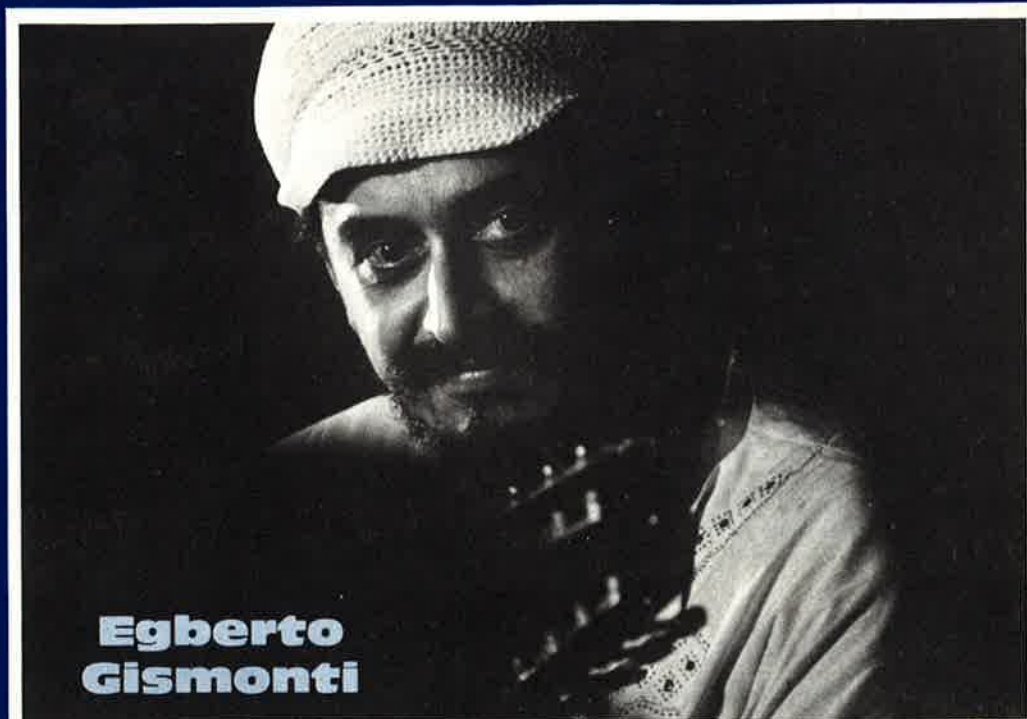
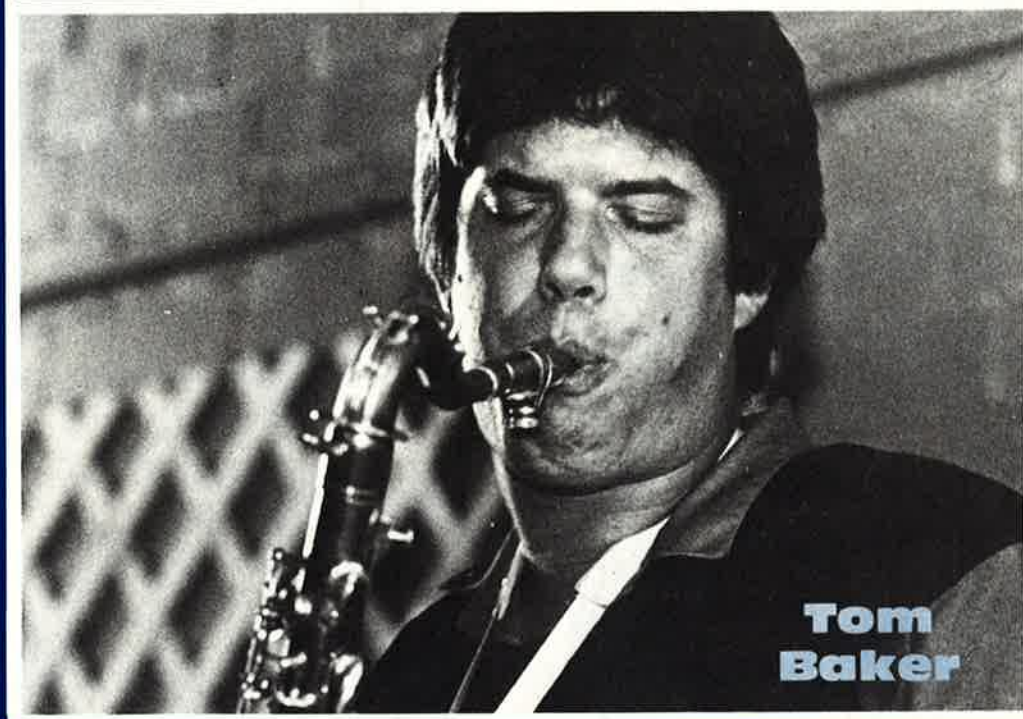


JAZZ

The Australasian contemporary Music Magazine



**Egberto
Gismonti**



**Tom
Baker**

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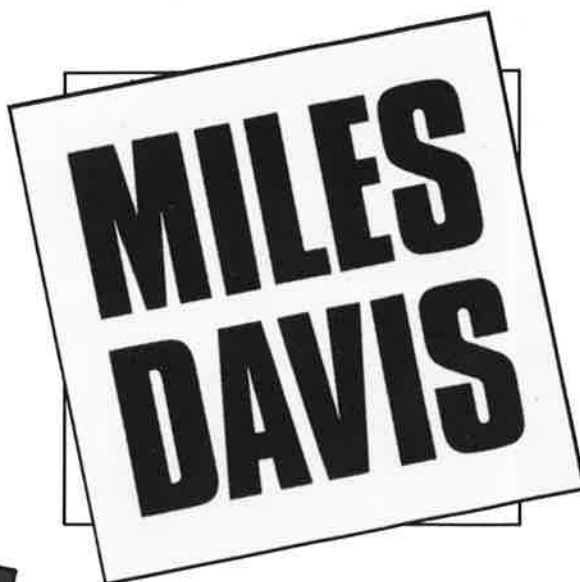


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JAZZ

The Australasian contemporary Music Magazine



Tom Baker:
After five years
on the saxophone, he
is now in the vanguard
of the pre-bebop movement.

7

Volume 4, No. 1

Summer / Autumn 1984



4

Egberto Gismonti & Nana Vasconcelos 4
Interviewed by John Shand



16

Tom Baker: Apostle of Swing 7
by Eric Myers

A Letter To The Editor From Dale Barlow 12

**The 38th Australian Jazz Convention
Forbes 1983** 14
by Bruce Johnson

Melbourne's Women & Jazz Workshop 16
by Julie McLernain & Andra Jackson

George Masso In Australia 18
by Peter J.F. Newton

Bruce Cale: More Than Just a Jazz Musician 21
by Adrian Jackson

Peter Boothman: Growth and Balance 24
by Bruce Johnson

Artie Shaw in Australia 28
by Mike Sutcliffe

Brisbane Profiles 34
by Neville Meyers

Scrapple From The Apple 33
by Lee Jeske



21

Also in this edition:

And We've Also Heard, by Dick Scott; Jazz Jottings, by Eric Myers; Obituaries; concert reviews, record reviews; New Releases, by Roger Beilby; the Merv Acheson Story, Part 10; Jazz Classifieds.

Edit.

Firstly, I would like to apologise to our readers for the long delay between our Spring 1983 edition and this edition, which we call Summer/Autumn 1984. This is our first quarterly edition for 1984 and it is late. We intend, however, to produce an Autumn 1984 edition as soon as possible (or indeed Autumn/Winter) and we are grateful to our subscribers and those who buy the magazine in the newsagents or through jazz clubs for bearing with us.

At this stage it might be appropriate to point out once again that JAZZ Magazine has no full-time staff and is run on a shoestring. We don't even have a typist or any office personnel. This would not be a major problem except for the massive amount of mail which now arrives at the magazine every day. We are grateful that so many people around Australia send us letters containing good wishes (or, more often, complaints), tapes, records, unsolicited articles, photographs, suggestions for stories etc. We just can't answer all this correspondence or, at least, not immediately. Hopefully we will get around to responding to all such mail (eventually).

I also have to apologise once again for the omission of various reports from interstate, and the section 'Around The Jazz Clubs'. The size of the magazine is dependent on advertising revenue and, on this occasion, delays in the production process meant that some of our advertising clients withdrew, and the magazine had to be shortened. Again, we hope that readers in far-flung areas of Australia (not to mention our diligent correspondents) will understand the situation.

We are aware that they often feel that our magazine ignores jazz activity in those areas most distant from Sydney. Of course, more than 90% of our readers live in NSW, Victoria or Queensland, and this is something we always have to keep in mind. Still, I hope that we can, in the future, devise strategies to include more comprehensive news from South Australia, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania, and also to increase the magazine's circulation in those States.

Finally, we hope that you find this edition interesting. As usual, much work has gone into it, particularly on the part of our (miserably paid) contributors and photographers. These dedicated people continue to

keep the magazine alive basically because they love jazz and want to see it progress and prosper in this country.

ERIC MYERS
Editor

Letters

Sir,

In one hundred years time a researcher into Australian jazz in the early 1980s will delve into your magazine and arrive at the totally wrong conclusion that, whilst modern jazz was thriving in places such as Perth and Brisbane, the city of Adelaide had no modern jazz scene at all. He or she would get the impression from your series on the great bass players that Adelaide was the only city without a bass player. Your round up of the various jazz clubs, as with the whole magazine, ignores Adelaide.

Over the years Adelaide has been the source of such great musicians as Errol Buddle. More recent talents such as Dave Colton and Glen Henrich are only just beginning to get the national recognition they deserve.

Before I go I should tell you about the December Jazz Action concert, since if I don't, you won't hear about it elsewhere in this magazine. It brought to light a musician with something to say on his instrument — watch out for Andrew Firth.

MARK S. BLUMBERG
Prospect, South Australia

Editor's Note: It is not strictly accurate to say that our round-up of jazz clubs always ignores Adelaide. We included news of the Southern Jazz Club in our July/August 1983 edition. The Jazz Action Society of South Australia is one of the few jazz societies around Australia which sends us no material on its activities. However, the points made by Mr. Blumberg are well taken.

Sir,

What a jazz critic should or should not be is a taxing problem. Let me step briefly across the abyss. Quite frankly, the good ones are exceedingly rare in Australia. During my compilation of the 'definitive' bibliography of Australian jazz I have read through a grand array of words. Indeed much has been said. Quantitatively, there has been a wide coverage of jazz as an event — and that's good for history; but the quality of analysis has, by and large, been poor — and that's bad for Australian jazz.

Let me attempt to codify the problem: there is a clear lack of understanding of the role of critic and criticism, sometimes blanketed by a limited knowledge of the music itself. Too often, commentators rely heavily on anecdote and too little on thoughtful analysis. Now I am not particularly concerned with how a body does it; our methods are largely controlled by our own brands of madness. What I do object to is the domination of Australian jazz reportage by the 'gee whiz' school. Okay, you say, given the trivial nature of the mass media (and here I am talking only

of print) and that bands, venues and performances are essentially transitory, surely anecdote is the best way of maximising attention to jazz. I agree partly with this; I use it from time to time myself. But let us not call it 'criticism'. Furthermore, the dominance of this type of reporting does little to distinguish the music we applaud from the rapidly passing parade of 'pops'.

Readers will have noted that in recent times newspaper coverage of jazz has become vanishingly small. To add insult to injury, columns, especially in the 'throwaways', are sometimes written by staffers who are totally incompetent in their knowledge of jazz — with lamentable but laughable results. The result is that the 'gee whizzards' are flowing over into the only other outlets regularly available — the 'specialist' magazines and extended newsletters put out by jazz clubs. Now perhaps I err; perhaps musicians and listener-readers only want to pick over the bleached bones, enjoy the jokes, be part of the backslapping. I have been around this half-world long enough to know that there are some who have little real interest in the music — it's merely something for a 'fun time', to jig to, a catalyst for social intercourse. Of course, these are part of the stew, but they are not the main ingredients!

I give you as *prima facie* evidence the following anecdote. I recently went late to a Sydney venue, The Brasserie, where Ms Su Cruickshank, undoubtedly a fine singer and an extraordinarily accomplished ad-libber, is backed by four well-known jazz musicians. The Brasserie is a night club and as such attracts as audiences some who are not readily attuned to the finer things in jazz; it is a venue to which noise is endemic. However, I did note that audience noise was inversely proportional to the sensitivity of performance, and the performance suffered accordingly (that is criticism); conversely the non-listeners loudly applauded up-tempo numbers such as *Stormy Monday*, either by hand or with a curious whooping call reminiscent of a chimp on heat (gee whiz!), then returned to the more important matter of not listening.

A critic for whom I have the greatest admiration is Eddie Cook of *Jazz Journal*. In his editorial for the December '83 issue he says: ... another rash has developed recently, of musicians who strongly disagree with a reviewer's opinion of their performances either on record, or live ... This is a development I view with amazement. Most of the older musicians I know seem to regard all comments and reviews with equanimity, maybe because they 'earned their spurs' in the days when work was difficult to obtain and having to fight for recognition made them grateful for any mention. Today some performers seem to think that the whole world should applaud what they are doing and that it is the duty of every critic and record reviewer to enthuse over them or their band's performance without exception.

This brief extract serves not only to highlight the perceived role of the critic but also to imply what listener and performer ought to expect from the critic. The critic should criticise — and be neither slave to tradition nor sycophant. At the risk of being struck off the 'free lists', it is the type of criticism I prefer. But in jazz, as in war, truth is often the first casualty.

PETER J.F. NEWTON
Balmain, NSW

... and we've also heard

By Dick Scott*



JANE MARCH

As we go to press the Rocks Push in Sydney's Rocks area is closed for extensive renovations. It will reopen under the name Rocks Push, not the reported Gatsby's. I understand the jazz policy will be continued which is good to hear. Bob Barnard will be back there as usual on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. It has been the home of some great music for many years with a solid place in Australian jazz history. Not many people know that it was a fire in the rear of the Push which forced Bruce Viles and Galapagos Duck to find new premises. They found a water-filled cellar near the Quay, gave it the working name of The Basement and the rest, as they say, is history. □

I'm going to put my two penn'orth on the record companies' lobby to get a surcharge on blank audio tapes. They seem very one-eyed, saying record sales are down but neglecting to say recorded cassette sales are up. Of course people record LPs, in many cases to preserve the album by playing a tape and reducing wear on the disc, but also because the record companies' cassettes are of such poor quality. We all like to have our favourite music with us whatever the ilk and, with so many portable players around as well as in the car, the companies should look to the quality of their recordings. There seems little chance of the individual stopping the big conglomerates but wouldn't it be nice if they surveyed blank tape users and put money behind the less 'popular' types of music. After all Michael Jackson and the like will keep them rich for some time to come. □

*Dick Scott is a professional journalist with News Ltd in Sydney. His pieces on jazz appear occasionally in *The Australian* and the *Daily Telegraph*.

The *Burrows Collection* will be back on ABC TV for the third time early in July — keep an eye on your local TV guide. In the eastern States it will be at its regular timeslot after the late news on Monday nights. Once again it will be a mix of the best available from overseas plus six programs filmed live locally — go get your VCRs ready. Incidentally the Australian content of the first two *Collections* are being repeated late on Friday nights in Sydney and possibly elsewhere. □

The Regent Sydney Hotel has added the final touches to its new-look Don Burrows Supper Club with the addition of soft pink leather bar stools on gleaming brass bases. The Supper Club bar which seats up to 40 people and is open for cocktails from 5 pm daily, except Sundays, was completed in January. From 5 to 7.30 customers are served with complimentary hot canapes and, of course, the live jazz in the club begins nightly at 9 pm. Don't forget that the cover charge of \$10 per person only operates on Friday and Saturday nights. □

Winner of the \$1,000 first prize in the JAS of NSW Original Composition Competition for 1983 was the pianist Michael Bartolomei for his work *Stepping Fourth*. This is the second year in a row that the competition has been won by a former West Australian musician; in 1982 the winner was the former Perth saxophonist Paul Millard. Second prize of \$300 went to the saxophonist Casey Greene for his work *Eclipse* and the guitarist Steve Murphy received third prize of \$200 for his composition *Strollin'*. A concert will be held later this year in which the winning compositions will be performed, thanks to a grant from the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA). The JAS is now soliciting entries for its 1984 competition, and the closing date is November 1, 1984. Also, moves are afoot for the conduct of a nationwide Australian Jazz Composition Competition. More details of this in the next edition of JAZZ. □

Artie Shaw is back on the road after many years away from the music scene. He is not playing his famed and fabled clarinet. That is being handled by Dick Johnson whose manager sent Shaw his new album *Spyder's Blues* hoping for a quote from Shaw for the cover. Shaw, now 73 years of age, was impressed enough to reform his old big band around Johnson whom he calls: "The best clarinetist around, bar none." When he heard the new band play Shaw said: "I tell you, man, it curled my hair, what little is left of it. They were playing with the same enthusiasm as the guys in my day, but with enormously more ability." As a sweetener to his return, the new Artie Shaw band reopened a famous big band venue from the 'thirties, the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, New York. □

The Nice Municipal Council, which puts on one of the biggest jazz festivals in Europe, recently decided to open a museum of jazz. The council called for material throughout France and were surprised when the French equivalent of Ministry for Agriculture found in its cellar a tin of 8mm film labelled "Fat, black woman with handkerchief singing". Louis [Armstrong] had many descriptions throughout a magnificent career but none quite like that! □

The usual spate of visitors early in the year has come and gone. This time many more declared a firm intent to return much sooner than later. Georgie Fame makes Sydney his home during January and won't hear differently. Mark Murphy, who surprised a lot of knockers by filling Kinsela's in Sydney for a full month in January, will be back possibly for a TV special built around the two nights when he had six local singers on stage with him. Danny Moss will be back from London on a teaching engagement in Perth and will then head for the eastern States for some gigging around. Mike Westbrook and his brass band have every intention of making a return trip following feelers put out during their recent visit for the Adelaide Festival and elsewhere. □

EGBERTO GISMONTI & NANA VASCONCELOS

By John Shand*

Bossa Nova did much to popularise Brazilian music, but it is a sadly emasculated form of a stunningly vibrant culture, resulting from the convergence of the indigenous people, the Portuguese settlers, and the West African slaves. Out of this melting pot came Egberto Gismonti and Nana Vasconcelos, who toured Australia during February. Their music is drenched in Brazilian culture, but they use it as a departure point for playing free improvisations.

Gismonti and Vasconcelos share a quiet, unaggressive pride in their cultural heritage. Both men are around forty. The former lives in Rio de Janeiro with his wife and children; the latter lives in New York with his 'family' of percussion instruments. They have only been performing together since 1977, but one easily senses the strength of the bond between them, both personally and musically.

Gismonti is the more voluble of the two, despite not being entirely comfortable with our tongue-twisting English; his self-confidence and expressive manner carry his meanings through these minor language difficulties. Immediately obvious was the importance of Manfred Eicher and the ECM label in the recent careers of both men.

Their first project together was the *Danca Das Cabecas* album (ECM 1089) in 1977. This received widespread critical acclaim, including the German equivalent of the Grammy for the best record in popular music. In 1978, they participated in the "ECM Tour", alongside Oregon and Keith Jarrett's *Belonging*. Much cross-fertilising ensued, notably Gismonti with both Ralph Towner and Jan Garbarek, and Vasconcelos with Colin Walcott. The result was the magnificent *Sol Do Meio Dia [Midday Sun]* (ECM 1116), dedicated to the Xingu Indians of the Amazon jungle, with whom Gismonti had lived many years earlier.

In 1979, the magical trio of Gismonti, Charlie Haden, and Jan Garbarek was formed which, fired by Eicher's enthusiasm, recorded two superb albums within three months of one another. These records, like the others mentioned, are examples of a relatively new music form which, Gismonti enthuses, has been championed by ECM.

"ECM is a very strong company, worldwide. It sells a lot of albums, and we actually make money. All the musicians on ECM are very good players, but they don't use it to play classical music, or jazz either. It is just free music. We cannot call it jazz any more than we can call it



JANE MARCH

Egberto Gismonti: "I believe all creative musicians are trying to do the same thing, which is make music about feelings . . ."

contemporary music in the sense of Stockhausen. Nor can we call it folk music or classical music. We can say it is all these things together."

All these things together, and much more, according to what I heard at the Basement at two of their four sellout concerts there. The music was nearly all improvised, generally with Gismonti setting up a theme or mood, which would evolve as Vasconcelos wove in and out.

Nana is quick to point out that the silences he 'plays' are as important as the notes, like an embroiderer leaving space in the design. In effect, Gismonti plays solo for nearly half the concert.

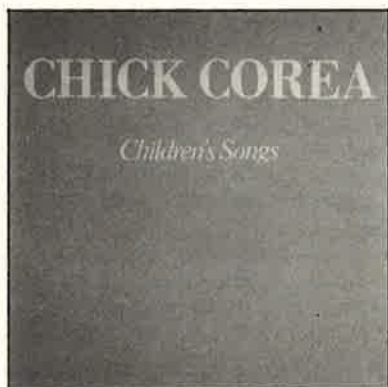
There is a difference in style between his piano playing and his guitar playing. The former was learned in a European classical context from the age of six. After fifteen years, he went to Paris, where he studied with the twelve tone composer Jean Barraque, and a teacher of Stravinsky, Nadia Boulanger.

Three things altered the shape of a flourishing career as a concert pianist and composer. The first was an appreciation of George Gershwin's ideas on orchestrations and chord voicings, which led Gismonti towards a love of improvised music.

The second inspiration was the music of Jimi Hendrix, whose rock-based improvisations were further proof to Gismonti that *popular* and *serious* culture were not mutually exclusive. The third influence was the previously mentioned stay with the Xingu Indians who provided the final catalyst to change his outlook from a classically trained perspective to a more organic one: "... the integration of musician, music, and instrument into an

* John Shand is a freelance writer and drummer who has a day gig with the Australian Opera.

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undivided whole."

He took up guitar some fourteen years ago, at the very end of his classical phase, lending his playing not only the originality of ideas that is apparent at the piano, but also an obvious originality of technique. For instance, he plays lines with his left hand on the fret board independently of what his right hand is plucking classical style, creating the audio illusion of two people playing. He is also able to pick off harmonics with his right hand, without his left hand actually touching the strings.

His instruments themselves are unorthodox. One has ten strings; the other has twelve, arranged as an eight stringed instrument, with the top four strings having a double, either of the same pitch, or an octave below. The ten string guitar is not uncommon in South America, but I suspect that the other instrument is custom designed.

Nana Vasconcelos learned to play on the streets rather than in the conservatories. Born in Recife, in northern Brazil, he began performing alongside his guitarist father at the age of twelve.

By the early sixties, he was an accomplished percussionist. In 1972, he achieved notoriety as a member of Gato Barbieri's band at Montreux. A long association with Don Cherry has followed, firstly in the Organic Music Society, and more recently in Codona, a trio with Colin Walcott, which has released three excellent albums on ECM.

He has made several records as leader, including *Saudades* (ECM 1147), exhibiting his prowess as a composer and vocalist, as well as an acclaimed percussionist — a winner, in fact, of the *Down Beat* Critics Award. A New York resident, he is currently working on an electronic percussion project, including synthesiser and electric bass entitled *Nanatronics*.

On stage, Vasconcelos squats on a rug on the floor,



PETER SMETANA

Nana Vasconcelos on berimbau: the silences he plays are as important as the notes . . .

wearing loose fitting clothes and a blissful smile, his eyes fixed on Gismonti. The latter periodically opens his eyes to return the gaze, and both break into broad grins.

The percussion set-up is remarkably simple: tablas, conga, talking drum, shakers, bells, earthen pot, whistles, cymbals, gong, and berimbau just about completes the list. Shakers and tablas are employed most often, his shoulders, arms and hands performing a lithe dance that is a joy to watch.

Both men use electronic effects on stage with their acoustic instruments. The guitars were being treated by echo and flanging units, and Nana was frequently introducing echo on his microphones. The total effect is an aural environment of as meticulously controlled aesthetics as one of their ECM albums.

This would seem unlikely in the Basement, but never before have I witnessed a crowd there so attentive. This is all the more remarkable, because on all four nights, the crowd was crammed in, with no small contempt for comfort, to the extent that this duo was the most successful overseas act ever to appear there.

I can't help but dwell on the fact. I mean, even the hip jazzers would, by-and-large, meet a stumbling pronunciation of the Brazilians' names with a blank "Who...?". I have to doubt the crowd-pulling significance of Vasconcelos' *Down Beat* award, so we are left with the fact that they record for ECM. This mob, in the industry parlance, moves units, and as the music moves outside of jazz, so does its audience: classical buffs, folk freaks, and audiophiles.

It almost sounds as if the potential is there for mass

popularity, although both men are unlikely candidates for stardom. Vasconcelos lays little store in the prestige of his award.

"I don't like that thing of competition, of saying this is better than that. I have my way to play and somebody else has their way to play. If you go in for studio dates, maybe you could charge more because of it. But it doesn't affect me; I am going to continue doing what I do."

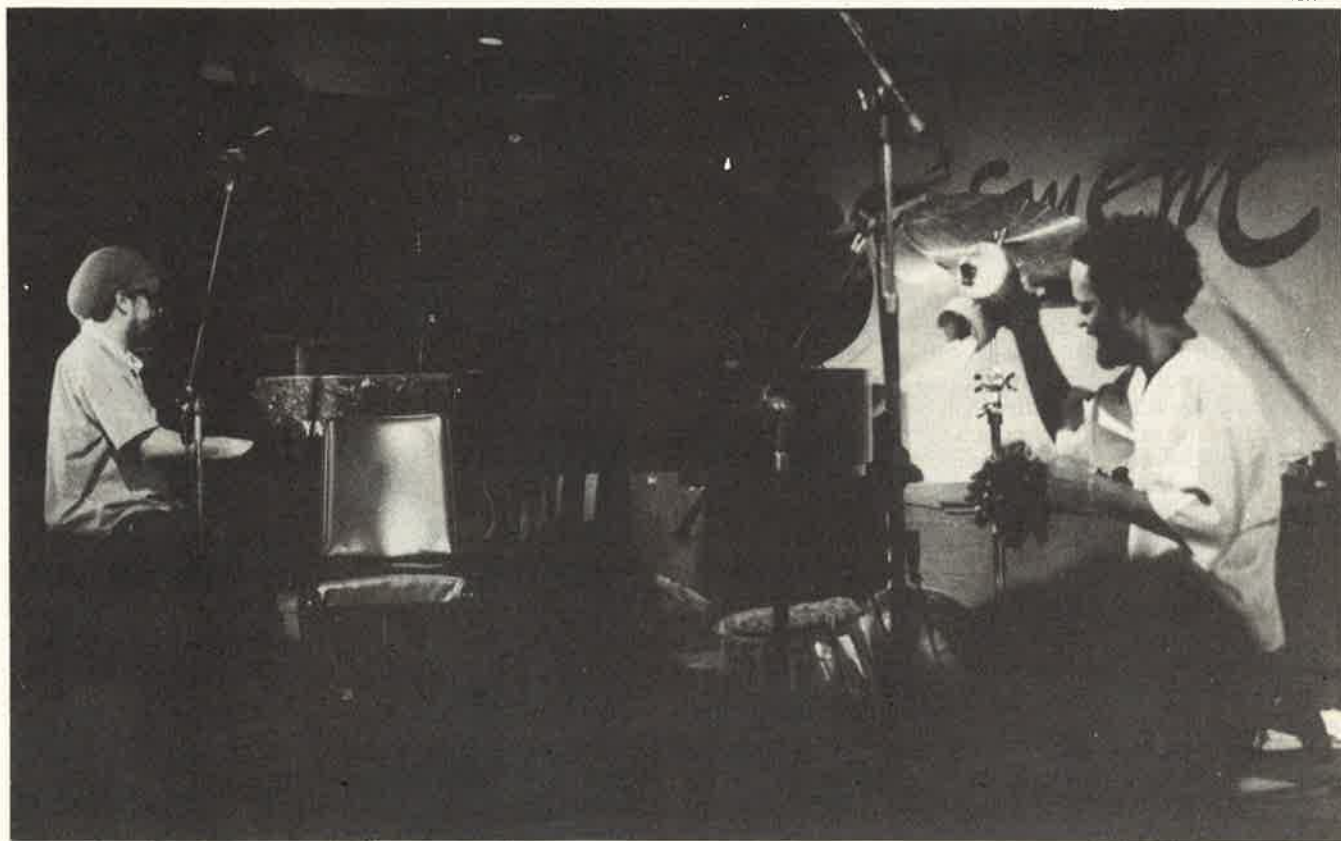
Similarly, Gismonti's values lie outside the music market-place. The most important things in his life are his family and the beautiful house they live in, beside the sea in Rio.

"I'm not so crazy about music. I used to spend eight or ten hours a day, to practise, to listen, to think about music, but not now. I used to use music to live, but now it is not my goal. I want to be very happy with my family. I still love to play music, but whereas I used to do two or three albums and a few movie scores each year, now I need more out of life.

"I believe all creative musicians, whether they are classical or popular — Nadia Boulanger, Miles Davis, or Baden Powell — are trying to do the same thing, which is make music about feelings. There is a kind of essence, of love, of generosity, of respect. I'm sure that music can talk a little about these things.

"The whole world of musical culture is now in a gestative period. For three centuries there has been a lot of talk about music, and now we must digest that, and use this information without thinking. We should be able to use any kind of music as a concrete language." □

JANE MARCH



Gismonti (left) on piano and Vasconcelos: one easily senses the strength of the bond between them, both personally and musically...

TOM BAKER: APOSTLE OF SWING

By Eric Myers

For many years there have been two major schools of jazz in Sydney: known loosely as the traditional and the modern. The traditional school has chiefly been concerned with classic jazz of the 1920s, which has been the main inspiration for the pre-eminent trumpet/trombone/clarinet line-up in Australian jazz since the 1940s. The modern school has chiefly been concerned with bebop and post-bebop jazz since around 1945.

One of the more interesting recent developments, however, has been the apparent emergence of a strong third school — what might be called a 'swing' movement — which appears to exist midway between the other two.

Many of the more progressive and adventurous traditional players are involved in this music, as well as some of the modernists, but there is no more influential representative of this new school than the saxophonist Tom Baker.

Recently Tom Baker spoke with JAZZ Magazine about the music that is his main inspiration: small-band swing of the 1930s and early 1940s — the kind of music that kept jazz alive in the pre-bebop years, at a time when the big bands of the swing era minimised creative improvisation, and lapsed increasingly into clichés and schmaltz.

"There's a period in jazz history from about 1930, I suppose, to 1945, where the big bands were in, and then were starting to go out. The small bands that came out of the big bands were still playing swing. That music is just more understandable to me than bebop; it was swing music, but with more advanced lines. I can understand bebop almost completely, but it is often too fast and too deliberately convoluted; simplicity almost went down the drain in the bebop era, and hot playing wasn't really considered.

"The guys who were playing hot music went out of favour. [Coleman] Hawkins was an example. He went with the flow, and played what bebop he could, and was very successful, but it wasn't real bebop; it wasn't what Charlie Parker was doing. I'm getting less and less interested in trying to play like Parker. I wanted to be Charlie the second when I first took up the alto. Now that I understand what he's doing I can see that the music that was going on just before that is more my style, more what I want to do.

"I think there is a definite trend amongst the working musicians that I know and play with, to playingswing. It's largely due to guys like

Marty Mooney and Paul Furniss. Also, there's more of an acceptance in the eye of bebop. Basically mainstream and modern bands are going into the pubs now, not so much New Orleans and Dixieland stuff anymore — though that sort of music still has a big following with bands like Mike Hallam, Noel Crow and Graeme Bell."

Tom Baker is perturbed that many younger musicians now out playing jazz are generally unaware of swing; they have usually been educated in bebop and the more modern movements. But, there is little doubt that, as he has increasingly established himself as one of the most impressive saxophone players in town, people are starting to take a real interest in the music he stands for.

"A lot of the musicians who have come out of the Con have expressed interest in swing. I know when I joined the Morrison Bros. big band, most of the guys were basically unaware of the swing traditions; some of them wanted to know what I was listening to, and *now* they are listening to Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry and Lester Young, and being influenced by them, whereas before they were listening to Coltrane, the Breckers, the modernists . . .

"I don't agree with the Con policy now, so far as I know. I see musicians coming out who don't have much of an idea of jazz history, which I think is important, just for

playing your horn right. You've got to know where you came from. If you go back to [Charlie] Parker and start, that's not enough, because Parker was influenced by a whole lot of guys. He was basically a big band musician when he started, as was Dizzy, as was Coltrane. At the Con they should have a proper jazz history course related to small band swing, if they don't already. I know Don Burrows is aware of it, but whether they teach it or not, I'm not sure.

"James Morrison is a good influence at the Con, because he's well aware of *some* of the swing traditions anyway. It's most evident in his piano playing. He's an Errol Garner man — very much so — which is great, because Garner covered all the bases; he could play with anybody, and he did. Through James, I think a lot of the students are becoming aware of the older styles.

"I have guys ringing me up wanting to come for lessons to find out, not so much about playing, but what I'm listening to, what my influences are. I guess I'm a bit of a white elephant,



Tom Baker on alto saxophone at the Breda Festival, 1982: representing a new school of swing music . . .



Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Band, circa 1978. Back row from left, John Bates, Hans Karssemeyer, Mal McGilvray, Don Heap, Eric Holroyd, Dave Robison, Paul Furniss. Baker is seated in front.

or a dark horse in the Morrison big band. I really don't fit in with them. I can — a bit like Hawkins in the bop thing, I guess — with them, but not of them.”

When Tom Baker took part in The Super Saxes evening at the Regent in January, he took the stage with two of the most accomplished modern saxophonists in Australian jazz: Errol Buddle and Bob Bertles. Yet Baker held his own well, and no-one could say that he was outplayed by either men — even by Buddle, who was at his mellifluous best on the night. It was astonishing to reflect that, at that time, while the other two men had spent most of their lives on the saxophone, Baker had been playing the instrument for less than five years.

