teach music. You just have to have new tunes, and with an organized ensemble you can take the music that much further and explore the colors and variations of ideas, tempos, moods.

"I get so bored with the way some groups approach their sound—it's always loud. As you know, we are as unobtrusive as possible without forsaking clarity, and it's paying off.

"Also, we're very excited about signing with Concord." (A live album recorded by the group in Japan last fall will be released on

Concord Jazz shortly.)

Along with the quintet and the book, Woods has another item on his agenda that should prove exciting and innovative: He is expanding the quintet to eight pieces for certain dates and a probable recording.

"We'll have three extra horns: Nick Brignola on baritone sax; a young man named Nelson Hill on tenor, who is really dynamite, and either Jimmy Knepper or Steve Turre on trombone.

"I'm composing more for this group than I am for the quintet. Hal Galper has written a couple of things, and Gil Evans gave me a chart on 'Miles Ahead.' Tom Harrell has been doing some writing for it too. Since the quintet has been around so long, it's nice to have a change of pace once in a while, and of course this instrumentation gives us a chance to expand the colors."

Woods has been a member for many years of a colony of musicians who live in the Pocono region of Pennsylvania, specifically at Delaware Water Gap. "That's how the quintet started, in fact; Steve Gilmore lived around the corner from me, and I stayed with Bill Goodwin for a while.

"We acquired our following the hard way, playing in small rooms and saloons and finally building up a nice following. When a place like Catalina's pays you well and takes good care of you, playing a nightclub becomes a pleasure. Catalina and Bob Popescu, the owners, are a delightful couple. The ambiance reminds me of the old Shelly's Manne Hole . . . When you play a gig like this, with the audience hootin' and hollerin', in a bona-fide jazz room, it makes the whole traveling bit seem worthwhile." □

# The Creative Yet Stable Life of Pianist George Cables

By LEONARD FEATHER

Time was when success for a jazz musician meant just one thing. You simply played your instrument, and with luck you kept working.

George Cables typifies the 1980s artist in that he is able to spread his creative wings. Currently he has



George Cables' trio will be at Biltmore's Grand Avenue Bar.

four areas of activity, as pianist/leader, sideman or co-leader, composer and teacher.

His endeavors have been overlapping with increasing frequency. His trio will be performing tonight at the Biltmore's Grand Avenue Bar. Some time this month, too, he will play on a session with the vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, who has recorded more of Cables' compositions than anyone else. Cables' last album was a duo set with the alto sax virtuoso Frank Morgan. He works now and then with the saxophonist Chico Freeman as co-leader.

Devoting himself exclusively to the acoustic grand piano, Cables has had a stable career that has seen him in a succession of remarkable settings. Over the last 20 years he has worked with Art Blakey, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Bobby Hutcherson and, since the early '70s, quite often with Freddie Hubbard.

Along the way he has gigged and recorded with his own groups, mainly for Contemporary Records. In his remarkable "Cables' Vision" LP three men who are leaders in their own right—Hubbard, Hutcherson and Ernie Watts—became Cables' sidemen.

"I enjoy diversifying my career,"

he said from New York. "When I lead a trio in the East I'll hire my New York rhythm section, and out here I will have Ralph Penland on drums and Tony Dumas on bass.

"I don't mind working as a co-leader or sideman occasionally. Last year Chico Freeman and I took a group to Japan; then we recorded an album in Chicago with Chico's father, Von Freeman, who's also a fine saxophonist.

"Japan has become so important to me—I think I've been there eight times—that I can just about speak Japanese; at least I remember enough to have a head start

every time I arrive there."

Though he has had dozens of compositions recorded—by Dexter Gordon, Hubbard, Hutcherson, Woody Herman and Woody Shaw among others—Cables has done less writing recently, perhaps because, as he says, "It's a lot of fun rewriting other people's music, as I did on the 'By George' album of Gershwin's music last year."

Teaching, particularly at college clinics, has become a growing interest. "When I was getting starting I wasn't aware of any jazz programs in schools, and that wasn't such a long time ago, but

things have changed amazingly.

"The level of student performance has definitely improved, and I enjoy working with young musicians. I did Bud Shank's workshop at his home town in Port Townsend, Wash.; I went to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where they have a surprisingly good jazz band; and I'm going to do some guest work with a band at Oberlin. It's great that so many of these players today have a place to test the waters, to try out their individual ideas. During my early

days we didn't have opportunities like that."

If he was unable to find outlets of that kind, Cables at least had the right education—at the High School of Performing Arts and later at Mannes College in New York—and was guided by the appropriate sources of inspiration. His idols on piano were Wynton Kelly, Buddy Montgomery, Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner; as overall influences he names Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Traces of all these men may be found in his writing or playing; he has forged this eclecticism into a vital, technically and creatively exceptional persona.

Cables today is reaping the re-

4/6/88

Los Angeles Times

ton's turned out to be the temporary residence of a splendid singer, Stephanie Haynes.

An Orange County favorite for many years, Haynes makes such an immediate impression with her elegant gown and personal charm that one finds oneself hoping for the best. The best was promptly forthcoming as she eased into a well-selected set of standards.

Her intonation is perfect, her timbre jazz-edged, her phrasing clearly that of a sensitive musician. The more familiar pop items alternated with such Brazilian delights as "Sometime Ago" and "The Gentle Rain."

Haynes' emotional highs were reached in a seldom-heard ballad, "The Masquerade Is Over," taken at a hauntingly slow pace. Here and elsewhere, potent support was offered by a trio under the direction of the pianist Daniel May. With him are his bassist brother, Benjamin, who just turned 21 and shows

remarkable promise, along with the versatile Paul Kreibich on drums. Daniel May works here solo or with his brother nightly except Sunday at the hotel's nearby Lantern Bay Lounge.

Haynes' return date is uncertain,

but she will be at the Money Tree in Toluca Lake on Friday and at Alfonso's May 10. At a time when uncompromising jazz vocalists are in short supply, she is a natural for wider exposure.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## The Uncompromising Stephanie Haynes

Serendipity can play strange tricks. During a recent visit to the Dana Point Resort, a 6-month-old luxury hotel on the coast just south of Laguna Niguel, the nightclub-area known as Bur-



MEMBER NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1988

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Jane & Leonard Feather

## IAOJA HAPPENINGS

LEONARD FEATHER APPOINTED TO IAOJA BOARD appointment of noted jazz historian, LEONARD FEATHER, to IAOJA's Board of Directors.

IAOJA's New appointee is a world renowned jazz critic, lecturer, historian, and author of the Encyclopedia Of Jazz, From Satchmo To Miles, The Pleasures of Jazz, The Book of Jazz (From Then 'Till Now), Inside Be bop, Laughter From The Hip, and his recently published autobiography, The Jazz Years, Earwitness To Aan Era. Also a composer of many blues tunes, such as Dinah Washington Hits, "Blow Top Blues" and "Evil cal Blues," Little Richard Hit, "Taxi Blues" and "Unlucky Woman," (Born on a Friday), Cledo Laines, encore tune, Feather has expressed the importance of IAOJA's goals, and has offered to lend his time and talents to its realizations.

In his February 20, 1988 L.A. Times article, appropriately headed JAZZ IS GOING TO SCHOOL FOR A STUDENT EXAMINATION, Feather describes IAOJA's recently completed "Jazz Goes To School" Program in the L.A. City Schools, our weekly Sunday Jazz concerts, and Dr. Coffey's future ambitions to create jazz study as regular curriculum in schools as a means of perpetuating jazz.

IAOJA is honored with Leonard Feather's acceptance of this Board of Directors appointment, and welcomes his extensive knowledge and assured support.

# A Record, Some Gigs Jazz Up Duo's Career

By LEONARD FEATHER

**D**elayed reactions are not unusual in show business, but the case of Don and Alicia Cunningham is extraordinary.

This handsome pair, together as a team for almost 18 years and as a married couple for half that time, has had such an erratic career that from 1978 to 1982 he had to go to work as a graphic photographer, shooting album covers for Lena Horne and Dolly Parton, while she worked at a Los Angeles bank.

Discounting two obscure, undistributed efforts, the Cunninghams in 1988 finally have their first real release—on the aptly named Discovery Records.

Are they doing well? "As well as anybody we've ever had on the label," says Discovery owner Albert Marx. "We have orders and reorders coming in from all over the country, and from Europe."

A mixture of jazz and pop standards, vocalise (Ellington's "Cottontail"), Latin, scatting, blues and originals, the album effectively traces the evolution of the duo from lounge acts (at one time Don was playing alto sax, congas and vibes and his wife played piano) into first-class jazz vocalists. The evidence can be observed Sunday, when they'll be at the Alleycat Bistro under the auspices of the International Assn. of Jazz Appreciation. They'll also be at the Biltmore on April 19.

Both are schooled musicians. Alicia Rodriguez, Los Angeles born, grew up strictly in the classical world, earning her bachelor's in music from Mount St. Mary's College, singing contralto and mezzo, playing organ, conducting a school choir.

"But I always listened to jazz," she says. "I went to Shelly's Mannehole, heard Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans, I loved Ella and Sarah, and Rosemary Clooney. I got into jazz and scat by copying Ella's 'How High the Moon,' but it was later, through Don, that I got out there and began to invent things of my own."

Don Cunningham, born in St. Louis, was the oldest of seven children. "My dad worked very hard and paid for me to take saxophone lessons. I played in the high school band. Then the Korean War broke out, and instead of going to college I joined the Army, where I played classical clarinet at a camp



Don, Alicia Cunningham perform Sunday at Alleycat Bistro.

in Louisiana; but on weekends I checked out my tenor sax and jammed with a jazz combo."

He took up the conga drums after his discharge and hooked on with Johnny Mathis for 3½ years. After that came a succession of gigs with his own Afro-Cuban group: Playboy Clubs, lounges and, in 1969, a move to Los Angeles, where he lived for a while with the drummer Ed Thigpen, an old Army friend.

"I started a new quartet, and Mary Kaye of the Mary Kaye Trio got me a job at Whittinghill's, where they kept booking us two or three times a year. By then I was getting into singing—mostly pop; I wasn't heavily into jazz vocals."

An agent suggested the act could

make more money if it included a woman. "A friend of Thigpen's brought this girl over, Alicia Rodriguez. She was very pretty, but I thought, 'My act's not geared for girls; besides, she's Mexican, she probably does things like 'La Paloma.'"

"How wrong I was! I said to her, 'Do you know any jazz tunes?' She said 'sure' and sang 'Lush Life' and blew me away!"

So, for several years the Cunninghams worked steadily if obscurely, until disco came along, the Las Vegas lounges closed down and the couple took day jobs.

Suddenly everything turned around: A former agent, who had

Please see PERFORMERS, Page 6

## PERFORMERS

Continued from Page 2

given up on them because they wouldn't do disco, called with an offer from Japan.

"I was worried," Don recalled. "The years were piling up; we'd gotten married, and I came home smelling of chemicals from the lab. I was in the darkroom eight hours a day and my eyes were bothering me. Alicia said, 'Make up your mind now! Either we go or forget it, and I

don't ever want another word about you wanting to go out as a percussionist.' So we went."

They were unknown in Japan and had been hired, the agent said, because they were not soul singers and had a unique act involving steel drums and congas.

"We went over on a two-month contract and stayed five months. Alicia played the piano; I had my sax along and sang a little," Don said.

"The next year I told my agent that if we went back to Japan we

had to go as a jazz act. So the second time we hired a pianist to cover bass and drums and stayed eight months. Every year since then we've spent six or seven months in Japan, with side trips to Okinawa, Malaysia, Singapore, all over. We will probably go back for the seventh time this fall, but now at last we have other considerations. We're off to Switzerland April 22—our second European trip—and we can finally line up a really good tour of this country, thanks to the record."

## JAZZ REVIEW

# Culture Shock's Latin Roots Bridge a Gap

By LEONARD FEATHER

Latin jazz has always been a hybrid form in which the heavy rhythmic elements too often tend to overwhelm the authentic jazz essence. Steve Huffsteter, who recently organized a band known as Culture Shock, is making a worthy effort to escape the strictures of this dual idiom.

Heard Wednesday at the Grand Avenue Bar of the Biltmore, doubling on trumpet and fluegelhorn, he offered a program of his own compositions and arrangements. Huffsteter is well qualified to bridge the jazz-Latin gap, having played with the Toshiko Akiyoshi band in addition to putting in several years with the late Willie Bobo.

His solos did not seem noticeably different, rhythmically or melodically, from those he performed with Akiyoshi, but his writing is intelligently geared to the Latin requirements, without falling into the pattern of monotonously danceable tempos, sound-alike melodies and overloud dynamics that too often dominate such groups.

Sharing the front line were Justo Almario, a capable tenor and soprano saxophonist, and the outstanding valve trombonist Mike Fahn. The three-horn blend was applied to such works as "Strange Head," a minor quasi-blues (there was a surfeit of minor key tunes played consecutively). The ensemble, which includes a drummer and two other percussionists, along with electric bass and electric keyboard, came most vividly to life with the contagious Brazilian beat of "Street Samba."

Huffsteter's philosophy seems to be: "I don't want to make history; I just want to make this kind of music more listenable." On that relatively unpretentious level he succeeds, for Culture Shock is not shocking, but its cultural level is above the norm for the genre it represents.

4/22/88

# Jazz LPs: Unconventional & Mainstream

By LEONARD FEATHER

"NEW STUFF." Jim Self & Friends. Trend TRCD 548.

Anyone who plays three different tubas—the electric bass, bass trombone, an electronic valve instrument—teaches chamber music and flies his own plane might be considered, well, self-sufficient. Nevertheless, Jim Self, a long-respected studio musician who's in charge here, does have help in the form of two odd groups, one of which includes a harmonica player, the other featuring guitar and vibes.

The inherent gloominess of the tuba is generally offset, either by Self's ingenious overdubbing of various horns or by the effective blend with Ron Kalina, the mouth-organ virtuoso, or guitarist Jon Kurnick.

The repertoire is wildly varied. Self flirts with fusion on "Kilo," which is about as elegant as an elephant, but makes the most of Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" and a beguiling Charles Mingus piece, "Peggy's Blue Skylight." He even goes for baroque on "Sinfonia III," transcribed for vibes, guitar and tuba from Bach's Two- and Three-Part Inventions.

There are lulls here, but there's also more than 67 minutes of music, much of it charmingly unconventional. 4 stars.

"HARLEM BLUES." Donald Byrd. Landmark LLP 1516. Byrd jumped off the jazz wagon many years ago to engage in a long flirtation with fusion, along with an extensive career in jazz education (he is now acting head of the Afro-American/jazz studies department at Oberlin). With this album he returns to mainstream jazz, leading an early 1960s-style hard-bop quintet.

Though brief use is made of a synthesizer, there's little here that was not done more effectively on Byrd's old Blue Note albums. His sound is neither as personal nor as attractive as it once was; at times, he suggests Freddie Hubbard on a bad day.

The slow, gospelly title tune works well, with Kenny Garrett's alto sax dominant. Garrett and Byrd interact well on "Sir Master Kool Guy." Byrd does better when

he switches to fluegelhorn on "Voyage a Deux." But "Blue Monk" is not unlike a dozen other versions, despite good work by Mulgrew Miller on piano. It will be intriguing to observe whether Byrd can recapture his pristine promise. 2½ stars.

"EASY TO LOVE." Erroll Garner. EmArcy 832 994-2. Rarely is a set of liner notes alone almost worth the purchase price, but Dudley Moore's extended essay here on Garner (whose ardent disciple he has always been) is truly of award-winning caliber. As for the previously unreleased material by Garner's 1960s trio, it's a delight, though Moore's reservations about his "wayward introductions" have some validity. But when Garner gets going, as Moore puts it, "I sag with the burden of gratitude." Who among us doesn't? 4 stars.

"SUN DANCE." George Robert-Tom Harrell Quintet. Contemporary C-14037. Phil Woods' drummer, Bill Goodwin, moonlights here as player and producer in an LP for which a Woods-like alto player, the Geneva-born Robert, was recorded in Lausanne along with Woods' trumpeter, Tom Harrell, and Italian pianist Dado Moroni. The tunes, four by Robert and two by Harrell, are simple functional vehicles, with Robert switching to soprano sax for the bright samba "Cancun" and the engaging 5/4 title number. With bassist Reggie Johnson completing the group, it's a cheerful outing. There's no foreign accent in these international sounds. 4 stars.

"JOY RYDER." Wayne Shorter. Columbia CK 44110. The leader's horn and the various synthesizers (Herbie Hancock, Geri Allen or Patrice Rushen) are generally well integrated in these seven Shorter originals. The assembly-line funk, repeated bass riffs and incessant pedal point effects follow a similar pattern. In a couple of cuts, notably

the hypnotic "Causeways," skillful writing compensates for a paucity of improvisational freedom. The concluding "Someplace Called 'Where'" is sung by Dianne Reeves almost entirely in quarter and half notes. Whatever happened to rhythm? 2½ stars.

"FROM A TO Z AND BEYOND." Al Cohn-Zoot Sims. RCA-Bluebird 6469-2-RR. Sims (1925-85) and Cohn (1925-88) were soul survivors (but not sole survivors, since Stan Getz is still around) in the

Woody Herman "Four Brothers" generation of tenor sax giants. This compilation of two LPs they cut in 1956 is packed with vital solos and exchanges between them. There are only 12 short tunes, four of which are duplicated via unissued alternate takes. The ensemble sound is thin and the writing uninspired on some tracks, serving as no more than a launching pad for the leaders. 3 stars.

"NATURAL RHYTHM." Freddie Green-Al Cohn. RCA-Bluebird 6465-2-RR. Green's guitar makes a world of difference, as do the Basieish piano of Nat Pierce and Joe Newman's consistent trumpet. For these and other reasons, such as Cohn's doubling on clarinet and

bass clarinet, these 1955 dates trade off better than the Cohn-Sims collaboration. There's more variety—22 tunes, of which Green wrote nine, with neat charts by Cohn, Manny Albam or Ernie Wilkins, some of which have a small-band Basie tinge. Produced by Jack Lewis, these are superior examples of small-band mainstream music. 4 stars. □

## JAZZ REVIEW

### Supersax: Loyal to the Bird

By LEONARD FEATHER

When the motion picture "Bird" has its gala premiere later this year, producer Clint Eastwood could hardly choose a more fitting group than Med Flory's Supersax should he decide that live music is needed to set the mood for the movie.

This nine-man band has devoted its 16 years to the preservation, even the amplification, of Charlie Parker's music. Heard Friday evening at the Loeb, the group seemed more than ever in possession of its unique faculties; the passage of time has set the five saxophonists so firmly in their ways that the performances are second nature to them.

Listening to Supersax once more, you are reminded what a superlative idea this was in the first place. The opening tune, "Au Privave," showed every facet of the band's personality: First, the original Bird theme played in unison, then a Bird improvisation, transcribed by Flory from the recording and harmonized for the five saxes; then some ad-lib blowing (always Parker-in-

spired but never slavishly avian), and a repeat of the theme, this time played in harmony.

All the soloists are in character: Lanny Morgan's alto is post-Bird but pre-Ornette Coleman, just as the tenors of Jay Migliori and Ray Reed are pre-Coltrane. Jack Nimitz remains one of the few true masters of bebop baritone sax.

The sax section has remained unchanged for a decade. The rhythm team, still with Larance Marable on drums, had bassist Larry Gales making his maiden voyage with the band, and some commendably appropriate piano by the pianist Tom Ranier, who was only 5 years old when Bird died.

Flory's dry wit set up the program as well as ever. He spiced it with several tunes the band rarely plays, such as "Dancing in the Dark" and "Dewey Square." Even Buddy Clark's arrangement of Parker's flawed "Lover Man" record somehow came to life, reminding us that Bird at his worst was head and shoulders above most jazz men at their peak. Supersax, today as always, is a joyful and significant experience.

4/10

4/12

# Gerry Mulligan—The Evolution Continues

By LEONARD FEATHER

Gerry Mulligan's album "Symphonic Dreams" with Erich Kunzel and the Houston Symphony, which has been earning extensive classical as well as jazz radio exposure, is now in its 26th week on the jazz charts (currently in *Billboard* magazine at No. 9 with a bullet). More significantly, though, the LP represents a giant step forward in the creative evolution of the composer/baritone saxophonist.

Not that there haven't been many other memorable career moves. Since writing his first big-band arrangement at age 15, Mulligan has had countless images: As arranger (along with Gil Evans) for Claude Thornhill's seminal orchestra, as key figure in the Miles Davis Birth of the Cool band, as leader of his precedent-setting pianoless jazz quartet, and, over the years, as occasional actor, founder of a big band and occasional featured soloist with Dave Brubeck.

"People have said I retired," he says, "but remember when Brubeck retired? He was actually busier than ever."

The fact is that Mulligan is not constantly on the scene, partly

because he and his Italian wife, Franca, divide their time between homes in Milan and Darien, Conn. But "Symphonic Dreams" kept him busy, at home, mainly with the composing of "Entente for Baritone Sax and Orchestra," the opening work in the album.

"Yeah, it's the most ambitious thing I've done in a long while; the first time I've ever composed and orchestrated for a full symphony. I was afraid to tackle it, but finally took the bull by the horns and spent the best part of six months on it."

Mulligan is a proud autodidact. "I never had any training, but so much of orchestration is simply logic—figuring out what the instruments can do with each other.

"I'd played a lot of pieces with symphony orchestras written by other composers, but they didn't feel natural, so I had to do a lot of woodshedding. So I thought I might as well do something that would enable me to avoid these problems. Too many experiments trying to combine symphony and jazz elements wind up with attempts to get the orchestra to play the way jazz musicians would—which, of



Gerry Mulligan on "Symphonic Dreams": "[It's] the first time I've ever composed and orchestrated for a full symphony."

course, just doesn't work."

To prepare himself for the self-assignment, Mulligan accepted an offer from one of the operators of La Scala in Milan, inviting him to attend the morning rehearsals there whenever he wished. "It was the start of the season and they were doing 'Turandot,' which is Puccini at his most magnificent. I found myself stumbling onto something brand new, because I'd never paid attention to opera. Hearing this from the ground up was a whole education in orchestrating.

"Puccini was fearless, man—he'd try anything, the most outlandish combinations of instruments. This inspired me, I'd spend the morning at La Scala, come home, have lunch and devote the afternoon to writing.

"The other thing they were working on was one of Rossini's lightweight things, which was another form of education for me, because Rossini was able, with relative simplicity, to bring so much vitality into his writing."

Along with the "Entente," the most adventurous and perhaps controversial work in Mulligan's symphonic repertoire is "The Sax Chronicles," a seven-part collaboration by the saxophonist and the eminent Canadian composer Harry Freedman. There was a time when this suite might have been dismissed as another attempt at "jazzing the classics," but actually it is the reverse, since each movement includes at least one Mulligan composition adapted to the style of seven classical composers.

The result was a unique series in which various Mulligan works were transformed. "Sax in Debussy's Garden" was adapted from an old, never-recorded Mulligan tune, "Willows." "Sax in Mozart Minor" began life as Mulligan's "Festive Minor."

Two pieces from the saxophonist's celebrated "Little Big Horn" LP (with Dave Grusin on GRP) were similarly transmogrified: "Sun on Stairs" became "Sun on the Bach Stairs," while "Under a Star" became part of "Sax and Der Rosenkavalier." "Actually," Mulligan recalls, "the origin of 'Under a Star' was a Broadway musical based on Anita Loos' play, 'Happy Birthday,' with lyrics by Judy Holliday." (The late actress was the woman in Mulligan's life for several years.) "But the musical never got produced."

As for "Sax and the Rite of Igor," Mulligan says: "Harry was fascinated with the fact that my 'Song for an Unfinished Woman' employed certain devices that Stravinsky used in the 'Rite of Spring.' So he reworked that melody into something that sounds a bit like a re-arrangement of the Stravinsky work."

Although the "Sax Chronicles," like the other material in the "Symphonic Dreams" album, is relatively new to most ears because its live performances have been only occasional, there is an imposing list of past and future performances. "I opened my European tour in 1984 playing the 'Entente' and the 'Sax Chronicles' with the Lon-

don Symphony. Since 1984, I've performed at the Hollywood Bowl with Erich Kunzel conducting, Tel Aviv with the Israel Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting—what a fantastic man!—and several other dates."

Mulligan was due to leave a few days ago for a performance in Stockholm with the Philharmonia under the baton of Dennis Elliott Davis. "From there I go to Salzburg, where we rehearse for concert with the Mozarteum Orchestra in Munich."

Nowadays Mulligan, once a lean, clean-shaven string of hair, presents a full, curly appearance, but the eyes still sparkle, in an ever more hirsute sense. A mass of white hair, beard, and eyebrows, looking (as he said) as if the baritone saxophone should be playing him.

The symphony orchestra represents just one of at least the settings in which this perennial award winner (since 1953 he has been voted No. 1 baritone saxophonist dozens of times in the journals worldwide) can be heard during the coming year. "I'm doing some dates with my quartet—Dave Johnson on bass, Richie de Rosa, Bobby Rosengarden on drums, and a young and exciting new pianist, Bill Charlap. We'll play the New York festival; then I have part of a European tour with the quartet and part with my big jazz band. I'll be in Glasgow for a week as composer in residence, playing concerts in several settings, then on to Italy for a whole bunch of concert bookings."

"After a month or so with the big band I'll be playing quartet dates in the U.S. for a while; then off to Australia followed by two weeks in Brazil."

This frequent alternation of contexts is a bracing experience, he says. "It's not that I prefer one over another. Whether it's a symphony, the quartet or a large jazz ensemble, I just want to create some music that will be fun for all of us to play." □

# Soviet Pianist to Make His Local Debut

By LEONARD FEATHER

It's a long way from Red Square to Berkeley Square, even longer if the latter happens to be not the one in London but a nightclub in Berkeley, Calif. That is where Andre Kitaev, having made the journey after marrying an American exchange student in Moscow, began soaking up American jazz in 1978.

"In Russia," he says, "I had very little chance to play jazz. Basically I concentrated on dance music with a big band called Night Arbat. I made records and television with them, but there was not much opportunity for piano solo work.

"I loved jazz. I heard it on Voice of America, but I had no American repertoire. When I came to Berkeley I went to this club every Thursday for three months to hear the pianist, Art Lande, and began learning what to do. I started to practice eight hours a day and memorized about 500 songs."

Kitaev, who plays his first Los Angeles engagement tonight at Catalina's Bar and Grill in Hollywood, studied at the Gnessin School of Music, Moscow's counterpart to Juilliard, and for four years taught classical piano at a private college in Moscow.

Had he not met his American bride, would he have come to America anyway?

"I doubt it. Maybe later in life," Kitaev said, "but I fell in love with jazz long ago. After coming here I heard many records by Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck. I listened to bass lines and figured out the harmony on my own. It was easy, because I have already trained memory from age 6."

Life in the United States was not easy at first. For a while his experiences were oddly like those of the character portrayed by Robin Williams in "Moscow on the Hudson": a black family in Oakland helped him through the rough times. He now lives in El Cerrito.

During his first American gig, at a bar in Sausalito, he was offered a record contract, but the album, "First Takes," was a little premature; as recent private tapes reveal, he has grown since then in every area—dynamics, harmony, subtlety—and hopes soon to record a more representative set.

In the Soviet Union his career was limited not by any official ban on jazz but simply by the paucity of outlets. "At that time we had a couple of jazz clubs in Leningrad, a couple in Moscow, but not enough to keep me working."



*Soviet pianist Andrei Kitaev is making his local debut tonight.*

Though he stays fairly busy in Marin County and San Francisco clubs, he finds conditions less than ideal in the Bay Area. "We just don't have enough places around

here. I go sometimes to Portland, Ore., where they have a lot of jazz.

"Too often, though, I make my living in hotel work, playing solo piano. That way I can't really play what I want—it's like freedom but not really freedom, you know?"

Unlike many other Soviet emigres, Kitaev says he is free to move between his old and current homes; he has a green card and what he describes as "a sort of diplomatic passport." He can go back to Russia "any time I want, for six months every year, but I haven't gone back yet. My parents came over here four years ago and I try to invite them back again this summer."

He hopes the future holds out opportunities that will extend beyond California and the hotel-nightclub circuit. "I like to play, but I don't want ever to be just background music. I want eventually to concentrate on just concerts."

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HEADLINE: JAZZ REVIEWS ;  
EARTHA KITT: THE SEXY SEXAGENARIAN

BYLINE: By LEONARD FEATHER

BODY:

The capacity crowd that attended her opening at the Cinegrill on a rainy Tuesday evening left no doubt that despite all her vicissitudes, Eartha Kitt is still a world-class name.

Age cannot wither her, nor custom <sup>stale</sup> ~~and~~ the infinite variety of this latter-day Cleopatra. As a cabaret-style singer, she remains as instantly recognizable as Billie Holiday was in jazz. As an entertainer, her mixture of hedonistic lyrics and seriocomic sensuality is like nothing else on any stage today.

Along with some unfamiliar material there were several songs out of her old Kitt bag. Bookending this captivating hour were her opener, the witty, waggish "I'm Still Here," and the warmly emotional poem she wrote for her daughter, "All By Myself."

As she still informs us, she's just an old-fashioned girl who wants an old-fashioned house with an old-fashioned millionaire. Her selective taste in men was the subject of an ode to the contrast between "My Champagne Taste and Your Beer Bottle Pocket."

There must be no dialect, no accent or language she has not mastered, or couldn't if necessary. Weltschmerz with early-Dietrich Germanic overtones and heavily rolled r's gave way to cockney-dropped aitches in a song about the wages of sin, then suddenly she was spouting black talk. At one point she also seemed to capture the southern twang of her old nemesis, Lady Bird Johnson. She sang "C'est Si Bon," of course, and chatted with members of the audience in French, Spanish and German.

Her control of the crowd is unique. If looks could kill, the mortality rate would have been high; yet at other moments she reminded us of her irresistible charm. Like Lena Horne, she has mastered the art of retaining the sex in sexagenarian.

A curious interlude, obviously rehearsed but not a regular part of her act, was the appearance of Reiko, whom the fans of the old "Jack Paar Show" will remember as the wife of TV writer Jack Douglas, often appearing with him as a barely articulate guest. Reiko sang a sort of Japanese quasi-blues and bantered and dueted with Kitt, to mildly amusing effect. But Eartha, as much as any artist on Earth, is self-sufficient.

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## FROM LEONARD FEATHER

As Shakespeare observed in *Twelfth Night*, some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

Mel Powell clearly will never feel the need of that thrust. Although I did not know him at birth, I strongly suspect that some of his greatness is innate. At the same time, in the course of a long and distinguished career he set about achieving much of what he has accomplished, and did so in more areas than most of us dare to enter.

When we first met he was a teen-ager playing piano and writing brilliant arrangements for the Benny Goodman orchestra. As I later learned, he had had a prodigious start, leading his own Dixieland band at the age of 12 and graduating from high school at 14.

For many years our paths did not cross, though his invaluable contributions as a composer and teacher in the world of classical music and his occasional returns to jazz were common knowledge. That he was also a gifted painter (an exhibition of his watercolors was recently held in Wilkes-Barre, Penn.), became known to me more recently, when we turned out to be neighbors in Sherman Oaks, Calif. The depth and breadth of his understanding and talent is matched by a delightfully articulate personality and an ability to move seamlessly through the diverse disciplines with which he has been involved.

In the fall of 1986, after three decades almost totally removed from jazz, Powell was persuaded to make a brief return by taking part in the jazz festival cruise aboard the S.S. Norway. It took only moments to realize that he had lost none of his personal touch at jazz piano. After another busy year back at CalArts, he made a return visit to the S.S. Norway, again delighting us all with every chorus played and every sentence uttered.

Mel Powell has achieved more in his rich careers (the use of the plural is clearly called for) than most of us can hope to accomplish in a lifetime. Suppressing the temptation to envy him, I regard Powell as someone whose wholeness as a human being I will always admire and whose friendship I am happy to enjoy. I hope to be on hand with him and his lovely wife, Martha, when February 12 arrives. ☺

Age 19—appearing with the Benny Goodman Orchestra.





# Oscar Brown Jr. — the Play's His Thing

By LEONARD FEATHER

Oscar Brown Jr. may be the most hyphenated figure in show business: poet-singer-songwriter-actor-playwright-producer-director-lyricist (add your own hyphens). His biography reads like a scattershot history of moderate hits, near misses, flops, fits and starts, mainly in the area of writing and staging musical shows.

But for a man once described as a genius of the theater by such disparate observers as Lorraine Hansberry, Steve Allen, Nina Simone, Max Roach and Nat Hentoff, he seems never quite to have lived up to the potential he showed when those accolades were showered on him in the early 1960s.

"I have a show right now," Brown said the other day in a call from Chicago, "that would be perfect for a movie. It's called 'Great Nitty Gritty' and it played in Chicago, St. Louis and Milwau-



Oscar Brown Jr.

kee. . . . It's about Jean DuSable, the black man who was the first settler here. A statue of him comes to life, and some kids are having a gang war, and this victim of a shooting has to assist him in peace-making. . . ."

As Brown (who is at the Vine St. Bar & Grill through Saturday) tells the story of his project, the mind's

eye goes back to all the other plays over the decades, and to the one central fact: that none ever became a Broadway hit. The best remembered is "Kicks & Co.," mainly because the late Dave Garroway turned his entire NBC-TV show one morning into a virtual backers' audition. Though \$400,000 was raised, it ran for just four nights in Chicago and died. Asked whether this was his biggest disappointment, Brown hesitated, then replied: "Well, it was my first. There were quite a number. But that's show business."

There were many other shows, most of them impressions of black history and Afro-American life. Brown has always had a vital social and political consciousness; he ran for the Illinois Legislature in 1948 and for Congress in 1952 and lost both times, but remained active in the labor movement and in socially significant writing.

Ironically, he feels that some of his most valuable work in the theater was done because he had time on his hands. With the singer Jean Pace, who was his personal and professional partner for 25 years (they are no longer together), he co-directed "Opportunity Please Knock" in conjunction with

Please see BROWN, Page 14

## BROWN

Continued from Page 5

the Mighty Blackstone Rangers, a notorious Chicago street gang. The show led to a temporary break in gang warfare on Chicago's South Side and earned national attention when the cast was presented on the Smothers Brothers show in 1968.

A few of his shows had reasonably good runs: "Joy '66," in Chicago, followed by "Joy '69," which ran for a total of a year in San Francisco, New York and Chicago. But the only show to make it to Broadway, "Buck White," after a long engagement in San Francisco, opened on Broadway with Muham-

mad Ali in the title role and closed after a week.

More recently Brown wrote a trilogy of verse plays based on the book of Genesis: "In the Beginning," "Raisin' Cain," and "Covenantants." "I'm bringing all this stuff with me to Hollywood," he says. "I still have a lot of scripts waiting for Hollywood and Broadway."

Between plays there has been no shortage of work. His one-man show was acclaimed in Europe and around the United States. In 1982, he hosted "Jumpstreet, the Story of Black Music," a 13-week series on PBS. When the theatrical stages were less than hospitable, there were always the nightclubs. In 1986 he presented "Sliced Apple," a cabaret-style musical, at a jazz

supper club in Lower Manhattan.

There are always the songs, too. Brown has written hundreds. The best known are "Brown Baby" (written in 1950 after the birth of his first son and recorded by Mahalia Jackson, Diahann Carroll and Lena Horne, among others); "Dat Dere," a lyric to a Bobby Timmons jazz instrumental, and possibly his biggest hit, the words to Nat Adderley's "Work Song." He also wrote some lyrics to Miles Davis' "All Blues" but claims to have received no royalties.

At 61, he is philosophical about that big stage hit that still lurks around the corner. "The only problem seems to be," he says, "that Broadway just won't take yes for an answer."

# Down Under's Upbeat New Australian Jazz Orchestra

By LEONARD FEATHER

In the wake of the Bee Gees, "Crocodile Dundee," Mel Gibson and Olivia Newton-John, jazz has just entered the U.S. as the latest significant Aussie export.

It takes the form of the Australian Jazz Orchestra, a specially assembled 13-man ensemble organized under the auspices of the Australian Bicentennial Authority. The band arrived in this country April 6 for dates at the Houston International Festival and clubs in Chicago and New York, gigs at the Smithsonian and in San Francisco and finally tonight's date at Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood.

The band is billed as an elite bunch of the greatest improvising jammens from Down Under. No one is the official leader, but by virtue of seniority the spokesman is Don Burrows, 59, the brilliant multi-reedman known around the world through his many jazz festival appearances.

"We're really excited at having a platform like this for our young talent to be heard," said Burrows.

The band has been together since New Year's Day, when we kicked things off to an enormous audience—over 70,000—at Domain Park in Sydney. We just finished a coast-to-coast tour clear across Australia, and when we leave the States a few days from now we'll continue working back home, winding up at Brisbane's Expo '88 in late June.

Though Burrows and a few of the others have been in this country before, for most of the men this is a new experience. The band is rich in young blood: Trumpeter Warwick

Adler, guitarist Doug DeVries, pianist Paul Grabowsky and trumpeter-trombonist James Morrison are in their early 20s.

Morrison has been hailed as a potential superstar; last year his virtuosic performance at the annual Dick Gibson Jazz Party in Colorado led to an American record deal. Following his appearances here with the AJO he will play concerts in tandem with the Polish pianist Adam Makowicz.

"The only bloke who lives here full time," said Burrows, "is Dave Panichi, the trombonist, from Sydney. He was with Buddy Rich for years and also with Toshiko Akiyoshi. Dale Barlow, who plays sax and flute, has been here too; he recorded in New York with people like Cedar Walton."

Though Australia's jazz associations are relatively unfamiliar to Americans, a group known as the Australian Jazz Quintet toured and recorded extensively in the U.S. in the mid-1950s. Burrows, an admirable clarinetist and arguably Australia's best known jazzman, has made the festival scene from Montreal to Montreux to Newport; his track record includes gold disc awards and numerous Australian magazine poll victories. Queen Elizabeth in 1972 awarded him the MBE for his services to jazz.

Burrows was a main catalyst in establishing his country's first jazz studies program at the Sydney Conservatorium. "I'm the chairman of jazz studies there now," he says, "and some of our most promising students have written music that we've incorporated into the library of the AJO. Thanks to the Conservatorium, there's a lot of wonderful

unknown talent coming up."

When the AJO members are not working as a unit, they tour and record with, among others, such visiting luminaries as Phil Woods, Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson and Cleo Laine. James Morrison by now is a name to

reckon with at home, as he no doubt will be in the States when his first record is completed in the next few months.

Asked whether Morrison's American successes might lead to his settling here, Burrows said: "Not really. James is like me and

Tuesday, April 19, 1988 / Part VI 7

most Australians. We're funny people—we love to travel and visit, but Australia offers too much in terms of life style that we always like to go home again.

"When we go out of the country, we have the opportunity to hear and maybe sometimes play with the players who are our idols. But people like James and me are the outdoor types—we love to be out swimming, fishing or sailing, play-

ing golf or tennis, all those things that are second nature to us.

"A couple of years ago I had Eddie Daniels, the clarinetist, as a house guest. I took him fishing and had him playing tennis for the first time in his life. He couldn't believe that a fellow clarinet player lives like this!

"It's very hard to pass up the sort of life we lead. I guess you could say we Aussies are truly spoiled."

6 Part VI / Saturday, April 30, 1988

## Jazz Reviews

### Shirley Horn Displays Dual Talents at Catalina's

Since her last local nightclub appearance just a year ago, the singer and pianist Shirley Horn has partially emerged from the cocoon of semi-obscurity that had kept her based in Washington, D.C. Her live album, recorded at Vine St. Bar & Grill, enjoyed enough acceptance to provide a needed reminder of her exceptional dual talents.

At Catalina's Bar and Grill, where she opened Thursday, Horn offered a somewhat restrained set, possibly occasioned by the small crowd on hand. As is her custom, she began with two piano solo numbers, flanked by her regular accompanists, Steve Williams on drums and Charles Abels on bass.

"Too Late Now," an old Burton Lane melody, displayed her agile technique and rhythmic creativity, but Abels' overloud electric bass (later subdued) hampered the proceedings. "Emily," given the advantage of an unaccompanied opening passage, went more smoothly, as Horn extracted the rich harmonic essence of the Johnny Mandel melody.

The balance of the show was primarily vocal. Horn's sound—distinctive, unpretentious and subliminally jazz tinged—worked well on "Love Is Here to Stay," though the reason for singing the same set of dated lyrics three times seemed obscure. "Someone to Watch Over Me" suffered from a tempo that dragged almost to a halt.

With Harold Arlen's delightful

"The Eagle and Me" Horn belatedly hit her stride; the up-tempo, cheerful singing and her self-accompaniment worked in a splendid synergy. Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Meditation" alternated between gentle, pleading vocals and a sumptuously chorded piano chorus.

Horn by now may have settled in for performances on the high level of which she has long shown herself capable. She closes Sunday.

—LEONARD FEATHER



Spyro Gyra  
(Jay Beckenstein, center)

## Spyro Gyra...Jazzman With something to say

### A conversation with Jay Beckenstein

Spyro Gyra's latest album is called "Stories Without Words," but don't make the mistake of thinking bandleader Jay Beckenstein is ever at a loss for words. Since Spyro Gyra's debut album came out in 1977, Jay has presided over a success story quite enviable, given the fickle nature of the music business. Through it all, he insists that the main motivation for any musician should be for him or her to trust one's instincts.

"Be true to yourself, and if something you're doing is moving you, that's what's important. You're supposed to be doing what gives you goosebumps. That's what it's all about!"

Proof of this being a "sound philosophy" can be found in the public acceptance of Spyro Gyra, evidenced by the sold-out crowds at major venues across the country and the consistent runs their albums make to the top of the contemporary jazz charts. In fact, nine years after *Downbeat* Magazine grouped them with other bands like Auracle, Seawind and Caldera, only Spyro Gyra remains in existence and indeed thrives.

Beckenstein is most outspoken about how all of this has come to be. He allows that the group is "more my concern than anyone else's; some others (in the group) have slightly different concepts." And so, while he has been the main orchestrator these past several years, he has also arranged for the opening-up of those other concepts, separate from the Spyro Gyra entity.

For instance, Jay is producing two solo LPs featuring two members, to give them their "chance at individual expression." Dave Samuels' record "Living Colors" is due out in April and leans toward a more traditional jazz sound,

Beckenstein reports. Keyboardist Tom Shuman's record, as yet untitled, will be out in the Fall and will be somewhat more electric. Both solo LPs and Spyro Gyra's 12th album, due out in June, are on MCA Records.

In spite of these departures, the individual members of Spyro Gyra are, for the most part, artistically satisfied. Their music together has artistic and intellectual content that moves people and, while it may be in opposition to the "attitudes dictated by trends and what is perceived as 'cool,'" Beckenstein dismisses such blanket criticism. "In the world of music press, critics, etc., there's an awful lot of posturing and politics. Don't listen to that stuff."

"That stuff" is the kind of criticism that condemns an entire style outright. Some of these people, who once criticized Spyro Gyra's "fusion," now pat them on the back for their exciting "contemporary jazz" stylings. As for the criticisms and the general public being influenced by them, Beckenstein feels that much of it was "a mistake. They were writing off hundreds of artists that may actually have pleased them."

And on the subject of pleasure, there's a very good chance that Jay Beckenstein and Spyro Gyra may be in your area soon to play some of the music from their June release, "Rites of Summer," as well as some old favorites... giving you, and themselves, goosebumps.

## New member of note:

Meet Mary Anne... **Mary Anne Randl** is an accomplished singer, entertainer, award-winning lyricist and poet who can add to her list of credits a listing in "Who's Who of American Women."

And just "who" is **Mary Anne Randl**? She describes her style as "Contempo-Classical Jazz." She started her musical career at an early age in New York, her talent blossoming while touring Western Europe.

She has performed at London's Troubadour, originated the Red Carpet Show in Saint Tropez, and entertained in Paris, Rome, Madrid and Munich, singing in all these languages! While in Europe, she was signed as an international recording artist by CBS Records.

Since her return to the States, she has appeared at The Rose Tattoo, the 20th Century Fox Repertory Theatre, L.A.'s Bon Appetit, Perino's Oak Room Bar, (among other local bistros) and performed during the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival.

A versatile and energetic entertainer, her repertoire spans from cabaret to jazz and from R&B to rock, taking her from Greenwich Village to Westwood Village and beyond.

As a songwriter she has collaborated with such jazz greats as Milcho Leviev, Bill Mays and Peter Sprague. Currently, her songs can be heard on the LA Jazz Choir's latest album for Pause Records, "From All Sides." Among her lyrics is the award-winning "Don's Song," a tribute to the great Don Ellis, which can also be heard on two of Free Flight's acclaimed LP's, "Jazz Cassical Union," on Palo Alto Records and "Milcho Leviev and Jim Walker," on Arabesque Records.

We're glad this songbird has landed on a branch of the NAJ!

# Record world Embarrassed by NARAS



by Leonard Feather

In all the years I have been with the Los Angeles Times, no piece I have written has ever drawn a more overwhelmingly enthusiastic reaction than my expression of horror at Jackie Mason's performance on the Grammy awards show in March.

Phone calls, letters, personal contacts with people I ran into at concerts or on the street, added up to countless dozens of approving comments. For those who missed it, here are a few of the remarks I made:

"Somewhere there may be someone who found Mason's act amusing, even enlightening. Perhaps they derived some satisfaction, or reassurance, out of being told that while blacks started fires out of anger, Jews start them for profit motives.

"Mason found himself sinking deeper and deeper into the racial quagmire. He started in with the Jews, then zeroed in on the blacks, eventually bringing in a Pope joke. At one point Mason seemed to be addressing himself to a group of blacks in the front row, among them Quincy Jones, with a series of condescending comments on how far blacks have come. As his patronizing quips became increasingly inept, Jones . . . was doing his damndest to muster a faint smile to show that he was being a good sport.

"Despite some applause, there was no doubt that Mason had bombed on a massive scale . . . It was . . . a throwback to the days when Richard Pryor saw fit to use the word *nigger* in every other sentence . . . Mason is at the same point with the word *Jew* . . .

"Orin Keepnews, the producer who won two Grammys that night for his Thelonious Monk album "The Complete Riverside Recordings," characterized Mason's performance as 'ghastly.'

"Bill Cosby has built the most triumphant career in TV history without embarrassing his own race or any other . . . Mason . . . could learn something by taking a leaf out of his book."

But there is more to the story. On the one hand, Mason's spokesmen claimed his routine was taken out of his Grammy-nominated album (what does that tell us about the NARAS voters' credo of artistic excellence?); on the other hand, parts of the act were all too obviously and awkwardly ad-libbed; in fact, Mason himself later admitted his performance "stunk" and said "If I offended anyone, I certainly didn't intend to."

If Jackie Mason is too unaware of the facts of social life in 1988 to understand what is offensive, surely NARAS, who booked him on the show, ought to have had some idea of what might eventuate. I was more relieved than ever at having quit NARAS in disgust in 1985; my reason then was the total exclusion of any jazz from the three-hour TV show. The general uproar that year was indirectly a cause of the

birth of the NAJ. It was almost no better this year, when aside from a few moments of ad libbing by Joe Williams and Bobby McFerrin (who were onstage mainly as presenters), genuine jazz was again ignored, this time in favor of a long C & W segment.

If the Jackie Mason fiasco proved anything, it assured us that the ineptitude of the Recording Academy is not limited simply to musical gaffes. To the knowledgeable music lover (even to some who themselves have won Grammys) the organization has long been a joke; the foremost objective of the television show clearly is to earn a big rating. On that level, it succeeded; but can anyone find a way to relate that accomplishment, or the dubious achievement of Jackie Mason, to the Academy's original statement of artistic purpose?

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## Pardon our slip!

In our last issue, we ran a review by Paul Baker on Leonard Feather's book, "The Jazz Years: Earwitness to an Era." Unfortunately, the information on both publisher and price was incorrect. Please note the following:

The book is not just published in England, by Quartet Books, but by Da Capo Press, 233 Spring St., New York, N.Y. 10013, 1-800-221-9269. The correct prices are \$25.00 hard cover and \$10.95 paperback.



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# AMERICAN NEWS

Leonard Feather

■ The 1988 Grammy Awards program was fairly typical. During a show that ran slightly over three hours, aside from a brief improvisation by Joe Williams and Bobby McFerrin, there was no live jazz performed. However the announcements of winners in the various jazz categories provided a couple of surprises.