In fact, Baker had been a trumpet player until late 1979, and switched to the saxophone only because he was physically unable, for a short time, to play the trumpet. But, he had an interesting career in jazz before then. What is his background?

Tom Baker was born in California on September 14, 1952. His parents were not particularly musical, but they liked music and had a record player. His father had played cornet for a short time, and there was a piano in the house. Tom would fiddle on the piano and, at around the age of 5 or 6, he began taking piano lessons with a local classical teacher.

“I just played by ear; I couldn't read much,” says Tom. “I'd memorise the pieces, and the teacher wouldn't like it.” He didn't hear jazz until well into high school, where there was a Dixieland band that played for parades on the back of a truck. He liked the music but, at that stage, felt no compelling need to get into jazz.

For someone who is now a central figure in Australian jazz, Tom Baker was a late developer. At age 15, he

wanted to play drums in the beginners' school band, but arrived late on the inaugural day to find that the drums were already taken. So he asked for what was left: the trumpet. “I got straight into it,” he says. “My parents bought me some Tijuana Brass records and an Al Hirt record, and that was it. It was good grounding playing along, because my stereo was a bit fast, so I got into all the sharp keys; I learnt to play in all the weird keys first.”

Like many fine jazz players, Baker learnt to play by ear. The musical director of the band showed him the basic fingering on the first day, then he was on his own. He did well enough to graduate later to the school's concert band, which did concerts and played sousa marches at football matches.

Still, there was some distance between Baker and a career in jazz. The first jazz that really turned him on came to him in college by way of a radio program called *Dixieland Is My Beat*. At that stage, he was oriented

towards playing Dixieland trumpet, but had made no serious effort to pursue that interest.

Then, he and his parents and younger brother came to Australia, arriving in Sydney on Australia Day, January 26, 1972. “The place was closed, I remember”, says Tom. They had come to fulfil one of his father's lifelong dreams: to build a boat and sail it back to the US. It was a 55-foot steel ketch, and they almost completed it at Lavender Bay, near Luna Park, when increasing costs forced them to abandon the project.

Tom was soon into the Sydney jazz scene. In late 1972 he went to Boosey & Hawke to buy a trumpet and met



The swing Street Orchestra, circa 1982. From left, Alan Geddes, Marty Mooney, John Ryan, Baker, Grahame Conlon, George Hermann, Paul Furniss.

Pat Reilly, who suggested he contact the Northside Jazzmen, a band which played every Saturday night at the North Star Hotel (now the Rag & Famish) in North Sydney. They needed a trumpet player.

"I fronted up the first time", says Tom. "I wasn't sure what 'having a blow with them' meant. I didn't know you were supposed to ask. I just walked in and took the trumpet out. It was a spirited, rough-as-guts pub band, but they liked me, and hired me. I remember the pay was \$7 from 7 to 10 on Saturday night. A middy was 18 cents, and a schooner 27 cents. That was my first gig."

So, Tom Baker was off and running as a jazz player. He stayed with the Northside Jazzmen for a year and a half and studied at the Conservatorium. He then went into a club job at Wentworthville Leagues for a year. Meanwhile, he had been playing in the jazz scene and had met Paul Furniss, who suggested him to Ray Price as a replacement for the trumpeter Mike Hallam. He was with the Ray Price Quintet for about two and a half years.

"During that time I'd learnt to play the tuba, and made three or four LPs with Nick Boston's band," says Tom. "That was good grounding; I found out what it was like to be in the rhythm section, to see the band from another angle."

"With Ray Price we did mainly schools during the day, sometimes two and three, just a one-hour jazz lecture, and country tours. We hardly played around Sydney. I don't ever remember playing in Sydney, apart from balls or private functions. We never did a jazz gig in Sydney, but we'd do tours in the country for up to five weeks or two months: Queensland, as far north as Thursday Island, toured New Zealand, Tasmania — everywhere. It was good experience."

"We'd always end the show with *American Patrol*, *In The Mood* and *The Saints*. It was a long blow. Most of the gigs were four hours and we'd usually done one or two school shows during the day, so my trumpet lip was really spot on. No technique much, but I could play all night."

That took Tom Baker up to 1975, when he formed the San Francisco Jazz Band. He had met the trumpeter Eric Holroyd and discovered a mutual interest in the Lu Watters - Turk Murphy style of Dixieland music. They decided to form a band to play at the Australian Jazz Convention which, in 1975, was to be held at Balmain, Sydney. The group originally included Chris Qua (bass), Len Barnard (drums), Dave Robison (banjo), Hans Karssemeyer (piano), John Bates (trombone), Paul Furniss (reeds), with Holroyd on second trumpet and Baker himself on first trumpet.

"We were quite successful — the hit of the Convention, so far as I can understand. We scored a good spot just after Bud Freean. We made a big splash, but then we didn't have any gigs for six months, so we recorded at The Basement and got our publicity together for an American tour. In 1976 I went over to the Sacramento Dixieland Jubilee and was able to talk them into having us in 1978, two years later, and I spent all of 1977 preparing the way."

In 1978, the San Francisco Jazz Band, along with a Japanese group, was the first overseas band to appear at the Sacramento Jubilee. Meanwhile, they had been appearing in Sydney at various venues: the City of Sydney RSL, the Old Push, Red Ned's, and Moby Dick's at Whale Beach. Although the band was originally designed to play the Watters-Murphy two-beat style, Tom found that the music was evolving.

"After a while the two-beat stuff sounded a bit the same to me, and a few swing things were creeping in", he says. "I started enjoying those. The career of the San Francisco

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Jazz Band* culminated in the American tour which amounted to a month in California, a visit to New Orleans, then Los Angeles and home."

Back from America in 1978, Baker then got an offer from the bassist John Callaghan to tour with a group called the Australian All-Stars, working out of England. So, he was soon in England with Callaghan, plus Paul Finnerty (banjo), Roger Bird (clarinet) and Norman Simmons (drums).

The group made two excursions into Europe but, as Tom explains, "we didn't get much international acclaim. The band was alright, but it was badly organised. Our band photo consisted of a snapshot taken outside a pub with most of our heads cut off, and our demo tape was done in a lounge-room on a little recorder. We made just enough to pay for our food and we had 25 pounds left over. It cost 25 pounds to cross the Channel, so we came home with nothing. But it was good experience."

After leaving the Australian All-Stars, Baker visited New York with the pianist Pat Qua. He was back in Australia by the end of '78. In early '79 he had an offer from an American bandleader Rex Allen, who was involved in a re-creation of the Dorsey era. The band was called The Fabulous Forties Orchestra, and Baker played in the trumpet section; the group toured through various areas of the US for two months.

"This got me more interested in swing music", says Tom. Then, in late 1979, some Californian friends suggested that he go to Holland for the Breda Festival. He went first in May, 1980, and has attended every year since.

Meanwhile, there had been an event which turned out to be a significant turning-point in Tom Baker's life. In England, while practising trumpet, he felt a twinge of pain, which turned out to be a hernia. The result: an operation back in Australia, and he was unable to play the trumpet for two months. "I had to play something, and couldn't play the trumpet", says Tom. So, he asked Graham Spedding, who was going to live in Turkey, to leave his saxophone with him. "Paul Furniss showed me the fingering, and I sat in the back room and woodshedded, until the squeaks were ironed out." Highly motivated, he did eight hours practice every day for some months.

In this way, Baker managed what can only be regarded as an extraordinary feat: within six months he was able to play the saxophone at a professional standard — so well that he played alto at the Breda Festival in May, 1980. "I'd built up such strong chops on the trumpet, playing sax used quite a few of the same muscles, and a few different ones", he says, "but it was that much easier than the trumpet — dead easy, comparatively."

Tom Baker's hernia and consequent adoption of the saxophone was therefore somewhat fortuitous. He had always admired the playing of the Sydney saxophonists Paul Furniss and Marty Mooney, whom he describes as his initial influences. "Marty has good time, good phrasing, a powerful way of playing, completely different from the other guys in town, which is good — I think the Coltrane thing is too much in evidence. Marty has a loose, swing style, basically a black style. I think his favourite player is [Sonny] Rollins, and I can hear a bit of that in him. But, he's very much his own man."

Once into the saxophone, Baker went out of his way to take something from all the great American saxophonists:

* Editor's Note: The San Francisco Jazz Band still exists and plays in Sydney under the leadership of Paul Furniss.



Tom Baker's current band, The Swing Street Orchestra Vol. II. From left, Pat Qua, Ian Date, Baker, Pat Wade, Don Heap.

Benny Carter, Coltrane, Pete Brown, Johnny Hodges . . . "I set out to get records by everybody. I wanted to find out the lineage, so I went right back to [Coleman] Hawkins in the '20s. I'd known about Frankie Trumbauer on C Melody for a long time; back to the roots, and through the lineage, right up to the '50s and '60s, where I basically lost interest.

"The public generally don't know about Gene Ammons, but all tenor players do. He's great, the best one for tone." Allan Eager, Brew Moore and Serge Chaloff are other fine but obscure saxophonists whose styles Tom Baker had studied closely.

In 1980, Baker former a band called Groove City, which played at Trappers, Westmead, for about a year. Other than Baker it included Marty Mooney (tenor saxophone), Bill Saragih (piano), John Ryan (bass) and Lachie Jamieson (drums). It was a good, swinging bebop-style band which was the support group for Oscar Peterson and Anita O'Day when they performed in Sydney.

The career of this band was interrupted in 1982 when Baker made his regular trip to the Breda festival. In late 1982, he was back on the scene with a band that was, for a short time, one of the most exciting and popular bands in Australian jazz: the Swing Street Orchestra. Along with Baker on trumpet and saxophones, it included Marty Mooney and Paul Furniss (saxophones), Graham Conlon (guitar), George Hermann (piano), John Ryan (bass) and Alan Geddes (drums).

The band gave a number of splendid performances in Sydney, including one that was the highlight of the Manly Jazz Carnival in October 1982. Later, the group did a successful tour of NSW and Victoria, then disbanded just before Christmas, 1982. Shortly after they disbanded, the pianist George Hermann died of a heart attack.

When the Swing Street Orchestra broke up, Baker swore he would never run another band. For the last year or so, he has been playing around Sydney in various combinations, but principally at Soup Plus on Monday and Wednesday nights with James Morrison.

"I've played a fair bit of bebop with the guys around town," he says. "It's not really my favourite sort of music, but I can play it. I like jumping in and having a go, and jumping out. I can't play bebop as a steady diet all the time. I suppose my biggest influences at the moment are guys like Don Byas, Lucky Thompson, Hawkins in his '40s period; not so much Lester Young any more. I listened to nothing but Lester Young for two years, and I've absorbed him.

"I think it's got a lot to do with the rhythm section. The earlier bands often used rhythm guitar, which was out in the bebop era, when piano, bass and drums became the standard. More complicated, almost bebop lines with a Basie rhythm section — that'd be my favourite sort of stuff.

"One of the differences between bop and swing is that the swing rhythm section would basically float along and swing. The horn player was expected to ride on top of it and keep things going, keep the element of heat there, and transfer it to the next soloist, and things would get

bigger and bigger until the finish. Bop is probably more of a collective effort in a way. It's more like a band of individuals, all playing to create a whole. It's harder to get going with a bop band. If everything's right it's great, but the rhythm sections are coming from a different place. It's hard for them to just cook, like the Basie rhythm section could cook. That's one thing Geoff Bull pointed out to me once: that, in the older bands, the rhythm section tended to drive the horns, whereas nowadays the horns have to get hot before everybody gets the message.

"Really I'd like to get a band with a Count Basie-style rhythm section, with rhythm guitar — basically like the Swing Street band, but with a more loose feel. But again, it's finding guys who can play in that style. For instance, there are very few bass players in town that I think play so much in the swing style that they actually could fit in with my concepts of how I want the band to sound. There are lots of great bass players here, but they don't play with the time and tone that I want. Bass players now tend to play more electrically; their notes connect, and they don't bounce anymore. As long as bass players are playing their horns like rubber bands, it doesn't swing to me. The only bass player in town who doesn't use a pick-up is Don Heap; he just plays acoustic bass."

In fact, Baker has formed a new Swing Street Orchestra (Vol. II) with Ian Date (guitar), Pat Qua (piano), Don Heap (bass) and Pat Wade (rhythm guitar). It has already done a tour of Victorian provincial centres, and Baker has high hopes of taking the group to the Montreux Jazz Festival and other European festivals. Once again, he will attend the Breda Festival, Holland, in May.

When he returns from Breda, he'll be playing at Sydney's Soup Plus on Wednesday nights with James Morrison, and will be putting together a special swing night every Thursday night, replacing the pianist Dick Hughes, who has been at the Soup on Thursdays from some years.

So, Tom Baker now enjoys an eminent position in Sydney jazz. He is convinced that the jazz scene here is

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the most vital he has experienced, outside of New York: "In Sydney there seems to be some attitude low down on the entertainment scale — which is the pubs — that when they want a band, they get a jazz bad. I don't see that in the States or anywhere else, except maybe London. In San Francisco, there are really only about a dozen spots where anything is happening, and only one or two places going six nights a week: Turk Murphy's club Earthquake McGoon's, which I hear is closing for good, and the Fairmont Hotel. We have The Basement, Soup Plus, the Brasserie, the Push, Red Ned's, and all the pubs, that have things all the time. You'll never find any jazz on Monday nights in San Francisco; LA is much the same — if there's anything on, you have to travel miles and miles to find it.

"I've always said that Sydney is second only to New York in the amount of jazz that goes on, and the number of guys making a living out of it. New York is that much bigger, and it's the home of the best players. But I've been through Chicago, New Orleans; I've lived in LA and San Francisco, in Paris for a little while; got to know Amsterdam, Hamburg, Munich, Auckland . . . I haven't found anything like Sydney, outside of New York. A lot of guys in the States know that, and they want to come out here and live." □

TOM BAKER DISCOGRAPHY

On tuba —

Australian Jazz Of The Seventies, Vol. 6 (Jazznote) with Nick Boston's Colonial Jazz Band; *Nick Boston's Colonial Jazz Band*, (Festival), Fred Starkey Foundation.

On trumpet —

Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Band, Vol. 1 (Jazz & Jazz); *Cakewalkin' Babies*, San Francisco Jazz Band, Vol. 2 (Jazz & Jazz); *Jazz Party No. 1*, with Ray Price Quintet (Dixie); *Jazz Party No. 2*, with Ray Price Quintet

continued on page 29

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM DALE BARLOW

The outstanding young tenor saxophonist Dale Barlow left Australia in September 1982 for Germany. After working for some time in Europe, he went on to New York for almost a year, before returning to Europe. This letter arrived recently from London, where Dale Barlow was sampling the cold weather.

Dear Eric,

The following is a summary of what I have been doing since I left Australia. I have been involved in so many different playing situations that it is going to be difficult for me to include everything, so I will concentrate on those events which I thought were the most musically significant for me and of interest to my many friends in music in Australia.

I left Australia in September 1982 for Frankfurt, Germany to commence a tour with the guitarist Peter O'Mara. We used Billy Elgart, a New York expatriate who is best known for his work with Paul Bley, Tom Van de Geld and Sam Rivers. He is one of the finest drummers I have worked with; a truly remarkable musician. We used Wayne Darling on bass, another US expat, who has performed with everyone from Joe Henderson and Woody Herman's band to the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Together, they made a great rhythm section — fiery and energetic, but also gentle and sensitive whenever the mood dictated.

We toured throughout Southern Germany and Austria, performing in most of the main cities as well as many smaller towns. For the last part of the tour we used Adelhard Roindinger, a highly respected Austrian bassist who has his own records out on ECM. The repertoire consisted of Peter's compositions as well as selected standard tunes. The tour was a success with many rave reviews.

At the end of the tour I remained in Germany for a while, playing with various big bands and a host of trios and quartets. I worked with Wilbur Little for two nights in Frankfurt in a trio with a Turkish drummer. Wilbur has played and recorded with Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker — just about everyone.

After Germany, I visited Switzerland, France, Holland, Belgium and Italy playing gigs wherever I could find them, with local pick-up bands under my own direction and name. Sightseeing is one of the reasons for going abroad, and I took the opportunity to do just this, as well as soak up the local culture in such places as Greece, Crete and Yugoslavia, as well as Florence, Pompeii, and the beautiful island of Corfu.

I returned to Germany to play some more gigs with Peter O'Mara before flying out to New York.

My stay in New York was for ten months, during which time I studied, played gigs and established many important contacts. I took lessons with Dave Liebman (whom I knew from Australia) and George Coleman, as well as Hal Galper. I also studied classical flute and clarinet with various teachers, but I think that most of my learning was done on the bandstand either doing gigs, sitting in, or at jam sessions. I could mention a lot of known artists that I performed and jammed with during my stay, but some of the most surprising talents were those who are little known outside New York. One major influence was Jim Pepper, an American Indian tenor player who works regularly with Don Cherry, Carla Bley, Charlie Haden and Jack De Johnette. Jim is one of the



Dale Barlow playing in Utrecht, Holland, with the Smirnoff Quintet in 1983: 65 gigs with the group . . .

most original players around today, yet his talent is hardly recognised. I learned a lot from playing with and hanging about with Jim. Also John Betsch, Archie Shepp and Dollar Brand's drummer (Doug Sydes) knocked me out and I played a lot with them. There are so many other great players that they have to be heard live to be believed.

Every second or third night I would go to see a "jazz great" perform in one of the many clubs around the Greenwich village area, near where I was living. Admission was usually expensive but in most cases, well worth the money. Some bands I would go and hear up to five nights in a row because they were so impressive. A favourite of mine was Elvin Jones' Jazz Machine with Pat LaBarbera on saxophone, which was just as exciting night after night. Archie Shepp and Dewey Redman both led formidable bands which played around regularly. I also managed to hear Sonny Rollins on a couple of occasions, once with Jack De Johnette and Wynton Marsalis, which was quite impressive. Other musicians that I heard regularly were Art Blakey, Dexter Gordon, Joe Henderson, Dave Liebman and Arthur Blythe. I would often go to hear Philly Jo Jones and his big band Dameronia, which featured Clifford Jordan, Charles Davis, James Moody, Cecil Payne and Frank Wess on saxophones and included some wonderfully original arrangements of Tadd Dameron tunes.

The one exciting aspect of music that I found in New York City and nowhere else in my travels was the jazz street scene.

There are such large numbers of excellent young players from all over the world (as well as the more established musicians) and so few gigs that pay, that

many musicians take to the streets and parks during the warmer months. Sometimes these gigs pay more than working in the clubs. One of the groups that I had been working with thought that it would be a great idea to organise to play a concert in the Blue Note Club. This we did on a 'door take deal' which netted us enough to buy one can of beer each.

I have heard and played with some really phenomenal players on streets and in parks and it is an indispensable part of paying one's musical dues in New York City these days. Some of the bands will play for hours and hours on end without stopping, at the same time entertaining a captivated audience of hundreds. The musicians teach each other new tunes and try them out together with new techniques and other players will always be there to sit in and talk for a while. In Times Square and Central Park, I have seen as many as five really good bands playing within 100 yards of each other, some with their battery-powered amplifiers.

There is a saxophone player named George Braith (who plays mainly on the streets) who has developed his own instrument which he calls the Braithophone. It consists of two saxophones joined together with two mouthpieces and all the fingering has been altered so as to get the full range of each horn. He can play two lines simultaneously and independently and creates some wonderful harmonies.

New York has long been the Mecca for jazz musicians and it certainly lives up to its reputation and, although it is a rough and hostile environment in many respects, for the serious jazz player it can be a kind of paradise. The New York winter has to be felt to be believed and can cause unexpected problems as I soon learnt when I slipped on the icy sidewalk and caused \$150.00 damage to my tenor sax which I could ill afford.

There were several Australian musicians living in New York while I was there. I saw a lot of Dave Panichi and we often played together on the streets or at jam sessions. Dave has now been in New York for some three years and is doing well with the Buddy Rich Big Band. I also hung out with Dave Ades and Phil Henderson while they were there.

During early July, I toured Michigan with an excellent young N Y jazz outfit and we played at a lot of clubs and concerts. As soon as I arrived back in N Y, I received a phone call offering a tour of Holland and Belgium and within two days I had arrived in Brussels ready to start the tour.

I actually arrived half way through the tour to replace a Dutch trumpet player who was unsatisfactory, but I still managed to play 65 gigs with the group which was a combination of Dutch and New York musicians.

The tour was sponsored by Smirnoff Vodka, Rothmans, Le Coq Sportif, Bose speakers and Capital Air. We travelled throughout Holland and Belgium in a well equipped, ex-public transport bus which was fitted with a fold-out stage with canopy, piano and 100 seats for the audience. The band was known as the Smirnoff Quintet which consisted of three Dutch guys, one black and one white American, and myself. The bus had a compliment of eleven people including roadies and two lovely girls who made the meals and served vodka to the audiences while we played. The bus was designed and rebuilt by an enterprising young Dutch piano player named Renee Van Hellsdingen who was also responsible for organising and publicising the tour.

We performed in all major cities and many provincial centres as well as jazz festivals including the Camel,

continued on page 26

THE 38TH AUSTRALIAN JAZZ CONVENTION — FORBES 1983

By Bruce Johnson

Discussing the traditional jazz movement in Australia, I have several times made the suggestion that its music is especially expressive of the idea of community. Certainly, if any event dramatises the point it is the Australian Jazz Convention. The Convention is as much a social occasion as a musical. As Dave Rankin enthused at the 38th Convention Picnic: "There's nothing like it. It's a beaut week long party." Peter Boothman, present as a fascinated spectator, put his finger on the same thing when, watching the massed marching band in the park, he said, "It's incredible. They all know the same tunes." The Convention expresses the solidarity and national unity of Australian traditional jazz. To my ears, however, the balance between socialising and music-making has altered over the last ten or fifteen years. Perhaps it's more a reflection of my own changing priorities, but it seems to me that the event is evolving a bias in favour of the party spirit as opposed to the serious desire to make good music.

As a party, it's a ripper. It's a most humane and generous-hearted affair, an extraordinary week during which (on this occasion) 1400 people get together, drink immeasurable quantities of grog, yet scarcely speak a cross word or perform an antisocial act. It's no wonder that country towns are queueing up for a function that will probably bring with it a week's good-humoured, clean and non-violent fellowship, and a quarter to half a million dollars income. Whatever else I might say about the Convention in general, it is perhaps the greatest single PR exercise for jazz in the whole Australian calendar. This one in particular had a wonderful atmosphere. Forbes demonstrated again that it is built on a scale perfectly adapted to the current magnitude of the AJC. And the locals, recollecting the last time they played host, made us all most welcome. To the town, as much as to the Committee, thank you. The Committee established a fine balance between effectiveness and invisibility. If you took the trouble to look, the members were all over the town square area, communicating by walkie-talkie, adapting, oiling the wheels. But I never felt oppressed by the organisational machinery. The Picnic was a masterpiece of what felt like spontaneity, but it takes symp-



JOHN MEAGHER

The Convention street parade, Forbes 1983: a most humane and generous-hearted affair, an extraordinary week during which (on this occasion) 1400 people get together, drink immeasurable quantities of grog, yet scarcely speak a cross word or perform an antisocial act.

athetic planning and discretion to achieve that illusion. The one breakdown was the Welcome Night, but I'm beginning to think that that's in the nature of the beast. The last three that I've attended (Forbes, Toowoomba, Forbes) have been overcrowded, hot, rowdy, with absurdly understaffed bar-service and musically spoiled by bands over-eager to take, and reluctant to leave, the stage. This is a function that needs to be reconsidered very carefully.

As a musical event, it was a very mixed bag. As usual, certain sections of a jazz band were poorly represented so that some individuals were worked into the ground. Kenny Crawford, Ross Collins and John McCarthy seemed to be everywhere, and their performances justified their ubiquity. I had the pleasure of some very enjoyable blows, courtesy of the company I happened to find myself in. Eric Gibbons' Magnolia Brass Band always provides a kind of thrill that only a New Orleans style marching band can give, and the trumpet trio with Eric Holroyd and Bob Henderson on the hoary old *Just A Closer Walk* was one of those unanticipated magic experiences. The most exciting band for me to work with was completely unexpected,

right up to the moment it began playing. Drummer Barry Canham, in obedience to some demonic intuition, assembled Brett Lockyer, myself and Bob Henderson, Ken Evans, Barry Chew, and Ross Collins. What he had visualised as a sort of Chicago Dixieland thing became a roaring jump band. One of those rare and unpredictable successful accidents. If it seems immodest of me to dwell on a couple of bands I happened to be playing with, I must if I am to give credit to those other musos who steamed so gloriously. At the other end of the scale, however, there seemed to be an unusually large proportion of very rough music, especially during the early part of the week, and I wonder if the reason for this lies with what I want to consider below, as perhaps the biggest single question hanging over the Convention.

My feelings on hired/imported musicians are by now well enough known for no-one to be surprised when I congratulate the Committee for not having spent a fortune bringing someone into the country. They did, however, pay 850 dollars for pianist Sam Price, who was already in Australia. While that seems a modest sum of money, I still don't agree with

the idea of purchasing something because it's comparatively cheap, without much regard for how much it's really needed. The argument against highly ballyhooed imports is not just a financial one, as was indicated on this occasion. The sight of normally level-headed colleagues turning into musical groupies is not an inspiring one. The subject in general certainly deserves to be taken up at some length, but the grounds of my objections to the way in which Price was presented can be implied by recording the following observations. (I had better emphasise the way I worded that: I spoke not necessarily of Sammy Price himself, but of the way in which he was presented and perceived.)

On the Welcome Night most of the music went ignored by the crowd. While all the local bands had to put their names down for a blow, the Price set simply jumped the queue (on the evidence of the blackboard), and proceeded to occupy the stage for twice as long as the Australian bands were given. The program was much as on the last visit — listen to the Red Allen *Feeling Good* album and you have the style and much of the repertoire. The crowd, now silent, hung on every note. Wild applause. The set finished, the crowd dispersed, roaring conversation ensued. The pianist in the next band put on a superior performance, really thrilling piano. But he's white, Australian, and middle-aged. Not more than a

dozen people even noticed he was playing. Now think about it. How far did that whole situation help Australian jazz? American horn player Tom Pletcher was also present, but simply as another musician. An avowed Bix disciple, his work was lyrical, correct yet supple, and understated. He mingled, chatted, sat in all over, listened courteously to the music and the musicians. He will be spending some time in Australia after the Convention, so try to catch his work if you missed him.

Fairly early in the Convention a meeting was held to discuss certain aspects of the function. Gradually it turned into a non-directed and inconclusive talk-fest, and although some very real problems were alluded to, it seemed to me that what *made* them problems was not dealt with. The Original Tunes Competition attracted much discussion. But I think the difficulty inherent in that competition is simply beyond solution. On the one hand, the search for genuine harmonic and melodic originality leads the composer beyond the stylistic tolerance of many traditional purists — "That's not jazz!" On the other, the need to remain within harmonic conventions acceptable to those ears tends to ensure that such a composition will be a pastiche of old material. (Even one of the winners included harmonic snatches of *Baltimore* and *Body and Soul*.)

Finally, a more serious long-term question. This was a marvellous Convention — I've said all that. But if we want them to continue, if anyone wants the traditional movement to continue into the 21st century, they should start noticing with apprehension the advancing average age of delegates. Every year there are fewer new young musos. I enjoyed the work of Grahame Pender, the reed player from Melbourne, who on soprano reminded me of a young Paul Furniss. But the diminishing numbers of his age group should be causing some alarm. One consequence is that the energy and dedication that once went into bands like The Onions or, more recently, Toad's Crazy Kats, is absent. Apart from Razzamajazz, and one other, I saw few young, well presented groups. Another consequence of the lack of new blood is that the 'Sunday driver' musicians, those who might not take out their horns from one week to the next, are now not only *not* improving, but are beginning to deteriorate as their bodies lose tone and co-ordination. Similarly, the audiences seem to be less discriminating and alert than

they once were. Many of them have settled into a well worn groove which requires simply that the music be loud, fast and *China Boy*. There is no stimulus in this for the musician who might want to extend his expressive range. I labour this point *not* at the expense of the Forbes Convention in particular. It is a problem which afflicts the whole Australian traditional movement. The biggest threat to the future of traditional jazz in this country is the failure of many of its clubs and societies to attract on a large scale the following of a new generation. Sometimes the discussion at Forbes seemed to assume that certain aspects of the music could be detached from their cultural context, repaired, then screwed back on. This is at best a patchwork short-term solution. Some of our traditional jazz societies are in danger of becoming social clubs for a diminishing circle of ageing drinkers. If they care about the music, they are going to have to pull their fingers out and turn to the young. Otherwise the gag T-shirts that announced the 50th Geriatric Jazz Convention to be held at Callan Park won't look quite so funny.

JOHN MEAGHER



American pianist Sammy Price: the crowd hung on every note . . .



KEITH HOUNSLOW
Pocket Trumpet & Flugel Horn

Keith is now living in Sydney, and is anxious to renew old musical friendships. As well as being available for gigs, he wants to form a small group to play both standards and freer forms of tonal music and would like to hear from any interested musicians.

Keith has longterm plans to tour the group, both within Australia and overseas.

For further information ring (02) 33 6873 or Eric Myers (02) 560 4449.

MELBOURNE'S WOMEN & JAZZ WORKSHOP

I — By Julie McErlain*

It would seem that, despite the advances made by women in increasing numbers in professional fields, the areas of both classical conducting and instrumental jazz have remained a predominantly male domain. From my experiences in music and in teaching, the playing of jazz and improvisation have been seen by many female musicians to require more bravado and confidence than they felt.

Believing that there were many female students and musicians doing solitary practice, and knowing that there were few (female) music teachers experienced and active in teaching jazz in the course of their work, I felt that jazz workshops were vital for the encouragement of women in Melbourne, to expand their role and increase their level of participation in the jazz of the future.

Following initial reactions to this "unpopular" or "unimportant" issue of women and jazz (thought to be "sexist", and likely to be referred to the Equal Opportunity Board), I then received much enthusiastic interest from a range of students, teachers and professional musicians, many of whom wanted to take their first steps into playing jazz and have a chance to meet kindred jazz musicians.

Immediately before the workshop, enrolments rose suddenly from 30 to 85, which set a task for our limited resources of tutors and rhythm sections. Tutors Brian Brown, Tony Gould, Barry Veith and Darryl McKenzie worked with rather unique ensembles of 12-14 players, where oboes, violins and tubas joined the field.

A unique and moving introduction to the first day of the workshop was given by Glen Tomasetti, who introduced our guest speakers: several ladies from some of the 20 women's bands which worked in Melbourne before and during World War II. The music and anecdotes shared with us were small gems from an unrecorded era.

Judy Jacques, Laura Lizotte and Bob Sedergreen conducted high-spirited sessions with the largest

Julie McErlain, who is a schoolteacher, was the moving force behind the Women & Jazz Workshop, held in Melbourne in September, 1983.

groups of singers and pianists.

On the second day, participants chose between sessions of Song-writing (Glen Tomasetti), Arranging (Brian Brown), Piano (Bob Sedergreen), before returning for two more ensemble groups. Supplementary Saxophone and Ear Training sessions taken by Brian Brown added further special classes for the day.

Each workshop group performed

in the final concert session, with line honours going to a 30-verse battle of the blues singers, accompanied by a relay of pianists. Audience participation added to this unforgettable highlight of the weekend.

Since the workshop, many women have continued to jam together, and the unanimous suggestion for the future was the request for "more workshops, more often". The need is 'here'. □

"Few women in jazz have been instrumentalists. Most have sung. And the jazz vocalist is most accessible to the audience because they both speak the same language. Whether a woman sang well or not, she was generally regarded as property. She was what the customer paid for. And she was expected to sing, be sexy, and give an impression that she was 'available'. Who can wonder that so many jazz women have led confused and tragic lives?"

— Roger Kamien, *Music: An Appreciation* (1976)

II — By Andra Jackson*

In September, 1983, a group of women jazz musicians got together and organised Melbourne's first women and jazz workshop. The idea for the workshop came originally from the experience of some of the women in finding bands to play in, and other musicians just to have a jam with.

**Andra Jackson is a Melbourne saxophonist, and also a professional journalist.*

When they first floated the idea of the workshop they drew some hostile criticism from women who were established musicians whose attitudes seemed to be "if I did it, why can't other women?". There were also the (to be expected) arguments about separatism.

But sufficient women expressed an interest and affirmed the need for such a workshop and it went ahead. With some publicity but mainly word of mouth contact, applications started trickling in, with a big rush on the actual Saturday, from women hearing



At the final concert session: a 30-verse battle of the blues singers . . .



Brian Brown (with his back to the camera) rehearsing his ensemble . . .

about it at the last minute. The organisers were more than vindicated in their judgement and it seemed that had they got the word out more extensively, the attendance would have been even larger.

One of the interesting facets was the age range, which covered women in their late forties or fifties, through to young teenage schoolgirls.

There were a handful of working jazz musicians and singers who seemed to be drawn by the opportunity to play with other women but the overwhelming number of women seemed to have had little experience of jazz. They included music teachers and students with a classical background, and even a couple of women who had played in rock and cabaret bands.

Another interesting feature was the discovery — through pre-publicity and the research of photographer Don Whyte — of the number of all female bands that existed in the 20s and 30s. These women, now in their 60s and 70s, turned up at the opening sessions to testify that women had indeed more than held their own at one time on the music scene. Younger listeners found their experience heartening but again, while these women were undoubtedly highly competent, most played in popular dance bands and had not ventured into jazz.

As a participant in the workshop, I was initially sceptical about whether it could indeed break down the barrier that seemed to be stopping larger numbers of women becoming competent jazz players. But by the time I finished the weekend, I had a different perspective.

Having taken part in one of the American jazz workshops open to both sexes a few years ago, I couldn't help but compare the two experiences. The difference could be summed up in the one word — "intimidatory". That was how I found the earlier clinic, to the extent that I was prepared to walk out after the first session, but was persuaded to stay. It was an experience, but it was also a week-long ordeal.

From the first individual assessment session, to the master classes and combo sessions, the emphasis seemed to be on how much you didn't know and how much you still had to learn. Part of the problem may have been that the American jazz players who took these sessions were used to teaching musicians who were already competent. But another part of the problem was feeling pressurised to gloss over gaps in your knowledge and to be quick in absorbing anything new. The pressure came from the attempt to be 'cool' and when in doubt, 'fake it' — a pressure I suspect came from the presence of both sexes in the classes.

That was what was absent in the women's workshop. No assumptions were made about what levels the participants were at. Explanations began with the basics: how to play a blues scale, or how to read chord changes and everything was 'out front' from the start. If you missed a step you didn't feel as if you had to pretend you hadn't.

There were about 12 women in

the group I was in. When it came to attempting a solo, you didn't feel embarrassed if you muffed it, but if you came up with something interesting you could feel the others were in there with you. There was a kind of collective feeling that was markedly different to the combo session I attended at the mixed clinic. In that one, sure the combo had to be able to play as a group but the overriding emphasis was on your own part and how it shaped up against the others.

The group sessions were the predominant ones over the two days, but there were also specialist and general interest sessions such as how to improve your playing by ear, composition, and special sessions for your particular instrument, in my case, saxophone. These were tailored to fit in with the group sessions in the sense that what was covered could be applied straight away in them.

The highlight of the weekend was a concert in which everyone performed. There was a genuine curiosity in seeing what the other groups had come up with. Everyone had a contribution including what seemed like 30 singers who had the unenviable task of having to sing one after another. But the overall atmosphere was one of patience, respect for anyone prepared to have a go, and above all a sense of enjoyment about both performing and listening.

The majority of women indicated that they would attend another workshop if it were all women, and that they felt there was a need for such workshops. One of the interesting aspects is that while the workshop was all female, the teachers were male and female. Saxophonist Brian Brown, who took the group I was in, certainly did a lot of engender the non-competitive, supportive learning environment I described in his sessions. He showed that it was not the sex of the people taking the sessions that was important but their approach that counted.

I came away from the workshop feeling I had musically made connections that hadn't quite happened before, and with more of a sense of direction. The workshop has provided ongoing contacts for women who had previously been unable to find jam sessions they could fit into. It has produced a group which rehearses regularly and which played at a Women and Jazz reunion on April 8.

A Women & Jazz Workshop will be held in Sydney later this year. Anyone interested should ring Margaret Sullivan (02) 560-4449 for further information, or Eric Myers, NSW Jazz Co-ordinator (02) 27-1001.

GEORGE MASSO IN AUSTRALIA

By Peter J.F. Newton*

George Masso, one of the world's finest jazz trombonists, flew into Sydney, on 19 October 1983, in the eye of a storm; and in the next few days he blew hot, and sometimes cool, at a number of venues. Throughout his visit he combined grace, charm and quiet wit with an energy and enthusiasm that some of our more indolent jazz musicians could well emulate. I saw him in action several times and noted the polite but interested way in which he listened to other soloists; he was never blaseé, never disinterested.

Masso is not too well known in Australia. His records are not readily available here, other than those recorded with the World's Greatest Jazz Band, but his reputation, established in Europe and The States since he came out of the cloisters of Academe in the mid-Seventies, is well-documented. Some readers will have had a taste of his work when he came with the WGJB to Perth for the 34th Australian Jazz Convention in 1979.

In essence, George Masso is a product of three worlds. His formative years as a musician were as a bandsman during his military service, mostly in Germany, and as a sideman with Jimmy Dorsey during the late Forties. After acquiring a master's degree in music, he settled into a teaching job at the University of Connecticut. There he taught composition and concentrated on work as a composer for orchestra and voices. In addition to trombone he is a fine arranger, and plays excellent piano and vibraphone.

Since his return to his third world, jazz, Masso's work has been prodigious, whether in the recording studio, in clubs, on the European Festival trail, on cruises, or as a sideman in television orchestras. In a word, the man is 'busy'. His comeback was apparently inspired by the late Bobby Hackett, with whom he played (but sadly did not record) until joining the WGJB.

After leaving the WGJB he toured Europe frequently, and appeared several times in Britain, under the auspices of Pizza Express, in the company of Yank Lawson, Warren Vaché Jr., Scott Hamilton and singer



George Masso: never blase, never disinterested . . .

Helen Merrill and as part of a trombone summit with the late Kai Winding and England's Don Lusher. Closer to home, he was a sideman for the Benny Goodman 40th Anniversary at Carnegie Hall concert, and featured with boppers Al Cohn and Red Rodney in a festival organised by Progressive Records, and with a host of stars in a tribute to Hoagy Carmichael at the Newport Festival. The impression gained from festival billings and from his many recordings is of one man in several musical guises; indeed, one who does not readily acknowledge musical boundaries. It is to be hoped that eventually record companies will release some of the well-reviewed works from these festivals and tours.

Technically, his work is near flawless. Whether open or muted, he plays with great facility and accuracy. He has impeccable taste, a wealth of ideas and a total awareness of the dynamics of his instrument. Attack is counterpointed by lyricism. The whole is pervaded by the quiet humour that marks his persona.

Like his humourist friend Bobby Hackett, he seemingly speaks ill of no-one. In fact, his best jokes are about Hackett — gentle reminders of a gentle man. For example, there was Hackett selling his cornet with the remark that "every note over high C is brand new"; or saying, when asked what he thought of Adolf Hitler, that "he was the best in his field."

Before coming to Sydney, Masso was sent by the Western Australian Arts Council on a tour of deep north of that state — Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Wyndham and Kunumurra. Believe me, that's rough country up there, and not the place to grab a jazz club tan. When in Sydney, George spoke most appreciatively about the trip, but space is too short to expand on his comments. Suffice to say that despite the discomforts, he enjoyed working with the Lazy River Jazz Band. And he could recite places visited verbatim! Newspapers being what they are, I have nothing further to report on George's appearance in Perth or elsewhere in Western Australia.

The invitation to Sydney was to honour a long-standing commitment by Neil Steeper, former President of the Sydney Jazz Club. Neil had befriended George Masso many years ago while doing post-graduate studies in the USA. Negotiations for the Sydney trip were made with the Perth Jazz Society, the SJC organising a suitable accompanying group, the Bob Barnard Band.

So on a damp Sydney day, the band with directors of the SJC in tow welcomed George at Kingsford-Smith Airport. There was one note of absurdity to mar the occasion; the chief security officer objected to jazz in the arrival hall. "If we make concessions to you, the Sydney Philharmonic will want to do it too," he said. But, with the encouragement of a minion who was a former Port Jackson freak, sanity prevailed, and to the delight of Masso and many damp bystanders, the band rocked into *Oh Baby*.

After dinner and a cleanup, the SJC team took its guest off to his first impromptu set. There was a birthday party in full swing at the Carrington Hotel, Petersham. Peter Strohkorb led a quartet with Geoff Bull (trumpet), Hans Karssemeyer (piano) and Lyn Wallace (drums). Masso sat in for several sets, the most enjoyable being with Bull at his 'Red Allen' best. Another set with Steeper was lacklustre, the latter being unwell as a result of a viral infection.

Masso's main appearance for the Sydney Jazz Club was on 21 October in the Celebrity Room of the North Sydney Leagues Club, an excellent room affording good all-round views

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of the bandstand and ample dancing space (always essential for the more exuberant of Sydney's trad world). The room also has a good sound system. But if any jazzers are thinking of booking this room, be warned — the bar service (waiters only) is abominable!

The 300 or so audience — not all jazz buffs by any means — were treated to a well chosen array of tunes, some from the traditional book, some from the swing era and a number of the great evergreens. As John McCarthy later noted: "George Masso knows all the same songs that we know." To break the ice at a new venue, SJC President, John Clifford, tried out a potted interview with the guest — it did not work!

The opener, always a feature of the Barnard Band, was *Oh Baby*; a little shaky in the first few bars, the band soon found its pace, the presence of MacCarthy (clarinet) and Chris Taperell (piano) being firmly established by authoritative solo statements. A lyrical version of *You Took Advantage of Me* showed the swing face of Masso, with fine comping from Taperell and solo evidence of his debt to 'The Fatha'. Then *All of Me*, taken at a cracking pace, had a punching chorus or so from Masso and some well considered open work from Bob Barnard, who also contributed the unpretentious vocal. It has been said that Masso is reminiscent of Jack Teagarden; here, if anyone, I was reminded more of the work of Bill Harris (of the early Herman Herds).

By this time rapport had clearly been established. Understandably too, for the group had rehearsed on the previous day and George had sat in with them at the Rocks Push. Moreover, having performed with Neil Steeper and Dave Rankin at the White Swan, Chippendale, for openers before this concert, he had made sure that his chops were in the best of trim.

Masso then asked us, through a tasty piece of extended improvisation, whether we knew what it meant to miss *New Orleans*, reinforcing my frequently expressed opinion that there is still a lot of room to move within the traditional frame. Here, the tone was mellow (shading Dorsey at his best) and the spirit moving. One sour note, which prevailed throughout the evening, was the double amplification of Wally Wickham's bass, the sound being passed through his own amp and into the main system. This should have been checked out earlier.

As *Long as I Live* had the dancers

gliding over the floor with an elegance and togetherness that is becoming increasingly rare. The finale of the first set, *Fidgety Feet*, had the jivers out in force; ageing to be sure, but still full of zest. Here we heard excellent ensemble work over Len Barnard's temple blocks, the best improvisations coming from McCarthy, blowing in low register, and Masso ably demonstrating that speed, fluidity and accuracy are not incompatible. At an adjacent table, several Leagues Clubbers, not normally of our scene, were quite vocally appreciative.

The second set opened with *Beale Street Blues*, with Bob Barnard producing one of his more inspired solos, highlighted by strings of strangled blue notes. Wickham, giving ample reason for preferring acoustic to electric bass in this type of music, gave a satisfying, solid and straight-ahead bridge to a coda of exciting riffs by the full band.

Masso's sense of humour is rarely far from the surface (dig the title of one of his albums in the following discography); it bubbled over in a rumbustious version of *Stumbling* as a cheeky quote from that inane Debbie Reynolds song *Abba Dabba Honeymoon*. *Out of Nowhere*, George's second long extemporisation, had the oldies looking wistfully back into all the Mecca ballrooms of their youth. One elderly and lovely lady propositioned me for a dance, saying that she had not had so much fun in years, then giggled coyly as my wife returned to the table; I

declined sadly having neither the style nor the grace to recapture such fading memories.

This relatively short set ended up-tempo with *Struttin' With Some Barbeque*, a well-received crowd-pleaser, packing the floor with gyrating and genuflecting bodies. The frontline really grooved on *Struttin'*, fast deliveries, much enhanced by some jaw-breaking triple-tonguing from the horns, and never lacking taste or technical adroitness right up to the raunchy rideout over a quote from Charlie Shavers' *Undecided*.

The last and longest set, extending the concert well beyond the 11 pm schedule, was the highpoint. The musicians had had sufficient time for a taste or two and were well relaxed; the audience, for the most part, was rapt. Those who left early missed much of musical value. A fairly routine version of *Them There Eyes* had all the horns working in the upper register; and tribute must here be made to the hard work put in by the rhythm section — Taperell, Wickham and Len Barnard — never stodgy, always swinging.

Basin Street Blues, surely one of the most overworked tunes in the band book, was revitalised; in fact, it produced one of those rare moments in jazz when everything falls into place, for performers and audience alike. The dancers stopped and sang the verses and Masso responded with a solo so full of wit and imagination that he got a standing ovation. As my non-jazz loving neighbour



George Masso (trombone) jamming at the East Sydney Hotel, with (from left), Don Graves (flugel), Mike Walsh (bass) and Alan English (alto).

said: "Ace"!

The catalogue unfolds. Extraordinary laidback singing by McCarthy over some rolling piano marked *Old Fashioned Love in My Heart*. *Tin Roof Blues*, another Masso showcase, again brought the house down and us to our feet. My notes recorded little to remark on in the next numbers, *Once in A While* and *Ain't Misbehavin'*; this may have been due to 'natural causes', but in the latter piece I recall some fine work by McCarthy on the fish-horn.

We all have songs and performances that are milestones in our progress through jazz. Mine is *Body and Soul*, never better handled than by the late Coleman Hawkins. It was now nearing the pumpkin hour, and with Masso's sensitive reading of this loveliest of tunes, the bewitching hour. On this evidence alone, he must stand among the world's great ballad players, not in emulation of Dorsey, Teagarden, Dickie Wells or what have you, but in his own right.

And so to closers. The penultimate tune was *That Ja Da Strain* which had them all on the floor, the nodders, the beserkers and the boppers, suggesting collectively that the tune might better be renamed *That Ja Da Hernia*. Then what more appropriate as an encore for this mainly fyggish audience than *The Original Dixieland One Step*.

My only regret at this concert — the omission of that fine trombonist, John Costelloe, who normally features with Barnard. I say this not out of some sense of local pride but rather out of a desire to see him pit his skills against Masso. There is a precedent for this in Masso's appearances with the WGJB, in which he was matched against Carl Fontana or Sonny Russo, both stylistically different from Masso and fine players to boot. But essentially they were in the band with the two trumpets to give it a big brass sound so extended solos were rare; mostly the trombonists played split choruses, at most about 16 bars each, which left little room for innovation. From the evidence provided at this concert, and from the small group work favoured by Masso since leaving the WGJB, we know of his prowess as a soloist. However, a set of trombone chases would have added to the excitement of the evening and also presented a stimulating challenge both to Costelloe and to Masso.

Masso's energy seemed to be boundless. On the morning following the concert, he sat in with The Raucous Arousal Brass Band at The Frisco, apparently absorbing all the

rough and readiness that the gig entailed. In the afternoon he flew to Brisbane to work three appearances at Sweet Patootie with Mileham Hayes' Dr Jazz. As with the Western Australian tour, I have been able to get little feedback on his reception in Queensland; and newspaper coverage of such events is about as gloomy in the Sunshine State as it is in Sydney. So three gigs, one a gala charity evening to aid the Sunshine Association (which helps youngsters with terminal diseases), and back to Sydney. George then recorded an interview with Eric Child, relayed over ABC-2BL a few weeks later. Being out of town, I missed the broadcast (so if anyone has a tape they could loan me . . .)

Of the impromptu gigs, I particularly enjoyed several sets played at the East Sydney Hotel on the following Tuesday. This date was notable not only for the different types of performance produced but also for the unexpected number of musicians in the audience. The basic group was the Tim Browne Trio, augmented by Dave Rankin (playing licks in the manner of early boppers Earle Swope or Bennie Green), Don Graves on flugel, and Alan English (alto sax). Ross Collins later appeared on piano, several drummers sat in and Mal Reece played a worthy set on electric bass. The high spot was a trombone choir of Masso, Rankin, John Bates and Dick Bradstock with his 'superbone' (slide cum valve). Some night indeed!

Like all visitors, Masso needed some time to relax. By Tuesday he was quite exhausted. He had been staying at the home of his old friend Steeper, which meant long trips into the night with food, drink, memories and records. Local musicians were very hospitable; members of the Barnard Band took him on a tour of Sydney; some of the RABB hiked off with him to Manly Beach, introducing him to the succulent delights of a take-away "fisherman's basket" from that place on the Corso; with Steeper he put in a non-blowing appearance at the Marble Bar, and was most enthusiastic about the playing of Ms Judy Bailey. Before leaving, George was loud in his praise of these and other friends he had made.

I spent most of his last day in Sydney with him. His tastes extend well beyond jazz. As he was particularly interested in local composers outside jazz who were influenced by the Australian environment I took him along to The Australia Music Centre where he not only met our loveable editor but also was well

looked after by the Centre staff, who were able to trace some non-commercial recordings of the types he required. He was as I recall quite taken with the work of Barry Conyngham — but he also had time to listen to work by Dave Dallwitz and Bruce Cale, and was most appreciative of the John Sangster double album *Jazz in Australia*. In fact, we did a last-minute chase to get a copy for him to take home.

In retrospect this visit by Masso has taught me much. Despite the attacks made on the allegedly insular and conservative nature of the present-day Australian trad scene, it is still possible to present relatively unknown outsiders in an essentially Dixieland setting. I say 'essentially' with purpose, for with the decline in available pub venues and the high costs of concert halls, hard-nosed traditionalists will have to make some concessions to post-revivalist music if they are to hear any live jazz at all. The Masso/Barnard aggregate proved that within this frame it is possible to entertain without sacrificing those quintessential ingredients of all jazz — musical integrity and artistic creativity. The alternative is the death of older jazz forms in the 'hills and dales' of a fading past.

George Masso was delighted with his reception in Australia. In a recent letter he intimated that he would like to return. There are several options; either someone with entrepreneurial skills negotiates with, say, Famous Door or Concord Jazz Records to bring him out with a small group of young giants like Vaché, Hamilton and Zottola, or the Convention Organisers place him high on their list for invitation, maybe to the '88 Convention. I asked George why he left academic security for the uncertainties of the jazz life; modestly he said that he was just happy to have earned the opportunity to play with the heroes of his youth. In just a few days I realised that their's was an influence that has paid handsome dividends to the mainstream of jazz and, quite properly, this is being passed on by George Masso to a new generation of musicians bent on staying within that flow.

References: In general, I have made frequent reference to notes in *Jazz Journal*, *Radio Free Jazz/Jazz Times* and *Down Beat* for the period 1974-1983. In particular, I acknowledge several articles by Lee Jeske, Stanley Dance and Peter Vacher, all of *Jazz Journal*. Other useful sources were *The Perth Jazz Convention Program*, *Country Copy* (W.A. Arts Council) Oct. 1983, Neville Meyers, 'Jazz Giant Comes to Brisbane', *Courier-Mail* (21 Oct. 1983) p.2, and Chuck Slate III, 'George Masso — Echoes of Lou and Jack', *Jersey Jazz Mag*.

BRUCE CALE: More Than Just a Jazz Musician

By Adrian Jackson*

I have always disliked the term Serious Music, at least when it is used as a synonym for European Classical Music; but the best way I could think of to describe Bruce Cale is to say that he is a Serious Musician. By which I mean that he is a man who has devoted his life to his music, constantly seeking to grow as a musician, and in the process becoming one of the most rewarding and important musicians in Australia today.

He is certainly one of our foremost jazz artists. His career stretches back to involvement with some of the most important jazz played here in the 1960s, and includes extensive experience overseas with a host of first-class jazz players. Since returning to Australia in 1977, Cale has shown, both on record and in live performances with a succession of bands, that he has a great deal to offer as a bassist, as a bandleader, and as a composer.

Cale the bassist is a formidable technician who knows how to pilot a rhythm section, and how to contribute positively — both assertively and unselfishly — to an improvised performance. As a bandleader, he has shown a talent for assembling strong lineups and bringing out the best in the players. And this probably comes back to his talent as a composer. Cale writes virtually everything his bands play, and his themes are invariably more than just another excuse for the soloist to play whatever he might be able to think of next.

He has had commendable success in his efforts to resolve the old dilemma of how to strike a balance between composition and improvisation. His compositions always seem to offer the players challenges that force them to play with a lot of thought; to some extent, the composition determines the course that the solo will take, without actually smothering the soloist. Cale's music is distinctively Cale's: the melodies are both unusual and attractive, the moods of the pieces carefully shaded; and while his music is certainly not devoid of feeling, including even a little subtle humour, it is best described as thoughtful. Or serious.

In a recent interview with Bruce Cale, he outlined his career as a jazz performer, as a jazz composer, and as a composer for classical ensembles.



JANE MARCH

Bruce Cale (on bass, left) at The Basement with his nine-piece orchestra in January, 1984. Also pictured are Kevin Hunt (keyboards) and Sandy Evans (tenor saxophone).

BC: I got started as a double bass player in Sydney around 1958. I was mainly doing club work with people like Graeme Lyall. I got involved in the El Rocco scene, which led to me giving up the commercial scene to concentrate on jazz around '61. I was playing with people like Bob Bertles, Keith Stirling, Dave Levy and Mike Nock. We were all playing bebop very much after the style of Cannonball, what was happening at the time via records — we never heard anyone live out here.

Bob Gillette was talking about free music, albeit chordal. Then Ornette Coleman became an influence, although, I was still listening a lot to Miles and Coltrane. Then around '63, I started playing with Bryce Rohde. As I got into Bryce's music, that led me to George Russell. Bryce has been a great influence on me; I think he's a wonderful musician and

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the epitome of the improvising pianist. And George Russell has been the biggest influence on me.

His melodies attracted me a great deal. Whereas Ornette's music was intuitive, Russell's was very intellectual and that fascinated me in the same way that avant-garde, geometric painting did. Another band I got a lot from at that time was Miles's quintet with Wayne Shorter, which had a great looseness in its improvisations; Ron Carter and Herbie Hancock, to me, seemed to have as free an approach to harmony as Charlie Haden did with Ornette.

The main thing I learned from working with Bryce was he showed me how you could get both structure and freedom via the modal approach. I'm very pleased that Horst Liepolt was able to get those records reissued *The Bryce Rohde Story Vols. 1 & 2* on 44, [the latter featuring Cale, along with Charlie Munro] so people could hear what his music was all about.

I went to England in 1965 with Syd Powell, and played with a lot of

very good players like Joe Harriott, Tubby Hayes, Ian Carr and Don Rendell; I got involved with John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, which included Kenny Wheeler, Trevor Watts and Paul Rutherford. I got a bit sidetracked by freeform music, which was heavily influenced by what Trane did on *Ascension*.

I applied for a *Down Beat* scholarship and got a grant to study at Berklee, which I did for a year and a half. I worked around Boston with people like Junior Cook, Ernie Watts, Jack Walrath and Pat and Joel La Barbera. I got gigs playing out of town with people like Zoot Sims and Toshiko Akiyoshi, and when I moved to San Francisco Mike Nock helped me get a job with John Handy's band, which also included Michael White on violin. That was an especially valuable experience for me, it really helped my growth and confidence as a player. That brought me to the end of the free period. I'd got that out of my system, I decided I could get more out of working with structures and good melodies.

I came back to Sydney in 1969 for six months. In that time, I recorded on Charlie Munro's *Count Down* LP, with Graeme Lyall, I had my own band with Charlie, Dave McRae, Bernie McGann and Mark Bowden for Charlie's jazz show on ABC Radio — *Now Jazz*. I also did some gigs with Serge Ermoll at the El Rocco.

When I returned to LA, I was involved with a group called *Contra-band*, which was an early part of the jazz/rock movement. Our LP came out around the same time as *Weather Report's* first LP, and actually outsold it, but we were dropped by the label. Then I played with Ernie Watts, in a band called *Encounter*, and with John Klemmer. Also, I was part of the first rhythm section Phil Woods put together when he returned to the States from Europe. That was a big thrill for me.

But after seven years in LA I felt like I wasn't getting anywhere with my music. I was getting disillusioned, but it was in that period that I began to realise my potential as a composer. A friend who was in the Los Angeles Philharmonic asked me to write a piece of music for him. Several other members of that orchestra then asked me to write pieces for them. That response encouraged me greatly, and made me realise I had it in me to write for classical musicians; and also that there was a lot more that I could do as a composer for my own band.

I moved to San Francisco and was

reunited with Bryce; we recorded an album that I don't suppose many people have seen here, *Turn Right At New South Wales*. But I felt the need to return to Australia, to come back home, and I did that in 1977.

Since then, I've led a succession of bands, and done a lot of composing. The first was the quartet with Paul McNamara, Bob Bertles and Alan Turnbull that recorded the *At The Opera House* LP. That's an LP I'm happy with, both the pieces and the playing. Bob's a fine player, I think Paul achieves a feeling that reminds me of Bryce and Alan has that listening feel that so few drummers here have. Charlie Munro did some concerts with us, which was great: I believe so much in him as an all-round creative musician. I wish he were out playing more often.

Another band had Dale Barlow, John Conley playing electric guitar, and Andrew Gander. Probably the most successful band I've led was with Dale, Roger Frampton and Phil Treloar then Alan Turnbull. It had the highest energy level and was the best improvising band I've had.

That was a few years ago now. There was a period when I wasn't doing a lot of playing, but over the last year or so, I've been reasonably busy. I've put together a nine-piece band, and we've had a fair amount of work. The lineup offers me a lot of scope as a writer, and there are some very good players in the band. The band can really cook and be very

exciting. I have a second bass player there, and concentrate on conducting, to keep the whole thing tight. I realise nine pieces isn't a strong proposition economically, but we have had warm reactions from audiences. We've done most of our gigs at Jenny's, but we also had a chance at The Basement in January. I hope I'll be able to bring the orchestra to Melbourne some time this year too.

I was at Jenny's in February with a quintet, with Tony Buck and Kevin Hunt in the rhythm section, Sandra Evans on tenor, and a different player from the orchestra each week to make up the quintet. That was a chance to play in a different context.

I enjoy playing in a variety of situations. I don't rely on a set personnel any more, I feel the music can stand up on its own with anyone playing it. In fact, a different personnel can offer a different approach to the music. Which is just as well, because it's very hard to keep a band together anyway these days.

Of course, the other side of music I've been concentrating on is composing classical music. I have already enjoyed some success as a composer of classical music. We are so lucky here to have the ABC doing so much to enable contemporary Australian classical composers to get their work recorded, which is so important. There are a lot of fantastic composers in America whose work simply never gets recorded.



A historic shot, taken in 1960. From left, Bob Bertles, Keith Stirling, Len Young, Bruce Cale, Dave Levy. This quintet played regularly at the El Rocco circa 1960-62.

I've had *Land Of The Aborigine* and *Concertino For Double Bass And Orchestra* recorded by the Melbourne Symphony for the ABC. And I recently got the good news that Patrick Thomas approved *Violin Concerto* (Opus 43) that I'm writing for Leonard Dommett to be recorded by the ABC next year, again for the New Music Workshop.

Another recent breakthrough for me came when Peter Walmsley chose a piece of mine for the Willoughby Brass Band to play to represent Australian music on their tour of New Zealand. There hasn't been much written for brass band by Australian composers, so that's a major step for me, to get acceptance at that level, that could open up a lot of possibilities for me.

Another important activity for me has been work as Composer-In-Residence at the Bondi Pavilion. I've written a lot of music for chamber groups. Also, I'm heavily involved in working with children, improving their general understanding of music. That's a really exciting program as far as I'm concerned.

AJ: Do you have any difficulties reconciling your activities as a jazz musician, and as a classical musician?

BC: No, I've got to the point where the way I write is the same whether it's for jazz ensemble or classical orchestra, chamber group or brass band. I'm concerned with writing a piece of music for its own sake. I see it as a melodic statement with a vertical form which is going somewhere. The difference is, with classical composition, I fully notate the music. It's like listening to a group improvise in your mind, and writing it all down, so the performance develops exactly the way you want it to. It's very demanding, but very rewarding. Performing with a jazz ensemble, the music goes wherever it wants to within the structure of the tune, as the group hears it. I like my pieces to have an overall shape, but it does rely on the art of the improviser, so in that sense it does lean on the jazz tradition. I use the Lydian concept from the point of view of weighing up colours and textures. I attended a ten-day seminar by George Russell in 1981, and that was a great learning experience for me.

The last album I did, *A Century Of Steps*, was the beginning of what I would like to do on my albums in future — I'm ready to do one with the orchestra this year — where the music crosses over into the classical idiom as well. I would like to offer the listener a wider range of my music.

In any case, I think the borders between different kinds of music are becoming less defined, less obvious. You can see that with Europeans who are playing jazz, and incorporating a lot of classical elements into that. I think at least part of jazz is heading towards a natural combination of jazz and classical elements, rather than a novelty third stream. If the different elements are naturally gravitating towards each other, that's a very healthy sign as far as I can see. I'm writing more pieces with lyrics for voice. Towards 1988 or so, I'm thinking of writing an opera with a distinct jazz element in it.

One point I would like to make: I am still very much a jazz musician. I don't have any hangups about being identified as a jazz musician; I'm proud to be associated with a great tradition. I still devote most of my time to jazz. It's just that more recently I've found the time and the opportunities to move into other areas as well, which are fulfilling in themselves, and can provide me inspiration for my jazz activities as well. What I would like to see is, if we can begin to break down the barriers between jazz and classical music, perhaps we can expand the audience for both types of musicians.

How healthy do you think the jazz scene is in Sydney?

I generally put my head down and tail up, and don't take too much notice of the mainstream, but I don't think there's as much happening as there should be. It's very hard for creative musicians, but then again, the scene for jazz is never totally healthy anywhere, in LA, London or

wherever. If you're dedicated to the music, you've just got to realise you won't get any money out of playing, you've just got to do it. I guess if you compare it to how it was twenty years ago, it's grown, but proportionally the audience is still quite small. I just go ahead and work when I can, and if there are people there to enjoy it, that's great. But it's a bonus.

One thing that keeps nagging me is the stuff I hear a lot of people playing. They're racing around their instruments, and they're not saying a damn thing. I think this is the great danger with so-called jazz education, that people are going to go through a course which maybe should be called a musicianship course, and come out thinking they can play jazz when they know very little about it.

You learn to play jazz from your own experience, you have to pay a lot of dues before you can play jazz. Learning the theory isn't what it's all about. The really great players never went to any schools, they came up through simply getting out there and playing.

I don't think Berklee has produced as many jazz players as they think. I did get something out of going there, but only because I already had so much playing experience behind me, I was at the stage where I could use the theory.

So what I'm concerned about is that we don't lose sight of the fact that jazz is not an academic music. Someone expressing something melodic something that comes from the heart, is worth so much more than just playing a thousand notes per hour. □

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PETER BOOTHMAN: Growth & Balance

By Bruce Johnson*

Feature articles dealing with musicians frequently ooze a rather oily complacency, as though the subject has now completed the growth process, answered all the questions (... got his shit together ... found out where his head is at ...). The finished, self-congratulatory tone of such interviews causes one to squirm. It is a relief to find that such a style is not always appropriate. As in the present instance, the picture is not finished; the account remains ambiguous and open-ended, it finishes with "... er ...".

Peter Ralph Boothman (b. Sydney 2/9/43) is a guitarist of extraordinary intensity. Although as a young child he mucked about with shoe-boxes strung with rubber bands, he didn't take up the guitar until his early 20s, when he was working in a bank. He began by teaching himself and going through the usual field apprenticeship of weddings, learning to adapt, lugging, reading over the pianist's shoulder, building a repertoire. Jack Richards of Guitar City (a business which Peter later bought) was "the first teacher ... who actually took interest and took me along a proper musical path". Subsequent instruction came from George Golla and some classical training from Antonio Losada. Don Andrews, with whom Boothman was later to perform, also gave lessons. At the same time he drew inspiration from a number of guitarists he heard on record. Barney Kessel, Joe Pass, Wes Montgomery, Tal Farlow, provided models of harmonic direction, "ways of getting through chords". From players like Larry Coryell and John McLaughlin he learned much about energy, and right hand attack. McLaughlin also exercised influence as a composer.

In the meantime Boothman was building his own reputation with his own bands and with performers like Jeannie Lewis, as well as observing the way in which the industry worked. Many musicians never get to the stage of reflecting upon the

larger context in which they perform; some of Peter Boothman's most important insights, however, concerned themselves not only with music in itself but with the point of contact between the performer and his society. The scene in which he was worked was relatively fashionable and visible.

I was more or less attached to the young ... inner city culture like the Punk thing is today ... So it was big. People would say, 'That's the hot stuff, that's it.' And I'd say, 'Well listen, have you ever heard of Bernie McGann? Have you ever heard of Tony Esterman? Have you ever heard of Dave Levy?' I'd name all these names. They'd say, 'Oh, no. Who's that?' ... They were my musical heroes. They were the guys, the really great musicians of this town.

Audiences establish categories which are scarcely related to the facts of the musical scene. Persuaded by packaging, rumour, by what happens to be visible, they form views about the overall shape of things, defining a generally fallacious

pecking order among musicians. But they also try to impose misleading categories of style as well of competence, attempting to lock a musician into a particular idiom and becoming bewildered or resentful if he doesn't quite conform. "The first turning point was the realisation of the fact that when you're playing creative music the people really want to slot you into one area and say ... 'You are that. You are that.'"

There are several responses which a musician can make in the face of this situation. He can allow himself to fall into the categories created for him, becoming repetitive and, ultimately, a caricature. Or he can react violently against the pigeon-holing. While this is potentially more fertile, it often leaves his work vitiated by anger, by a distorting resentment. Or he can invoke a balanced multiplicity of perspectives. This involves recognising the fact that categorisation goes on, but not allowing one's



JANE MARFCH

Peter Boothman: "People are just a bit scared of anything new..."

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musical instincts to be diverted either way by that recognition. One half of the self acknowledges a situation, the other half remains indifferent to it: "I didn't let that stop me from playing the way I felt." It is perhaps the most authentic response, maintaining truth to self. It implies and reinforces a certain kind of personality, one which emerges in Boothman's conversation as well as in his playing. Above all, in transcending a fixation upon categories, a musician is free to grow. Flux, movement, development, are key notions in Peter Boothman's attitude to his music, every aspect of his discussion centred on them:

People are just a bit scared of anything new . . . 'Here's something new. It's a threat.' It's always been around. Misoneism. Fear of novelty . . . It's only lack of knowledge. If it's something new they have to make a decision then for themselves and say, 'Look, what's that mean?' . . . When you apply it to music, basically your ordinary general person isn't very well musically trained as far as listening is concerned. So they just hear the thing and it just comes to them as one colour . . . But once you train yourself to hear, you look at it, and it's not just one colour, it's a whole lot of different shades. . . . They say, 'I don't know what it is. It's sort of red. No. No! I like blue!' But if they looked at that red, and really looked into it, they'd probably find there's some purple, and even some blue in there. Some green even. And if they looked right into it and followed along, they'd probably find that it was OK after all.