The winners were as follows: Female Jazz Vocal: Diane Schuur, DIANE SCHUUR AND THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA; Male Jazz Vocal: Bobby McFerrin, WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE; Jazz Instrumental Soloist: Dexter Gordon, THE OTHER SIDE OF ROUND MIDNIGHT; Jazz Instrumental Group: Wynton Marsalis, MAR-SALIS STANDARD TIME - VOLUME I; Jazz Instrumental Big Band: The Duke Ellington Orchestra, conducted by Mercer Ellington, DIGITAL DUKE; Jazz Fusion: Pat Metheny Group, STILL LIFE; Traditional Blues: Professor Longhair, HOUSE-PARTY NEW ORLEANS STYLE; Contemporary Blues: Robert Cay, STRONG PERSUADER.

Yusef Lateef, well known for years as a jazz artist, won in the New Age category for his LITTLE SYMPHONY. Bill Holman was a winner for his arrangement of *Take the A Train*, performed in an album by Doc Severinsen's Tonight Show Television Orchestra. Frank Foster was also a winner for his arrangement of *Deadie's Blues* from the Diane Schuur/Count Basie album. Orrin Keepnews was a double winner, as producer of a historical album, and writer of the liner notes, for THELONIOUS MONK - THE COMPLETE RIVERSIDE RECORDINGS.

If Dexter Gordon's somewhat sub-par performance in the ROUND MIDNIGHT album was a surprise, even more remark-



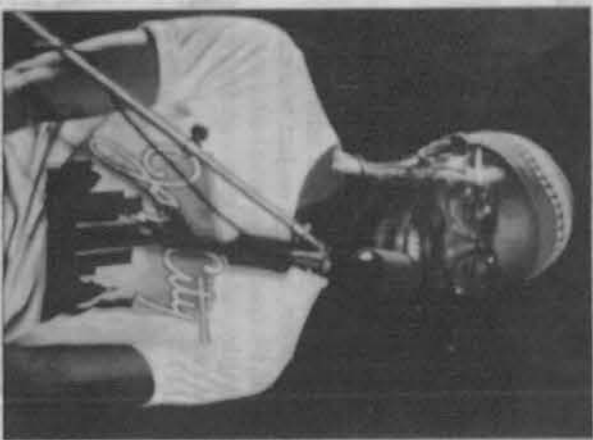
DIANE SCHUUR

able was the Grammy for Best Instrumental Composition, which was divided among Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Billy Higgins for *Call Sheet Blues* on the ROUND MIDNIGHT album. This was not a composition at all in the accepted sense, but rather, as the album notes made quite clear, something thrown together on the spur of the moment completely ad-lib.

■ Miles Davis is recuperating in a New York City hospital from an infection in his leg caused by an injury sustained while touring in France. He is in good condition but is expected to remain hospitalized until early April and has had to cancel concerts in Chicago, Detroit, Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia.

■ Peggy Lee, who has been absent from recording since her illness last year, returned to the studios recently to record a new album, her 60th. Entitled PEGGY SINGS THE BLUES, it will include such standards as *Fine and Mellow*, *Tain't Nobody's Business*, *See See Rider* and *God Bless the Child*.

■ Dizzy Gillespie, while in Hollywood to play a week at Catalina's with his small group, rehearsed with the all star big band



BOBBY MCFERRIN

which he will lead in June at the tenth anniversary Playboy Jazz Festival. Starting in late June he will embark on a European tour with a medium sized group which he refers to as the United Nations Band. In addition to his Cuban drummer, Ignacio Berroa, it will include Paquito D'Rivera, on saxes and flute, as well as James Moody and Sam Rivers. Airo and Flora Purim, from Brazil, will also be in the band, along with the West Indian pianist Monty Alexander and a Puerto Rican percussionist. Slide Hampton will write some of the arrangements.

■ Charlie Ventura, the 71 year old saxophonist who at one time led the most popular small group in jazz, has been reported in desperate health after he was found lying in a near comatose state on the floor of his Atlantic City apartment. Reportedly discharged from the hospital in late February, Ventura is still ill and inactive. Though he won various Down Beat, Esquire and Metronome polls in the late 1940s, he has been playing only occasionally during the past decade. Friends are invited to send donations to his fellow musician and old friend, Count Lewis, at 2915 Sunset Ave., Atlantic City, New Jersey 08401.

Photographs by Tim Motion

## JAZZ REVIEW Tenor Saxophonist Woodard a Discovery at Comeback Inn

By LEONARD FEATHER

Currently celebrating the 15th anniversary of his Comeback Inn, owner Will Raabe planned to bring to an old favorite, the saxophonist Rudolph Johnson, as Wednesday's attraction. Johnson called in sick, but the musician he sent as a replacement, Berkeley Woodard, was a more than adequate substitute. In fact, he turned out to be a serendipitous discovery.

Like Johnson, Woodard works regularly as a member of the Ray Charles orchestra. Leading a quartet, however, he was afforded an opportunity to display an improvisational personality that could hardly have surfaced so effectively under big band conditions.

A tenor soloist of the post-John Coltrane generation, Woodard reflected the hard-driving sound and

style of the early Trane, with a touch of Johnny Griffin's "tough tenor" approach here and there.

As if to emphasize the former resemblance, much of the material consisted of tunes that Coltrane either wrote or performed. "Blue Train," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," Joe Henderson's "Recurring Me" and the Monk blues "Straight No Chaser." His full-blooded blowing was supported by an admirable and stylistically versatile pianist, Bill Henderson, whose modal moments evoked memories of the early McCoy Tyner.

The bassist, Jeff Littleton, is yet another example of the profusion of contemporary masters of the upright bass. Completing the group was Peter Hillman, who contributed emphatically to the group's keeling.

## Royal Performance at Hollywood Holiday Inn

The Sunday matinee by the quartet of alto saxophonist Marshal Royal at the Hollywood Holiday Inn was more than just another jam session. It was a unique and delightful innovation.

Too often, jazz is performed after dark, in small, often windowless rooms. At the instigation of the Los Angeles Jazz Society, a series of champagne buffet jazz brunches is being offered in Hollywood's only revolving rooftop restaurant.

The main advantage is an airy ambience conducive to optimum performance.

The concept of ballads with the subtle and spectacular views with the blues is in sharp contrast to

normal nightclub conditions. (There is a reduced rate, no brunch option.)

A seat near the musicians may be an illusion, since by set's end one may be halfway across the room (the bandstand is in a stationary area); however, the sound is clear from every angle, and the tables move almost imperceptibly at about one revolution per hour.

Royal responded to these conditions with one of the most spirited performances he has offered in years. Though his choice of notes may suggest Denny Carter at times, his elegant sound is closer to that of Johnny Hodges. After cruising easily through "Willow Weep for Me" and a loosely flowing "Pardido," he jumped into "I Want to Be Happy" in a *molto agitato* mood marked by staccato notes and syncopations.

Coincidentally, all his colleagues were fellow Count Basie alumni, though of a later vintage. Royal was the band's lead alto player from 1951-1970. John Clayton was Basie's bassist from 1977-79, and drummer Greg Field, a 1980-83 sideman, will rejoin the band shortly. Even Gerald Wiggins once substituted at the piano on a Basie record date. The three sidemen provided the brand of mainstream rhythmic pulse best suited to the Royal manner.

The Holiday Inn brunches (from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.) will continue through the summer, offering what can literally be called a moving experience. Next Sunday's attraction is the Ross Tompkins Trio.

—LEONARD FEATHER

5-13-88

5/3/88

# The "Golden Feather Awards"

by Leonard Feather

Jazz has been through some apocalyptic developments during the past two decades. It has found new courses to chart, given rise to new related idioms such as fusion and New Age and grown immensely in the number of men and women studying it at colleges and performing it at concert halls and festivals worldwide.

A glance at the first "Golden Feather Awards" column, which appeared in the pages of the Los Angeles Times Jan. 2, 1966, points up some of these changes. Four of the recipients have left us: Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Earl Hines. Others such as Oscar Peterson and Paul Horn (honored for their 1965 compositions), Joe Williams and pianist-psychiatrist Doctor Zeitlin, are still here and active.

**MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR:** My choice is a jazzman who lived for 34 years and has been dead almost that long: Charlie Parker. Odd though it may seem to select a long-gone artist for this honor the shadow of Bird loomed larger than ever this year over much of the jazz world.

His innovations are still reflected in the work of young musicians; a splendid hour long documentary devoted to him was just released. 'Bird', a major motion picture produced and directed by Clint Eastwood, is nearing completion at Warner Brothers with Forest Whitaker in the title role.

**ALBUM OF THE YEAR:** Choosing a single album, it seemed to me, was an impossible choice given the hundreds of new releases and almost as many reissues, most of them on CD. I passed.

**BAND OR GROUP OF THE YEAR:** The American Jazz Orchestra. Unfortunately, this repertory group is confined to New York. Its library of master works by many of jazz history's great composer/

arrangers was presented on a limited but impressive basis in a retrospective held during the New York Jazz Festival.

The group has made only one album **CENTRAL CITY SKETCHES** (Music Masters) with Benny Carter playing his own compositions, not well recorded but first-rate in content.



CHARLIE PARKER

**SINGER OF THE YEAR:** Shirley Horn. In another egregious example of being in the wrong place for a long time, the Washington-based Horn was ignored by the record industry moguls until a visit to Los Angeles enabled her to tape a superb live album at the Vine Street & Grill. She is not only a singer of charm and conviction but also an exceptional pianist.

**TREND OF THE YEAR:** A return to respectability, and acceptability, by mainstream jazz; in a significant move the trade magazine *Billboard* began listing albums in this category separately on its best-seller charts, to avoid the confusion with fusion. Less noticeable but important was the trombone trend. J.J. Johnson quit the studios, formed a band and went on the road.

Bill Watrous and Dan Barrett led their own groups on recent albums; Mike Fahn of Los Angeles carried the banner for the valve trombone, and Jimmy Cheatham, playing bass trombone, recorded with his blues band. John Fedchock is a key soloist in the still active Woody Herman Herd.

HERMAN LEONARD

Other trends noted by my colleagues: "The growing expansion of the territory of jazz - geographically, aesthetically and spiritually". "Bands led by Chick Corea, John Scofield and Michael Brecker are repaving the way for fusion and making it a more viable form of expression". The "reissuing of many significant mainstream jazz sessions on CD - by such firms as Blue Note, Polygram and Fantasy - replete with bonus tracks, providing a first and welcome hearing of previously unavailable gems", and "the first signs that young bandleaders are attempting to work with electronics and contemporary styles - from hip-hop to reggae and other Caribbean idioms - without sacrificing improvisational daring."

**BLUE NOTES OF THE YEAR:** As ever, it was a time not only for rejoicing but for regretting. Gone are Irving Ashby, Eddie Durham, Victor Feldman, Freddie Green, John Hammond, Woody Herman, Alfred Lion, Phil Moore, Turk Murphy, Jaco Pastorius, Frank Rehak, Bola Sete, Slam Stewart, Maxine Sullivan, Booty Wood and too many more to list.

Still, a generation coming up fast reminds us of the utter unfeasability of writing off jazz as a moribund art form. The average age of the Terence Blanchard/Donald Harrison Quintet is 24; the groups led by Wynton & Branford Marsalis are only a year or two older. To all who feel the spirit, a happy and enriching New Year; may the jazz life be great in '88.

May 1 '88

# The Business Side of Making Music

By LEONARD FEATHER

**B**OULDER, Colo.—How do you reconcile the irresistible force of music with the immovable object of the profit motive?

This perennial problem was brought into focus here recently

during the 41st annual Conference on World Affairs, for which 105 experts came from all over the world to the University of Colorado campus. Among the 183 discussions during the week—intermingled among panels and plenary sessions

dealing with subjects heavy (Nicaragua, Iran, drugs, nuclear war) and light ("Is Safe Sex Fun?" "The Jewish Princess and the Bum-bum")—were nine music events. One of the most provocative panels was "Technology, Vision and Ethics in the Record Business."

The principal panelists were Dave and Don Grusin, both graduates of this campus.

Coincidentally, Don Grusin, a late bloomer in music, was inspired in the early 1960s by a class on contemporary social issues conducted by Prof. Howard Higman, who conceived the conference concept in 1948 and who, since retiring a couple of years ago, has devoted most of his time to planning it. Don Grusin earned an MA in economics, taught it at a university in Guadalajara and continued as a teacher until, at age 34, he moved to Los Angeles and what he now calls his true love, music.

"I never thought much about ethics and greed," Don Grusin said. "Growing up in the '40s in Colorado, I saw my father working up to 14 hours a day as a jeweler in his store. You had to be very ethical; it was the only way to do business. But as I began studying economics, reading Adam Smith and all the great theorists, I realized that capitalism is based on an internal desire to be somewhat greedy."

Not until he followed in his brother's footsteps ("I had figured



DONNA ZWISG

*Don Grusin: "I saw my father working as a jeweler. You had to be very ethical; it was the only way to do business."*

*Dave Grusin: "The record companies are in a profit position before the artist is. Is this an ethical way to do business?"*

one musician in the family was enough") did Grusin come face to face with the harsh realities of that notorious contradiction in terms, the music business.

He enjoyed expanding his horizons, moving from jazz to country and Western, backing pop singers and adapting to the studio life, but was frustrated by the callous attitudes of the businessman.

"I had two traumatic experiences. About 10 years ago several musicians who had left Sergio Mendes because they were unhappy with the money came to me and suggested a partnership. It sounded like fun; we rehearsed, found two fine singers and got a record deal with Lou Adler of Ode Records. We called the group Kitchen and we really did cook."

With Adler, the architect of Carole King, behind them, they pooled their resources (mostly Ad-

ler's money but some of their own) to the tune of \$60,000, buying band uniforms and staging an elaborate showcase. A week later, Adler announced that he had sold his record company to Epic, a Columbia subsidiary.

"We thought, 'Wow! Now we're really in the big time.' We adjusted to leaving our families and going on tour. But then the bottom fell out—Epic decided not to release the record," Grusin said.

"We were dumbfounded by the casualness with which they reacted to us. They just said, 'Well, it's a business decision. It's not worth our while to work on it.' It was an emotional as well as a financial trauma."

Almost no better was Grusin's experience with Friendship, the band he formed with Lee Ritenour, Ernie Watts and others. "This could have been the beginning of what Spyro Gyra turned out to be. About \$75,000 went into the project, and Elektra Records promised us an ad campaign. Well, they took one ad in Billboard and that was it. We played a New York club and a couple of other dates, but their devil-take-the-hindmost attitude essentially killed the group.

(Representatives at Epic and Elektra say that people responsible for the above projects are no longer with the company. Adler could not be contacted by Calendar's deadline.)

□

Dave Grusin, seven years Don's senior and wearer of many hats (his 30-plus film scores have earned four Oscar nominations and he was among the first to plunge into the U.S. compact-disc market full scale, with his own GRP Records) takes a more pragmatic view, but his experiences too stem from disillusionment.

"We have to understand how the record industry works," he said. "The companies are like banks; their clients are the artists, whose sales have to recoup the companies' investment. Say the artist gets 10% of the retail price. The record

# Johnny Frigo Ready to Fiddle Around

By LEONARD FEATHER

**I**t took jazz violinist Johnny Frigo awhile but he is finally a hit—at age 71. Why did national recognition come so late? Frigo laughs and says, "Maybe I wasn't ready." There is a more realistic reason: He has enjoyed a long and very successful career in his native Chicago, working in many other areas.

"I guess I'm an unusual individual; I have so many interests," says Frigo, who performs tonight through Sunday at the LoA. "I play bass, I paint pictures; I play golf; I've done a lot of jingle work, I've written music and lyrics and arrangements for my wife, Brittny Browne, who's an actress and singer. I just kept making a good living, but people were bugging me: 'Anybody can play bass; why don't you do something with your fiddle?'"

Except for one album on Mercury (in which his backup group included guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown, who will be with him at the LoA), Frigo never bothered to take advantage of his talent on violin. For five years he played bass in a group called the Soft Winds, with Herb Ellis and the pianist Lou Carter; together they composed "Detour Ahead," which was recorded by Billie Holiday and became a jazz standard.

He practically had to be bludgeoned into the violin initiative. "A feller at Universal Studios called me and said, 'Be here Thursday night at 8, and bring your violin.' I thought he meant for a jingle, but he said, 'No, I've booked you for your own album; you've been sitting on your talent all these years and now you're gonna go in there and do something about it.' So I did an album, which isn't out yet.



LISA GENSEN

"I have so many interests," says violinist Johnny Frigo.

"Then one night I was playing at the Conrad Hilton—you know, strolling violins, that kind of thing—and after work I went across the street to hear Herb Ellis, Ray Brown and Monty Alexander. I took my violin with me because I didn't want to leave it in the car. They said, 'Why don't you sit in?' I told them I'd hardly worked any jazz gigs lately, but they insisted, so I played two tunes."

A month later Frigo was invited by Brown to fly out to Los Angeles for a live recording session at the LoA. Frigo's guest solo work on four cuts of the album ("Triple Treat II" on Concord Jazz) caused such a stir that he was invited to return as a leader in his own right. He will follow it with a date in Chicago (with Ellis and Brown) at the Jazz Showcase.

As a violinist, he once shared

practice sessions with the legendary Eddie South, but names Joe Venuti as his main influence. "But I think I play more in a horn-like style. I like to dig in powerfully and create moods with my violin."

Is it his versatility that has held Frigo back? Or his modesty? A recent incident suggests an answer.

"I was invited by Monty to play with him at a Dick Gibson jazz concert in Denver. Well, the next day the headline in the newspaper read 'Jazz Violinist, 71, Melts Hearts of Crowd at Paramount,'" he said.

"I was so embarrassed. Here I was sharing a show with these giants I've heard about all my life—Sweets Edison, Peanuts Hucko, Flip Phillips, Al Grey—and I was the one who got the attention. I called all those guys the next day and apologized profusely."





JAMES GILL

Ben Sidran: "Having to wear earphones in the studio is a problem. You hear what's going on in a totally unnatural way."

companies make more, maybe a buck or two per record, so they are in a profit position before the artist is. It's totally confusing to me, and I've been involved in it for 20 years. Is this an ethical way to do business?

"My partner, Larry Rosen, and I teamed up in 1976 to form Grusin/Rosen Productions. We produced for United Artists, then spent five years putting projects together for Arista. But there were so many conflicts between our musical interests and their values that in 1983 we decided to form our own label. At GRP, Larry Rosen has been a visionary in terms of our potential scope; but it's not easy to predicate everything on our past track record. I have to be concerned about practical matters like cash flow and overgrowth.

"We also realize now, by hindsight, something else we should have thought of years ago. The older record contracts were de-

signed to encompass LPs, singles, cassettes or any medium known or unknown to come.' That means that any advantages the record companies may derive from CDs or from the digital audio tapes that will be on the market here eventually—they're already available in Japan and Europe—will not be shared by the artists."

Ben Sidran, who like Dave Grusin is a multiple hat-wearer (composer, pianist, singer, NPR radio personality, author, producer) also focused on the technological issue.

"There are hidden agendas in every innovation. Records went from six minutes on a 78 disc to 30 on a 10-inch LP, 40 on a 12-inch

LP, now it's an hour or more on a CD. Well, you can't always come up with that much valid music; you may be obliged to put on extra material of less value just to enable the companies to gross more money.

"Look how many record companies today are going into the vaults to repackage jazz classics. The musicians probably were paid \$20 union scale for three hours, with no royalty. The cost of putting out these CDs is a couple of bucks, the public is paying \$12 or more, and it all goes to the businessmen; the artists are totally frozen out."

Another issue discussed by the panel was multitracking. Sidran

said, "Rudy van Gelder, the engineer who has helped create thousands of great jazz records, told me he thinks the worst thing that ever happened to records was the invention of multitrack recording. After the musicians have gone home, the engineer can rebalance the music any way he likes, maybe eliminate a valuable solo or generally treat the music without any regard for the artist's considerations.

"Having to wear earphones in the studio is another problem. You hear what's going on in a totally unnatural way... you're forced to manipulate your art for the technology. How does that help self-

expression?"

Whatever the answer to this or other questions raised by this delicate issue, the colloquy here was a healthy catharsis for the participants and an often enlightening experience for the audience. Moreover, it was impossible to avoid one upbeat conclusion: No matter how often the artist in our society may suffer frustrations, and regardless of the aborted projects and the constant evolution of new technical problems, somehow or other, good music, even great music, will continue to be provided for posterity. □

6 Part VI / Monday, May 2, 1988

### JAZZ REVIEW

## Cooper, Stewart at Alfonse's

By LEONARD FEATHER

Bob Cooper, the tenor saxophonist, heard Friday at Alfonse's, is an exponent of a genre that might be classified as local jazz. Most often it consists of mainstream music, performed by artists who play commercial jobs by day and indulge their creative fantasies at night.

Cooper's long career as a studio performer has not atrophied his inventive impulses. Taking a tune like "Stella by Starlight," which has all the surprise value of a three-piece suit, Cooper tried it on for size, tossed it away after one

chorus and adopted a disguise that sublimated the familiar chord pattern with spontaneity and spirit.

It was still more rewarding to hear him deal with "Nobody Else but Me," a Jerome Kern song with challenging harmonic contours. Next came a fast blues, with a theme in two-bar breaks, that reflected Cooper's funk-tinged affection for the ancient 12-bar formula.

Tom Ranier on piano, Chuck Berghofer on bass and Mike Whited on drums offered impeccable support.

Local jazz is also vocal jazz. Yvette Stewart, a truly exceptional singer with a musician's improvisa-

tional feeling, took over for the latter part of the set. After celebrating Duke Ellington's birthday by singing "In a Mellotone" (with totally unfamiliar lyrics), she dipped into her Dinah Washington bag with "Teach Me Tonight," then showed her bebop passport by combining Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" with the song on whose chords it was based, "Whispering."

She concluded with Jon Hendricks' lyrics to the blues "Centerpiece," bringing to it the same exhilarating freedom that had marked her entire performance. Compared to this very hip lady, Diane Schuur sounds like Dinah Shore. Whoever said there were no real jazz singers coming up evidently had not heard Stewart.

Cooper returns to Alfonse's May 13.

Los Angeles Times

S/7

## Pop Music Reviews

### Love's Ups, Downs With Marlene VerPlanck

If Marlene VerPlanck can sing a paean to a soup, a soap, a sauce or a cigarette, she can certainly do even better justice to a Berlin, a Kern, a Bacharach or a Porter.

The New York jingle queen, who has been going public with increasing frequency of late, turned her first-ever Los Angeles performance, Wednesday at the Cinegrill, into a conducted tour, telling a song-by-song story of the vicissitudes of a love affair, complete with brief narrative links, using Johnny

Mandel's "A Time For Love" as bookends.

It's a near-perfect act for this attractive, small-featured woman with her short-cut red hair and sparkling white gown. Her professionalism never sacrifices emotional depth. She respects each song while feeling free, here and there, to add a modulation upward, suspend a line or toss in a wordless ending. The two decades of studio work have not limited her personal appeal; her movements add a gen-

tle visual charm.

It helps, of course, to have a husband who writes all the arrangements; in fact, Billy VerPlanck also co-wrote two of the songs. His wife displayed unerring sensitivity in dealing with a lyric, whether the outrageously witty "Come Back to Me" by Alan Jay Lerner or the cool and the charming "Nice and Easy" (by the Bergmans, who were in the room) or John LaTouche's "Taking a Chance on Love," in which she took melodic chances with the Vernon Duke melody.

Toward the end the premise wore a little thin, and one wondered whether it might have been wise to include a few songs without narration or thematic bond. But then came "A Time for Love" and this delightful hour was over. Joe Harnell at the piano, backed only by a bassist, Steve LeFever, did justice to each of the neatly packaged arrangements.

Every singer in town owes it to himself/herself to study the artistry of VerPlanck, whose total confidence and composure could provide a role model for many. She continues tonight, resumes Wednesday and closes next Saturday.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# Whatever Happened to the American Standard?

By LEONARD FEATHER

Almost since the dawn of the 20th Century, the *lingua franca* most vividly illustrative of our social attitudes as a nation, our *modus vivendi*, has been the popular song. Through its lyrics we can detect beliefs and fads and

fashions; its melodies reflect our aesthetic values, for better or worse.

Is the American popular song still a durable yardstick, as it has been since the days of player pianos and primitive Victrolas? Or is it in danger of irrelevance and eventual extinction?

This was one of the topics dealt with at the recent Conference on World Affairs at the University of Colorado. Johnny Mandel, the Oscar-winning composer of "The Shadow of Your Smile" and of countless motion picture scores

5/8/88



KARL GEDRING

*Johnny Mandel: Today's tunes have to sound contemporary.*

(starting with the jazz score for "I Want to Live" in 1958) came up with the idea for this discussion.

"The question is not whether popular songs are in danger of extinction; obviously there will always be songs that are popular at some point," he said. "The issue should be: Is the American popular standard song in danger of dying out?"

"The standard song is one that outlives its original life and is covered by many artists. Back in the early decades of this century, when recording was in its infancy, people had pianos in their homes; they could read music, and if they liked a song they'd buy the sheet music and play it themselves.

"When recordings became popular, customers would go into the store and ask for a song—they didn't care that much whose version it was. During the swing era the requests were more specific. People didn't just want 'Begin the Beguine,' they wanted Artie Shaw's 'Begin the Beguine.' But the songs still had a long life and continued to be covered by other artists.

"The music publishers in those days controlled the business; at their instigation, innumerable recordings would be made of the songs that became standards, and the publishers kept half, even two-thirds of the income. But then in the mid-'60s a new phenomenon arose: with the era of the Beatles and the Stones, you saw the rise of the conglomerate: the composer-lyricist-performer-publisher. The artists were saying to themselves, why shouldn't I have 100% of the pie?"

"Suddenly, record companies didn't cover songs anymore—we were into the era of the disposable song, which after a short time is discarded like Kleenex."

The point is essentially valid; while it is true that there has been a substantial supply of high-quality songs by the Dylans and the Simons and the Beatles, their dissemination has become very limited. "People want to sell each product real fast, get it out of there and find a new one," Mandel said. "In some cases you can understand why; you don't hear too many people covering 'Why Don't We Do It in the Road.'"

Sadly, many fine songs have been neglected along with the lesser breed. According to Mandel, the standard in the old sense—Cole Porter, Berlin, Rodgers & Hart—has almost ceased to exist. A plausible explanation was offered by Ben Sidran, the record producer and composer who took part in the panel discussion.

"A song propagates life; it is the product of a certain cultural environment. We don't have dinosaurs anymore. Why? Because the climate shifted—maybe a meteor struck the Earth, or a volcano blocked out the sun. By the same token, the conditions for songs as we've known them have blocked them out."

Clearly, there are exceptions. A few years ago, against the wishes of her advisers, Linda Ronstadt recorded her now-famous album of pop standards, with Nelson Riddle's arrangements. The spectacular sales led to sequels by Ronstadt and a few others; most recently the use of an old Louis Armstrong record on the sound track of "Good Morning, Vietnam" swam against the current and put "It's a Wonderful World" on the charts. But these

are almost freak events.

Movie sound tracks, in fact, have become increasingly rare sources of songs designed for posterity, as another panelist, the lyricist and author Gene Lees, pointed out.

"It's important to remember where the standard songs came from," said Lees, whose best-known works include Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Quiet Nights" and Bill Evans' "Waltz for Debby." "A great number stemmed from Broadway shows, films, nightclub revues, or, later on, television. What has happened to theater and movies has naturally influenced the course of American popular music.

"To speak from a devil's advocate viewpoint, if I were a Hollywood producer today, making 'Top Gun' or anything designed demographically for the 14-to-30 age group, and if it's a story about people in that age group leading contemporary lives, why would I score that film in any other way than with so-called contemporary rock 'n' roll hit song music?"

"Sure, there are plenty of pop songs being written. Anything we're watching on MTV has to be categorized that way. I suppose [Michael Jackson's] 'Bad' is a contemporary pop song—but will it have a life beyond its original use? There have been fewer and fewer of these during the past 20 years."

It is possible, without selective reporting, to draw an informative analogy here. Among today's "Hot 100" one finds "Where Do Broken Hearts Go?," "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car," "Naughty Girls Need Love Too" and "Da Butt." How many of these will be remembered during the next five decades?

There is, however, an upside to the story. Johnny Mandel's first hit was a movie song, "Emily," from "The Americanization of Emily." Later came "A Time for Love," from "An American Dream"; "Close Enough for Love," from "Agatha"; "Suicide Is Painless," the theme from "MASH," and others of motion-picture origin.

"Given the nature of what's required for so many film scores today, however," Mandel says, "movie writing has become a nightmare. If I had to make a choice between doing movie scores and just writing songs, I'd simply make my living writing songs," Mandel said.

"During the past 20 years we've been going through the dark ages for the American popular standard; but I'm finding more acceptance now for my songs than I ever did before.

"In fact, I see a light at the end of the tunnel. I have to be optimistic—what choice do I have?" □

## JAZZ

## An Upbeat Berlin Sampler

By LEONARD FEATHER

"ALWAYS." Various artists. Verve 835 450-2.

There are golden moments, most notably the long "Cheek to Cheek" cut, sung first by Armstrong, then by Fitzgerald with Armstrong providing trumpet and vocal obbligatos, and their magnificent prestissimo duet on "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm." Armstrong is also in superb form on "Top Hat."

"White Christmas" is assigned to Fitzgerald; Bing Crosby's only track is an amiable "Heat Wave." Fred Astaire's "Puttin' on the Ritz" and "Change Partners" find him in elegant jazz company, with solos by Oscar Peterson, Flip Phillips and Charlie Shavers. A similar band backs Billie Holiday on "Remember" (sung not as what the annotator calls "an artful waltz," but in a casual 4/4 readout) and on a more successful "How Deep Is the Ocean."

Dinah Washington's "Say It Isn't So" is marked by her acidly personal imprimatur; contrary to the listing (did anyone listen to these sides before reissuing them?), Cannonball Adderley and Junior Mance are not featured soloists.

The Vaughan and Eckstine cuts have their value, despite being saddled by sometimes glutinous string arrangements; their "Easter Parade" duet comes off best.

Perhaps because of a limit to available material, the project is slightly flawed. However, for the more felicitous moments, this CD is a four-star package; but the LP version, Verve 835 450-1, in which four of the best items are missing, rates 3½ stars.

"THE IRVING BERLIN SONGBOOK." Elisabeth Welch. Verve Digital 835 491-2. Elisabeth Welch, an American singer who has lived in London since the early 1930s,



A celebration of Irving Berlin for his 100th birthday; through the years, from left, it's Berlin in the 1920s, 1946 and 1973.

sings only four of the same songs heard in the above anthology; moreover, five of her songs are performed as waltzes, which renders this set more in character for Berlin. Her voice is small and the treatments are unpretentious, yet she captures with total charm the magic of Berlin's best works, from the grandly oscillating "Shaking the Blues Away" and the cute corn of "Spooky Okums" (written in 1913) to the brief but poignant "Supper Time." The backing, by piano and/or a British band, is adequate. The capper is that Welch, who made her recording debut in 1928 and was returned to the U.S. only briefly (she was in "Black Broadway" in 1980) is now

ing Hyman's potential warmth. Switching to organ, or adding bass and drums here and there, would have helped. 3 stars.

"ELLA IN ROME: THE BIRTHDAY CONCERT." Ella Fitzgerald. Verve 835-454-2. Released now for the first time, this celebration of Fitzgerald's 40th birthday (30 years ago last month) is a rewarding reminder of our ultimate jazz singer in the prime of her time. A full hour of Fitzgerald handling Handy, Ellington, Gershwin (a profoundly heartfelt "I Loves You Porgy"), Rodgers & Hart and Arlen and Porter, with felicitous support by Lou Levy's trio (replaced for the jubilant scat-in finale by the Oscar Peterson Quartet), it leaves no conceivable room for improvement. (You even get Norman Granz announcing in Italian.) The CD has 16 songs, the LP 12; either way, it's 5 stars.

"TAKE 6." Take 6. Reprise 25670-1. On no account should "Take 6" be omitted from any purchase list. This amazing sextet (originally a quartet, formed in 1980 at a small black Christian school in Alabama) sings, entirely a cappella, hymns and traditional spirituals (but with a powerful jazz orientation), along with a few originals by members: Claude V. McKnight, director and baritone; Mark Kibble, chief arranger, and Mervyn Warren. Blend, beat and harmony are nonpareil. You may have heard "David and Goliath," "Get Away Jordan" and "Milky-

White Way" before, but never like this. 5 stars.

"FACE THE MUSIC" A CENTURY OF IRVING BERLIN." Dick Hyman. Music Masters MMD 61147 A. Despite the inclusion of six songs not heard in the other Berlin sets ("Lady of the Evening," "The Best Thing for You Is Me," "How About Me?" etc.), this is one of the more expendable outings by one of America's most indispensable pianists. There is some super-stride in "Russian Lullaby," humor in the downward modulations on "Cheek to Cheek," but cuts like "Easter Parade" sound perfunctory, lack-

ing Hyman's potential warmth. Switching to organ, or adding bass and drums here and there, would have helped. 3 stars.

"LIVE JAZZ." Nancy Kelly. Amherst 93317. In a mixed debut, Kelly sings nine pop/jazz standards to a background that's mainly jazz, with fusion touches. She's best on such ballads as "Love Man," weakest when her intonation falters on the up tempos. In "twisted" she distorts Wardell Gray's melody, then lapses onto a meaningless monologue and senseless scatting. Worst, on "Yesterdays" she mangles the inviolable Jerome Kern melody line in the second eight bars. Why didn't producer Jeff Tyzik spot this? Ernie Watts' sax solos are extensive and valuable. Kelly, using her range and power more carefully, could be a talent to keep in mind. 2½ stars.

JEAN-LOUP LONGNON & HIS NEW YORK ORCHESTRA. Atlantic 81829. An oddity; this Frenchman, visiting New York, manages to secure the release, on a major label, of an expensive project involving a 20 piece orchestra; meanwhile some of the best (and regularly organized) American bands are having trouble getting recorded. This would be acceptable if Longnon were an exceptional talent, but listen to his scat vocal on "Torrade," a shameless take-off of Clark Terry. Nor is his trumpet more than competent. He is a capable composer-arranger who uses flutes well and adds tuba for body. Ted Nash, credited as co-leader, almost steals the show, such

as it is; with his alto sax on "Jazz a Paris" and the jaunty, tongue-in-cheek Royal Garden Blues." 3 stars.

## Video Reviews

"FIDDLER'S DREAM." Claude Williams. MT Productions. MTP 1285-1. Fame escaped Williams when he quit the Basie band just before it hit the big time. Born in 1908, originally a guitarist but later well known as a violinist, he is seen at home in Kansas City playing, reminiscing, teaching, singing the blues. The tributes (by Billy Taylor, Big Joe Turner, Stephane Grappelli, Andy Kirk and others) are eloquent, but take up too much time vis a vis the performance in this too short (23½ minutes) attempt to capture the essence of an underrated artist. 2½ stars.

"CONFESSIN' THE BLUES." Jay McShann. MT Productions. MTP 1286-2. As long as the camera and mike are on McShann's piano and blues singing, the screen lights up vividly. Sittin in with a student band at UC San Diego (with Jimmy Cheatham conducting), or on location in Kansas City or Toronto, McShann is a timeless delight; but the numerous tributes are neither articulate nor informative enough, and the examination of Kansas City in the Pendergrast era is superficial. The premise of seeing McShann through the eyes of a fictitious writer seems contrived. It would have been better to devote the entire 35 minutes to the subject himself in concert. 2½ stars.

6 Part VI / Friday, June 3, 1988

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Ruth Brown Headlines at Cinegrill

By LEONARD FEATHER

Returning to the Cinegrill Wednesday, Ruth Brown referred to herself as "the oldest rhythm and blues singer in the world." While the point was debatable, the main issue is not the age of this soul survivor, but the talent.

Brown, 60, has long since earned her black belt in blues belting. That she can still bring passion to her blockbuster record hits of the early 1950s—"Teardrops From My Eyes," "Mama He Treats Your Daughter Mean"—soon became apparent. Her contagious way with this material is somewhat fuller and darker now, leaning at times toward an overkill of volume; in fact, some of her more satisfying moments were provided in the warmly engaging treatment of such ballads as "What a Wonderful World."

Despite the encore-milking reaction of a crowd that lapped up every syllable, her show left considerable room for adjustment. For openers, there was an inexplicable appearance by a tall, bald man in a three-piece suit, Carl Fisher, who sang a conventional mishmash of blues lyrics followed by a drearily paced ballad that included an attempt to imitate Billie Holiday.

Brown's own performance was marked by similar lethargy as in a series of five songs, dedicated to other singers, all in roughly the same downbeat tempo. Individually, they would have been fine—in particular "Since I Fell for You" and "Good Morning Heartache" were superb—but the need for a change of pace became increasingly evident as the medley dragged on.

Before her encore, Brown introduced her son Ron Jackson, a personable young man who sang a pop song very pleasantly. All three singers in this protracted performance were splendidly backed by Bobby Forrester, Brown's musical director since 1972 and a nonpareil blues organist; Bill Williams on guitar, Clarence (Bootsie) Bean on drums and the ever-dependable Red Holloway on sax.

The show continues through Saturday, resuming Wednesday through June 11.

# George Shearing: Onward and Upward

By LEONARD FEATHER

George Shearing, the British-born pianist who recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of his American residency, has reached almost every prestigious peak to which an artist can aspire, but he is not ready to relax on his laurels.

It is not enough that he has earned countless awards for his contributions to jazz, plus several honorary degrees and respect from his peers as pop and symphony performer and composer ("Lullaby of Birdland"). Reluctant to slow down, the 68-year-old Shearing is enthusiastically active in more musical areas than ever.

A recent visit to Hollywood to play at the Vine St. Bar & Grill found him in singularly good spirits, playing with unbridled verve, happy with his new bassist, the Canadian virtuoso Neil Swainson, and looking forward to a year of new challenges. Some of the items on the Shearing agenda:

**Shearing and Shakespeare—**"About three years ago I set three Shakespeare sonnets and two Shakespeare songs for a choral concert in St. Paul, Minn.—just me and the bass player and 38 voices. Now I want to amplify that idea sixfold, adding enough music to make an entire album, some of it jazz oriented, some in the [Shakespearean] tradition."

**Shearing and the symphony—**"I still do as many of these dates as I can fit into the schedule. I have a date set with the Cincinnati Symphony, for which Ray Brown will play bass. Mel Torme and I are doing a Gershwin concert at the Hollywood Bowl Aug. 26 and 27 with the Philharmonic; also I have two big concert tours with Mel booked for 1989." (The Shearing-Torme partnership yielded two Grammy-winning albums on Concord Jazz Records in 1982 and '83.)

**Shearing and singing—**"I sent Carl Jefferson of Concord Jazz a review of my singing at the Carlyle in New York, but Jeff doesn't want me to sing on records, even though I've done a couple of vocals that I thought came out pretty well. I know I can interpret a lyric, and I've got my intonation under good control, with Ellie's help." (Shearing's wife, Ellie, is a professional group singer.)

**Shearing and sidemen—**"We're going to the Maksoud Plaza in São Paulo [Brazil] for two weeks in June. Don Thompson will rejoin me on bass and is writing some band charts. It's kind of exciting, because there will be a 12-piece band; so Don can put in some Gil Evans-type sounds and some Brazilian rhythm. Also, it's only one show a night, five days a week, so I'll find it relaxing."

Shearing recently reinstated a major reunion when Joe Pass, the virtuoso guitarist, played with him



JAMES PEASE

George Shearing: "Still hellbent on doing a Dixieland album."

at Blues Alley in Washington. After touring with the Shearing Quintet in 1965-66, Pass went on to become a world-class solo recitalist. "We're planning to do some more things together—in fact, I hope Joe may record with me."

**Shearing and tradition—**"Last year I played a concert at Town Hall, part of it in a duo piano set with Hank Jones and part of it leading a Dixieland band, which was a real departure. I've recorded an album with Hank, and I'm still hellbent on doing a Dixieland album."

**Shearing and society—**Gerald Ford was the first President to invite the Shearings to the White House; they have returned several times, usually for state dinners honoring foreign dignitaries.

Ellie Shearing elaborates: "Nancy Reagan invited pianist Vladimir Feltsman to perform at the White House not long after he left Russia. George and I were just there as guests. By the way, Feltsman's encore was a rag. While we were walking out, down the White House steps, I said to George, 'Well, we had a good time and neither of us dropped any bricks; I think now we're ready to take on the queen.' This was on a Sunday. The following Thursday the phone rang and we learned that George and Mel Torme were invited to the Royal Command Performance in London!"

George added: "The show consisted of 2½ hours of rock, five minutes of introductions and acknowledgements, and exactly five minutes for me and Mel. We did 'It

Might as Well Be Spring.' Well, you know, you do it for the honor."

"When we were preparing to be received afterward [by Queen Elizabeth II], I was told that the directive is: Do not extend your hand until the queen extends hers. I said, well, either somebody's going to have to cue me or she'll have to wear a bell. . . . But somebody did cue me," the blind musician said.

Shearing's encounter with the queen took place more than 30 years after he acquired American citizenship. Before arriving in the United States he had already reached the heights of his profession in England, but his first year in New York found him starting from scratch; it was not until the formation of his quintet in 1949 that he burst into the national consciousness.

The quintet stayed together almost 30 years. Ironically, what most observers see as his most dazzling level of individual creativity came in the last decade, as he played accompanied simply by a bass player.

He remains close to old friends in England, going back about once a year. He is loyal, too, to causes involving the handicapped.

"I wrote a letter to the New York Times, which it published, to emphasize the necessity for more space in the library for the blind and physically handicapped. Well, we wound up with a million dollars plus in state funds."

"There's an organization in Boston called the National Braille Press. I said to them, 'You people have been putting out some great books about computers for the blind. How about getting us an index of area codes in Braille so we don't have to worry other people about that?'"

"They suggested I write to AT&T, which I did, and the people at AT&T said, 'Thank you for bringing this to our attention.' They decided to underwrite the whole thing—complete books of area codes and related consumer information will be out shortly."

"As I told them, after they'd spent so long reaching out and touching somebody, how about reaching out and touching everybody?" □

## JAZZ REVIEW

### Jones, Person Stick to Path of Integrity

By LEONARD FEATHER

Etta Jones and Houston Person may be the last survivors of a fondly remembered breed: The traveling jazz show, complete with leader, sidemen and vocalist, bringing unpretentious, unhyphenated jazz to audiences around the country for better than 200 nights a year.

Some of those nights are presently being spent at the Vine St. Bar & Grill, where Jones and Person opened Friday and will be on hand again Wednesday through Saturday. As has been his custom throughout their 20 years as a team, Person started off with a group of instrumentals.

His tenor saxophone is steeped in tradition, doing no violence to the melodies and concentrating on such well-entrenched works as "There's No You," "Day Dream" and "Triste." The fullness and warmth of his sound is well-butressed by the engaging piano of Stan Hope, with Peter Martin Weiss on bass and drummer Cecil

Brooks III flowing along in an easygoing mainstream.

After five numbers, Etta Jones made her bow. The ready smile, slight sob in her tones, the sensitive use of melisma and the occasional tendency to lag behind the beat recalled two important influences: Jones came up in the era of Duke Ellington (her first recording, in Washington, her first recording in 1944, consisted of cover versions of Washington's hits) and Billie Holiday, who was represented Friday by Jones' last two songs, "Crazy" and "Calls Me" and "Laughing at Me." Nevertheless, she sounds exclusively like Etta Jones.

The backing and filling by Person's horn stressed the emotional depths of which Jones, today more than ever, is capable. She was singing soulful jazz before the term soul music was coined, and in partnership with Person has set the two of them in a straight and narrow path that continues to uphold integrity.

## 5 High School Jazz Groups Featured on Channel 58

Five high school jazz orchestras from the Los Angeles Unified School District will be featured in a half-hour television show Thursday at 8 p.m. on KLCS Channel 58.

"Top Five Jazz Bands 1988," emceed by actress Maria Gibbs, was produced by Ralph Jungheim under the auspices of Performing Tree, an arts education organization.

Bands from Carson, Eagle Rock, Hamilton and San Fernando high schools and a trio from Westchester High School will play compositions or arrangements by Lennie Niehaus, Miles Davis and Benny Golson, among others.

The program will be repeated on KLCS on six dates through July.

—LEONARD FEATHER

3-21  
Harry Connick  
in Tune With  
Yesteryear

By LEONARD FEATHER



Harry Connick Jr.

How do you explain Harry Connick Jr.? The 20-year-old pianist, who can be heard tonight at the Palace Court, is a wild anachronism. While other youngsters were copying the latest solos by Chick Corea or McCoy Tyner, Connick was busy diving into Earl Hines and Erroll Garner. The lad simply refuses to go with the fashionable flow.

Actually, there is a simple explanation. He is the son of distinguished parents (his father has been the New Orleans district attorney since 1973; his late mother was a judge) who, while they were going through law school in the 1950s, owned a record store.

"I got my grounding through those records," Connick says, "and through being in New Orleans around so much music. Then from the eighth grade until halfway through my junior year, I studied with Ellis Marsalis at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts."

Wynton and Branford Marsalis had graduated before Connick entered their father's class, but Delfeayo Marsalis, now 23, was in class with Connick; they became close, and last year, after Wynton had recommended Connick to CBS Records, Delfeayo was assigned to produce his first album.

Through his teen years (which ended last September), Connick was encouraged by his family. "They would take me down to the French Quarter almost every weekend to sit in; in fact, I started playing gigs at 13, and occasionally I subbed for Ellis when he couldn't make a job."

His indoctrination into the glories of yesteryear came about mainly through records that are not a part of the average youngster's background nowadays.

Asked how he explains that so few pianists of his age listen to the old masters rather than to Hancock and Corea, he replied, "They don't know, man, they just don't know. I figure like this: The most piano playing was done when Art Tatum and Duke Ellington and Monk and

Fats Waller and Bud Powell and James P. Johnson and all those guys were around. Everybody else is hearsay.

"Monk could play that stride stuff if he wanted to. Herbie Hancock is old enough to know where that school comes from. But who am I to try to understand what McCoy Tyner is doing?"

"I think I'd run into the same problems Earl Hines had; not that I put myself on his level, but he wanted to sound like a trumpet player—when he made those masterpieces with Louis Armstrong they called him the trumpet-style pianist. Well, I'll do anything I can to get to the same kind of feels Earl was using, he's been a big, big influence."

Unlike his first album, the second, Connick says, will introduce him as a singer. "I've always enjoyed singing, but I decided if I want to document it I'd better get a teacher, so I did, and then I went into the studio for CBS and recorded about 35 tunes, out of which some 25 had vocals, and the best of them will be in the album."

Not surprisingly, his vocal influences too are traditional: "I love Billie [Holiday], Pops [Louis Armstrong], Sinatra, Ella [Fitzgerald], Nat King Cole." But he grants that vocally and instrumentally he still has much to learn, and is soaking it all up as fast as he can.

"I've been heavily into Duke Ellington's piano playing lately. You know, you can hear so much of Duke in Thelonious Monk's work; that's pretty much where Monk got all his stuff."

"You know how I figure things? They say after Beethoven, nobody really accomplished anything more than he did. If you draw the comparison, you'll find the same thing with what I'm studying—I mean, after Tatum or Ellington, how much more complex can you get?"

"If I can figure those guys out, everything else will be downhill."

5-21  
Jazz Reviews

Hutcherson With Trio at Catalina Bar & Grill

Bobby Hutcherson, the Los Angeles-born vibraphonist who for most of the past 20 years has been leading various small groups, opened Thursday at Catalina Bar & Grill, fronting a quartet.

Although the musicians—Bill Henderson, piano, Tony Dumas, bass, and Larance Marable, drums—have all worked with him before at one time or another, it became obvious a minute or two into the first tune that this was not an organized group, nor even one that had rehearsed.

Consequently, the evening's music began with a very casual,

fast-paced blues, centered on a long and intermittently inspired solo by Hutcherson and leading to the inevitable traded choruses with the drums. "All the Things You Are" was no less free of surprises, from the standard introduction to the standard coda; but Henderson's excellent solo was well supported by Hutcherson's four-mallet chording.

Not until "My Foolish Heart," introduced with a gentle half-chorus of unaccompanied vibes, did the quartet finally begin to cohere. The 40-year-old Victor Young ballad offered a resplendent reflection of Hutcherson's eloquence, particu-

larly when he made shimmering use of a series of vibrant tremolos.

"Blue Bossa," taken at a hearty pace, was a satisfactory vehicle for all hands.

Toward the end of the set, Hutcherson finally led the group into one of his own compositions, and certainly one of his best, "Little B's Poem," written for one of his first recording sessions in 1965 and still one of the most charming of all jazz waltzes.