It's an endless thing, and I'm still learning. I don't really get off much on playing the same music all the time.

I just take it when it comes. As long as the growth is still there. . . . When I stop growing I think that's going to be the end.

At one period of his career the principle of growth, of extension, threatened to run out of control. In the early seventies he was working with a number of bands, running Guitar City, touring with various big shows like that of Kamahl, teaching at the Conservatorium. "I couldn't say no." He suffered a collapse, and withdrew completely, giving up playing and selling his business. It was the beginning of a radical re-evaluation. He secluded himself on Scotland Island for a year, returned briefly to Sydney, then went to the States. He assumed a completely different life style, mobile, detached, travelling with members of the hippie counterculture. He emerged from this experience with a new conception of possibilities: not only of what could be done, but of what did not need to be done. It expressed itself as a sense of freedom, not the amorphous freedom of fashionable slogans of liberation, but the freedom that arises from a conception of balance.

It acted as a counter to the principle of growth. It seems as though a second Peter Boothman evolved to monitor the other. You sometimes feel that you are talking of two people. One is answering your questions politely and seriously, the other is watching him do it, smiling tolerantly but getting ready to deflate or correct what it is hearing. Talking to him is like dealing with a balanced collective improvisation between two or perhaps more different voices. Asked about his style, he begins to speak, then looks puzzled. He asks for the tape to be turned off. "This is a hard one. I'll have to think for a while." He talks about the term "modern" briefly, but concludes that it's a misleading term often used to describe something the listener can't relate to. He goes on to the idea of improvisation, and again you hear the two sides of his musical personality: one which accepts the way some people describe his work, the other smiling with a mild bewilderment, seeing the matter quite otherwise, but with a sense of humour that's directed as much at his own bewilderment as anything else. He is interested in

. . . improvisation over reasonably complex forms. I get off on playing something that's got quite a few chord changes, . . . or even if it's only got one or two harmonic areas, laying over other scales. . . . Some people say that's an intellectual approach. Maybe it is. I just like the colours. I like the Barrier Reef — coral, all those coloured fish — and rain forests, for the same reason. I like the complexity of colour, but all in form.

The analogy is revealing, reminding the listener again of the importance of organic, spontaneous growth in Boothman's music, the interaction of diverse forces to produce something new. The unexpected extension of perspective, the interruption of what is there by something else that was also there, colours his whole experience of music:

If I'm going out to do a gig, no matter what gig it is, or if I'm just sitting at home, if I just pick up the guitar, the first thing I think is that I want it to sound good, I want it to be musical, I want it all to be working nicely. But I want there to be that little buzz on the top, where it can go anywhere . . . It's being as well musically stocked as possible, and then, with that, letting intuition take over on top of that — intuition, creativity, and that ends up with the unpredictable, because you don't know what it's going to be.

One side of his personality seeks expansion, the other recognises that the matter cannot always be forced or predicted, that in making music the player is also an instrument, being worked upon as well as working. He quotes from lutenist John

Dowland: "Only pick up thy instrument when thy genius favours thee. Do not provoke by immoderate labour."

That is balance, and it has become as essential to his music as growth. Be ready, but don't force it. It consists of a serene alertness. Where once he felt compelled to make the ringing personal statement, no matter what, now his music is the outcome of a balance between what he has to say and the circumstances which become the medium. Creativity and growth are not the brutal imposition of the will, but are manifested through a balance between inner and outer. It is spontaneous. As a composer:

I'm sitting around playing and suddenly I play something and I think, Gee, what's that? I'll just write that idea down in a book . . . So now I've got a book full of little ideas . . . and every now and again I'll go to that book and pick one of the ideas and write a tune around it.

The range of bands he is currently working with indicates the same generous receptivity. From experimental to hard bop to traditionalist and New Orleans musicians, there exist opportunities to extend himself. Recently he has been playing with the bands of people like Roger Frampton, Joe Lane, Paul Furniss and Dave Ridyard. One great attraction in the earlier styles is the element of collective improvisation, as well as "finding a lot of these incredible tunes that I never knew existed". He feels himself growing also into a solo artist. Again, he doesn't force the issue but, as he puts it, hears it developing while he's practising, incorporating classical techniques as well as the total jazz tradition. Growth and balance, and an open-ended, interrogative future full of possibilities that he accepts as they come:

I have no clear plan at the moment. It's . . . er . . . going along. We'll just see what tasty little morsel comes up next. If it stays the same as it is . . . um . . . that's fine too. But I am still actually practising, I am still actually growing.

The quotations were taken from an interview conducted by the writer with Peter Boothman on 21/12/83. In conjunction with this article, 2MBS-FM in Sydney broadcast a program of Boothman playing solo guitar on March 19 at 7 p.m. The program will be repeated in Sydney June 16 at 2 p.m. It will feature him on steel and nylon strung acoustic as well as electric instruments, and will also present for the first time a number of his recent compositions. The program has been specially recorded by 2MBS-FM.

CLARKE, VITOUS & CORYELL TOURING AUSTRALIA IN JUNE

In June the bassists Stanley Clarke and Miroslav Vitous, plus the guitarist Larry Coryell will visit Australia for a short series of concerts. They will perform at the Sydney Town Hall (June 5); Melbourne's Concert Hall (June 9); Perth Concert Hall (June 11); and Adelaide Festival Theatre (June 12).

All three musicians have played major roles in the jazz/rock fusion movement of recent years through their involvement with some of the most important and successful contemporary jazz groups — Clarke with Return to Forever, Vitous with Weather Report, and Coryell with The Eleventh House.



Larry Coryell



Stanley Clarke



Miroslav Vitous

This will be the first time that Stanley Clarke and Miroslav Vitous have toured together. They will perform duets and solo pieces on both acoustic and electric instruments, showcasing a combination of classical, jazz and rock influences. Larry Coryell will play both electric and acoustic guitars.

Throughout their careers Clarke, Vitous and Coryell have shared a willingness to experiment, to break new musical ground and to stretch their talents to the limit. They are certainly among the most acclaimed contemporary musicians in the world today, and between them have won innumerable jazz awards in the US, Japan and Europe.

Since his years with Chick Corea and Return To Forever, Stanley Clarke has transcended the traditional role of the bassist in contemporary music. He has produced records for the guitarist Roy Buchanan, Dee Dee Bridgewater and the funk group Lips. In 1979 he joined forces with the Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood and Keith Richards to tour as the New Barbarians. Since then, he has had a successful partnership with George Duke and recorded with Paul McCartney on McCartney's last two LPs.

Miroslav Vitous last visited Australia in January 1982, when he and his quartet played free improvisation at the Sydney Jazz Festival. He has taught at the New England Conservatory of Music since 1979 and, in 1983, became Chairman of the Jazz Department there. In recent times, he has been active as a composer of chamber music, and in the 1984-5 Musica Viva season in Boston, plans to present a specially written composition for solo bass and chamber orchestra.

Larry Coryell was one of the pioneers of jazz/rock fusion; his blistering, dazzling pyrotechnics helped pave the way for the music of the 1970s. In 1974 he formed The Eleventh House, one of the most popular and musically exciting bands of the 1970s.

Since 1977, Larry Coryell has devoted himself to the acoustic guitar, producing some of the most beautiful and original music of his career. He has recorded with a number of other acoustic guitarists including Philip Catherine, Steve Kahn, John Scofield and Joe Beck. He has now emerged as a leading exponent of, and composer for, the acoustic guitar. □

DALE BARLOW

continued from page 13

Hague and Zwolle Jazz Festivals. We even performed at the Zandvoort Grand Prix where we had to dismantle our portable stage on the actual race track only four metres from speeding stunt cars. The tour was extremely rewarding musically as well as being the most enjoyable way for me to see the country.

After the conclusion of this tour, I was offered the opportunity of staying in Holland and playing with local bands, but decided, instead, to visit England to check out the jazz scene there for myself. I found the interest in jazz not to be as great in the UK as it is on the continent or in the USA, but there are some very talented and dedicated musicians here.

Within two weeks of my arrival in London, I was working with some very good bands and have done a pop recording session for EMI with musicians from the group Fun Boy 3, formerly the Specials.

I feel there are better places to be for an aspiring young Aussie jazz player (who has suffered so much cold weather) than in London and I will probably be back in Australia before much longer. I also believe that there is as much talent in Australia as anywhere else I have been, that the scene is not as tight as elsewhere, and that there are more opportunities to try new ideas once you know exactly what you want to do, even though jazz artists are not recognised or appreciated in Australia as they would be in a similar situation in the US or the Continent, where jazz is a more recognisable art form and treated accordingly.

The lasting impression that I have gained from my travels is the genuine warmth and friendship that exists with the fraternity of jazz musicians throughout the world, especially when I was touring on my own. Other musicians I had only just met would house and feed me and introduce me to other musicians and it was a delight to find an instant respect from others involved in this art form of ours which seems to transcend all national boundaries and languages.

Best regards to my musician friends back home,

Yours faithfully,
Dale Barlow.

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ARTIE SHAW IN AUSTRALIA — 1943

By Mike Sutcliffe*

At the age of 73, the American clarinetist Artie Shaw is out of retirement, and back on the road leading a big band — and packing them in, according to a recent article in *The Australian* newspaper. In this article, MIKE SUTCLIFFE looks at the visit to Australia in 1943 of Shaw's Navy Band, which had such an impact on local jazz musicians.

Australian musicians and record collectors, eager to hear an American swing band live, had to wait until the Artie Shaw Navy Band came to Australia in September, 1943. This was at the end of an extensive tour that had taken the band through the South West Pacific Area war zone, and then on to New Zealand before coming to Australia.

Known officially as US Navy Band 501, and led by Chief Petty Officer Artie Shaw, the members of the band were physically and mentally worn out by the time they arrived in this country, and as well, their instruments were badly in need of repair after prolonged use through the humid tropics. However, the concerts they gave in Australia were a great success. Although the music was intended only for Allied and US servicemen and women, others were able to gain entry to hear the band play. In *Black Roots, White Flowers*, Andrew Bisset mentions some of the ploys affected by various people to gain

admittance: Duke Farrell dating an American servicewoman for example, and Wally Norman cutting a padlock on the back door of the Trocadero.

The band played in Brisbane (September 3 - 15), Melbourne (September 15 - 22), Townsville (September 23 - 26), Cairns (September 26 - 28), Rockhampton (September 28 - 30), and Sydney (September 30 - October 7) before playing again in Brisbane (October 7 - 26). In Sydney, they played at various hospitals for wounded ex-servicemen and women, and did three dances: at the David Jones Auditorium for Allied Officers; and two at The Trocadero (one for Australian service personnel, and one for US service personnel).

After Brisbane, the band left for San Francisco and arrived there on November 11, 1943. Shaw and several other musicians were discharged for medical reasons, and the band continued under the leadership of Sam Donahue.

The members of the band were drawn from several leading American bands, although not all were jazz players. The personnel of the band in full was as follows, with the age and former experience of each musician given in brackets.

On lead trumpet was Conrad Gozzo (21, Benny Goodman). The other trumpets were Frank Beach (21, Stan Kenton), John Best (29, Glenn Miller) and Max

*Mike Sutcliffe is a Sydney builder who has been researching jazz and recording in Australia for over 30 years.



The Artie Shaw Navy Band at The Trocadero, Sydney, in 1943. Shaw is out the front on clarinet. Back row from left, Rocky Coluccio (piano), Barney Spieler (bass), Al Horesh (guitar), Dave Tough (drums), then Frank Beach, Conrad Gozzo, John Best & Max Kaminsky (trumpets). Middle row from left, Harold Wax (accordion), then Dick Le Fave, Tasso Harris & Tak Takvortan (trombones). Saxophones from left, Sam Donahue, Ralph La Pollo, Mack Pierce (obscured, behind Shaw), John Aglora and Charlie Wade.

Kaminsky (35, Eddie Condon groups). Best was the principal soloist.

The trombones were Tasso Harris (25, Claude Thornhill), Tak Takvorian (22, Sam Donahue) and Dick Le Fave (29, Benny Goodman). Takvorian was the main soloist.

On saxophones were Sam Donahue (25, deputy leader, who had his own band in the US), Mack Pierce (22, lead alto, Artie Shaw), Ralph La Pollo (22, alto, Vaughn Monroe), Joe Aglora (25, tenor, Paul Whiteman), Charlie Wade (age unknown, baritone, Harry Horlick).

The rhythm section included Harold Wax (22, accordion, who had done radio staff work), Rocky Coluccio (22, piano, Charlie Barnet), Al Horesh (23, guitar, Bob Allen), Barney Spieler (22, bass, Johnny 'Scat' Davis), and Dave Tough (35, drums, Benny Goodman).

Two arrangers were on hand also: Dick Jones (age unknown, Casa Loma Orchestra) and David Rose (26, Vaughn Monroe). The pianist Claude Thornhill had been with the band when it was stationed in Hawaii, but had been replaced before the South-Western Pacific Tour took place.

As the ages show, Tough and Kaminsky were the oldest members of the band; Shaw was 33. All the reviews of the band rave over how Tough was able to swing the band with his playing. (This was something that he was to repeat a few years later when he joined the Woody Herman First Herd.) However, Kaminsky was regarded as an anachronism in the band and the three younger trumpeters would at times overblow in the section, knowing that Kaminsky, with his smaller stature, couldn't keep up with them. Conrad Gozzo, who never took any solos, was later to become one of the great lead trumpeters in the post-war period.

Kaminsky had met and roomed with Graeme Bell in Brisbane during early September, and Graeme had then sent word to his brother Roger in Melbourne, who was then leading the band, details of when the Shaw musicians would be there. For musicians in Melbourne brought up only on records, the chance to hear one of America's jazz musicians live, was a great incentive to seek Kaminsky out and play (and possibly record) with him. The trumpeter's playing was well-known from the many small group recordings he had made, mainly with Eddie Condon and Bud Freeman, and especially the Commodore label series of records.

Forewarned of his visit, William Miller arranged to record Kaminsky with members of the Bell band, and this session took place on September 19, 1943. It may seem strange that Dave Tough, probably equally well known, wasn't invited to record as well, but apparently Tough, after many months of not obtaining liquor in the islands, had gone on a bender when he reached Australia. He had virtually become a zombie, according to members of the band. In fact individual musicians were detailed to look after him every day and try to keep him away from drink. Apart from this fact, it appears that the Melbourne enthusiasts were mostly interested in Kaminsky as a candidate for recording.

Details of the recording that day are:

ROGER BELL'S JAZZ GANG:

Max Kaminsky (trt), Roger Bell (cnt), Adrian Monsborough (valve trb), Don Roberts (cl), Don banks (pno), Norm Baker (bjo), Lyn Challen (bs), Charlie Blott (drs).

At The Jazz Band Ball

Unissued

(Solos: Roberts/Kaminsky/Monsborough/Bell)

Oh, That Sign

Ampersand 1

(Solos: Splinter Reeves (ten)/Kaminsky/Roberts/Banks)

Royal Garden Blues (Laurie Howells replaces Blott)

(Solos: Roberts/Bell)

Unissued

DON ROBERTS' WOLF GANG:

Max Kaminsky (trt), Adrian Monsborough (valve trb), Don Roberts (cl, ten), Don Banks (pno), Norm Baker (gtr), Lyn Challen (bs), Laurie Howells (drs).

Ja Da

Ampersand 1

(Solos: Kaminsky/Monsborough, Roberts - ten)

The title *Oh, That Sign* referred to the fact that Kaminsky, as a rating in the Navy, was unable to enter places with the sign "Officers Only". Everywhere he went, he encountered this sign.

Initially, it was only possible to press small quantities of the issued sides (July, 1945) but later in the year more copies became available using the new vinylite material.

At the concerts and dances where the band played, all the Shaw hits of the previous years were played: *Begin the Beguine*, *Softly As In A Morning Sunrise*, *Stardust*, *Jungle Drums* etc., as well as a few from other sources, such as *One O'clock Jump*. An eye-opener to the Australian musicians was the power in the brass section with four trumpeters. This was unknown in Australia as leading bandleaders like Jim Davidson and Frank Coughlan only had three-man trumpet sections.

Reviews of the Shaw band at the time were sparse in the main newspapers, with nothing appearing in the Melbourne newspapers of their time spent in that city. The *Courier Mail* in Brisbane reviewed the Brisbane Town Hall Concert, but the review apparently was done by a non-jazz journalist, as he speaks of "off-key pitch clarinet playing" and speaks of Shaw and Sammy Kaye as America's ace clarinet players. The *Sydney Morning Herald* carried a more informed review of the band in general.

Most details of the visit appeared in *Tempo* and *Music Maker*, with the latter giving several articles on the various concerts from Eric Ambler (Brisbane), George Watson (Melbourne) and Wally Norman (Sydney). *Tempo* had an excellent review by Ron Wills of the David Jones dance and in the same issue William Miller reviewed the Melbourne concert as well as featuring brief biographies of musicians in the band. This latter article also appeared in the American *Down Beat* magazine later in the year.

Unfortunately Shaw never allowed transcription records to be made of the band (Sam Donahue as leader was to record both transcriptions and V Discs) either in Australia or in the USA, so apart from some rumoured wire recordings there is nothing left of the band that brought to Australian audiences its first experience of swing. □

Acknowledgements: William Miller, Harold Kaye, Nigel Buesst, Mitchell Library, Jazz Notes.

TOM BAKER

continued from page 12

(Dixie); *Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Band in Hobart 1977*, (Anteater Records) cassette only.

On saxophone —

Tom Baker Quartet: Crazeology, (Anteater Records) cassette only.

JAZZ JOTTINGS

By Eric Myers

Warren Fahey of Larrikin Records, Australia's largest independent record label, has announced that the label is no longer distributing its records through EMI; it is returning to full independence. Larrikin had signed a production and distribution deal with EMI in 1981. "1984 is a long way from 1981," says Fahey. "We are now fully equipped to handle our own distribution, promotion and administration. In fact, we believe, Larrikin will be far more effective in servicing its labels direct to the marketplace because we are closer to our music." Of particular interest to the jazz world will be the 1984 launching of Larrikin's *Cornerstones of Australian Jazz* series, which will see many of Australia's most worthy and, in some cases neglected, jazz artists out on LP for the first time. JAZZ Magazine understands that the Sydney singer Marie Wilson is one of the first cabs off the rank for the new series. She has already recorded an LP with Chuck Yates (piano), Ed Gaston (bass), Alan Turnbull (drums) and Bob Bertles (saxophones) and this should be out soon on Larrikin. An LP by Bob Bertles is planned and — good news — an LP under the leadership of the saxophonist Charlie Munro will also be one of the early issues. Munro is one of the great players in Australian jazz, whose compositions and playing have been heard too little over recent years; this LP on Larrikin will hopefully go some way towards redressing the balance. □

Roger Frampton's group Intersection returned in February from a highly successful 3 week tour of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. The group included Frampton (saxophones & piano), Steve Elphick (bass), Guy Strazullo (guitar) and Phil Treloar (drums). Sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and managed by Peta Williams, International Co-ordinator at Musica Viva, the tour included concerts in Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh; Calcutta, New Delhi, Agra, Bombay, Bangalore, Mysore and Madras in India; and Colombo in Sri Lanka. Phil Treloar, who arranged to stay on to study Indian music for six months, has written recently to JAZZ Magazine: "In a nutshell, from my point of view, [the tour] was highly successful but quite exhausting. In retrospect, worth every ounce of



JANE MARFCH

Bob Bertles (left) and Charlie Munro: both should have LPs out soon on Larrikin . . .

energy spent. For the most part, the band played very well and shared some beautiful moments with some very receptive audiences." □

Eight months ago Bob White took a big band into Paddington RSL for one Saturday night. The experiment proved so popular that he is still there, playing standards from the swing era. The band draws between 400 and 600 people every Saturday night. The group includes Ray Bensted, Ken Flannery and White himself on trumpets, Peter Haslam (trombone), Len Mulley, Peter

Almond, Glen Murphy, and Jack Williams (saxophones), Ray Forster (piano), George Thompson (bass), Matt Dilosa (drums), and Frank McQuade (vocals). Who said that the big bands were dead? □

The Sydney pianist and composer Mark Isaacs has won the 1983 Don Banks Memorial Scholarship for study in 1984. It involves a grant of \$6,000 from the Music Board of the Australia Council plus air fares to and from the United States, courtesy of Pan Am. Isaacs is off in August to the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York State, where he has been accepted for a Master's degree in composition. He expects to complete his Bachelor's degree at the NSW Conservatorium of Music in mid-1984, and plans a farewell concert at the Con on August 8. Over the last few months he has rarely played in public, devoting his time to a score for the animated film *A Tale Of Two Cities*, being produced here by Burbank Films. Also, he's been rehearsing with the bassist Lloyd Swanton, and they've already recorded for the ABC. By the way, the closing date for the 1985 Don Banks Memorial Scholarships is September 15, 1984. For further information, ring your local State Jazz Co-ordinator, or David Goodwin at the Music Board, on (02) 923 3406. □



PETER SINCLAIR

Mark Isaacs: off to the Eastman School of Music, New York State.

The Morrison Bros. Big Bad Band is now under the exclusive management of Ken Laing's Media Music Co-ordination. Laing, who took over the Lynn Rich empire when Rich was killed in a car accident in 1980, is best known as the manager of Tommy Tycho. He is also responsible for assembling the orchestras for visiting overseas artists and other major musical events, such as the recent Linda Ronstadt tour, the visit by the Four Tops and The Temptations, and the official opening of the Sydney Entertainment Centre. Enquiries regarding the availability of the Morrison band can be directed to (02) 89-0229, or to 425 Victoria Road, Gladesville NSW 2111. □

Don't be surprised if the New Zealand pianist Mike Nock returns to live in Sydney after more than 20 years in the USA, mostly in New York. He played for two nights recently at The Basement in Sydney with Col Loughnan, Craig Scott and Alan Turnbull, and also performed in Melbourne and Brisbane. Nock is disillusioned with the New York jazz scene and feels that the Big Apple is no longer the creative centre it once was. Also, it will be handy for him to be living closer to New Zealand, where he is now well-known as a solo piano performer and television personality with his own show *Nock On Jazz*. □

After some years of a relatively stable program *Soup Plus*, 383 George Street, Sydney, is revamping its lineup of jazz artists. The new-look program is: Mondays, Johnny McCarthy Quartet; Tuesdays, Judy

Bailey, Ron Philpott & Guest; Wednesdays, James Morrison Quartet; Thursdays, Keith Hounslow Quartet; Fridays, Dick Hughes Famous Five; Saturdays, Errol Buddle Quartet. Thursday night at the Soup has been the domain of the pianist Dick Hughes since September 1976. Now that his stint is up, after nearly eight years, this night will see the first resident engagement in Sydney for the Melbourne flugelhorn player Keith Hounslow, who recently moved here to live. He'll continue there until Tom Baker returns from Europe after the Breda Festival, when Baker will be putting on a 'swing' night every Thursday. Baker will also feature with the James Morrison group every Wednesday night. On Saturdays, the old firm of Errol Buddle (saxophones), Col Nolan (keyboards) and Warren Daly (drums) will be reunited, plus the splendid guitarist Dave Colton. This last quartet might well turn out to be the hottest group in town. □

Former Sydney jazz promoter Horst Liepolt is now well-established as a publicist and entrepreneur in New York. News has just arrived that two of the Big Apple's leading jazz spots — Lush Life and Sweet Basil's — are under the combined management of Mel Litoff, Phyllis Weisbart and Liepolt himself. He is also heavily involved in the Greenwich Jazz Festival, which he inaugurated, and which is now an annual event. In the next issue of JAZZ, we publish an in-depth report on just what Horst Liepolt is doing in New York. Watch for it. □



From left: Dizzy Gillespie, Horst Liepolt, Mel Lewis and Benny Carter in New York, summer 1983.

OBITUARIES

RICHARD OCHALSKI

The sudden death of bass player Richard Ochalski on 20 December, 1983 had a devastating effect on those of us who had known and worked with him. Born in Poland on 2 December, 1949 into what must have been a musical family (his brother is also a jazz musician who has recorded with, inter alia, the late Sandy Brown), Richard seemed to appear rather suddenly on the Sydney jazz scene in the early to mid-seventies. His prodigious talent, both in terms of theory and execution, belied his youth and made him very much in demand. I worked with him over several years in three bands, those of Paul Furniss, Graeme Bell, and Dick Hughes, and always enjoyed his profound jazz feel, as well as admiring the very high standards he set for himself. He took the music seriously, and was always ready to discuss the subject both in a generously instructive spirit and with a view to increasing the cogency of the bands he worked with. During the time we spent working together I learned an enormous amount about jazz thinking from his playing and his conversation.

In the late seventies he put together his own band, aptly called *Straight Ahead*, played a few engagements, and then withdrew from the Sydney scene. I felt then, and still feel, that the album recorded by that group was one of the best Australian jazz records of the decade. It was characteristic of Richard that he should have disbanded the group when he felt that it had fulfilled its potential. He was a constantly growing musician who could not abide the thought of lapsing into complacent repetition. His premature death was therefore that much more of a loss.

On behalf of the jazz community, I extend to his widow, Val, our most deeply felt sympathy and psychological support.

Bruce Johnson

NIGEL STEWART

Sydney has lost yet another fine and gifted jazz musician. Veteran guitarist Nigel Stewart died on 2 February 1984 at the age of 66, after an illness that had kept him from the scene for some time. Before coming to Australia, Nigel played extensively in Britain and Europe and is remembered particularly for his work with Diz Dizley at the legendary Cottage Club in London.

He led many small bands in Sydney, especially at pub venues such as the Rose & Crown, Paddington and the Coogee Bay Hotel. Until ill health forced his early retirement, Nigel worked the pavement window of the New Edition bookshop/restaurant in Paddington where, in company with Don Graves (accordion), he swung softly at browser, diner and passer-by. A pencil and wash drawing hangs in tribute near his former seat, neatly portraying the battered hat, shades and luxuriant beard that were Nigel's badges of office.

The funeral took place at Pinegrove Park, Rooty Hill on 7 February. Family and friends at the mourning heard a moving testimony from Don de Silva (banjo) and John Colborne-Veele (trombone) as they accompanied Nigel on his final set — *Just a Closer walk with Thee*, *Old Rugged Cross*, and *The Saints*.

Peter J.F. Newton

What Can APRA Do For You?

By Eric Myers



John Sturman, Managing Director of APRA

So, you're a jazz composer. Are you a member of APRA? Do you receive royalty payments for the performance of your own compositions? If not, then you may well be missing out on a substantial amount of money to which you are entitled.

First of all, you may well ask, what is APRA? Answer: the Australasian Performing Right Association Limited. It is an association of authors, composers, music publishers and other music copyright owners. Members of APRA assign to the association the broadcast, public performance and diffusion rights in their works. Thus, there exists a single central authority to whom users (i.e. those wishing to obtain permission to perform musical works in public) can apply.

If it were not for APRA, individuals wishing to obtain permission to perform musical works in public would have to ascertain the individual ownership of the copyright in each piece of music they wished to use, and then obtain direct permission against payment of a specific fee.

Because of the thousands of musical works in general use daily, such a procedure would be impracticable from the point of view of both the individual owner and user.

APRA, by the way, is a non-profit organisation. After meeting administration costs, it distributes its income to its members and affiliated societies.

To take the enquiry one step further, if APRA is an association of copyright owners, what actually does copyright involve?

Copyright in relation to a musical work is the exclusive right which its owner has over its use and his entitlement to rely on the law to prevent others from using his work without his authority and payment of appropriate compensation to him.

The owner of copyright is entitled to control:

1. The reproduction of his work in material form, i.e. the making of a record.
2. The publication of the work, i.e. the issue of sheet music copies to the public.
3. The performance of the work in

public, i.e. in a restaurant, cinema or concert hall, etc.

4. The broadcast of the work, i.e. by radio or television stations.

How does this affect the jazz composer/performer? Take the case of a jazz musician who works regularly in jazz venues and performs his own compositions. Most venues which feature such live performances will have been issued a licence from APRA. The licence, in effect, grants that venue permission to authorise the performance in public of copyright music under APRA's control.

All venue owners are normally required to pay a prescribed fee — it may be a percentage arrangement or a flat amount — in order to cover the royalty payments due to those copyright owners whose music is performed in that venue.

In the case of jazz venues, proprietors will be very unlikely to provide details of performances. Therefore, it is up to the jazz composer to undertake the following procedure.

1. Join APRA; it costs nothing. The applicant need only establish that his works are being broadcast or publicly performed.
2. Register his works with APRA. This involves things such as the title of the work, its duration, the publisher (if the work is published) and so on.
3. Provide APRA with the titles of works performed, the relevant date and venue, and the number of performances.

John Sturman, Managing Director of APRA, points out that it is virtually impossible for APRA to know what compositions are performed in the 80 or so jazz venues in Sydney. Therefore, the association relies heavily on its members to provide the information.

A jazz composer who works regularly, performing his own original works, is foolish, therefore, not to be a member of APRA. He might well be depriving himself (or herself) of some hundreds of dollars in royalties.

APRA is at 25-27 Albany Street, Crows Nest; its postal address is PO Box 567, Crows Nest, NSW, 2065, and its telephone number (02) 439-8666. □

SCRAPPLE FROM THE APPLE

By Lee Jeske*

If I told you that Miles Davis participated in a five hour concert at Radio City Music Hall entitled *Miles Ahead: A Tribute To An American Music Legend*, you'd probably think, "Hmmm, sounds interesting." If I then told you that the participants included, aside from M.D.D. III, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams, Jackie Mclean, J.J. Johnson, Walter Bishop, George Coleman, Roy Haynes, Shirley Horn, Jon Faddis, Art Farmer, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Jon Hendricks, and Pepper Adams, you'd then probably think, "Sounds terrific!" If I then told you that the guests also included Sammy Davis Jr., Bill Cosby, Shalamar, The Whispers, Grover Washington Jr., George Benson, Quincy Jones, Angela Bofill, and Peabo Bryson, you'd probably start to think, "Uh-oh . . . sounds fishy." If I concluded this verbose fantasy by telling you that filler would be provided by such people as George Wein and Carlos Santana *kvelling* about Miles on tape; that Miles would have to stand straight-faced through speeches and various presentations (ranging from an antique phonograph to an honorary degree) from an academic, a record executive, a leader of a charitable organisation, and somebody from Miller Beer; and that I still didn't mention stage participation by Cicely Tyson (Mrs. D, of course), Don Shirley, Mtume, Chris Connor and Honi Coles, you'd probably think, "Yipes, this thing sounds long and boring!!!"

And, of course, you'd be right. Everybody listed above did what they do, Miles himself performed a fairly perfunctory set with his current band (and he actually managed to say "Thank you" into a microphone), and what could have been an historic evening turned into a rather predictable, and way overlong, variety show. It benefited the Black Music Association, a good cause from what I understand, and it had its moments, but I don't expect to get dewy-eyed in the future from my memories of it. □

Horst Liepolt had something to do with a rather nifty little concert at Town Hall called right, the 'tributes' have been coming a little hot right, the *tributes* have been coming a little hot and heavy lately). This was a low-keyed affair that featured two sets: one by the duet of Dollar Brand and Carlos Ward, and one by Sphere. Brand is one of the finest of the Monk-influenced school of piano and one of the most original. I find his African-tinged melodies soothing and blithe. Sphere, of course, do Monk proud but don't try to Xerox his sound. They are getting better and better, really, and this set, particularly Charlie Rouse's work, was fine. The two bonuses of the night were a couple of Rouse/Brand duets and Sphere's 'world premiere' performance of Monk's *A Merrier Christmas*, which managed to sound like Monk and sound like Christmas. □

*Lee Jeske, who lives in New York, is JAZZ Magazine's US correspondent.

MARGARET SULLIVAN



Miles Davis: a fairly perfunctory set . . .

The combination of jazz and classical musics continues with gusto and I think that's good. Hell, as long as the players feel comfortable in the setting, or like to nestle in that hazy area in between, things can work. They usually don't work, but they can work. I recently sat through three examples of this new marriage.

First was an evening at Avery Fisher Hall with Claude Bolling. The French pianist is extremely popular here with his tuneful *Suites* for jazz band and, usually, classical soloist. The music contained in these things is usually neither jazz nor classical music, but a kind of pseudo-hip mood music that appeals to the type of people who buy James Taylor and Laura Nyro records. It is, essentially, pap. This concert featured Bolling's most popular suite — the one written for flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal. Eugenia Zuckerman was in Rampal's seat and the music came off, to these ears, without a hitch — that is to say, sounding just like the record, which is, apparently, exactly what the audience was hoping for. It was boring. Charlie Byrd participated in a similar suite, this one, naturally, for guitar. It was boring, too. I left after the first half, so if there were fireworks after intermission, I missed them.

A crossover in the other direction featured Wynton Marsalis and Hubert Laws participating in a rather bizarre evening with opera star Kathleen Battle (it was her night) and Metropolitan Opera Music Director James Levine. The first half featured a pair of Bach's cantatas, one co-starring Wynton and one co-starring Hubert. Now, I hardly know my cantatas from my cantinas, but I do know that the singing was gorgeous. I also know that Wynton sounded superb, while Hubert seemed to be a little unsure of himself. Part two was a mish-mash: Laws tooted Don Sebesky's arrangement of *Amazing Grace* and joined La Battle for a spiritual, *Fix Me, Jesus*. Ho-hum. Wynton then marched out with his

quintet and did Monk's *Think Of One!* To my surprise, the reaction from the mostly classical crowd assembled in Alice Tully Hall was positive. Then Battle, Laws and Marsalis — Levine was conducting a string ensemble all this while — did *Creole Love Call* (with a dirty, growly Marsalis plunger solo) and *I Loves You Porgy*, which proved that Battle was not at home in such surroundings. The concert closed with Levine on piano to accompany Ms Battle in some lovely spirituals — just piano and voice. Is this kind of concert the harbinger of future concerts — a little of this, a little of that?

More successful was a performance by the James Newton Flute Quartet (Newton, Henry Threadgill, Lloyd McNeill, and Frank Wess). Here jazz and classical idioms were melded into a unified structure that was rich and quite satisfying. Newton is one of the very best young instrumentalists and composers and it's music like *this* that's going to finally legitimise the intermingling of classical music and jazz and give it a reason for being. □

Claude Bolling wasn't the only visitor from abroad to concertise in New York recently. The Public Theatre brought in, on separate weekends, three of the top European jazz ensembles: The Steve Lacy Sextet, The Willem Breuker Kollektief, and The Globe Unity Orchestra.

The Lacy band is European by home, not by origin, since two-thirds of them are Yanks (the leader; Steve Potts, the terrifically talented soprano and alto player; pianist Bobby Few; and drummer Oliver Johnson). The group is rounded out by French bassist, Jean-Jacques Avenel, and Swiss singer, violinist, cellist (and Mrs. Lacy), Irene Aebi. But the group lives and works in Europe and their *sound* is European. Lacy is, in my opinion, one of the living jazz giants: he's one of the finest soprano saxophonists to ever play that instrument, he's a sly and witty composer, and he leads a cracker-jack band. The Sextet is capable of many different colours — from Kurt Weillish theatre music to rollicking collective improvisation — and its sound is unique. This performance was sort of a greatest hits of Lacy's fine recordings of recent years (most of them available on Hat Hut or Black Saint records) and I was sad when it was over.

The Breuker band is Dutch and slightly off-the-wall. They go in heavily for parodies and rehearsed schtick that is fun to watch for a few minutes, but eventually gets you squirming in your seat. It's not that the vision of nine musicians racing about the stage, playing each other's instruments, and mocking all sorts of musics, isn't funny; but when they get down to some flatfooted blowing, the solos are, usually, empty and boring. It's a comic book band — fun and colourful and lively, but not meaty enough for me.

The Globe Unity Orchestra is meaty enough for anybody. The soloists are heavyweights, that's for sure, and this night (their New York debut) consisted of two totally improvised pieces that almost melted through the stage, so intense and dense were they. Consisting of

continued on page 35

BRISBANE PROFILES

By Neville Meyers*

The Basement

The Basement, Brisbane's leading modern jazz venue, is expanding its Bebop and Beyond program this year. From February the Club has offered, not one, but two nights of jazz, Fridays and Saturdays, with a possibility of a third night at its Community Arts venue, Edward Street. Drummer Ted Vining and trumpeter Greg Quigley are the prime organisers. Attack, forge ahead, or otherwise stagnate, is the primary impulse.

There was an auspicious, if somewhat premature, launching in January when Melbourne musicians Keith Hounslow, Tony Gould, Geoff Kluke, and Sydney trombonist Bob Johnson, all here for Queensland Jazz Action's highly successful Summer Jazz Clinic, dropped in to jam. The resultant hard-blowing, mainstream playing was not the best jazz I've heard from Messrs. Hounslow, Gould and Vining, who had had an exhausting week of teaching and blowing, but it was highly enjoyable jazz nonetheless. The standing-room only crowd dug it.

Vining and Quigley hope there'll be similar patronage in the future. "We'll feature one band each night, as well as sit-in groups; the emphasis will be on modern jazz, by definition, anything that isn't Dixieland," Vining said. A major jazz artist will also be presented monthly, drawn from the ranks of major Australian jazz stalwarts. Club improvements, including sound-proofing and refurbishing, are worth noting.

Vining and Quigley believe there is a modern jazz audience in Brisbane, and are going all out to win it; they remain enthusiastic about the Club's future.

"We intend to take the Club as far as we can in 1984," Vining said. "And we'd especially like to involve the Summer Clinic's participants, especially Brisbane's up-and-coming young jazz musicians, to sit-in and contribute in the weeks ahead."

For further information on The Basement, ring Brisbane 209-8401 or 376-2403. □

*Neville Meyers is a librarian, jazz collector, freelance writer, and a veteran habitue of jazz clubs in Australia and the United States.



From left, Bob Johnson, Keith Hounslow, Geoff Kluke, Tony Gould, Ted Vining, at Brisbane's Basement: hard-blowing, mainstream playing . . .

Peter Uppman

"Style, energy and individuality are the ingredients I admire most in a jazz player," Peter Uppman, the 22-year-old Brisbane trumpeter, told me. Over the past 18 months Uppman has earned praise — he is at times described as a "natural" —



Peter Uppman: "You have to be yourself, whatever your imperfections . . ."

for displaying such elements in his own playing.

His major ambitions are to continue to refine the self-acknowledged limits to his own playing and to develop his own jazz style.

At 12 he was given a \$40 horn and was off. The Brisbane Kedron High School Band and a jazz grounding with instructor-saxophonist Ted Wallace provided initial formal training. "Since then I've come to appreciate all styles of music — in fact I've had to play them in a variety of musical settings, but jazz in particular has remained my major influence," he said.

Two years ago Uppman became a full-time professional and since then has done TV studio work, dances, has sat in with various bands, appeared regularly for the Queensland Jazz Action Society, and has been featured weekly at Brisbane's Basement with Ted Vining's progressive jazz group Musiikki Oi.

Style and energy are his obvious qualities; on the several occasions I've heard him, his playing has in spots been raw but hard-driving, fierce and flashing, embodying strong influences of Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard.

He's also strong on individuality. "I'm continually being told I should

play like Miles Davis or someone else," he said. "To me that's ludicrous — to evolve as a player, it's important, sure, to listen to and learn from all styles. But in the end, you have to be, and play, yourself, whatever your imperfections."

Uppman acknowledges that to achieve his goals first as a respected jazz trumpeter and second as a singer (favourites, Sinatra, Murphy), there are many hills to climb.

Pitfalls? "First, there are too many musicians continually putting one another down or being intolerant of other jazz styles; second, there's also too much conformity in this business; and lastly, many musicians forget why, first and foremost, they are there — to communicate with their audience.

"There's also too much concern for technique — playing the fastest or highest notes." Jazz is feel — something that goes beyond mere technique. If you haven't got that feel, you might as well forget it as a player." □

Clare Hansson

It was open house at Copenhagen's Purple Door when Brisbane jazz pianist Clare Hansson dropped in. And the club's policy that "a stranger is a friend you've yet to meet" typified, she told me, the camaraderie of musicians she encountered during a six months' club, pub and festival crawl to hear a pot-pourri of jazz greats.

Clare's six-month jazz odyssey began with a standing-room only



Clare Hansson: "I have a pocketful of new dreams."

farewell by musicians and friends at Brisbane's Adventurers Club. It took her to the major jazz clubs and festivals of Europe, England and the US.

It also gained her exposure to a veritable who's who of jazz ranging from the big bands of Woody Herman and Lionel Hampton to individual performers like Mel Torme, Carmen McRae, pianists Kenny Barron, Dick Hyman, George Shearing, Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, and many others.

She said: "The sense of jazz camaraderie amongst jazz musicians was evident wherever I went. Without exception, the musicians in every country played with a mutual sense of fun and reverence. Nobody needed to play faster, or louder, or to prove anything."

VSOP II with Herbie Hancock (piano), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), brother Branford (tenor saxophone), Ron Carter (bass) and Tony Williams (drums), with guest Dizzy Gillespie was typical of the "I'll play with but not cut you" philosophy.

"With such greats as Dizzy and Wynton Marsalis sharing the stage there was every opportunity for ego clashes," Clare said. "Marsalis, demonstrating a brilliant, sparkling technique, had no trouble whatsoever in keeping up with Dizzy. But Wynton didn't try to dominate Dizzy nor vice versa; individuality and complementarity were just in perfect balance."

A reunion with Bob Barnard in England was also especially memorable. So were her reunions with singer Ernestine Anderson and bassist Ray Brown in Seattle, and in New York, meeting her long-standing jazz idols, the pianists Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan.

Clare was invited to give a guest lecture on Australian jazz at the University of Colorado, to record in Munich, and frequently asked to sit in.

The beauty and grandeur of the Rockies and Switzerland, and the chance to consummate a life-long romance with New York, were other bonuses. "New York is truly the most exciting city on earth," she said. "A mixture of fantastic skyline, tantalising smells, throbbing culture, tangible danger, and from all my travels, still the heart and hub of world jazz."

Clare feels she's returned to Brisbane with her interest in jazz revitalised. "I suppose it's a cliché but I also came back feeling that Australia is still the luckiest country in the world. My head is bursting with fresh ideas. I have a pocketful of new dreams." □

SCRAPPLE

continued from page 33

Toshinori Kondo and Kenny Wheeler, trumpets; Albert Mangelsdorff, George Lewis and Gunter Christmann, trombones; Gerd Dudek, Evan Parker, and Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky, reeds; Bob Stewart, tuba; Alan Silva, bass; Paul Lovens, drums; and leader Alex Schlippenbach, piano; the band just blew — each player taking one solo per set. At times things were too frenetic, too wild. At other times, everything just fell together behind a particular soloist and lifted him on the shoulders of the collective sound. Particularly well-served were the three trombonists, but everybody managed to get in their share of hot-licks before the night ended. I think Schlippenbach would have been better off planning a more varied program — a set of improvisations and a set of compositions, as I've seen them do outside of the US, but this was free, collective improvising at its best — and that is something of a rarity in these days of returning melodies and structures.

Another rare visitor Stateside not long ago was Horace Parlan. The pianist was teamed up with bassist Red Mitchell for some duets at a new club called Jasmine. The playing was good-spirited and together — bebop on the light side — and swung with good, steady bop. I stayed through a few sets, and enjoyed every single number. It's good that some of the American jazz expatriates who are still in Europe are finding opportunities to come back for a gig here or there. □

Usually the combination of jazz and latin musics sacrifices something of the one at the expense of the other. Not so a terrific evening conceived, composed, and led by pianist Michelle Rosewoman, called *New Yor-Uba: A Musical Celebration Of Cuba In America*. A jazz big band (John Stubblefield, Oliver Lake, Howard Johnson, and Baikida Carroll were a few of the soloists) joined forces with a terrific Cuban percussion section for a truly integrated, hot concert. Rosewoman (who, of course, changed her name from Roseman) is one of the promising lesser-known talents around these parts. Remember the name. □

George Russell put together a big band for a quickie tour. I love George's writing (his last few albums, on Soul Note, are highly recommended — especially the newest one) and this band was well-greased and well-rehearsed. They played a one-hour piece called *The African Game* that was prime Russell. The band was young; George had, this time around, sacrificed soloists for tight ensemble work. With Gil Evans presiding over a loose-limbed big band every Monday night here lately, it's good to see the two finest veteran arrangers out there strutting their stuff. □

Before I say goodbye I'd like to recommend a book. *Close Enough For Jazz* by Mike Zwerin (Quartet Books) is the autobiography of the former Miles Davis sideman, former steel company president, and current trombonist and journalist residing in Paris. It's wicked, hip, weird, and very, very funny. It gives us the jazz life from the perspective of a somewhat neurotic, guilt-ridden, confused, middle-class New York Jew; if Phillip Roth played bass trumpet, this'd be by him. It's entertaining and different and just enough off-kilter for my tastes. □

CONCERT REVIEWS

The Benders

RMIT, Melbourne, October 30, 1983.

The Sydney quartet The Benders made their way down to Melbourne for four performances in October-November, and made a big impression on everyone who heard them.

Tenor saxophonist Jason Morphett, pianist Chris Abrahams, bassist Lloyd Swanton and drummer Andrew Gander all proved themselves to be very capable technicians with the ability to play brilliant solos. More important, they showed that they have developed a rare understanding of how best to play as a group, supporting and responding to each other. Both in the music they play and the way they play it, they have forged a powerful group identity.

At RMIT, they played a lot of originals, that would typically feature muscular grooves with alternately stabbing and rippling piano solos, and tenor solos that could be both energetic and insinuating, over the top. *The Ceiling* was one exception, a softer-hued ballad with lyrical offerings from Abrahams and Swanton, and measured playing from Morphett. In addition, they played *Giant Steps* — a convincingly handled performance of a very testing piece — a punching arrangement of Monk's *Well You Needn't*, and a well-developed performance on Coltrane's *India* theme. A very stimulating and rewarding performance, showing that The Benders' jazz is both disciplined and abandoned, full of both logic and excitement.

The Benders also gave a very satisfying performance at The Limerick Arms Hotel one night, and on another night, interestingly enough, they played The Venetian Room, an inner-city nouveau rock venue, and went over very well with the audience. They made some concessions to the audience, winning their

attention with sheer energy, and by emphasising pieces with throbbing, rock-like rhythms; and they rewarded that attention with pure, original jazz that was persuasive for both its intelligence and its intensity.

Adrian Jackson



JANE MARCH

From left, trombonists John Costelloe, James Morrison and George Brodbeck at the Regent: bringing to notice a dozen seminal trombonists in jazz history . . .

Jazz 84 – Tributes to the Giants of Jazz

The Don Burrows Supper Club, Regent Sydney Hotel, January 12-21, 1984.

This event, produced by Peter Brendle and included under the umbrella of the Festival of Sydney, drew some criticism in the jazz world on the grounds that it was elitist; at \$9.50 a night it was not likely to be a real 'festival' event for the people of Sydney.

Still, it was an excellent week, highlighting the talents of a great many of our local performers, and it was sold out. Even if the Don Burrows Supper Club holds only about 120 people, it was encouraging to see an impressive cavalcade of our own musicians playing, night after night, to packed houses.

I missed the opening night, Monday January 16, called The Trumpet Giants, with tributes to the great trumpeters by Bob Barnard, Keith Stirling and James Morrison. The backing trios were led by the pianists Paul McNamara and Julian Lee.

On Tuesday January 17, tributes to the great trombonists were paid by John Costelloe, George Brodbeck and, once again, James Morrison, with rhythm sections led by Lee and McNamara. They brought to notice about a dozen seminal trombonists in jazz history, from

the traditional style of Jack Teagarden through to the avant-garde of Albert Mangelsdorff.

It is difficult to explain why the music, for most of the night, was not uplifting. John Costelloe set his sights high with two tunes in tribute to Carl Fontana, *Sweet & Lovely* and *End of a Beautiful Friendship*. He was hard-pressed to suggest the soft sound and liquid, flowing lines of that great American player.

Still, his tribute to Jack Teagarden in *Baby Won't You Please Come Home* and *Old Man River*, was spirited and heartwarming, accurately recalling Teagarden's melodic approach. Costelloe stretched out and

extended himself vigorously, showing that the pre-bop trombone style is still full of interest.

George Brodbeck was an excellent contrast emerging, on the night, as the trombonist with the most modern ideas. He took the audience through the major post-bop trombonists Bill Watrous, J.J. Johnson, Bob Brookmeyer, Urbie Green and Kai Winding.

Equipped with a lovely, warm, mellow sound, Brodbeck's technical approach tended his playing towards precision and understatement, rather than towards freewheeling expression. His was a sober, rather cool, performance, but exquisite in its own way.

By the time Brodbeck ended, this contemplation of the jazz trombone had become decidedly introspective; the evening might have been merely a disciplined, intellectual experience had it not been for James Morrison.

In *Gettin' Sentimental Over You*, a tribute to Tommy Dorsey, Morrison took the tempo down from its normal pace, to exhibit faultless tone in the high register of the trombone. For withering bebop-style improvisation, his tribute to Frank Rosolino, *Autumn Leaves*, was one of the evening's brilliant highlights.

He was even audacious enough to represent the German free trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff. While his unusual tongued sounds were only a modest suggestion of Mangelsdorff's

PETER SINCLAIR



Chris Abrahams of The Benders: stabbing and rippling piano solos . . .

iconoclastic approach, they were clever enough to fascinate the audience.

The key to Morrison's success lay in his positive, confident approach. He came across, not as a mere disciple of other great trombonists but as a seasoned performer in his own right, with absolute certainty of purpose. He was completely familiar with his material and, unlike the other two performers, used no music.

When Morrison began, the atmosphere was stilted and tense. When he finished, the room had been relaxed and transformed, so that the jam session on *Perdido*, which brought the three trombonists together, was able to generate patches of real fire.

The Great Guitarists evening on January 18 featured George Golla, Johnny Nicol and Jim Kelly. In terms of programming, pace and execution this was, for me, the concert of the week — as close as possible to a perfect night of music.

George Golla, accompanied by Craig Scott (bass) and Laurie Thompson (drums) opened with *Easy Like*, a tribute to Barney Kessel. Joined by the pianist Paul McNamara, he then ran through the standards *Gone With The Wind*, and *A Foggy Day*.

At this stage, there was a chamber music feeling to the evening, with the music sedate and relaxing. The sound level was moderate, the audience rather starchy and upper middle-class, and — somewhat surprisingly — a number of tunes went by without a piano solo from McNamara. Thus, the music was not so much a dialogue between improvisers, but more a one-dimensional presentation of Golla's guitar style. Still, it was a compact and pleasing set, highlighting the exquisite architecture of Golla's finely-honed bebop style.

Johnny Nicol, accompanied by Col Nolan (piano & keyboard bass) and Thompson (drums) began his set with a tribute to George Benson, *Affirmation*, then paid tribute to Herb Ellis (*Autumn Leaves*) and Joe Pass (*Watch What Happens*).

Right from the top, Nicol was aggressive and businesslike, very much at home in the room, and unoverawed by the situation. By the time he was into *Watch What Happens*, his improvisations were hot, spirited and swinging. So mesmerised are we by his singing that we forget what a good guitar player he is. Of course, his tone is more twangy than most — I would prefer a less harsh, more rounded tone; but what he plays is inspiring. On this night, he really got it on.

If Johnny Nicol was a hard act to follow, then it was a good thing that Jim Kelly came next. In an exquisite performance that was for me the highlight of the week, Kelly confirmed his status as a musical artist of the first order. He played five numbers: two which were tributes to Lenny Breau (John Coltrane's *Mr. Night* and *Invitation*); two for Larry Carlton (*10 PM* and *Room 335*); and *Graceful*, a tribute to Dean Parks.

Jim Kelly is by no means well-known as a jazz guitarist; in fact, he is best-known for his rock-influenced work with the fusion group Crossfire. Yet, there is no disguising musical beauty, and Kelly's lovely singing guitar — against a gentle rhythm section, rather than a strident rock feel — drew everyone in. He established a beautiful mood from the first note, and the audience was absolutely enchanted. During this set, one might have heard a pin drop.



PETER SINCLAIR

Jim Kelly: a musical artist of the first order . . .

The Great Pianists evening on January 19, featured Graeme Bell, Judy Bailey and Indra Lesmana. With this range of styles, it was possible to go from Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton and Earl Hines, through bebop to the modern jazz pianists.

Graeme Bell, accompanied by Dieter Vogt (bass) and Geoff Allen (drums) began with Joplin's *Pineapple Rag*, *Maple Leaf Rag* and *The Entertainer*. Some of the notes in these ragtime classics might have been missing, but the spirit was there; Bell took the jazz player's broad approach, rather than the exhaustive, classical approach to these written pieces.

By the time he had been through *Buddy Bolden's Blues* and *Honey Hush*, Bell was

swinging, and it was interesting to speculate what an accomplished piano player he might have been, had he not restricted himself over the years to short, compact solos with his larger band. Indeed, in Earl 'Fatha' Hines's *Rosetta* he stretched out to play a very swinging and flowing solo, beginning with an approximation of Hines's trumpet-style octave figures, then moving on to more linear ideas. This was a vigorous performance.

Judy Bailey, who performed with the bassist Ron Philpott, took this series of tributes from Fats Waller (*Alligator Crawl* and *Jitterbug Waltz*) through Oscar Peterson (*Blues For Big Scotia*) to Horace Silver (*Opus De Funk*), Bill Evans (*Waltz For Debbie*) and Thelonius Monk (*Round Midnight*).

Once again Judy Bailey showed what an accomplished piano player she is, whose command of the keyboard is built as much on studio-honed exactitude as it is on jazz experience. Her version of *Alligator Crawl* never sounded rushed — so good was her time — and her dynamics were always measured and subtle. Moreover, her piano work always sits beautifully on the substructure of Ron Philpott's bass work. He is an admirable foil for her. In *Django/Skating In Central Park* he burst into the music with a stunning solo, singing along with his own lines (although not into the microphone).

The highlight of this set was a tribute to Thelonius Monk, with *Thelonius*, an original by Judy herself, *Blue Monk*, *Round Midnight* and *I Mean You*. Judy's playing here was angular, dissonant and abstract — and strangely beautiful and pithy. This was an impressionistic and interpretative sound portrait of Monk, which struck familiar chords in my own consciousness.

Indra Lesmana, accompanied by Craig Scott (bass) and Tony Buck (drums) opened his set with one of his own tunes *For Earth and Heaven*, which was a tribute to McCoy Tyner. The trio was not far into its performance, however, before there was evidence of a



JANE MARCH

Judy Bailey at the piano: her tribute to Monk was angular, dissonant and abstract . . .

serious sound-balance problem — so serious that it was difficult to regard the performance as subject for review.

The situation was simply that the volume level of Tony Buck's drums overwhelmed the sound of the piano and bass. Or, to put it another way, the level of amplification on the piano and bass was inadequate for the volume level adopted by Buck. Under these circumstances, there were two clear options: the sound technician could have turned up the volume for Lesmana and Scott, which would have given the trio a fierce sound, but would have been acceptable, given the sort of turbulent music they were attempting; or ask Tony Buck to play more softly. Neither of these options were adopted.

This was a great pity, for the upshot of the situation was that Tony Buck, who is a fine player — perhaps the most brilliant young drummer to have emerged in Sydney for some time — came across as egocentric and insensitive. A great many experienced musicians in the room — Col Nolan, Judy Bailey, Jack Lesmana and Graeme Bell, not to mention myself — agreed that the sound balance was objectionable, and these sentiments were transmitted to the sound technician and (I understand) to the musicians. Yet nothing was done, and the performance ground on, with the musicians oblivious.

The result was that most of the audience lost interest in the music; the level of conversation rose alarmingly so soon the audience's sound was as strident as the drums; many people left, so that empty seats littered the room. Only a handful of cultists stayed with the music and, admittedly, they were full of appreciation. This could not have been a sharper contrast to Jim Kelly's closing set the previous evening, where a packed audience listened in absolute silence and, at the end, no-one wanted to leave. The Lesmana Trio performance was a waste, and illustrated the kind of logistic problem which jazz producers in Sydney have to solve if they are going to present jazz successfully to the

public. In jazz, we have to make every post a winner, and a performance with such bad sound sets the cause back considerably.

The following night (The Super Saxes) featured Errol Buddle, Tom Baker and Bob Bertles. Buddle opened the evening with the (somewhat hackneyed) standard *Autumn Leaves*, accompanied by Julian Lee (piano), Craig Scott (bass) and Laurie Thompson (drums). In view of the previous evening, it was ironic that the audience was treated immediately to the lovely, rich sound of Buddle's alto sax, and a full, clear sound from Julian Lee's piano. How stunning the Lesmana performance might have been the previous night with that level of amplification and sound quality!

In his tributes to Stan Getz (*Gettin' Sentimental Over You*) and Paul Desmond (*Take Five*) Buddle accurately recalled the breathy sound and flowing, melodic approach of the West Coast cool players. As he always does when he is playing well, Buddle stretched out and took long solos, building the fire steadily, so that by the time he was into his tributes to Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt (*Bye Bye Blackbird*) and Pete Christlieb (*Indiana*), he was playing in that authentic, flowing mainstream style that has made him one of the great players in Australian jazz.

Tom Baker opened with tributes to Art Pepper (*Broadway*) and Stan Getz (*This Can't Be Love*). The latter provided what had been missing all week: a tune taken at breakneck speed, to be played with all stops out, and Baker came to the party with some brilliant playing.

Tom Baker, like James Morrison, is a natural performer who puts the audience at ease. He is also a hot player, who builds his solos to a level of real vigour, and is not afraid to let the saxophone sing with real vibrato — a legacy of his experience in traditional and swing jazz. In tributes to Serge Chaloff (*Body & Soul*), Sidney Bechet (*Georgia Cabin*) and Benny Carter (*Fine & Dandy*) he gave the alto



JANE MARCH

Marle Wilson (left) with Don Burrows (clarinet) and John Sangster (vibes): a leisurely treatment of the swing idiom . . .

and tenor saxophones a solid work-out.

Bob Bertles took on the bop and post-bop modernists: Charlie Parker, Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane et al. So, he was attempting much more than Buddle and Baker. Now that we were into the more turbulent area of post-bop, I felt that the rhythm section (Paul McNamara, piano, Criag Scott, bass, and Laurie Thompson, drums) could have been more robust; nor was Bertles as sharp and articulate as the other two saxophonists. During *Scrapple From The Apple* the time momentarily fell apart during four-bar breaks with the drums; overall, the set seemed to lack confidence. Still, this sort of post-bop music — which is not as popular and accessible as pre-bop and bebop — requires more empathy and direction, and signs of under-rehearsal were perhaps inevitable, given the pick-up nature of the quartet.

The tribute to Lester Young (*Lester Leaps In*) which brought the three saxophonists together was one of the highlights of the week. Baker took the first solo in rousing fashion, and got a great ovation. Buddle then took over, and built a solo that established a real momentum. When Laurie Thompson went over to crack out the off-beat on the rim of the snare drum, Buddle took advantage of the more open sound to move into top gear, establishing a formidable authority. During these moments one could see why John Sangster describes Buddle as the "boss tenor" in Australian jazz.

Bertles, on alto, followed, but was at a disadvantage in this company; his playing is not essentially designed to achieve that level of enthusiasm, even if his ideas are more modern. Also for technical control of the saxophone and facility of execution, he was shaded by both Buddle and Baker. Still, this saxophone battle produced some of the most thrilling music of the whole week.

The last concert in this series was the tribute to Benny Goodman on Saturday January 21, featuring Don Burrows (clarinet), John Sangster (vibes), George Golla (guitar), Terry Wilkinson (piano), Ed Gaston (bass), Laurie Thompson (drums) with the singer Marie



JANE MARCH

From left, saxophonists Errol Buddle, Bob Bertles and Tom Baker at the Regent: some of the most thrilling music of the whole week . . .

Wilson. Booked out early, the evening concert was also presented at 5 pm in the afternoon, which was the performance I attended.

With tunes like *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart*, *Exactly Like You* and *Poor Butterfly*, this was a smooth and relaxed concert, by players who had no trouble producing the goods. Burrows stretched out brilliantly on clarinet and, to my mind, authentically captured the somewhat quirky flavour of tension and release of Benny Goodman's style. All the players took the straightforward, uncomplicated approach of pre-bebop music, so that this became a leisurely treatment of the swing idiom by musicians who were completely familiar with it.

In *Bei Mir Bist Du Schon*, a tribute to Red Norvo, Sangster used the big fluffy mallets that Norvo used, and the music became a real dialogue, particularly between him, Burrows and Golla. They listened closely to each other, threw phrases from one to the other, and merged often into collective improvisation. They also used swing riffs adeptly, which enabled the music to swing out.

Therefore, when the vocalist Marie Wilson took the stage, the set was swinging. She began with a medium tempo *Sweet Lorraine*, beautifully riding the pulse of the rhythm section, as always. She then took on *Deep Purple*, providing quite an exquisite statement of the melody at a difficult, dead-slow tempo. The sensitivity of her treatment drew murmurs of approval from the audience, and the tune was afforded a lovely ending: she held the fifth, Golla provided some resolving chords, followed by a splendid obligato on clarinet from Burrows.

And so on: *Don't Be That Way*, *Lulu's Back In Town*, *Memories Of You*, *After You've Gone*, *Moonglow* . . . a trip through the swing standards, with Terry Wilkinson giving an authentic approximation of Teddy Wilson-style piano. Marie Wilson came back for *I Cried For You* and *Lover Come Back To Me*, which rocketed along at a brisk tempo. At that stage I had to leave, so missed the penultimate moments of this performance. I understand that the evening concert, which was recorded by the ABC for broadcast on ABC-FM, was just as successful.

Finally, a word for ABC-FM's Jim McLeod, whose compering was an essential part of the performances throughout the week. He provided perceptive and witty introductions every evening, giving each tribute an intelligent context, so that the audiences could make sense of much disparate music.

Eric Myers

Malcolm McNeill with the Julian Lee Trio

Don Burrows Supper Club, Regent Sydney Hotel, February 15, 1984.

One night I switched on Ralphe Rickman's *Music To Midnight* program during what was, apparently, a Mel Torme track, voice and guitar only. But I had my doubts as the track went on. Was it really Torme? No, it was in fact the New Zealand singer Malcolm McNeill, along with George Golla on guitar.

McNeill had such a lovely voice — almost too good, too pure, for jazz — that I wondered how he would sound live. So, down to the Don Burrows Supper Club, where he was



Malcolm McNeill: an astute reader of the great standards . . .

performing with Julian Lee (piano), Darcy Wright (bass) and Golla (guitar).

Naturally the first thing you notice about Malcolm McNeill is his great voice, with that splendid vibrato reminiscent of Torme. He uses his voice generously, particularly in its upper register; he likes to hold a long note over the pulse of the rhythm section; he takes a free approach to a tune, fashioning his own lines to suit his voice, even if they are well-related to the written melody.

McNeill is obviously a student of the great standards: *The Folks That Live On The Hill*, *Fly Me To The Moon*, *There will Never Be Another You*, *Have You Met Miss Jones?* . . . The list is endless, and he is a very astute reader of them. He knows obscure verses to the great standards, not to mention the names of the composers.

When it's all said and done, very few jazz singers attempt scat singing. It is certainly one of the most difficult tasks in all art music, and one must admire any singer who scats competently. Malcolm McNeill's scat singing is certainly more than capable. He is no Bobby Scott, but he gets through the changes well. He either knows the harmonic structures of his tunes, or has carefully worked out the possibilities there for improvisation.

As the evening wore on, there were minor aspects of his vocal style which left me a little uneasy. Firstly, I wondered, was there too much freedom in his articulation of melody? In *I've Got The World On a String* and *Honeysuckle Rose*, I felt that his elaborations did not do enough justice to the composers. Should a singer state the melody first? Or, is he free to fashion his own melody, without first having stated the theme? This is a critical question. My own view is that the melody should first be stated accurately, just as an instrumentalist states the theme before going on to improvise on it. But, I know that opinions vary.

In Malcolm McNeill's case, the magnificence of his voice could be the root of the problem. He enjoys his work and relishes melody so

much, that there are times when the voice becomes an end in itself. In *Our Love Is Here To Stay* he exhibited perhaps his major weakness: the tendency to stretch one vowel over a number of ascending (or descending) notes, merely articulating the diatonic scale. In other words, there was little jazz architecture in those constructions.

Moreover, I felt that he tended to locate his variations in the middle to upper register, where his voice was strongest. Why not explore the whole range of his voice?

Still, I hasten to add that this is minor carping about a singer who is obviously a world-class performer. Moreover, I have rarely heard a singer with better intonation.

This performance was enhanced by the presence of Bob Kindred, the New York tenor saxophonist who was in town with the Pan Am New Reunion Jazz Band. He fitted into the scene with professional ease, playing breathy, understated solos on his warm, full-bodied tenor.

Eric Myers

Pan Am New Reunion Jazz Band

Don Burrows Supper Club, Regent Sydney Hotel, February 17, 1984.

The Pan Am New Reunion Jazz Band turns up in Sydney about once a year. Assembled by John McGhee, Regional Managing Director of Pan Am for the South Pacific, it is usually considered a promotional vehicle for the airline. Still, as it has shown on a number of occasions, it is a very good, mainstream jazz group, with the kind of professional ease we associate with American jazz.

On this trip the group consisted of McGhee (drums), Mike Canonico (trumpet), Bob Kindred (tenor saxophone), Tom Ervin (trombone), Ed Gaston (bass), Jeff Haskell (piano) and — a special treat — Cal Collins (guitar).

At this performance the group played mostly head arrangements of jazz standards and, as this was a crowded night in the Don Burrows Supper Club, kept the music light, swinging and danceable.

Still, there was enough jazz played by the soloists to make the evening an enjoyable jazz experience. It was interesting to note the all-



Guitarist Cal Collins: effectively transforming dance music into jazz . . .

round expertise of the group: fat-sounding arrangements, beautifully voiced; the use of riffs played behind the soloist, which is a neglected art in this country; relaxed, competent improvisations.

The real delight of the evening was, of course, Cal Collins, one of the great guitar players in American jazz. On many occasions (as in *Tangerine* and *Don't Be That Way* in particular) he emerged with extraordinarily beautiful and powerful solos, effectively transforming dance music into jazz.

Similarly, Bob Kindred (tenor saxophone) emerged often with a fiery, darker solo that gave a hint of what might be produced if the group seriously moved into a more freewheeling, full-blooded mode of expression.

Bob Barnard joined the group for an occasional blow; Errol Buddle was ill and couldn't appear. All in all, this was a good night, and an unusual opportunity to hear an excellent American band.

Eric Myers

Egberto Gismonti and Nana Vasconcelos

The Basement, Sydney, February 22, 1984.

Very few people in Australia had heard of the percussionist Nana Vasconcelos before he won the *Down Beat* Critics Poll in 1983; and almost no-one knew of the guitarist/pianist Egberto Gismonti before the duo was booked to perform at the Perth Festival. Yet, their performances in Sydney were unusually successful; they apparently did the best business of any overseas artists at The Basement for some time.

It is easy to see why their music captured the imagination of Sydney audiences. Few of us had ever heard music like this before — a special, individual interpretation of Brazilian music — but familiarity with its conventions was not necessary. It was a mind-trip, and a particularly exquisite one.