Though it fell short of the adventurous ends that might have been achieved with adequate preparation, the foursome on the whole came reasonably close to the standards one would expect from musicians of this caliber. Perhaps by the time they close Sunday, a few more of the vibist's original works will have made their way into the repertoire.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Jazz Reviews

### Vaughan Displays Her Gifts at the Greek Theater

By LEONARD FEATHER

Sarah Vaughan has been plying her profession for 45 years, and she will keep on doing it until she gets it wrong—then she will retire. That eventuality seemed more remote than ever Friday at the Greek Theater.

Levitated by the horns of the Count Basie Orchestra along with her own trio (George Gaffney, piano; Andy Simpkins, bass; and Harold Jones, drums), Vaughan instantly let it be known that all her gifts are firmly in place: the limitless range, the almost cavernous sound on her low tones, the ability to twist a melody (but without distorting it) according to the dictates of her musicianly ear.

Her sense of humor pervaded the show on several levels, principally in the use of wordless vocals on several numbers—a clever bop riff on "Sweet Georgia Brown," a scat line sung in unison with the brass section on "Just Friends," a shoo-be-doo investigation of "Autumn

Leaves."

Wordlessness, however, does not necessarily connote comedy; she still sings Billy Strayhorn's sumptuous "Chelsea Bridge" as a tenderly evocative mood piece. But the best ballads came equipped with lyrics: the sinuous "So Many Stars" as well as "Photograph," both from one of her Brazilian albums. On "Since You Went Away" the words escaped her, but as so often happens, she turned it into a running gag, singing about the lapse.

Finally there was the encore that has become her staple: As we here on the ground observed her in midair, she called for the clowns.

The support of the band, with solos by trumpeter Bob Ojeda and others, provided a potent reminder that this kind of setting inspires Vaughan to the heights of which she is still capable.

The orchestra's opening set, conducted by tenor saxophonist Frank Foster, was short on surprises but long on ensemble skill and solo inspiration. The rhythm section has

been through an overhaul. There are two returnees: Greg Field on drums and Cleveland Eaton on bass, as well as a new pianist, Ace Carter, whose long solo on "Good Times Blues" achieved a measure of the old Basie spirit. Paul Weeden's rhythm guitar compensates well for the loss of the late Freddie Green.

As usual, Carmen Bradford acquitted herself credibly in three songs, though she needs stronger material. Sonny Cohn on trumpet in "Shiny Stockings" and "Li'l Darlin'," Danny House on alto sax, and the three tenors (Foster, Kenny Hing, Eric Dixon) in the closing "Jumpin' at the Woodside" all were up to the standards one expects of this band.

The days of such all-time originals as Lester Young and Sweets Edison are far behind us, yet it is enough that the Basie phenomenon has survived half a century, even outlived its leader, successfully enough to remain one of the more compelling forces on the dwindling big-band scene.

# Jazz Reviews

## The Cain-and-Kral Formula at Work at Vine St.

The team of Jackie Cain and Roy Kral belongs among the seven wonders of the jazz vocal world; indeed, compared to them it is hard to imagine what the six others might be.

When they opened Thursday at the Vine St. Bar & Grill (a day late, because of an injury sustained by Kral), it was a safe bet that most of their listeners were infants, or perhaps unborn, when this unique vocal duo began working together. Cain still has the trim figure, the fabulous cheekbones, the blond pageboy hairdo, the ready smile; Kral (her husband since 1949) remains similarly untouched by the inroads of four decades.

Their formula is as simple as ever, mainly octave unison vocals, with moments of two-part harmony, and occasional wordless passages that are too elegant to be stigmatized as scat singing. Kral's piano solos are effectively cast in the mainstream mold; his teammates, Seward McCain on bass and Kurt Moore on drums, furnished the right light touch that is the essence of the Krals' sempiternal charm.

Much of the show Thursday was geared to an assortment of Lerner & Loewe songs, but not to the exclusion of a typical jazz piece (Gerry Mulligan's "Line for Lyons") and a brand new, exquisite song called "Lost." This poignant lyric by Fran Landesman (whose "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" was also included) is splendidly matched with a touching melody by Kral.

A few numbers were solo vehicles for Cain or, in one instance, Kral. Separately or teamed, they were in consummate form. The inclusion of "You Haven't Changed at All" in the Lerner & Loewe segment seemed as though it should have been sung for Jackie Cain, rather than by her.

They wound up the proceedings, as has long been their tradition, with "Mountain Greenery," a hit in the "Garrick Galettes of 1926," a hit record for the Krals in 1955. It still sparkles with the same mountain-dew purity they have brought to it through all their yesteryears. They will no doubt keep it in the show through their Saturday closing.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## JAZZ REVIEW

### It's Sommers Time at Vine St.

Joanie Sommers has been a perennial presence on the Southland scene since the 1960s, and an occasional visitor for several years to the Vine St. Bar & Grill, where she opened Thursday and closes tonight.

Some of her early successes were scored in the lucrative world of jingles, as she reminded us in a medley—composed mainly of plugs for Pepsi-Cola—placed somewhat irrelevantly near the end of her performance.

More in character were her ballads, most notably the Henry Mancini coupling of "Days of Wine and Roses" and "Two for the Road," to which she brought a tender lyricism. Sommers was not blessed with a big voice, but then neither were Maxine Sullivan and others who knew that belting is not necessarily the name of the game. She reminds you of the wine about which the maitre d' observes, "It's a modest vintage, but I think you'll admire its *joie de vivre*."

Within her prescribed parameters, Sommers brought intelligent, jazz-informed detours to a series of standards. Some of these were relatively free from overexposure ("You Say You Care," "My Foolish Heart"). On the other hand, there was a long, carefully planned Gershwin medley that kept pianist Frank Collett busily turning pages as Sommers plowed through familiar territory, ending with "Love Is

Sweeping the Country," which would be long forgotten had it not borne the Gershwin's byline.

Collett, more than a mere accompanist, steered Sommers through all those busy upward modulations, soloed briskly on several tunes and played a brief but delightful opening set of instrumentals, highlighted by an easily swinging update of "Limehouse Blues." He was backed by the impeccable Bob Maize on bass and the dependable Sherman Ferguson on drums, as *any Gershwin might have commented*, who could ask for anything more?

—LEONARD FEATHER

5/29/88

# Mussolini Swings Into L.A.

By LEONARD FEATHER

Romano Mussolini sounded excited. The phone call from Rome left no doubt that he looked forward eagerly to his first California visit in 18 years, to renewing old friendships and addressing the American public.

Mussolini will not be giving political speeches. His mission here is as unconventional as his life and career have been insecure and pain-scarred.

The youngest son of Benito Mussolini, he was 17 when the life of Adolf Hitler's World War II Fascist ally came to an ignominious end in 1945. For more than a decade he said he was "afraid to appear in public" because the family name aroused too many mixed emotions. "I had many jobs outside music, always without profit." He worked in the lumber business, then got into the construction field and several other short-lived undertakings, among them poultry farming.

But today Mussolini, 60, is accepted as one of Italy's foremost jazz pianists, touring internationally, recording, broadcasting.

Last month a deal was made for him to bring over his quintet, and a singer, for three gourmet-banquet-and-concert dates (at \$200 a head) Saturday and Sunday at Perino's, a Los Angeles restaurant.

"I've put together a show dedicated to the Swing Era," said Mussolini, "with tributes to Benny Goodman and Lionel Hampton, and a special homage to George Gershwin. For the Italian part of the show my vocalist, Maria Kelly—that's not her real name; she's Italian—will sing some of our own songs.

"There are two great musicians in my group—Enio Randisi on vibes and Gianni St. Just on clarinet; Gianni played on some of my first recordings in 1957. And I have a fine rhythm section with Aldo Vigorito on bass and Wilfred Coppello on drums."

After the two-day gig, Mussolini and his troupe will return directly to Italy, though he hopes to return in the fall for some dates in Florida.

His last California visit—a brief tour as part of an Italian vaudeville show—went almost unnoticed by the jazz community, but for Mussolini it was rewarding, as he had a chance to catch Bill Evans at Shelly's Manne Hole and fly to Las Vegas to hear Count Basie.

Despite several abortive ventures in other worlds, music has been part of his life from infancy. Father Benito, who read music and played the violin ("He was also a great admirer of Fats Waller") encouraged his interest in jazz.

"My sister started on piano and my brother, Vittorio, took up the cello. It's odd—they studied but didn't become players; I am self-taught but I'm a professional. It was Vittorio, though, who became a pioneer jazz critic; it was through his collection—Ellington, Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines—that I taught myself by copying solos off their records.

"One of the very first tunes I can remember is Duke Ellington's 'Black Beauty.' In fact, I started to love this music when I was 3 or 4 years old. I remember the first time I heard a Louis Armstrong record, the sound was so beautiful that I cried."

For Romano Mussolini, World War II is mainly remembered less as a titanic struggle than as the era when he began amassing a collection of V Discs and 78s, and became aware of the new be-bop movement. But he was unable to put his knowledge and talent to practical use; for a year after the war, he and his mother and sister were exiled to the island of Ischia,



Says Romano Mussolini: "I remember the first time I heard a Louis Armstrong record, the sound was so beautiful I cried."

where "The only center of jazz was a barbershop where we gathered and had sessions—I played guitar a little."

Returning to Rome, he was promptly sidelined for a year by pneumonia. "Then I finished my education at the University of Naples, studying economic science; after graduating I took my first gig, leading a quartet for 300 lire [then \$3] a night."

After years working odd jobs in the lumber and construction businesses, an editor of the Musica Jazz magazine persuaded him to take part in a festival at San Remo. By now the name evoked less political

resistance and mainly curiosity.

"I was uncomfortable because of all the photographers, but for the festival it was fantastic. Headlines in the papers the next day, 'Romano Mussolini Plays Jazz,'" he said.

That year, 1956, he made the first in a series of records for Italian RCA. Little by little he established a reputation as a confident, Oscar Peterson-inspired musician. He was especially proud of the night when his first wife, Maria Scicolone, actress Sophia Loren's sister, sat in with the Peterson Trio. ("Oscar and I are good buddies.") He now lives in Rome with his second wife, Carla, and their three

children.

Along with his performing, Mussolini has produced and directed a couple of movies and promoted a number of concerts. "For three summers I presented jazz at the beach resort of Viareggio. We had musicians from all over Europe, and from America—I spent one whole summer playing with Chet Baker."

He gave his first radio performance with Dizzy Gillespie. "Dizzy is a kind man—so good-hearted, he became a true friend." In 1972 Romano went to Venice to catch a concert by Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and others; after hanging out with the musicians he had to drive back to Rome all night in order to play the next morning at a high school with his quartet, which at that point included the American clarinetist Tony Scott.

The traumas that played a bitter role in the young life of Mussolini seem to have been slowly eliminated by time and growing success. Jazz may not have made him wealthy, but it has brought him a career to which, during more than a decade in the frustrating postwar period, he was effectively denied entry.

At the time of his 1970 California visit he was still claiming that music could not be a true profession for him, that he played merely for pleasure. Today, with a background that has taken him to Canada, Mexico, Australia and dozens of other countries, he says he is more secure than ever before. □



# Duo's Keyboard Artistry: The Same, but Different

By LEONARD FEATHER

It's road time again for two of the foremost names on the pop-and-jazz keyboard scene. Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea are in the midst of a 23-day concert tour that lands Wednesday at the Greek Theater.

Though their paths have coincided off and on over the years, the current tour, which began last Thursday in Seattle, is their first major joint venture since 1978, when an album on Columbia preserved their collaboration.

Both are basking in the successes of their new albums. Corea's Electric Band is making rapid strides with "Eye of the Beholder" (GRP Records, GR 1053). Hancock's "Perfect Machine" (Columbia FC 40025), one of his most ambitious pop ventures, has generated a hit single and a video, both entitled "Vibe Alive."

"We're doing our own separate sets," Corea said just before the tour got under way, "but you know we're not going to finish a concert without improvising something together."

Asked what he thinks are the differences between his keyboard style and Hancock's, Corea said: "I guess you could say Herbie has more of an inclination toward a blues feeling, while I have a little more of a Latin edge."

Responding to the same question, Hancock said: "Our touch is different. I rarely use the soft pedal; Chick does, which means he's using two strings instead of three on each note. It sounds warmer to me not to use it. I hear a lot of playfulness in Chick, a whimsical quality that I like a lot, but when we play together it's really hard to tell us apart, so the differences can't be all that great."

How either musician deals with the traditional piano is only one aspect of a Hancock or Corea performance. In "Perfect Machine," Hancock displays his virtuosity on more than a dozen instruments, among them several Yamahas, a Vocoder, a Rhodes, an Oberheim. He will be using at least four of these on the concert Wednesday, among them a hand-held portable keyboard.

Corea, despite the Electric Band name, has taken to doubling on acoustic keyboard. His band at present is so strong in sideman-power that each musician is now represented by an individual project. Frank Gambale wrote, arranged and produced his own "Brave New Guitar" album. John Patitucci, voted "Best New Talent" in a recent Jazziz magazine poll, and saxophonist Eric Marienthal, the group's newest member, both have their own albums, and drummer Dave Weckl, voted "Best Electric Jazz Drummer" in a Modern Drummer magazine poll, is represented by his own instructional video.



Chick Corea, left, Herbie Hancock touch down at the Greek.

A bonus member of the tour is Michael Brecker, who will be on board as a featured soloist with Hancock's Headhunters.

"I've admired Michael for years,"

said Hancock, "and he's no stranger; last summer in Japan we did some concerts with Ron Carter and Tony Williams; and I was on his own recent album. He's very flexi-

ble—he can be funky or far out, whatever fits."

Coincidentally, Brecker also toured Japan at one time with Corea, in a quartet with Eddie Gomez and Roy Hayes. "In fact,"

Please see **KEYBOARD**, Page 4

## KEYBOARD

Continued from Page 3

Corea adds, "not many people remember this, but Michael played soprano and tenor sax for a couple of months in my first Return to Forever band, along with Flora Purim and Airto. Unfortunately we never got that group on tape."

Hancock's sidemen for the tour differ from those heard on the new album. "My drummer, Charlie Drayton, comes from a great musical family. I've known him since he was about 5 years old; he's a nephew of Leslie Drayton, the trumpeter. He's worked with David Sanborn, the Rolling Stones, Chaka Khan, and had his own band, the Raging Hormones. He's not a jazz drummer at all, but he's great for pop or R & B. My bass player, Darryl 'Munch' Jones, was with

Miles Davis from 1983-85, and that's where I first heard him; but after that he was with Sting, and I was impressed with him when I sat in with Sting a couple of times in Paris.

Steve Thornton, who's playing percussion with me, has also worked with Miles. I first heard him with Jon Lucien. It's funny—I just found out that he was inspired to make a career out of music after hearing my original record of "Watermelon Man" when he was 7 years old."

What will happen when the Hancock-Corea tour ends July 1 in Tampa, Fla., is anybody's guess, since both men are juggling multiple lives. Corea will return to his own Mad Hatter Studio in Los Angeles, where countless albums have been produced both by him and many outsiders since the first session in 1981.

Hancock continues to consider movie offers. Though he had written several film scores before "Round Midnight," his Oscar victory for that assignment has led to intensified interest. Among his recent ventures are "Action Jackson" and "Colors."

Adaptability, no less than natural talent, seems to be the name of the game for both men. It is perhaps symbolic that one of the cuts in "Perfect Machine" is a new, experimental version, heavy on percussion and electronically altered voices, of "Maiden Voyage," the composition that helped establish Hancock as a world-class name when he wrote and recorded it in 1965.

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Sonic Rainbows by Bernsen &amp; Co.

By LEONARD FEATHER

Randy Bernsen may well be the most versatile, technically adroit young guitarist on the contemporary fusion scene. With three albums on Zebra Records in which to prove the point, this fast-rising soloist from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., made his belated California debut Tuesday at Le Cafe in Sherman Oaks.

Because his albums find him switching instruments and benefit-

ing from the company of numerous guests such as Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker, Toots Thielemans and Herbie Hancock, it was impossible for Bernsen to duplicate, with the quartet he led in this small room, many of the sounds on his albums. Nevertheless, he was able to create an astonishingly broad tonal palette.

At one point or another, with the help of various synth effects, he managed to simulate the sounds of an accordion, an organ, and most noticeably a steel drum, employed in his reggae-like version of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood." Once or twice he even let his guitar sound like a guitar.

Concentrating mainly on his own compositions, such as "Be Still and Know" and "The Stomp," he diversified the rhythms and sounds provocatively from tune to tune. On one number, "You Must Be Joking," the group dropped its

fusion groove in favor of a fast and furious jazz 4/4, with Bernsen keyboarder Taras Kovayl and bassist Gary Willis each contributing at least half a dozen choruses.

As a close friend and longtime Florida associate of the late Jaco Pastorius, Bernsen was not likely to settle for a less than exceptional bassist; in Willis he has found a man of almost comparable brilliance. Drummer Joe Heredia was a no less vital contributor, often doubling or even quadrupling the

Please see BERNSEN, Page 5

20 Part VI / Friday, June 10, 1988

## BERNSEN

Continued from Page 4

beat and the intensity.

Because performances in this genre inevitably call for one of three volume levels—loud, very loud, and out-of-the-ballpark—the sound in this very intimate setting was earsplitting; only during the first choruses of a couple of numbers was there any attempt at discretion. Given the right setting, Bernsen no doubt will bring his deftly urgent message to the enormous crowds his music seems designed to please.

## Jazzmen Sound Glad Notes for Glasnost

By LEONARD FEATHER

If recent events are any yardstick, jazz has really been jumping in the Soviet Union—and at the highest levels.

For example, when bassist Eugene Wright appeared as a guest soloist with Dave Brubeck during an appearance at a state banquet for the Reagans and the Gorbachevs during last week's summit in Moscow, Wright says, "I could tell that Secretary Gorbachev was really digging 'King for a Day' [their duet].

"Afterward," the North Hollywood musician continues, "Gorbachev gave me a nod of approval and a very hearty handshake. Then I said to President Reagan, 'I'm proud of you!' He reacted with a big, warm smile and thanked me. I really meant it, too—he took care of business over there and laid some great groundwork for the future."

Not by coincidence, the summit conference found a number of leading American musicians sounding a major chord for *glasnost* during their visits to the Soviet Union.

Billy Taylor, Paul Horn and Brubeck and were among those who catered to the intense local interest in jazz. All three had been there before; Horn was still touring there Thursday and, according to his wife, attracted packed houses during a week-long stand in Moscow.

For Taylor it was, he said on returning home last weekend, "a fantastic experience. Last year I went over as a member of a commission, including Milton Babbitt and other composers, that was established to interface with the League of Soviet Composers. You could tell even then that *glasnost* was already in action, because negotiations we thought might take up to two weeks were completed in 45 minutes!

"This time I was invited as a composer and performer, with my bassist and drummer, Victor Gaskin and Bobby Thomas. We were in Leningrad for the Third International Music Festival. They had John Cage and several other Americans on hand, unlike



Dave Brubeck

Billy Taylor

Eugene Wright

what we do here, they include jazz as a regular world music.

"There was also a jazz festival that coincided with part of my visit, but I hadn't known about this in advance and they were disappointed that I couldn't stay over to take part in it.

"During the International Music Festival we played at October Hall in Leningrad. We also took part in a jam session at a place called the Children's Palace."

Taylor, like most visiting jazzmen, was impressed by the quality of the local talent.

"They are doing all the stuff the young players are doing here; but like anyone else in Europe, they feel the need to play with musicians from the States. They also still suffer from a shortage of instruments—I saw one guy playing a DX 7 that looked as though it must have been the first one ever made. But they're trying, and I was pleased with what I heard."

Taylor went on to Moscow in time to take part in an interview with Charles Kuralt on the CBS "Sunday Morning" show for which segments involving Taylor's interviews with American jazzmen have been a regular feature for six years.

"I met some of the 'unofficial' musicians, which means they don't work at it for a living because the Union of Soviet Composers, the group that invited me over, determines whether or not you are worthy of having your music published and recorded. But at least these unofficial musicians felt free to talk about it—another sign that *glasnost* was very much in evidence."

Brubeck, who previously had visited the Soviet Union to play for the public, was on hand this time to provide the music at a

state banquet for the Reagans and Gorbachevs in Moscow's Spaso House.

"I took my regular group—Bill Smith on clarinet, Randy Jones on drums, my son Chris Brubeck on electric bass and trombone—plus Eugene Wright, the bassist who was with the original quartet in the 1950s and '60s."

Brubeck had only 15 minutes for this occasion, but "it was a strong 15 minutes. Gene Wright and I did a number called 'King for a Day,' from 'The Real Ambassadors.'" This musical show, by Brubeck and his wife, Iola, dealt with jazz as a unifying force.

"There was a pianist working in our hotel who was fantastic; he's obviously listened to Oscar Peterson, Erroll Garner and maybe Bill Evans. He told me there were two or three guys working at local clubs who are at least his equal, so there must be a lot going on."

The Soviets evidently are aware of the need to continue learning from the American source. Billy Taylor last year was asked to name some musicians who could go to the Soviet Union to teach improvisation. One of his selections, saxophonist and educator Bill Barron from Wesleyan University, is heading for Moscow in October.

Nor is the public being starved, as it was for so long, in terms of the availability of American jazz on records. "We have a new album coming out called 'Moscow Night,'" said Brubeck. "It was recorded live during our visit in March of 1987. To our delight we heard that Melodiya, the official Soviet label, is putting out a two-record set of the same concert. So you know things are really happening over there."

talks about his original experience as a drummer, he look over a departed bass player's job and all but mastered the instrument in a week, the diversity of his influences and the development of his unprecedented skills.

Jerry Jemmott, an experienced New York studio bassist, interviews Pastorius and plays a blues

## JACO PASTORIUS



duet with him. Along the way Pastorius can be heard playing everything from his own "Portrait of Tracy" to John Coltrane's "Naima" and even "America." The last segment is mainly given over to a trio performance for which he is joined by John Scofield on guitar and Kenwood Dennard on drums. As a coda he even tosses in a piano solo. Pastorius, through the use of formidable right- and left-hand technique, of chords, modes and arpeggios, was able to transform the electric bass into an all-purpose solo instrument as well as a rhythm vehicle. Even those who remember him with Weather Report and his own groups, the video will come as a revelation.

"CHICK COREA: KEYBOARD WORKSHOP" DCI Music Video, VHO29. Always adept at defining and describing his music, Corea demonstrates his approach to practicing, improvising and composing. Interspersed among the discussions are his performances of J. S. Bach's Goldberg Variation #1, an original children's song, Ellington's "Mood Indigo," Cole Porter's "Easy to

Love." The 42-page booklet has a valuable harmonic analysis by John Navrozd of Corea's approach to the tune, and finally an in-the-spot view of Corea composing a new piece from scratch, correcting it, compelling it and performing it with his trio (John Patitucci on bass, Tom Reischlein on drums). Though parts of this 60-minute session may be a little too technical for the outsider, much of it holds up well simply on the inherent strength of the music.

ADRIAN BELEW: ELECTRONIC GUITAR. DCI Music Video, VHO06. Unwittingly, in this 60-minute display of twisted virtuosity, Bewlew highlights everything that is wrong with the over-electrified music scene. Displaying what he himself characterizes as "an embarrassing array of electronic weaponry," he describes his use of fuzz tones, flanges, frequency analyzers, tape loop machines, compressors and volume pedals. For those who would care to hear a guitar resembling a herd of African elephants or imitating a bagpipe solo, this will have immediate appeal. For others it will merely come across as a series of hideous distortions by the former member of King Crimson. Watching this 60-minute demonstration is truly a depressing experience.

"MAX ROACH: IN CONCERT & IN SESSION." DCI Music Video, VHS 0015. Max Roach is presented here in two separate 30-minute programs, neither of which involves any technical explanation. In the first, taped at a New York jazz festival, he plays several unaccompanied drum solos and reminisces a little about his high school days and the period he spent subbing with Duke Ellington.

The second segment, recorded in a studio, employs his regular quintet, augmented, all too briefly, by his daughter Maxine on viola, Walter Bishop Jr. on piano, and a singer, Matilda Haywood. The explanations consist of generalities. The best passage is a Martin Luther King speech to which Roach plays a counterpoint, illustrated by some ingenious graphics. For Roach fans, this portion is of interest, but as instruction the entire hour falls short—surprisingly, since Roach has had years of experiences as a professor of music at various universities.

Among the other videos in the DCI catalogue are drum sessions with Ed Thigpen, Elvin Jones and Lenny White, a contemporary keyboard survey with Richard Tee, and a John Scofield examination of guitar improvisation. The videos

are priced from \$29.95 to \$59.95. For information call (800) 342-4500.

Having covered the rhythm section, Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel plan soon to enlarge their program by producing similar videos for the

horn players. It's certainly an idea whose time has come; in fact, it arrived many years ago, before the days of video. We are fortunate that productions like these are helping to make up for so much lost time. □

## JAZZ

# Videotaped Lessons From the Masters

By LEONARD FEATHER

I was always one of the great regrets of jazz musicians in the early years that self-instruction was virtually the only path toward education in this all but undocumented art form. Jazz education was nonexistent, a contradiction in terms.

Even today, unless the young student's family can afford to send him to one of the institutes where jazz is the subject of formal learning (Berklee in Boston, Dick Grove's in Los Angeles, etc.), he is unlikely to have direct access to the playing methods, let alone the instructional concepts, of the artists he admires and would like to emulate.

Today, that situation is slowly changing, thanks to the initiative of two New York musicians who are taking advantage of the video revolution.

For the past eight years Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel, both studio drummers in New York, have been running a music school known as DCI (Drummers' Collective Inc.). In 1980, they had the idea of expanding their potential by starting a video library that would afford a VCR's eye view of prominent musicians performing and explaining the nature of their work.

Although the project began as a drummers' series, it has grown in scope to include other rhythm section players on keyboards, guitar and bass. These videotapes are unique not only in their intimate view of the musicians, but in their inherent value simply as music and entertainment.

Some of the videos come equipped with an instruction booklet. Though written explanations will appeal primarily to those who read music, most of the films will be of interest to anyone interested in a closer look at these artists, their styles and the generally lucid manner in which they are explained.

Following are some of the most valuable.

6/5/88

## LOUIE BELLSON



"LOUIE BELLSON: THE MUSICAL DRUMMER." DCI Music Video Inc. VH 005. Because of Bellson's outgoing personality, the articulate analyses of his playing and the inherent values of his work both as a drummer and composer, this is one of the most rewarding items in the series. Leading a quintet with Ken Hitchcock on sax and flute, Remo Palmier on guitar, the late George Duvivier on bass and John Bunch on piano, he demonstrates a broad range of styles: Bossa nova, shuffle rhythm, jazz/rock, swing, contemporary back-beat.

Each tune is followed by Bellson's discussion (and illustration) of what rhythmic effects he was using. Particularly delightful are his soft-shoe-like impressions of Jo Jones' brush work, and, finally, in an almost unbelievable solo, the story of his pioneering use of two bass drums, which he plays with demonic celerity. A 64-page booklet is available to accompany the 60-minute video, but everything Bellson has to say is self-explanatory.

"JACO PASTORIUS: MODERN ELECTRIC BASS." DCI Music Video, Inc. VHO13. In the light of Pastorius' tragic demise at age 35 (he died last year of injuries suffered in a fight with a Florida night club owner), this documentation of his genius is unique and invaluable. Unusually long (90 minutes, with a 40-page booklet), this a fascinating mixture of music, autobiography and technical elucidation. Pastorius

ALAN BERNER

## Mike Metheny, Standing Pat With the Brass

By LEONARD FEATHER

The career of Mike Metheny has closely paralleled that of his brother, Pat. Like Pat, he started out on trumpet (but, unlike him, he stayed with the horn while Pat, to quote Mike, "got smart and switched to guitar, an instrument that doesn't require lips").

Like Pat, Mike was raised in Lees Summit, Mo., but wound up in Boston, playing and teaching at the Berklee College of Music. The odd aspect of all this is that the brothers did it in reverse order: Mike, who followed Pat to Boston and Berklee, is five years his senior, born in August, 1949.

Vietnam made the difference. While Pat, after high school and the University of Miami, went to Boston and joined Gary Burton's band before his teen years were over, Mike, after earning a degree at the University of Missouri, wound up in a military band in Washington, D.C., from 1971 to 1974.

"Trumpet ran in our family," says Mike, who opens tonight for a three-day run at Catalina Bar and Grill. "My father was an automobile dealer who also played; my maternal grandmother performed occasionally with John Philip Sousa. I studied classical trumpet, and after the three years in the Army I went on to get my master's degree in music education from Northeast Missouri State University."

A Boston resident since 1976, he spent the first six years there on the faculty at Berklee. "I taught trumpet, harmony, ensemble, the works; but about five years ago, having been playing on the side, I realized that teaching and playing are both full-time jobs, so after trying to do both for six years I decided in 1983 to become a full-time player."

By that time Metheny had made his first album (now out of print), for a small label, Headfirst Records. For the most part he was content to remain an active member of the New England jazz community, until an opportunity came along to resume recording, this time for a major label.

His first album for MCA/Im-



Mike Metheny, for whom flugelhorn "is really my main thing."

pulse, "Day In—Night Out," set his mellow sound on flugelhorn in focus, with brother Pat in the supporting group. Recently he followed it up with "Kaleidoscope," in which his supporting cast consisted of the men who will be with him at the Catalina: Brad Hatfield on keyboards, Marshall Wood on acoustic and electric bass, John Riley on drums.

In both albums, Metheny doubles on the EVI (electronic valve instrument), invented by Nyle Steiner. "I didn't take this instrument

very seriously when it first came out, but then Pat gave me one as a present, and it's been an important part of the band ever since."

Mike Metheny's generally understated style and subtly lyrical melodic sense, along with the technical expertise resulting from his classical training, are gradually earning him the recognition that his Boston-rooted years would not allow. Currently on a 10-day tour of the West Coast, he says: "It's taken a while, but now the pieces seem to be falling into place."

### JAZZ REVIEW

6/11/88

## Marlena Shaw at Vine St.

By LEONARD FEATHER

Love is a game—ain't it a shame that we've all got to play it," Marlena Shaw observed during one of her songs Thursday evening at the Vine St. Bar & Grill. As she sang this line, the thought came to mind that in her world, singing is a game, one that she plays with the exuberant spirit that has always helped sustain her.

Though she is capable of serious moments (as was especially noticeable in a touching Bernardtighner song, "Davy," from an album he helped write for her in 1975), Shaw's sense of sometimes self-mocking humor never stays under the surface for long.

It was in evidence as she opened with "On the Street Where You Live," the only pop standard in her set. No respecter of melodies, she has a musician's improvisational sense, often tossing an extra word or varying the phrases, with results that blend rhythmic invention and

effervescent confidence.

Much of her material over the years has been either self-written or closely associated with her. Such relatively unfamiliar works as "Sweet Punkin," "It Is Love" and "Love Is in Flight" give her a special advantage over some jazz-oriented singers who tend to pack their repertoire with overworked products of yesteryear.

Her other major advantage, still obvious after 20 years as a touring and recording artist, is her visually striking personality. Call it something in the way she moves; whatever it is, it's handsomely in evidence and she knows just how to use it.

She closed with a traditional blues, "Stormy Monday," and even here the comedic undertones broke through.

Her accompanists, pianist Larry Farrell, bassist Richard Reid and drummer Roger Larocque, seemed equally at home conveying the jazz message here and the pop rhythms elsewhere. Shaw closes tonight.

0110. The difference between this group and the Kronos Quartet is that the latter, including no jazz improvisers, has to bring in outsiders (guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Eddie Gomez et al) to insert an ad-lib touch. The Turtle Islanders are all skilled as both classical and jazz performers, as becomes vividly clear in the four opening tunes. David Balakrishnan plays violin and wrote the arrangements of Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia" and Miles Davis' "Milestones." Darol Anger, playing violin and octave violin, also wrote the fourth chart, Bud Powell's "Tempus Fugit." Irene Sazer is the violist and Mark Summer, on cello, fills the function of a jazz bassist in this unique unit. Rounding out the CD are a string quartet by Balakrishnan, incorporating components from idioms around the world, not excluding jazz; and a series of seven brief improvisations, mockingly titled "The Decline of an American String Quartet." This is by any yardstick the most intriguing new group of the year to date. 5 stars.



"THE MUSIC I LIKE TO PLAY." Tete Montoliu. Soul Note SN 21180-2. The blind Catalonian pianist is on his own here with a fine piano, well recorded. He has the perfect left hand for a solo situation. The repertoire includes only one original and perhaps a couple of standards too many, yet in his hands "Old Folks" are young again and "Alone Together" takes on a new meaning. Essentially this is updated, skillful bebop. 3½ stars.



"DENNY ZEITLIN TRIO." Windham Hill Jazz 0112. It's too bad this busy Bay Area psychiatrist doesn't have more time for his other love, the piano. He is a composer of exceptional skill, but is no less at ease reinventing a simple blues like Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround" or bringing out all the poignancy in Charles Mingue's "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" (originally a threnody for Lester Young). Backed by Peter Donald on drums and Joe DiBartolo on bass, Zeitlin is in fine fettle on his own "Brazilian Street Dance" and "Rolling Hills." 4 stars. □

GARY GUISINGER



Blues pianist Gene Harris, on his Loa gig, which begins tonight. "I'm in seventh heaven! I never had a big band in person before."

## Bluesman Goes From Boise to Basie to Santa Monica

By LEONARD FEATHER

Idaho somehow does not seem the likeliest state of the union to provide a jazz ambiance, nor the talent or excitement of which this music is capable. Yet it is at the University of Idaho in Moscow that the Lionel Hampton School of Music flourishes, and it is in the lounge of Boise's Idanha Hotel that one of the greatest living blues pianists, Gene Harris, has been ensconced for most of the last 11 years.

Harris will be leading a big, star-laden orchestra tonight through Sunday at the Loa in Santa Monica, re-creating his surprise hit album "Tribute to Count Basie" (Concord Jazz 4337).

The setting is perfect for Harris, though the music is not directly a Basie imitation. Where the Count

might tinkle a sprinkle of notes, Harris is more likely to explode in a shimmering burst of rich blue chords; he has a different and compelling approach to the blues, to stomps and occasional ballads.

The band, for which arrangements have been written by Basie alumni Frank Wess and John Clayton, was recorded a year ago in Burbank after the impresario and bassist Ray Brown, with whom Harris has often left Boise to play in trio settings at home and abroad, convinced him that a full orchestra would be the ideal complement for his next album.

Ironically, Harris says, the original idea was to do it with the actual Basie band.

"I have to be honest with you," he said in an interview last week during the band's stint in New York. "They turned us down, so we did it this way, putting our own

orchestra together, and I'm afraid they may be a little sorry now. As for me, I'm in seventh heaven! I never had a big band in person before, and where I work regularly in Boise the entire room just seats 45 people."

The Loa will seat, along with about 140 customers, the likes of Snooky Young, Bobby Bryant, Oscar Brashear and Conte Candoli, trumpet; George Bohanon, Garnett Brown and Maurice Spears in the trombone sections; such saxophonists as Marshal Royal, Jeff Clayton, Pete Christlieb and Jack Nimitz and, along with Harris, the rhythm contingent of guitarist Herb Ellis, drummer Jeff Hamilton and bassist John Clayton. Ellis is even playing an amplified guitar to

come closer to the late Freddie Green's sound.

Born in 1933 in Benton Harbor, Mich., Harris first established his indigo keyboard coloration through the Three Sounds, a group that flourished in the 1950s and '60s, using occasional orchestral settings by Oliver Nelson and others, but always appearing in person with just Andy Simpkins (now Sarah Vaughan's bassist) and drummer Bill Dowdy.

"After so many years just working solo or with a trio," Harris said, "this is an amazing experience, to have all these men on the stand knocking you dead every night. I sometimes think how great it would be to keep a band like this together, but of course it costs so

much for an orchestra to travel nowadays."

In any event, the band dates will occasionally spell his regular job. In early July he'll be back at the Idanha. He speaks warmly of his Idaho home, where he spent a while in semi-retirement, playing golf, fishing, and sailing on his cabin cruiser with his wife, Jane, the daughter of a local banker.

"Jane's a classical pianist and a jazz fan. She was a schoolteacher and she came to see me shortly after I opened in Boise. We've been together ever since, and she's retired, so that we can go everywhere my job takes me—London, Tokyo, New York."

But will he ever be able to show off his big band back home in

Boise?

"Sure, we've talked about it and I'm sure Ray Brown will fix up something for me there—but of course it will be much too big for the hotel room, so we'll find someplace that will accommodate us.

"It's wonderful having someone like Ray working with us—everybody respects him, and I just get my kicks playing while he takes care of the business."

When the band roars its way through "Captain Bill" (dedicated to Basie) and "Blues for Pepper" (Freddie Green's nickname), it's a fair bet that the kicks at the Loa tonight will be mutual. The journey from Boise to Basie in the hands of Harris and his Blue Genes is a trip that just can't miss.

6/19/88

# Tracing the Roots of the Latin Beat

By LEONARD FEATHER

The Latin influence has always been an occasional element in jazz. W.C. Handy used a tango-like rhythm in his "Memphis Blues" in 1912 and again in the verse part of "St. Louis Blues" two years later. Jelly Roll Morton talked about (and used on records in the 1920s) what he

called the Spanish tinge. In 1930 Louis Armstrong recorded a rumba, "The Peanut Vendor." Juan Tizol, the trombonist from Puerto Rico, brought his ethnic heritage to the early Duke Ellington orchestra in the 1930s with "Caravan," "Moonlight Fiesta," "Conga Brava" and many other works.

Today, the Latin jazz world is subdivided into many genres: Afro-Cuban, Brazilian bossa nova, Argentine, salsa; so pervasive has it become during the past decade that Concord Jazz Records started a Latin subsidiary, Concord Picante, and another label, Cross-over, to make room for these idioms.

Many of the best Picante items have just been transferred to CDs. Among those recommended are "Ivory and Steel" by the Monty Alexander Quintet, featuring Othello Molineaux on steel drum (CCD 4124), "Brazilville" by the Charlie Byrd Trio with Bud Shank (CCD 4173), "Bien Sabroso!" by Poncho Sanchez (CCD 4239), and "Piquant" by Tania Maria (CCD 4151).

Among the best of the newly recorded Latin releases are the first two CDs reviewed below.

□  
"MISTER E." Pete Escovedo. Crossover CCD 45-005. The paterfamilias has his children along for this rhythmic ride. Helping him out in the percussion department are sons Juan Escovedo and Peter Michael Escovedo, with daughter Sheila E. heard briefly on congas and vocal in one cut. For the most part, it's a brilliantly recorded program with a formidable percussion team, along with bold brass writing by, among others, the trombonist/musical director

Wayne Wallace. The brisk rhythms are relieved by such works as a relaxed "Let's Wait a While" and the misterioso title tune. Among the best jazz soloists are Melecio Magdaluyo on saxes and flute, David Yamasaki on guitar and Rebeca Mauleon on keyboards. 4½ stars.

□  
"TANGO/ZERO HOUR." Astor Piazzola. Pangea PAND 3213 B. Forget the cutesy, corny, X-rated liner notes, which tell you nothing about Piazzola. Born in 1921 in Buenos Aires, he became the seminal figure during the 1950s in the modernization of the tango. This Argentine music has an infectious indigenous flavor, the product of his use of the bandoneon (a multi-buttoned cousin of the accordion). The quintet is drumless, relying for its personality on the leader, his ingratiating compositions, his graceful violinist (Fernando Suarez) and a non-aggressive rhythm section. This is dramatic, exciting, sensual music. 4½ stars.

□  
"COLLABORATION." Helen Merrill-Gil Evans. EmArcy 834-205-2. Don't be confused. This is not the same album Merrill recorded in 1956 with Evans arranging and conducting. However, the same tunes are used, with one exception (a superb new "Summertime" replaces "You're Lucky to Me"); even the arrangements are generally similar, yet the sound quality is so superior, and Merrill's voice has matured so impressively, that the results are a magnificent final return (this was Evans' penultimate recording) of an incomparable team. The writing (variously using woodwinds, brass or strings)



Gil Evans: His last recordings.

reminds us that Evans was always at his zenith writing for a specific vocalist or instrumentalist. This album preceded by a year or two his collaborations with Miles Davis and a large orchestra.

The songs for the most part are tailored to Merrill's veiled timbre and downbeat personality ("I'm a Fool to Want You," "Troubled Waters," "He Was Too Good to Me"), but there are moments of upbeat contrast. Ironically, Merrill is quoted as saying that "Earphones and having to think about technical problems is absolute death," yet she is shown at the session wearing earphones. The result was absolute magic. 5 stars.

□  
"BUD & BIRD." Gil Evans. Pro-Jazz CDJ 671. Evans' last LP, taped at a New York jazz club three months before his death in March, shows how he adapted to the electronic generation. He came equipped with two synth players and set up the performances often as long strings of solos surrounded (and sometimes supported) by horn section passages. As many as 10 soloists are accommodated (curiously, Evans and his son Miles, who plays trumpet, are not featured); they vary from inspired (Shunzo Ono and Johnny Coles on trumpets, Dave Barger on trombone) to hysterical. (One wonders whether the hysterical alto player is the same fellow responsible for occasionally dubious intonation in the sax section.) 3 stars.

□  
"TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET." Windham Hill WD

# Jazz Reviews

6/14

had made it unmistakably clear  
that nobody ever need open for  
Tony but old Benedetto himself.  
—LEONARD FEATHER

## Tony Bennett Gets Basic at Universal Amphitheatre

There is no September in Tony Bennett's years. For him every season is spring, every month is May, every note is A—if not A-plus. Saturday night at the Universal Amphitheatre, he showed the strength of his roots in the values he has always represented: straight-ahead singing of quality songs, with a stronger than ever jazz orientation.

Bennett is hip enough to know that he and Frank Sinatra, and whatever other singers may survive of the so-called saloon generation, will never have to make self-conscious attempts in their repertoires to keep up with the times. True, there were a couple of beautiful and relatively recent numbers by Michel Legrand and the Bergmans, but more typically, after announcing that "now we'd like to do some new songs," he would remove tongue from cheek and segue into "Just in Time," vintage 1956.

Aside from a slightly cantorial ending on "Yesterdays," there was not the slightest attempt at gimmicking up the songs. The one venture into showmanship was a totally appropriate rear-projection of Fred Astaire, dancing with Ginger Rogers and then changing partners while Bennett sang "Change Partners." Later there was a brief and impressive screening of some of the paintings to which he appends his real name, Benedetto.

The use of a very young guest vocalist on "Puttin' on the Ritz," her grip on the notes somewhat loose, seemed a little misplaced, until Bennett introduced her after the song. Never mind, Antonia; it was a nice fatherly gesture to give you the break, and you'll get it together yet.

Bennett indulged in only one brief interlude of scatting, as he made his transition from the slow tempo to an upbeat chorus in "The Man I Love," a few lines of the lyrics suitably modified by Ira Gershwin (to "The Girl I Love"), so that there was no need to sing "... and she'll be big and strong."

Ralph Sharon has spent 19 of the past 32 years as Bennett's pianist and musical director. Accorded plenty of space, he delivered some of the most spirited solos of his distinguished career. Bennett also graciously gave time to bassist Paul Lagnosh and drummer Joe LaBarbera, the latter a Bill Evans alumnus. This admirable trio was aided now and then by a string-and-woodwind ensemble, but their role was almost subliminal.

After the last encore, it was amusing to think back to a question posed by a bystander before the

concert who wanted to know: "Who's opening for Tony Bennett this evening?" By the end of a flawless and tireless two-set performance, this 61-year-old master



## Playboy Festival Sags Until King Sunny Ade Refreshes

By LEONARD FEATHER

Seven hours and 20 minutes into the show, the 10th annual Playboy Jazz Festival finally came alive Saturday night at the Hollywood Bowl.

Not a moment too soon, the unique Nigerian ensemble of King Sunny Ade brought a different and refreshing form of fusion to the stage in an orgy of song, dance and rhythm. Colorfully but not garishly gowned, the company of 18 men and three women included every conceivable type of percussion, along with a pedal steel guitar, four other guitars, a synthesizer and an electric bass.

Ade, 39, is a master of Juju music, compounded of elements from his native Lagos, West Indian flavoring, and dashes of jazz or R & B. The songs, with their infectious

group vocals, were a seamless mixture of melodic charm and rhythmic complexity. Often the synthesizer simulated a steel drum sound so well that between him and the pedal steel guitarist it was hard to tell whether you had been transported to Jamaica or Hawaii.

The Nigerians offered the only new and exciting music in a day that had seemed much longer than its 8½ hours. There is still a happy imagery attached to the jazz festival—the picnics, the partying, fun in the sun; the selling of the T-shirts, and the yelling of Bill Cosby. But the music Saturday was on a lower level than any other concert in the festival's history.

Excessive compromise in the selection of talent was the chief culprit. If the quality had been upgraded somewhat, perhaps the

Please see JAZZ, Page 6



Carmen McRae at the Hollywood Bowl festival over the weekend.

6 Part VI / Monday, June 20, 1988

## JAZZ: Playboy Festival's Music on a Lower Level

Continued from Page 1

show would only have sold out two weeks in advance instead of six.

Bad taste was in frequent evidence. It began when the generally excellent, Cal State Long Beach college band sang a puerile, pointless song about the atomic bomb. It grew worse when Maynard Ferguson's group, all high voltage and low aspirations, took over.

Ferguson, who not too many years ago led an admirable big band, now carries just one other horn. But he and his sidemen do everything in their power to compensate by blasting away at mediocre charts in a pathetic show that represents the nadir of the trumpeter's long and once respected career.

The Ray Brown trio, with Gene Harris at the piano and Jeff Hamilton on drums, provided surcease, though they are better suited to a small club than playing for 17,641 revelers at the bowl.

Kirk Whalum, a tenor saxophonist who has struck it rich with a couple of pop albums, fielded a bassist who showed how to milk the crowd by prancing around, and a drummer whose forte is a long comedy scat vocal routine. Whalum's fulsome sound on "Over the Rainbow" measured up (or down) to the general taste level of the day.

The World Saxophone Quartet consists of four musicians, playing a cappella. All have been widely praised, and the group's blend is indeed remarkable, particularly in the attractive opening blues theme. But this was one of those days when freak notes, beyond the in-

struments' normal range, were flying around seemingly without any regard for intonation. David Murray, the most popular of the four men, displayed his passion-fruity tone on tenor; Hamiet Bluiett showed how to try to make the baritone sax sound like a soprano, with predictable results. But at least the WSQ has something original to say, and says it without relying on volume as a crutch.

The Fabulous Thunderbirds, in stark contrast, geared themselves to simplistic blues, complete with vocals, harmonica, and three-chord monotony. This was good fun for the first 10 minutes, but the set lasted for an excruciating hour, during which the partying and the beer and wine consumption apparently rose in reverse proportion to popular concern for the music. Nevertheless, as their performance finally wound up, the T-birds were treated to a jumping ovation.

On the other hand, while Carmen McRae was on stage the audience tended to become a little noisy and

restless; musical subtlety has never been well received at large jazz festivals.

McRae sang a few numbers with her regular trio, then accompanied herself at the piano for a couple of songs. Finally she was joined by the Bob Florence orchestra and three excellent arrangements, two of which were devoted to contemporary and better-received material, "Love Dance" and Javan's "Upside Down."

The Florence orchestra had a short outing on its own, highlighted by a semifashionized updating of the old Glenn Miller theme "Moonlight Serenade."

The success of Kenny G, who this year was heard at the festival for the third straight time, defies explanation. He's a capable and uninspired saxophonist. His soprano sounds as though it has a sinus condition. In his group were a pop singer of no distinction and a bass player from Sweden who thumped and jumped. Later came the regular Kenny G routine of marching

through the aisles, tenor sax in hand—a gimmick his naive listeners seem to fall for even though the sound of his horn is still being transmitted to, and heard from, the speakers on stage. For all the difference made by his whereabouts, he might as well have been in Long Beach, calling his solo in. His final on-stage performance, on soprano sax, was an interminable and egregious display of vulgarity.

Sunday's program, which at least looked better on paper, will be reviewed Tuesday.

6/21/88

JAZZ REVIEW

# Superior Session of Fusion at Playboy Fest

By LEONARD FEATHER

The theme for Sunday's jazz session at the Hollywood Bowl could have been "What a Difference a Day Made." It was hard to accept that the same producers for Saturday's half of the Playboy Jazz Festival were also responsible for the vastly superior presentation 24 hours later.

Fusion worked in its several manifestations, from the Brazilian-tinted Latin jazz ensemble of Flora Purim and Airto to the guest appearance of pianist Lalo Schifrin bringing his Argentinian soul to a Dizzy Gillespie band made up of Afro-Americans, Cubans and Caucasians in a riotous update of "Manteca."