As I understand it, the music played by Gismonti and Vasconcelos is basically free improvisation, yet deeply informed by the two men's common knowledge of Brazilian musical forms and traditional compositions. The empathy between them, and the sensitivity of their communication, gave the music a unique magic so that, as the evening wore on, the music became increasingly mesmerising and somewhat hypnotic.

It would not be romanticising their performance to say that we were treated — through the artistry of two great musicians — to a glimpse of a culture that is extraordinarily rich and creative. It is said that Brazil is one of the most genuinely musical countries in the world, with love of music running through the entire society; Vasconcelos and Gismonti gave us a view of it, even if we saw only the tip of the iceberg.

One can point to many elements in their music, merely as production of sound, that drew the audience into their orbit: the ability to establish mood; the care taken by each player in the articulation of each note; the rhythmic sophistication and complexity which underlay their playing, even when their music was at its simplest.

Gismonti began on guitar. Later, while Vasconcelos took an extended solo on the berimbau, Gismonti began playing bamboo flute from the back of the stage; it was an



PETER SMETANA

Egberto Gismonti on bamboo flute: an exquisite moment . . .

exquisite moment. Always the performance retained the flavour, the intimacy, of chamber music, where subtlety and attention to detail mattered. Every note was important, and the smallest ignitions in the music were immensely pleasurable.

At the beginning of the second set, Gismonti began on piano, and it was sobering to discover that he was a virtuoso on this instrument, as well as on guitar. His playing, which could well have been mistaken for modern, contemporary, Western classical piano, was impossible to categorise. Were there snatches of Debussy here and there? When he went into lyrical, moving chords, he sounded like the best of Keith Jarrett. His piano work was, for me, the highlight of the concert.

Not the least element of Gismonti's artistry was the extraordinary independence between his two hands, on both guitar and piano. He was able to articulate two separate sets of melody and rhythm, so that frequently he sounded like two players.

At about 11.45 the performance ended to a

standing ovation. The two men came back, and Gismonti played a particularly moving, lyrical piece on the piano, accompanied by Vasconcelos on the berimbau. On this wistful note, a magic night came to a close — an unforgettable night, packed with musical beauty.

This review may be a little rambling, but it is not easy to write about such music, a point which Gismonti himself has conceded. His improvised music is "full of delicate meanings", he has written. "I realised at a certain point that literary language was very limited to express feelings, specially those we live during creative moments". I would endorse those sentiments.

Eric Myers

The Relative Band

Cell Block Theatre, Sydney, March 9, 1984.

This most recent incarnation of The Relative Band is the most ambitious, yet most successful offering of free improvisation I've had the pleasure of witnessing in this country. Adequate superlatives escape me.

There was a time when I used to rush off to performances of spontaneous music only to be regularly disillusioned. This performance by The Relative Band has successfully rejuvenated my sadly depleted optimism in this form of musical expression.

With the assistance of a grant from the Australia Council's Music Board, an impressive ensemble of local and overseas musicians was assembled for this tour of Victoria, the ACT, and southern NSW. Australians Jon Rose (violins/cello), Jim Denley (saxes/flutes), and Simone de Haan (trombone), teamed with Marcel Cuypers (piano/sax) and Luc Houtkamp (saxes/clarinet) both from Holland, plus Maggie Nicols (voice) and Roger Turner (percussion) both from the UK. Unfortunately, the great Japanese trumpet player Toshinori Kondo was unable to attend due to an illness in the family.

What began as a gentle, folksy duet between Maggie Nicols and Marcel Cuypers



JANE MARCH

Members of The Relative Band. Back row, from left: Jon Rose, Jim Denley, Richard Ratajczak. Front row, from left: Luc Houtkamp, Maggie Nicols, Marcel Cuypers, Roger Turner.

on melodica, soon developed into a formidable onslaught as the other members of the band asserted their presence and found their feet. Once under way, the music proved to be consistently engaging, diverse, and full of surprise. Each member of the band proved his/her mettle.

Jon Rose: Always listening carefully. Bowing, plucking, or hitting his multifarious, home-made string instruments. At times hardly able to conceal his obvious excitement.

Simone de Haan: His eyes forever glancing furtively around, but always listening, always embellishing. A really solid player.

Jim Denley: Sprightly and capricious, his playing at times almost mischievous.

Marcel Cuypers: Less bang and crash than your average improvising pianist. He provided a pleasant melodic touch. Using eclectic snatches of various piano styles, he is as likely to drop in a little honky tonk, or set up some minimalist cycle, as to hammer the keyboard with his fists.

Luc Houtkamp: A dynamic sax player who enters into the fray with powerful bursts, then discreetly retires to a corner of the stage for a respite. He really came alive during the second bracket. His performance included various surprising percussive sounds using unusual tonguing techniques.

Maggie Nicols: Performing not just with her formidable voice, but with her whole body. Sometimes singing in falsetto, sometimes chattering nonsensically, sometimes spouting spontaneous poetry.

Roger Turner: Grovelling around the floor on his knees, one minute scraping sheet metal with a fork, the next flailing away at roto-toms with bunches of newspaper.

It seems to me that improvised music generally has a better success rate when performed by a reasonably large ensemble. The variety of potential musical directions is in direct proportion to the number of people performing. Furthermore, the element of risk is severely reduced: should an individual performer fail to come up with the necessary inspiration at a given performance, then they may be less compelled to make noises for the sake of it.

With an ensemble the size of this particular Relative Band there is, quite simply, more entertainment value. For example, there was the added component of visual divertissement: Maggie Nicols' quirky, staccato body language; Roger Turner attacking a polystyrene mannequin head with a violin bow; Jon Rose playing his cello with a comb, then pausing to comb his short-cropped (and very orderly) hair; Marcel Cuypers and Maggie Nicols pulling silly faces at one another.

Even the television crew packing away their gear in the middle of the second set were somehow just another element in the performance as a whole. There was none of the sanctity that dogs many formal concert situations. It seemed as though nothing could intrude on a performance that took audience and environment into account. Whilst there were a few vocal responses from the rather diminutive audience during the show, the whole experience seemed so relaxed as to be but a few steps away from real audience participation.

There is a strong sense of good humour and merriment in the Relative Band's approach to its music. This is fortunately in direct contrast to the stuffy, intellectual sobriety of most

improvised music I have witnessed (for example, the Alexander Von Schlippenbach Trio who toured last year). Furthermore, Jon Rose appears to have relaxed a little in recent years. Certainly there is far less academic solemnity in his approach now than there was but a few years ago. Hopefully this general liberation in attitude will make free improvisation far less daunting, and accordingly, more popular.

Rarely during this concert did the music falter. At one point, when the musical direction began to stale, Roger Turner called a halt to the proceedings by bashing a drum very loudly. The rest of the band took his point and stopped playing immediately. Maggie Nicols reacted with a babbled description of the event, while Jon Rose filled-in with a muted jig on his doctored violin. This melodic interlude was then interrupted by Roger Turner who attacked a snare drum with an eggbeater, and soon the whole unit was off exploring a new realm.

This is how I've always wanted improvised music to be: dynamic, surprising, cosmopolitan, and most of all, fun. For once the old assertion that "free improvisation is always more interesting to perform than to listen to" was negated.

Tony Wellington



From left, Mike Westbrook, Kate Westbrook, Phil Minton: a fascinating evening . . .

The Mike Westbrook Brass Band *The Basement, Sydney, March 12, 1984.*

In a preview in *The Australian*, I wrote that the Mike Westbrook Brass Band had achieved a "curious obscurity", only to have my knuckles rapped by a couple of people. Nevertheless, there were only around 100 who braved *The Basement* to hear the one Sydney concert of this group early in March.

So, who is Mike Westbrook and what is his Brass Band all about? He defies easy description. No grab bag pigeonholing for his music. There's Dixie and Afro, heaps of Ellington and circus magic, echoes of Hodges and Coltrane, lots of Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill, nods to free improvisation and Shepp, swooping vocals and scat singing from male

and female voices, poetry readings with and without music — all presented with very few intervals, often with one style segueing into another; often one piece combines several styles.

This may seem like a smorgasbord with no one dish satisfying. Not so. The immense variety of music, excellently played, added to the unfamiliarity of a program of originals composed by Westbrook, sometimes with the collaboration of his wife Kate, made for a fascinating evening. The audience's attention was not given an eyeblink to waver.

The group started by laying out its wares as an introduction; then they were into *Bordeaux Lady*, with Westbrook switching from tuba to piano, while the others toyed with a strident Moorish sound. Then into *Madame* with a Brazilian feel with Chris Briscoe producing melodic yips and screams on a piccolo, and Phil Minton showing a similar vocal range to that of Kate Westbrook — very much voice-as-instrument — ending with a circus feel. *England Have My Bones*, written by Kate, was a recitation with all sorts of ghoulish vocal effects thrown in; it was reminiscent of the Goons or H.B. Morton's *Beachcomber* that used to appear in the *London Daily Express*.

A hilarious *Home On The Range* followed, showing the underlying humour in much of

Westbrook's work, which somehow ended with *Auld Lang Syne*. There followed two poems — *The Badger* and *The Toper's Rant* — both recitations, first by Mike, then by Kate, with a great deal of "mugging" and vocal effects. The composition *Australian Fantasy* was not the patronising playing around with *Waltzing Matilda* that many foist on us, but a thoughtful piece put together during their time in Australia.

Mike Westbrook's music was unexpected and all-engrossing; if ever there was music that beggared verbal description, this was it. Westbrook leads a group of enormous talent and virtuosity. Kate Westbrook plays tenor horn when not vocalising — 'singing' is just too prosaic a word to describe her work. Chris Briscoe plays the range of reeds, plus piccolo

and flutes, and his singing is equal to that of Kate. Phil Minton added a range of brass instruments as well as occasional forays into reeds; and all in the group play percussion like fiends.

Certainly a special mention must be made of the drummer Dave Barry who calmly sat behind the whole spectrum of Westbrook's music, laying down a beat, pointing an emphasis, and building a solid base for the performance. This was a memorable night, and might be repeated: the Brass Band already have tentative invitations for a return visit and are keen to take them up.

Dick Scott

A Night of Richard Rodgers Music, with Paula Langlands, Barbara Canham & Bobby Scott

The Sydney Brasserie, March 22, 1984.

This was one of a number of special evenings at The Brasserie organised by Su Cruickshank, and featuring a variety of jazz singers.

In the first instance, let me say that this was one of the most enjoyable evenings I've ever had in a jazz venue. Right from the first note, mayhem and anarchy were in the air (as they usually are whenever the hilarious Su Cruickshank is on hand).

The backing group included Judy Bailey (piano), Tom Baker (tenor saxophone and occasional trumpet), Chris Qua (bass) and Ron Lemke (drums). The instrumentals played by this quartet in advance of the singers were simply good fun, with Judy Bailey encouraging a lengthy, spontaneous dialogue between all the players.

Paula Langlands, up from Melbourne for the occasion, opened her account with a set of relatively obscure Richard Rodgers tunes: They included *Everything I've Got, Ten Cents a Dance, I Wish I Were In Love Again* (with harmonies sung by Bobby Scott), *Glad To Be Unhappy, Little Girl Blue* . . . and others. It

was an instructive set. Had Rodgers really written all those tunes?

Paula Langlands sang well, but was hard put to disguise evidence of under-preparation. Of course, on an evening like this, where anything goes, perhaps it is overly negative for critics to insist on certain standards. However, I always feel uneasy when I see a professional singer reading the lyrics of songs from a music stand next to the microphone. Should we expect professional singers to know the words of songs they present to the public?

I felt that Paula, in this way, detracted from the standard of her performance; it was a competent display but, under the circumstances, she was hard-pressed to sing from the heart.

Barbara Canham also had a folder of lyrics, but her approach was subtle; she rarely appeared to be looking in the direction of the stand. Her set — *You Took Advantage Of Me, Alone Together, This Can't Be Love, It Never Entered My Mind, Spring Is Here, and Kiss To Build a Dream On* — was short and sweet, with her aching vibrato that is so reminiscent of Billie Holiday.

The program was so behind time that Barbara Canham went on stage about 11 pm, which meant that she and Bobby Scott could do only short sets. This was a great shame, particularly in the case of Scott, who proved to be in great form.

Bobby Scott, at his best, has everything going for him: excellent jazz phrasing and a warm, musical voice; he handles a ballad beautifully; and he scat sings with astonishing facility, swinging as hard as any singer in the business. Most jazz singers in this country would give their eye-teeth for half his talent.

Scott is widely regarded as merely one of the legendary, colourful characters in Australian jazz, and it is easy to forget how good he really is. This performance — only six tunes: *The Lady Is A Tramp, My Funny Valentine, Thou Swell, Where Or When, There's A Small Hotel* and *Mountain Greenery* — was a timely reminder of his extraordinary talent.

Eric Myers

Record Reviews



VARIOUS ARTISTS "Jazz Classics in Digital Stereo Vol. 1 New Orleans" (ABC Records L 38149)

The tracks on this record are all from the 'classic' jazz period and most of them are well enough known not to require description. Clearly this is not so much a review of music but of a process by which it is reproduced. The interest of this LP lies in the digital transfer system as developed by Robert Parker. I first heard of his work in Adelaide in 1982 and the enthusiastic reports primed me for the demonstration he gave at Sony last year. At that time I also enjoyed a conversation with Parker, who is clearly the kind of man jazz collectors should be grateful for — an inventive sound technologist, but with a loving sense of the priority of the music. On that occasion, then later when I was able to hear some of the ABC programs devoted to his work, I was enormously impressed by the sound.

It was not until I sat down to review this sampling on LP, however, that I took the trouble to make some comparisons. I began listening, still sharing the widespread impression that these new transfers were a minor miracle, and as I listened to *Sweet Lovin' Man*, I think I kept believing it. For those whose interest in jazz doesn't go back that far, this song was recorded by the great King Oliver band of 1923. Pre-electric!! Yet cop the sound! It seemed to me that I could hear the piano work of Lil Hardin for the first time. But . . . the Dodds clarinet solo didn't quite have the character I remembered. That was the point at which the review became something like a blindfold test. I played my ancient reissue of the track on Epic; I bought it 20 years ago. On the same volume and tone settings, my ears, and another pair, decided that the clarinet on the Epic had a more brilliant sound. Perhaps the digital remastering is not quite the advance I had thought. I played Armstrong's 1927 *Alligator Crawl*, and compared it with the Parlophone reissue of some 15 years ago. The Parker sound was superior in every way. But this was a bit haphazard. After all, that Parlophone is now virtually a palimpsest; the



Bobby Scott: most jazz singers in Australia would give their eye-teeth for half his talent . . .

JANE MARCH

crackling of the old 78 has been erased, but replaced by the sound of wear on a much played 33 LP. The question is not, are these better than the originals or old reissues? Rather, how do they compare with recent and current alternative technology?

To my ears, a series of comparisons produced far from conclusive results. I tried to maintain every factor, except the actual remastering, as a constant: the same playback equipment, the same settings, the same room, the same listening position, the same take, and as far as possible, the same amount of wear on the reissue LP. Jelly Roll Morton's *Dr. Jazz*, 16/12/26, mx 37257-3, track one of this album, has also appeared recently on RCA VJL 1 7434. The sound on the two reissues was so similar that I wasn't sure if I was only imagining that the ABC album was a bit tinnier and a little less defined in terms of the individual instruments. Side 2 of the digital remastering opens with Red Allen's *Pleasin' Paul*, 24/9/29, mx 55855-2. I have what sounds like the same take on a fairly old Japanese Victor reissue. Parker's has a stronger sound on the bass, but the treble register is thinner. Sidney Bechet's *Sweetie Dear* from 15/9/32 was reissued on RCA-Vintage quite a few years back, but the same take on this new LP is so similar that, like the old shell game, it didn't take much shuffling before I was able to confuse myself and another listener as to which one was playing.

The great toned Johnny Dodds is represented several times on the new album. Leading his own band, he recorded *Too Tight* on 7/2/29, take three of which is included here. My only copy is on the old 7" Swaggie JCS series. When these appeared, they were treasured, partly because often they were the only reissues available, but it was not always possible to locate mint condition originals. If only for that reason, the comparison put the old Swaggle well and truly into the shade. Time for a visit to Bill Haesler, (who, incidentally, wrote the JCS series cover notes), whose collection and knowledge of the period are more extensive than mine. His copy of the recent reissue of the same take of *Too Tight*, on RCA 741110/111, mainly differed in being a bit louder on the same setting. We also compared Papa Celestin's *As You Like It* and Monk Hazel's *Sizzling The Blues* with the same takes remastered for VJM (33 and 46) by John Wadley. In each case the most obvious of the slight differences in sound was the more penetrating high register on Parker's transfers. That raises the question of how far we can agree that different sounds in remastering are qualitative differences arising from technology, rather than simply the manifestation of a preference on the part of the engineer for a certain kind of sound. That is, *different* is not necessarily better or worse. Perhaps Parker sometimes likes a sharper sound in the upper register. Certainly, the suspicion is reinforced by a comparison between his transfer of Armstrong's *Weatherbird Rag* (a trace of echo added also?) and the CBS reissue, S 2VL 88002.

The general tendency of all these comparisons is towards the conclusion that the digital remastering process as displayed here doesn't really produce results that are significantly better than the techniques used currently by other engineers like John R.T. Davies. In general, I'm prepared to bet that the extravagant claims that have been made

would not survive a blindfold test. The sound on these is generally as good as you're likely to hear anywhere, but not necessarily better, an opinion shared by Bill Haesler. When assessing this album, therefore, one cannot say that there is such an indisputable superiority of sound that all its other shortcomings can be ignored. There are shortcomings, though they are not the fault of Robert Parker. Above all, they are the shortcomings of an anthology spread too thinly and haphazardly. Most if not all of these tunes have been reissued elsewhere as part of more comprehensive and systematic programs. It makes me wonder what the intended market for this is. People who are interested in this era of jazz will almost certainly have these tracks on more 'scholarly' reissues. Parker's process is a valuable though by no means miraculous development. It would be a waste if his technology and dedication were not to be applied to rescuing the enormous amount of material which we are still waiting to hear. Is there a producer out there?

Bruce Johnson



DON BURROWS
"Burrows At The Winery"
(ABC Records L38161)

Don Burrows' latest album was recorded live at the Rothbury Estate winery last year, and strikes me as his best for some years — since the Burrows-Golla Duo's *Other Places Other Times* — and the best group album he has done yet.

Burrows himself plays better than ever. He offers a rare taste of his warm tenor style on *I Should Care* and a typical busy flute solo on *Satin Doll*, but otherwise concentrates on clarinet, which he plays with delightful authority and verve.

There are two other key factors in the success of the album. One is the choice of material: tried and true standards that are conducive to relaxed, swinging playing. The other is the playing of Burrows' colleagues who, like the leader, play with enough freshness of spirit to inject life into such numbers as *Satin Doll* and *Sweet Georgia Brown*.

Burrows' star protegee for the past few years, James Morrison, is given plenty of room to display his rare talent, and he does so very impressively. There are good examples of his style on trombone and flugelhorn (one track each), but he is at his most brilliant on trumpet. His solos are full of dizzy runs and virtuosic flourishes, which he manages to keep on the

right side of excess. Throughout, his control and brash displays of exuberance provide Burrows with a lot of healthy competition. Check out their genuine interplay on *Basin Street Blues* or *Sweet Georgia Brown*.

This is mainstream jazz at its happiest, and the obvious delight Burrows and Morrison take in each other's talents is the key to the music's joy. They are also helped significantly by the bright, tasteful support provided by guitarist George Golla, pianist Tony Ansell, bassist Craig Scott and drummer Alan Turnbull.

On the whole, this is a pleasurable album that fans of Morrison or Burrows could hardly do without. The recording, pressing and packaging are as good as the music, so this record will be a big seller by local standards.

Here's hoping its success prompts ABC Records to produce more of the same — and records by some of the many Australian artists and bands whose work deserves to be preserved on disc. People like Bernie McGann and Gruce Cale have been ignored by the local recording industry for far too long. How about it, ABC?

Adrian Jackson



LORRAINE SILK
"Lorraine Silk Trio"
(EMI Records YPRX 2135)

The main difficulty for a trio such as this must be how to spread the available musical resources in order to maintain interest over the whole album. The more often I play this, the more it seems to me that they have successfully addressed this problem. The range of material helps to maintain variety, from Harold Arlen's classic *Stormy Weather* to Stevie Wonder's *Isn't She Lovely*, with a welcome original from Steve Murphy, *Strollin'*, which took third place in last year's Jazz Action Society of NSW competition. The group also thinks carefully about its routines. There are various time feels, from the implied Bossa on *Rainy Day* to the jaunty 2 beat on *Strollin'*, with rubato sections on, for example, *Stormy Weather*. In addition, various instrumental permutations are explored, adding texture and interest: bass with voice on *Twisted*, bass/guitar dialogue or chase on *Isn't She Lovely*.

Perhaps most important in providing strength and interest in a piano-less and drum-less trio, the instrumentalists have the musical resources to maintain interest. Craig Scott's support is immaculate and unerring, his lines providing a complete harmonic foundation and his big tone giving weight to the overall

Record Reviews

sound. The solidity of the bass work never allows me to feel that drums are needed, and in fact the absence of percussion becomes a virtue in that there seems to be no acoustic obstacle between the ear and the music. Each voice has a very direct presence, the overall sound is clean and uncluttered (I should say that there seems to be some blurring on *Strollin'* but I can't work out whether this is in the master, or my copy, or even my play-back equipment). Steve Murphy's guitar work is no less impressive. Although in general he is content with the unannealed sound of amplified guitar, he varies timbre in traditional ways — the intro on *Stormy Weather* has a bell like clarity, almost like an electric piano, that suggests he is working close to the bridge. His solos have a lean, trimmed down beauty, clear and incisive, with a perfect sense of pace — when to fall back, when to recover. His control of tension and release is especially clear on *Twisted*. In *Stormy Weather* his work has a gentle poise that conveys strong latent emotion, and its considerable impact lies in the sound of feeling which is powerful but controlled. In the upper register there is something of the sparse intensity of B.B. King.

Inevitably, however, the main and obvious burden of responsibility falls upon Lorraine Silk. Her voice has some arresting qualities, and, among the local singers, is extremely distinctive. Attention should be paid to an individual stylist such as this. There is at first a fragile quality in Lorraine's singing, and yet this belies a considerable range, as you can hear on *Rainy Day*. I have observed before that the focus of her singing is more upon the music than on the lyric. The point emerges forcefully in *God Bless The Child*. The inevitable comparison with Billie Holiday reminds us of the thick emotional content in the singing of the latter, the commitment to the psychological ironies in the lyric. Although one hears some of Billie's pain on the last chorus, from "Momma may have . . .", Lorraine's emphasis falls more upon the abstract musical value of the harmonic and melodic component of the song. Although her articulation of words is much clearer than on the last occasion I heard her, her singing is nonetheless very instrumental, and is perhaps at its best when she doesn't have the distraction of forming different vowel sounds. On *Strollin'*, a wordless vocal, she shapes the resonating chamber exclusively to the demands of pitch and volume and not to a lyric. The result is singularly pure, and led me to go back and listen again to certain other moments where there is a curiously disconcerting quality in her voice. I think perhaps she finds some vowel sounds more difficult to project at certain registers, and has adopted several techniques to compensate. One is the intelligent modification of timbre and vibrato, and the adjustment of her relationship with the microphone. The other consists of edging into a note, getting a leg up to it through a lower mordent, either on the attack or in the middle (listening to the last word on *Twisted*). Again, in jazz, this is a very 'instrumental' device. But sometimes it creates

the impression of a sort of power surge that can be construed as poor pitching. I think it is a misconception. Listen to the truly pitched intervals on the very testing melody of *My One and Only Love*. Although *Twisted* is essentially a blues, the head is, as the title suggests, an awkward and sometimes dissonant line. Lorraine handles it with assurance, then in the 1st four bars of her 5th chorus takes on triumphantly some really punishing intervals. And most striking is a moment in the last chorus of *Stormy Weather*. When she sings the line "Everything I have is gone", she departs from the rather undistinguished melody line and takes a sudden downward swoop over nearly an octave and a half, ending on an almost rasping low note. The effect is like a floor dropping out from under you, taking your breath away, and on this occasion, it gives depth to the sentiment of desolation. It is the more rivetting because although (as she shows here), she can do it, she doesn't labour the point, but saves it for the most effective moment.

That is perhaps what I find most appealing about the album. It understands the dramatic potential in understatement, and doesn't squander its musical effects in exhibitionism. It therefore grows richer rather than poorer with replaying.

Bruce Johnson



SADAO WATANABE "Fill Up The Night" (Elektra 250161-1)

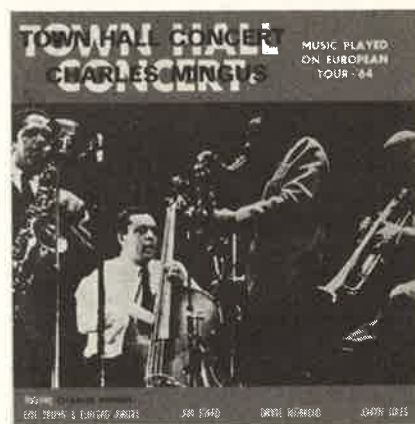
Japanese altoist Sadao Watanabe is apparently a very highly-regarded performer in his homeland, where jazz itself is accorded plenty of respect. His reputation was enhanced by a solid bebop album he recorded a couple of years ago with Hank Jones, Ron Carter and Tony Williams. It won't be enhanced, in jazz circles at least, by this album. It simply has nothing to do with jazz. Sure, it involves a lot of instrumental soloing, but it is essentially unimaginative instrumental pop-funk that allows the soloist no room to do anything more than play a few patterns and join up the dots.

The usual laidback studio pros are along for the ride: Steve Gadd, Marcus Miller, Richard Tee, Ralph McDonald, Eric Gale plus, as guest vocalist on one track, Grady Tate. Really, if you've heard a recent LP by any of twenty people like Ritenour, Gale, Tee, Bob James or, especially, Grover Washington Jr., you've already heard this one.

If you actually enjoy that sort of music, fine,

buy it and enjoy. It is a skilfully blended package that cannot be faulted on its own terms. However, if you buy records not to offer pleasant background noise but to provide interesting listening, I can't imagine why you would want this LP. There's nothing special about bland competence.

Adrian Jackson



CHARLIE PARKER "Bird at St. Nick's" (Original Jazz Classics OJC-041, originally Jazz Workshop 500)

CHARLES MINGUS "Town Hall Concert" (Original Jazz Classics OJC-042, originally Jazz Workshop 005-S)

MILES DAVIS

"Blue Moods"

(Original Jazz Classics OJC-043, originally Debut 120)

GILLESPIE, PARKER, POWELL, MINGUS, ROACH — THE QUINTET "Jazz at Massey Hall"
(Original Jazz Classics OJC-044, originally Debut 124)

CHARLES MINGUS

"Mingus at the Bohemia"

(Original Jazz Classics OJC-045, originally Debut 123)

In its continuing reissue program, OJC is performing the same invaluable service for the 50s and 60s as, for example, RCA-Vintage once did for an earlier era, and at nearly the same remove. Here we have a group of albums which, perhaps unintentionally, helps to document the protean genius of Charles Mingus. Although not all under his name, he has a hand in all of them: as musician (both sideman and leader), composer, arranger, record producer (in every instance), A & R man and, in a way, recording engineer, and even writer, since the strident sleeve note of -042 is from *Beneath the Underdog*. That autobiography, by the way, spoke of its extravagant subject in the third person. Like Julius Caesar, who used the same device to the same ambiguous effect, Mingus emerged from his book as a character with a large conception of himself, yet not so locked in his own ego as to be incapable of at least the gesture of objectivity. It can be a noble double strain, and is confirmed as such by the music we are now able to hear again.

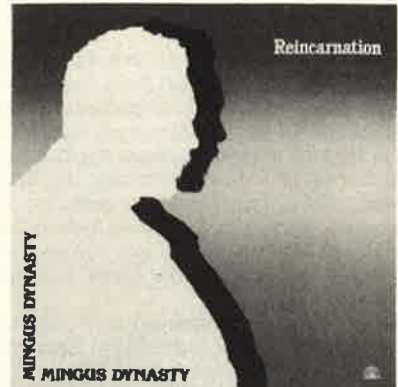
Mingus encompassed so much. Stylistically he sprawled across the whole black music tradition. The Massey Hall concert (-044) is quintessential bop. *Work Song* (-045), with its call and response theme and percussive low register piano blows, looks back to the work gang hollers preserved by Alan Lomax, but the solos on the same track look forward (if this was, as I suspect, the early 50s) to Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*. Some of the material with Dolphy still sounds avant-garde, but partly because it resurrects a primeval voice almost forgotten. Mingus also liked the Janus face in his sidemen. Jaki Byard's work (-042) oscillates between Basie and prefigurations of Cecil Taylor's work of a few years later. As Byard said elsewhere, "Mingus had to get a piano player that could play 'old-fashioned' for his Town Hall Concert. There ain't too many cats who can go that way, play stride". The Town Hall Concert shows the breadth of Mingus' imagination as an arranger. He uses every possible interactive device: Kansas City riffs behind Dolphy's outlandish solo lines, or Clifford Jordan playing a solo well within the mainstream while discordant figures are fed to him from behind. On *Praying with Eric* (originally called *Meditations*), a most plaintive melody is stretched over a nervous rhythmic foundation which, like an aural object/field illusion, seems to switch from a 3 to a 4 structure, depending on where your ear blinks, so to speak. The compositional approach on this concert is, by jazz standards, epic. There are only two tracks, both extended conceptions rather than simply dozens of

choruses tacked on to one another. *Praying with Eric* verges on modern symphonic music (the feel of the first section is reminiscent of parts of *Petrouchka*). This is not to make the ambitious yet essentially self-demeaning and distracting claim that this music was as avant-garde as its academic European counterpart. It wasn't, and in any case, whether it was or not is a red herring. By its own traditions, *Town Hall Concert* is very advanced, still not sounding dated; it is partly because, whatever the pretentious verbal rhetoric with which Mingus sometimes surrounds it, the music is nonetheless in itself honest. It is also, by the way, an LP which presents some of the most impressive Eric Dolphy recorded. In addition to those mentioned, the rest of the band are Johnny Coles and Danny Richmond. The leader brings out the best in all of them.

He is also the leader on *At the Bohemia*, -045. Again the arrangements are striking although the general approach is in a more orthodox tradition. What sets the work apart is the way Mingus uses familiar elements. The head of *Jump Monk* sounds like fairly orderly unison and counterpoint sections, interrupted by chaos. But the latter is not as it might seem. Although it's a very violent collective improvisation, a key is maintained and the interlude acts as an illuminating foil to the imposed neatness surrounding it. Many of the songs on this session are virtually standards, but Mingus' arrangements recreate them stunningly. His way with *Serenade in Blue* at first seems extraordinary. It opens slowly, arco bass in parallel with tenor (George Barrow), with trombonist Eddie Bert tracing a different but complementary line. Bass doubles the second eight, then the bridge at the original tempo with wide harmonies using the tops of the chords; the last eight as the first. Odd though it looks, the sound is curiously true to the often roccoco spirit of Ellington/Strayhorn. Two other tracks are composites. *September* (the title tells you which two songs are brought together). This has an inexplicably powerful effect; you have to hear it. The moment when the two melodies come to a stately divergence is like the moment of 'bloom' in the opening of *Das Rheingold* or (better known) Strauss' *Zarathustra*. When the band returns to this routine at the end, Mingus' underpinning sounds like something from the centre of the earth. He employs a similar idea on *All The Things You C-Sharp*. Rachmaninoff's famous *Prelude* is adapted as a harmonic foundation to the Jerome Kern standard. Again, it has to be heard; like so much Mingus, it is a breathtaking experience. This compounding (in the chemical sense) of tunes is far more than just the casual, even flippant 'quoting' which is often so irresistible. What Mingus does creates a new harmonic perspective, as though a familiar old object were suddenly viewed through a light filter, revealing new seams and contours. In itself it is a device which creates a deep satisfaction, makes you smile in admiration and disbelief. In the hands of a lesser musician it would soon descend into facile novelty, but through Mingus' uncompromising pursuit of the implications of the coupling, we have not just a musical parlour trick, but intimations of later developments of harmonic theory and practice. Also on this album is *Percussion Discussion*, a duet between Mingus and Max Roach, taking over from regular drummer Willie Jones. As it's not indicated on the cover notes, it will save

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Record Reviews

confusion if I suggest that, since this is a live performance, Mingus must have overdubbed other bass lines later: there are certainly two instruments being played for much of the time, and perhaps at moments even three. Before leaving this LP, I must mention Mal Waldron's work. On *Jump Monk* in particular he provides magnificent comping behind the tenor, then launches into a solo that discloses with enviable neatness the song's harmonic movement.

The other three albums are under different leaders, indeed, Mingus is not even playing on one of them. He is heard as a sideman on the Miles Davis session and the Massey Hall concert, and he was also the first to issue any of these performances (including Bird at St. Nick's) on LP.

The last mentioned is something of an oddity as recording enterprises go, though it reminds us of the singleminded reverence which Bird inspired. On February 18 1950, young trombonist Jimmy Knepper lugged a tape recorder into St. Nicholas' Arena in New York and recorded Charlie Parker playing with Al Haig, Roy Haynes, Red Rodney and Tommy Potter. Just that. Whenever Bird stopped, the tape was stopped. The material was later spliced for continuity (though some breaks are still audible), and Mingus heard it and put it out on his own Jazz Workshop label. It was one of the first albums which showed Parker extending himself on a gig. The balance is inevitably poor, and variably so. For about half the program we have Parker clearly audible, with intimations of rhythm and chords — Haig and Potter suffer most. There is occasional Rodney, and there is a permanent mush of crowd noise (if they talk over Bird, who are we to become prima donnas when they talk over us? Jazz audiences don't change: as Parker begins *Smoke Gets in your Eyes* there's a long sigh from a female patron who is at last able to show that she knows one of the songs). On *Out of Nowhere* the balance alters; the others come forward and Bird goes back (to the bathroom, it sometimes sounds like). At times Haynes' sound suggests that there might be a thunderstorm in progress. Parker himself is in top form, especially in the *Hot House* chases. At the time this album would have been prized for showing how Parker approached the greater freedom of a gig, how he paced the program, the repertoire, how far he repeated himself during an evening. Top flight Parker though it is, however, today when we have so much of his work better presented, this is really an album for the dedicated ornithologist.