The biggest crowd mover, almost an earthshaker, was Spyro Gyra, whose pop fusion formula worked its way implacably toward two uproars and two encores. The formula involved no audience seduction a la Kenny G; though it stayed on far too long, the band is valid on its own modest level. Jay Beckenstein's saxophone is the big fish in this creatively confined pond, though some of the most interesting solos were the work of vibraphonist Dave Samuels.

Even the brief opening appearance by jazz talent contest winners came out ahead. Harold McKinney's piano solo on Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" exuded buoyancy and charm. He was followed by Scott Kretzer, a tenor saxophonist mature beyond his years, with a style grounded in the mainstream.

A sextet aptly billed as the Timeless All Stars blended class, insight, depth and passion with its impeccable front-line blend of Harold Land on tenor, Curtis Fuller on trombone and Bobby Hutcherson on vibes. Creative juices flowed freely in originals by these men and

others by the bassist, Buster Williams, and pianist Cedar Walton. Drummer Billy Higgins completed this flawless group.

The band of Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham proclaimed its loyalty to the everlasting verities of the blues, with Mrs. Cheatham at the piano keeping the spark alive and her lyrics mercifully intelligible. Too bad trumpeters Snooky Young and Clara Bryant were denied featured spots while the saxes assumed a heavy solo burden.

The Latin interlude by Purim, Airto & Co. was part Brazilian, part West Indian, due to the sound of Andy Narell's steel drums. Purim's voice interacted neatly with Gary Meek's saxophone. Dave Valentin, a slick flutist, served as ambassador for the pipes of Pan-Americana. For anyone in search of a light interlude of whistling, bird calls and echo effects, Airto supplied them. More germane to the Latin mood was an arrangement of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," so complex that trying to figure out the rhythms was like working an acrostic.

Pianist Ahmad Jamal's quartet (bass, drums and percussion) functions more convincingly as a unit than any other group of its kind. Sedulously building a Joseph's coat of many colors and moods, Jamal worked tightly with the others, but not without leaving them room to reveal their separate images. Bassist James Cammack left no doubt that the electric bass can belong in a small acoustic jazz unit.

Along with a sense of *déjà entendu* in the 20-man Dizzy Gillespie orchestra, there was a stunning reminder of the headway jazz has made. The updates of material from the 1940s were delivered with a conviction and powerhouse abandon of which no orchestra in the early bop days would have been

capable. In addition to the leader, five other trumpeters spun their way through charts so demanding that they would have made mincemeat out of any old-timer's lips. Listening to Jon Faddis, whether in a section-leading or solo role, one felt one's own chops aching by osmosis. The man is, in the jazz vernacular, ridiculous.

Gillespie was, of course, a pioneer in the fusing of jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms. His "Night in Tunisia," with the Cuban percussionist Ignacio Berroa heavily featured, was as undated as an open check. So was his arrangement of "Lover Come Back to Me," its meters switching from 6/4 to 3/4 to 4/4. Gillespie himself, though he let the other trumpeters shoulder much of the burden, acquitted himself better than at any time in recent years.

Bobby McFerrin's one-man vocal circus is like nothing else in show business. Though much of his time was devoted to interaction with the crowd (he even wandered around turning the names of customers into ad-lib songs), the startling changes of range, from bass to soprano, are the aural equivalent of a Wall Street chart during a panicky week. Alone, McFerrin put his imprimatur on everything from John Coltrane's "Naima" to "The Star-Spangled Banner" (so soulfully that it's hard to imagine a ballpark where he wouldn't be the perfect game opener). For a while, too, he dueted with a remarkable bassist, Rob Wasserman, in a spine-tingling "All Blues." Emcee Bill Cosby coaxed him into a couple of encores; he could well have closed the show, but finally we were informed that Mr. Charles was ready.

Ray Charles has been on automatic pilot with his show for

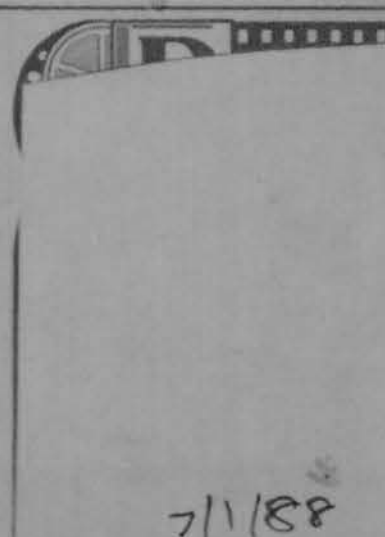
JOSE GALVEZ / Los Angeles Times



Spyro Gyra's Jay Beckenstein and bassist Oscar Cartaya, in Lakers jersey, on stage at Bowl.

decades. Legs flailing, voice croaking, blues piano ablaze, he went through motions his listeners have learned so well that they offered the ritual responses. Why the reluctance to update the act? Is he just playing it safe? Or simply lazy? No matter, only the most cantankerous of customers could have left this eight-hour banquet feeling less than completely sated.

Sunday's attendance was 17,788.



JAZZ REVIEW

# Zawinul Syndicate: Fusion Band for the '90s

By LEONARD FEATHER

To objectively judge the Zawinul Syndicate, heard Wednesday at the Palace, it is necessary to erase one's mental slate; to forget about Weather Report (not easy) and even avoid comparisons with "The Immigrants," Joe Zawinul's last album.

Such artists as Abraham Laboriel, Alex Acuña and the vocal quartet Perri, all valuable contributors to that recording, were not involved in this trimmed-down touring version of his current band. Nevertheless, what was presented succeeded, at least partially, in achieving the synthesizer virtuoso's main goal of uniting many musical cultures within a powerful and at times rhythmically intoxicating framework.

Guitarist Scott Henderson and drummer Cornell Rochester, both

heard on the record, were flanked by two other percussionists and a bassist at the start of the two-hour set. At first, it seemed that the listener was to be subjected to a barrage of highly intense cross-rhythms, with very little of melodic interest, but halfway through his second composition, Zawinul got up a head of steam as the various ethnic influences—layered textures of Latin, West Indian, African, even quasi-Scottish sounds—began to work their magic.

Zawinul's use of the vocoder for vocal distortions resulted only in some incoherent mumbling that works better in the carefully balanced record. Of the band members who sang, by far the most remarkable was Lynn Figgmont, the conga player. In "Shadow and Light" (sung on the record by Richard Page, who wrote the lyrics), and in the lead vocal on the new version

of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" (Zawinul's mid-1960s hit), she drew from a bottomless well of soul in two stirring performances.

Cornell Rochester's drum specialty was hypnotically powerful; he is the owner of the fastest feet and hands—and the most responsive bass drum—in the West. Later in the set, Zawinul began blowing into an instrument of his own invention, the Korg Pepe, an oddity that manages, with its bassoon-like mouthpiece and button-key design, to sound like everything from an accordion to a tenor sax.

Token acknowledgment to jazz was offered in a quirky version of Thelonious Monk's "Little Rootie Tootie." For the rest, though, this was essentially Zawinul's personal trip as composer and leader of what may yet develop into one of the most versatile and appealing fusion bands of the 1990s.

THE PLACE TO GO

# From Russia With Love: Paul Horn at Vine St. Bar & Grill

By LEONARD FEATHER

Flutist and composer Paul Horn has an American passport, a Canadian residency (he has lived in Victoria, B.C., since 1970), a Dutch wife and the soul of a vagabond. His wanderlust has taken him from India to Egypt to China to the U.S.S.R. in search of music, peace and global understanding.

He has just returned from his third tour of the Soviet Union, organized, as was his first trip five years ago, through the Canadian government. Unlike Dave Brubeck and Billy Taylor, whose brief, overlapping recent visits to the U.S.S.R. were confined to Moscow and Leningrad, Horn stayed in the U.S.S.R. almost four weeks, playing 20 concerts in four cities, soaking up impressions of *perestroika* and glumness along with some starkly negative reactions.

"There's a lot more happening now than I didn't find in 1983," said Horn, whose quartet opens tonight at the Vine St. Bar & Grill. "Jazz is more in evidence above ground; there were jazz clubs in every city we visited—Kiev, where we sold out twice in a fine 4,000-seat theater, Moscow, where we played six evening shows and two matinees, all sold out, Donetsk, a mining town where they have a really big pizza following; and Odessa, where we did five shows."

Horn, whose second visit to Russia last September was the only one conducted, under a U.S.-U.S.S.R. exchange (he was in a show with Kris Kristofferson), found the Soviets more open both in words and deeds.

"For the first time we were shown some modern art, and we had the impression that painters are now free to do more abstract things. The Soviet government also is officially permitting rock concerts; they draw 10,000 to 15,000 people a night, and they are saying things in the lyrics that are quite anarchistic.

"It's ironic—an interpreter told us that there were all kinds of KGB men taking photos of the audience, so on the one hand they're allowing people to do this, but on the other hand they're checking out who's doing it, sort of making them feel paranoid. But the kids don't give a damn; they'll sing about not wanting to fight, about getting out of Afghanistan and looking for peace—sort of like our Vietnam situation—and the government is actually funding these concerts."

From the practical standpoint, the Horn tour was an unprecedented hassle. "We took our own sound system along, our own transformer; previously we've played straight gigs, but now I wanted to do some fusion things involving electronic



Flutist Paul Horn will open at the Vine St. Bar & Grill tonight.

equipment, and logistically it was a big problem, because we had to deal with the bureaucracy as well as play our music. That never happened before, and this time it was partly because of a shortage of good interpreters, due to the Reagan-Gorbachev summit.

"All the best interpreters were busy, and we were stuck with some who were really incompetent. And Gosconcert, the Soviet concert agency, a big bureaucracy itself, was grappling with all these other visitors: the New York Philharmonic, a road company of 'Cats,'

the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the BBC Symphony—so it was a battle every step of the way.

"There were no rooms vacant in the best hotels, and they have lesser hotels that are really falling apart, with dirty bathrooms. You realize what a basically poor country this is, not what you'd expect a major superpower to be; and you notice that people are not very kind to each other in the work place.

"A couple of my musicians had studied Russian, which helped a little, but you could still go to a restaurant and see 15 waiters

drums (he will be at Vine St. tonight) and three Canadian musicians. "The enthusiasm, the adulation for us as jazz artists, in Kiev and Odessa was really heartwarming. On our final night in Moscow, everyone rushed down the aisles and stood in front of the stage as they did in the old big-band days. I hate to use the expression, but they made us feel like rock stars."

Horn sensed a dichotomy between the attitudes of two Soviet generations. "The older people, who are in the majority, don't want change because they're lazy; they don't care to work too hard, they

just want to get paid. But the young people are really eager for change and they refuse to hold on to the old values."

There was a delicious irony in Horn's second Canadian-backed tour. "In 1983, all of us had U.S. passports, but because there was so much tension between America and the U.S.S.R. we were announced as a Canadian group. This time, although Robin and I were the only ones who had American passports, we were promoted as U.S. band. The Cold War must really be melting, and it's nice to feel that thaw."

standing around, not giving a damn, serving you when they're good and ready. If you want to take a taxi to the gig, the driver may or may not feel like taking you there; he gets paid either way. There's just no incentive, and somehow I was exposed to that sort of thing more this time than in the past."

Despite all the frustrations, there was consolation in the reaction to Horn's quintet, which included his 28-year-old son Robin Horn on

Los Angeles Times 6/27/88

## Jazz Reviews

### Teaming of Pisano, Castro-Neves a Rare Offering

By LEONARD FEATHER

Call it a musical love affair between two guitarists, or simply plectrum heaven. By any definition, the team of John Pisano and Oscar Castro-Neves, presented Saturday at Le Cafe in Sherman Oaks, qualifies as a rare example of musical empathy.

Pisano, a New Yorker, came to prominence playing and writing with the Tijuana Brass; Castro-Neves, though born in Rio, studied in L.A. and became a pioneer in the bossa nova movement.

Backed by John Leftwich on electric and upright bass and the Brazilian drummer Claudio Slon, they are intensely rhythmic performers; often while one man is soloing the other will urge him on with relentlessly syncopated figures. Occasionally they will join forces in octave unison, their contrasting sounds complementing one another: Castro-Neves crisp and bright, Pisano gentle and light.

Although both men are great composers, during the two appearances manifested itself in frequent smiles. At one point, perhaps spontaneously, they both began singing the melody wordless. One song was a brief, amusing sample of Castro-Neves as a vocalist, applying his crusty tones to "Got a Way With Women."

So bright is the interaction of the quartet that even during Leftwich's bass solos both guitarists would find ingeniously contrasting ways of backing him. Pisano and Castro-Neves are incapable of uttering a dull moment, but that is an understatement. They are capable of generating rhythmic and melodic joy.

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BARBARA MARTIN / Los Angeles Times

*Joe Pass: "The guitar sound can be enhanced by electronics, bringing it more vividly to life, but without changing the basic sound of the instrument."*

on to this recording company, to find and develop lesser-known artists nobody wants to bother with. It won't interfere with my albums on Pablo; in fact, my first new release is almost ready now—it's a collection of songs associated with Fred Astaire."

Another new development for Pass is his broadening of the instrument's tonal scope in his own performances. "I believe," he says, "that the era of that pure, dry Charlie Christian sound is past." (Christian was the guitarist in the Benny Goodman Sextet who became the first to bring the electric guitar to world-wide popularity around 1940.)

"The guitar sound can be enhanced by electronics," Pass added, "bringing it more vividly to life, but without changing the basic sound of the instrument—in other words, we're getting to the point where you can't recognize that it's a guitar, which I'm afraid seems to happen 90% of the time nowadays."

A little of this electronic experimentation, surprising in the light of Pass' longstanding adherence to traditional tonal purity, can be observed in the first Polytone album, "Sound Project." But essentially the straight-ahead nature of the Pass persona, both in terms of sound quality and improvisational mastery, remains unchanged.

In 1976, during a "blindfold test" interview, Pass listened to a recording by Jimi Hendrix. After a minute or so he said, "Take it off; that's enough of that. It has a fuzz tone and a wah-wah. I wouldn't know who that was; I'm not interested. I'd rate it no stars as far as jazz is concerned, and as far as music is concerned, I would again say no stars."

A few years later, in a similar interview, he listened to a record by James (Blood) Ulmer and commented: "I have a 13-year-old son who can play better than that." Nothing much has changed except

still playing the guitar. (Pass also has a daughter, Nina, 16, who plays drums and keyboards.)

Since the end of his official association with Granz (they remain good friends), Pass has taken, he says, "a lot of jobs that Norman wouldn't have approved of; for example, I'm doing more nightclub work. Right now I'm in the middle of three weeks at the Summer House Inn in La Jolla with a trio.

"I spend a lot of time in Europe now. I'll be doing the North Sea Jazz Festival in The Hague, as well as the Canadian festivals in Montreal and Toronto. I recorded with the Vienna String Quartet in Vienna, and I'm planning to do something with the Vienna Philharmonic. I also played at a small club in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, because a friend of mine opened a new jazz room there.

"It's fun getting into new situations. I played six cities in Italy with Niels Pedersen [the Danish bassist] and [alto saxophonist] Lee Konitz. But that doesn't mean I've ended any of the previous associations. I'll be at the Hollywood Bowl with Ella on July 20, and although I haven't worked with Oscar Peterson since November, I'm sure we'll still be doing occasional dates together."

Along with the innovative tonal experimentation and the solo and trio assignments, Pass will be reunited now and then with some of the mainstream jazz artists who were a vital part of his early associations. Most notably, in mid-August he will be teamed with Benny Carter, Herb Ellis and Ray Brown, all fellow alumni of the various Granz "Jazz at the Philharmonic" units, for a concert along with pianist Gene Harris, drummer Jimmie Smith and others at the Concord Jazz Festival.

Summing up his current situation, Pass said, "I'm not going to be involved in as many of those strictly set things as I used to be. I expect to be doing more of what I want to do, which is—well, just

JAZZ REVIEW

Lessons From Master McLean at Catalina's

By LEONARD FEATHER

Jackie McLean, who introduced his band at Catalina's Bar and Grill on Tuesday, represents the second of three jazz generations. His father was a name band guitarist; his son, Rene, like Jackie a gifted saxophonist, has contributed compositions to the latter's library.

In fact, one of Rene McLean's original works bore a title, "Time for Change," that seemed symbolic of what both men have contributed over the years. Jackie McLean's alto saxophone is capable at times of a searing, mordant sound and of impassioned, focused energy, yet at other points he revealed a sharply contrasted restraint, as he demonstrated in the pop standard "A House Is Not a Home," to which he brought a personal touch without damage to the song's inherent qualities.

The performance began with two numbers by the rhythm section, designed as showcases for the piano of Hotep Galeta. This adventurous artist from Cape Town, South Africa, who first heard jazz via the Voice of America, has long since absorbed the essence of the present keyboard generation, seemingly with a bow to McCoy Tyner among others. On his second piece, "You Don't Know What Love Is," his subtle yet briskly stated ornamentations brought harmonically new and vivid life to the 1941 pop song.

McLean's opening number was an original piece that sounded like a cousin of "Giant Steps." That this is an organized group soon became evident, as all four men (with Nat Reeves on bass and the explosively

eloquent drummer Carl Allen) moved in parallel motions on various introductions, theme statements and endings. One tune seemed to hop, skip and jump from one meter to another while McLean rode the crest of a surging rhythmic wave.

It came as no surprise to hear that both McLean and Galeta are both professors at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. Visitors to Catalina's, where this splendid unit is booked through Sunday, will find plenty to learn on a more informal basis.

6/26/88

# Many New Things Come to Joe Pass

By LEONARD FEATHER

Joe Pass, the most honored jazz guitarist of the past decade (he has won dozens of awards as No. 1 in his field since his first Down Beat poll victory in 1975), has entered a new stage of his illustrious career.

No, he hasn't moved into the nether world of fuzz tones, flanges and frequency analyzers. His guitar still sounds like a guitar. No, he hasn't mastered the art of playing while lying supine on the stage. He does, however, have new manage-

ment, a new record affiliation and a new game plan for his activities in general.

Well known since the mid-1960s, when he toured for two years with George Shearing, he was a key figure in the Los Angeles studio

and jazz clubs, but the key figure in his rise to world-class stature was Norman Granz, the impresario who first heard him at Donte's in 1970.

A couple of years later, Pass was all over the Granz map, recording for his Pablo label, concertizing with Oscar Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald, both of whom Granz managed. Often presented as a solo recitalist, he was built by Granz into a virtual counterpart of Segovia.

Granz—to whom, Pass says, "I owe an immeasurable amount—we had 15 great years together"—has now phased out of the picture. "Norman has had a lot of health problems, so has Ella, who's doing very little right now, so Norman set me up with another agent.

The other important change is that Norman sold Pablo Records to the Fantasy group. He worked out a deal for me to record for Fantasy, still on the Pablo label, but during the year or so that it took him to set that up, I did something else on the side."

The "something else" was a partnership with Tommy Gumina. Once best known as an accordionist, Gumina became successful in the electronics business, manufacturing instruments. Last year he and Pass started a company, Polytone Records. They recorded an album with Gumina playing the Polycorus, a sort of super-accordion, and with drummer Jimmie Smith. Another album, displaying the same trio plus clarinetist Buddy De Franco, will be released shortly.

The Gumina-Pass association goes back to the early 1960s, when, Pass recalls, "I persuaded him to manufacture a small, so-called 'Mini-Brute' guitar amplifier, because I'd become very tired of lugging those big amps around. I wanted something light and easy to carry, with a genuine jazz sound. Tommy managed to make one for me, and it became an important thing on the market, everybody started making small amps.

"Tommy and I would like to hold

# CALENDAR



## The Trials of Tiffany

THE BATTLES ROYAL OVER THE 16-YEAR-OLD POP STAR (INSET, IN HER COUNTRY PERIOD, AGE 12). A REPORT BY DENNIS McDOUGAL, PAGE 6.

# CD Jazz Library: Swing to Avant-Garde

By LEONARD FEATHER

**W**e music lovers live in exciting times. The establishment of the compact disc has been more than a technological revolution. From the standpoint of many jazz students it has become an incentive to start a serious, comprehensive library.

It's sad to reflect that most of today's jazz fans are too young ever to have heard in person the majority of giants created by this art form. To them, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Jack Teagarden, Art Tatum, Lester Young, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington and Charlie Parker are just names in a history book or on a record label.

But by the same token it is rewarding to know that jazz, more than any music that preceded it, has been preserved in large measure through the ever greater fidelity of phonograph records, and that the compact

disc represents the disc medium in its most sophisticated state.

The jazz market has provided most major companies with an opportunity to repackage, usually with enhanced sound and often with additional, previously unissued tracks, some of the masterpieces of the last 60-plus years. Within a few years the LP will be well on its way to oblivion, while CDs will have become the dominant medium for listening to recorded music.

The list that follows is designed for (a) the neophyte whose interest in jazz may have coincided with the arrival of the CD, (b) collectors who may have a modest store of LPs but who would like to flesh out their library to include in the CD format most of the indispensable figures.

Because MCA Records has not yet transferred to CD its early masterpieces by Art Tatum, Basie, Nat King Cole and Benny Goodman, substitutions were made wherever possible. Inexplicably too, MCA and CBS have left on the shelf their classic works by Jimmie Lunceford (who led one of the three great bands of the Swing Era alongside Ellington's and Basie's). Nor has CBS made CDs of its exclusive store of works by the greatest of all blues singers, Bessie Smith.

These omissions aside, the list takes in all but a handful of the vitally important artists. It represents my own opinion rather than a reflection of mass popularity. In the case of the fusion and avant-garde selections, the term "classic" has been used loosely; after all, it takes decades to determine whether a work is really of classic stature.

## Traditional

**Louis Armstrong—"Great Original Performances 1923-1931."** BBC CD 597. Tracing Satchmo from his King Oliver days through the first crude attempts to lead a band, this set is mainly valuable for the Hot Five and Hot Seven cuts that established him as the role model for every trumpeter and singer of the day: "West End Blues," "Muggles," "St. James Infirmary" and "Knockin' a Jug," etc. With him are Earl Hines, Lil Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Johnny Dodds and Lonnie Johnson.

**"At the Jazz Band Ball—Chicago/New York/Dixieland."** RCA Bluebird 6752-2RB. A fine cross section of dates by white musicians who took their jazz seriously in the 1930s. Of the 22 cuts, 16 are by Muggsy Spanier's Ragtime Band, with the rugged Irish-American cornetist surrounded by the likes of Joe Bushkin and George Brunies; four are by Bud Freeman's Summa Cum Laude Band, with the tenor sax pioneer slipping and sliding his *sui generis* way through "The Eel." There are two early Eddie Condon cuts with trombonist Jack Teagarden playing and singing his soul out.

**"Jazz in the Thirties."** Disques Swing CDSW 8457. This two-CD gold mine yields Jess Stacy playing two of Bix Beiderbecke's piano pieces; Gene Krupa in "Blues of Israel" with Israel Crosby on bass; numerous examples of Joe Venuti as catalytic jazz violinist and of Benny Goodman leading a small jam band; Bunny Berigan heading combos that include Edgar Sampson (composer of "Stomping at the Savoy") in a rare appearance as solo saxophonist; Adrian Rollini, a pioneer of the now all-but-defunct bass saxophone, leading a band that includes the Dorsey Brothers, and Joe Sullivan, a Hines-inspired pianist, in his own "Little Rock Getaway" and "Gin Mill Blues." Many of these names may be unfamiliar or dim memories, but the music is invaluable.

**"Kansas City Jazz."** Atlantic 7-81701-2. The rolling, driving sounds of Kansas City

jazz were part of the 1930s Pendergast era, yet they are re-created with total fidelity in these 1950s and 1970s sessions. This is a jubilant and soulful collection, with "Confessin' the Blues" sung and played by pianist Jay McShann (using, of all people, John Scofield on guitar), with Big Joe Turner singing the blues about Piney Brown, and one Buster Smith, who allegedly was Charlie Parker's mentor, in a rare appearance on record, not to mention the instrumentals with Buck Clayton on trumpet and Vic Dickenson on trombone.

**"Ridin' in Rhythm."** Disques Swing CDSW 8453. Several of the great black bands of the 1930s are gathered under this two-CD roof: Duke Ellington in his first version of "Sophisticated Lady," Benny Carter leading the most elegant of all sax sections, the brothers Fletcher and Horace Henderson leading their own bands, the tenor saxophone grandsire Coleman Hawkins in New York (with the Hendersons) and London (with Jack Hylton). As a bonus there's the first famous boogie-woogie solo, Meade Lux Lewis playing his own "Honky Tonk Train Blues," which in 1936 triggered the nationwide mania for eight-to-the-bar piano.

**Fats Waller—"Great Original Performances 1927-1934."** BBC CD 598. Waller was much more than the Clown Prince of Jazz, as

this odd miscellany reveals. He's heard as a powerfully individual piano soloist (in his own "Alligator Crawl" and "Handful of Keys"); as leader of various recording units with Red Allen, Pee Wee Russell, Jack Teagarden and J.C. Higginbotham; as organist, pianist and/or vocalist in groups led by the black cornetist Thomas Morris and the white vaudevillian Ted Lewis. There's even a group called the Little Chocolate Dandies with Don Redman, Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins, all in the sax section.

## Swing

**Duke Ellington—"The Blanton-Webster Band."** RCA Bluebird 5651 2 RB. Though the CD is named for bassist Jimmy Blanton and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, who joined Ellington in 1939, the band during this period was a galaxy of geniuses: Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Cootie Williams, Lawrence Brown, all perfect subjects for Ellington's (and Billy Strayhorn's) pen. Beyond question, this was the most glorious of all orchestras in its peak glory years.

**"From Spirituals to Swing."** Vanguard VC D2 47/48. At these live Carnegie Hall concerts presented by John Hammond in 1938 and 1939, the roots of jazz were represented by Mitchell's Christian Singers,

Big Bill Broonzy, Sonny Terry and Ida Cox, early jazz and swing by Sidney Bechet, Lester Young, Hot Lips Page, the Count Basie band and the Benny Goodman Sextet.

**Benny Goodman—"Sing, Sing, Sing."** RCA Bluebird 5630-2-RB. The definitive representation of the band during its halcyon years, notable for the inclusion of such arrangers as Edgar Sampson ("Don't Be That Way"), Fletcher Henderson ("Sometimes I'm Happy" and "King Porter Stomp"), Mary Lou Williams (Roll 'Em") and Gordon Jenkins ("Goodbye"). Along with the leader and the other soloists there are such bonuses as vocals by Ella Fitzgerald and Jimmy Rushing.

**Artie Shaw—"Begin the Beguine."** RCA Bluebird 6274-2-RB. An admirable cross-section of the Swing Era. The 20 cuts include a small combo (the Gramercy 5, with Johnny Guarneri on harpsichord and Billy Butterfield on trumpet), the regular orchestra ("Star Dust," with Jack Jenney on trombone) and the enlarged ensemble with strings ("Frenesi," "Temptation"). Unlike most virtuoso leaders, Shaw was not only a magnificent clarinetist but a talented composer-arranger. He wrote the band's haunting theme, "Nightmare," the lyrics and music to "Any Old Time" (vocal by Billie Holiday) and co-wrote "Moonray." William



# CALENDAR

Grant Still's two-part "Blues" is a unique example of a great black classical composer's successful venture into jazz.

**"The Best of Art Tatum."** Pablo PACD 2405-418-2. Tatum was the greatest jazz soloist who ever lived, in the view of all those who don't accord that honor to Charlie Parker. Though recorded in his declining years, this set is a compendium of sessions surrounded by his peers: Roy Eldridge, Ben Webster, Buddy De Franco, Lionel Hampton, Benny Carter, Buddy Rich, Jo Jones, Louie Bellson.

## Bebop

**Dizzy Gillespie—"Shaw Nuff."** Musicraft MVSCD 53. As was made clear in my original liner notes (reprinted on this CD reissue), the small group works of the mid-'40s triggered the bebop revolution: One tune with Dexter Gordon, seven with Charlie Parker, four with Sonny Stitt. Of the nine big band items, a few are of value as illustrations of how the idiom was adapted to the orchestral form, and as early examples of the work of John Lewis and Ray Brown. But did we really need two versions of a tune called "He Beeped When He Should Have Bopped"?

**"Charlie Parker Compact Jazz."** Verve 833-288-2. Bird's work by 1948-53 was uneven, but there are several masterpieces here; the unforgettable "Just Friends" with a string ensemble, "Bloomdido" in a reunion with Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, and such Parker originals as "Au Privave" (with Miles Davis); also "Lover Man" (with Red Rodney).

**Bud Powell—"Jazz Giant."** Verve 829-937 2. Powell's early (and best) works are on Blue Note, not yet on CDs, but the 1949 session here, with Ray Brown and Max Roach, including such Powell pieces as "Celia" and "Tempus Fugit," reaffirm that he was the guiding bebop piano force.

**Clifford Brown-Max Roach—"Study in Brown."** EmArcy 814-646-2. Brown, who died at 25, was a lyrical 1950s counterpart to Gillespie; both as trumpeter and composer he is brilliantly represented here in a quintet with Harold Land on tenor sax.

## Vocal

**Ella Fitzgerald—"These Are the Blues."** Verve 829-536-2. The dozens of Fitzgerald albums of Kern, Porter, Berlin, Ellington et al. have attested to her stature as the doyenne of pop-vocal jazz, but the blues cannot be contested as a common denominator. Moreover, her aides here (Roy Eldridge on trumpet, Wild Bill Davis on organ, Herb Ellis on guitar, Ray Brown on bass and Gus

Johnson on drums) are searing plus factors in a set devoted mainly to songs by other singers (Alberta Hunter, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Leroy Carr, Louis Armstrong, Joe Turner).

**"The Quintessential Billie Holiday."** Vol. I, 1933-1935. Columbia CK 40646. The pristine Lady Day is surrounded by various Teddy Wilson combos featuring Benny Goodman, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge, Johnny Hodges, Chu Berry, Dave Barbours, et. al. The songs vary from attractive ("If You Were Mine," "You Let Me Down") to atrocious ("Eeny Meeny Miney Mo"), but Holiday administers CPR to all of them.

**Dinah Washington—"The Bessie Smith Songbook."** EmArcy 826 663-2. Just as vocalists today are singing Dinah Washington tributes, the Queen herself paid homage to her own forebear. "Jail House Blues," "Back Water Blues" and the rest succeed because Washington rises above the mock-antiquated backgrounds with her tart, imperious sound.

**"The Singers: 1940s."** Columbia CK 40652. Sarah Vaughan's "Summertime," Mildred Bailey's "I'm Nobody's Baby" and blues cuts by Jack Teagarden, Maxine Sullivan, Cleanhead Vinson and others light up this rich reminder of a golden vocal age.

**"The Singers: 1950s."** Columbia CK 40799. The too-soon-forgotten Lee Wiley (her sound cushioned by Bobby Hackett's cornet), Jimmy Rushing, Billie Holiday in a superb "Fine and Mellow," and Betty Roche taking the A Train lead to hints of the '60s in Lambert, Hendricks & Ross and Betty Carter. (If you find the Joe Williams cut inadequate, check out "Count Basie & Joe Williams," Verve 835-329-2).

## Midway

**Dave Brubeck—"Time Out."** Columbia CK 40585. Brubeck and Paul Desmond, his alto saxophonist in the '50s and '60s, defied the convention that all jazz had to be played in 4/4 (and occasionally 3/4) time; out of this defiance came "Take Five," in 5/4, "Blue Rondo a La Turk" in 9/8, not to mention the use of two meters in contrapuntal contest. Oddly enough, this was not only Brubeck's best-selling album but also his best.

**Miles Davis—"Kind of Blue."** Columbia CK 40579. This was a bridge over the troubled waters that had separated jazz in chords from jazz using modes—a difference you can feel even if you don't know the technical meaning. Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane and Bill Evans contributed to this catalytic innovation.

**Miles Davis—"Sketches of Spain."** Columbia CK 40578. Gil Evans' arrangements

used textures almost unknown to orchestral jazz, the Spanish tinge established this as the greatest in a memorable series of Davis-Evans collaborations.

**Modern Jazz Quartet—"Pyramid."** Atlantic 1325-2. The definitive chamber jazz unit, with John Lewis playing his own "Django" and "Vendome," Jim Hall's "Romaine" and



Ray Brown's title tune. Milt Jackson, Percy Heath and Connie Kay were the sidemen then (1959-60) as now.

**"Atlantic Jazz Piano."** Atlantic 7 81707-2. Arranged chronologically, the 16 tunes provide a fascinating cross section of '50s and '60s keyboard jazz: Erroll Garner, Mary Lou Williams, Lennie Tristano, Ray Charles, Thelonious Monk (with Art Blakey's Messengers), McCoy Tyner, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, even an acoustic Joe Zawinul.

**J.A.T.P. All Stars—"Return to Happiness, Tokyo, 1983."** Pablo PACD-2620-117-2. No library would be complete without an example of the live-concert jam session format, with which producer Norman Granz revolutionized jazz recording in the 1940s. This double package, given the presence of Oscar Peterson, Joe Pass, Zoot Sims, Clark Terry, Ella Fitzgerald, Sweets Edison and Lockjaw Davis, is typical in its jubilant swing-cum-bop spirit.

## Fusion

**"Chick Corea Compact Jazz."** Polydor 831-365-2. This involves both early incarnations of Corea's Return to Forever group: The early unit with its Brazilian infusions and the late-'70s band with its strong rock dynamics. Along the way Flora Purim, Joe Farrell, Stanley Clarke, Al Di Meola and Jean-Luc Ponty are heard from. Corea's mastery of acoustic and electric keyboards is in full view throughout.

**Miles Davis—"Bitches' Brew."** Columbia G2K 40577. Yet another Davis breakthrough,

this was the gateway to the electronic era in jazz. The two-record set has a floating personnel with Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul and/or Larry Young on keyboards, John McLaughlin on guitar, Wayne Shorter on soprano sax, and others on the cutting edge of 1969 fusion.

**"Atlantic Jazz Fusion."** Atlantic 7 81711-2. The internationalization of fusion is represented by the Czech bassist Miroslav Vitous, the German saxophonist Klaus Doldinger and electric groups led by Larry Coryell, Billy Cobham, Les McCann and Jean-Luc Ponty in the 1970s.

**Weather Report—"Black Market."** Columbia CK 34099. Midway through the life of their pioneering fusion band, Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter had Jaco Pastorius on bass, the Peruvian Alex Acuna on percussion and Chester Thompson on drums. Originals by both leaders, and "Barbary Coast" by Pastorius, helped elevate the group.

## Avant-Garde

**Ornette Coleman—"Free Jazz."** Atlantic 1364-2. Enormously influential in its day, this double-quartet (with Don Cherry, Scott La Faro and Bill Higgins backing Coleman on one channel while Eric Dolphy, Freddie Hubbard, Charlie Haden and Ed Blackwell occupy the others) now includes, in the CD version only, an additional first take never before heard. What sounded like total chaos in 1961 seems only partially chaotic today.

**John Coltrane—"A Love Supreme."** MCA Impulse MCAD 5560 VC 467. In the all but illegibly small liner notes, Coltrane describes his spiritual awakening and the path that led to this "humble offering" to God. Recorded in 1964 with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison, this was a singular achievement on an impassioned level far from the chordal (but scarcely less influential) days of his "Giant Steps."

**"Anthony Braxton Live."** RCA Bluebird 6626-2 RB. The musician most emblematic of the 1970s avant-garde, Braxton plays six instruments, from flute to contrabass sax, at festivals in Montreux (with the Canadian trumpeter Kenny Wheeler) and Berlin (with George Lewis on trombone). His compositions, identified by geometric designs instead of titles, are challengingly adventurous.

**"Atlantic Jazz: The Avant Garde."** Atlantic 7 81709-2. Charles Mingus' "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," Roland Kirk's "Inflated Tear" and the Art Ensemble of Chicago (in a piece by saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell) are highlights in this set, which also includes Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" and John Coltrane's "Countdown." The eight works show how greatly the avant-garde varies in accessibility and abstraction. □





## A Tribute to 'Brownie' in LP, Concert

By LEONARD FEATHER

It has become commonplace in the jazz world to salute some immortal in a special concert or album. Tributes to Louis Armstrong, Dinah Washington and more recently Benny Goodman have been frequent, typical and predictable, but recently a more original concept surfaced with the release of "Joy Spring" (Discovery DSCD 946), by trumpeter Bob Summers' Quintet. Subtitled "A Tribute to Clifford Brown," it consists of seven compositions by that legendary, lyrical horn man, and two original works by Summers, "Cliffordish" and "Sweet Brownie."

"I never heard Brownie in person," says Summers, who will recreate the album with a similar quintet from 5 to 9 p.m. this evening at the Grand Avenue Bar of the Biltmore Hotel. "He died in 1966, when I was not quite 12 years old."

"My first influences were Clark Terry in the Duke Ellington trumpet section and Chet Baker with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet. But after high school I went into the Navy, and while I was at the Naval School of Music in Washington, D.C., a trumpet player told me about this new musician he wanted me to listen to. We went to the library at the music school and he played a record by Clifford. That was truly a memorable experience."

This incident took place six years after Brown's death in an auto accident on June 26, 1966, which was also the 20th birthday of his wife, LaRue, and their second wedding anniversary. LaRue Brown Watson is a prominent figure in the Los Angeles jazz community and president of the Jazz Heritage Foundation, under whose auspices the Summers group will be presented. She will be on hand at this evening's tribute.

Brown studied extensively in his native Wilmington, Del., toured with a rhythm and blues band, then worked briefly with Lionel Hampton, touring Europe with him in 1963. He spent the last two years of his life as co-leader of a quintet with drummer Max Roach.

Born in 1930 and reared near Fresno, Summers was 8 when he began studying the horn at elementary school. "As for jazz, I just picked that up myself," he says. "In my high school days there were no stage bands. In my senior year they had a dance band, in which I played drums, but right after high school I gave up drums and concentrated on the horn."

Besides, free-lance work, he played three years with Maynard Ferguson and nearly five years with the Basie band.

The Summers group, which he



Tribute trumpeter Bob Summers with LaRue Brown Watson.

hopes to keep together at least on an occasional basis, includes a promising tenor and alto saxophonist, Mark Rowland, a product of Eagle Rock High School's celebrated jazz program, and a former sideman with Louie Bellson and Ray Charles. The potent rhythm team includes Frank Strazzeri, perhaps the most ubiquitous pianist in town; Andy Sumpkins, the bassist who rose to fame during his years with the George Shearing Quintet; and drummer Mike Stephans (replacing Jeff Hamilton, who played on the album).

Summers has managed to capture the essence of the Brown legacy not only in his own improvisational lyricism, but in the arrangements he has made of such now-standard Brown works as

"Joy Spring," "Daahoud" and "Sandu." His decision to carry forward the Brown legacy was a logical inspiration, one that will provide a history lesson for most listeners.

### JAZZ REVIEW

## Aarons Leads Ad-Hoc Band

Flugelhornist-trumpeter Al Aarons organized a seven-piece band for the latest in the Los Angeles Jazz Society's series of Sunday brunches at the Hollywood Holiday Inn.

Any ad-hoc group of this size is unusual these days for economic reasons, particularly when it presents arrangements of original material. Aarons wisely enlisted the assistance of his pianist, Phil Wright, who brought in a library of unpretentious but comfortable works to provide neatly cohesive ensembles.

With Aarons—whose sound and style were equally effective individually and as leader of the four-man horn section—were the exceptionally inventive valve trombonist Mike Fahn, the veteran jazz flute-master Sam Most and Jeff Clayton, who doubled on alto and baritone saxophones.

Although nothing startlingly new happened, what emerged was consistently pleasing mainstream jazz. Wright provided some of the more upscale moments at the keyboard, with bassist Allan Jackson and drummer John Guerin offering solid support in such Wright originals as "Lazy Day" and "The Chaser."

A surprise guest was the Rev. O.C. Smith, still doubling as a singer. In "Watch What Happens" he offered evidence that his bur-nished baritone is as commandingly personal as ever.

—LEONARD FEATHER

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### JAZZ REVIEW

## Vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake at Le Cafe

By LEONARD FEATHER

Practicing what one preaches is not the easiest task in music, but for 15 years Charlie Shoemake has combined his busy career as a teacher with appearances and recordings as a vibraphonist and composer.

Sunday evening at Le Cafe in

Sherman Oaks, he hit the ground flying. Playing an original tune, "Stand-Up Guys," he took an opening solo that ran to an estimated 2,500 notes, more than half of them evenly spaced eighth notes. Technical expertise as a means to an end is admirable, but Shoemake's explosion was not even sound and fury; in fact, a little fury

would have been welcome.

Things changed for the better when, slowing the tempo, he displayed his affinity for the blues on an old Charlie Parker line, "Barbados." The double-time flurries made sense, tempered as they were by moments of relaxation. But Shoemake came closer to a full display of emotion in "I Thought

7/3/88

# Ruth Brown's Battle Royal

By LEONARD FEATHER

In fighting for one's legal rights in the jungle that is the music business, it takes more than a good lawyer. It takes a dedicated lawyer with a background as a lifelong fan.

Such, it seems, is the lesson to be learned from the case of 60-year-old R&B singer Ruth Brown vs. Atlantic Records. As a result of an action she triggered after years of effort, she recently received her first check in 28 years for royalties that Atlantic had claimed weren't due her; moreover, the royalty status of many other R&B veterans has been reexamined and other artists, or their estates, will receive payments.

Discussing the much publicized action during a recent stint at the Hollywood Roosevelt's Cinegrill, Brown looked back at the days when she was Atlantic's biggest star, with such hits as "Teardrops From My Eyes," "5-10-15 Hours," "Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean" virtually putting Atlantic Records on the map.

"I got about \$69 a tune for those records," she said, "against what was supposed to be a 5% royalty. But I saw very little in the way of royalties, because everything was

being charged off against them—musicians, studio costs, arrangements, packaging, giveaway records."

For Brown and many others, the result was a pattern of negative statements, informing the artists how much they owed Atlantic. Starting in 1969 they were, in effect, written off the books; the quarterly statements required in their contracts were no longer sent.

Meanwhile, Ruth Brown suffered. The R&B peak days were past; if her albums were still selling all over the world she knew little about it. From 1964 to 1974 she was barely in show business, taking jobs (sometimes under a pseudonym) as a maid or driving a school bus.

"I started making an effort to find out what was going on with my royalties," she said, "but over a long period four different lawyers took up my case, and every one of them finally said it wasn't worth pursuing, because my account was in the red, and whatever decisions were made, Atlantic would be the beneficiary."

"Then in 1983 a friend introduced me to a man named Howell



Ruth Brown recently got her first royalty check in 28 years and her career is back on track.

Begle. He said he was a great fan of mine, he first saw me when he was 11 years old and he had all my records. He showed me one of my records and I said, 'Where did you get this?' He told me a lot of them were from out of the country and he had to pay a good price for them.

"I told him I wasn't getting a dime out of this. He said, 'You can't be serious.' I assured him I was, and that I hadn't received royalty checks since 1960. He gave me his card, and it wasn't until then that I realized he was an attorney."

And so the great paper chase began. To Begle, Ruth Brown was not simply a client but the idol of his teen years. "He worked so long and hard tracking everything down," Brown said, "that the law firm where he worked wrote off \$60,000 worth of legal time and he worked for me on a pro bono basis. I

introduced him to Big Joe Turner, Sam & Dave, and other artists who will benefit from this in the long run—if they haven't died.

"Joe Turner's was a very sad case. Howell arranged for an episode about this whole royalty business to be shown on CBS in 'West 57th St.,' which Joe and I were on. Joe was very, very ill, on dialysis treatments, and it was heart-wrenching to hear him say, 'I don't want to work. I don't feel like it, but I have to.' Atlantic even billed both Joe and me for the mastering and re-editing of a R&B blues album in 1985, though it was 25 years since we'd recorded for them."

When this situation came to the attention of Ahmet Ertegun, who had founded Atlantic Records (now part of the vast Warner Communications conglomerate), he reacted to Begle's complaint and had the bill canceled. Joe Turner died soon after; Ertegun paid the funeral expenses.

The more Begle looked into the bookkeeping practices, the clearer it became that the negative balances had to be recalculated. "They said I had an outstanding debt to them of some \$30,000," Brown says, "but Howell found this was incorrect, and my first check, after all the deductions, a couple of months ago, was for \$21,000."

The payment was based only on post-1970 reissues, since Atlantic states that records prior to that time are incomplete and such old accounts are beyond tracing. Atlantic has also committed itself to a major role, and possibly a \$2-million contribution, in the launching of a Rhythm & Blues Foundation, which will distribute funds to performers who are down on their luck.

Other record companies are expected to join Atlantic in redressing the grievances of the past and helping to develop the R&B Foundation as a viable entity.

Meanwhile, Ruth Brown's career has bounced back on several levels during the years of Begle's battle. She was seen recently in an acting role in the movie "Hairspray." Her nightclub appearances are growing in number and fees. She has her own weekly syndicated radio show, "Harlem Hit Parade."

Brown took part in the recent Atlantic Records 40th anniversary celebration at Madison Square Gar-

den, but when it was aired on ABC last Sunday her two songs were on the cutting room floor. She hopes for better luck with a musical show that is scheduled to open on Broadway in October.

"I was part of this show, 'Black and Blue,' in Paris in 1985. It ran there for eight months and the reception was like nothing else in my life—10 or 12 curtain calls a night. It was Linda Hopkins, Sandra Reeves Phillips and myself.

"We were supposed to open in New York three months after we closed in Paris, but there were problems. Then we were set to rehearse here next month to open at the Pantages in Hollywood, but that was canceled. We still expect to go to Broadway, with Linda Hopkins, Carrie Smith and some great old-time hoofers and choreographers. It's just music—no book—good songs and great dancing."

Because of the sudden collapse of the Pantages deal she has to fill in some dates now, but the days of financial panic seem at last to be behind her.

"At last," she says, "I can now pay the rent a few months ahead and take care of some bills, so that life is a little easier. I'm still not a rich woman, but at least I don't jump when the telephone rings."

ADDENDUM: Two of the artists omitted from "CD Jazz Library" (Calendar, June 12) have shown up in CDs acquired by the BBC label. They are "Bix Beiderbecke: Great Original Performances 1924-1930" (BBC CD 601), featuring the cornetist with his own group and with Frankie Trumbauer, Paul Whiteman and Hoagy Carmichael; and "Bessie Smith" (BBC CD 602), 15 classics by the blues empress, among them "Empty Bed Blues" and "Take Me for a Buggy Ride," the latter at her final session in 1933. Both CDs have sound quality greatly enhanced from the original mono 78s. Distributed by Mobile Fidelity, 1260 Holm Road, Petaluma, Calif. 94952; (707) 778-0134. □

## JAZZ REVIEW

7/8/

## Heath Quartet Displays Its Flair

The only problem with Jimmy Heath's Quartet at the Vine St. Bar & Grill was brevity. Heath opened and closed Tuesday, playing to a slim post-holiday audience, but his group's performance level left little doubt that he'll be invited back.

This unit is an outgrowth of the Heath Brothers band of the late 1970s, before Percy Heath, the oldest, left to rejoin the Modern Jazz Quartet. Drummer Albert (Tootie) Heath rejoined the group

for Tuesday's gig, bringing an obvious familiarity with the arrangements.

Switching back and forth between tenor and soprano saxophones, Jimmy Heath played a couple of his own works, "Sassy Samba" and "Winter Sleaze" (a variation on the chords of "Autumn Leaves"), as well as the familiar "Hi Fly" and "Invitation." Never a spectacular soloist, he avoided any freak notes or artificial audience-milking devices, maintaining a high

level of taste and invention except on "Round Midnight," the dreary tempo of which seemed to hamper everyone.

The real star was Tony Purrone, who in addition to leading his own trio has worked with the Heath family off and on for a decade. He has developed into an astonishingly fecund guitarist, capable of dazzling single-note lines alternating with stunningly brilliant chord sequences. One can name a dozen guitarists of less talent who have their own recording contracts. Purrone's time for fame is long overdue.

Ben Brown on electric bass completed the quartet, soloing with impressive fluency.

—LEONARD FEATHER

About You," launching the old standard with a pensive four-meal introduction.

The sound of surprise in this group was supplied most vividly by Randy Cannon. A former Shoemaker student, Cannon is a pianist of formidable gifts, with great dynamic variety and consistently galvanizing rhythmic sensitivity. His two section mates, Bob Maize on bass and Larence Marable on drums, pulled their familiar and very considerable weight.

The set ended with a group of songs by Sandi Shoemaker, truly

one of the most underrated of local vocal talents. Singing two of her husband's originals, "Satin Nights" and "Old Acquaintance" (with lyrics by Arthur Hamilton) as examples of what he described as "our idea of what contemporary music should be," she brought purity and jazz-informed intelligence to these well-crafted songs, then capped herself with a beautifully modulated rendition of an old and neglected ballad, "When Your Lover Has Gone."

The quartet rounded off the set with a version of "Get Happy" that

began well, with Shoemaker playing rubato, but led inevitably to the seemingly unrelated and lengthy drum solo that now seems mandatory in every set by every group. A well-played solo, to be sure, but would Harold Arlen have recognized his "Get Happy"?

Los Angeles Times

7/17/88

## The Most Beautiful Speaking Voice in Music

### MABEL MERCER

#### A Life

by James Haskins

(Atheneum: \$19.95; 217 pp.)

#### Reviewed by Leonard Feather

Mabel Mercer was a show-business maverick. Born at the turn of the century in Staffordshire, England, to an English-Welsh vaudeville singer (her father, whom she never knew, was a black American musician), she left school at age 14 to join an aunt's act—as a dancer, because her

"small, sweet soprano voice" was not deemed adequate for the British music hall stages.

On later jobs, she played the piano, even conducted an orchestra in London (disguised as a man, complete with monocle), but it was as a singer that she became the darling of the *entre deux guerres* set in Paris. Bricktop, Josephine Baker, Cole Porter, Django Reinhardt and Paul Robeson float through these pages, as do the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. When the homosexual Kelsey Pharr offered to marry Mercer in order to help her gain entry to the United States,

it was the duke who helped expedite her emergency marriage license.

Author James Haskins seems to be of two minds concerning his subject's voice. At one point, he claims that after a tonsillectomy in Paris, her singing returned to its earlier form, but he quotes others who believe that after the surgery "she became a diseuse," (a song "speaker").

Haskins adds: "She was now in her early 40s. . . . Mabel really had no alternative but to continue singing. She had no other marketable skills to speak of."

The legend clearly outlived the singer. By the time she died in 1984, Mercer had elicited the admiration of everyone from Frank Sinatra to Peggy Lee and had been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Reagan. She enjoyed a fierce loyalty as the *in cult* singer of her day; it was unchic to ignore or denigrate her.

One has to read between the lines to infer that at least a measurable part of her success was due to her personal charm. Haskins quotes a friend: "She spoke the most beautiful English—grammatically correct, excellent diction—and she could talk about an enormous number of subjects."

After the brief token marriage to Pharr, she had a long relationship

with a well-to-do, married Jewish restaurateur whose death was one of a series of traumatic blows in her later years.

Haskins, a sort of fast-food, microwave biographer (yesterday, Lena Horne and Bricktop, recently Corazon Aquino, now Mercer), has a facile style, but he never interviewed Mercer, and his prose never resonates with trenchant observations. He falls short of explaining the words how Mercer created her magic in music. As a consequence, the appeal of this biography will be limited largely to those who know his subject well, and then only because of the endearing portraits drawn by some of her friends.

Feather is *The Times'* jazz critic.

7/10/89

# Chuck Mangione—Superstar With Plans

By LEONARD FEATHER

**B**y almost any definition, Chuck Mangione qualifies as a jazz superstar.

True, his flugelhorn and compositions are strongly pop-oriented, as is his new album, "Eyes of the Veiled Tempress" (CBS 40884), but pure jazz improvisation is never far from his heart or his horn, particularly on in-person bookings when he has a chance to stretch out.

This week, in fact, he will be devoting all his time to jazz festi-

vals, on a country-a-day hegira: Nice today, London Monday ("We'll be on the same bill with Dizzy Gillespie"), then the Hague, Montreux, Perugia and Andorra, backed by his six regular sidemen.

At 47, this small, trim figure from a tight-knit Rochester, N. Y., family ("My dad still sells records and T-shirts at our concerts, he'll be 78 this month") seems immune to the barbs of critics that began to take shape after he moved from a pure jazz background (2½ years with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers) to elaborate settings and extended concert works. His career over the past 18 years has protected him with a chain-link fence of successes, gold and platinum records, Grammy awards, movie scoring commissions and symphony appearances.

True, his music has been called lightweight, too pop, too pallid, but Mangione seems genuinely unperturbed. "I've read all the reviews, from the ones that say you're the greatest thing since sliced bread to the others who say they left at intermission. This kind of thing happened to Cannonball Adderley, who incidentally produced my first album in 1960, it happened to Herbie Hancock and a lot of other people.

"If I have a big record, people assume I've figured out a formula to be successful. The fact is, for example, when I made 'Feels So Good' I just wrote some music I was happy with, handed the tapes to A & M Records and said 'This is my next album.' They said 'Nice album, but we don't hear any singles in here.' Well, nine months later it had sold 2 million. I don't respond to pressure from record companies or critics, my reviewers are the audiences, and besides, my only severe critic is me."

□

He is, however, ambivalent about control by the record indus-

try's ever more powerful moguls, the producers. After switching from A & M to CBS Records in 1982, Mangione produced the first two albums himself. "Around that time," he said, "the bottom fell out of the record industry, sales were off, and I had a contractual deal whereby if I didn't sell 'X' number of records per year, I had to work with a producer. So I've dealt with other producers for my last three albums.

"The numbers show that every album I ever produced has outsold anything that's ever been produced by somebody else. But I've been locked in to dealing with producers, which isn't the greatest of thrills for me." Despite which he acknowledges: "The new album was co-produced with Thom Bell, who did a great job; moreover, this is the first album I've made in four years using my regular performing group."

As so often happens with artists who are committed to sustaining vast sales, Mangione has been under pressure to duplicate the styles of earlier successes. "That's not what I want to do; I just write whatever music I feel like writing, and that has to be my next album."

In other words, diversification has its charms. He recently played the Universal Amphitheater with 20 strings and nine brass added. Often, he will appear with symphony orchestras too, but he has mixed feelings about this aspect of his work.

"Sometimes I may replace the regular conductor, while other orchestras refuse to let you do that, so you may have a great time or it may be like pulling teeth. Not only that—[but] you're also part of a concert subscription series, a pop concert line-up where people have bought tickets to see the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and they find they also bought Chuck Mangione, with amplification and electronic



LACY AVKINS / Los Angeles Times

"My reviewers are the audiences and my only severe critic is me," says Chuck Mangione.

instruments. It's really hard to grab that kind of audience, so to me it isn't a big fun trip."

Mangione's ideal fun trip, the one he recalls as the most exciting among his travels, was a visit to Brazil in 1986.

"That was the most receptive of all our overseas audiences," Mangione said. "Everybody's a musician there—I mean, 2-year-old kids have great time and rhythm, people walk like they're doin' the samba. I think the fact that our music has a Latin flavor and a good rhythm thing happening made us very strong there."

Neither "Land of Make Believe" nor any of the other perennial Mangione favorites has been covered by other artists. "I don't understand it. People won't do that one, or 'Children of Sanchez' or any of the others, because they say these are classics and they've been done," he said. "I even have lyrics to 'Chase the Clouds Away' and it has never been recorded in the lyric version." □

## Jazz Reviews

### Fitzgerald in Top Form, Unfazed by a Fall at Bowl

People can really say Ella fell for them," said the first lady of jazz Wednesday night at the Hollywood Bowl.

She wasn't kidding. An hour into her show, blinded by the lights, Ella Fitzgerald misstepped and fell onto the apron. Her remark was made from a prone position as she was being helped back up, and she sang the rest of "Tain't Nobody's Business" as if nothing had happened. Later, during a duo set with Joe Pass, she ad-libbed a few bars of "Since I Fell for You."

Two years after a series of health problems and open heart surgery, Fitzgerald retains the characteristics that established her supremacy exactly 50 years ago this month, when her first hit record, "A Tisket, a Tasket" with the Chick Webb Band, reached the record stores.

Rather than compare her to the Fitzgerald of earlier years, it would seem fitting to speculate who could have offered a program richer in spirit, musicianship, imagination and diversity. The answer is simple: not a living soul.

Sure, there's a quaver rather than a vibrato that surfaces during some of the ballads, yet her range, intonation and ability to hit sudden, unexpected high notes are unimpaired.

Ready to weave her magic on 16,121 fans, Fitzgerald hit an instant groove with "Sweet Georgia Brown," written in 1925 when she was 7 years old. By the time she was through, we had heard a Ray Charles style blues, a Gershwin medley with time out for a piano solo by Paul Smith, a scat routine on "Night in Tunisia" trading riffs with bassist Keter Betts, the Portuguese and English lyrics to "Agua de Beber," and finally the inevitable crowd-pleasers from "How High the Moon" (now equipped with a mock-operatic interlude) to "Mack the Knife" and,



MARSHA TRASGER / Los Angeles Times

*Ella Fitzgerald, in concert on stage at the Hollywood Bowl.*

when a third encore seemed mandated, "You Are the Sunshine of My Life."

By this time she had Pass, Smith, Betts and drummer Frank Capp for company, and if her doctors had not warned her to take it easy she might have stayed on another hour. (After dedicating a number to the doctors, she described herself as "The Bionic Woman.")

The Joe Pass solo set was so alive, so brilliant both in sound and invention, that guitarists in the audience may well have wanted to go home and trash their instruments. Playing almost exclusively finger style (he only used the

plectrum on the final tune), Pass got to the core of every song, whether by Jerome Kern or Ivan Lins, miraculously adding rhythmic and melodic nuances without ever losing the original essence. During his set with Fitzgerald they played musical Ping-Pong with "One Note Samba" in what sounded like a loving exchange of embraces.

One of the tunes during this unforgettable evening was "Teach Me Tonight." The title sounded as though every other singer might well address it to this indestructible lady.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# Elias—A Rising Star From Sao Paulo

By LEONARD FEATHER

Jazz has taken on so many international colorations during the past decade that it should no longer be surprising to find a major new talent arriving from any point on the planet. Still, it is remarkable that one of the most gifted and fastest rising artists on the current scene is a 28-year-old pianist from Sao Paulo with the very musical name Eliane Elias. (Ill-YAH-nee Ill-EE-as.)

Winner of the recent *Jazz* magazine poll for new talent of the year, Elias has a new album, "Cross Currents" (Blue Note 48785), and is about to launch her first cross-country tour to promote it. (She opens Thursday at Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood.)

The crosscurrents denoted by the album were foreordained, since she grew up with the gravitational forces of three elements competing for her attention.

"I was very lucky," she said in a telephone interview. "You might say that my musical influences began before I was born, because while my mother was pregnant with me she practiced the piano nine hours a day. She played classical piano—not professionally, but very well—and she loved jazz and had this enormous collection of American jazz records.

"Another early influence was my grandmother, who used to play the guitar, write songs and sing them to me. In fact, one song called 'Vou Ali e Ja Volto,' which she wrote in 1927 when she was 12 years old, always stayed in my mind.

"I recorded it in the new album and gave it to her as a birthday present." (Now known as "Coming and Going," the tune evolves from a Latin jazz piano solo into a choral vocal with all the jubilation of a Rio carnival.)

□

Along with the Brazilian music that surrounded her, Elias spent much of her childhood studying the records of Art Tatum, Nat King Cole, Erroll Garner, Wynton Kelly and Red Garland. Even during her classical studies at the Centro Livre de Aprendizagem Musica, a free music school which she attended from age 11, there was a bonus.

"I was lucky there, too, because they had a teacher who not only gave me classical instruction but also showed me all the beautiful old pop standard songs. Before I turned 13 I was ready to play just about any tune you could name."

At the school, which she says was more or less a counterpart to Berklee College in Boston, she progressed from studying to teaching. "By the time I was 15, I was teaching the master's class, directing the piano department, playing with trios at nightclubs until 2 or 3 in the morning, and getting up at 6:30 to stay in school all day.

Luckily the teachers were friendly and didn't try to stop me."

At age 17, Elias moved to a bossa nova group led by one of the movement's founding fathers, Vinicius de Moraes. During her three years with Moraes, ending with his death in 1980, she had her heart set on moving to the States.

"I'm not putting down the Brazilian musicians, but I had heard people on records like Eddie Gomez and Ron Carter on bass, Tony

electrified context. The albums under her own name are strictly acoustic.

The extent to which "Cross Currents" represents her evolution is reflected in the album's repertoire. Along with her grandmother's song the program includes a Bud Powell bebop standard, "Hallucinations," an old Charles Mingus piece, "East Coastin'," Victor Young's "Beautiful Love," the old Disney song



MARTY LEDERHANDLER

Jazz pianist Eliane Elias: "I knew . . . that sooner or later I would go to the States and become a professional jazz musician."

Williams and Jack de Johnette on drums; the Brazilians hadn't had that kind of exposure, so it was difficult for me to accomplish what I wanted.

"I had met a few American musicians in Sao Paulo; they encouraged me, but I felt I wasn't ready yet for the move. I went to Paris and went all over Europe as a tourist, checking things out, then Eddie Gomez, whom I met in Paris, encouraged me to go to New York. I arrived in August of 1981."

Gomez at that time was a member of the group known as Steps (later as Steps Ahead). Through him she met the others—Mike Mainieri, the vibraphonist, who helped her produce a demo record; Peter Erskine, the drummer, and Michael Brecker, the tenor saxophonist.

Within seven months after her arrival in New York Elias was a regular of Steps Ahead. On another job, with the drummer Bob Moses, she met Michael Brecker's brother Randy. "He was the last of the well-known musicians I met during that first year. We were married in February, 1983, and our daughter, Amanda, was born in March of 1984. She's spending the summer with my family in Brazil while I'm on tour and Randy's on the road in Europe."

After the birth of her daughter, Elias collaborated with her husband on an album, "Amanda," displaying her Brazilian roots in an

"When You Wish Upon a Star," and four Elias originals.

□

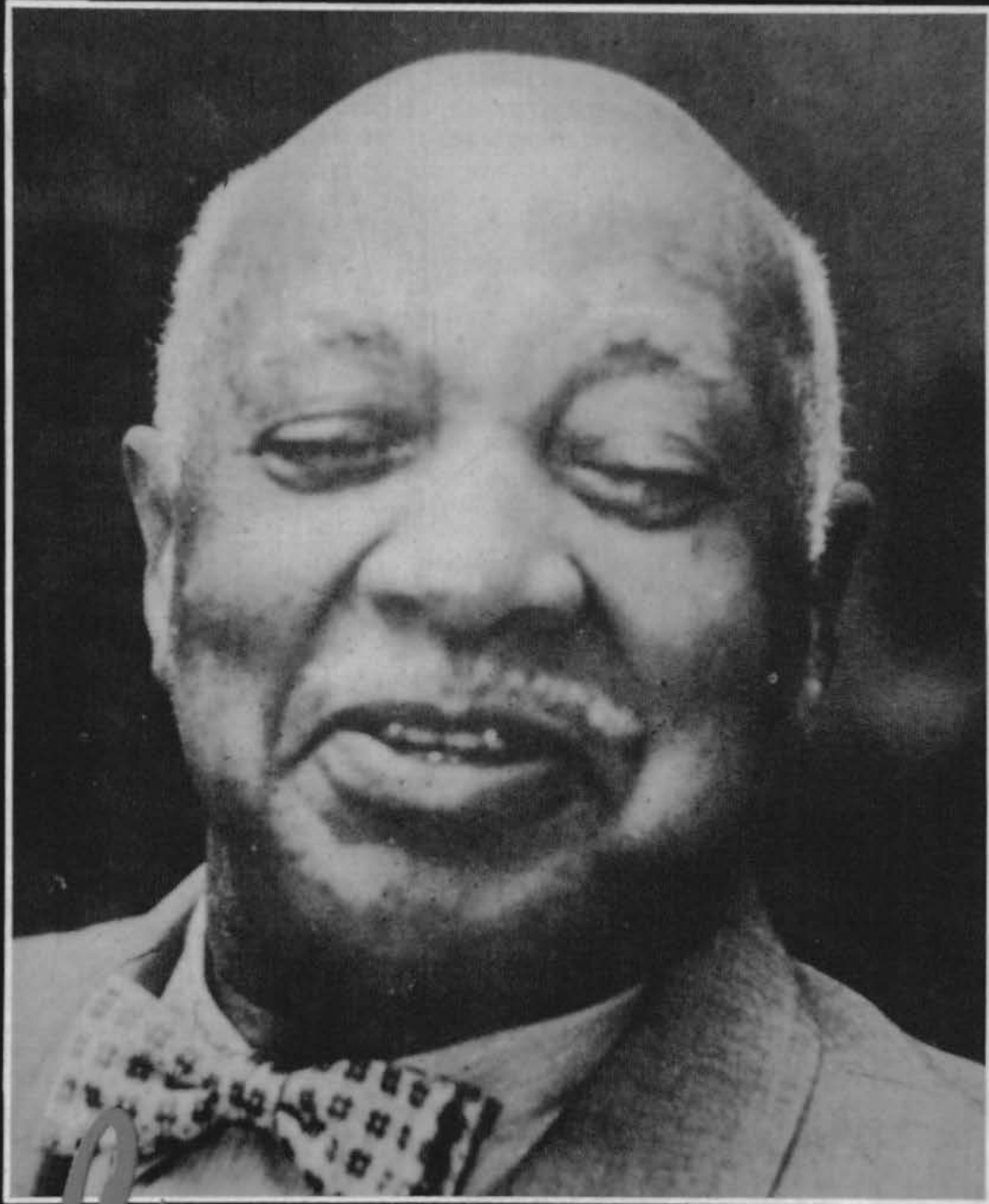
The progress she has made since her arrival in this country is characteristic of most careers involving artists from overseas who have set their sights on a jazz life. With very few exceptions (Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli come to mind), they have decided, sooner or later, to emigrate to the native land of the music.

"When I was growing up," says Elias, "there wasn't that much happening in Sao Paulo in terms of instrumental jazz. Most of the jobs were not very rewarding, like accompanying singers. I knew from a very early time that sooner or later I would go to the States and become a professional jazz musician."

This does not mean that you can't go home again. "A while back," says Elias, "I went back to Brazil for a month just to write, and I came up with some beautiful stuff, very melodic but with a beat. I wrote seven tunes in that month and felt really good about it. But as for the musicians I want to use on the next album, and the studio I'll choose—well, you know I'm going to do it where everything has worked so well for me during the past seven years. I still love Brazil, but New York is where jazz is happening." □

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*W.C.*

**HANDY**

## POP MUSIC REVIEW

## Alpert, Mendes at Hollywood Bowl

By LEONARD FEATHER

The concerts presented Friday and Saturday at the Hollywood Bowl, with Herb Alpert and Sergio Mendes as headliners, drew virtual capacity houses both nights: Friday's figure was 17,788.

Ostensibly this was a Latin- or Brazilian-tinged program, though the exact meaning of those terms has become increasingly vague. Los Angeles' own Alpert and his Chicago-born wife, Lani Hall, shared time with conductor-composer George del Barrio of Argentina and Mendes of Brazil.

Alpert has made vast strides from the Mariachi-influenced Tijuana Brass, moving from a cottage industry to the multimillion-dollar pavilion that houses his A & M Records. He has not done this without help from such distinctly non-Latin sources as "If I Were a Rich Man," from "Fiddler On The Roof," and "Zorba the Greek," both

included in a medley of his early hits. Opening dramatically from way back in the house, blowing "A Taste of Honey" (a song that is neither Latin nor Greek) into a mike hidden in his horn, Alpert made the 100-yard dash to the stage, then reminisced about his show here 21 years ago, also with Mendes.

Though he is not primarily an improvising trumpeter, Alpert's strong sound on prepared solos and seemingly self-mocking staccato effects work well for him. Creatively, though, he came to life with Del Barrio's three-part suite "Under a Spanish Moon."

Alpert acquitted himself agreeably in a vocal duet with Hall, then left her in the solo spotlight. Hall has matured impressively over the years. A song called "Get Here" provided a potent blend of attractive melody and lyrics, well-crafted arrangement for the L.A. Philharmonic and her own sensi-

tive interpretation.

The medley of Alpert's blockbuster recordings offered a reminder of tunes that were tiresome 20 years ago ("Tijuana Taxi") and sound doubly dumb today; on the other hand, Julius Wechter's "Spanish Flea" dressed up in an ingenious Del Barrio arrangement, was a very hip tune in 1966 and remains so today.

Sergio Mendes, in his opening set, also leaned on some of his 1960s hits. Such songs as "Going Out of My Head," "The Look of Love," and most particularly "Mas Que Nada" have fought the onerous test of time and won handily.

The veteran composer Dori Caymmi was on hand, playing guitar and contributing some of the arrangements; however, the songs were mainly vehicles for Mendes' vocalists, Gracinha Leporace and Angie Janee, neither of whom is spectacularly gifted, though their blend is, at least, quite pleasant—an adjective that could scarcely be applied to his guest singer, Joe Pizzulo. It takes quite an effort to mess up a beautiful song like Charlie Chaplin's "Smile," yet Pizzulo, overdosing on schmaltz, managed to do it.

Tuesday, July 26, 1988 / Part VI



Gerald Wiggins

## Los Angeles Jazz Society Honors Veteran Pianist

Veteran pianist Gerald Wiggins is the winner of the sixth Annual Tribute Award given each year by the Los Angeles Jazz Society to an outstanding local musician.

Wiggins rose to fame as accompanist for Lena Horne, Kay Starr, Helen Humes and dozens of other singers, in addition to playing with his own groups and with Sweets Edison, Teddy Edwards and many other local bands.

Wiggins' award was announced Monday at a meeting of the Jazz Society in Hollywood. Other winners this year include Clare Fischer as composer/arranger and Dick Grove as outstanding jazz educator. Eric Reed, 18, a student at Cal State Northridge, won the annual Shelly Manne Memorial Award as the outstanding new talent of the year.

Times jazz critic Leonard Feather is the winner of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The winners will be present at a ceremony and concert, organized by the society and open to the public, Sept. 11 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

10 Part VI / Friday, July 29, 1988

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Ben Sidran Leads Own Quartet

By LEONARD FEATHER

Ben Sidran opened Wednesday at the Vine St. Bar & Grill, removing his preaching hat (as journalist, author, radio and TV host) long enough to display his practicing head gear (singing, playing, leading his own quartet).

As a performer he revealed a quirky personality; a semi-conversational voice; a piano technique that seems often to be held in reserve, though at times he whipped into a solid be-bop groove and at one point even tossed in a little stride.

Sidran's experiences in the worlds of British rock (he recorded with the Rolling Stones) may have helped him to feel comfortable imposing other disciplines on his jazz work, since he was evidently at ease with the quasi-fusion beat that launched his set.

The opening number was notable for a vocal sung in unison with his saxophonist, Bob Malach, a talented tenor soloist who seems to have avoided listening to all the wrong people.

A couple of Sidran's own songs displayed intriguing lyrical image-

ry: "I Want to Be a Bebopper" carried an amusing anti-electronic-music message. The longest, but not the strongest, of his originals was a series of non sequiturs about the supposed essentials for a jazz musician—a bad romance, a good travel agent, etc. More ingenious was a lyric that consisted almost entirely of a string of jazz pianists' names.

His revisions of the works of others were fairly successful, among them a new set of lyrics replacing the old, sexist words to "Girl Talk," and a slight reworking of "Sunny Side of the Street."

Ricky Peterson on electric bass and Gordy Knudtson on drums rounded out Sidran's unpretentiously entertaining unit, which will be at Vine St. through Sunday.



## JAZZ

# Gifted Soviet Musicians From '84 Moscow Festival

By LEONARD FEATHER

**J**AZZ '84—HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE IXTH MOSCOW JAZZ FESTIVAL." Mobile Fidelity MFCD 894.

Amazing! Aleksei Batashev's notes claim that "the Novosibirsk Orchestra is probably the best ensemble of its kind in Siberia." Who would have assumed there was even one such band in Siberia? And with a trombonist/arranger as gifted as Victor Budarin, playing a whirlwind arrangement of Gillespie's "Manteca"?

Geographically and stylistically the festival cuts a wide swath, from avant-garde (echoes of Ornette Coleman in "Free Jazz Dialogue" by the Georgian State TV-Radio Orchestra) to Dixieland (a fine clarinetist in a Moscow group, playing a theme from an operetta) and mainstream ("Is That Love" by the Leningrad Jazz Ensemble and the swinging energy of the Moscow Saxophonists' Quartet in a wildly updated "I Got Rhythm"). Georgi Garanyan's alto sax with the Rostov Art College Orchestra reminds us that Soviet jazz is by no means simply derivative of the American model; he is, as John Hammond once observed, a phenomenal improviser.

Using themes ranging from Hoagy Carmichael to Shostakovich, Villa Lobos, Russian folk songs and new works by band members, the CD offers evidence of how far the Soviet jazzmen have advanced since the days when this music was virtually underground in the Soviet Union. As a curiosity alone, it rates five stars, but much of it qualifies on musical merit. Mobile Fidelity also has other comparable items such as "Jazz From the USSR" (MFCD 890).

"LOOK WHAT I GOT!" Betty Carter. Verve 835-661-2.

Inimitability can be a surpassing virtue in the art of jazz. That the sound of an Ella Fitzgerald or a Sonny Rollins can be instantly recognized after the first couple of measures is unquestionably admirable. It is, however, not a virtue *per se*.

It is a grave error to mistake style with quality. Stylization is no guarantee of artistic merit. One of the most compelling reminders can be found in the case of Betty Carter.

Long a sort of teacher's pet among New York jazz critics, Carter without doubt has a sound and style of her own. The sound is at times sporadic (as in the title tune here), or disconcertingly dry and hollow (as in several other cuts). One wonders about her intonation: is it the singer's or the listener's ear that is at fault? When she sings the

phrase "... and when he comes my way..." in "The Man I Love," did she really mean to bend the last note, or would another take have been advisable?

Carter's maxim seems to be: When in doubt, start scattin'. In fact, the first two minutes of "Imagination" are devoted entirely to up-tempo ad-libbing. To ignore a melody or render it completely unrecognizable is another questionable gambit that succeeds or fails according to the performer's degree of authority.

The accompanists, particularly Benny Green on piano and Don Braden on tenor sax, are first-rate. For them, one star.

"LIVE AT BLUES ALLEY." Wynton Marsalis Quartet. Columbia C2K 40675.

Records grow more extensive and expensive by the year. Here we have two solid hours taped live at a Washington club. Tunes are repeated: Marsalis' familiar "Knott-Moe-King" occurs four times in varying versions. "Juan," a blues credited to pianist Marcus Roberts and drummer Jeff Watts, is played three times.

The critics who have retrenched since their original encomiums may find occasional evidence to support their case. Certainly Marsalis seems to overblow, or become a little tongue-tied in his haste to unleash long strings of notes. Yet by and large his work is impeccable, and such cuts as "Just Friends" and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans" achieve the tenderly emotional level of which some observers thought him incapable. The show is almost stolen by his pianist, Marcus Roberts, an innovator whose rhythmic twists and turns on one of the blues tracks are truly amazing. Trimmed down to a single CD this might have been at least as effective. Still, it's a four-star package.

"IN THE MOOD FOR SWING." Benny Carter. Music Masters 20144 X.

Too few of Carter's albums through the decades have zeroed in on his own compositions. Here at last is a set of 11 originals ranging from the title tune (which he first recorded at a London session in 1936) to the brand new and exquisitely melodic "Janel." A few of the songs are familiar through earlier versions, but Carter's masterful alto sax, and the company he keeps here, lend them all a new and captivating quality, whether in the gently Latin "Courtship," the blues-based up-tempo "Romp" or the jazz waltz "You Only You." 4½ stars.

# Jazz Reviews

## MJQ Plays Ellington at Arco's 'Concert in the Sky'

**B**raving the heat and humidity, an unprecedentedly large crowd stood, sat or stretched out on the grass to attend Arco's latest Thursday "Concert in the Sky" by the Modern Jazz Quartet at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel.

This was the group's first local appearance since the release of its album dedicated to Duke Ellington. Much of the one-hour performance was devoted to works from the recording, arranged for the group by John Lewis.

Because many of Ellington's compositions were primarily orchestral in nature, it might have been expected that something would be lost in the reduction to this format. It is a tribute to the ingenuity of Lewis that most of the pieces took on a character that was at once a re-creation of the original and a logical vehicle for these four brilliant interpreters.

Totally in character too was a new Lewis number, "For Ellington," written for the album, and varying attractively in tempos and meters (from 3/4 to 4/4).

"Ko Ko," a somber minor blues, found Lewis' piano, Milt Jackson's vibraphone and Percy Heath's bass all attuned to the spirit of this almost 50-year-old masterpiece. Heath's solos on "Jack the Bear," a tune that elevated the Ellington bassist Jimmy Blanton to prominence, was based almost note for note on his recorded version.

Connie Kay, the quartet's drummer almost from the beginning, added a delicate mood to "It Don't Mean a Thing" with a series of rhythmically apt breaks. Jackson's leisurely time feeling brought a fittingly gentle touch to "Prelude to a Kiss."

As an encore Lewis turned to his own music for a revised version of the still beguiling "Django."

It is remarkable that the MJQ, organized in 1952, continues to justify the adjective in its name. Remarkable but not too surprising, since it is obvious that these men still believe passionately in the irresistible music they continue to create.

—LEONARD FEATHER

8/3/88

## Jazz Briefs

"ENDLESSLY." Dizzy Gillespie. Impulse 42153. Every few years some bright producer decides: "Let's do something to make Dizzy sell records." So here he is complete with DX 7, programmed strings and songs by everyone from Stevie Wonder to Marvin Gaye. Perhaps because he enjoyed meeting the challenge, he plays exceptionally well. Forget the pop vocal on Kristofferson's "For the Good Times," and the dismal doubled-up arrangement of "I Should Care." At its best (Horace Ott's "Tippin' In" and Clyde Otis' "There You Are") the presumptive objective is met. 3½ stars.

—LEONARD FEATHER

"FACETS." Doc Severinsen. Amherst 93319. After two well-received sets with his big band, Severinsen now invades pop territory, using a basic octet (Ernie Watts on sax, Lee Ritenour on guitars), surrounded here and there by strings and French horns. Why he chose to remake "Take the A Train," which the band played so well on his previous album, is anybody's guess. Severinsen's work is generally tasteful, and the treatments of "Night Train" and "Maiden Voyage" show a trace of originality. Arranger Jeff Tyzik contributed three of his own works to round out a commercially viable set. 3 stars.

—L.F.

"DUETS." Rob Wasserman. MCA 42131. This would appear to be an attempt to circumvent the problem often posed by the excessive length of CDs: on almost every cut, bassist Wasserman is paired with a different partner (usually a singer). It works beautifully when

Cheryl Bentyne joins him for "Angel Eyes." Leonard Cohen's "Ballad of the Runaway Horse," with Jennifer Warnes, is quietly moving. "Brothers," with Bobby McFerrin, is overdubbed fun, and Wasserman's duet with himself is a fine showcase for his technique. The rest, alas, is darkness: an abysmal "Stardust" with Aaron Neville, two ridiculous cuts with Rickie Lee Jones, Lou Reed's distorted guitar, shuffle rhythm and questionable chords on "One for My Baby," Dan Hicks savaging the great old song "Gone With the Wind," and a disappointing "Over the Rainbow" featuring Stephane Grappelli that ends inexplicably with Wasserman and the violinist playing the melody in unison. Moral: Diversity is not enough. 2 stars.

—L.F.

"EASILY SLIP INTO ANOTHER WORLD." Henry Threadgill. Novus. The opening side of Threadgill's second Novus album is imbued with the somber, funereal pomp and (less frequently) the sassy buoyance that are the twin cornerstones of New Orleans marching band music. Threadgill showcases his compositional skills more than his acidic, acrobatic alto solos here. The serpentine twists in the tightly arranged material are adroitly negotiated by his regular, unusually constituted backing sextet featuring two drummers and cellist Deidre Murray. Threadgill falters when his fondness for formality overcomes his swinging side but the broad palette of tone colors and textures indicates why he has emerged as one of the leaders of jazz's exploratory wing. 4 stars.

—DON SNOWDEN

JEAN-LOUP LONGNON & HIS

NEW YORK ORCHESTRA. Atlantic 81829. Now here's an oddity: a Frenchman visiting New York manages to secure the release, on a major label, of an expensive project involving a 20-piece ad hoc orchestra; meanwhile, some of the best and regularly organized bands in the United States are having trouble getting recorded. This would be fine if Longnon were an exceptional talent, but listen to his scat vocal on "Torride". It's a shameless take-off on Clark Terry. Nor is his trumpet more than competent. 3 stars.

—L.F.

"LIVE JAZZ." Nancy Kelly. Amherst 93317. In an interesting debut, Kelly sings nine pop/jazz standards to a background that's mainly jazz with touches of fusion. She's best on such ballads as "Lover Man," weakest when her intonation falters on the up tempos. On "Twisted," she distorts Wardell Gray's melody, then lapses into a meaningless monologue and senseless scating. Worst, on "Yesterdays," she mangles the inviolable Jerome Kern line in the second eight bars. Why didn't producer Jeff Tyzik spot this? Ernie Watts' sax solos are extensive and valuable. Using her range and power to its full potential, Kelly could be a singer to watch. 2½ stars.

—L.F.

8/3/88

# Getz Makes Most of Life's 2nd Chance

By LEONARD FEATHER

Almost literally, life has begun anew for Stan Getz. He is a performer, talent scout (singer Diane Schuur is his proudest protégée), teacher (mainly at Stanford University, not far from his California home) and dedicated propagandist for jazz.

He remains one of the most influential virtuosi of the tenor saxophone, playing with the same tonal beauty and personal style that marked his original years in the big time (he joined Woody Herman's orchestra in 1947); yet a year ago it seemed his career might be at an end. A malignant tumor was discovered behind his heart, and extensive surgery was required.

"It's been 10 months since I had the operation," Getz, 61, said the other day, "and everything worked out wonderfully; all I have to do is take an X-ray every couple of months.

"It's strange, but I feel that if you put everything in God's hands—leave the driving to him, so to speak—that's the way to go. I'm exercising regularly, and I'm on a limited schedule, going out on the road far less than I used to."

This week his plans call for him to appear tonight at the Hollywood Bowl opposite Grover Washington Jr., followed by two evenings at the Loeb Club in Santa Monica. Sunday, he will be back at Stanford—playing an annual benefit for the university's jazz department—with his quartet, Joe Pass, the Hi-Los and Viva Brasil.

"I'm teaching at Stanford whenever I'm in town and have the time, but mostly I help organize the funding and line up talent to come in and do four concerts a year," Getz says.

His involvement with the academic world is closely tied to a campaign for greater understanding of jazz. Getz was pleased when Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) last year introduced a concurrent

Please see STAN GETZ, Page 9



JAMES JOHNSON

Stan Getz: "I

8/13

## JAZZ REVIEW

# Mixed-Media Show Produces Mixed Results

By LEONARD FEATHER

"Jazz Connections," the first of a series of weekly evening presentations, was introduced Thursday at the Studio Grill, 7321 Santa Monica Blvd.

The concept of a mixed-media show involving live music and classic jazz on film, the latter seen on two TV screens, was laudable in theory, and indeed much of the music was admirable, with Count Basie, Jimmy Rushing and Lester Young and many others.

Freddie Redd, the veteran bop pianist, assembled a sextet for this occasion, playing some of the music he wrote long ago for "The Connection" (he appeared as actor and musician in the stage and film versions).

Redd's sidemen are well suited to the material, particularly a fleet trumpeter named Jerry Rusch and the redoubtable bassist Al McKib-

bon. Redd himself has to work at an upright piano that cries out for help (in the form of a tuner); but this was just one problem in an evening loaded with them.

Fred Baker, who produced the show, presented the famous CBS film "The Sound of Jazz," in the segments before and after the live sessions. However, he also saw fit to introduce and interrupt the live sets with a pretentious and pointless narration, which he read from a script—hardly in the true jazz spirit of freedom. Moreover, to set up a superb film of Billie Holiday, he sang a number himself.

The audience in the overcrowded room talked noisily through every film clip. The musicians were bunched together so closely that had one of them lit a cigarette, three would have been in danger of catching fire.

Worst of all, the show was

interminable. By the time Bruce Scott, an enthusiastic young jazz singer, had his turn at the mike, it had been running two hours and 10 minutes. If Baker wants to make this idea work, he would be well advised to stay off the bandstand, cut the show to 90 minutes tops, and turn the lights down so low that the customers may realize that something magic is happening up on those screens.

## Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Form a New Band

By LEONARD FEATHER

More than three decades have elapsed since the release of an album entitled "Dizzy Gillespie, World Statesman." At that time Gillespie was leading an all-star orchestra in the Middle East on the first jazz tour ever sent overseas under official State Department auspices.

Of the many international events with which the trumpeter has since been involved, none has been more



Dizzy Gillespie: Speaking in international language of music.

distinctly multicultural in character than the 15-piece orchestra he organized last month for a domestic tour.

"It was my idea," says Gillespie, "and it was my title too." Billed as Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Superspace Band, the ensemble plays Sunday in Costa Mesa and Tuesday at the Greek Theatre. Part of the band—mainly the percussion section—will appear with Gillespie on the "Tonight Show" Monday.

"We have a Puerto Rican, three Brazilians, including Flora Purim and Airtó; a West Indian—that's my pianist, Monty Alexander—and two Cubans," the 70-year-old grand sire of bebop reported. One of the Cubans is Ignacio Berroa, the drummer with Gillespie's regular band; the other is Paquito D'Rivera, a saxophonist whom Gillespie first met when he embarked on a jazz festival cruise to Havana in 1977.

"Paquito was playing in a Cuban band called Irakere. During our visit we sat in with a lot of Cuban musicians at a theater in Havana. I was very impressed with him."

(D'Rivera defected to the U.S. some years ago and has since established himself as a successful leader of his own group.)

"I've been back to Cuba three times since that first visit," Gillespie added. "I've got a movie coming from there, you know. We took a film crew down a couple of years ago. Fidel Castro is in it. I just went by his office and we had an interview. He wouldn't speak English—he used an interpreter, but I'm sure he understood everything I said while I was saying it." The film is being shown at festivals overseas but has not yet gained U.S. exposure.

The mixture of cultures and languages was no problem for any of the participants in the United Nations Orchestra. "All the guys speak good enough English," said Gillespie, "and everyone enjoyed putting together a library for his project. We're using some written music and some head arrangements."

The horn section includes Jon Faddis, the iron-chopped young Gillespie protege who has played his trumpet with him off and on for several years; Claudio Roditi, the Brazilian trumpeter who works regularly with Paquito D'Rivera's group; Slide Hampton and Steve Turre on trombones; Sam Rivers, Gillespie's permanent tenor saxophonist; James Moody, an often-returning Gillespie alumnus, also on tenor sax; and D'Rivera on saxophones and flute.

Adventurous musical colors are second nature to Gillespie; his compositions, all the way back to "Night in Tunisia" in 1942, have frequently had an exotic flavor. Some of the familiar pieces that have been adapted to the present band are "Manteca," "Fiesta Mojo," "Tanga," and "Lorraine" (dedicated to his wife of 48 years).

When this tour is over, there may well be pressure on Gillespie to revert to a much more commercially oriented format. An album he made a few months ago with a fusion band, "Endlessly" (Impulse 42153), is at No. 10 with a bullet on the Billboard jazz chart this week.

"Yes, it's a little different," says Gillespie, "and it's certainly one way to go. Meanwhile, we're having an awful lot of fun with the superspace band. Talk about music as the international language—man, this is it!"

## Mark Murphy, Plus Trio and a Mostly Sophisticated Song Bag

Mark Murphy has a way with words; also, as soon as he dips into his scat bag, a way without words. An unabashed jazz singer who has devoted a long career (much of it in England) to the propagation of the sophisticated material he believes in, he opened Thursday at the Catalina Bar & Grill, backed by a fittingly hip trio under the direction of pianist Tom Garvin.

Opening with Oliver Nelson's instrumental "Stolen Moments," to which he set his own lyrics, Murphy displayed a strong, bold sound well fitted to the tune's engaging harmonic contours. He followed with "Moody's Mood for Love," another vehicle of jazz origin, by now familiar through many vocal versions.

Murphy's choice of standard songs leans to the esoteric: on "I Can't Get Started" he not only began with the seldom-heard

verse, but proceeded to the almost equally rare second chorus of lyrics.

His tendency to over-emote surfaced in a melodramatic "As Time Goes By," which eventually segued into "Maiden Voyage." The latter was top-drawer Murphy until the voyage struck a reef, in the form of an almost literally endless rap—it just faded away.

As if to prove that his taste in songs isn't entirely flawless, he took on "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," a silly novelty when Louis Jordan sang it 40 years ago, and upgraded not a whit by Murphy's decision to append a series of lame chicken jokes.

Garvin, aided by Tom Warrington on bass and Sherman Ferguson on drums, opened the show with a briskly stated version of "Have You Met Miss Jones." The show closes tonight.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Sam Riney Proves to Be a Man of Many Horns

Like so many aspiring horn players today, Sam Riney has chosen not to concentrate on a single instrument and become its total master; instead, he changed horns with almost every tune. Possibly for this reason, or perhaps simply because it takes years to reach the requisite level of maturity, he has not yet acquired a distinctive personality.

Performing at the weekly jazz brunch at the Hollywood Holiday Inn Sunday, Riney began on sopra-

no saxophone. He displayed enough technique to make an impression, though not a lasting one, since his sound leaned toward shrillness and the fingers sometimes outpaced the flow of ideas. The very busy drummer, Bob Leatherbarrow, made it difficult at times to determine just what time signature was intended.

Riney was more at ease both in sound and style on tenor saxophone, simply blowing a few well-constructed choruses on the blues, offering evidence that he has studied the roots of jazz. Guitarist Jeff Richman did his best to supply an impelling rhythm background, but the lack of a keyboard player and the modest contribution of Bruce Stone on electric bass placed a ceiling on the results.

Switching next to flute, Riney offered a restrained version of the superior ballad "My One and Only

Please see JAZZ, Page 5

# JAZZ

8/9

*Continued from Page 3*

Love." By now Leatherbarrow was keeping the beat well under control. Another tenor sax feature, the old Stanley Turrentine hit "Sugar," suggested that this may eventually be the instrument that will earn Riney whatever reputation lies ahead for him.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Karen Briggs Rises Above the Room

Serendipity can lead the inquisitive musicologist to the most improbable places. Take, for example, Phillip's Restaurant, a busy and lively room on Devonshire Street in Chatsworth where, every Friday and Saturday, Karen Briggs can be heard playing the violin.

A newcomer to town (she arrived here in April from Virginia, where she had spent three years playing in a symphony orchestra), Briggs seems likely to lose very little time establishing a local and, ultimately, national reputation.

Jazz violinists have always been a rare breed, particularly, in recent years, those who eschew electronic

gimmicks. Briggs plays a white violin with no enhancement device attached; she extracts from it, pure sound, weaving by through standard tunes and jazz numbers with consummate ease.

Hermes time" was graced with an unaccompanied introduction the rhythm section joined she moved seamlessly from variations on the Gershwin melody to intense forays into dance.

"So Say My Prince Will Come" led compelling evidence of how musically effective the 3/4 men be.

Despite somewhat limited sound, Pike was able to draw from electric keyboard, the accompaniment was generally sympathetic. Manning the bass was no less present than Eugene Wright, not long ago was in Moscow with Dave Brubeck playing at the Summit banquet. Completing the group was Danny Moore.

Phillips the kind of room that calls for cocktail-music ambience, yet Briggs manages to rise above the limitations and provide stimulating proof of an as yet unknown but clearly promising talent.

—L.F.

8/7/88

# Too Fast, Too Easy and Too Unctuous

By LEONARD FEATHER

As the aspiring young musician may observe, times have changed for the better in the profession of his choice. The conditions under which performers in jazz and related fields work today are in many respects vastly preferable to those under which their predecessors had to labor.

Gone are the days when great artists languished in obscurity or in financial limbo, only to be praised and saluted in posthumous essays and albums. Far behind us is the era when most of the lucrative and prestigious jobs were inaccessible to musicians, no matter how gifted, simply because racial segregation was a pervasive way of American life.

There is, however, another side to this picture. Sometimes recognition comes too fast, too easily, and the dazzling rays of success blind the musician to any acknowledgment of reality.

Is the easy route to the top a curse in disguise? Is jazz or fusion music becoming too self-important? Surely there is evidence that some relative newcomers to the scene, after brief exposure to the limelight, are not only receiving disproportionate acclaim but are fast getting to take themselves too seriously, with results that are half-pathetic, half-comic.

To take a typical case history, the latest album by a saxophonist named Najee ("Day by Day," EMI Manhattan 90096) includes a long essay in the course of which 73 people are thanked for their supposed contribution to the presumptive success of his venture.

Starting with "special thanks to the Creator who makes all things possible" and moving on to "my mother for your undying love and support," he has unctuous words of praise for brothers, sisters, bankers (sic), management, a booking agency (William Morris, of course), various singers and other artists who may or may not be heard on this particular album, and dozens more, their identities and

contributions in many cases unexplained, though they are lauded for their "constant support," "positive creative energy," "aggressive contributions," "tireless efforts," "inspiration," "dedication," "enthusiastic support," and on and on and on. All this for 73 people who helped to make possible an album in which, to judge by its sound, at most a dozen musicians took part.

I was reminded of the ancient fable: "A mountain was in labor, sending forth dreadful groans, and there was in the region the highest expectation. After all, it brought forth a mouse." (Phaedrus, Fable 22.) The mouse in this instance is not a bad album, merely one of boundless mediocrity by a musician who was unknown a couple of years ago, and who a decade hence may have returned to that condition of obscurity.

Even the wardrobe stylist is credited, along with Najee's five producers, executive producer, production coordinator, administrator. Did Lester Young ever thank his wardrobe stylist or booking agent or siblings? Did Ella Fitzgerald salute her producers, lawyers, administrators, hairdresser? Did Miles Davis ever thank anyone?

In all the years when Art Tatum and Charlie Parker created their masterpieces, I never once read on any album cover the name of their managers and agents, even what brand of instrument they played. Somehow posterity has remembered them. Somehow the legends of Charles Mingus and Ellington and Basie live on, even though we were never privy to the names of their advisers or the addresses of their fan clubs.

I mean no personal disrespect to Najee. His thanks are well-intended, and the effulgence of the potentially profitable light he gives off may have obscured certain harsh realities, such as the fact that these delusions of grandeur are ultimately self-defeating. Yet his case is all too typical of what is happening in

a world dominated by get-rich-quick producers, each of whom convinces his latest discovery that he has achieved something unparalleled since the invention of the wheel.

Is there no humility left in music? Are we to be confronted indefinitely by these middling-to-minor talents who are built up (and build themselves up) with mountains of verbiage to herald their mouse-sized contributions?

There should be a word for this trend. Since the suffix *-megaly* denotes anything abnormally enlarged (gastromegaly, acromegaly etc.), let us call it jazzomegaly. The symptoms are obvious: a painless swelling of the ego, an enlargement of the gratitude vein, a pronounced fever in the vocabulary.

The cure is simple: Take a backward glance, observe how few of the men and women now enshrined in the music halls of fame looked on their own artistry as gravely as this, or even assuming they did, how humbly they kept to themselves the awareness of their importance.

For the seeker of musical verities, until jazzomegaly is expunged from the marketplace, it might be wise to keep this advice in mind: When a new artist simply offers his wares without pomp and circumstance, he may well deserve a hearing. If, however, he finds it necessary to thank 73 people, the operative words are *caveat emptor*. □

## JAZZ REVIEW

8/22/88

### Gerald Wilson and Company at Marla's

When Duke Ellington was once asked why he went to vast expense to retain his orchestra on a year-round basis, he replied: "As soon as I've finished a new arrangement, I want to hear right now how it sounds."

Gerald Wilson may well nourish the same desire, but because the band he presented Friday and Saturday at Marla's Memory Lane faces today's economic realities, he can only organize his band for occasional gigs.

Wilson is the last great black composer who led a band when the Swing Era was at its height and does so today. The 19-man ensemble he fronted at Marla's presents the same values he has always clung to: plenty of room for the men to stretch out, a chance to depict his personalized view of works by the Ellingtons and Miles Davises, along with reminders of his ongoing love for the *corrido*, expressed in his own compositions

named for giants of the bull ring.

Wilson the leader is an eloquent and engaging speaker who, instead of assuming ignorance on the part of his audience, will explain that his version of "Sophisticated Lady" involves polychords, contrary motion and eight-part harmony. Moreover, when he turns to the band, he doesn't just conduct; he is a virtual self-choreographer.