In an earlier issue of this magazine I reviewed a release on this same label of Miles' June 7 1955 session with Red Garland, Oscar Pettiford, and Philly Joe (OJC-004). I mentioned that it was a turning point in his career and that that session seemed to find him off balance. The boxing metaphor was

apt: his recovery was swift and sure, as his next session, from July 9, suggests. The band was Miles, Britt Woodman trombone, Teddy Charles vibes, new boy in town Elvin Jones, and Mingus. Mingus organised the date for release on his Debut label, here reissued on OJC. This was fairly tightly arranged music, three charts by Charles and one, *Alone Together*, by Mingus. The whole mood is muted and crepuscular. The great success of the Newport Jazz Festival is just behind Miles and he seems to be defining some directions for the future. The plangent, introverted harmon work gives one of the signals. The leisurely program belies what was apparently the volatility of the personal relationships — "I hope I won't have to hit Mingus in the mouth," Miles said as he was being driven to the studio. The leader's playing is unhurried, and even the occasional cracked notes on *Easy Living* and *There's No You* seem to be part of the unforced repose of the sound. Apart from being an episode in the history of Mingus, this reissue catches Miles Davis in a mercurial moment in his career.

Finally the Massey Hall concert, often billed as the greatest jazz concert ever. Well, certainly one of the greatest we have on record. If you don't know it: Parker (Charlie Chan, for contractual reasons), Dizzy, Bud Powell, Max Roach and Mingus at Massey Hall in Toronto in May 1953. Mingus recorded it on domestic equipment, achieving astonishingly good results (and although the sleeve note coyly fails to mention the fact, he doctored the sound by overdubbing some of his bass lines later). This is a reissue of his release on his own label, Debut. Nothing need be said about the music apart from, if you like bop, you should have it. It is peerless music, as well as being a triumph of art over personalities and circumstance. There is just one question: do you want to buy this reissue or the 2-LP set on Prestige? What this album also fails to tell you is that this is just the second half of the concert. Missing (but released on Prestige) is the first half with just Roach, Mingus, and some of the most spinechilling Bud Powell on record. Much as I am grateful to this reissue series, I can't understand the rationale behind putting out half a great concert when the whole lot is (as far as I know) still available.

In any event, this selection of LPs remains an impressive reminder, even though only a small sample, of the magnitude of Mingus' spirit. They cover a period during which bop was on the whole dominant, yet these LPs reflect a musical attitude which extends far beyond that moment, and in both directions. We can hear in these something of the totality of Mingus' commitment, not only to playing, but to all stages in the production of music as a commodity/art. His is a wholeness of vision which is generally forgotten in labour specialised industries (such as recording), where humanness is often sacrificed. Mingus' music proclaims its human as well as its racial origins behind the technology. He enjoys collective interplay, he has faith in the emotions as skilled musical workers, and in intuition as a significant principle of organisation. From all this comes the ferocious energy of his work. He conceived his folk art in epic terms, without embarrassment and without becoming merely precious. If I may paraphrase Joyce, he came as close as any black musician to 'forging the uncreated conscience of his race'.

Bruce Johnson



ART FARMER QUINTET "Manhattan" (Soul Note SN-1026)

In this day and age of ever increasing costs, it would be naive indeed for me to suggest you hurry out and buy this record just for one track alone; but, by golly, the interpretation of Rodgers and Hart's old standard *Manhattan*, by Farmer and Kenny Drew would come very close to justifying that purchase.

Admittedly it is the only ballad on this new Soul Note album featuring Farmer with Sahib Shihab — playing both baritone and soprano saxes — and an excellent rhythm section comprising Kenny Drew, piano, Mads Vinding, bass, and Ed Thigpen, drums.

It is possible Art was so pleased with the end result on the ballad that he decided to use it as the album title, or perhaps Giovanni Bonondrini, the Italian producer of this session, has an acute ear for beauty and selected it. No matter. After hearing 500 versions of the song it is a pleasure indeed to listen to one that can find new meaning in the changes and harmonies. Even after the first chorus, Farmer is re-shaping the song with his lyrical approach, to be followed by Drew, who is equally pleasurable. Together they gently lead us, for almost seven minutes, through what must surely become a definitive performance.

Although Shihab lays out for that track he is well in evidence on the others. Playing soprano on two (a lesser-known tune of Charlie Parker's — *Passport* — and a piece entitled *Back Door Beauty*), his lower register usage of the baritone complements Farmer's flugelhorn nicely on the opening track — *Context*. From the pen of Kenny Drew this is the kind of music I always hope to hear when walking into a jazz club... a nice loose feel, medium tempo, everyone fronting up for a piece of the action.

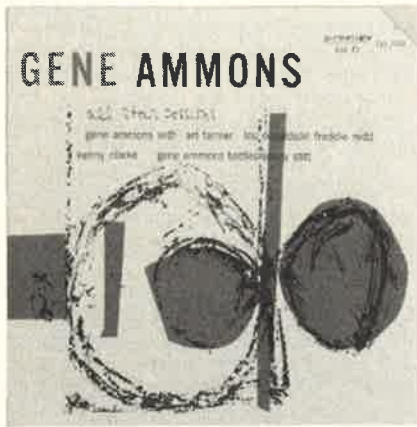
The other Drew original, *Blue Wail*, is, by contrast, quite boppish and here the difference between the two front men is in evidence. Farmer is perfectly capable of playing bop, as he shows here, but his sound has none of the impact (and I don't mean volume) of, say, Dizzy or Howard McGhee, and Shihab's very powerful style tends to dwarf him. Not possible you say? Well, I can only say in defence that I wish Farmer had been included in that excellent set of Verve albums of two decades ago when Gerry Mulligan worked with people like Getz, Hodges and Desmond. My thoughts keep nibbling at the possible results of this date had

Mulligan been the baritone player.

One interesting cut on the album is a piece called *Arrival* which is credited to pianist Horace Parlan, a one-time member of some Charles Mingus bands. It was an immediate case of where-have-I-heard-that-before? The answer came, as it often does, after I had slept on the question. Sure enough, it happens to be the same piece as *Here At Last*, which appeared on a Red Rodney Sonet album recorded in Stockholm in 1976. Oddly enough, drummer Ed Thigpen is on both sessions. Could it be . . . ? Anyway it is a fitting companion to the opener *Context*, and again has that late-night laid back feel.

A word of appreciation should be said for the excellent engineering of Giancarlo Barigozzi at whost studios these tracks were put down in November 1981. This LP is a good example of what expatriate American (except for bassist Mads Vinding who is European) jazzmen are doing these days.

Ric Prestidge



**GENE AMMONS
"All-Star Sessions"
(Original Jazz Classics OJC-014,
originally Prestige 7050)**

In the unlikely event you haven't heard of Gene Ammons, for starters imagine the harmonic sense of Lester Young allied with a big R & B attack. Perhaps the earthiness came from his father, pianist Albert Ammons. Certainly, the style has been influential enough to contribute to a school of saxophone playing, subsequent disciples of which include King Curtis and Houston Person. Nearer home, there's a lot of it in Marty Mooney. Ammons started out in the band of trumpeter King Colax, then with him, joined Billy Eckstine in one of the great big bands of bop. In 1949 he replaced Stan Getz in Woody Herman's band. His career was to be short (he died of pneumonia at the age of 49) and patchy (he began a 7 year prison sentence for narcotics in 1962), but he was able to establish himself as one of the major tenor players.

This reissue presents four small band sessions in the 50s. After he left Herman, Ammons teamed up with Sonny Stitt. Although they reunited occasionally right up until Ammons' death, this first two year period has always seemed to me to have a peculiar freshness about it. Three of the sessions on this album show us what the couple sounded like during their first year or so. The other session,

side 1, finds Ammons in 1955 leading his own All Star Sextet. This is a free blowing performance — opening head, solos, closing head — consisting of two numbers, *Woofin' and Tweetin'*, a jaunty blues line, and *Juggernaut*, on the *'Rhythm'* changes. Lou Donaldson plays alto, showing a fondness for quotes and, especially in his hurried interjections, a deep respect for Charlie Parker. Art Farmer's work reminds us of how unfairly he is underrated. His work is simple, but the outcome of a complex understanding. He never sacrifices poise for the sake of hectic effect. His solo on the blues, with its fleshy tone, lean phrasing, and lazy confidence in the rhythm section, is the kind of work that musicians respond to more warmly than non-playing audiences. He avoids obviousness and flash, and thereby achieves a smouldering dignity. The pianist is Freddie Redd, who free-lanced in N.Y. during the 50s and 60s before moving to San Francisco where he has played with, among others, John Handy. On the blues he picks up the laidback mood created by Art Farmer, thoughtful, unhurried, and you might even say diffident until he very clearly overrides Ammons when the latter tries to enter a chorus before the pianist has finished making his statement: an instructive reminder that true authority is not loud or garrulous. The bass player is Art's twin brother Addison, and bop pioneer Kenny Clarke is on drums. All members of the group demonstrate their capabilities both in accompaniment and as soloists, and the general effect is of driving understatement. The rhythm section would be a joy to work with, since it never requires the horn players to do its work for it, nor, on the other hand, does it box the soloists in. Ammons' work on side 1 is big, punching, but with the same lean phrasing as Farmer's. No-one tries too hard, and the result is sure-footed and consummate swing.

The temperature rises on side 1 as Ammons and Stitt strike sparks off each other throughout each track. The first session, with Duke Jordan, Tommy Potter, and Jo Jones, consists of three takes of *Blues Up and Down* (#2 cuts out in mid solo, #3 folds up with a groan) and two takes of *You Can Depend on Me*. *Stringin' the Jug* is with Junior Mance, Gene Wright, and drummer Wesley Landers. The album finishes with *New Blues Up and Down*: Charlie Bateman piano, Gene Wright bass, Teddy Stewart drums. Billy Massey, trumpet, and Al Outcalt, trombone, are also listed as being on this track, but in fact their contribution is minimal — a few riff harmonies at the end. It doesn't matter. The point of the exercise is the teaming of Ammons and Stitt (incidentally, is there a splice on this, just before they return for the chase?). With the exception of a surprise break in the middle of *Stringin' the Jug*, the routines on side 2 are head in, solos and/or chases, head out. Except for a bass bridge, also on *Stringin' . . .*, all the solos are by Stitt and Ammons. The combination is incandescent. It brings out a more 'soul' side of Stitt's temperament, so that he is less inclined towards that cerebral aspect of bop which is evident on some examples of his playing. For all that, you can hear the two distinct personalities, especially in the last chase chorus of take 2 of *You can Depend*, where the influence of Bird is clearer in Stitt's work. But it is Ammons' album overall. He emerges as the more hypnotic player, operating like a black orator with repeated figures and

often very simple developing motifs. And like the climax to a black baptist sermon, towards the end of his solo on *New Blues Up and Down* he pushes the voice of the saxophone to the edge of its conventional tonal limits, transcending the literal value of each note. Stitt's work is a succession of aptly chosen notable phrases. Ammons expands his timbre more, and even when the two trade single notes, Stitt remains more 'correct', Ammons more pentecostal. But they are both searing players, mutually revealing foils, and their supple inventiveness draws you along with it. Their work always is swinging and instructive, worthy of analysis. The conclusion of the last track is a real furnace, a justification not only of each player, but of the historic team which, in action, became more than the sum of its parts.

Bruce Johnson



**THE BOB FLORENCE LIMITED
EDITION "Soaring"
(Bosco Records — B3)**

This record arrived just as I had used Florence's earlier *Concerts by the Sea*, on the Trend label, on my weekly 2MBS-FM program, so the leader/pianist/composer/arranger was very fresh in my mind. Strangely, the *Soaring* album is remarkably similar in some respects. All the tunes are again by Florence, the personnel is pretty much the same, even the programming is almost identical. The major difference however is that *Soaring* was studio-recorded and the earlier album before an audience.

It is obvious from the outset that this new disc is a labour of (jazz) love. The engineer was Jim Hughart, well known as a fine acoustic and Fender bass player in a variety of contexts. The label, Bosco, is also new and is the brain child of noted tenor sax player Pete Christlieb, who apparently has had enough of the indifferant attitudes of the bigger labels to the recording, promoting and marketing of jazz. The six tracks reflect the care and attention that went into their recording, and from a playing time alone would make the record value for money.

Afternoon of a Prawn opens the set, with the title apparently taken from the nickname of the soprano sax — the fish-horn. It certainly isn't a play on words of Ravel's mini-masterpiece, *Afternoon of a Fawn*, for Ravel this certainly is not. Florence opens, deceptively slow, on Fender Rhodes, and after that it's

Record Reviews

get-outta-the-kitchen-if-you-can't-stand-the-heat tempo. Kim Richmond, on soprano (what else!) takes the first solo and the other main contender is Lanny Morgan playing alto. Joel DiBartolo's bass and Nick Ceroli's drums drive all before them, with the latter proving on this track alone his development into a first class big band drummer.

Jeff 'n Jeff is a loping waltz carved up equally by the tenors of Bob Cooper and Pete Christlieb with reed and brass sections giving solid support. Towards the end there's a delightful solo spot for the two tenors which recalls the tricks performed by two other well-known artists of the horn — Zoot Sims and Al Cohn — when they recorded together.

The title track, which ends side one, is a very tight yet very light fast samba that brings Warren Leuning, flugelhorn, and Chauncey Welsch, trombone, front and centre. However the band plays a bigger role here, gradually building to a pretty explosive head of steam before the Haydn Surprise Symphony-style ending.

Side 2 commences by highlighting the Florence talent for voicings; either within a section, or two or more sections working off each other. Unfortunately Ceroli's constant use of what sounds like the old crash cymbal mars the track. In my opinion this item of the drum kit should be given a decent burial. Its heavy, almost gong-like effect drags the feel and sound down, especially behind Lanny Morgan's alto, and detracts from what otherwise is a great big band flag-waver. The baritone of Bob Efford gets a nice outing though, so all is not lost. The piece by the way is called *Nobody's Human* . . . a nice switch on the old adage.

A *Soundsketch* follows and is one of the best (and only ballad-style) tracks on the album. I don't know whether Florence wrote this especially to feature Pete Christlieb, but the tenorist certainly grasps the opportunity to display both his warmth and richness in the lower register, with his fire and strength in the upper, when the tempo picks up strongly towards the end. Perhaps the band is a mite too busy in the latter stages but the whole composition works beautifully, particularly with Christlieb's closing cadenza ending on exactly the right note.

Misbehavin'. The title to this, the album closer, may recall Fats Waller, but it is Waller's *Jitterbug Waltz* that obviously provided the source material and feel for this complex chart. Certainly not an arrangement to be tried by a lesser gathering of talent than this one. Warren Leuning's flugelhorn shines as does the gutsy baritone of Bob Efford. Overall I think this track embraces all the fine things about the band. Its use and control of dynamics, the quality of all the players and other things. For instance, if the flugelhorn solo here is not written out, then Warren Leuning must be one of the major finds in recent years. After playing this track five times I marvel increasingly at the way each note fits exactly right in his solo and

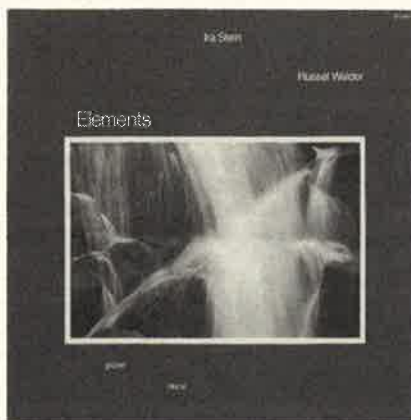
his tone and attack (in the gentler sense) cannot be faulted.

This is a fine swinging band set with many plus features. The soprano-on-top writing gives the sax section (all six of them) a light, airy sound, even when it's swinging hard. The trumpet and trombone leads (George Graham and Chauncey Welsch respectively) hold their sections together with a steely grip, while Joel DiBartolo's bass work complements Ceroli's drums in fine fashion.

Now if only something nasty could happen to that damned cymbal . . .

To sum up; *more please*.

Ric Prestidge



ALEX DE GRASSI
"Slow Circle"
 (Windham Hill WH-1009)

LIZ STORY
"Solid Colors"
 (Windham Hill WH-1023)

IRA STEIN & RUSSEL WALDER
"Elements"
 (Windham Hill WH-1020)

DAVID QUALEY
"Soliloquy"
 (Windham Hill WH-1011)

WILLIAM ACKERMAN
"Passage"
 (Windham Hill WH-1014)

The music to be found on the Windham Hill label falls somewhere between Chamber Jazz and what Brian Eno has coined Ambient Music.

By way of definition, Eno has stated that "Ambient Music must be able to accommodate

many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular, it must be as ignorable as it is interesting." Certainly the Windham Hill artists go a large part of the way towards conforming to this concept, whilst retaining the classical romanticism and delicate improvisation of the increasingly popular chamber jazz scene.

The label has been in existence since 1976 and has produced some 30 albums from its select coterie of artists. The pianist George Winston is undoubtedly the label's strongest ambassador, having recently had three of his records simultaneously in the American Top 30 Jazz Album Charts.

The Windham Hill collection is distinguished by a uniformly high standard of recording and record pressing comparable to that of the very best European classical labels. Windham Hill is currently being imported and distributed in Australia by Festival.

Steel-string guitarist Alex de Grassi has recorded a number of solo albums for Windham Hill, as well as those with Shadowfax. *Slow Circle* is a carefully detailed and extremely intricate album. De Grassi uses a variety of tunings, and displays a picking technique that is truly remarkable. But his compositions are like exercises in pure virtuosity, where somehow the studied regimen has rendered the music inert.

The lack of tangible melodic lines results in an album that lacks direction and verges on monotony. De Grassi appears to be an unfortunate case: a performer with impeccable technique but nothing to say.

Liz Story's solo piano playing on *Solid Colors* is not so far removed from that of the deified Keith Jarrett. Beautiful chord passages give way to intricate melodic patterns; an ostinato rhythm established with the left hand will provide a gospel-like accompaniment for contrapuntal excursions with the right; every so often the melodic line has a surprising familiarity.

What separates Story's playing from that of Jarrett's, apart from the obvious lack of orgiastic grunts and moans, is the deficit of emotional contrast in *Solid Colors*. Thus, in keeping with Windham Hill's raison d'être, this album maintains a fairly regular level of emotional intensity. But *Solid Colors* is far less monochromatic than *Slow Circle*, or *Elements*.

Elements presents composer/pianist Ira Stein in a series of duets with Russel Walder on oboe. On first listening I was immediately struck by the similarity between Walder's oboe sound and that of Paul McCandless. Furthermore, the style of Stein's compositions was very reminiscent of some of the quieter, reflective moments to be found on Oregon and McCandless' albums. It should not have been surprising therefore to subsequently discover all four members of Oregon listed on the cover in a "Thanks to . . ." column.

As with the Liz Story album, there is something rather derivative about Stein's music. That beautiful, haunting, deceptively simple clarity that Oregon often achieves is certainly captured here. But whereas Oregon have many strings to their collective bow, Stein has but one, albeit a pretty one.

Almost all of the improvising on the album is undertaken by Stein. Even on a track like *Eden* which conforms to the traditional jazz format of melody — solo improvisation — restated melody, the middle section fails to

elaborate on the melody and is merely an excursion into directionless doodling.

David Qualey is an American classical guitarist currently living in Germany. He has recorded previously for the Stockfish, Sonet, and Telefunken labels. The solo album *Soliloquy* establishes him as a guitarist with fine technique, though not as remarkable as de Grassi. His compositions however are far more linear and a great deal more interesting.

Qualey's style ranges from straight classical to more folksy, bluegrass-derived playing. The music nevertheless still retains a fairly homogeneous level of emotional intensity. I confess that I am not terribly enamoured with the classical guitar, however I am sure that those who relish a good classical or flamenco guitar album will find much to entertain them on *Soliloquy*.

William Ackerman is the Chief Executive Officer of Windham Hill Records, and a better-than-average steel-string guitarist. On *Passage*, Ackerman teams with four other performers for a series of duets, and performs a number of pieces solo.

The opening track, *Remedios*, featuring Darol Anger on violin is a real winner. Anger, as with a number of Windham Hill artists, performs regularly with David Grisman, and the heritage of Dawg Music is more than evident here. His soaring violin lines are beautifully timed and executed, and they leave Ackerman in the role of supporting player.

Conversely, classical cellist Dan Reiter provides only a modicum of simple, but tasteful, accompaniment to Ackerman's sweet *Impending Death of the Virgin Spirit*. Another purely classical musician, Robert Hubberd provides a very restrained melodic overlay on english horn on *Pacific*. Lacking improvisational skills, Hubberd and Reiter are left to merely reinstate the melodies implied by Ackerman's guitar.

The only really converse duet on the album is with pianist George Winston on the lovely *Hawk's Circle*. Here a fairly simple chord pattern is embellished equally by both players.

Thankfully, Ackerman's guitar playing is less self-consciously "clever" than either de Grassi or Qualey. The music is more folk-oriented and less inclined to be unnecessarily busy and fiddly. There is a simple purity to this album which sets it apart from the others.

Generally speaking, there is something very upper-middle-class about Windham Hill's music — in its earnest tastefulness, its carefully engineered niceness, its refusal to be drawn into any vaguely challenging emotional context. It is exquisitely manicured, aesthetically well-considered, terribly serious, and entirely unsurprising. It is a label inhabited by worldly-wise, meaningful composition titles like *Hymn*, *March Sky*, *Rice Fields*, *Elements*, *Inverness*, *Water Caves*, etc.

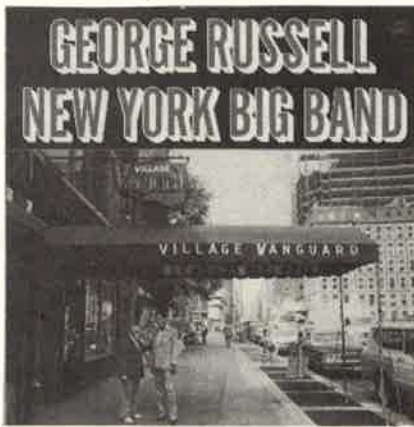
Windham Hill albums are eminently suitable for relaxing with late in the evening: filling in that aural vacuum at dinner parties and soirées; or as an adjunct to meditation. They are not as relentless as Minimalism, more acoustically pleasing than spacey Electronic Music, and even more accessible than Chamber Jazz. To the average jazz enthusiast they would probably be considered dull in the extreme.

Windham Hill likes to refer to its music as "impressionistic". I've no idea what that may mean, but perhaps a specific generic term is necessary to categorise what the label is doing.

I am inclined to think that Windham Hill's music is the personification of Doonesbury's catchword "mellow" (and all its hip ramifications).

For my money, of the albums under scrutiny here, *Passage*, *Solid Colors*, and *Soliloquy* are the most successful. They're as effective as chamomile tea.

Tony Wellington



GEORGE RUSSELL
"The Essence of George Russell"
(Soulnote SN 1044/45)
"Vertical Form VI"
(Soulnote SN 1019)
"New York Big Band"
(Soulnote SN 1039)
"Live In An American Time Spiral" (Soulnote SN 1049)

The Essence of George Russell is a double LP, with three of the four sides taken up by the composition *Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature (Parts I, II & III)*. It was recorded and performed in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1966-67. When one considers that, around this time, John Coltrane was in his *Ascension*, or collective improvisation, period, I am struck by the fact that George Russell was involved in a far-reaching forecast of the music to come.

The music itself contains elements of what was later called "fusion" music — much later, when such music was brought about by Miles Davis, Weather Report, Mike Nock's *The Fourth Way*, Contraband etc in the late 1960s. It also contains development of the

concept which George Russell brought to the attention of all improvising musicians in the early 1950s: the Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation.

The *Sonata* contains 15 movements (or 'events') which unfold one by one over a specially prepared electronic tape put together by Russell on a computer for Swedish Radio. There are many musical elements involved. There is a marimba-like sound that is actually an old African man and his two sons; part of this tape was done in Uganda. Some of the integrated sounds stem from Russell playing on an organ in an old Norwegian church. These are mixed together with an eye to the idea of a cultural explosion.

All the thematic material is George Russell's except *Events VII, XII and XIII* which are themes by the tenor saxophonist Jan Garbarek.

Vertical Form is used in this suite. Vertical form is not a new discovery by George Russell; it is used in African and South American music, and many tribal musics of the past. It is based on the principle of layer upon layer of sound in the form of melodies, counter-melodies, vertical chords and their modal tonic key centres, including an overall key centre, as well as rhythms in very specific terms.

The music, at times, is quite powerful, and I can recommend it for what it shows of George Russell's music and the early playing of the tenorist Jan Garbarek.

The track *Concerto For Self-Accompanied Guitar* was dedicated by Russell to his long-time close friend Barry Galbraith. It was intended for two guitarists but here Rune Gustafsson, a very gifted classical guitarist, has used over-dubbing to perform the piece, which is reflective and beautifully played.

The last track *Now And Then* is not unlike *Electronic Sonata* in that it has the sound of a recording of the national radio company in that period, but does have the advantage of a remix. The remastering done in New York in 1983 has greatly improved the sound over my Sonet Concept copy which George Russell gave me while I was studying with him in 1981.

Now And Then was the first of the vertical form series of orchestrated music by George Russell. It moves in and out of pure harmonic relationships into, at times, almost anarchy.

The LP *Vertical Form VI: A Composition for Jazz Orchestra* consists of five events. Russell uses vertical form scoring in *Event I* and also in *Event III*. The music moves in and out of tempo, stating fractional theme material with collective improvising against mensural scoring.

A beautiful rhythm pulse is the basis of *Event II*, with two drummers and the percussionist Sabu Martinez, who died not long after this recording. This track has vertical tonal properties and mensural scoring throughout. The piece achieves a warm, building feeling and, at times, suggests the scoring of Gil Evans. The musicians from the Swedish Radio Jazz Orchestra play wonderfully throughout this LP.

One aspect impresses me greatly: there is an overall ensemble sound, rather than a sound which focuses on a soloist at given points between ensemble passages.

Event III commences with minimal ostinato patterns. We soon become aware, if we had not realised it earlier, that we are listening to a master composer/orchestrator at work. His

Record Reviews

use of tonal colours is superb. Pastels are present in his woodwind writing, contrasted by dark brass conjectures. The layer upon layer method is employed by a craftsman who seems aware of a higher law.

With *Event IV*, all I can say is: settle back and just listen. You will find what you will within this music. It has everything in a pure state: beautiful dynamics, true concern for harmonic relationships, melodic inventiveness, warm feelings from the players and rhythmic feels that build from the hearts of the musicians, as well as from the composer.

Event V is a recapitulation of the last two sections of *Event I*.

The *New York Big Band LP* includes two bands: the acclaimed Village Vanguard All-American Big band of 1978, and the Swedish Radio Jazz Orchestra once again (of 1977). This album is just a delight. It contains such classics as *Living Time*, which was commissioned by Bill Evans and recorded by him. This version is played by the marvellous pianist Stanley Cowell.

Big City Blues is sung by the vocalist Lee Genesis with lyrics written by Russell himself, and includes a great trumpet solo by Terumasa Hino. *Listen To The Silence* is the band's signature-tune.

The version here of *Cubano Be, Cubano Bop*, the Afro-Cuban tune written originally by Dizzy Gillespie and Russell, may even outdo the original version for collective feeling. Note especially the wonderful Afro-American vocal by Sabu Martinez and the trumpet solos by Bertil Lovgren and Americo Bellotto.

Mystic Voices and *Listen To The Silence Part II* are substantial works with great performances by all concerned, particularly the trumpeter Stanton Davis.

The inclusion of the great standard *God Bless The Child*, written by Billie Holiday, is an extra bonus. The arranging honours go to Ernie Wilkins. There is a definitive tenor solo by Roger Rosenberg which roars over the top of the drive and energy which one comes to expect from New York big band jazz.

I assume that *Live In An American Time Spiral* is George Russell's latest LP. It was recorded with an all-American cast in New York in 1982, with only two of the original members of the 1978 band. It has all the things that one has come to expect from one of the greatest living jazz composers. It also has great solos by Doug Miller (tenor saxophone) and Tom Harrell (trumpet). The young guitarist Jerome Harris reflects, in his playing, Barry Galbraith, the late guitarist whom both George Russell and Gil Evans relied on so much.

The tune *Ezz-thetic*, based on the old standard *Love For Sale*, was originally written in 1948 for a Lee Konitz recording session. It also dates back to the George Russell LP entitled *Ezz-thetics* of the 1960s, when the band included Don Ellis and the late Eric Dolphy. The arrangement here is done by Jerry Coker.

In *D.C. Divertimento*, there are two

carefully composed sections with room for solos, which are integrated with written material. This piece was also on the early Riverside recording by George Russell's Septet, called *The Outer View*. The updated version includes a funk-style bass line played here by the electric bassist Ron McClure. The arrangement here is done by the keyboardist Goetz Tanderding; he has successfully expanded the arrangement without altering the essential character of the piece.

Bruce Cale



WEATHER REPORT "Domino Theory" (CBS FC39147)

Weather Report, or at least the Joe Zawinul-Wayne Shorter partnership that is Weather Report, have been around long enough for their oeuvre to be readily identifiable — not just a certain style of music and musicianship, but everything right down to the production, and the actual sound of the record. *Domino Theory* comes straight from the bag, bearing all the typical WR hallmarks, and living up to the band's reputation, though never attempting to move beyond. Indeed, this album is so much your standard Weather Report that it could have appeared years ago, say, circa *Black Market*. Though this is Weather Report at their most attractive and accessible, it's also, for them, slightly run of the mill.

The worst first: the album opens with *Can It Be Done*, a fatuous song (yes, vocals!) speculating whether there's a melody or sound that has never been played. This is exactly in the vein of Miles Davis's enormously uninhibited toast to himself, *Man With The Horn* [or *Blowing Your Trumpet In Public*] from two years ago. Best forgotten straight away.

D Flat Waltz is a torrid Zawinul piece with the sort of busy, buoyant drumming that sounds like Peter Erskine is still in the ranks [in fact the current line-up is Omar Hakim, drums, Victor Bailey, bass, percussionist Jose Rossy and vocalist Carl Anderson]. Reflecting the band's true foundations, the piece has extensive solos by Zawinul and Shorter, the latter's tenor saxophone [no soprano on this album] sounding electronically reinforced, perhaps by a chorus or similar device. Even so, Shorter's marvellous tone and all of his musical class remains intact.

The Peasant is one of those picaresque musical portraits that are Zawinul's speciality. This one draws on Zawinul's central European roots for its folk music influences to draw a

caricature of its subject, enhanced by simple earthy percussion and sleigh bells.

Shorter's *Predator* is a fairly heavy funk outing that sets the tone for most of side two, including his other contribution *Swamp Cabbage*. Though these bear Shorter's name they do not seem particularly his and the extent to which everything this band records is controlled and shaped by Zawinul is apparent. All the same, Shorter gets much more playing room on this set than the usual tightly restricted exposure he gets on other WR albums.

It's inevitable that WR has turned into virtually a one-man band with Zawinul in the key post. He writes most of the material and long ago set the direction for the band. With his synthesisers he can be a one-man orchestra, arranging and playing his own material like some latter-day Ellington, with that same gift for exotic sounds and aural imagery, best heard here on *Swamp Cabbage*, *The Peasant* and the sombre *Blue Sound, Note 3*. This is what's best about Weather Report and to find it here in such strength helps to make *Domino Theory* a very pleasurable album, albeit a rather safe one.

Shane Nicols



PEARCE-PICKERING BARRELHOUSE JAZZ BAND "Red Hot & Blue" (Candle CFPS-122)

The role played in 1938 by Graeme Bell and his musical friends and to a lesser extent the Southern Jazz Group in South Australia in the making of jazz in this country is familiar history, yet off the mainland, in Hobart, Tasmania, at the same time and in the same way, Tom Pickering, Ian Pearce, brother Cedric and Rex Green were also discovering and playing jazz.

In an isolated way they evolved an Australian style of their own which is alive and kicking today nearly 46 years later. It was not until the World War II years that the members of the Barrelhouse Four, as the Tasmanian group was known, met and played with members of the Bell band.

I had just met Tom Pickering, Ian Pearce and Col Wells in 1949 when they were invited to Melbourne by the Southern Jazz Society to play a function. Now, one of the highlights of any trip to Hobart is to hear and sit in with this dedicated group of musicians who, over the years, I have come to know as friends.

Unfortunately, there are too few recordings available by this great Hobart band which,

over the years, became the Pearce-Pickering Barrelhouse Jazz Band, and if it had not been for Swaggie Records, too few Australians, apart from Jazz Convention devotees, would know of their existence.

Now a brand new release is available on the Hobart-based Candle label, called *Red, Hot & Blue*. It was recorded in September 1983 and features Pearce, piano; Pickering, clarinet, tenor sax and vocals; Col Wells, trumpet; Graham Ranft, bass; Oscar Smith, guitar; and Mike Colrain, drums.

As befits the elder statesmen of Australian jazz, the music is competent, consistent and accurate, without indulging in that over-reaching hotness often associated with younger, Dixieland-oriented groups. In fact, on just one hearing I was a little disappointed with the record, but found on repeated playings that it grew on me.