His brass section was as lustrous as ever, with Oscar Brashear's golden brilliance dominating "Carlos," dedicated to the late matador Carlos Arruza. The saxes suffered from lapses of intonation in the lead alto chair but were otherwise together, and the five-man rhythm team was illuminated by Wilson's astonishingly gifted 20-year-old son Anthony.

The band is scheduled to play a free matinee concert at MacArthur Park Sept. 3 as part of the first Los Angeles Jazz Festival.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# Rare, Classic Videos Finally Distributed

By LEONARD FEATHER

Little by little, the audio-visual information that can contribute to our knowledge of the sight and sound of jazz history is becoming more generally available.

Some of the great documentaries, such as the recent two-part examination of Duke Ellington, are reaching us via public television. A few have been shown theatrically; others (including several of those reviewed below) languished on the shelf for many years before a distributor was found.

All of the following videos are available from Rhapsody Films Inc., Box 179, New York, N.Y. 10014. The first two are \$39.95, the others \$29.95, with a shipping and handling charge of \$4 per order. They are unnumbered.

□  
**"THE LAST OF THE BLUE DEVILS."** 90 minutes. Color. This Kansas City classic is essential to every jazz library. It begins on a snow-clogged street outside the old Musicians' Union Hall in Kansas City, where a group of old-timers (mainly Big Joe Turner, Jay McShann and Count Basie) gather to reminisce, 50 years later, about how it was in the Pendergast era, when night life was wide open and the famous Blue Devils (in which Basie began his move toward the big time) were flourishing.

Many of those who play or talk have left us since Bruce Ricker put this film together in 1979: Budd Johnson, Jo Jones, Eddie Durham, Jimmy Forrest, Freddie Green and, of course, Basie and Turner. It is hard to decide which is more delightful, the performance (particularly McShann's ingratiating warmth both as singer and pianist) or the often poignant recollections, coupled with late and early clips of Basie bands, the one and only performance shot of Charlie Parker, anecdotes about Lester Young, Benny Moten and other legends. One might wish that this had all been done decades earlier. (Turner is so far past his prime that his lyrics are barely intelligible), yet the fact that it was done at all has enabled us to be transported to a magical moment when time seems to stand still for these hardy pioneers. 5 stars.

□  
**"NEW ORLEANS: TIL THE BUTCHER CUTS HIM DOWN"** 53 minutes. Color. Made by Philip Spaulding in 1971, with narration by the veteran New Orleans archivist William Russell, this is a window on an even earlier world, when men like Bunk Johnson, Louis Armstrong and Kid Ory were emerging. The central figure is Kid Punch Miller, a trumpeter said to have influenced Satchmo. Liberally sprinkled with river-boat

scenes, sessions at Preservation Hall and the story of Miller's return home after a long absence, the film reaches a moving climax as Miller, barely able to make it out of the hospital, takes to the stage at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival for what turned out to be his final performance. Though the music often sounds as tired and dispirited as the players, some of the sense of how it all sounded in the formative years comes across in this affectionate tribute. 4 stars.

□  
**"JACKIE McLEAN ON MARS."** 31 minutes. Black-and-white. McLean, who has been teaching for some years at a college in Hartford, Conn., discusses everything from how to keep your lip muscles in shape to his involvement with children; his drug bust is also dealt with (he later counseled drug addicts and appeared in the off-Broadway and film versions of "The Connection"). It might have been better to hear fewer pointless questions such as "How have you become a legend?" and more music not interrupted by voice-overs. Trumpeter Woody Shaw is heard along with the leader's saxophone. 3 stars.

□  
**"LES McCANN TRIO."** 28 minutes. Color. Seen at Shelly's Manne Hole around 1965, at about half his present weight, McCann plays early funk piano, makes his bow as a vocal balladeer in "With These Hands," and plunges into a prehistoric version of his now famous "Compared to What?" He is backed by Jimmy Rowser on bass and Donald Dean on drums in this brief, mildly agreeable show, totally lacking in production values. 3 stars.

□  
**"SHELLY MANNE QUARTET."** 28 minutes. Color. Despite the presence of four superb musicians (the others are Ray Brown, Hampton Hawes and Bob Cooper), nothing happens except a lackluster jam session with mediocre camera work, barely adequate sound and color that is mainly pink. Somebody blew a great opportunity here. 2½ stars.

□  
**"JAZZ EARL HINES AND COLEMAN HAWKINS."** 28 minutes. Black-and-white. Shot in a film studio in 1965, Hines demonstrates the percussive style that established him as the dominant jazz pianist of the 1920s and early '30s. He sings one number, to little effect; later Coleman Hawkins, then far beyond his great days as the master of the tenor sax, gets through a couple of tunes, none too

comfortably. Hines talks very little. Hawkins not at all. For the Hines piano footage, 3 stars.

□  
**"ZOOT SIMS QUARTET."** 28 minutes. Color. Undated; this has no narration, no dialogue, unimaginative camera work and production that takes less than full advantage of the distinguished company

(Sims on tenor sax, Roger Kellaway on piano, Larry Bunker on drums and Chuck Berghofer on bass, all live at Donte's). 3 stars.

□  
**"PASSING IT ON."** A Musical Portrait of Barry Harris. 23 minutes. Color. Conducting classes in his own theater-club at Harvard,

pianist Harris emerges as an agreeable, articulate personality as this short but engaging film follows a day-in-the-life pattern, with visits by Red Rodney, Clifford Jordan and Pepper Adams (presumably circa 1984). As Harris points out, the average young American seems to know little or nothing about jazz, a situation he is trying hard to rectify. 4 stars.

4 Part VI / Monday, August 15, 1988

## Jazz Reviews

### Manhattan Transfer Has It Together at Irvine Meadows

If nothing had been heard Saturday during Manhattan Transfer's concert at the Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre except the first half-hour of the show, these few numbers alone would have reaffirmed what has long been taken for granted: that this is the most accomplished of all the jazz-oriented vocal groups, singing the most ingenious lyrics to the most attractive songs, in the best arrangements and with the richest blend.

This is another way of saying that the opening portion of the program was devoted to songs from the quartet's best album, "Vocalese," with such delights as Janis Siegel explaining the meaning of Jon Hendricks' lyrics to "Joy Spring," then singing what was originally a solo by its composer, Clifford Brown; Tim Hauser verbalizing the Harold Land solo from the same record, and Cheryl Bentley, in "Meet Benny Bailey," vocalizing a chorus played by the trumpeter in an old Quincy Jones tune dedicated to Bailey.

These were just a few of the almost endless pleasures in the jazz segment. Others were "Move," adapted with finesse and fidelity from the Miles Davis record, and, perhaps most startling of all, a passage in "Jeannine" during which all four, a cappella, sang different lines in counterpoint, building to an incredible pitch of tension.

It would be unfair to imply that everything after these pieces was

anticlimactic. There were solo specialties such as Siegel singing Dave Frishberg's "You Were There," and, during the second half, some of the better pieces from the Transfer's Brazilian album. The evening took a political turn when Hauser, after the group's rendition of Gilberto Gil's "Hear the Voices," told of Gil's imprisonment in Brazil for the progressive idea expressed in his songs; then Hauser made an impassioned statement about South Africa and Nelson Mandela, to whom he dedicated the next song, "Notes From the Underground," featuring Alan Paul.

Of course, there were many lighter moments: Hauser had the big crowd dancing to "Boy From New York City." There were a couple of doo-wop songs, as well as some jokes about Newark, and that everlasting empty-suit song "Java Jive." But these were small token prices to pay for what was overall an evening of vocal and instrumental togetherness.

Special credit must go to Yaron Gershovsky, still the group's musical director and keyboard soloist, and to such capable musicians as Don Roberts on saxophone and Wayne Johnson on guitar. There is a rare empathy here, one had the feeling that if all these singers and musicians were awakened at 5 a.m. and told to get ready immediately for an unscheduled show at 5:30, they would put on an immaculate concert as any they have ever done.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Silver Is Building His Own Record Company

By LEONARD FEATHER

To anyone who has known him throughout his long career, Horace Silver's name has been identified with three main talents: pianist, quintet leader and composer of such jazz standards as "Song for My Father," "Senor Blues," "Doodlin'," "The Preacher" and "Nica's Dream."

He is still writing music and still tours with a group, but these are no longer his principal activities. As he explained Saturday only hours after returning from a two-week tour of Japan, he has concentrated for years on building his own record company.

"I've been playing only during the summer for quite a few years now," said Silver, whose group opens this evening for six nights at Catalina Bar & Grill. "I don't care to work all year around anymore because I'm trying to build my business, and I'm very serious about it. It's taken some years, and it's still dragging its feet a little, but eventually I want to build it into something comparable to Blue Note." (Before launching his own Silvero Records in 1981, he was with Blue Note for a record-breaking 28 years.)

Silver recently completed a new album for Silvero with Clark Terry on trumpet, Junior Cook on tenor sax and vocals by Andy Bey. On his other label, Emerald, Silver has an album due out soon that will be his first release under another artist's name, a quartet date led by Clark Terry and taped live at a session in a Long Island club.

"I'm putting my own money into these releases," Silver added, "and things are finally beginning to happen. I believe Bruce Lundvall, who took over at Blue Note some years ago, may arrange the Japanese distribution for Emerald."

This year's tour by the Silver combo was mainly overseas, with four weeks in Europe preceding the



LARRY ARMSTRONG / Los Angeles Times

Horace Silver will be at Catalina Bar & Grill for six nights.

Japanese trip.

"Europe was hectic. We did seven one-nighters in a row in seven cities with no nights off," he said. "One of them took a whole day to reach—a plane from Berlin to Frankfurt, another plane from Frankfurt to Rome, two or three hours' wait in the airport for a third plane to Bari, Italy, and from there by surface to Molfetta, where we arrived just in time to rush on the bandstand. It was physically taxing, and I caught a bad cold, but the people liked the music, and that's the main thing."

"Compared to Europe the Japanese tour was a breeze; we only had to do seven concerts in 14 days, with time to rest between dates. Actually, one of the hardest parts of these summer tours is getting the band together."

Although he has had the same drummer, Carl Burnett, for many years, and is using singer Andy Bey

for the third year, the rest of the group was not easy to assemble. "It's so difficult to find cats today who can play our kind of music. They just don't have enough chances to practice it, especially out here in Los Angeles. Even in New York you don't find as many as you used to."

Citing some of his own sidemen of yore, he said: "Where are the Blue Mitchells and Woody Shaws of today? Where are the Randy Breckers and Mike Breckers? It's a strange thing—you can find a thousand guys who will play the arrangements just the way you wrote them, but when it comes to the solos—well, I won't say they can't play, but they just aren't dependable. Years ago, it was just the other way around. A lot of cats were scuffling when they tried to read the music, but when it came to improvising, they played like crazy."

In spite of the problems, Silver says he has been fortunate this

year. He found tenor player Ralph Bowen, whom he "borrowed" from the group OTB, and hired his trumpeter, Vincent Cutro, out of the Lionel Hampton orchestra. The bassist is Phil Bowler, formally with Max Roach and Wynton Marsalis.

Although in the early years, groups like Silver's and Art Blakey's were almost always exclusively black, integration has become more common. As it happens, Silver's current front line is Caucasian and the rest of the band black, but as the leader says, "I'm looking for musicianship, not color. I'm striving for the right sounds, the right combination; whoever impresses me, I hire."

"It's tough when you find your musicians are good at times, but inconsistent. I don't expect 100% perfection, but I do look for creative, imaginative performance at least 80% of the time. When it drops down to 50%, you're really in trouble." And how will it be at Catalina's? Silver laughed. "This summer, we've really been lucky. Right now the band is truly 80% plus."



# Leaders May Die but Big Bands Never Fade Away

By LEONARD FEATHER

**G**lenn Miller died in 1944. Artie Shaw gave up playing his clarinet forever in 1964. Tommy Dorsey died in 1956, his brother Jimmy the next year. We lost Gene Krupa in 1973, Duke Ellington in 1974, Harry James in 1983, Count Basie in 1984 and Buddy Rich and Woody Herman last year.

Yet today their bands—or bands bearing their names—are still alive and busy.

The ongoing existence of the so-called ghost bands (as which, with the exception of Shaw's, they all qualify) is one of the oddest phenomena of the 20th-Century music world. Never before did any performer become immortalized in this manner. To

AAF [Army Air Force] band, and some new material.

"The band always includes a male and female singer, but on some dates, they work in tandem with name vocalists—Patti Page, Rosemary Clooney, Mel Tormé, Teresa Brewer, Billy Eckstein, Helen O'Connell. The band has been led for the past couple of years by Dick Gerhart, who for a long time played in the sax section."

Who leads the band seems almost inconsequential, since it is the Miller sound and style that audiences come to hear. Next March and April, the Miller organization will embark on its 22nd annual tour of Japan. Unlike most of

Second only to the Miller band in ghostly longevity is the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, now temporarily inactive while its leader, Lee Castle, recovers from a heart attack. Castle was regarded as a virtual third son in the Dorsey family; after playing with Tommy Dorsey from 1937-38, he was sent by Tommy to study with the Dorseys' father on the family farm in Pennsylvania.

"I rejoined the brothers after they were reunited in 1953," Castle says, "but Tommy and Jimmy died within six months of each other in 1956-57 and I bought the Jimmy Dorsey name outright."

"It's rough to find kids who can under-

get requests for my own 'Night Train' too. I'd say we play 75% Dorsey stuff and 25% what I feel like playing."

Morrow's comment on what he feels like playing symbolizes a problem that confronts all the ghost bands: They are locked into a style that does not necessarily represent the musical inclinations of the leader. When the great clarinetist Buddy de Franco fronted the Glenn Miller orchestra for eight years, simply because he needed the security of a weekly salary, the effect was an eight-year hiatus in his career, since the opportunities to display his phenomenal talent were severely restricted.

NAUCY O'HANIAN



make the situation doubly confusing, some of these groups have no true relationship to their predecessors.

The Dorsey Brothers, for example, were famous as virtuosi of the trombone (Tommy), alto sax and clarinet (Jimmy). Yet the Jimmy Dorsey band has been led for decades by Lee Castle, a trumpeter; moreover, most of his band members not only aren't alumni of the original ensemble, but for the most part were unborn, or perhaps in their infancy, when the Dorsey Brothers died.

A sax player, Frank Foster, rather than a pianist, heads the Basie band today. Glenn Miller's orchestra is currently headed not by a trombonist but a tenor saxophonist. Earlier leaders played drums or clarinet.

Of all the ghost stories the Miller saga is by far the most remarkable: after 32 years on the road the band still tours 49 weeks a year, playing a 50-50 mix of concert and dance dates.

"The interest in Glenn's name and his music is as strong as ever," says Charles De Stefano, assistant vice president of the office that handles the Miller tours. "We have all the great arrangements from Glenn's original orchestra as well as some reprints from his

ghost bands, this one has a reasonably current album going for it. "In the Digital Mood," taped in 1983 but reissued a few months ago on a CD.

"This is a real young band," De Stefano said. "Most of the men are from the best music schools—Berklee, North Texas State, Eastman, UCLA, USC. They're around 23 to 25 years old."

A point De Stefano did not make was that if Glenn Miller were still leading the orchestra he'd be 54. Moreover, chances are he would have taken the library several steps beyond "In the Mood" and "String of Pearls."

The Miller organization enforces very strict limitations on the use of his name. It is legal to announce a "Tribute to Glenn Miller," but the phrases "Glenn Miller Orchestra" and "Moonlight Serranaders" are registered by the Miller office.

(The former Miller saxophonist Tex Benick briefly used the Miller name after World War II but promptly dropped it until Miller's widow decided, almost a decade later, to launch an official ensemble under the direction of Ray McKinley, who had played drums in Miller's AAF band.)

stand this music and play it right. We get occasional alumni, but the turnover is heavy. We draw mostly an older crowd, but there are always a few kids whose parents played them the records of 'Green Eyes' and 'Amapola' and all those early hits of Jimmy's. Helen O'Connell, who was on those original records, worked with us quite a bit, as well as guest singers like Margaret Whiting and Kay Starr.

"We work eight or nine months a year, and things are holding up pretty well. The band is doing some dates without me, but I expect to get the doctors' OK and be back on the road in a few weeks."

Also on the road, perhaps even more steadily, is the Tommy Dorsey orchestra. A trombonist named Warren Covington led the band within a year after Dorsey's death, but since 1977, the leader has been another trombonist, Buddy Morrow, who had worked in both Dorsey bands before making a little noise with a hit of his own, "Night Train."

"We work 47 to 48 weeks a year," Morrow said, "and of course we keep the Dorsey hits alive—we have a Sinatra-type singer, Chuck Anderson, and we use the old charts by Sy Oliver, Ernie Wilkins and the others. We do

More fortunate is Dick Johnson, the Boston-based clarinetist chosen by Artie Shaw when, after years of persuasion on the part of a booking agent, he allowed his name to be used in connection with an orchestra using the old Shaw arrangements and some new material.

Shaw went to Boston in late 1983 to rehearse the band, and during its early months made several appearances as a non-performing leader, but in recent years he has left the direction up to Johnson. The band has been working fairly steadily but does not yet have a current record to represent it, though the old Shaw LPs (and CD reissues) continue to proliferate.

Along with the ghost groups and the maverick Shaw phenomenon, several bands have survived the deaths of their leaders by continuing to tour with many of the same musicians. The preeminent case in point is the Ellington orchestra. Mercer Ellington did not lose a single day, in accordance with his father's wishes, he flew directly from Duke's funeral in May 1974 to present the orchestra at an LHM conference in Bermuda. Several of the same musicians who were with him

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Hampton Plays Classics at Disneyland

By LEONARD FEATHER

It is an odd irony that a perennial court of last resort for the big bands, allegedly senior citizens' sounds, is a place designed for preteens: Disneyland, where Lionel Hampton and his 16 colleagues are this week's incumbents at the Plaza Gardens.

How does this 79-year-old vibraphone virtuoso cater to a crowd that may have some members close to him in age and others who could be his great-grandchildren? The challenge is not simple, nor did it seem to be met for the first few tunes Monday night, with the orchestra making its way reservedly through conventional standard songs and the maestro himself in a subdued mood. Even Hampton's most durable ballad, "Midnight Sun," was a trifle perfunctory.

Everyone woke up conspicuously with a Wade Marcus original, "Invincible," with the upright bassist switching to electric, the second percussionist backing up the regular drummer and a tuba reinforcing the brass team. Although this could have been the most danceable tune of the set, the listeners, except for a couple of 3-year-olds cavorting up front, stopped their movements and

14 Part VI / Friday, August 26, 1988

DON KELSEN / Los Angeles Times



Lionel Hampton brings his ever-present vigor, vibraphone and 17-piece orchestra to Disneyland.

formed a long line in front of the bandstand absorbing these invigorating sounds.

Hampton's track record for developing major talent may have slowed a little, but he still produces the occasional promising newcomer. Doug Miller was doubly effective as tenor saxophonist and arranger, on "It's You or No One," "Speak Low" and his own "Sweet Tooth," flavored with early be-bop overtones. The other tenor star, Jerry Weldon, cooked cogently in his own arrangement of "Jean-

nine."

No Hampton convocation is complete without "Flyin' Home," ready to round out its first half-century but now equipped with a new routine in which each of the four trumpeters has a turn at bat.

By the end of the second set this invincible veteran, his enthusiasm whetted by the sounds around him, had brought his own unquenched vigor up to par.

The band plays nightly through Saturday, with sets beginning at 7, 8, 9:35 and 10:30.

## Jazz Reviews

## Oscar Peterson in Top Form at Hollywood Bowl

When Oscar Peterson plays "Soft Winds," his trio blows it into a sirocco. Not that heat and intensity are the only emotions distilled by the Canadian piano master; they are simply the most devastatingly evident, as a receptive crowd of 10,109 discovered Wednesday evening at Hollywood Bowl.

If energy is Peterson's heavy artillery, delicacy is his non-lethal weapon. While his technical prowess has made the most dramatic impact, the ability to conjure up sensitive webs of harmonic beauty has always been dexterously intermingled ever since he brought his formidable presence to this country 35 years ago.

On this occasion, there were many opportunities to observe the flying fingers of funk—in such numbers as a variant on the old 16-bar "Jada"—counterbalanced with examples, some of them unaccompanied, of his compositional creativity on a more cerebral level.

Peterson clearly is not out to sell records; not a word was spoken



Canadian piano master Oscar Peterson at Hollywood Bowl.

throughout the set. What was that beguiling waltz? How about the piece with the melody in fourths? And what does he call the one with the Bach-like movements? Some

SCOTT ROBINSON

apparently were excerpts from his "Canadiana Suite."

He has one of the most sympathetic small-group drummers in Bobby Durham, and a bassist, David Young, who proved equally nimble in supportive and solo capacities.

Except for a somewhat perfunctory Ellington medley toward the ending, this was top-grade Peterson all the way, and there are no higher grades.

Suffering from a cold, Jon Hendricks got through his opening set with apparent difficulty, sounding strained on his solo numbers.

The lyrics he has set over the years to masterworks by Ellington, Basie, Miles and Monk remain an enduring delight; however, he and his aides—wife Judith Hendricks, daughter Aria and Kevin Burke—were hampered not only by his condition but by an indifferent sound control that offered too much drums and unbalanced voices.

Aside from Hendricks' interesting version of the Brazilian song "Estate," the set consisted of long familiar favorites. The quartet was efficiently backed by the trio of pianist Danilo Perez.

—LEONARD FEATHER

during that traumatic week are still in the band.

"This has been a pretty good year," said Mercer Ellington in a recent interview, calling from Atlantic City, where his orchestra worked steadily for 4½ months as the house band with the Ellington musical "Sophisticated Ladies" at the Claridge Hotel.

"This is the year we won a Grammy for the 'Digital Duke' album on GRP Records, which really helped reestablish us after a long time away from the recording studios. And last week we recorded a new album for Music Masters, using some reggae material and other new additions to the repertoire."

The Ellington name has been kept alive through such media ventures as the recent two-part TV documentary, "A Duke Called Ellington," and through the seemingly endless discovery of hitherto unused material by the orchestra recorded during Duke's last

seriously of putting a Goodman band together.

Perhaps because of the power of their personality, drummers have not yet given rise to any phantom successes. A California based promoter, Joe Graydon, has the right to use Gene Krupa's name. He has presented some concerts using the band's old arrangements, but Anita O'Day, heard on many of the band's best-selling records, has yet to appear with it, and the drummer usually is Jack Sperling or some other leading studio musician. Buddy Rich's daughter Kathy, asked whether she would consider a Rich band, said: "I've helped to put a couple of tributes together, but as far as a full-scale band goes, you know the problem—Buddy Rich was that whole band."

Nevertheless, the tributes continue. Big bands led by elderly men in the names of dead men are big business, while new bands

in it," she says, but then there wasn't even when Daddy was doing it; it was just pocket money for him."

After six weeks off in June and July, the Herman Herd resumed touring last month and has a fair quota of dates through mid-December. Among them will be a fund-raiser in Los Angeles Oct. 28 for the Woody Herman Foundation, which since Herman's death has been reactivated, with the help of funds from the recently disbanded National Academy of Jazz, to help musicians faced with financial difficulties.

What might be called the Rudderless Ship Syndrome has affected at least one band, the Count Basie Orchestra, since the pianist's death in 1984. Despite the presence of the late Thad Jones at the helm, followed by saxophonist Frank Foster, the band found it



couple of decades. Though based primarily in Copenhagen (his wife is Danish), Mercer continues to spend as much time traveling as the bookings will permit. The band will be touring Japan from Oct. 10 to Nov. 13. (Where would the big bands be without Japan?)

Coincidentally, the chair of distinction is this orchestra, once occupied by the Duke himself, has been filled on several recent occasions by a young woman named Shizuko Yokoyama. "I found her in a Japanese jazz joint," says Mercer. "She's only about 27, but she manages to do very well with tunes of Pop's like 'Kinda Daktish' and 'Dancers in Love.' I wanted her to do this show in Atlantic City so she could get a real indoctrination into Ellingtonia."

□

Not every major figure of the Swing Era has spawned a posthumous ensemble. Though occasional tributes to Stan Kenton are presented, Kenton specified in his will that there could be no band in his name. Benny Goodman has been the subject of so many events using his name (without any official sanction) that Irving Goodman, the clarinetist's trumpeter brother, is thinking

playing fresh, exciting music (such as the Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra, which has won countless polls) have trouble getting three months' work a year.

"You can't start a new band today," says Graydon, "unless it has one of those names attached to it. There's still a lot of that generative set who are totally into nostalgia. They want to hear a band—any band—play 'Sing Sing Sing' or Herb Jeffries sing 'Flamingo' or Helen Forrest sing 'I Don't Want to Walk Without You.' You don't see too many people under 65 at these affairs, and there's a great scramble for tickets."

What is true of "Flamingo" applies equally to "Woodchoppers' Ball," "Four Brothers" and the other Woody Herman hits. Herman's was one orchestra that promptly raised the "Straight Ahead" banner upon the loss of its leader. In fact, long before his death last October, the band had been directed most of the time by Frank Tiberi, who had joined in 1969 playing tenor sax and bassoon.

Ingrid Herman Reese, who for the past two years has faced the mounting problems of Herman's enormous IRS indebtedness, his lengthy illness, and the attempt to evict him from his Hollywood home, is still helping to keep the band alive: "There's no real money

could not command the sidemen's salaries and fees for bookings fees it enjoyed during the Basie years; it has been going through a bankruptcy proceeding, but at present the outlook is brighter.

"We're going to be back on records soon," said trombonist Dennis Wilson, who last year gave up playing in order to concentrate on promotional devices for the orchestra. "We're also working on a 'Count Basie Band Suite' project, which we hope will involve a video; and we want to step up our activity on campuses, playing and teaching."

"Our last album, with Diane Schuur, was a big hit and stayed in the No. 1 slot in Billboard for 39 weeks; but what we need now is an album featuring the band itself. You know, 10 men who are with us now—and also our vocalist, Carmen Bradford—were all in the band before we lost Basie; so it's essentially the same sound with a lot of the same music."

Another orchestra that has suffered few changes is that of the bravura trumpeter Harry James. Six months after his death in 1983, the band was on its way again, under the guidance of the brothers Pee-Wee and Sal Monte, who had been part of the James

organization since the '40s.

Joe Graves was the first trumpeter selected to duplicate the James sound; a few months ago he was replaced by Art DePew, who like Graves was a longtime James sideman.

"This is a dream job for me," said DePew, 53, who made the rounds of the big bands—Tommy Dorsey, Tex Beneke, Glenn Miller, eight years with Lawrence Welk. "I always idolized Harry's trumpet playing. We have a good band and good music. I think *ghost band* is a most unfortunate term. The band is like a brand name, a guarantee of quality. It's an ongoing sound that we're proud to keep alive."

"I know the so-called Big Band Era will never come back, but the names have a meaning that promises a first-rate product, and we can deliver it," DePew said. "We can

reach some younger people with it and bring a lot of the older folks back into the fold. If someone asks for a waltz, heck, we'll play a waltz. Whatever we play, it's played with conviction and professionalism."

Having said that, DePew left to embark on the following schedule:

Wednesday, 3 p.m.—Leave from Sherman Oaks Park.

Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.—Play date in Goleta Elks Lodge, to 11:30 p.m. No hotel in Goleta. Immediately following gig, around midnight, bus leaves for Sandman Hotel in San Jose, arriving around 4:30 a.m.

Thursday, 1:45 p.m.—Leave for rehearsal at Paul Masson Mountain Winery with Rosemary Clooney for 3 p.m. rehearsal. 7:30 p.m.—Concert, in tuxedos. Bus will not go back to motel after rehearsal. A gratis dinner will be served at the winery at 6 p.m. . . . and the beat goes on. □

Calendar Movies, Page 20

# Turtle Island Makes the Strings Swing

By LEONARD FEATHER

"Strings can't swing" has long been a cliché derogation in the jazz world. Though many individual violinists have earned reputations for their virtuosity, the string section per se traditionally has had trouble interpreting jazz arrangements with the right rhythmic feeling.

The arrival of the Turtle Island String Quartet may change forever the image of the supposedly non-swinging string unit. Unlike the Kronos Quartet, which has recorded some admirable jazz but has to call on outsiders to provide ad lib

solos, the Turtle Island group consists of two violinists, a violist and cellist, all of whom are experienced improvising musicians.

Visiting Los Angeles recently to promote their album ("Turtle Island String Quartet," Windham Hill Jazz WD-0110), the violinists David Balakrishnan and Darol Anger described how the group came into focus.

"I studied classical violin through college," said Balakrishnan, "but I always wanted to play jazz and, when I was younger, rock 'n' roll. I got my master's degree in composition and graduated from UCLA in 1976."

Anger, by that time, had played bluegrass/swing in the David Gisman Quintet and had listened to "Jazz Violin Summit," a record by Jean-Luc Ponty, Stéphane Grappelli, Stuff Smith and Svend Asmussen, all improvising pioneers.

After exploring the violin's po-

*Turtle Island String Quartet, from left, Mark Summer, Darol Anger, David Balakrishnan, Irene Sazer.*

tential as an electric rock vehicle, he moved into the jazz and bluegrass scenes in the Pacific Northwest, honing his craft in bars and fiddle contests before becoming a founding member of the David

Gisman Quintet.

When Anger met Balakrishnan in 1978 it turned out that both had been inspired by "Jazz Violin Summit." Their backgrounds were similar and they began a mutually stimulating exchange of ideas.

Two years later a record entitled "Jazz Violin Celebration," with Balakrishnan, Anger and a third violinist, Matt Glaser, caught the ear

of Mark Summer, a Los Angeles born cellist who had graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and promptly received a position with the Winnipeg Symphony in Manitoba. It was a move he soon regretted.

"Over the years I became more and more disenchanted with the classical life," Summer now says. "I didn't care for the stress and the strictness; on the other hand, I was strongly attracted to the concept of improvising, which I'd tried on piano and guitar."

"I quit the Symphony and formed a group called the West End Stringband. We played at the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 1985, and that's where I met Darol Anger. The next year I moved to the Bay Area and we got together again."

The fourth Turtle Islander, Irene Sazer, born in 1959 in Los Angeles, had been playing violin for eight years when, at 15, she performed as concert master at the USC campus in idyllic. After racking up credits as second violinist at Tangle-

wood under Seiji Ozawa, earning her bachelor of music degree at Peabody Conservatory and joining the Baltimore Symphony in 1982, she too began leading a double life, moonlighting in a country-swing band. In January of 1986, she too moved to the Bay Area, where she soon found that her dual talents were rare and welcome.

"For many years there had been a shortage of qualified string players with a jazz feeling," Balakrishnan said. "In fact, I had to do some recording in which I played all the parts myself by overdubbing. When the four of us finally got together, we decided the time had come to organize a string ensemble that could involve all the disciplines, playing string quartet music, Third World music and jazz. Irene had been playing violin, but in order to give us the orthodox instrumentation—two violins, viola and cello—she switched to viola, and learned our entire library in seven days."

The basic idea was not new, as far back as 1980 Balakrishnan had been playing arrangements for four violins in a group known as Saheb.

But the general inexperience among string musicians, in terms of escaping from traditional and often stiff classical phrasing, was always a problem until the Turtle Island String Quartet was founded.

The spirit and spontaneity in the album made an immediate and startling impression. Balakrishnan contributed arrangements of Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia" and Miles Davis' "Milestones," leaving room in all three for improvised passages. Similarly Anger wrote a treatment of Bud Powell's "Tempus Fugit." Recorded on the same occasion was an original string quartet work by Balakrishnan.

"Now we're moving ahead on two fronts," said Balakrishnan. "We're doing club dates whenever we can with the jazz quartet, and we're pursuing the academic side. I received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to write a piece for a string orchestra, which will incorporate the quartet. "Most of the material we're doing," said Anger, "was composed or arranged from within the group, and it's enabling us to do things that are

outside the scope of many players. There's also an important rhythmic factor in that both David and I have had plenty of experience working in groups that don't have drums, and we can still generate a swinging feeling."

The Turtle Island foursome is, astonishing though it may seem, the first-ever string ensemble in which all the members not only play jazz material authentically as an ensemble, but also are all experienced in the improvisational art. In other words, it has taken some 70 years for the strings to develop a talent that evolved among saxophonists, trumpeters, trombonists and clarinetists at the dawn of jazz history. □



MARVIN COLELINE

# Gaines' Many Shades of Blues at the Biltmore

By LEONARD FEATHER

The good times rolled Monday at the Biltmore's Grand Avenue Bar when Roy (Guitar) Gaines launched another of his Texas blues sessions.

Gaines has a background of 30 years in every blues setting from Roy Milton and Joe Turner to Jimmy Rushing and Ray Charles.

His influences reflect this diversity of experience: During a 99-minute set, instrumentally he was Charlie Christian, then T-Bone Walker, then Wes Montgomery; vocally he delved into Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson (whom he resembles only if photographed from above), Jimmy Rushing, King

Pleasure and Nat King Cole.

Well supported by a vintage soul-blues group with Cedric Lawson on Hammond organ, Rob Kyle on tenor sax and Paul Humphrey on drums, Gaines showed tremendous animation on the blues numbers, sometimes jumping up and singing from a table top, even playing the guitar behind his neck.

You couldn't be too dismayed by this silliness, since his playing never suffered; moreover, on the ballads ("Too Late Now," "What's New") he displayed sensitivity, a commendable linearity and a commanding tone.

The longer the session ran, the more he sang, exploring the repertoires of a half-dozen blues pio-

neers. Oddly, after a series of Rushing lyrics, he sang "Lush Life," which was doubly out of place in this noisy room, then segued immediately into yet another blues.

If he is not entirely his own man, at least he is, with reasonable conviction, several other men whose contributions are worth recalling.

At 51, he is too young to have heard Charlie Christian in person, yet on "Wholly Cats" (an early Christian number with the Benny Goodman sextet) the spirit of that early master came vividly alive.

Gaines will be back at the Grand Avenue Bar on Sept. 12.

8/30

# Bassists Have a High Time at Schoenberg Hall Concert

The basses were loaded again Friday night at Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, when the International Society of Bassists Convention presented another in its weeklong series of concerts.

Charlie Haden, announced as the headliner, failed to show, yet he was hardly missed, given the presence of four successive groups led by bass players whose talent at times bordered on the mind-boggling.

Andy Stimpkins, long respected for his work with George Shearing and Sarah Vaughan, has it all: the technique, the conception, the intonation the phrasing. On this occasion, perhaps because of its nature, he seemed even more than usually inspired. Splendidly backed by Frank Collett on piano and John Nolan on drums, he wove his way through a blues, a ballad, a bop standard and a jazz waltz with chops-defying celerity.

Larry Steen, presented next as winner of the convention's competition, is a Berklee School of Music graduate whose ability to play a Charlie Parker line in lightning unison with the piano was an

indication of his stature as a giant of the not-too-distant future.

Then came Brian Bromberg, 27, who led a quintet, playing a piccolo bass tuned an octave higher than the standard electric bass. His solo foray was phenomenal, but the presence of a second bassist and a loud drummer mitigated against a swinging result. Later, when Bromberg switched to an upright bass and the other bassists departed, his performance was one step short of manic. At times he seemed to be producing two melodies simultaneously, using three or four fingers of each hand.

Less spectacular was the final set by Rufus Reid, with Harold Land on tenor sax. Reid made intelligent use of an unamplified upright bass and demonstrated the art of the bowed bass while backing one of Land's vigorously inventive solos. But the evening was long and the duo's welcome was ultimately unworn.

Special credit is due to John Clayton, himself a virtuoso bassist and teacher, who put the bass competition together and was the articulate host of Friday's concert.

—LEONARD FEATHER

9/9

# Basie and 'Tonight Show' Bands at the Bowl

By LEONARD FEATHER

The two halves of the "Jazz at the Bowl" concert Wednesday had more in common than might have been expected.

Obviously the main attractions were the two name bands, the Count Basie Orchestra directed by Frank Foster and Doc Severinsen with "The Tonight Show" Band, plus Joe Williams. Surprisingly, Williams sang with both. His set with the Basie ensemble was primarily blues-oriented; with Severinsen he leaned more toward pop and ballads, with an affecting nod to his church origins in "Down by the Riverside."

Both bands featured one of the saxophonists playing his own arrangement of Duke Ellington's "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me." Eric Dixon performed it with the

Basie Band, later Tommy Newsom played it with Severinsen, at a slightly faster tempo but with equal grace and assurance.

Both orchestras also featured some first-rate trumpet work, but with a touch too much of the flashy and florid, as in a brilliant but somewhat overheated version of "Night in Tunisia" by Basie's Byron Stripling, and Severinsen's generally admirable but slightly too melodramatic interpretation of "Star Dust" arranged by Newsom.

The Basie Band was only two numbers into its show when Carmen Bradford appeared for her three customary vocals, a throwaway "Foggy Day," a pleasing "Young and Foolish" and a lightweight blues. Of the instrumentals, Ernie Wilkins' old "Good Times Blues" came off best, though it's doubtful that the Count would have

approved of that comedy bass routine by Cleveland Eaton.

Severinsen's "Three Shades of Blue," a suite written in collaboration with Newsom, provided a well-tailored showcase for the leader and Shooky Young on trumpets, Ross Tompkins on piano and Gil Falco on trombone.

Ironically, the best solo work of the evening was offered by the bristling, indomitable tenor saxophone of Pete Christlieb playing a Basie number—Tommy Newsom's arrangement of "Jumpin' at the Woodside." Another top-grade tenor man, Frank Foster, who should have featured himself more, came out for the finale to join Williams and Severinsen in a rousing roundup on "All Right, Okay, You Win."

Attendance was a healthy 15,133.

THE  
AUDIO  
INTERVIEW

## LEONARD FEATHER

# A Life In Jazz



Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives

A 14-year-old boy's chance listening to Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues" in a Kensington, England record shop in 1928 led to one of the most illustrious careers in jazz. In his 1987 autobiography, *The Jazz Years: Earwitness to an Era*, music critic/producer/songwriter/jazz historian Leonard Feather maintains that this single incident determined the pattern of his life, providing him with "a sense of direction, a lifestyle, an obsessive concern with every aspect of jazz." This passion eventually led Feather to leave England because nothing was happening in the jazz scene there. But long before he emigrated to the United States, Feather joined the jazz vanguard.

His rise to prominence began with a letter to the editor of the British magazine *Melody Maker*, in which Feather questioned why no jazz was written in waltz time. This concept, considered outrageous at the time, was only the first of many controversial issues which Feather would introduce in subsequent letters to the editor. In addition to stirring heated debate about the parameters of the then-new music form, jazz, these missives prompted the editor to sign Feather as a regular *Melody Maker* columnist. From his first magazine essays to his critics' jazz polls for *Esquire* to his blindfold tests for *Down Beat*, Feather was a controversial innovator, calling for audiences and critics alike to reexamine their perceptions of modern jazz. His books, like his essays, sought to enlighten the jazz audience and to give them more knowledge about the medium and stars. In addition to his autobiography, Feather has written *The Encyclopedia of Jazz* (1955), considered by many to be the definitive book on modern jazz music, *The Book of Jazz* (1965), and *The Passion for Jazz* (1980).

A champion of be-bop, Feather helped bring luminaries such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie into the public eye. He was famous for taking chances on "unknown" artists such as Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington, and for finding or writing lyrics and arrangements to highlight their specific talents. Many times, these efforts met with criticism, as did the be-bop movement as a whole. Nevertheless, Feather's life work as a producer, songwriter, music critic, and author emerges as both revolutionary and evolutionary, and many of his musings have gone on to become musical facts.

*Let's talk about your first foray into producing in England, in 1936, with Benny Carter. You suggested doing jazz in waltz time for that session, which was a revolutionary concept at the time.*

It was, yeah. And what seems strange to me is why should it be revolutionary? You know, what is abnormal about ¾? Benny Carter happened to agree. There was no arrangement. That record was completely ad-libbed. We just played the blues—we played 24 bars instead of 12. But it made headlines in many of the newspapers and a lot of the music critics put it down. They said the idea

had about as much hope of posterity as a mule [laughter].

*Hadn't it ever been tried before?*

I think there were probably one or two jazz records that purported to be jazz waltzes. But I was not aware of anything. As far as anyone could tell, it was the first of its concept—a real jazz record, not pseudo-jazz.

*Why did you try such a revolutionary move on your first producing attempt?*

Because the first thing that got me some prominence was writing a letter to the editor of the *Melody Maker*, saying why is there no jazz in ¾ time? That caused a bit of

## TED FOX

# Buddy Collette Brings L.A.'s Jazz Past to Shrine Concert

By LEONARD FEATHER

For many L.A. musicians, Buddy Collette is a local hero, even a legend.

He was in the forefront of the movement to integrate the musician's union (until 1953 there was an all-black Local 767, paying lower scales than the white local, and without access to many valuable jobs). Around the same time he became the first black musician to break the studio color barrier by playing in a major TV series (in the Groucho Marx show band under Jerry Fielding).

A native Angeleno, Collette was part of the vital scene that dominated Central Avenue and Watts in the 1940s and '50s; he got Charles Mingus his first job as a bassist, and was an early associate of Dexter Gordon, Red Callender, Eric Dolphy and other pioneers.

"That's the era we'll be celebrating on Sunday," says Collette, who has organized a 16-piece orchestra to play the LA Jazz '88 concert at the Shrine, presented by the International Assn. of Jazz Appreciation.

The ensemble will include men and women who have long been a part of the Los Angeles scene: Harold Land, Bill Green, Bobby Bryant, George Bohanon, Clara Bryant, Vi Redd, Oscar Brashear and singer Bill Henderson.

A tall, gracious and articulate figure, Collette has been in constant demand in both jazz and studio circles, as flutist and saxophonist, and frequently as composer, with more than 100 recorded compositions and dozens of screen-writing credits (many for documentaries, advertising, films and television projects).

"I remember getting my baptism of fire," he says, "doing a movie called 'Trauma,' a 90-minute feature that called for 60 minutes of music. I led the group that performed it too. That was back in 1962, and it taught me a lot of what I needed to know about movie writing."

Collette has managed to keep his hand in at every level. "I was in Europe for a month recently, and for starters I did some writing for an 18-piece community orchestra in Freiburg. I taught improvisation classes, then took part in a 'flute summit' festival with James Newton and Paul Horn.

"Next I went to France for the Sorgues Jazz Festival; to Milan for a Soul Note Records session and a nightclub date; then on to The Hague for the North Sea [Jazz] Festival and an interview for the BBC."

Collette's professional life began



MARSHIA THASSEN / Los Angeles Times

Saxman Buddy Collette: A local hero to many jazz musicians.

in earnest around 1940 when, at 19, he joined Local 767. During the next decade he was playing saxophone and leading his own band, or paying sideman dues with Les Hite, Benny Carter and Gerald Wilson. After a few years in the studios in the early '50s, he acquired his first measure of fame in 1956 as a member of the original Chico Hamilton Quintet.

"By that time I was playing flute quite a bit," he recalls. "I picked it up around 1946, when it was thought to be a strange animal. When I'd take it into some club and play a ballad, a lot of mouths would fall open. 'Why are you playing that in a jazz room?' I studied it with Marty Ruderman. Soon other saxophone players began to follow suit; the ones who didn't lived to regret it, because it turned out to be essential for studio work.

"A funny thing happened at the recent flute convention in San Diego. One evening we had half a dozen flutists on the stand, so I pulled some of my music out of a bag and passed it around. After we'd played it, one lady in the audience said: 'That's fine, but couldn't you play something without music?'" Collette laughed. "So we gave her a few minutes of 'C Jam Blues.' What made it interesting, though, was that we had no rhythm section—just those six flutes all on our own."

Please see COLLETTE, Page 21

## COLLETTE

Continued from Page 20

Along with his playing and writing, Collette has maintained a teaching career; until recently he co-conducted a jazz class for four years at Loyola Marymount University. "We'd have the students bring in their own music, express their own ideas and learn how to solo, I'd bring out my sax or clarinet and switch choruses with them. It was fun, and it kept my chops up, in addition to making me more the regular guy with them."

For the Shrine concert Collette will include some of his own music to evoke a nostalgic echo of the great Los Angeles years. "I'd like to do some sort of dedication, drawing on our own heritage, the things that happened when Central Avenue was the place."

It won't be all nostalgia, of course; for Collette, the past, present and future carry equal weight. The measure of his versatility has been recorded in an astonishingly well-researched book, "Man of Many Parts: Buddy Collette," assembled by a Dutch fan, Coen Hofmann. It includes a long interview, lists of Collette's film scores and compositions, and a complete discography from 1945 into the '80s.

"When I got to Holland on that last visit," Collette said, "Hofmann gave me the book. I was amazed at the detail. I said 'You did all this for me?' He said 'Yeah, I love your music.' He had tears in his eyes, but when somebody can write 160 pages all about me, seems like I'm the one that should have been crying."

# Jazz Reviews

## Jeff Clayton Quartet: Combination Pays Off at Loa

Jeff Clayton, whose quartet opened Thursday at the Loa in Santa Monica, first attracted attention in this room as a member of the Gene Harris All Star Band. That, however, was a fleeting glimpse of a protean and promising talent.

Clayton strolled onto the bandstand carrying what looked like enough equipment to facilitate a change of horns on every tune. Starting conventionally with a blues on tenor sax, he switched to alto for two numbers that benefited from off-the-beaten-path arrangements: First in "A Foggy Day" and again in "On the Trail," a repeated figure was used as a device for introduction, bridges between solos and closing routine. Clayton's horn surged and soared over a rhythm section that managed, despite John Boudreaux's sometimes stiff drumming, to sustain an energetic pace.

"Bras-Real," a Clayton original, was an attractive Latin vehicle for his alto flute. Still another instrument, the soprano sax, provided the basis for his requiem, "Sad About Thad," composed in memory of Thad Jones, for whom he worked when Jones was leading the Count Basie orchestra.

A too-deliberately abstract version of "Night in Tunisia" showed that Clayton is not Ornette Coleman, nor does he need to be, any more than his young pianist, Mike Cane, has to jump into a Cecil Taylor bag. Cane's own solo version of "Stella by Starlight" re-

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JAZZ

## The Gentle Wave of Bossa Nova Rolls On

By LEONARD FEATHER

As the first title below makes clear, the impact of Brazilian music has stretched through three decades. "Black Orpheus," the Academy Award winning film, yielded "Samba de Orfeu," among other hits, in 1959. Three years later the Charlie Byrd-Stan Getz LP "Jazz Samba" triggered the U.S. bossa nova explosion.

9/3

## Eddie Vinson Tribute Sept. 30 at Biltmore

A memorial tribute to Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson will be held Sept. 30 from 6 to 11 p.m. at the Biltmore Bowl of the Biltmore Hotel. The veteran saxophonist and blues singer died July 2.

Scheduled to appear are the Teddy Edwards Quartet, Mickey Champion, Papa John Creach, Maria Gibbs, Harmonica Fats, the Plas Johnson Quartet, the Bernie Pearl Blues Band, Reynaldo Rey, Yvette Stewart, Phil Upchurch, Diane Witherspoon and Jimmy Witherspoon. Emcees will be disc jockeys Chuck Niles and Bobba Jackson and Times jazz critic Leonard Feather.

Admission is \$15 with tickets available through Ticketmaster or by mail from Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson Tribute, P.O. Box 5565, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405. Information: (213) 396-7848.

9/3

## Two Young Ellingtons Don't Match One Duke

The use of a respected and world-renowned name for a career in music is a calculated risk. In the case of a pair of singers from Canada now working in a room over Martoni's on Cahuenga Boulevard in Hollywood, a triple gamble is involved.

They have called their venue, where they work Fridays and Saturdays, the Ellington Room;

they bill themselves as April and Edward Ellington, and inevitably some of the Duke Ellington songbook constitutes a substantial portion of their repertoire.

One might almost infer that they were part of the Duke's family; however, their talent does not achieve the level that such an assumption could lead the listener to expect.

Visually they are an attractive couple, a brother (in his early 30s) and sister (a few years younger) who, despite obvious nervousness, did their best in trying to deal with "I Got It Bad," "Mood Indigo" and a few general standards such as "Green Dolphin Street."

The main problems are their failure to use harmony, a consistently stiff delivery and sagging tempos on the slow tunes. With their good looks and obvious eagerness to succeed, they might benefit from the advice of a vocal coach who could teach them how to relax. As things stand, it is tempting to wonder how much interest they would engender if they were known as, say, April and Edward Johnson, and their place of business the Johnson Room.

They were accompanied by Art Hillery at the piano, John B. Williams playing a bodiless upright bass and Rick Flowers on drums.

—LEONARD FEATHER

9/4/88

Jobim is here, playing his own "Chega de Saudade (No More Blues)" and singing, in a delicious duet with Elis Regina, his memorable "Aguas de Marco (Waters of March)." The backup groups are modest: guitars, flutes, strings, vibes, an accordion. Aside from two instrumentals, all are sung in Portuguese. The lyrics are reprinted in that language but not, alas, translated. Still, it is better to let the gentle wave of Brazilian words and rhythms wash over you than suffer an assault on the ears by an American pop group singing half-literate English lyrics. 4½ stars.

"SO NAO TOCA QUEM, NAO QUER." Hermeto Pascoal. Capitol/Intuition CI 96559. Translated. If you don't want it, you can't do it. Pascoal, the mystery man of São Paulo, wears a dozen hats here: composer, arranger, piano, percussion, vocals, button accordion, fluegelhorn, baritone flute, bandola, clavinet, harmonium, carviola. Weird noises, strange voices, eerie instrumentals, wordless vocals, Portuguese narrations, odd melo-

dies (some inaccessible, a few charming) add up to a rhytmic olla podrida (pardon my Spanish) diverse enough to be worth investigating. 3½ stars.

"VAUARETE." Milton Nascimento. Columbia CK 44277. All the fuss about this man's voice has energy but no apparent warmth, lacking the low charm that marked Jobim's other early Brazilians. "Do Merchant" has more of a Cuban beat, with a twist of only in a love song like "Het My Master" or "Songs and ments" does the true Rio peek through. The bloated singing—many strings, the USA group, voices—only adds to a lot of pretension. The singing is all in Portuguese, but at least translations in the notes enable to learn about the sociopolitical significance of Nascimento's letter to the Republic. 2 stars.

"MAOS." Ivan Lins. PolyGram 83282-2. "Maos" (Hands) re-



Lins as an ingratiating personality with a voice that almost defies the language barrier—but not quite, and foolishly, translations are absent here, leaving such songs as "Nicaragua" unexplained, though the cheerful voices and beat somehow put across a pro-Managua message. "Iluminados" is another contagious example of Lins' writing. Too bad this is such a brief set (32 minutes and eight songs, even on the CD). 3 stars.

□

"TJADERAMA." Clare Fischer & His Latin Jazz Sextet. Trend TRCD-551. A few thousand miles north of Rio, related Latin sounds thrive. This dedication to the late Cal Tjader comprises songs by or associated with him, along with four originals by Fischer, whose digital piano has a vibes effect that enables him to approximate Tjader's sound. Most cuts have a three piece percussion section with a Fischer regular, Dick Mitchell, on flutes and soprano sax. Pleasant lightweight listening. 3 stars.

□

"THE OVERWHELMING JOE WILLIAMS." RCA Bluebird 6464-2-RB. Consider the company the singer kept on these various 1960s dates: Clark Terry, Thad Jones or Howard McGhee on trumpet, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Zoot Sims, tenors; Hank Jones, Junior Mance, piano, and dozens more. Of the 18 songs, six are blues (including an informal version of "Every Day"), four are Ellington, and one is both (Duke's "Rocks in My Bed"). A couple of more ambitious cuts with strings and/or voices, displaying Williams as a top-grade ballad singer, work well, too. 4 stars.

□

"IT'S ABOUT TIME." Harvie Swartz. Gala D 9011. Playing something called the Merchant Vertical bass, Swartz also functions as composer and, briefly, pianist, in a curious assortment of fusion and quasi-jazz, with one or two cuts displaying his writing talent reasonably well. Percussion, synth

and harmonica are among those present in the group, known as Urban Earth. This may earn him some new listeners but will say little to those who admired him in his straight-ahead days. 2½ stars.

□

"THE HOOPS McCANN BAND PLAYS THE MUSIC OF STEELY DAN." MCA MCAD-42202. The fictitious name in effect stands for the conductor-aranger Joe Rocci-sano, who takes the nine-piece band through instrumental charts that alternate effectively between jazz and fusion. Soloists, all leading Los Angeles studio musicians (most of whom were on the original Steely Dan versions), include Mike Lang, piano; Jerome Richardson, alto sax; Chuck Findley, trumpet. A neat transmogrification. 3½ stars. □

**JEANNIE**  
&



## ABERCROMBIE: On an Adventure in Music



Continued from Page 3

York and join Steps Ahead.

"I had this idea of getting the two of them together, because Marc has the sensitivity for that subtle interplay I like to achieve on standard songs, while Peter's drumming provides the kind of energy he displayed in Weather Report, which works well with some of the more electronic stuff I like to play."

The trio played its first date in Europe in 1984 and has remained together. There is a great mutual admiration within the unit. Erskine has characterized Abercrombie as "one of the greatest improvising musicians I've ever encountered."

"I've always had a good relationship with drummers," says Abercrombie, who began his professional life in music in 1966, when he graduated from the Berklee School of Music in Boston. "Chico Hamilton was very open—we all did a lot of writing for his band and there was plenty of spontaneity. With Billy Cobham, whom I joined in 1974, there wasn't that much interplay, but he had a high decibel level and a certain kind of interesting energy."

"One of my greatest experiences was working with Jack De Johnette. We were together for about 5 years. He is a great time-keeper, with strong jazz roots, capable of playing free time, straight-ahead time, everything. I learned an awful lot from him."

He is also learning from other guitarists. Just as Metheny inspired him to become involved with the synthesizer, an English guitarist, Alan Holdsworth, now intrigues him with a new development. "Holdsworth is involved with the MIDI guitar, which includes an in-between converter box. Whereas Pat uses what would be called more of an analog-sound synth, Alan Holdsworth's is digital. Both men are real pioneers."

"I'm still convinced that all these developments have musical value in terms of being creative and expressive; we just have to keep hanging in there until the technology matches the players."

John Abercrombie now uses the guitar synthesizer: "You can program so many of your sounds with it that it's an invaluable tool."

HELENA SEIBERT

Times 9/14

## Chanting Keeps Ernestine Anderson's Career on Key

By LEONARD FEATHER

Four words saved Ernestine Anderson's singing career.

They are not words most of us hear every day: *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*. To those who practice the Nichiren Buddhist religion, however (and they include Herbie Hancock among other musicians), this chant had a special significance.

Anderson's life in music had moved upward slowly during the 1950s and down precipitously in the '60s. A hit album she had recorded in Sweden in 1958 crossed the Atlantic; soon *Time* magazine was calling her "the best new singer in the business." But after a few more records with diminishing sales and a couple of years living in England, her work opportunities ground to a halt and she found herself taking day jobs.

"Meanwhile, though," the Houston-born singer recalls, "I had become a practicing Buddhist, and I started praying for a chance to get back on records. Sure enough, not long afterward I got a call from Benny Carter to do an album with him."

Praised by Carter for the honesty and conviction of her sound, she eventually landed a contract with Concord Records. In the last decade she has produced a long series of free-swinging LPs, one of which, in 1981, included the slightly raunchy blues "Never Make Your Move Too Soon." It gained major airplay; the calls for club and festival dates picked up.

Tonight at the Hollywood Bowl



JIM DAVIDSON

Ernestine Anderson, "hopping pretty steadily on the road."

Anderson's life, in a sense, will have come full circle. She will be heard as a special added attraction with the Lionel Hampton orchestra. It was as Hampton's band vocalist that she first attracted attention in the early 1950s.

Despite the obvious temptations, Anderson has never sacrificed her image as an uncompromising jazz singer, with a resourceful ear for unconventional popular songs and a deep feeling for the blues (one of her best albums was the blues-oriented "When the Sun Goes Down"). Because of prevailing conditions in the music world, though, she is beginning to have slight reservations about her stand.

"Jazz artists on the whole are still not getting the proper exposure," she says. "Compared to people in the pop field, they are still at the dues-paying stage; they have to do it for the love of the

music rather than to make a living at it. Jazz is just not a form of music that attracts too many young singers; there's not enough incentive for them."

Asked about Diane Schuur, who like Anderson is Seattle based, she said: "I've known her for years; she's a good friend and a good singer. She has sort of crossed the line, and that's fine for her. Dianne Reeves also leans toward the commercial, and I'm not saying this is a bad thing. In fact, sometimes I wonder whether I'm doing the right thing myself."

Whatever her momentary misgivings, life is running smoothly. True, there is little work on her home turf, except for a Seattle club once a year and the annual jazz festival in nearby Bellevue, Wash. Aside from this, though, her bookers keep her, as she puts it, "hopping pretty steadily on the road."

In general, her career is spiraling upward. "I have had capacity houses at places like the Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Mass., and the Blue Note in New York. The records are getting great radio play."

"It's not that I don't do as much as I want to, but I'd like to concentrate less on clubs and do more concerts. After all, you can reach as many people in one or two nights at a good-size hall as you do in a whole week at a club."

As she points out, even when working conditions are less than ideal, a concert can be a rewarding experience. "A couple of weeks ago I was at the Chicago Jazz Festival, a city-sponsored outdoor event, and it was raining. A great gust of wind came up and blew rain on the stage. To my amazement, the people stayed. Herbie Hancock and I were the closing acts and they waited patiently in the rain."

Concerts can sometimes pay off in prestige rather than cash. "I've been invited by Gov. Booth Gardner to appear at the 'Best of Washington State' gala."

Anderson has never given up the chanting that she feels turned her life around almost 20 years ago.

"I still try to chant three hours a day. I'm not always successful at that, but I do try for a minimum of an hour."

85

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# Abercrombie Seeks Adventure on Higher Musical Ground

By LEONARD FEATHER

**J**ohn Abercrombie, one of the most adventurous artists in a new generation of guitarists, is always reaching for higher-tech.

The group he now leads (due to open tonight for a 6-day run at Catalina Bar & Grill) finds him working with the guitar synthesizer, enabling the group to undergo a powerful change of character. In effect, the trio can become a full orchestra.

"I started using the synth a couple of years ago, around the time we made our first record with the trio," says the 43-year-old virtuoso. "I first heard one when Pat Metheny used it on a gig at Woodstock with me and Jack DeJohnette. I knew right away that I had to have one.

"The synthesizer is at once rewarding and frustrating. There's a slight delay between hitting a note and hearing it, which you don't get on a keyboard synthesizer. Then, too, there's what I call the glitching—when you touch an adjacent string that you're not playing, but the synth will bring it out and make it sound like you added a wrong note.

"Still, the advantages outweigh the problems, because you can

program so many of your own sounds and ideas with it that it's an invaluable tool."

As was revealed in the trio's recent album, "Getting There" (ECM 1321), Abercrombie employs the technology without allowing it to overwhelm the human quality. His taste ranges from dissonant original works to such wistful pieces as "Remember Hymn," with guest soloist Michael Brecker.

After 20 years working with major names—Johnny Hammond, Gil Evans, Gato Barbieri—Abercrombie has achieved a colorful fusion of elements that is expressed by a hand-picked group.

"It didn't come together by chance," he says. "Several years ago I went to the Village Vanguard to hear Bill Evans, and I was completely floored by this bassist who had just joined him, Marc Johnson. I just knew we would work together someday.

"I met Peter Erskine on a Bobby Hutcherson record date. He was just leaving Weather Report, getting ready to move back to New

*Please see ABERCROMBIE, Page 6*



## JAZZ REVIEW

## Notes of Freedom Ring at Gibson's Jazz Party in Denver

By LEONARD FEATHER

DENVER—There was one striking difference between Dick Gibson's 20th annual jazz party, which ended here Monday evening, and the two overlapping jazz events in Los Angeles.

Unlike the practically all-white Classic Jazz Festival at the Marriott, and the virtually all-black "L.A. Jazz '88" events, the Gibson bash was thoroughly integrated, by chance rather than design, among the 52 sets during 32 hours of playing time, all but a couple were by interracial groups.

One reason could be that the Gibson affairs cover the jazz spectrum from traditional to swing to pop and beyond.

The "beyond" may take the form of one of Roger Kellaway's more perceptive piano explorations, Ray Brown's phenomenal bass solo on "Sam de Ofeu," or Lew Tabackin's vivid statements on the state of the tenor sax art.

Freedom is the keynote in Colorado, freedom from thrallidom to synthesizers, electronics, written arrangements, New Age, and whatever else conflicts with the taste of Dick and Maddie Gibson.

Among the 59 handpicked musicians, who occupied the bandstand in the chandeliered ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, changing partners at 45-minute intervals in an infinite number of permutations, there were five first-timers. John Frigo, the astonishing 71-year-old violinist from Chicago; Harold Ashby, the ex-Ellington tenor saxophonist; Bruno Carr, the Denver-based drummer; Lou Soloff, a trumpeter who has proved that working as a New York studio musician doesn't ruin your jazz chops; and Dan Barrett, a Pasadena-born trombonist who bore out one of two conflicting theories the party seemed to prove.

One theory is that musicians in their 20s and 30s have either failed to capture the essence of pure jazz or have been seduced by fusion. In addition to Barrett, 32, there was Joe Cohn, 31, the guitarist son of the late saxophonist Al Cohn, who was a party regular for many years; John Clayton, the 36-year-old bassist whose credits include the Count Basie Band and five years with the Amsterdam Symphony; drummer Duffy Jackson, 35, son of bassist Chubby Jackson ("I last played the party when I was 17, and I made such a big impression that they brought me back 18 years later"); and Australian whiz kid James Morrison, who at 25 has mastered more instruments than he can carry, from trumpet and



Sax man Benny Carter, blues singer Joe Williams, pianist Dick Hyman participated in Denver party.

trombone to euphonium and alto sax.

If these relative youngsters show that the torch is being passed along, another point is made *chez* Gibson: Maturity is a <sup>route</sup> betterment.

Most of the giants of yesteryear are playing with at least as much creative power as they were decades ago. Eight of this year's participants are over 70; many are in their 50s or 60s. (Gibson has pointed out the vital need for younger men to carry the tradition forward; of the 226 artists heard at the 25 previous parties, 26 have died.)

If the three days included the customary quota of lingua-franca standard songs, there were occasional surprises. Frigo chose to play "Estrellita" as an almost unadorned violin solo. Dick Hyman and Roger Kellaway, in a stunning piano duet, took "Swinging on a Star" off into the wild atonal blue yonder.

Joe Williams, surrounded by fellow Basie alumni (Marshal Royal, Sweets Edison, Al Grey, Milt Hinton), was an electrifying form as he devoted part of his blues roundup to the lyrics of the late Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson.

Benny Carter's alto sax solo Saturday evening was "Memories of You," an exquisite dedication to his first major employer, Horace Henderson, the pianist and composer who died in Denver last week.

Still another tribute was "My Buddy," played during the noon to 11:10 p.m. Labor Day marathon by Spike Robinson for a fellow tenor sax giant, Buddy Tate, who was at the party as a guest but was not supposed to perform until he is fully recovered from open-heart surgery.

At his insistence, however, he did get to play, and beautifully, the two final numbers on Monday night.

As always, the party was as much a social as a musical affair, where East (Joe Newman, Phil Woods, Bob Wilber, Kenny Davern, Dave McKenna, Scott Hamilton) meets West (Snooky Young, Bill Berry, Red Holloway, Ross Tompkins, Jeff Hamilton) to enjoy what is for many a once-a-year

chance to stretch out in fresh and stimulating company.

Where in Los Angeles could Plas Johnson be inspired to play "Jum-pin' in the Blues" with Kansas City's own Jay McShann supplying the blues-drenched piano and his unique nasal vocal? Where but in Denver can Oklahoma's Barney

Wednesday, September 7, 1988 / Part VI 7

Kessel and New York's Bucky Pizzarelli establish their two-guitarist empathy?

And who but Gibson would fly trombonist George Chisholm from England for his annual chance to jam with Flip Phillips and Ralph Sutton? Or bring in the expatriate drummer Ed Thigpen from Copenhagen to team up with old friends?

The party cost the Gibsons \$143,000. The charge for attending the five long sessions was \$240, predicated on the assumption that if all 600 available places were sold

it would break even.

But the final figure was 574 paid admissions; thus, the loss of more than \$6,000.

Gibson started something that has snowballed into 54 competitive spin-off jazz parties, held by other promoters who may have cut into his own tick.

He is left with the pleasure of hearing his favorite world-class musicians; this is the true profit that has continued for more than a quarter of a century to put him ahead of the game.

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Bud Shank Quartet at the Loa

Bud Shank, the alto saxophonist and composer who opened Thursday at the Loa, was taken too much for granted during his many years as a Southland resident. As a visitor from his home in Port Townsend, Wash., he seems doubly welcome, particularly since his present direction is more adventurous than that of his days in a somewhat bland group known as the L.A. Four.

He opened with an original, "The Doctor Is In," a fast blues with a bridge. It was promptly apparent that this is a no-holds-barred quartet. In the next piece, his own "Sea Flowers," it was fascinating to

observe Shank's innate sensitivity. He has an uncanny ability to bring the right tone quality, dynamics, duration and emotional impact to every note and phrase.

This impact was fortified by the

RENEW GIBSON

# The Velvet Years of Mel Tormé

By LEONARD FEATHER

**T**he trouble with Mel Tormé is that he has too many activities, and performs them all too efficiently. There are those he does to perfection (singing, com-

posing), and those he does inordinately well—drumming, arranging, writing (newspaper and magazine articles, books). Everyone, you might say, should have such troubles.

Back home in Los Angeles after a recent tour, Tormé, who turns 63 Tuesday, was afraid to be interviewed because he had no complaints. "This is going to be dull, because in the past I've had something provocative to bitch about, but what can I say today? This is the happiest time in my entire life; everything is so good, I'm waiting for the bubble to burst."

The inflated bubble was due to two nights playing to capacity houses and standing ovations at the Hollywood Bowl with his frequent partner, George Shearing, to the success of his latest Concord album and the completion of recording for

the next, a reunion with his old arranger friend Marty Paich, to a major new pop album by Steve Miller in which Tormé's "Born to Be Blue" is the title tune, to an upcoming Jason Robards' movie, "Dream a Little Dream of Me," in which he sings the title song; and most notably to the imminent publication by Viking of his autobiography, "It Wasn't All Velvet," due out next month.

As an advance copy revealed, the memoir has all the writing skill he displayed in his previous books, "The Other Side of the Rainbow," about his experiences writing for Judy Garland's TV series in the 1960s, and "Wynner," a novel.

It is more successful than either, since its personal revelations shed a fascinating and generally honest light on his private and public lives: the years as a child singer and radio actor in Chicago, the pioneering MelTones vocal group of the 1940s, the three wives who jettisoned him (he doesn't pretend to be blameless for the first two breakups), the five children, and the fourth wife, Ali, a tax lawyer, who now has him, he says, permanently contented.

As his friend Charlton Heston has observed, "Mel Tormé explores his subject with a clear eye, he writes with candor and humor. I was taken enormously with this book." To which the subject adds: "When you write a book about yourself you have to be reasonably even-handed."

Among the topics about which he has always voiced strong views is the recording industry. "As you know, I've never predicated my career on the success of any one record. Sure, there have been some songs I'm associated with, like 'Mountain Greenery' and 'Lulu's Back in Town,' but I'd be a liar if I said those were platinum sellers. Even 'Blue Moon,' which was high on the charts, didn't hit No. 1."

He has never forgiven the brothers Nesuhi and Ahmet Ertegun, whose Atlantic Records signed him in the 1960s. "These brothers were supposedly such great jazz fans,



Mel Tormé, a man of many, many talents, has an autobiography, "It Wasn't All Velvet," due next month from Viking.

and I was ecstatic about signing with them. Then Nesuhi came to my house and played me some of the most putrid songs I've ever heard. He sat there jiggling in his seat, snapping his fingers, really believing in this drivel. Atlantic just wasn't the place for me; the Erteguns basically are businessmen with a totally commercial approach."

Such experiences make him doubly happy with his present situation: Concord Jazz is an independent company that records whatever its artists want to record, which usually corresponds with what is desired by the owner, Carl Jefferson.

"Jeff is a big bear of a man and just as honest as the day is long. He has good taste, and good distribution—wherever I go, there's always a Concord record of mine in the bin. To make it even better, all my old things that I did with Artie Shaw and the MelTones have been reissued by Musicraft; so have the old Bethlehem albums, and the Verve's, even some of the Atlantics."

Finding non-standard songs that are worth recording has become a challenge. "I'm not talking about the melodies," he says, "but so many of today's lyrics are being written by young songwriters and are designed to come out of very young mouths. If I sing some of the

words that are out on the market today, I have no credibility."

When he does find the right song, Tormé often sets himself the even more grueling task of orchestrating it; he is the only major pop singer whose musicianship enables him to write many of his own arrangements.

"What really thrilled me, the other night at the Bowl, was to have so many of those L.A. Philharmonic musicians come over and say gee, we loved your arrangements. That means so much more to me than if they said hey, you sang beautifully, because, you know, that's easy."

Easy?

"Well, when I write an arrangement I have to sit at the piano and form the chords and make up my mind about what harmony or which substitution to use, and then slowly, very carefully, write it all down. For me, it's terribly time consuming. For a genius like Billy May it's nothing—he can write an arrangement on a plane, in his sleep, under water. For me it's agony, but when I hear the results, it's heaven."

As deeply absorbed as he has been in music during at least 50 of his 63 years, Tormé has intense outside interests. His knowledge of old movies is encyclopedic. He has been an airplane pilot and is thinking of taking up this hobby again. He likes to sit around chatting with people like Artie Shaw, who shares his background as a voracious reader with a consuming interest in extramusical matters.

"I have a pal," says Tormé, "who runs a Sony service office near here—a real nifty guy. Sometimes, even if I don't have anything that needs fixing, I'll just drop over there and we'll rap about anything—not about music. You know,

I'll get in a limo from the airport, and the driver will say, 'Hey, Mr. Tormé, you want a different station?' And I'll say, 'Please, just turn it off.' You can really get inundated with music, and there are times when you just have to hold it at arm's length."

Will Tormé's book wind up as a major motion picture? Somehow the recipe seems wrong: he has never touched any drug, not even a cigarette, drinks only an occasional glass of wine, and has never had a comeback spread in People Magazine. On the other hand, his encounters with Ava Gardner, Marilyn Monroe and various other Hollywood luminaries may seem spicy enough for conversion to screenplay—which Tormé himself might be best qualified to write.

He has a healthy ego and a tendency to name-drop, but it would be hard to find anyone for whom these qualities were more fully justified. Among his closest friends was another former child prodigy who also sang (a little) and played drums (a great deal), Buddy Rich. He is, in fact, the subject of the name Tormé literary enterprise.

"I talked to Buddy just before he died and he said, 'You're the one to tell it, and make sure you tell the whole story—warts and all.' I've written three chapters and I've done tons of research, but don't crowd me—publication is a year away; meanwhile I have my own autobiography to promote. One thing at a time."

Sure. Just singing, writing songs, finishing up arrangements, playing drums, recording for movies and albums, studying his new Macintosh computer, promoting his book—that is Melvin Howard Tormé's idea of one thing at a time. □

## Los Angeles Times

presence of three propulsive teammates—pianist Alan Broadbent, a promising drummer from New Orleans named Gordon Lane and the remarkable John Leitham on bass.

Broadbent's keen ear for harmony was engagingly evident during Johnny Mandel's "A Time for Love," in which Shank embroidered this attractive standard tune with his personalized finesse. The set ended with another new Shank work from a forthcoming album,

the Brazilianesque "Tomorrow's Rainbow."

Shank bears roughly the same relationship to Art Pepper as Frank Morgan does to Charlie Parker, yet even this analogy is a little unfair, since at this point in Shank's career, he is unquestionably his own man. It could only be regretted that he did not choose to bring out the flute, an instrument he was among the first jazz artists to master.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# James Morrison—A Wizard From Oz

By LEONARD FEATHER

The movies have "Crocodile Dundee"; jazz has James Morrison.

The 25-year-old multi-instrumentalist from a small town in the Australian outback has long since conquered his native land; during several visits to the United States (he spent five months here last year), audiences at clubs in major cities have marveled at his mastery of the trombone, trumpet, euphonium, flugelhorn, alto saxophone and piano.

At Dick Gibson's annual jazz party in Denver, last year and again this month, the general reaction left little doubt that he could be the next jazz superstar.

Although the first American release of one of his albums is a couple of months away, Morrison already has provided, for many audiences in this country, a fascinating example of how a young musician can become, in his opinions as well as his performance, a symbol of the new wave in acoustic jazz.

His use of so many instruments goes back almost to the beginning of his life in music. "I began on cornet at 7, right after we'd moved to Sydney, then within a year I took up trombone, tuba, euphonium and anything else I could put my hands on; a few years later I began playing alto sax."

Asked whether this had involved a tremendous amount of practice time, he said: "Not really. I just spent a lot of time playing with a lot of other musicians, and that meant almost all the time. I went to high school at 12, formed a school band and spent so much time rehearsing and writing arrangements that the school was sort of happy when I quit at 16. I went directly to the Conservatorium in Sydney and took a two-year course."

A little of his talent can be attributed to heredity. "My mother plays alto sax and piano. Dad's a TV producer. They encouraged me. When I was 9, I had a trad band and we used to play in the local shopping centers. I had no time or inclination to sit down and listen to other players, although by the time I was 16 I did begin to get a lot of records by people like Charlie Parker."

Long before he began picking up formal knowledge at the Conservatorium, Morrison had made his professional debut. "When I was 13 I started playing night clubs, backing acts, doing dance band jobs and whatever came along. Then when I was 16 I managed to get a gig at one of the only real jazz clubs in Sydney, the Paradise Jazz Cellar. It was in the worst part of town, and I ended up playing there six hours a night, four nights a week."

Playing both reed and brass instruments is a hazardous life for the average musician; only a hand-



Australian trombonist-trumpeter James Morrison showed his talent at an early age; he started playing club dates at 13.

ful of great jazzmen ever accomplished this successfully, yet Morrison dismisses the problem as one he simply didn't notice. "I never even thought about having to change my embouchure, it simply seemed to me that playing the trumpet, as opposed to playing the saxophone, was just a matter of learning to use your fingers this way instead of that. I wasn't aware of any conflict."

First heard in the United States at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1979, when he was 16, Morrison made his major impact here last year when the American trumpeter Red Rodney, who had heard him in

Sydney, invited him to join his group. Later came a European tour that took in the big festivals (the North Sea, Montreux, Nice, Port), at which he inevitably overwhelmed the crowds, particularly when he strode on stage, trombone in one hand, trumpet in the other, and effectively played a duet with himself. At Montreux he recorded a live session with the Polish pianist Adam Makowicz, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster; this will be released on WEA Records, as will a studio session taped in Australia.

Morrison finds nothing remarkable about his having been inspired

by Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown, Erroll Garner and Art Tatum rather than the fashionable fusion favorites of the day.

"I hear arguments from people of my own generation telling me that what I'm doing is something that's already happened, and it's up to me to play something new. I have two answers to that. First, whether it's happened or not isn't the point. Great music is great music. Suppose we used the same standards in dramatic arts and refused to perform Shakespeare because he's already 'happened'—wouldn't that be a great loss?"

"Second, the way I play my music will be different from the way other people play it. With each musician we may have some new swing, some new bop to hear."

"Australian people do tend to be blinkered and single-minded about jazz, and about the necessity for it to be new. It can be difficult for someone like me, if you just start swinging, they may put you down immediately as a mimic, or on a nostalgia trip."

"How can it be nostalgia for me? I wasn't there!" □

# Jazz Society Honors Gerald Wiggins



L-R, Eric Reed, Leonard Feather, Gerald Wiggins, Clare Fischer

**A**N IMPORTANT FUNCTION for the Los Angeles Jazz Society is to honor those who have contributed to jazz in an annual tribute. The Society feels it is important to honor these people while they are still alive and well and able to fully appreciate the high esteem in which they are held.

Los Angeles is home to many important musicians, composers and educators and this year has been dubbed "The Year of the Piano" by the Society. They have chosen three gentlemen who have made their marks with the piano: Gerald F. Wiggins, Clare Fischer and newcomer, Eric Reed, in addition to educators, Dick Grove and Leonard Feather.

Gerald Wiggins has been a reliable figure in the Los Angeles music scene for many years. When he is on the bandstand the audience knows that the evening will be special. Wiggins handles every job, whether in a small club or a concert hall with exacting professionalism.

Born and raised in New York City, Gerald Wiggins' professional career began in his teens. Inspired by Teddy Wilson, Billy Kyle, and Art Tatum, Gerald attended the now famous Music and Arts High School in Harlem, with his first professional break coming as accompanist to comic Stepin' Fetchit. Within a short span of time his list of credits grew to include Les Hite's Band, Louis Armstrong and Benny Carter.

After a two-year interruption to serve in the armed forces, Gerald resumed his career in 1950 as accompanist to Lena Horne and, later, with Helen Humes, Dinah Washington, Esther Phillips, Diana Ross and the Supremes, and countless others.

In addition to an impressive list of jazz credits, his career record reads like a

"who's who" of stage and screen, most notably with movie queen Marilyn Monroe who stated, "Without you I can't sing a note." His composer credits include "Strip City" from the movie *Some Like It Hot*, and more recently a PBS special titled, *Profiles in Jazz*, which he composed and directed.

Since the late forties, Gerald Wiggins, affectionately known as "Wig", has recorded numerous albums in the United States and in Europe with his trio and with many prominent jazz artists. Gerald's associations with major personalities continues into the '80s with Marla Gibbs of TV show "227", and Cybill Sheppard of "Moonlighting".

Wig's inventive harmonies, sensitivity and ability to swing, are trademarks which have earned him loyal fans and the respect of fellow artists. His recent solo concert at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall confirms his current status as a world class jazz pianist.

#### Leonard Feather 1988 Lifetime Achievement Award

In his lifetime, Leonard Feather has touched upon all aspects of jazz greatly influencing the growth and development of the art form. Feather's accomplishments in the field of journalism have made him a household name in the jazz world, with 12 books to his credit, the most recent of which is *The Jazz Years — Earwitness To An Era*.

He is a composer of some 225 works, many of which have been recorded by countless jazz artists. As a producer he was the first to record Sarah Vaughan, George Shearing, Dinah Washington, and Ella Jones. These examples illustrate Leonard Feather, the talent scout.

Born in London, England, Feather

lived in New York for many years before moving to California. Since 1965, his byline has appeared in the Los Angeles Times. He also writes for a number of jazz publications both in the U.S. and abroad.

As a TV and radio personality Feather has made guest appearances on several documentaries. His own radio programs have been heard for more than 20 years on a variety of stations, most recently KKGO.

A walking encyclopedia on jazz, Dr. Leonard Feather's fascinating memories of bygone years and personal experiences with many of the greatest jazz artists afford students meaningful insights through his lectures, sometimes illustrated by rare film from his private collection.

#### Clare Fischer 1988 Composer/Arranger Award

Noted for his versatility in musics, Clare Fischer's natural gift as a composer/arranger emerged at the age of 12. Born in Duran, Michigan, he began his general music studies in grade school.

Upon graduating from high school, Fischer went straight to Michigan State University. In 1952, he was drafted into the army where he eventually became the arranger for the U.S. Military Academy Band at West Point.

After the army, Fischer returned to Michigan State to complete his graduate work. In 1955, he received his masters degree and three years later, relocated to Hollywood, and began to write his first vocal arrangements with the "Hi-Lo's". During this same period he arranged an album for Donald Byrd and began working with Dizzy Gillespie, Cal Tjader and George Shearing.

The next several years were followed by writing music for commercials and recording the first record under his own name for Pacific Jazz records.

An interest in Latin music developed and in 1976 he organized his own group called "Salsa Picante". Later adding vocalists to the band, the "2 + 2" recorded an album of the same name which received a Grammy in 1981.

Presently Fischer writes and orchestrates for Prince and with various orchestras performing arrangements he wrote using Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn themes. Some of his compositions include: *I Remember Spring*, *Morning Song* and *Pensativo*.

#### Dick Grove 1988 Jazz Educator Award

Pianist Dick Grove moved to California from Indiana to become an important part of the music industry of Los Angeles.

Working for about twenty years in the studios, writing and arranging as well as leading his own big band, Dick Grove opened his Grove School of Music in 1973.

He has written numerous educational books on music theory, improvisation, arranging, and modern harmony. His school of music employs some 60 teachers, with students number 400 this semester, and a projected 600 students expected in January 1989.

#### Eric Reed 1988 Shelly Manne Memorial New Talent Award

Eric Reed began playing piano at three, with formal lessons beginning at the age of seven in Philadelphia at the Settlement Music School with Vernon Lathorn.

When Eric's parents moved to California in 1981, he began studying music at the Community School for Performing artists located near USC, with Harold Battiste.

With an emphasis on improvisation, Battiste invited jazz musicians to conduct workshops as well as an occasional field trip to a local jazz club where Eric would have an opportunity to sit in.

Eric has received numerous scholarships including the Dolo Coker. Recently graduated from high school, he will begin attending Cal State Northridge in September and plans to transfer to the Berkeley School of Music in February, 1989.

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# IN UN FILM CAPOLAVORO PARKER VIVE!

È stato presentato in maggio, a Cannes, al Festival del Cinema, l'attesissimo film *Bird*, la biografia di Charlie Parker prodotta e diretta da Clint Eastwood (vedi l'ampio servizio su Musica Jazz dello scorso gennaio). Molti critici vi hanno visto il film più degno della vittoria, ma la giuria lo ha gratificato soltanto con uno dei premi speciali, oltre al massimo riconoscimento a Forest Whitaker per la migliore interpretazione maschile. Un altro premio è andato a *Bird* da parte dei critici italiani. In attesa che il film esca nei circuiti italiani, pubblichiamo le impressioni che Leonard Feather ha tratto da una visione privata in America, dove il film avrà la sua premiere il 30 settembre al Museum Of Modern Art di New York.

di Leonard Feather

Mentre scrivo questo articolo, il film *Bird* deve ancora superare la sua presentazione al festival di Cannes e manca ancora almeno quattro mesi prima che entri in circuito in America, ma non so trattenermi dall'esprimere la mia opinione. Il fatto è che *Bird* funziona perfettamente.

Intanto, è il primo film veramente autentico che sia stato fatto su un reale musicista di jazz, non un'opera di fantasia come *Round Midnight*, o di semi-fantasia come *Lady Sings The Blues*, né pura sciocchezza come *The Benny Goodman Story*. No, *Bird* è un trionfo ai più diversi livelli: benissimo scritto da Joel Orlanski, superbamente diretto da Clint Eastwood, interpretato con totale convinzione da Forest Whitaker (e da Diane Venora nella parte di Chan), è un film credibile dal primo all'ultimo minuto.

Come loro, Lennie Niehaus ha la sua parte di merito per una colonna sonora che è un autentico miracolo tecnologico. Gli originali assoli di Charlie Parker sono stati isolati, cancellando tutto quanto d'altro si trovasse sui vecchi nastri o dischi monaurali e sostituendolo con un sound attuale, che impegna musicisti come Monty Alexander, Barry Harris o Walter Davis Jr. al piano, Jon Faddis o Red Rodney alla tromba, Ray

Brown al contrabbasso, John Guerin alla batteria e, qua e là, una grande sezione d'archi che abbellisce assai brani quali *April In Paris* e *Laura*. Insomma, è come se *Bird* fosse ancora tra noi, regstando con musicisti d'oggi nella tecnologia digitale d'oggi.

Dopo cinque minuti di proiezione, avevo bellamente dimenticato che sullo schermo fosse Forest Whitaker, un attore. La sua interpretazione lascia intruire un'irrimediabile sfilata di ore spese a studiare *Bird*, a discutere i tratti della sua personalità con chiunque al mondo lo avesse conosciuto. Avrebbe i titoli per almeno una nomination all'Oscar, con questa intensa performance.

Ben mantenuto è l'equilibrio tra il dramma agrodolce e la commedia; le scene riguardanti Mike Zelnicker, che sostiene la parte di Red Rodney, sono basate su fatti veri (Rodney che assicura di essere un albino così che le plattine bianche del Sud possano tollerare la sua presenza in un'orchestra di neri; Rodney che si porta appresso *Bird* per suonare a un matrimonio ebraico). Ma i contrastanti aspetti del complesso carattere di un uomo come *Bird* — gentile, contorto, fenomenalmente dotato, sarcasgico, incontrollato, estroverso, impulsivo, generoso — sono messi in gioco con grande sensibilità in quella che in fondo è, come naturale, una storia cruda.

Certamente qualcuno si lamenterà che questo è pur sempre un altro film su un musicista drogato, ma il messaggio che ne esce, chiaro e forte, è che la droga, come *Bird* per primo disse a Red Rodney, è un male devastante. La sequenza verso la fine, nella quale *Bird* e Chan cercano di vivere una vita in pace in una casa di campagna in Pennsylvania, è accuratamente fedele a quella che del musicista fu la fondamentale aspirazione, cui però egli non fu capace di restare fedele per più di qualche breve momento.

La musica, dall'inesorabile fluasso, all'inizio, di *Lester Leaps In* via via fino ai sound straziante di *Parker's Mood* sopra i titoli di coda, è magnifica. Pochi i brani che usano gli assoli di *Bird* reperibili nelle originali incisioni in commercio, ma molti sono tratti da rari nastri forniti da Chan, riproducenti rarisismi trasmissioni dal Rockland Palace di Harlem e perfino un paio di pezzi messi su nastro quando *Bird* andò in visita in casa di Lennie Tristano. Il disco conte-



Nel film *Bird*, l'ottimo protagonista Forest Whitaker, che impersona Charlie Parker, con Sam Wright, realistico Dizzy Gillespie.

nente la colonna sonora, naturalmente con brani completi piuttosto che con i frammenti che dominano nel film da cima a fondo, è un documento più unico che raro messo insieme da Niehaus e dal suo capotecnico del suono Bob Fernandez a prezzo di infinite ore di lavoro per cercare di accoppiare adeguatamente ogni nota di ogni assolo di Parker e la nuova musica che doveva essere aggiunta.

Chi spacca il capello in quattro potrebbe anche notare che alcune persone importanti nella vita di *Bird* qui non ci sono, ma le licenze drammatiche non sono mai portate all'eccesso. Se Miles Davis non ha voluto esser messo in scena, non era fondamentale per la storia di *Bird* che lo si coinvolgesse; e così pure per Doris Parker, l'altra donna degli ultimi anni di *Bird*, dato che sembrava più utile concentrarsi sulla strettissima relazione con Chan. Ciò che vividamente emerge è il ritratto di un uomo immensamente dotato quanto tormentato, la cui vita fu distrutta dalla droga ma che lasciò una magnifica eredità musicale, un patrimonio ideale che Clint Eastwood, Niehaus e tutti gli altri collaboratori hanno chiaramente rispettato.

Parlando con Clint Eastwood ho capito che è più orgoglioso di questo film che non di qualsiasi altra cosa abbia fatto nella sua carriera. Ne ha tutto il diritto: ha preso un progetto che fin troppo facilmente sarebbe potuto finire in un fallimento (originariamente il soggetto era di proprietà di Richard Pryor, che sarebbe stato totalmente fuori posto nel ruolo di *Bird*), e lo ha prodotto e diretto con cura, dico di più, con amore. Ci ha reso i nostri giorni, o meglio il nostro decennio, con un inedito esempio di onestà e devozione per un soggetto cinematografico.



## Jazz Reviews

### Coltrane Kin Carry On Tradition at Wiltern

The second annual John Coltrane Festival drew a somewhat sparse but enthusiastic crowd Saturday to the Wiltern Theater.

Alice Coltrane, now known as Swami Turiyasangitanada, is mainly active as the spiritual teacher who runs the Vedantic Center in Agoura, where she provides students with meditation instruction. Her appearance at the Wiltern climaxed an evening devoted mainly to the music of her husband, who died in 1967.

Her performance was routed in the mystic tradition of John Coltrane's later years, yet her own personality came through with power and conviction as she alternated between a synthesizer (hampered by an unpleasant tone) and the piano. Most of her solos consisted of lengthy cornucopias of eighth notes, with dramatic synth glissandos. A striking woman with a smile that all but lit up the first five rows, she conveyed a sense of spiritual peace at odds with the droning content of the music.

Her sons, Ravi, 22, on tenor and soprano saxes, and Oran, 21, on alto sax, were infants when their father died, but intense study of his records has enabled them to make valid statements, particularly on such Coltrane standards as "Impressions" and "Giant Steps."

Ravi's own earlier set found him

leading a somewhat awkward quintet, with trumpeter Ralph Alessi, pianist David Ake, bassist Nedra Wheeler and drummer Ralph Penland. The influence here seemed to be that of the early Coltrane, leaning to hard bop rather than modality.

The strongest contribution of the evening was provided by Joe Henderson, whose mordant tenor sax was in tough, tear-it-up form on "All the Things You Are" and the old Charlie Parker blues "Relaxin' at Camarillo," with compelling support by Irene Rosnes on piano, Charlie Haden on bass and Tootie Heath on drums.

Rounding out the show on a pop note was the Rev. O. C. Smith, who now divides his time between the ministry and the stage. His bur-nished sound was as agreeable as ever, but the backup group offered more interference than support.

Applause broke out late in the evening when bassist Reggie Workman began playing the main phrase of "A Love Supreme." Alice Coltrane then clasped her hands in prayer and the concert was over.

As a footnote, her daughter Michelle presented her with a plaque in recognition of her mother's good works for the cause of young musicians. If there is not yet in the family a talent commensurate with that of the master himself, at least such youths as Ravi

and Oran Coltrane are moving in a direction for which he unwittingly offered them guidance.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## Steve Miller Joins the Ranks

By LEONARD FEATHER

The line between pop music and jazz is growing thinner. Recent examples are Barry Manilow's use of Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz and Diane Schuur in his "Swing Street" LP, and the superb Getz solo on the title cut of Huey Lewis' current album "Small World."

Most remarkable of all is the addition of Steve Miller to what might be called the Jazz Aid ranks. His just-released "Born 2 B Blue"

### JAZZ

(Capitol C 1 48303) brings Milt Jackson's vibraphone front and center on the title tune, uses Phil Woods' alto sax on two other cuts, and includes such songs as Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child," Horace Silver's "Filthy McNasty," Ray Charles' "Mary Ann" and an old blues, "Red Top," credited to Lionel Hampton.

On close inspection of Miller's background, his new direction seems less surprising. Billed as co-producer and pianist is Ben Sidran, the composer/singer whose jazz credentials are impeccable, and who has known Miller since both were at the University of Wisconsin.

"My roots were really in jazz and blues," Miller said in a phone call last week from Hamburg. "First in Milwaukee, where I was born, and then in Dallas, where I lived from the age of about 6. I was exposed to people like Red Norvo, Charles Mingus, Tal Farlow, Les Paul. My father had one of the early tape recorders, in 1949, and he was a good friend of so many musicians—in fact, Les Paul would drop by and tape some things, then show me the principles of guitar playing. He really got me started on the guitar."

After the move to Texas, Miller was subjected to a heavy blues influence in the form of T-Bone Walker. "T-Bone was sort of a hypochondriac, and since my dad was a doctor, he came around a lot

In fact, I just found a tape that Dad recorded of T-Bone playing at our house in 1951. I learned a lot from him, that really set me on my way for playing lead guitar, and I was only about 7."

□

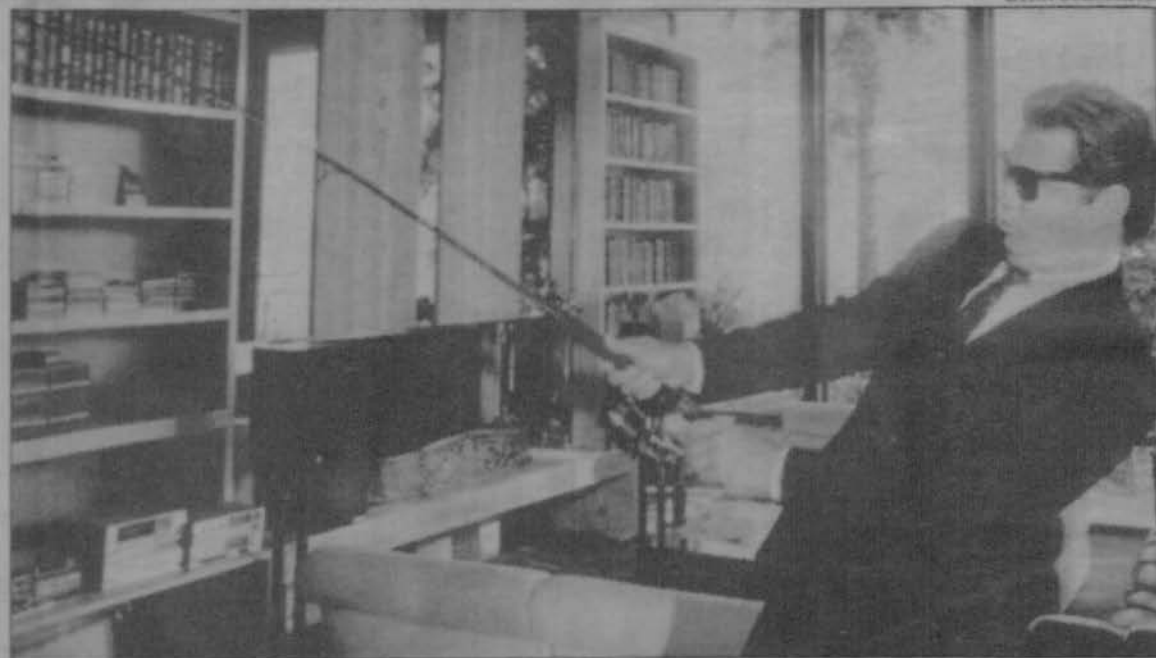
At 12, Miller formed his first band and maintained it through five high school years. Boz Scaggs was a member. At that time black music was a pervasive influence. "If you couldn't do Bobby Blue Bland in your high school band, they didn't want you to play."

During those years he played one of his first night club gigs, at 14, with Jimmy Reed, whom Miller calls "One of the founding fathers of rock 'n' roll." The rock, blues and jazz influences continued to interact, at the University of Wisconsin, Ben Sidran introduced him to Horace Silver, a jazz pianist/composer with a strong blues feeling. "Filthy McNasty" is based on the 12-bar blues pattern).

"Then there was a sort of lull, as I spent my junior year at the University of Copenhagen, majoring in comparative literature. Well, for the first time since I was 12, I wasn't working in a band, and that really brought one thing home to me: I needed to play music more than I needed to study comparative literature. So I came home and spent my senior year back at Wisconsin."

After graduation came three years in the vortex of the Chicago blues scene, jamming with Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, Paul Butterfield. "Then I heard things were really happening in San Francisco, so I moved out there in '66 and found there was a frenzy of recording companies signing up everybody. I signed with Capitol to record my band, with a stipulation that gave me complete artistic control over everything I did."

But for that stipulation, he says, the current jazz-oriented album might never have been made. "Everyone at the company was very worried about it, but it's already moving up in the AOR charts; I'm convinced it's going to be one of my



Casting into jazz waters: Steve Miller's new album features Milt Jackson and Phil Woods.

biggest and best."

That would be quite an achievement, since Miller has to his credit five platinum albums and three No. 1 songs ("The Joker," "Rock 'N Me," "Abracadabra"). He has enjoyed a rare one-company recording career—21 years with Capitol.

His choice of material for the "Born 2 B Blue" album involved a great deal of retrospection. The title song had particular significance for him. "That's one of Mel Tormé's great songs. I've only seen him on television, and he's always fascinated me as a singer; I'd love

to meet him when I get to Los Angeles on this tour."

Speaking of "When Sunny Gets Blue," he observes: "That's simply a beautiful song, one I remember hearing my mother sing to me. That and 'Willow Weep For Me'

Please Turn to Page 90

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# STAN GETZ

## "A Master at Work"

By LEONARD FEATHER



Stan Getz was in Los Angeles briefly in early August. He had only two gigs: a night at the Hollywood Bowl, sharing billing with Grover Washington Jr., followed by two evenings at the Loeb Club in Santa Monica leading his regular quartet — Kenny Barron, Rufus Reid and Victor Lewis.

Like so many of Getz's groups before, the foursome was admirable not only for its cohesiveness, but for the individual talent displayed and for the undimmed virtuosity of the leader. After a roller-coaster career of almost 45 years playing with name bands and leading his own groups, Getz today seems as firmly in command of his faculties as ever. This was doubly remarkable in light of a serious problem that overtook him a year ago; in fact, at one point there seemed to be a distinct possibility that his career might be finished. Doctors found a malignant tumor behind his heart.

"My health right now is excellent," he said. "It's been ten months since the operation and everything is working out wonderfully. All I do is have an x-ray taken every couple of months. I really do feel that I have to just put things in God's hands — leave the driving to Him, so to speak."

"I am exercising regularly, and work on a limited schedule. I don't go out nearly as much as I used to."