Ian Pearce, veteran trombonist of that fabulous 1950s Graeme Bell Australian Jazz Band has, in my opinion, always been one of our best pianists and if you have never heard him there are plenty of examples on this album, particularly *I've Got My Fingers Crossed*, *Old Folks* and *Tishomingo Blues*.

Dick Hughes maintained some years ago that Tom Pickering was our best male jazz singer, and he reasserts this claim on the album notes to this new release. There are vocals galore on this disc for you to make up your own mind but, while I can take a lot of Tom's vocals, I don't rate him as highly as Dick does. Who then is Australia's best male singer, past or present?

Vocals are featured on *I've Got My Fingers Crossed*, *Old Folks*, *Where Are You*, *They Say*, *Postman's Lament*, *Last Night On The Back Porch*, *Skeleton In The Closet*, *Nobody Knows and Nobody Cares*, *I'm Living In A Great Big Way*, and the Tom Pickering original *Vacuum Cleaner Man*. Maybe I'm getting old or my Irish Catholic education, always dormant, still has some control, but I must confess that the salaciousness of songs like *Vacuum Cleaner Man* leaves me cold, so much so that I find the track irritating. A small criticism however, Tom is amply featured on both clarinet and tenor sax, and proves beyond doubt his acclaimed talent on both instruments.

The best tune on the disc, to me at least, is the Louis Armstrong classic *You're Next*. Here, once again is that Australian sound, just to prove that it does exist!

Mention must be made of the remainder of the band. Col Wells has, on and off, over the years been a mainstay of the Pearce-Pickering groups and for good reason — he is a fine musician with a direct trumpet lead; precise, hot, but never dominating. Mike Colrain has been drumming with the band since Cedric Pearce retired from music years ago, and still plays with that youthful enthusiasm lacking in many younger musicians. For those who like drum solos there is a brief spot for Mike on *Postman's Lament*.

Graham Ranft, a fine acoustic bass player has been around the band for quite a while, and Oscar Smith has been playing guitar and banjo with the Barrelhouse boys for a long time and is featured with fine solos on *Where Are You* and *Tishomingo Blues*.

Jazz releases by local bands are too infrequent to pass up and if you like Australian jazz with both feet in the traditional camp then don't let this record pass by. The title is a trifle

overstated, the band being more in the blue style. The red hotness is implied only and the music is more relaxed than earlier releases by this fine Tasmanian group.

Bill Haesler



**THE BENDERS
"False Laughter"
(Hot Records 1006)**

This is the second LP by the Sydney group The Benders — Chris Abrahams (piano), Lloyd Swanton (bass), Andrew Gander (drums) and Jason Morphett (saxophones) — although the first since Morphett replaced Dale Barlow.

It is an LP of extraordinary original music (most of the compositions are by Abrahams or Swanton), confirming that The Benders are certainly one of the most accomplished and innovative quartets in Australian jazz. I know of no other group — with the possible exception of the Melbourne group Pyramid, when it included David Hirschfelder on keyboards — which, in recent times, could match The Benders for power, energy and brilliance.

As The Benders are comprised of relatively young musicians, it may be important to point out that this is not an LP of jazz/rock fusion. Certainly the players are influenced by rock rhythms, but jazz is the only music which gives them the freedom they need to explore, to say what they want to say. Therefore, their music is certainly in the jazz tradition and, more particularly, in the acoustic jazz tradition.

One of the most delightful aspects of the LP is Lloyd Swanton's bass sound, which one can feel as well as hear. For the recording sessions, I understand that Swanton was situated in a separate booth, playing into two strategically placed microphones, without using the normal electronic pick-up and amplifier which have become *de rigueur* for contemporary bassists. The result is a marvellous, springy bass sound, which is how acoustic basses used to sound before the pick-up was discovered. This helps to give the rhythm section an unusually buoyant and flexible feel. Similarly, Abrahams plays the acoustic piano throughout.

Overall, the result is a unique rhythm section sound, by today's standards, which brings back memories of how jazz was before the advent of electronics and "sophisticated" recording technology. This is not to say that *False Laughter* has a primitive sound — it is splendidly recorded, with my only carp that, occasionally, Morphett's saxophone could do with a little more projection — but it is to say that this LP recaptures some of jazz's lost verities.

It is often said that the younger avant-gardists are unable to play bebop or straight-ahead, swinging jazz in four. The Benders effectively dispose of this old furphy with two brilliant tracks, *Elastic* and *Vegetation*. *Elastic* is a bright, boppish tune by Abrahams. It includes some flashing figures articulated cleanly in unison by Abrahams and Morphett, before it breaks out into four with terrific forward propulsion.

This tune has one tonal centre, or only one chord, which gives the players ample freedom to express themselves without being restricted by key changes. Morphett produces a fiery, questing improvisation, full of guttural runs in the lower register, wailing cries in the upper register, and staccato, jabbing figures which take him over the full range of the tenor. Meanwhile he is prodded mercilessly by rich, full-blooded chords from Abrahams; and there is an irresistible swing feel from the bass and drums. Gander has a clean, open ride cymbal sound, and provides a surrealistic spray of snare and tom-tom figures which help to build Morphett's solo to a powerful climax.

Vegetation, by Swanton, is a medium tempo, rather quirky 13-bar blues. Again, note the powerful swing feel (this rhythm section really cooks!) Morphett solos this time on soprano saxophone, and note also the laid-back, rather far-sighted architecture of Abrahams' brief piano solo.

The LP opens with an Abrahams composition called *Jukebox*. It is played at a high energy level, and has an unusual, loose 8 feel. Once the theme is stated, Abrahams sets off on a strong solo, with no doubt as to where he's going, while Gander and Swanton set up a turbulent feel behind him, effectively

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The Benders
false laughter

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disguising the pulse.

In fact, the rhythm section's ability to play through long sections in which the pulse is ambiguous is one of the group's most notable strengths. The result, in much of their music, is a certain tension which may irritate many listeners, particularly toe-tapping jazz buffs who like the time clearly articulated. Others will get enormous pleasure from this approach; certainly the periodic resolution of such tension in the music is relieving, like the calm of equilibrium after a period of disorientation. There is never any suggestion that the players are unaware of where they are, and one must admire the authority with which they play through the broken time.

Scholar Emeritus is a tight and skilful treatment of a difficult time signature, 7/4. Again, rhythmic ambiguity underlies the piece, but it is played so smoothly, without any of the jerkiness that is often found in such unusual time-feels, that it is easy to experience the tune as a floating, rather relaxing, bossa nova.

The tune *False Laughter & Fatness* is a terrifically fast piece with a turbulent, indescribable feel. Each member of the quartet plays furiously, and they move together through certain peaks and valleys, with disaster in the air, towards an inevitable explosion. I was bewildered in 1980 when I heard the Art Ensemble of Chicago play music like this, and I still find such expenditure of energy unsettling. I now believe that such pieces are important, not so much in themselves, but for what they prepare the listener for.

I had a similar feeling when, in Phil Treloar's work *Primal Communication*, the saxophonist Eddie Bronson played the "primal scream". It was an emotional, somewhat alarming, experience, but Treloar resolved the resultant anxiety by taking the listener into a movement of placid, lyrical chords, effectively restoring equilibrium.

The Benders' LP provides a similar experience. If *False Laughter & Fatness* sounds like the end of the world, then *Second Storey* restores a sense of harmony and delicacy. Another Abrahams composition, it is a lovely piano ballad, full of delightful dissonances and unresolved sounds. On Side 2 of the LP the tune *Hindsight*, which closes the record, has a similar effect. Both tunes are somewhat Erik Satie-like: wistful and beautiful, including some exquisite improvisation, but still rather spare — determined not to lapse into sentimentality.

Lloyd Swanton's *Collapse And Die* has a typical hard-bop theme over a throbbing rock feel, which breaks momentarily into swinging four in short bursts before it is quickly reined in. It is a somewhat whimsical piece, and good fun. Could this be the hit single of the LP?

The Benders' version of Thelonius Monk's *Well You Needn't* is something of a shock after the rather sedate Monk version I know, which was recorded in 1947. Monk's treatment sounds like cocktail music compared to the fierce, up-tempo Benders version. Still, I believe Monk himself would have enjoyed this full-blooded treatment: the arrangement is effective, with rippling piano figures from Abrahams and clever bass figures from Swanton, before the improvisations take off in swinging four.

Claustrophobia, like *False Laughter & Fatness*, is notable for the players' restless and iconoclastic rhythmic approach, their willingness to push the music over the edge into

pure, unbridled expression. Again I find the musicians totally persuasive, able to play together as a group for long periods without the aid of an obvious pulse.

As *Evenings Dawn*, with a lyrical Latin-style theme and rhapsodic arpeggios from Abrahams, sounds initially like a comment on the vapid jazz sambas which have been in the popular jazz repertoire in recent years. But again, the somewhat bizarre feel adopted by Gander gives the piece a distinctive character. The tune is, in fact, a vehicle for Gander's extraordinary brilliance on the drums. He takes the rhythm out under some sparse Abrahams figures, and produces a drum solo which illustrates his precocious ability.

To sum up, I believe this is a great LP by an important and innovative group of young Australian musicians. The Benders are as familiar with contemporary developments in jazz as any musicians in this country; they know the language. They have what few contemporary groups have in our jazz scene — the ability to transcend technique and express themselves freely, with a certain confidence in what they're saying. The result is exhilarating and challenging music that, usually, is breathtaking in its brilliance.

Eric Myers



EGBERTO GISMONTI "Sanfona" (ECM 1203/04)

This double album set was released overseas in 1981 but has only recently been made available in this country. On the first album Gismonti (piano, 10 string guitar, Indian organ, voice) teams with Academia de Danças, a trio consisting Mauro Senise (soprano and alto saxes, flute), Zeca Assumpcao (bass), and Nene (drums, percussion). On the second album Gismonti solos on 10 string guitar, super 8 guitar, Indian organ, and voice.

The whole double album set is subtitled *Portrait of a Feast*. "Sanfona", the liner notes state, "is a trip through Brazilian rhythms, musical forms, and popular festivals." But this is not your conga-laden, simplistic samba and rumba kitsch. Gismonti's music is fresh and original, without ever losing sight of its cultural heritage.

The music ranges from simple folk melodies to inspired free improvisation, and stops at every station along the way. Gismonti's musicianship, particularly his guitar technique, is almost beyond criticism. The Academia de Danças are also quite extraordinary, particularly the drumming of Nene.

Gismonti's music is a natural extension of

the Latin American/jazz fusion begun by Aírto Moreira and his friends. The traditional rhythms often provide the framework on which the melodic element is built, as opposed to most Western music which begins with the melody to which a rhythm is subsequently attached. The result is a rhythmic intricacy that few Western musicians have been able to approach.

Unlike many Western attempts at cross-cultural unification, there are no compromises being made here. The music is first and foremost Brazilian. This is no ethnographic pastiche. There are no awkward leaps or transitions between seemingly disparate styles. Here a simple melody will develop into a busy improvisation as a perfectly natural progression.

The very intention of Gismonti to present a "portrait" of the "feast" that is Brazilian music is both passionate and honest. This is not Brazilian music westernised. This is modern Brazilian music which enjoys the freedom that it has acquired from modern jazz. It is thus a rather different approach to the Haden/Gismonti/Garbarek albums, and the Codona albums, where the Latin American element is assimilated into predominantly Western conceptual intents.

When George Harrison introduced Ravi Shankar to the world he immediately popularised the sitar. But when Harrison himself played the sitar he was not really playing Indian music. When Don Cherry plays a doussan gouni, he is not automatically playing West African music. In approaching what has become known as "world music" there is a tendency to get carried away with the novel sounds produced by exotic instrumentation rather than the music being performed.

To truly play Indian music it is necessary to be part of the Indian cultural milieu. Years spent studying the tabla will undoubtedly produce technically excellent tabla playing, but only an Indian, raised in India, can play a raga with any degree of honesty.

I do not mean to denigrate the assimilation of foreign instruments or musical idioms into Western music. Such diversity has, particularly in the last decade, extended the boundaries of Western music and contributed much colour and variety. But it can be even more exhilarating to witness ethnic music performed in its true context, by musicians who have absorbed all the intricacies of their cultural heritage and maintain an understanding of the history of their music. Suddenly, the popularised, Westernised attempts at incorporating simplified Latin American rhythms, for example, seem so shallow and lifeless. So when Gismonti solos on his Indian organ, it is as much real Brazilian music as when Nana Vasconcelos performs on the berimbau: it is played with an unconscious spirit that cannot be emulated.

On *Sanfona* we find a genuine concern for the historical significance of each musical style. When Gismonti extrapolates a samba rhythm, as on *10 Anos*, it is the social dynamic of the music which forms the framework of his composition — the samba was at one time banned by the police who considered it dangerously subversive.

Whereas Vasconcelos' *Saudades* album (ECM 1147) was just as intrinsically Brazilian as *Sanfona*, Gismonti's albums are far more complex, more jazz-oriented, more richly textured. *Sanfona* is "world music" *par excellence*.

Tony Wellington

NEW RECORD RELEASES

By Roger Beilby*

I was sitting with pen poised, looking for an opening line to this column, when Eric Child (ABC, 19/2/84) made the comment, "With so little material being pressed locally, where would we be without imports?". The only answer I can offer is "poorer". During the last couple of months I have never seen so many imports: Jazz Import Services has received quite a few shipments and the Jasmine, Spotlight, Dawn Club, Hep, Affinity, Hefty, Mole and Steam issues are now available at most larger record shops, etc. (with jazz sections).

First, locally, Swaggie Records (through Carinia) have three new issues available: *Joe Venuti/Eddie Lang 1930-33* (Swaggie S 819) and two Louis Armstrong's (Swaggie S 1402 & S 1403). They feature Louis' Orchestra from the period 1929-1932, recorded originally for Okeh.

The ABC (through Festival Records) has the excellent double volume Ricky May with Julian Lee's Orchestra *Fats Enough* (L 60111/2). The price is only \$14.99 and I think, musically, it must rate close to being the best local jazz issue of 1983. Also available is *Jazz Classics In Digital Stereo, Vol. 1 - New Orleans* (L 38149). The tracks on this LP are all remastered by Robert Parker (see full review elsewhere in this issue).

Also on the local scene, Anteatr Records have issued three more cassettes: (008) *Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Band* - this is a re-issue of 1976 material originally issued on an LP (Ereo 003) available only in America. Some tracks were also available on a double EP that Tom sold at band gigs in Sydney some years back. (009) contains a 1983 session recorded by Mike Hallam's Hot Six titled *Downtown Uproar*. The cassette showcases the band's excellent talent. (010) *Sammy Price - Australia 1982* was issued to coincide with Sammy's recent tour. Featuring Geoff Bull (trumpet), 'Orange' Kellin (clarinet) and Lars Edergran (guitar), tunes include *New Orleans, Just A Gigolo, Shake That Thing* and *Poor Butterfly*.

Candle Records (distributed by Another Record Distribution) has just



Ricky May's *Fats Enough* LP: close to the best local jazz issue of 1983 . . .

issued the Pearce-Pickering Ragtime Five's latest LP (recorded September 1983) *Red Hot and Blue*. Tunes include *All By Myself, You're Next, Old Folks, Skeleton In The Closet* and *Postman's Lament*. In fact, most of the tunes on the album are off the beaten track.

Now for the imports. Jazz Import Services' initial shipment would fill about half a dozen pages of this magazine. I have selected, hopefully, a cross-section from which each reader may find an item or two of interest. Firstly, Affinity has issued the nine albums in a series *Big Band Bounce and Boogie*. Bands featured are Al Cooper and His Savoy Sultans (AFS 1009), Andy Kirk (AFS 1011), Jimmie Lunceford (AFS 1003), Chick Webb (AFS 1007), Count Basie (AFS 1010), Lionel Hampton (AFS 1000), Jay McShann (AFS 1006), Charlie Barnet (AFS 1012) and Lucky Millinder (AFS 1004). If you have been collecting for a while, many of the titles cross over the *Ace of Hearts*' issues and, before that, many of the Brunswick LPs. But anyone new to collecting will find all these LPs a must.

Other new issues on Affinity available locally are: Bud Freeman, *Stop, Look and Listen to Bud Freeman*, Affinity 112; Ruby Braff, *The Mighty Braff*, Affinity 98; Frank Rosolino, *The Rosolino Connection*, Affinity 111; Stan Levey/Red Mitchell, *West Coast Rhythm*, Affinity 95; Peter Brown/Jonah Jones, *Harlem Jump and Swing*, Affinity 96.

Jasmine Records have so far issued over 125 LPs over the last three or four years. Many are Decca

reissues. Worth looking out for are the Oliver Nelson Sextet, *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, Jasmine C20; Count Basie, *Standing Ovation*, Jasmine C30; Charles Mingus, *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus*, Jasmine C36; The Joe Newman Sextet, *Happy Cats*, Jasmine 1008.

All swing and big band fans should check out the Hep label; it ranges from Tex Beneke to Claude Thornhill. The 2000 series contains more recent recordings, with some excellent sessions by Roy Williams, Digby Fairweather, Eddie Thompson and Slim Gaillard.

Spotlite Records has produced many fine albums of classic bebop material. Charlie Parker fans should leave their credit cards and cheque books at home when checking out this label if it's new to them.

Finally for this issue (I'll list some of the discs on the smaller labels that JIS distributes in the next issue), The Dawn Club label is of immense interest to collectors of Australian jazz. Dawn Club LPs (12021-12024) contain virtually all the sides recorded by Adelaide's Southern Jazz Group. Dawn Club have reissued the Wilco, Jazzart, Memphis and Parlophone sessions. Dawn Club 12001 has some of the Ampersand 78s recorded in 1947 as well as the six Regal Zonophone sides (*South, etc.*) recorded by Graeme Bell's Dixieland Band. Other artists issued on Dawn Club include Ken Colyer, Lu Watters, Turk Murphy, Kid Ory and Wally Fawkes.

Another Record Distribution is now distributing many of the WEA/Atlantic issues. Included in the first batch are John Coltrane *Ole* (Atlantic 40 286), *My Favourite Things* (Atlantic 40 287); Charles Mingus *The Clown* (Atlantic 40 030); The Modern Jazz Quartet *Pyramid* (Atlantic 30 011). ARD is also distributing the latest batch of Commodore Classics (10 in all), featuring Eddie Condon - 1938 - 1942, *A Good Band Is Hard to Find*; Peck Kelley, *Jam, Vol. 1 and 2*; Pee Wee Russell, *The Pied Piper of Jazz, etc.* Another new label to ARD is Saville. This label features English recording and dance bands of the 20s and 30s. Also available is the Boplicity label. So far there are only four issues available, the highlight being Chet Baker/Art Pepper, *Playboys*, Boplicity BOP 3. □

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The Merv Acheson Story

(Part 10)

In part 9 of this series (JAZZ, Spring 1983) Merv Acheson described a miserable stint as a journalist in post-War Melbourne. Following his return to Sydney he became editor of *Tempo* magazine, and played in Mick the Greek's Collonade Club at La Perouse and, later, at the Embassy Club in Manly. Meanwhile, the first Australian Jazz Convention to be held in Sydney took place in 1950. NOW READ ON:

About this time in the early 1950s, major things were happening in the theatre world. All the top film theatres had had reasonably big bands doing live presentations along with the movies for decades.

This was a big source of work for musicians in cities all over Australia. The bands of between 10 and 20 pieces did an overture and presentation numbers, either on stage or in the rising pit, before the first movie, played music at interval, and after the second feature movie played what was known as the march out — a spirited tune as the crowd was leaving. Suddenly the crash came — all the picture shows were laying off their orchestras. To this day it is not widely known that this order came directly from the producers in Hollywood.

Somewhere there had the bright idea that the time taken up by live music could be better used with short movies and even with ten minute films showing an overseas band in action — all to the profit of the moguls. To impress this on the film houses the big companies threatened to cut off supplies of their product to anyone who did not come to heel. This edict applied not only to Australia but world wide. In America it was one of the major factors which finished the big band era.

Prior to this, bands like Duke Ellington, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Kay Kyser, Bob Crosby, Cab Calloway and others did much of their work in theatres where they played the first half of the bill before the feature movie. This Hollywood manoeuvre directly cut off this source of employment and with it came another order from the same source: name bands were no longer to be used in pictures. This was getting them too much publicity and taking crowds from the movie houses to the dance halls and clubs where they regularly performed.

The music scene was pretty turgid for a while and things were not going too happily at *Tempo*. The money was poor, expense accounts non-existent, and I had not had a raise in more than two years. Then I had a phone call from the Packer organisation, which owned the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Women's Weekly* and numerous other publications. They were starting a new show business magazine called *Pictorial Show* and wanted me as jazz columnist.

My old friend and colleague Dick Hughes was working as a journalist for the firm at the time and had recommended me for the job. Dick and I still work together — I with his band the Famous Five at the Soup Plus Restaurant and he with my band the Mainstreamers at Paddington-Woolahra RSL Club.

I said my farewells at *Tempo* and joined *Pictorial Show*. Here I received as much for one column each week, called "The Music Box", as I did for a whole week's work at *Tempo* and I did not have to put in



Merv Acheson, snapped at Mick The Greek's Collonade Club, Sydney, 1947.

an appearance at the office — merely type the stuff up at home and hand it in.

Then came the best news any NSW musician had heard in years: in 1954 10 o'clock closing came in for hotels and the present day registered club scene took off with more liberal laws relating to poker machines, live entertainment and 24 hour-a-day licenses.

At first a peculiar law inspired by the wowsier element applied to hotels they had to close their doors between 6 pm and 7 pm — ostensibly to allow people to go home for dinner. This unrealistic nonsense was soon scrapped.

Once the pubs had 10 pm licenses they began to vie with each other in booking entertainment. Huge chains such as Miller's Hotels sprang up employing literally dozens of musicians and presenting glittering nightclub style shows with dancing girls, comics, vocalists and of course bands. The smaller pubs did not have the room or finances to compete with this and that is where jazz came in. Previously jazz musicians had to play all kinds of garbage music to make a living and could only make their own music in some dingy after hours spot or at private parties. Now they were in demand. The smaller hotels soon realised the strong attraction jazz had and began booking bands good, bad and indifferent.

I had a visit from my old Melbourne mate Harvey Buce who had been engaged as manager of the new beer garden at the Balaclava Hotel, Alexandria, and wanted me to take a band in on the first night of the late opening. He had come to Sydney because a relative had left him an inheritance including a quaint old weatherboard house near the Balaclava. I came to know how "quaint" the house was when I took a lady friend there one night and her high heels went right through the worm eaten lino and boards just inside the front door.

The band I selected for opening night was John Ceeney (drums), Kenny Green (piano) and Dick McNally (trumpet). Ceeney subsequently stayed with various bands of mine for 16 years. He died from chronic asthma last year.

The Balaclava was a funny pub right from the start — on opening night, although admission was supposed to be free, the enterprising Harvey had been selling reserved tickets at 10 shillings (one dollar) each. But he had sold 500 tickets when the place only seated about 250. By the time we were due to start at 7.30 pm people were struggling and arguing about seats, sitting on each others laps and making a great uproar while the urbane Harvey, resplendent in white tuxedo, red bowtie and cummerbund, was running hither and yon trying to placate everyone concerned.

We played loud and clear to get above the noise and when things sorted themselves out seemed to be getting along just fine when a man I did not know came up and said he couldn't understand anything we were playing and it was the most boring music he had ever heard. I told him there were a dozen other pubs in the area and he wasn't nailed to

the floor so why didn't he leave. He later turned out to be one of five brothers who owned the hotel and they had five wives and all ten of them wanted a say in the entertainment.

Not much later I left and joined the Doc Willis band at the Port Jackson Hotel in George Street near the Quay. This was a happy job with Doc on trombone, Chris Hamilton or Terry McCardell on trumpet, Jimmy Shaw on drums and Jim Roach on piano. We played behind the bar and all went well until one night a hulking customer who was always boasting about being the brother of a famous boxer did the wrong thing.

He called me over and I went, still playing clarinet because I thought he wanted a request. When I got near enough he playfully punched the end of the clarinet chipping one of my front teeth. In reflex I picked up a siphon of soda water, which in those days was left on the bar, and bashed him over the head with it. He collapsed and was dragged out by some of his mates. I never saw him again — but he was lucky he was wearing a hat.

This job came to an end when the pub changed hands. During my stay there I had been approached by the manager of the Criterion Hotel on the corner of Park and Pitt Street, Sydney, to work at that spot and now I accepted.

This was to be the longest non-stop job and one of the happiest in my life. I stayed for 10 years and in all that time had the same drummer, John Ceeney and bassist Bob Clarke, although the pianist changed from time to time. The longest running piano player was Barry Jones and when he left to live in Queensland those who followed him included Peter Piercy, Allan Lynch, Dick Jackson, Bill Palmer, Chubby Turner and others. The Criterion Hotel job lasted from 1955 to 1965, survived three changes of management and ended only when a fourth publican took over.

In those days the outgoing licensee was not supposed to tell anyone he was leaving, apparently under the assumption that the customers might follow him to his new pub leaving the incomer with nobody to serve.

The first I knew of the last changeover was when the phone rang early one morning while I was asleep. Staggering out of bed I grunted "Hello" and a voice I did not know said "Are you the band leader at the Criterion?" When I said I was the voice continued "Well I'm the new owner and the band's fired — I hate music!" I quickly cut in that I did not know the voice and he could be somebody having a joke to which he replied; "Come in and see me".

I threw on some clothes, grabbed a cab and was in town in about half an hour. What I saw even before I met the new man made me believe him; three burly labourers were manhandling the piano out the door into the street and from the back bar where we played came the sound of banging and sawing as workmen demolished the stage.

When I finally met the publican and asked him why he was doing this when the band had packed the bar four and five deep and kept half a dozen barmaids working flat out three nights a week for ten years, he told me he had looked in a few times and did not like the crowd. "You've got the place full of knockabout sailors, molls and God knows what" he said. When I reminded him that plenty of other types including intellectuals, artists, jazz students and members of the various ABC bands based nearby came to listen and applaud and that one night we even had Sir Robert Helpmann in the audience he was not impressed.

The band was out, but not down.

What follows sounds like Poo Bah in the Mikado. In 1959 I had been elected Vice-President of the Musicians' Union, Sydney Branch and NSW District, and often acted as union organiser when the regular man was out of town. In addition I was appointed public editor for the Union, a job which included public relations.

The publican was greatly displeased when I informed him of the union rules governing dismissals, especially after ten years' service, the notice money and severance pay involved and various other little matters that had slipped his attention. One of the other "little matters" was that as the law stood at that time when anyone took over a business or company he took over both its assets and liabilities.

So he owed the band.

He said "I'm not going to discuss this with you; I'll talk to a senior union official."

I said "You are now, I'm the Vice-President."

He said "Where's your organiser?"

I said "He's right here — I'm the organiser too."

He said "My God — can't I ever get away from you?"

He ended by saying he would ring the Union and that ended the dialogue — for the moment.

I hurried back to the Union office only a block or two away and shortly afterwards the 'phone rang.

I said "Musicians Union" and a voice replied "Look, I'm the new licensee at the Criterion Hotel and I want to talk to someone in charge."

I said "OK, I'm in charge. I'm the only official in the office."

He said "What do you do?"

I said "I'm the Public Relations Officer."

He said "I suppose you'll do — what's your name?"

I said "Merv Acheson."

I heard a sobbing, choking sound on the line then it went blank.

In the end the dismissal matter was settled out of court by the Union and the employer and the musicians concerned received what, in that day nearly 20 years ago, was a substantial sum.

At the Criterion we played on a small platform backed against a large window looking onto Park Street and with a big sign advertising the Mainstreamers. Inside was a typical medium-size saloon bar with the edge of the bandstand ending about two feet from the edge of the serving bar allowing customers to slip through to the toilets.

There are at least three incidents I remember well, caused by this narrow gap through which customers squeezed. One night I had had a few Scotches too many and fell off the stage thrusting my tenor saxophone to one side to save it but breaking three ribs on the metal edged bar.

Another night a little gay man in a jaunty Tyrolean hat with feather continually passed back and forth pinching the bass player, a very tough boy, on the backside. At length Bobby Clarke got tired of issuing warnings and dropped his heavy upright bass with the spike protruding on to the gay man's foot impaling it to the floor.

On still another occasion a drunk repeatedly came up to bang on the front of John Ceeney's bass drum until Ceeney produced a pair of metal practice drumsticks and donged him on the head after which he staggered away and was seen no more.

I still have people coming up to me on jobs and in bars I frequent reminding me of the Criterion years and the musical enjoyment they had at that spot.

NEXT ISSUE: The great Giles O'Sullivan nightspot at Coogee; all the pubs want jazz; pubs and licensed poker machine clubs force nightclub closures.



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NEW AUSTRALIAN RELEASES

DON BURROWS: BURROWS AT THE WINERY (ABC RECORDS L38161). Recorded live at the Rothbury Estate in the Hunter Valley, 1983. Our reviewer Adrian Jackson writes: "This LP strikes me as Don Burrows' best for some years — since the Burrows-Golla Duo's *Other Places Other Times* — and the best group album he has done yet."

LORRAINE SILK TRIO (EMI YPRX 2135). Our reviewer Bruce Johnson writes: "This LP understands the dramatic potential in understatement, and doesn't squander its musical effects in exhibitionism. It therefore grows richer than poorer with replaying."

THE BENDERS: FALSE LAUGHTER (HOT RECORDS 1006). The second LP by one of Sydney's leading quartets. Our reviewer Eric Myers writes: "This is a great LP by an important and innovative group of young Australian musicians . . . The result is exhilarating and challenging music that, usually, is breathtaking in its brilliance."

PEARCE-PICKERING BARRELHOUSE JAZZ BAND: RED HOT & BLUE (CANDLE CFPS-122). Our reviewer Bill Haesler writes: "As befits the elder statesmen of Australian jazz, the music is competent, consistent and accurate, without indulging in that overreaching hotness often associated with younger, Dixieland-oriented groups."

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TAPES

PEE WEE ERWIN EXCLUSIVE TAPES as featured in JAZZ Magazine (November/December 1982 issue). Titles: *Pee Wee in New York*, *Pee Wee in Hollywood*, *Pee Wee At Home*. \$10 postpaid. Write GPO Box 4689, Sydney NSW 2001.

WRITERS

DO YOU WANT A WRITER? Full-time journalist will write sleeve notes, artist bios, press release and/or publicity material. Jazz a specialty, other areas as well. Dick Scott. Phone (02) 33-4538 a.h. or write 1/243 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst 2010.

GROUPS AVAILABLE

DOCTOR JAZZ & SONS. Stars of Manly Jazz Carnival. (044) 76 2102, 22 Bay Street, Narooma NSW 2546.

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MUSIC LESSONS. Bruce Cale, Sydney area (02) 560 4449. Bruce Cale will also accept students from anywhere within Australia on the principle of lessons by cassette tape. Write C/- PO Hampton, NSW 2790.

BIO-DISCOGRAPHIES

Chris Sheridan of *Jazz Journal International* is trying to contact jazz collectors in Australia for help with the book on Count Basie that he is researching. It's a bio-discography, somewhat along the lines of Russell Connor's Benny Goodman opus, *B.G. On The Record*. It will therefore include not only the well-known studio recordings, but also all known films, transcriptions and radio and television broadcasts. In addition, there will be sections covering all known microgroove issues, cross-referenced to the text, and a complete band itinerary from 1936 onwards. He would welcome information on Australian broadcasts, concert dates and local record issues. Chris can be contacted at

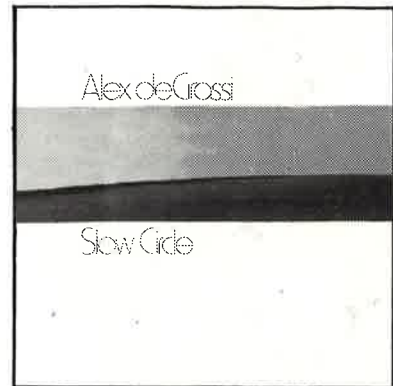
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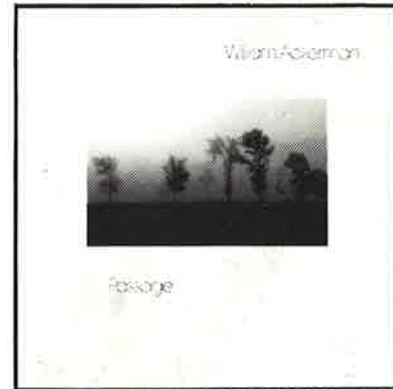
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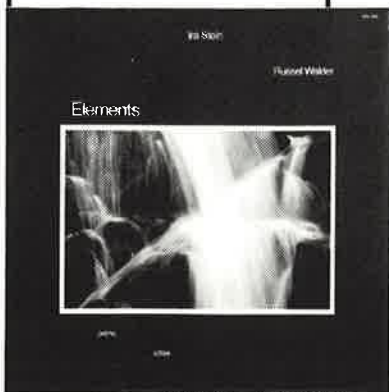
- "New music on familiar instruments . . . uncluttered (by the) unnecessary" (*Oakland Tribune*)
- "Innovative instrumental music that would impress any audiophile" (*Dallas Morning News*)
- "An antidote to urban madness" (*Downbeat*)
- "The Windham Hill sound is contemplative . . . slightly spiritual and plenty sophisticated . . . packing a dose of good old-fashioned adult loss . . . a common timbre (that) runs through the music" (*New Age*)
- "A label without labels" (*KQED-TV's Focus*)



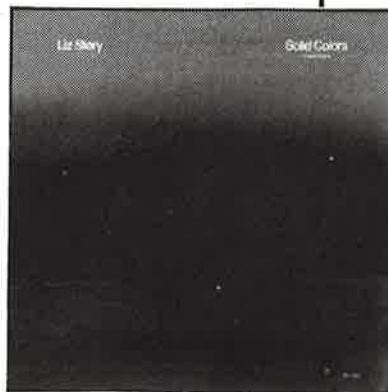
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