Although not under exclusive contract to anybody, Getz remains a frequent presence on records. He can be heard in a typically languorous solo on the title track of an album by the pop star Huey Lewis, *Small World* on Chrysalis Records.

Stan's track record as a recording band leader is amazing. He made the first session under his own name in July 1946 with Hank Jones, Max Roach and Curley Russell. There were several other ventures with recording groups involving some of the other young lions of the tenor: Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Allen Eager, Brew Moore. But as early as 1950 he was making a session with his own regular quartet, which included Horace Silver on piano.

It is possible to subdivide the Getz career into various phases. First, of course, were the sideman years. While still attending high school in the Bronx, he played with his first band, and at 16 worked with Jack Teagarden, Dale Jones and Bob Chester. He was still virtually unknown, however, until joining Stan Kenton for a year at age 17. After a series of other brief name-band stints — with Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Randy Brooks, Buddy Morrow and Herbie Fields — he moved to California at age 20 and became associated with the group of young saxophonists who eventually coalesced into the Woody Herman sax section.

His colleagues at one time or another were Zoot Sims, Herbie Steward (later Al Cohn) and Serge Chaloff. Jimmy Giuffrè, who composed *Four Brothers* for the band, also worked in the reed team for a while, and it was this tune, along with others such as *Early Autumn*, that elevated Getz swiftly to national recognition. By 1950 he had started winning the national polls and was considered a trend-setter in the post-bop cool era. Though often compared to Lester Young, he lost little time distilling a personal and individual sound and style.

Getz's combo-leading phase, which began after he left Woody, has continued intermittently for almost 30 years, interrupted by a couple of tours with Jazz at

the Philharmonic, several ambitious ventures with large ensembles on records, and motion picture work, such as an appearance in *The Benny Goodman Story*. A glance through his discography reveals an astonishing list of sidemen who have worked with him on records, as well as in person: to name just the pianists, there were Al Haig, Kenny Drew, Duke Jordan, George Wallington, Walter Bishop, Oscar Peterson, Hank Jones, Tony Aless, Jimmy Rowles, Mose Allison, Vince Guaraldi, Albert Dailey, Chick Corea, Joanne Brackeen, Hall Overton, Kenny Barron, Victor Feldman, Steve Kuhn, Bill Evans, James McNeely and Lou Levy.

The expatriate years more-or-less constituted a phase in themselves: Stan settled in Copenhagen in 1958, worked jobs all over the continent for the next three years, and has extended visits overseas ever since. These foreign forays produced such albums as *Stan Getz in Stockholm*, using an admirable Swedish rhythm section with Bengt Hallberg on piano; *Dynasty*, a double album recorded live at the Ronnie Scott Club in London in 1971, a year when Stan spent most of his time living in Malaga, Spain (for this session he used an unusual instrumentation of organ, guitar and drums); and *Stan Gold*, recorded live at the Montmartre in Copenhagen with Joanne Brackeen, Nils-Henning Orsted Pedersen, and Billy Hart.

It was not long after his return from the first period of expatriation that Stan became involved with what turned out to be the luckiest and arguably the most lucrative of all his many stages, the launching in the U.S. of the bossa nova movement. As I noted in *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the '60s*, "Back home in 1961, his success was not commensurate with his talent, for during his absence the more aggressive sound of John Coltrane had taken hold of the public's interest. Getz, instead of modifying his style to accommodate himself to the prevalent attitudes, continued to play in the comparatively gentle style with which he had been associated ever since *Early Autumn*; his first major artistic achievement after his return home was an album written by Eddie Sauter, with Getz improvising over several pieces written for strings. Released in January 1962, the album entitled *Focus*, was widely praised by critics and enjoyed fair sales."

The major breakthrough, however, was the result of a collaboration with Charlie Byrd, who suggested to Getz the idea of recording some songs he had heard during a tour of Brazil. At All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington they recorded the album *Jazz Samba* in February 1962. Two of the songs were Antonio Carlos Jobim's *Desafinado* and *One Note Samba*. By the end of that year, dozens of other artists had jumped on the bossa nova bandwagon. Stan himself became tied up with the movement so closely that most of his subsequent ips entailed collaborations on Brazilian material with Joao Gilberto, Astrud Gilberto, Gary McFarland, Luis Bonfá, Antonia Carlos Jobim, Laurindo Almeida and others.

Eventually, what had been a life saver for Stan became something of an albatross, as he tired rapidly of the constant requests to play sambas. When I asked him recently how sick and tired he was of this, he replied casually, "I don't play sambas; well, I play maybe one or two a night at the most, and I keep looking for different ones. Right now I'm into one

that Benny Carter wrote for us in 1965 for an album we did called *Get A Go Go*. It's called *Only Trust Your Heart*. There's also a Jobim tune I like called *O Morro No Tendes*."

One stage of the Getz career that has been virtually forgotten, though it briefly seemed to be very significant for him, was his dalliance with electronics. For many years he put down the concept of amplified saxophone. In an interview in the 1970s he told me: "I was the first one to try it 15 years ago. I used it at the London House in Chicago, and I tried all those devices — and I was breaking up and the audience was laughing, too. It was just good fun; then I put it away and never touched it." Later in the interview, he said: "Can't we talk about something more important than a little thing like electricity and the saxophone? I've got nothing to say about it, except that I love the saxophone when it's pure."

Only two years later, though, in 1978, an album was released called *Another World*, recorded in Montreux, with Stan playing Selmer tenor sax, digital delay with Moog echoplex, Andy Laverne playing Steinway acoustic grand, Fender Rhodes piano, Arp Omni string ensemble, Norlin Mini-Moog, electric harpsichord, Moog Echoplex; and Mike Richmond playing acoustic and fretless electric bass.

Along with the double album, in an unusually lengthy and enthusiastic essay by Stan describing his joy, he wrote: "Dave Richards, the engineer, connected my horn to some electronic equipment with the delay... as I discovered that the delay enabled me to build chords, to put note upon note, and build harmony on top of harmony, all simultaneously and spontaneously... I felt transported... I was suddenly liberated of all previous conventional restrictions... this in my opinion is the best of all possible musical worlds in the loveliest of all possible surroundings... the only constant is change, and I'm beginning to think I wouldn't want it any other way."

The romance evidently was short-lived; it was not long before popular demand, or perhaps simply another change of heart on his own part, took him back to the sound and basically acoustic style that had established his individuality long before the electronic era.

One aspect with which Stan has never become involved is the extension of the saxophone above and beyond its normal range, in the manner made fashionable by several groups in recent years. When I asked him about his feelings on this development, he said, "I guess it's all right once in a while for an effect, but the natural range of the instrument is where it's supposed to be. I really don't listen to it much. When I do hear it, it reminds me of a baby's crying and squealing for attention. I guess some people want that stuff. They think it's avant garde and it makes them feel as though they're avant garde to like it. But I tell you, if you want to sound like a soprano, why play baritone?"

Stan's basic beliefs today seem to be rooted in a firm conviction that the purity of jazz as an art form deserves to be recognized and preserved far more fully than it has in the country of its origin. He was very pleased when Congressman John Conyers, Jr., of Michigan and Senator Alan Cranston of California introduced concurrent resolutions declaring jazz a national treasure, but he feels that this in itself was not enough.

"Declarations in Congress are marvelous, because they do draw attention to the fact that this music is more than light entertainment. It has suffered an unusual fate — misunderstood in the land of its birth; too often its buoyancy and rhythmic thrust have been confused with pushiness and arrogance, he says.

"The value of jazz still has to be clarified. People involve themselves with its superficialities without digging for its soul. Fortunately, a beginning has been made, through the rapid growth of jazz programs in our schools.

"I've been talking about this on the Larry King TV show and everywhere else I can. I'll be dealing with it in my speech at the JazzTimes Convention."

*"The value of jazz still has to be clarified. People involve themselves with its superficialities without digging for its soul."*

Much of the problem, Getz says, has to do with America's obsession with what is current and the tendency to neglect some of our senior giants. "Too many great men have been lost to early deaths — they were burned out by the continuous travel, the drain of creating when there was so little regard for what they did," Getz says. "Why did a marvelous saxophonist like Ben Webster have to waste his last years in Europe when his value as a teacher could have been put to such great use in some of our schools?"

"It's ironic how little we do to help our own. Did you know that in Denmark all the jazz clubs are subsidized? When I play over there in small towns where they may lose money, the Government picks up the slack. No wonder so many of our best and brightest, in order to survive, have had to seek haven in Europe."

Stan feels that the rapid growth of jazz programs on the educational level can make a great difference, and he has been doing whatever is in his power to help along these lines. Now living in California not far from Stanford University, he has been closely involved with the activities there. "I teach at Stanford whenever I'm in town and have the time. Mostly I help to organize the funding and line up the talent to come in and do the four concerts there every year."

Along with his regular quartet gigs, he has continued to make occasional symphony appearances. "William Thomas McKinley wrote a symphony which we previewed at Stanford in June with the Stanford Symphony Orchestra. I hope we will be able to record it. And next summer I will probably be with John Williams at Tanglewood."

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Pianist Tyner Backed by Hayes and Sharpe at the Vine St. Bar

By LEONARD FEATHER

There may be safety in numbers, but at times there is security in solitude, as pianist McCoy Tyner demonstrated occasionally during his opening set Thursday at the Vine St. Bar & Grill.

Given a chance to express himself without accompaniment, especially when the vehicle is a ballad such as "Don't Blame Me" or "Yesterdays," Tyner can display unhampered the harmonic imagination, the rococo runs and fills that virtually turn these over-familiar pieces into original works.

The trio numbers were something else again. His opener, "Li'l Darlin'," was a jarring energy trip in which the loud pedal seemed to be continuously in action while the drummer Louis Hayes and bassist Avery Sharpe maintained a furious level. Other up-tempo numbers more often than not had the same hyper-tense character; once the theme had been stated, the pianist opened up the floodgates and the notes poured out, often 16 to a bar.

Tyner still has in him an innate feeling for the blues, as became apparent during "Frank's Back," a hard-driving but traditionally based excursion. Here and elsewhere, however, it became apparent that much of the success of the trio is due to the phenomenal work of Avery Sharpe.

Even in these times of extraordinary bass players, Sharpe stands

out. Slapping and zapping the strings, walking and chording, he turned every solo into a riveting tour de force. Hayes, featured too frequently in a solo capacity, is an intelligent drummer but sometimes too forceful; he might more effectively have used brushes instead of sticks on certain numbers.

Listening to a set by the Tyner trio is akin to sitting at the ocean's

edge during high tide, observing the waves rising and falling, wondering whether their swell may drown you, then watching them recede just in time. Ideally, a set

equally divided between solo and trio numbers would yield even more rewarding results than were audible on this occasion.

The group closes Sunday.

Los Angeles Times 10/4/88

## JAZZ REVIEW

## Holman at His Best as Leader of the Band

André Previn once wrote that "Bill Holman most assuredly is a first-rate saxophonist, but his true instrument is the orchestra, and he plays it with musicianship, honesty and brilliance."

Holman has almost given up playing his tenor sax (he used it only on the closing number Saturday night at the Wadsworth Theatre), but his artistry as a composer and arranger is simply nonpareil. If the tune is by someone else—Billy Strayhorn, Thelonious Monk, Sunny Rollins—he will sublimate it with extra bars, new harmonic ideas, wild counterpoints, stop-and-go rhythms, odd instrumentations (for Monk's "I Mean You" he employed three soprano saxes as a centerpiece).

All the charts were interlarded with splendid solos by, among others, Bob Cooper on tenor, Alan Broadbent at the piano, Steve Huffsteter on trumpet and fluegelhorn, Bob Efford's baritone sax on

Jimmy Rowles's "The Peacocks," with flutes leading the background, revealed Holman's most engagingly lyrical side.

If the subject is a dated ditty such as "Moon of Mannakoora," Holman will tear up the tired, the poor, the muddled music yearning to breathe free, and will fix it all up with new richness. He is without doubt the world's greatest detrializer of trivial tunes.

Among the Holman originals, the standouts were a blues entitled "Lightning," a cooker called "No Joy in Mudville," and the unique "Just Friends," in which all the horn sections played five choruses in plain unison, to himn what he called "an orchestrated jam session."

As has long been the Wadsworth custom, the second hour was broadcast on KKGQ. This was, as emcee Chuck Niles pointed out, the 50th concert in a series that began in January, 1984. One can be sorry that a great band like Holman's so rarely has a chance to be heard, but thankful that it attracted a large audience both on the air and in the theater. —LEONARD FEATHER

# Hinton Bio Mirrors the 20th Century

By LEONARD FEATHER

The extent to which a musician's life can mirror the evolution of society in 20th-Century America has never been more graphically illustrated than in "Bass Lines: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton" (Temple University Press, \$39.95, 328 pages).

His family links go back to antebellum days (his mother's mother was a slave on a Vicksburg plantation) and to Africa (his father came here with a missionary group from Monrovia). As an 8-year-old, Hinton was exposed to the terrifying sight of a lynching near his Mississippi home in 1918.

As a banist, Hinton has progressed from the traveling experience (on the road for 15 years with Cab Calloway's band) to the studio world (as one of the first black musicians to break the barriers in the New York studios) to the fulfilling life he now leads, at 78, lecturing, recording, playing festi-

vals, concerts and jazz parties around the world.

As a photographer, he has been documenting these scenes for more than a half century. It is hard to determine whether his book is an illustrated autobiography or a picture book with text. Certainly his photos, which have been widely exhibited and contributed to museums, are as invaluable as the story he tells. Hinton's old friend David G. Berger, an associate professor of sociology at Temple University, is listed as collaborator, but his job cannot have been hard, since Hinton's recall is prodigious and the conversational style sounds as though it stems direct from the tape.

Jazz musicians, particularly blacks, have been subjected to a series of myths that kept them out of the more lucrative jobs: they couldn't read music, they were unreliable, they were limited to improvising, in the case of bass

players, they didn't know how to use the bow. Yet Hinton, playing violin in a Chicago high school band, "never played any jazz . . . the symphony played highbrow stuff . . . music was written out and there was no ad libbing whatsoever."

Switching to tuba, he landed his first steady job in 1929 during his senior year. As the string bass gradually replaced the tuba, he made the final change, and over the years never ceased aiming at self-improvement. Whenever the Calloway band was in Chicago, he studied with Dmitri Shmulkovsky of the Civic Opera.

Informative though Hinton's story is in chronicling the drama of his escape from Jim Crow and the rigors of the road, "Bass Lines" is no less richly anecdotal as the author recounts the odd quirks of Benny Goodman, the personality traits of Lionel Hampton (who gave a side-man \$10 extra to jump overboard during the climactic chorus when

his band played "Flyin' Home" on a barge), Jackie Gleason (who got Hinton started in the studio world), Dick Gibson, whom Hinton credits with a vital role in earning respectability for musicians through his jazz parties, Jack and Bobby Kennedy, at a private party, and Eddie South, the pioneer violinist who would have been lost to jazz had the doors to classical music been open to black musicians.

The 186 photographs cover a great range of time and space. Here are the Calloway musicians in the 1930s standing by "For Colored Only" restaurants and "Motel For Colored" signs; here is Milton Dixon Hinton, the author's father, whom he never met until he was 30; throughout are shots taken in recording studios, and festivals, with Pearl Bailey and Louis Bellson in the Middle East; an ecstatic Duke Ellington dancing with his sister at the White House, and such legends as Jimmy Blanton, Chu Berry, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Charles Mingus, Lester Young, and Hinton's classic shot of the moribund Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Joe Venuti, a very young Doc Severinsen in 1955, Gene Krupa, Phil Woods and others of recent vintage came within the scope of Hinton's cameras.

The most graphic story, recalling a one-night stand with Cab Calloway in Longview, Tex., ca. 1936, typifies the damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don't situations



Musician and photographer Milt Hinton: from the days of segregation to VIP parties.

that confronted blacks. A drunken white couple approached Calloway's pianist. The woman offered him a drink; he politely refused. "You mean you ain't gonna take a

## JAZZ

drink that's offered you, boy?" Reluctantly accepting the drink, he is then confronted by the woman's friend. "Nigger, you can't be taking whiskey from my girl."

Hinton, terrified as he looked on, sought an escape route. Cab Calloway was the object of attention, as one redneck shouted, "I'll give \$200 to hit the nigger." (For a \$200 fine, any white could attack a black with impunity.) The band rushed off the stage and hid in the cellar for hours before the tumult subsided.

The great irony, as Hinton points out, is that he can compare it with "things that happened in recent parties in Midland and Odessa, Tex.—being wined and dined by

town dignitaries, being made an honorary deputy sheriff, getting VIP treatment in one of the world's best eye clinics."

America has indeed changed, and the South along with it, but Milt Hinton is the same equable personality who has endeared himself to thousands while building a stable home life (a marriage of more than 40 years, a successful daughter on Wall Street, a granddaughter).

Handsomely mounted on 10½x9¾-inch pages, "Bass Lines" is one of the most revealing works, textually and visually, of the many jazz chronicles to appear in recent years.

"JAZZ GIANTS: A Visual Retrospective Compiled by K. Abe" (Billboard Publications, \$60, 280 pages).

The Tokyo-born Abe edited this collection, which includes his own photos along with others, some in color, by Ray Avery, William Claxton, William Gottlieb, Charles Stewart and others, even a few by Milt Hinton. Superb photography, but aside from a preface there is no text. This is a work to keep in mind

at Christmas coffee-table time.

"MUSIC WAS NOT ENOUGH," by Bob Wilber, assisted by Derek Webster. (Oxford University Press, \$24.95, 216 pages).

A respected saxophonist and arranger who came to prominence as a protegee of Sidney Bechet, Wilber tells an uneven story of self-discovery. It is easy to suspect certain major errors of omission: one wife,

unnamed, is dismissed in a single paragraph ("I was tricked into marriage by an older and rather plain-looking woman"), and their daughter never rates a mention. Describing himself in a prologue as an "angry man" who at 50 decided to overcome his insecurities, Wilber is less successful at self-analysis than he is in assessing the characters of those he worked for, among them Benny Goodman, Bob Crosby and Lawrence Welk.

## Jazz Reviews

### Guitarist Henry Johnson's Split Personality

Henry Johnson, the guitarist who came to prominence in the Joe Williams backup group, was presented Thursday as part of the live action in the JazzTimes Convention at the Sheraton-Universal Hotel.

Like many jazz artists today who are attempting to straddle the line between the pure and the popular, Johnson displays a split personality. There were times when the benign influences of Charlie Christian and Wes Montgomery surfaced most effectively, as Johnson moved with ease through the improvisational concepts of those long-gone pioneers.

At other points, both the compositions and his solos seemed as though they had been designed to please the merchandisers, the salesmen and promoters. Backed by Bob Long on piano, Robert Gates on drums and Frank Russell on electric bass, he fell into clichés, among them one of those multi-tag endings that threatened to last all weekend. Presumably in the hope of becoming another George Benson, Johnson also occasionally sang with modest competence.

Slick production may have attenuated the impact of Johnson's unquestionable talent, but it has certainly not ruined him. A blues number with a bridge found him at his loosest; even Long, suffering from an atrocious piano, came up with an interesting though hard-hammered solo.

During a later set, Johnson was joined on stage by some of his MCA

Records stablemates. Since they obviously had not rehearsed, Keiko Matsui with her clavinet, Justo Almaro and Michael Paulo on tenor and alto saxes respectively, and a very busy guitarist named David Becker were all reduced (elevated would really be a better word) to playing the blues.

This made for some spirited jamming until the saxes, and then the guitarist, decided to abandon taste and innovation in favor of crowd-milking fast-finger exercises. Nevertheless, this lengthy ad lib workout provided some of the more unaffected music in a session that seemed oddly in need of a sense of direction.

—LEONARD FEATHER

10/9/88

JAZZ

# McConnell Makes L.A. Gig Permanent

By LEONARD FEATHER

Sometimes our images of public personalities differ radically from their own reality. Bob McConnell, the composer, arranger and valve trombone player respected as leader of Canada's best and best-known big band, the Boss Brass, typifies that disparity.

The 22-man ensemble has built a library of music now played throughout the United States by thousands of students in hundreds of schools. Records by the Toronto-based band have enjoyed considerable U.S. sales and air play at the Monterey Jazz Festival and in recent years has appeared three times in Los Angeles. It has won two Juno Awards and has been nominated three times for the Juno, American counterpart, the Grammy.

A great success story? Hardly. Discontented with his life in Canada, McConnell, now 53, made a radical change. He pulled up stakes and moved with his wife to Los Angeles, where he started work this week at the Dick Grove School of Music in Van Nuys as head of an

instrumental program.

"It seemed like the right time for a change," said McConnell, a laid-back, cheerful figure, as he relaxed the other day in California sunshine. "You see, people around the country think I have this band together, but it wasn't like that. Sure, we were playing gigs for 20 years and made 20 albums, but our best year was 1984, when we worked a total of 60 times. I don't mean weekends or weeks, just 60 days out of 365; and it's been a lot less since then."

The reasons, of course, have to do with economics. All the band members worked mainly as freelance musicians in Toronto. "In fact," said McConnell, "some of my musicians—the saxophonists Moe Koffman, Jerry Toth, Rick Wilkins, the trumpeter Guido Basso—played jobs of their own, and they were employers of me more often than they were employed by me."

The band became "an albatross around my neck. Here were 22 people, some of them quite a bit older than me, very few younger, none of them eager to travel fifth class on a bus. Could I take a job in Chicago? The answer was no, be-

cause the band couldn't draw enough people to pay enough money to get us there and back. Could we work our way there by stopping for gigs in Hamilton and Detroit? Probably not, because several of the men didn't want to leave town, and I wouldn't do it without them."

When the Boss Brass did get to leave town for its three California excursions, a portion of the expenses was covered by the Canadian government's Department of External Affairs. Despite the sporadic nature of its appearances, the Brass achieved a unique level of cohesion in its performances of colorful and vigorous arrangements mainly written by the leader.

Some of the earlier albums released here on Pausa are now hard to find, but the most recent, recorded in tandem with Mel Torme, is available on Concord Jazz CJ 306. Now ensconced in an apartment in Sherman Oaks, not far from the Grove School, McConnell is happy with the relative lack of pressure involved in his new assignment. "I'm in charge of what they call PIP—the Professional Instrument Program. We're going to have a PIP student band, playing mostly



Bob McConnell has left the headaches of running his Boss Brass big band behind in Toronto and moved to Los Angeles.

my music, at least for the present. It will be 20 hours a week, spread over three days.

"Having a four-day weekend will give me a chance to keep up my other activities, such as conducting college clinics. I'll be doing a lot of appearances like that. In fact, working at the Grove School is the same kind of thing I've been doing for years at various colleges. That kind of work is always gratifying."

Ever since he arrived here a few weeks ago, McConnell has been obliged to answer the inevitable question: will he be organizing an American counterpart to the Boss Brass?

"I just can't envision that. After all, when you've spent 20 years performing that music with most of the same familiar faces and sounds, I'd feel strange about doing the same thing with other people. For the time being, of course, I'll be hearing my music anyway, played by the students."

What intrigues him most for the moment is the lack of responsibility for keeping 22 men together even on an occasional basis. Since a heart attack a couple of years ago, he has been conscious of the need to avoid saddling himself with unnecessary problems.

"You know what? Right now I enjoy not having the band. The other evening I subbed for a trombone player in Bob Florence's orchestra, and it was a real pleasure. Just being a member of the band—gee, it's lovely! Bob Florence and Bill Holman and the others out here are all carrying the good work. Meanwhile I'll be carrying on the good work at the school, and that's good enough for me."

10/14/88 Los Angeles Times

## CABARET REVIEW

# Sophisticated Style of Haran

By LEONARD FEATHER

With her slim figure and tight-fitting black dress, Mary Cleere Haran, who opened Wednesday at the Cinegrill, is very much a presence for the present, yet her repertoire anachronistically veers almost entirely to the distant past. When she precedes "Alfie" by announcing that "the next song was actually written during my lifetime," you realize why she had to make the point.

Making her first local appearance (one wonders why, at 36, she only recently became an overnight hit in New York), Haran has a deep attachment for the 1920s and '30s. Her long commentaries between tunes range from dryly witty to near-hysterically funny as she talks about everyone from Richard Rodgers to Ginger Rogers and looks back at her days as a health-food-happy Haight-Ashbury hippie.

Along with the sardonic humor and the Marilyn Monroe mimes there is a slick sophistication. For a while you feel that she is a mite too ladylike, that the routines are too

pat, and that she might well let down her strawberry blond hair and remove the black gloves.

The hair stays the same, but the gloves, along with the less-revealing parts of her dress, do come off, right in the middle of "Lorelei," and you begin to forget that she spent so much time watching Loreretta Young on TV. When she suddenly updates herself by half a century to tackle Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Waters of March," you no longer worry about her possible excess of perfection, since this extraordinary song with its odd litany of one-syllable words calls for a sentient and flawless interpretation, which is precisely what she gives it.

Though she is not an improviser, Haran's rhythmic sense is as intelligent as her conversation.

Accompanied most efficiently by the pianist Jonathan Wolf, with Paul Gormley on bass and Bob Leatherbarrow on drums, Haran, with her elegant, fine-tuned act is a sure bet to become the last important new cabaret singer of the 1980s. She remains at the Cinegrill through Saturday and returns Wednesday through Oct. 22.

## A Brazilian Sound New at La Ve Lee 10/17

With its Hebrew name and Lebanese cuisine, it may seem odd that La Ve Lee, the restaurant at 12514 Ventura Boulevard in Studio City, recently launched an entertainment policy with Brazilian music. (Not strange to the owner, however, as he pointed out, they've got an awful lot of Lebanese in Brazil.)

The leader of the resident quartet, now heard weekly from Wednesday through Saturday, is Octavio Bailly, an electric bass player and composer who keeps the rhythmic impetus continuously and contagiously at work.

In partnership with Bailly is Liz Kinnon, who doubles on electric piano and a DX7. Though not usually associated with Latin American music (she also works with the group called Jazzbirds), Kinnon has taken to the idiom as if to the samba born.

It's not just the samba, but a heady mixture of bossa nova, Latin waltzes and other variations of the

Please see JAZZ, Page 5

voice to match, who sings mainly in Portuguese with occasional side trips in English.

The Bailly bunch exudes a sense of good humor and cohesion with its neatly constructed arrangements, most of them by the leader or Kinnon. It adds up to a refreshing and mildly exotic note in a locale where you might least expect it. (In case you are curious, the translation of the room's name is "For Her and for Me.") The four-night-a-week policy will continue indefinitely.

—LEONARD FEATHER

# A Clean Bill of Health

By LEONARD FEATHER

**J**azz underwent its annual physical last week. The 600-plus doctors who converged on the Sheraton-Universal Hotel—record producers, musicians, media types, managers—pronounced the patient generally healthy but in need of further treatment.

During four days and nights of panel sessions, workshops, seminars and live music, the seventh annual JazzTimes Convention (the first to be held in Los Angeles) more time was devoted to lighting candles than to cursing any perceptible darkness. An underlying theme was the existence of two seemingly irreconcilable sets of values, those of the artist and the businessman.

In the keynote address by Ricky Schultz, vice president for jazz at MCA Records, we heard the predictable clichés about the rise of jazz from brothel to officially acknowledged "national treasure" (as inserted in the Congressional Record by Rep. John Conyers and Sen. Alan Cranston). Endlessly repeated was a reference to "the ties that bind us," as if all those present had an unbreakable bond.

The truth is that for all the ties that bind us there are fissions that split us. Just as the values of an auctioneer at Sotheby's are not those of the painters whose works he is selling, by the same token the values of a businessman trying to sell records, or gain a rating for his radio or TV show, are too often at odds with those of the artist who created the music.

Stan Getz, this year's guest of honor, put it succinctly during an hour of very frank reminiscences about his career. Asked about his relationship with the recording industry, he said: "We made records as documents, not as 'product.'" The remark drew a burst of applause.

George Butler, vice president for jazz at CBS Records, in his "State of Jazz Update" report, made several enlightening points that left room for optimism. According to statistics released by the National Assn. of Record Manufacturers, he said, the jazz world's piece of the revenue pie rose from 3.7% (\$163 million) in 1985 to 8% (\$352 mil-

lion) in 1986; figures for 1987 are expected to show another rise.

As Butler and others made clear, the baby boomers represent a vast potential audience among those who, tiring of rock and fusion, are turning in increasing numbers to acoustic jazz. With a growing number of jazz artists in residence at leading universities such as Harvard, academia also is playing a significant role.

Bill McFarlin, executive director of the National Assn. of Jazz Educators, offered powerful evidence of the importance of that organization, which now has 8,000 members, mainly college and high school teachers and students.

A no-less optimistic speaker was Lee Luckett, representing the American Federation of Jazz Societies (local organizations of fans, many of them middle aged and financially upscale). A recent concert organized by the AFJS drew 25,000 in Savannah, Ga.

Corporate sponsorship also is helping, recently a major series of concerts and seminars at the University of Idaho was underwritten by Chevron. Ironically, much of the sponsorship of jazz events during the past decade has involved products harmful, or legally taboo, to part of the jazz audience: cigarettes and liquor.

Ursula Smith, representing the California Arts Council, reported on a current state-operated program to give support to jazz concerts at non-commercial venues. But, as a member of the audience reminded us, the United States does not support jazz at the federal level. U.S. jazzmen working in several European countries are surprised to learn that their visits are being funded by the local government.

A topic that came up at several of the panel discussions was the value



Danny Zeitland performs at the JazzTimes Convention.

of the word jazz. Is it still thought of in derogatory terms? Or does it now, at long last, have a useful connotation? The latter hypothesis was the more convincing. Jazz today has become, in some circles, indicative of all that is upscale, classy, hip, trendy, cool, elegant, why else would a new perfume have been christened Jazz? Why would musicians like Joe Williams and Henry Threadgill be plastered across the back pages of major magazines endorsing their allegedly preferred poisons?

Why, for that matter, are more and more rock musicians hiring jazzmen—Stan Getz on a Huey Lewis album, Branford Marsalis and others on tour with Sting? The motive behind this trend is obvious: the sound of jazz has an increasing appeal for the rock world's purveyors and listeners.

Jazz is no longer the dirty word it was for seven decades. Record companies are jumping on the bandwagon, not only with countless new releases, but with CD reissues of just about every jazz classic back to the 1920s.

There are, however, pockets of resistance. Pat Williams, the composer who moderated a panel on jazz in the movies and television, told the story of his attempt to persuade a producer to use Joe

Williams as singer of the closing theme in his score to the film "All of Me." The first reaction was "Joe Williams? Who's he?"

It is partly in order to counteract situations like this that JazzTimes publisher Ira Sabin and other speakers stressed the need for an umbrella national trade association for jazz, to deal with the problems it still has to face both at the creative and sales levels.

Will such an organization come to exist? Noting that similar ideas had been advanced at earlier conventions, Orrin Keepnews, the veteran record producer, observed: "It's great to hear all these helpful ideas, but we have to maintain a healthy cynicism. We must translate words into action."

Leaving the hall after the final session, one had the impression that allowing for this modicum of skepticism, the willingness of so many concerned citizens to attend an event such as the convention was a healthy sign. Perhaps at long last a National Trade Assn. will come into being and develop into as strong a power base as is the Country Music Assn. in that area. Perhaps jazz, after all its roller coaster rides through the years, will ultimately prevail on a note of triumph. ■



## Jazz Reviews

### Melvoin Trio in Mainstream Mode in Hollywood Series

Windows on Hollywood, better known as the weekly jazz brunch series at the Hollywood Holiday Inn, turned over its bandstand Sunday to pianist Mike Melvoin's trio.

Both Melvoin and his drummer, John Guerin, have enjoyed great success as studio musicians, perhaps at the expense of their jazz reputations. Nevertheless, as they wasted no time in demonstrating their capabilities in the mainstream mode remain unimpaired.

Though not the most experimental of players, Melvoin has enough technique and imagination to deliver a sharply defined jazz message, expressed through a repertoire of standards, blues and originals. His own pieces, such as "Whiskey for Breakfast" and "The Fifth Power," were essentially well-crafted launching pads for improvisations by Melvoin and bassist Brian Bromberg.

Bromberg, well established for his electric work, is downright prodigious on the upright bass. He employed devices now common to the true masters of the instrument, generally moving around with a degree of dexterity that would challenge a violinist.

Guerin and Bromberg left no doubt that this was a unit, not just three men assembled on an ad hoc basis. Melvoin's arrangements are ingenious, locking the trio into a tight conformity. On "Oh, Baby," a fast blues, all three men accented every note in the tricky line of the theme.

Witty, both in his announcements and at the keyboard, Melvoin is the type who will change keys upward in the middle of a bar just to lend the sound of surprise to

an old Charlie Parker tune like "Scrapple From the Apple." On Sunday, the brunch will feature drummer Kenny Dennis' trio.

—LEONARD FEATHER

4 Part VI/Thursday, October 20, 1988

## New Owner Plans to Reopen Donte's

By LEONARD FEATHER

After months of uncertainty, plans are under way for the reopening of Donte's, the North Hollywood room that was a jazz landmark for 22 years until its closing in April.

The property on Lankersheim Boulevard was recently acquired by David Robert Silvert, a real estate developer and talent manager.

"We are having the room restored and redecorated," he said, "and we are hoping to be able to open New Year's Eve. There will be no change in the musical concept; we will work with some of the record companies to present major talent showcases."

In addition, Silvert will launch a Donte's record label. The group known as L.A. Express will be reorganized under the direction of drummer John Guerin, an original member, to record for the label and play in the room.

Donte's became the Southland's most popular jazz rendezvous during the 1970s but had fallen on hard times in recent years. Four days after its closing on April 2, owner Carey Leverette was found dead in his office at the club. The building was sold soon after to a Japanese promoter, Ken Akemoto, who then changed his mind about reopening, and the fate of the room remained in limbo until Silvert's acquisition.

Another club casualty, Concerts by the Sea, which closed three months ago, will apparently stay shuttered for the present. According to Howard Rumsey, who opened the jazz haven on the Redondo Beach Pier in 1972, there are no plans yet to reopen the property, which suffered from a decline in business aggravated by storms which damaged the pier. Rumsey, who last year withdrew from active participation in the corporation that owns the room, is now retired.

### JAZZ REVIEW

## George Coleman Plays Standards at Catalina

Although George Coleman's tenor saxophone has been an audible and laudable part of the jazz scene since the late 1950s, his appearances as a leader have been intermittent. When he opened Tuesday at the Catalina Bar and Grill, it was a safe assumption that he would be unable to bring an organized unit from New York and would rely on local musicians.

This is precisely what happened, and as might also have been predicted, the program sounded as if Coleman had told his men: "Round up the usual standards."

Out came a blues, an "I Got Rhythm" variation under the guise of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo," a Latin jazz piece called "Ceora," Freddie Hubbard's lilting waltz "Up Jumped Spring" and, as a brief tongue-in-cheek closing theme, "Twelfth Street Rag."

Through it all Coleman displayed the qualities that have kept him regularly in demand, though hardly in the forefront: great energy, sometimes to excess, a distinctive and occasionally somewhat hollow sound, and an enviable storehouse of technique.

Coleman's ability to build tension through a series of choruses may last through an entire solo, or it may begin to flag, as was the case during "Good Morning, Heartache." This song, designed as a tender ballad, soon lapsed into double time with an overwrought Coleman resorting to that nemesis of every jazz purist, the saxophonic

squeal.

Some of the most dazzling moments throughout the set were provided by Billy Childs, who seems to have every stylistic device at his command. During one solo he moved from a repeated rhythm pattern to dense, exotic chords to long single-note lines to a

puckish "From Thelonious Monk."

He may well be the fastest-rising pianist on the Southland scene. Bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ralph Penland completed a first-rate rhythm section, though it hardly seemed necessary to include a drum solo in every other number.

The quartet closes Sunday. —L.F.

Faces . . .

10/29



*A hot year for Lee Ritenour.*

## **Brazilian Beat**

**T**hese are eventful times for Lee Ritenour, the guitarist who in the past 10 years has crossed every border, stylistically and geographically.

He toured Europe twice this year. He just played the Universal Amphitheatre with a group of Brazilian and American musicians in a show based on his album "Festival." And next month he will take his small band to Jakarta to celebrate Indonesia's first international jazz festival.

"'Festival' is my first all-acoustic album in 10 years," says Ritenour, a Hollywood native who has gained prominence through extensive use of electric guitars and synthesizers. "It went well with the Brazilian flavor of most of the songs."

*Please see FACES, Page 3*

A graduate of the Sergio Mendes mid-1970s group, Ritenour has led several small groups, one of them with Dave Crusin, and was one of a cadre of young musicians who helped establish what is now looked back on as the California sound of the '70s.

Blended with that sound is the new Brazilian movement known as Tropicalism. "It has a little more of the African element, brought in by some musicians from the north of Brazil," Ritenour points out. "It's a slightly more contemporary extension of what Joao Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim started in the '60s."

On the album he introduced as guests Caetano Veloso and Joao Bosco, representatives of the new and more provocative northern Brazilian sound. For the concert, to ensure the right rhythmic impetus, the master percussionist Paulinho da Costa will be added to Ritenour's regular band. His regular vocalist, Phil Perry, is learning to sing the Brazilian songs in Portuguese.

"Even if you can't understand the words," he says, "it's enjoyable to just listen to the voice as if it were an instrument.

"This has been one of my busiest years ever, and with so many jobs and challenges I think my playing has more confidence. I really feel good about the way things are going."

## Red Rodney: From the Pits to the Peak

By LEONARD FEATHER

"I think I'll take December off," says Red Rodney. Spoken by a musician, a member of a profession in which most months off are involuntary, the statement was remarkable. Uttered by the rubicund trumpeter, whose life for years veered between success and cataclysmic drug-induced self-destruction, it was doubly surprising.

Although his name has been brought to a far greater audience through the movie "Bird" (in which he was portrayed by Mike Zelnick while Rodney himself played on the sound track and served as a consultant), the fact is that the 1980s have seen the Philadelphia-born bop veteran working more steadily and profitably in jazz than at any other time in his zigzagging career.

Be-bop, rather than swing music, was the first idiom to interest Rodney as a teen-age musician.

"Dizzy Gillespie was my hero," he says. "He was the first jazz star I wanted to be like. I was working at the local radio station with the Elliot Lawrence Orchestra, doubling at night with a small group in the Down Beat Club, and Dizzy would come home every so often to visit his mother.

"Every time he was in town he'd listen to me. At first I knew maybe six tunes and had no idea of what I was doing, harmonically. But eventually, after six months, he said, 'Now it's time for you to come to New York and listen to this quintet I'm leading.' So he took me to New York and sat me down in the front row at the Three Deuces on 52nd Street."

Although Gillespie had affected him, Rodney found an even more powerful influence in the group's other horn player, Charlie Parker.

The details of their association differ somewhat from their depiction in the movie, which had them meeting in California.

"Dizzy introduced me to Charlie that night. The first thing he did was borrow money from me—10 bucks. Then I heard him play the first number and totally freaked out. Here I was, an 18-year-old, having my ears opened up, in a daze, enthralled. I couldn't get enough! I stayed until they got through at 4 a.m.

Gerry Mulligan, who had been writing for Lawrence, soon joined Gene Krupa's band as saxophonist and arranger. When Mulligan recommended Rodney to Krupa, there was a brief hesitation on the trumpeter's part—"but then I heard from Dizzy that he and Bird were going to California, so I decided to join Krupa, just as a way to get to the West Coast and be close to them."

Los Angeles was a heavily segregated city in 1945. "I remember Miles Davis and I almost got arrested on Hollywood Boulevard just because the police were suspicious of a black kid and a white kid walking down the street together. Miles told the cop, 'Look, he's with Gene Krupa,' and they let us go. Soon after, I went back to New York, stayed with Krupa another year, then became a real jazz player—you know, one-night stands on 52nd Street, weddings and bar mitzvahs, anything to support myself. . . . Then [later], after some more 52nd Street dues, I went with Woody Herman."

The Herman band was playing at the Howard, Washington's black vaudeville theater, when a call came backstage for Rodney. "It was Bird. He said Miles was leaving him; he wanted me in the band. I told him I'd love it but I didn't feel I was ready—besides, people like



Red Rodney: "Playing better than I ever played in my life."

Fats Navarro and Kenny Dorham were available; and in any case I'd have to give Woody two weeks notice."

Parker told Rodney, "Ask Woody if he'll let you go for me." Herman acceded; two days later Rodney was on the stand at the Three Deuces alongside the foremost pioneer of the new jazz era.

"I was petrified, because Miles and Fats Navarro were in the audience. The first tune Bird stomped off was '52nd Street Theme,' at a lightning tempo that I wasn't used to.

Somehow I got through it, and at the end of the set Miles and Fats came over and said 'Hey, man, great.' It was wonderful to feel accepted."

Parker was a father figure to Rodney. "He became a good teacher without even trying. After the job, while the others went their separate ways, he and I would hang out; we became really attached.

"He was badly strung out at the time, and I wasn't; in fact, in the Woody Herman band, while so many of them were fooling with drugs, I was the clean young kid. But now I was with this giant, hearing him create these outpourings of genius, and my young, immature mind was saying, if I crossed over [into drug use] maybe I could play that good."

It is true that Parker at first discouraged Rodney ("Do as I say, not as I do"), but before long he was hopelessly entangled. "I remember the first time I got an injection I couldn't do it—Stan Getz had to do it for me and I had to look the other way! Bird knew he was the reason so many musicians became junkies, and he was unhappy about it. I probably would have been a much better player if I hadn't gotten involved."

After the Parker experience, Rodney worked with Charlie Ventura's big band, eventually conquered his drug habit, and by the late 1950s was turning his life around musically by booking groups on society club dates, playing mostly pop music. For more than a decade he was off the jazz scene, spending most of the 1960s in Las Vegas.

Sooner or later his jazz credentials had to catch up with him. During the 1970s he toured Europe extensively, recorded with a group called Bebop Preservation Society, and by the dawn of the 1980s was working full time with his own jazz quintet.

"It's odd," he says, "but my greatest period musically has been between the ages of 50 and 60—the past 10 years! I'm playing better than I ever played in my life, and the reasons are simple: I'm healthy, I'm happy, I have a good home life, I'm earning a steady living. I have the maturity to put all my past mistakes behind me." □

# Art Farmer Reaps His Musical Harvest

By LEONARD FEATHER

Art Farmer deserted the trumpet for the fluegelhorn in 1961, and quit the United States for Vienna in 1968. He has no reason to regret either decision.

An equable man, with an easy-going personality and a gentle voice that seems to match the mellow sound of his horn, Farmer is playing at Catalina's through Sunday, heading a quintet that includes Clifford Jordan on tenor saxophone, John Heard on bass, Tom Garvin on piano and Ralph Penland on drums. He feels sure that this group, assembled for him by Heard, will live up to his audience's expectations.

"When you travel around all the time free-lancing, picking up local musicians in every city and country, it's always a gamble—you have to go with what you get. But this time I know it'll work out."

Like many expatriates, Farmer returns to the States fairly regularly. At present, he is on a three-month visit. "I seem to be spending a little more time here now," he says, "because there's more activity than there used to be. I'm playing the New York Blue Note in December and the Village Vanguard in February."

One of Farmer's best-known associations is his partnership with Benny Golson. Together they

MARTIN E. KLIMEK



Art Farmer: "Vienna is a wonderful place for jazz."

formed a group known as the Jazztet, which stayed together from 1959 to 1962 (with McCoy Tyner as their original pianist). The combo has been reunited with slightly varying personnel in recent years.

"I have a contract with Sweet Basil in New York," Farmer says, "to play there twice a year with the Jazztet. We try to work in some other jobs around those dates, but Benny has been busy with assignments of his own. He just came home from a birthday celebration for the king of Thailand—the king is a saxophonist, and he hired Benny to write arrangements on some of his tunes."

Farmer, who earned his wings in the 1950s as a trumpeter with Lionel Hampton, Horace Silver and Gerry Mulligan, has encountered no problems using Vienna as a home base. For a while he stayed in the house band with the Austrian Broadcasting System.

Since then, the rare lyricism of his style has been heard at most of the jazz world's principal festivals and frequently on records. Now under contract to Fantasy Records, he is particularly proud of his current album of Billy Strayhorn compositions, "Something to Live For," released on that company's Contemporary label.

He can work at home whenever he feels the urge. "I have an exclusive agreement with a club in Vienna—all I need to do is call and tell them when I'm ready to open. But I just don't want to work there too often and wear out my welcome."

"Vienna is a wonderful place for jazz—the only city I know where you can go to a club one night and hear boogie woogie, the next night hear an 'outside' group, the night after that a big band, the following night a blues band—and every night have a good crowd, with different people."

Though he sees less of it than he might wish, his home life has achieved a rewarding level of com-

fort. He and his Viennese wife, Mechtilda, recently acquired a large house. "It has about 12 rooms, I guess, with a real nice studio where I can work anytime I want, and a sauna where I can go and sweat off all the extra fat that I pick up on the road."

Would he ever consider moving back permanently to this country?

"Well, it isn't exactly out of the

question, but my wife is very comfortable over there. Maybe we could come after she has retired—she's in banking—and after the kid is out of school." Their son, George, now 15, has begun studying the upright bass. "He's practicing day and night; it's hard to even get him to do his schoolwork. At least we're happy for him to be playing upright

Please see FARMER, Page 9

Los Angeles Times

## JAZZ REVIEW

# Farmer's Fluegelhorn of Plenty

by DON HECKMAN

Warning Art Farmer cock his golden fluegelhorn up into the spotlight, and hearing cornucopia of precisely articulated tones come pouring out, is like stepping into a cozy time warp. Before there was New Age, before there was fusion and avant-garde, there was Farmer, with his unparalleled lyricism and gorgeous sound.

Incredibly, in the three decades since his arrival on the jazz scene, Farmer's music has lost almost none of its crystalline purity. His opening set at Catalina's Bar and Grill on Tuesday night glistened with an elegance and style that made a quiet, but persuasive case for the value of tradition and

continuity in jazz.

Despite the fact that he was playing with a local rhythm section, Farmer eschewed the obvious repertoire and played a fascinating collection of tunes from (among others) Benny Carter, Kenny Drew, Sonny Rollins and Mal Waldron.

His characteristically delicate, filigree improvisation on Duke Ellington's "What Am I Here For" craftily obscured Farmer's sometimes remarkable harmonic choices. On Rollins' difficult "Waltz Hot," he burst out of his occasionally too-predictable eighth-note patterns into flashing double time and disjunct accents.

And the arrival of Harry "Sweets" Edison in the room—"someone I really want to impress," said Farmer—provoked the best solo of the evening, a darting, devil-may-care, high-speed romp around the cornice curves of Cedar Walton's "Firm Roots."

Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, looking a bit wan and physically infirm, provided low-keyed, but thoughtfully contrasting solos. Like Farmer, he played masterful harmonic improvisations, with long, serpentine lines that glided easily through a thicket of altered chords.

Farmer, who rarely appears in the Los Angeles area, will continue at Catalina's through Saturday, with shows at 9 and 11 p.m.

## Sinatra Jr., Childers at Grand Avenue Bar

The billing at the Grand Avenue Bar of the Biltmore Hotel read "Frank Sinatra Jr. with Buddy Childers." Yet in his own words the singer, who does not usually appear in such an intimate jazz setting, insisted he was "just sitting in."

That was, in fact, the impression he gave during his well-attended two night stand. On Wednesday, the second evening, he waited for the band to play one or two instrumentals, and even during his own numbers allowed ample time for the soloists to take off freely.

Over the years Sinatra must have been the victim of more ill-informed, condescending criticism than any other singer on earth. Contrary to popular unwisdom, he does not now bear a strong resemblance, vocally or visually, to

any other singer.

At 43 a somewhat introverted figure, conservatively dressed and wearing rimless glasses, he opened with an ill-advised parody of Dean Martin, singing "When You're Drinking" to the tune of "When You're Smiling." From that point on, however, things improved as he stayed with orthodox versions of such standard tunes as "You Go To My Head" and "Stella By Starlight." He sings good songs and sings them in tune, with occasional improvised melodic changes.

A million-dollar personality he is not; he moves very little and smiles seldom. One had the sense that he would have been more at home back in Las Vegas, with the big band and arrangements that are his normal context—and who can blame him?

Sinatra, Childers & Co. will be back New Year's Eve.

—LEONARD FEATHER

## FARMER

Continued from Page 8

bass rather than the electric bass in pop music."

If mature talent and soulful performance were the only yardsticks, Farmer today might be in the rich-and-famous bracket alongside Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis. Still, he has achieved goals he finds just as meaningful: the respect of his peers and professional security. As long as he has no strong objection to living out of a suitcase—and a fluegelhorn case—his international acceptance and continued success would seem to be assured.

